



Building a BRIDGE for indigenous, adolescent girls in Guatemala

A Final Report

**Prepared by Starfish One
by One**

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Organization Name: Starfish One by One

Program Title: Building a BRIDGE for indigenous, adolescent girl in Guatemala

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Goals: Recap briefly what outcomes the program was designed to achieve.

The overriding objective of this project was to apply DFW support to the scaling a proven pilot project (called the BRIDGE Program) that empowers indigenous, rural adolescent girls to overcome traditional obstacles that impede their economic participation. The specific outcomes were:

- Sustained access to high school.
- Solid and consistent academic achievement at the high school level.
- Acquired awareness of the employment landscape in Guatemala and the relevant knowledge and skills to successfully navigate it to find a job.
- Attain the key information to make informed decisions (critical thinking, reproductive health, financial literacy, networking skills, personal skills assessment).
- Provide “first job” experience through formal internships.
- Promote the option for continued studies at the university level.

Students in the BRIDGE Program have all transitioned into the program having completed the Starfish POWER Program for middle schoolers. Like the BRIDGE Program, the POWER Program uses mentorship and peer support to develop self-esteem, positive social relationships and a clear identification of individual strengths. Starfish’s weekly Empowerment Curriculum provides each student with fundamental information on topics health, financial and computer literacy, and vocal empowerment.

Findings and Overall Outcomes

- **Tell us what the program actually achieved. How does it compare to the proposed outcomes?**

The program’s original framework focused on the transition of 76 girls from middle to high school starting in January 2012 and ending in December 2012. Due to DFW’s internal timing mechanisms and significant media attention after the NBC news piece, the schedule for this grant was delayed until June 2012. For the duration of 2012 the number of beneficiaries remained consistent; however in 2013 the number of young women served increased to 120. This adjustment allows for a snapshot of Starfish graduates (who received DFW support through the end of 2012). These 14 Starfish graduates speak to the achievement of several of the outlined outcomes:

- 66% of Starfish graduates are studying at the university level (compared to less than 1% among rural indigenous females nationally).
- 85% are employed outside the home.
- Of the 14 graduates (whose mothers average 1.5 years schooling):
 - 4 graduates are now employed in Starfish as mentors.
 - 1 works in the Municipal government in the community development office.
 - 2 work with other NGOs (a school and a microcredit organization)
 - 1 plans to travel to the US to study intensive ESL and will build a tourist company catering to NGO visitor traffic.

- 1 interns at her community health clinic.
- 1 is the office assistant for Starfish, awaiting her 18th birthday when she can be legally employed by a bank.



Figure 1: Celena (in white, second row) is a Starfish graduate who now mentors the "Triumphant Little Ants" group

Other notable short-term results:

- *Firsthand formal job experience:* Starfish Girl Pioneers in this project conducted over 50 professional internships in formal settings (3 month, renewable terms).
- *Academic success:* In 2012, 84% of the students enrolled in the BRIDGE Program passed their grade. Comparatively, 21% of indigenous students drop out of high school in the department of Sololá.
- *Possess and utilize key knowledge:* Completion of modules pertaining to health and hygiene, career planning and communication, vocational orientation, and advanced financial literacy.
 - 100% possess and utilize personal savings accounts.
 - 98% avoided pregnancy, 98% avoided marriage.
- *Retention in the Starfish program:* For 2012, the BRIDGE achieved a 93% retention rate. Desertions were most often attributed to lack of family motivation. Through 6 months in 2013, this rate is 99%.



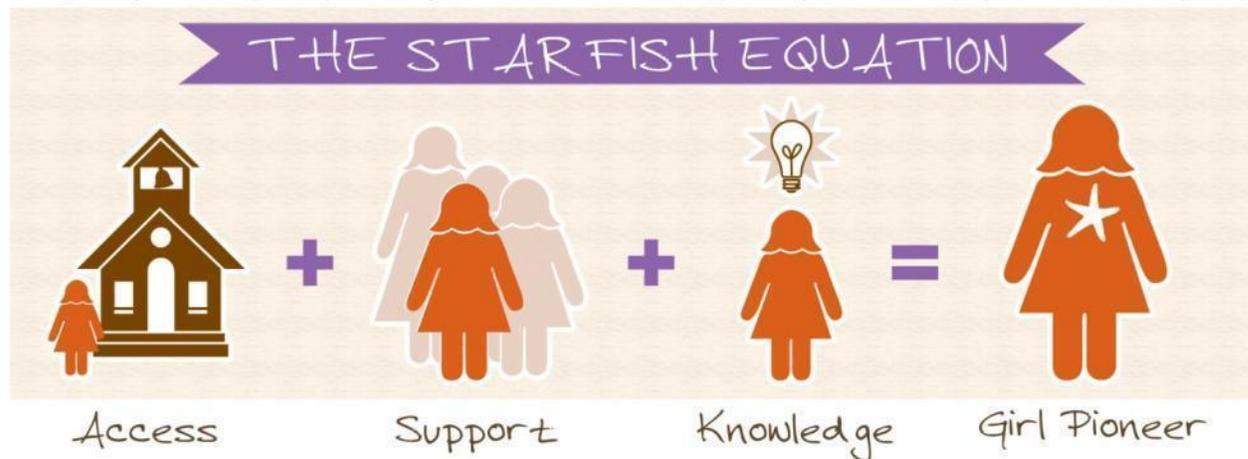
Figure 2: Lola is an intern at an NGO called Anadesa, where she teaches young children how to read

- **What challenges were encountered while implementing the project? What actions were taken to address them? Include information about any new collaboration with other NGOs, CBOs or governmental groups.**

Challenge 1: Family, economic and social pressures increase significantly in high school

The 2012 scaling of the BRIDGE Program further clarified the threatening power of several of the obstacles that regularly impede a young woman from completing high school and securing access to the formal employment sector. In 2012, the Starfish developed the following formula to describe how it responds to these difficulties:

Girl pioneer (GP): *noun*, A first generation shatterer of glass ceilings. The first in her family to go well beyond primary school, acquire key knowledge and skills, and create the opportunity for formal employment and university.



The Starfish response: Double down on mentoring

Starfish is committed to the education and empowerment of young women *with* the support of parents (rather than *in spite* of them). The majority of parents are completely unprepared for the unforeseen challenges of high school (parents of starfish Girl Pioneers average less than 2 years of formal schooling). The transition from middle school (where schools tend to be much closer and less costly) to high school (which almost always requires a daily travel expense, has longer hours and requires more fees for materials) is very jarring for many parents. The combination of these factors as well as other pressures (to marry, to help with daily chores, etc) often abruptly derail familial levels of support for their daughter's education, even when her graduation from high school is relatively close. This occurred on a few occasions in 2012, and Starfish responded in 2013 by doubling its level of mentor attention to students and families to proactively identify and prevent parental loss of motivation. Whereas in 2012 a mentor was responsible for 2 groups of 15 Girl Pioneers, in 2013 each mentor is responsible for 1 group of 15.

Challenge 2: Getting to/through high school means a Girl Pioneer has only reached the starting line

As a high school graduate, a Starfish Girl Pioneer has reached unprecedented academic heights for her family and community. She is under enormous pressure to immediately provide an income for her family, yet the job prospects are exceedingly bleak. Pressure to marry and follow a more "traditional" path is also intense. Yet Starfish has helped her birth a dream and a vision for herself that is not always compatible with the traditional expectations of a Mayan woman in

rural Guatemala. By reaching high school graduation, she is only just begun to confront some of these challenges, and they will keep coming with every step forward.

The Starfish response: Further define the organizational philosophy and scope- it's not about how many, it's about how far

A Starfish Girl Pioneer has been empowered with a firm belief in herself and her vision for her future. In her village she will face fierce resistance, and there is likely a complete void of support or camaraderie as she challenges untouched paradigms. In 2013, Starfish made the bold decision create a new organizational model that will respond to these emerging needs. The Starfish "Sunrise" Model will empower 1 generation of 500 young women in Guatemala over the course of 20 years. By limiting the numeric scope of the organization, Starfish is able to explore just how far each of the 500 graduates can go. Over the course of the next 15 years, the Starfish organization will pivot itself around the graduates. Along the way, the organization will evolve into powerful alumni association for Starfish Girl Pioneers. Graduates will access this network for personal and professional resources as they continue to push through previously untouched barriers. Like the Girl Pioneers it serves, Starfish is defying the "traditional" rules of non-profit organizations. Rather than build an organization to explore how many girls can be served over an indefinite period of time, Starfish aspires instead to see how far a generation of 500 Girl Pioneers can go. They- rather than Starfish- will be the ones to catalyze the transformational, long-term change.

New Collaborations

Starfish's success derives in large part from powerful partnerships that continually enhance the organizational efforts to be efficient and innovative. In the past year, Starfish has forged several powerful new partnerships, such as:

- **Africa 70** for enhanced training of Starfish mentors and curriculum development pertaining to environmental stewardship.
 - **Community Solutions Enterprises** for small business development opportunities for Starfish Girl Pioneers participating in the BRIDGE Program.
 - **Appropriate Technology Collaborative** that will provide training on the development and installation of solar panels for BRIDGE students with an eye on launching small, female-led businesses.
 - **The Trauma Resiliency Institute** for training of mentors to strengthen the individual and family levels of emotional resilience.
 - **Vocal Empowerment Training** from Dr. Beth Osnes of the University of Colorado. This training is ongoing and designed to develop the vocal assertiveness of Starfish Girl Pioneers.
 - **Professional Internship Agreements** with over 12 small businesses and NGOs to match up Starfish Girl Pioneers with employment opportunities.
 - **Ministry of Education- Department of Sololá** validated the BRIDGE training modules.
 - **Starfish's RIPPLE Training Program** disseminated proven practices to over 12 NGOs operating in the departments of Sololá and Quiché in 2013.
- **Describe unexpected events and outcomes, including unexpected benefits.**
 - Starfish has an important role to play in disseminating best-practices. Many of the techniques and innovations honed in the BRIDGE Program are formally shared with other NGOs via the Starfish RIPPLE Program. This program caters to NGOs, however the demand is equally high among municipal governments and public school teachers.

- The 2013 Volcanothon challenged several young women to summit the nearby San Pedro Volcano. This experience proved to be profoundly powerful for young women who have spent their lives staring up at its summit. They became the first people they know to ever reach its summit.



Figure 3: 2013 Volcanothon participants

- **Did you change your strategy as a result of obstacles you encountered? How will you address these challenges in the future?**

The aforementioned twofold increase in mentorship attention is designed to address what the important family motivation that can abruptly wane when girls reach high school. Starfish also made the following adjustments to its BRIDGE Program to accommodate the more challenging high school schedules and family pressures:

- Fortnightly (rather than weekly) group meetings that are 30% longer and feature a full breakfast (rather than snack).
- Monthly parents meetings to inform families of important advances.
- Higher expectations of mentors to conduct home visits to the families of Girl Pioneers.
- Use of formal internships to address high pressure family situations. Pulling a daughter out of high school and putting her to work often provides immediate economic relief. Starfish can effectively counter this pressure by organizing formal, paid internships for Girl Pioneers.
- Mandatory (versus voluntary) homework support is now provided by trained teachers.

- **Approximately how many lives have been touched, both directly and indirectly, by the program?**

For the final 6 months of 2012, this program served 76 BRIDGE Students and their families (average size of 8), for a total of 608 lives directly touched. In 2013, this increased to 120 students and families, for a total of 960 touched.

- **What was the overall impact, both *direct* and *indirect*, in the lives of the women, children and community at large?**

This number cannot yet be accurately quantified. However the significant impact was undoubtedly felt through the following ways:

- Academic support of siblings. As the most educated members of their families, Girl Pioneers report that they provide key tutoring for siblings.

- Navigation of systems for parents. Girl Pioneers are often their family's best Spanish speaker and help parents maneuver otherwise impossible systems (financial, health, government, etc.).
- Formal and informal community service programs. For example, the BRIDGE students of Santiago, Atitlán performed a social theater for their large village to promote environmental consciousness.
- Professional internships. The majority of the internships take place in other NGOs. Starfish Girl Pioneers taught pre-school children how to read, compiled data for microcredit organizations, helped run educational programs for special-needs children, or help in the accounting departments of women's weaving cooperatives. All told, these NGOs serve over 15,000 people.
 - **What are the measurements used to monitor success and how was this information measured (surveys, observation, etc)? Be specific and include measurable results.**

See next pages for detailed monitoring and evaluation

BRIDGE PROGRAM RESULTS 2012

Indicator	Context	2012 Benchmark and Goal	Result	Comment
<p>ACCESS</p> <p>Percentage school/SF1by1 Program retention, specifically among the 48 girls who transition from middle to high school</p>	<p>Annually, 21.3% of indigenous drop out of high school in Sololáⁱ</p> <p>1 in 10 indigenous (male or female) who enrolls in 1st grade reaches the 10th gradeⁱⁱ</p>	<p>100% retention in SF1by1 BRIDGE Program and 100% pass high school grade</p>	<p><u>Of 76 BRIDGE GPs</u>: 93% continue in the BRIDGE Program</p> <p>84% successfully passed their grade. GPs who do not pass are supported to retake their exams.</p> <p><u>Of 48 10th graders in BRIDGE</u>: 96% passed and continue in the program</p>	<p>Desertion most often attributed to loss of parental support</p> <p>Math and inability to purchase required materials for assignments frequently cited as reasons for poor grades</p>
<p>GRIT</p> <p>Increased self esteem, assertiveness, and resilience</p>	<p>Globally, Guatemala ranks 118th out of 135 in the area of women's political participation</p>	<p>Significant (>10%) increases as measured by validated tools in each of the 3 focus areas.</p>	<p>Data from BRIDGE graduates demonstrates positive increases in all three areas, but does not reach the desired 10% threshold.</p>	<p>To address this, in 2013 Starfish mentors will receive external training from Dr. Beth Osnes (Vocal Empowerment) and the Trauma Resource Institute (Emotional Resilience).</p>

<p>SOCIAL INTEGRATION Percentage of 76 GPs who effectively overcome social pressures- specifically marriage and pregnancy</p>	<p>Over 40% of indigenous females are married by age 18ⁱⁱⁱ. Although the national fertility rate decreased from 5.6 to 3.6 children per woman between 1987 and 2008, the rate among indigenous women is 1.4 higher than that among nonindigenous (4.5 versus 3.1)^{iv}.</p>	<p>Through the BRIDGE Program’s module titled “Integral Health” and through sustained access to peer and mentor support, 0% of GPs would get pregnant/married.</p>	<p>98% successful (1 pregnancy, however this GP continues in the program has chosen not to marry). No BRIDGE GPs were married in 2012.</p>	
<p>SOCIAL INTEGRATION Percentage of 76 GPs who complete a Guatemala-context personal skills- assessment</p>	<p>0% of GP families are formally employed. GPs receive minimal career guidance at home.</p>	<p>Through the use of the personal skills assessment tool developed by the Universidad del Valle, all 11th and 12th graders would have a clear idea of their natural talents</p>	<p>26 out of 28 11th or 12th grade GPs (92%) enrolled in the BRIDGE Program in January 2012 completed the assessment informing each of her natural areas of interest and talent.</p>	<p>The two who did not conduct the assessment abandoned the program and their high schooling.</p>

<p>SOCIAL INTEGRATION Percentage of 76 GPs receiving certification upon successfully completing a 3-month IT course</p>	<p>Less than 1% of BRIDGE GPs have access to a home computer.</p>	<p>100% of BRIDGE GPs complete IT-focused workshop</p>	<p>This workshop was combined with the “Life Competencies” Model (below) that was extended to encompass computer literacy.</p>	<p>Starfish plans on piloting the use of e-readers to facilitate access to books and to foster the habit of reading.</p> <p>All BRIDGE GPs have access to an interactive, online ESL program.</p>
<p>SOCIAL INTEGRATION Percentage with knowledge of job acquisition process</p>	<p>93% of Guatemalan youths have never received work-related training of any kind^v</p>	<p>100% of BRIDGE GPs complete in formal job-readiness workshop</p>	<p>100% of GPs remaining in the program all successfully completed the module on “Life Competencies”</p>	<p>This module was integrated with other skills, such as time administration, advanced financial literacy, and political participation. It is now an annual module that increases in sophistication from 10-12th grade.</p>

<p>SOCIAL INTEGRATION Percentage of 76 GPs who conduct and complete a professional internship</p>	<p>0% of GPs in SF1by1 have previous experience in a formal work environment.</p>	<p>All interested and academically eligible students acquire firsthand formal employment experience.</p>	<p>33, or 43%, GPs conducted a 3-month formal internship in a small business or local NGO Internships occurred in 20 organizations/small businesses.</p>	<p>This opportunity is optional and hinges on several factors, including often difficult school schedules.</p> <p>The goal is that every BRIDGE student complete at least one internship during high school.</p>
<p>Ongoing development of Potential (Graduates)</p>	<p>It is estimated that less than 1% of indigenous women access the university.</p>	<p>100% of Starfish graduates find employment and 50% enter the university</p>	<p>Of the 14 Starfish graduates, 92% are employed outside the home and 66% are enrolled in university (almost all in weekend classes).</p>	<p>4 current Starfish mentors are graduates of the program.</p>

- **If program is ongoing, provide plans and expected results, including projected timeframe.**

Based on the success of this project, the BRIDGE is now forms an essential part of Starfish's holistic program. For the next 15 years, Starfish will continue to serve generations of 10-12th graders from rural villages to ensure that each continues to develop and apply her talents. By 2028, the last of 500 Girl Pioneers will have graduated from the BRIDGE Program and into a well-developed alumni program.

Budget

- **Provide a timetable with detailed budget line items (itemized expenses), activities and outcome.**
- **Tell us specific ways the funds from Dining for Women were used – Planned and Actual.**
- **If DFW donations did NOT cover the entire cost of the program, what percentage did the funds cover?**

Please see the attached financial information

Sustainability

- **How has the impact of this program provided for long term change for the beneficiaries or community?**

This project help catalyze Starfish's game-changing decision to deviate completely from the traditional development organization. The BRIDGE Program demonstrates both the unparalleled power of young women as positive change-makers, and it also crystallized the daunting series of obstacles that still await a young woman after high school. What if she were able to keep going? That is the question that Starfish is now designed to explore. Rather than simply existing indefinitely to serve ever-more middle and high school girls, Starfish is diving into the concept that 500 Starfish graduates will be the ones to enact truly sustainable and transformative change.

- **Are the results sustainable?**

It is with long-term sustainability in mind that Starfish has opted to evolve its organization around a generation of 500 Girl Pioneers. They represent the truly permanent results. While the short and medium-term impacts that Starfish has achieved are notable, Starfish will pivot its organization around these 500 to ensure the long-term impact of the Girl Effect is not impeded.

- **What long term changes would you expect to see after 3- 5 years as a result of this grant?**

In 5 years, Starfish will be halfway through its 20 year plan with almost 250 Girl Pioneers graduated with another 200 currently enrolled in the program. This grant has defined the crucial BRIDGE Program that will be the platform for post-high school success. Girl Pioneers will graduate from high school and the BRIDGE Program with powerful knowledge, experience and personal connections. Starfish graduates of 5-7 years ago will embrace these young women and offer them ongoing mentorship and professional support. In 5 years time, the *Starfish Alumni Network* will embrace every new graduate and provide her with crucial technical and emotional support to continue to pioneer uncharted paths in her community.

The Women and Girls Served

- Include several stories, experiences and quotes from women/girls, preferably in their own words, whose lives were altered by the funded program

**Candelaria**

“Education is valuable because it allows us to find good jobs and be able to support our families. We will not have to suffer how we have had to in the past now that we have an education. By receiving a formal education we are able to learn Spanish and other important things about the world around us. Our parents did not get an education so they don’t know how to read or write and they don’t know how to communicate well in Spanish. They want us to get an education so that we will have more opportunities than they did. All the emotional, social, academic, and financial support I have received from Starfish has helped to build my self-confidence and begin to believe in myself.”

**Irma**

“Education is something really important in my life because each day I learn new things that help to mold and change my life. My attitude and my way of thinking have become much more open and outgoing. Although I still encounter obstacles in my life, I am now able to confront them with a positive attitude, which helps me to move forward in a healthy way. My family, too, has worked hard to support me in my education, despite some of difficulties. We all want to move forward and look for opportunities to a better future. Starfish has taught me that I can set goals and reach them if I plan and work hard.”

**Telma**

“Starfish has taught me a lot about myself and how to participate in groups. I used to be very shy and couldn’t talk in front of people; now I feel comfortable leading a group. Starfish has helped me to overcome a lot of my weaknesses and have taught me how to set goals for myself and my future. My dream is to graduate from the university and do something valuable with my life that will help me and my family move forward.”



New Opportunities

- **Did this grant and relationship with DFW assist your organization in obtaining other funding, partnerships with other organizations, or public recognition in some capacity?**

Yes. Through the results obtained via the DFW grant, Starfish was able to secure significant funding from Rotary International and several smaller foundations. Additionally, the curriculum honed over the course of the past 12 months is being systematized and will be formally shared with other NGOs via Starfish’s RIPPLE Training Program.

Organizational Information

- **Is your organization or program situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, change in your mission or vision statement, significant program staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?**

No.

- **Dining for Women is focused on the empowerment of women and girls; how is your commitment to empowering women reflected in your organizational structure?**

While there are numerous NGOs operating in Guatemala, Starfish is among the few that is women/indigenous-led. The core leadership team is 100% indigenous and 83% female (5 out of 6). The mentor staff is 80% indigenous (12 of 15) and 86% indigenous (Starfish has 2 male mentors who oversee the pilot project for 2 groups of boys).



Figure 4: The mentors of the Starfish BRIDGE Program

- **What lessons have you learned about the functioning of your own organization through this program? What is working? What might you change?**

DFW supported the scaling of the ambitious BRIDGE Program, which allowed Starfish to steer directly into what has too often been an unchallenged paradigm of exclusion for indigenous women. By providing the emotional and technical support to young women and an expectation that each will participate productively in the formal Guatemalan economy, the bar has been raised. *But how high?* This project has also raised the aspirations and ambitions of Starfish as it now evolves to see what heights these young women can reach. This grant fueled Starfish's belief in its ability steer directly into this question. To truly pursue the answer, Starfish is redefining the traditional rules of organizational lifecycles. Its exclusive focus on 1 generation of 500 Girl Pioneers over 20 years is evidence of the tremendous impact of this grant.

Next Steps

- **What are the next steps/future directions for your organization?**

Go “all in” on the Generation 500 concept: This DFW allowed Starfish to systematize its program for high school Girl Pioneers, many of whom are nearing their graduation. Starfish is now prioritizing its HORIZONS follow-up program that will provide 2 years of ongoing, even more individualized support to Girl Pioneers who have completed high school. An additional, overarching task that affects every phase of Starfish is the pressing need to create a highly intentional alumni organization that Starfish graduates will continue to access well into the future.

Give it all away: For 2 years, Starfish has been formally disseminating its most effective innovations to other, small NGOs in Guatemala. The clarified 15 year plan and focus on 500 graduates enhances Starfish's commitment to share its best-practices. This finite time frame disarms any concern for branding, recognition or the threat of competition from other NGOs. Instead, Starfish is under inverted pressure to make sure that as many NGOs as possible access the information. Starfish's RIPPLE Training Program is charged with this important task. Through the first half of 2013, the RIPPLE Program has trained over 16 other organizations.

Comments and Recommendations

- **Is there anything else you would like our members to know about this program, or your organization?**

At the time that this donation was awarded, it was the largest institutional grant that Starfish had received. This grant proved to be a crucial stepping stone towards what is now highly innovative organizational model. The BRIDGE Project further deepened Starfish's organizational faith in the unprecedented heights that these young women will reach. We greatly appreciate your trust in this vision and invite you to stay in touch with Starfish to accompany their journey.

ⁱ Guzmán de Lurca, Vivían. UNICEF. United Nations. *La Niñez Guatemalteca en Cifras*. Guatemala: UNICEF, 2007. Print.

ⁱⁱ USAID Guatemala. USAID. *Mayor Acceso, Calidad e Igualdad Educativa en Guatemala*. Guatemala: , 2004. Web. <<http://www.beps.net/publications/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. Population Council

^{iv} Population Council, "Equipping Mayan girls to improve their lives,"

Prepared by Jennifer Catino, Alejandra Colom, and Marta Julia Ruiz, p.1, 2011, <http://www.popcouncil.org/publications/serialsbriefs/TABriefs.asp>.

^v "Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida y Población Joven." *Instituto Nacional de Estadística Guatemala*. ENCOVI, November 2011. Web. 6 Apr 2012.