



Building a BRIDGE for indigenous, adolescent girls in Guatemala

**A 6-month report for Dining
for Women**

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One**

December 2012

1 A brief description of what has been accomplished so far, including progress on the goals and objectives of the program DFW is funding. What impact has been made through DFW's funding?

The valuable DFW-derived resources supported the first year of full implementation of the SF1by1 BRIDGE Program. The BRIDGE Program serves young women in grades 10-12 and represents the second phase of the SF1by1 program (the first phase, called the POWER Program, focuses on grades 7-9th grade). The BRIDGE Program builds upon the POWER Program's emphasis on self-esteem and assertiveness by developing job-readiness of a generation of indigenous girls from rural Guatemala.

Among the more significant accomplishments of the BRIDGE Program in 2012 are:

- *"Foot in the door"* internship program- (Ongoing) To date, over 30 of the 76 students have acquired their first formal employment experience. This program matches SF1by1 students with local non-profits (and to a lesser degree small businesses) for 3-month, renewable part-time employment. The formality of the internship is emphasized by a selection/hiring process, formal performance reviews, and an official renewal process.



Irma interns at Community Solutions Enterprises, which provides rural villages with access to water filters and eye glasses

- Access to University- Ongoing visits to local and national universities to explore the different areas of study. In August, students attended at a national university scholarship fair to survey financial support options. At the conclusion of 2012, 14 students have graduated from SF1by1 (4 in 2011 and 10 in 2012). In 2013, SF1by1 anticipates that at least 8 of these 14 (57%) will study at the university level (it is worth noting that less than 1% of indigenous females reach this level).
- Career Exploration Panels- Ongoing speaker series featuring different professionals (such as social workers, bankers, hotel managers, physicians, small business owners) presenting the intricacies of their jobs and what it took to get there.



A social worker presents the details of her profession to Starfish students in Santiago, Atitlán

- Academic support- Provision of weekly academic tutoring sessions to reinforce core competencies (with heavy focus on written Spanish and mathematics) in addition to drop-in homework help. Of the original 76 students, 70 of the students continue in school successfully (92%) while 5 (6%) have withdrawn from the 2012 school year but continue in Starfish and will re-enroll in school in 2013. One student withdrew completely from the program and school.
- SF1by1 Empowerment Curriculum- Delivered weekly during mentorship sessions and divided into formal modules that advance each girls knowledge on the subjects of financial literacy, reproductive health, professional communications, and small business development.



A Starfish mentor leads a discussion on Reproductive Health during a weekly mentorship session for BRIDGE students

- Two small businesses launching- Girl-led businesses have been launched in 2 rural villages (the first produces washable sanitary napkins and the other makes/sells snacks for local events).
- 2 **Has anything changed in regard to the original program goals and objectives?** No.
 - 3 **Have you experienced any significant challenges or obstacles in implementation? If so, how are you addressing them?**
 - *CHALLENGE: The high costs of "bucking the trend"*- The latter years of high school are proving to require increased levels of mentor involvement with families. The "Double Burden" (school fees + missed opportunity costs) seems to grow heavier with each academic year and some parents lose motivation, in spite of the relative closeness to graduation. Likewise, as young women reach and

surpass the traditional age for marriage or childbirth to become the most educated members of their families, they find themselves in unknown territory. In a handful of somewhat volatile cases, there is a clear discord between the expectations of a girl versus the traditional views of her family. Such cases require frequent mentor interventions to facilitate communication and expectations.

SF1by1 Response: To better address the individual needs, SF1by1 is doubling its level of mentor-to-student attention across the organization. Since 2008, mentors have been responsible for stewarding 2 groups of 15 girls. In 2013, each mentor will be responsible for 1 group of 15 girls. While this is a numeric reduction in students, the workload of attending to students, families and schools is expected to double. Similarly, organizational expectations of success are increased among mentors as a result of this significant change to the structure.

- *CHALLENGE: A high bar for staff-* SF1by1 is being very intentional about its organizational culture and expectations. This necessitated the replacement of the BRIDGE Coordinator, who was well-qualified and sincere but lacked the sense of urgency that SF1by1 is encouraging in the program.

SF1by1 Response: SF1by1 has since named (one promoted from within, one hired) two mentors to coordinate the BRIDGE Program in 2013.

- *CHALLENGE: The Guatemalan Education System-* Never a pillar of stability or consistency, the education system of Guatemala consistently scores among the worst in the hemisphere. For girls with a complete lack of academic support at home (most parents are illiterate), many lack even the basic writing and mathematical skills even as they near graduation from high school.



Its estimated that 0% of rural schools in Guatemala meet the minimum international standards for basic infrastructure

SF1by1 Response: As a small organization, SF1by1 is unable to significantly influence even the local levels of school supervision. However, lackluster schooling does not lessen the overriding need for core academic competencies among SF1by1 students. In 2012, SF1by1 added mandatory weekly homework support sessions for all students. In 2013, weekly mentorship sessions will be expanded by an additional hour (5 hours total) to allow for additional homework reinforcement activities.

- 4 **Has the timeline for the program changed from the original funding application?** No.
- 5 **Has funding changed for this program? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?** No.
- 6 **How much of the original DFW restricted funds have been disbursed and how much remain?**

50% of the funds remain and will be used in 2013 when the BRIDGE program supports 140 students.

Additional information:

Blog-style summary- In 2012, Starfish One by One launched the BRIDGE Program with DFW support. This project creates job-readiness among indigenous high school girls whose families have never held roles in the formal economy. To date, over 30 young women now have experienced their “first job” in a formal setting through the DFW-supported “Foot in the Door” program that matches students with local non-profits. In 2013, they will continue to pioneer new paths for indigenous women in Guatemala.

Message for DFW Supporters- Starfish derives its name from the semi-famous [fable](#). The efforts of each DFW chapter make this fable reality. Through supporting one we will change many.



**Thank you Dining
for Women for your
generous support!**