



**PROGRAM FACT SHEET
STARFISH ONE BY ONE, GUATEMALA
FEBRUARY 2012**

Featured Organization: Starfish One by One, serving rural Mayan girls of Guatemala

Website: www.starfishonebyone.org

Program title: BRIDGE- Bridging education and the "Girl Effect" among Indigenous Guatemalan adolescent girls.

Mission: To empower young women through education and mentorship to become leaders in their community. The BRIDGE Program targets girls otherwise unable to continue their studies beyond the 6th grade and stewards their educational and empowerment process through the 12th grade to help Mayan women overcome the pressures that education represents.



Brief Description of the Organization:

Starfish One by One is dedicated to serving as a catalyst for education of rural Mayan girls in Guatemala to enhance the educational opportunities as well as the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of children and their families.

Connie and Ted Ning began work in Vietnam in 1989 as a medical relief organization and evolved into a rural development organization with a large women's microcredit program.

In 1998, under the leadership of Ted, Connie and Mimi Schlumberger, they began a rural microcredit program in the Lake Atitlan region of Guatemala. Because of the low literacy level, low health indicators and poverty of these communities, a non-formal education program was created, coupled with small loans for women borrowers in areas of women's leadership, business training, and women's and children's health. Pilot programs were also created, including scholarships for the children of the borrowers.

It was Connie's inspiration to name the non-profit, Starfish One by One. Connie shares, "It comes from the story of a mother seeing her daughter picking up only

one of a beach covered by starfish and tossing it back into the sea. The mother ask 'why save that one if you can't save all of them,' and the daughter replies because it will make a difference to this one, and she tosses the living starfish back into the sea, where it will thrive."

Region: Starfish One by One serves Guatemala, which has the largest gender gap in Latin America with Indigenous women representing only 25% of the population, of whom only 5% complete primary school.

Guatemala is a country in the Central America region of North America. It borders Mexico on the north/northwest, Belize on the northeast, Honduras the southeast, and El Salvador on the south. It has a Pacific coastline to the southwest and a tiny piece of Caribbean coastline to the east.



Guatemala is a country of marked contrasts: indescribable physical beauty with volcanoes and lakes cultural marvels of a unique Mayan civilization yet economic and social indicators of extreme poverty, illiteracy, and disease. The majority of the 12,000,000 inhabitants are Maya living in rural areas of this

mountainous country. The people continue to recover from a tragic 36-year civil war that ended in 1996, which left 200,000 Mayans dead. Equitable land use remains a major problem with wealthy *ladinos* owning 80% of the arable land.

In addition, the region suffered from a financial crisis in 1998, which disrupted the course of economic improvement for the country and caused a collapse in coffee prices, which was the country's greatest export. Currently, as a country the wealthiest 20% of the population consumes 51% of Guatemala's GDP; as a result, about 51% of the population lives on less than \$2.00 a day and 15% on less than \$1.00.

Life challenges/urgency of response: On a national level, Mayan girls start school on average 1.2 years later than Mayan male students. Only 14% have access to secondary school. The effects of this lack of educational access are evident in a variety of ways: 70% are illiterate, maternal mortality is three times higher than the national average, 40% are married by age 18 and 7 out of 10 of those lacking an education are mothers by the age of 20.



Families without a tradition of education are reluctant to let their daughters continue studying while they enter puberty due to a foreseen high risk of pregnancy and concerns for their reputation and subsequent marriage ability. Additionally, the "double burden" (school cost and labor) is more pronounced as girls age and their levels of responsibility and productivity increase.

The Project: Dining for Women will donate \$40,000 to the BRIDGE program to bridge the gap of education and the "girl effect" among Indigenous Guatemalan adolescent girls.

Why we love this program: We love the holistic approach to the education and empowerment of adolescent Indigenous girls through BRIDGE Program's peer support, community mentors, and promotion of secondary school education so that they become leaders in their families, communities, and country. The Indigenous population is at special risk with only 5% of girls finishing primary education. Starfish One by One has a proven model in which 95% of its beneficiaries are academically successful and continue in the program. The BRIDGE Program helps move girls into launching businesses, earning formal employment, or attending university. The organization's leadership is 80% female and 70% Indigenous. We particularly like that the organization is gathering data to measure inter-generational impact also. DFW's grant will go towards supporting the 76 girls enrolled in the BRIDGE Program as of January 2012.

In 2011, Starfish experimented with some formal, internal internship with some high school girls enrolled in the program. This experiment proved to be one of the most effective tools of professional development, as each participant's level of awareness, ambitions, and confidence improved markedly.

The DFW funding will also support the formalization of this internship program in which the six girls entering their final years of high school will have "after school" jobs with various NGOs for the duration of the 2012 school year (which starts in late January and ends in late October). Starfish will match these students' interests with the focus areas of local NGOs. The DFW support will cover the majority of the stipend that each young woman will earn as an "employee" of the participating organization. The partner NGO will be required to contribute roughly 15-20% of the cost. Through this direct work experience, these young women will get their first hands-on work experience while also serving the needs of the local communities. Ideally, some of these young women will be hired by the NGOs upon the completion of the one-year internship.

Project Budget: \$40,000

Project Budget Item	Total
Personnel including program coordinator, administration, benefits for 6 employees	\$18,945
School supplies	\$ 1,143
Internet	\$ 1,150
Weekly Transportation	\$ 3,405
NGO Internship	\$ 2,000
Weekly Snacks	\$ 1,333
Other costs, including travel, field trips, and group meals, invited professional costs, office supplies, rent, utilities, phone, space etc, equipment maintenance and repair	\$ 8,632
Equipment acquisition: 3 computers for mentors, printer, and projector screen	\$ 2,392
DVD Production and Mailing	\$ 1,000
Total of Program Budget supported by DFW May - Dec 2012	\$40,000

Additional funding provided by DFW will support the critical role of supervisory staff who are responsible for developing and systematizing the methodology, establishing productive partnerships with relevant organizations, and training BRIDGE-focused staff.

How the organization measures DFW impact: Starfish One by One will gauge the progress of 76 students by measuring results of:

- School and Star Fish One by One Program retention, particularly among the 48 girls who transition from middle to high school
- Students with passing grades
- Students who complete a Guatemala-context personal skills-assessment to help each determine her unique skills and areas of interest
- Girls receiving certification upon successfully completing a 3-month IT course that equips each with intermediate skills in Internet Navigation and Microsoft Office
- Girls receiving certification upon successfully completing a 2-month Successful Job Acquisition course
- Girls who complete an 80-hour professional internship in the field of their interest

- Girls who effectively overcome social pressures- specifically those related to marriage and pregnancy

Voices: From Women who have been served by Starfish One by One

Nicolasa

“Education for me is very important because these days it is necessary for finding work. Many people who don’t have education, can’t get work. For me SF1BY1 is important because I wouldn’t have the possibility to study. Thanks to SF1BY1, they have helped me a lot and therefore I am now studying. I am the only person in my family studying. I have many siblings but they didn’t have the possibility to study. In contrast, I have the opportunity to study. In the future I want to be a professional and work for my family, for my community, to help people who are in need, and lead a happy life. I am very happy because I never imagined I would reach this stage. I never imagined I would get to study because no one in my family has studied as I am now.”

Reina Estela

“My mentor is important because she teaches us the things that we don’t know. And for me, she’s an example. In the future I want to be a teacher to help my community.”

Carmelina

“SF1BY1 helped me with a scholarship. Without the scholarship I could not study because I live in a poor family. SF1BY1 has helped me a lot...In the future I want to help my community. Right now I am helping my community a bit by working with young children to teach them to read...Every Thursday we give classes to the children.”



Footnotes:

"Guatemala." Welcome to Travel.State.Gov. A Service of the Bureau of Consular Affairs. Web. 16 Jan. 2012. <http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1129.html>.

"Guatemala." U.S. Department of State. Web. 16 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2045.htm>>.