



Year End Report on Chukmuk School Library Project

Funded by Cup for Education



Submitted by:

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Executive Summary

This report describes significant events and activities that occurred during the year 2012 in the Pueblo a Pueblo Chukmuk school library project, funded by Cup for Education. The project has been implemented in municipal elementary schools of Chukmuk, Santiago Atitlán.

Pueblo a Pueblo introduced its library project in Chukmuk in 2010 through literacy activities that were conducted in an interim communal space provided by the local municipality. Children attended scheduled activities three times a week in a space where books were available to encourage independent learning, intellectual curiosity and a lifelong passion for reading.

The year 2012 was an exciting one for Pueblo a Pueblo's efforts on the library project as we continued to strengthen the resources and activities available to children from the community of Chukmuk, but also to expand our project impact through training activities.

2012 Project Objectives

The four program objectives during 2012 were:

- To train local volunteers, teachers and a school librarian in literacy and reading promotion techniques.
- To increase available literacy materials in the Chukmuk School.
- To increase usage of materials by teachers and students in the Chukmuk school.
- To ensure proper functioning and sustainability of the Chukmuk school library.

These objectives were fully met, and in some cases exceeded, in our implementation of the project.

Background and Context

Guatemala has the second lowest development indicators in Latin America according to the UN Human Development Index of the United Nations.

- More than 50% of Guatemalan indigenous children do not complete primary education and only 24% complete their basic education.
- In some indigenous areas, about 75% of women cannot read or write.
- Among the rural indigenous children with illiterate parents, the poorest 20% of the population, the probability of school attendance is only 22 per cent.

Following all these statistics we find an education system that fails to provide the basic skills for children from poor families to improve their lives. Rural indigenous schools do not have sufficient funds to purchase books and materials and implement effective educational programs. Unfortunately, together these factors often result in functionally illiterate adults.

Pueblo a Pueblo's project has addressed the great need for literacy activities in the Santiago Atitlán region of Guatemala by extending support of the School Library at Chukmuk Elementary School by

implementing Phase 2 of the project. The project strengthens literacy among indigenous Mayan children in this community and develops stronger skills among teachers and directors at the school. This project is impactful for several reasons:

- Supporting Disaster Recovery: The community of Chukmuk was developed in 2009 for families from Panabaj who lost homes, land, and loved ones in Hurricane Stan (2005). The school library further supports efforts to equip the community with necessary programs and services.
- Building Experience with Libraries: The concept of a school library that supports the teaching is virtually non-existent in rural Guatemalan communities. Families do not have books to read at home and other than a few text books at school. There are no reading materials to pique the children's interest in reading or build reading skills.
- Fostering Human Potential: Teaching children to read dramatically enhances their life skills. Currently more than 50% of the region's indigenous children never make it through primary school and only 24% finish middle school. Meanwhile, in some indigenous areas, as many as 75% of the women are illiterate.
- Building Capacity of Educators: Most teachers and librarians have only the equivalent of a high school diploma and almost none have had specific training in reading promotion or literacy education.

This project also helps achieve Pueblo a Pueblo's mission, which improve the health, education and food security of families in indigenous and rural communities in Latin America.

Activities and Outputs

- **In-Service Teacher Training.** In order to achieve the objective result of '*teachers and volunteers equipped with knowledge of literacy activities and lesson plans*', Pueblo a Pueblo's Project Staff (and external consultants when needed) conducted six in-service training sessions of two hours each. We originally planned to train 15 teachers, but ended up training more than educators. Due to an increase in the school population versus 2011, more teachers were assigned to the school. To fully integrate the school library as an educational resource center for the school and its teachers, it is very important that all teachers participate to trainings from the project. Therefore we trained 20 rural teachers, a school librarian, and 1 community volunteer on basic school library management skills and strategies to improve literacy and reading skills amongst the students.

Participants were trained on the following topics:

- Importance and First Steps to a School Library
- Child Friendly School Library General Concept and Basic Management
- Reading for Pleasure: 'Story Hour'
- Strategies on Writing for Elementary School Students
- Language Elementary Class Learning Difficulties
- Learned Concepts Revision and Assessment on our School Library

Funding from Cup for Education permitted us to produce a teacher training manual for all participants to receive at the end of the training program. Teacher Manual I; Strategies on Literacy

Activities, is a compilation of 23 strategies on literacy topics, organized according to school age. This Manual acts as a tool for teachers as they include new literacy techniques in their activity planning.

- **Book Purchase.** To have a school library stocked with Spanish and Tz'utujil language children's books, as well as supplementary learning resources, the Cup for Education grant allowed us to make an in-country purchase of 250 children's story books and educational materials such as (math games, vocabulary games, puzzles etc.). At the end of 2012 the Chukmuk School Library was at 50% of the desired level of resources according to international guidelines for initial minimum school libraries' collection, which was a big improvement on the previous situation.
- **Literacy Activities by Grade.** Pueblo a Pueblo's librarian led weekly literacy activities by grade at the library engaging the participation of the grade teachers. Each activity has been planned according to children's education level to reinforce their vocabulary, phonemic awareness, reading fluency and comprehension, and compiled into the Library Project's 2012 Literacy Activity Curricula.

The above activities were funded directly by Cup for Education. We are also pleased that matching funds from other sources amplified and extended the impact of Cup's investment in Pueblo a Pueblo. The following additional activities created synergy with Cup-funded elements of the project:

- **Literacy Activities Summer Camp.** During summer time, the Library Project Staff and local volunteers organized and led a two-week literacy-activities Summer Camp open to 50 children from Chukmuk Community. During the summer camp children enjoyed fun activities that focused on literacy and linked to art, science, story hour, educational games and theater. A daily healthy snack was provided to the children.
- **School Library Committee.** A school library committee was formed integrated by two teachers, two school parents, two students, and librarian. Pueblo a Pueblo project staff hold monthly meetings with the library committee to train and guide them on basic school library management systems, ensuring sustainability of the library and making sure a large group takes ownership.

Most Significant Change

Children engaged and interested in reading books is the most significant change that the library project observed during 2012. Once the children understood the open and child friendly atmosphere of the school library they couldn't stay out! Since the first quarter of the year to the end of 2012, we saw a regular increase in the number of children stepping into the library to pick up a book from the shelves by themselves and sitting down to read it for pleasure.

Through a detailed monitoring system, where we track monthly project indicators, we know that on average the Chukmuk School library received over 100 visits from students and teachers each week (participating in literacy activities and during recess).

Program Challenges

- **Children's books in Tz'utujil language.** It has proven difficult to find appropriate books for children printed in the local Tz'utujil Mayan language. Guatemala, with 22 officially recognized languages, uses Spanish as the language of official communications, and few books are available in Tz'utujil. Chukmuk Elementary School is a bilingual school. The mother language (Tz'utujil)

is taught in class as a first language, and Spanish is taught as a second language. Therefore it is essential to have printed literature in the students' mother tongue. Unfortunately, Guatemalan publishers don't fulfil this need. This need will have to be addressed by the school or community by producing 'hand-made' materials in Tz'utujil to enrich the school literacy environment.

- **Engagement of older students.** During the course of the project this year, we've observed that it is mainly the youngest students who access the library more frequently. It is a challenge to find strategies to awaken the oldest student's interest and keep them engaged. We may be able to turn to principles of adult learning to design ways to engage the passion and interest of older students.

Lessons Learned

Gap between trainings and teacher implementation of learned concepts. While the teacher trainings have been extremely successful overall, we realize that teacher trainings alone are not enough. Teachers need additional ongoing support in applying the knowledge gained in the training sessions to their teaching practices.

Need to create a different space for students to support the library. We created a Library Committee to manage library activities at a decision-making level. We felt it was essential to include students in the Library Committee. However, this did not work out as planned, as the management and decision-making focus de-motivated and discouraged the students. We will find a different space, such as a student club, to engage and involve the students in developing the library.

Future Directions

To address these lessons learned, we plan to develop a teacher training / mentoring program to be implemented in 2013 and create a student club or similar way to engage students in shaping the library. We also plan to find ways to engage older students to catalyse their passion for reading and learning.

Due to the success of the project, we are excited to have interest from the nearby community of Chacaya in partnering with Pueblo a Pueblo to replicate and adapt this project for the Chacaya Elementary School.

Conclusion

Pueblo a Pueblo is pleased to partner with Cup for Education and our local partners to promote the overall goal of the U. N. Declaration on the Rights of the Child: ***that the child may have a happy childhood and enjoy for his/her own good and for the good of society***, as well as its supporting goals on education, health, nutrition, safety, and more. Thank you for your support!

Photo Gallery

The photos show project participants enjoying the benefits of Cup for Education's investment.

