

Dining for Women

Interim Report 1

June 2017

1. Organizational Info

Organization: Starfish One-by-One

Contact Name: Travis Ning

Contact Address: 1031 33rd St. Denver, CO 80205

Contact Email and Telephone: travis.ning@starfish-impact.org, 303-670-1291

Program Title: Connecting talent with opportunity among Girl Pioneers in rural Guatemala

Grant Amount and Start Date: \$60,000 - 4/15/2015 (\$20,000 per year for 3 years)

Kind of Grant (Featured or Sustained Program): February, 2016-2018 Sustained Program

2. Program Outcomes:

The goal of the Starfish Impact School is to equip young women with the skills to match their vision and ambition to lead positive change in Guatemala. Fortified with a healthy cultural identity and an education that meets the demands of the present-day economy, a graduate will be capable of occupying crucial roles of significant influence in her community and country.

The Starfish Impact School will evidence the phenomenon of what is possible when talented girls are given an extraordinary opportunity to receive a culturally attuned, robust education designed to catapult them into positions of leadership. The school is deliberately designed to be the first of what will become a network of all-girl schools that will transform the landscape of a country in dire need of its female talent.

At the conclusion of this three-year (2016-2018) project, Guatemala will have its first all-girl secondary school specifically designed to empower and educate high-aptitude female leaders from traditionally marginalized contexts. With its purposeful design that integrates the core concepts of culture, community and academics, graduates of this school will achieve previously unseen heights in the areas of government, economic participation, and leadership. The school-and all of its systematized materials, policies and curricula- will be the first in what will become a network of female-focused schools around the country.

3. Program Funding

Funding for this program has not changed in any significant ways that affected program design or implementation, although there have been shifts amongst funders in relation to the amounts we projected and what was actually received.

4. Significant Changes

The only major organizational change Starfish has had since the time when we applied for our grant is a managerial shift. Our previous Executive Director Travis Ning moved to Antigua, Guatemala and specialized his role to the Director of Collaboration in order to focus on the school development and network building. Simultaneously, we hired a new, US-based Executive Director, Kathryn White, who now oversees fundraising and organizational management. This shift, however, took place in May of 2016 and not in the last six months of the grant period.

5. Number of Beneficiaries

The number of students in our first class of seventh graders at the Starfish Impact School increased from the time of our application. We initially projected having 40 girls in our first class but because of the strength of our six-month onboarding process we started the school year in January with 48 students. As we begin to recruit our second class of girls, the number of girls and families served by the Starfish Impact School will grow to 98 shortly, as we add a class of 50 young women who will go through the six-month orientation and mentorship process before starting school in January of 2018. The girls and families served in the current wrap-around program remains the same as projected for 2017, at 72 young women.

6. Challenges Moving Forward

Students' starting point: We recruited students from villages that are underserved by both government and NGO interventions. While we carefully selected the most motivated young women and families, their academic level is very low. On average, the Spanish language skills are very low which makes instruction in any academic subject extremely challenging. We have implemented three central assessment programs, Achieve 3000, MAP, and Lexile assessments, which measure math and literacy. Only 2 of the 48 Girl Pioneers started the 7th grade reading at the appropriate grade level (based on US reading standards). The rest are, on average, 3 years behind. Based on the first quarter grades, five of the 48 girls are not meeting the academic standards. Among the next quarter's priorities is to further shape interventions for students who are struggling with the material.

Technology: There is a lot of global enthusiasm around the power of technology as a way to leapfrog longstanding obstacles. While technology can help reinforce core academic skills, we have to acknowledge that these young women have no experience with it (most touched their first screen when we showed them the

school's tablets). Accessing heralded applications like Khan Academy or Duolingo requires a certain level of both Spanish and technological fluency that our current students do not yet possess.

When everything is important, nothing is: The volume of issues the staff is confronting is daunting. Tasks like determining the best way to manage a school library, creating emergency contingency plans for student safety, or tracking student grades are all core functions of a successful school. And all are equally urgent. Diffuse and uncoordinated efforts provoke a high risk of staff frustration and burnout. The school effectiveness plan developed throughout 2016 is an essential tool now worth its weight in gold. This plan, which delegates tasks with clear deadlines, is now a crucial reference point for the team. We can methodically work our way through the “to-do” list.

7. Objectives

The objectives of the Starfish Impact School remain the same, as detailed in the following section.

8. Progress Toward Objectives

The successes are evident. Student retention is at 100% and school culture is thriving as Girl Pioneers and parents deepen their commitment to this new path. Core operations around transport, building, food, materials, etc. are running smoothly. Educator energy is high as each realizes the power of her teaching techniques. The arduous work over the past 2-3 years in the planning of the school was invaluable. The below objectives and progress indicators detail the specific focal points of this project:

- *Using local talent, reinvent the role of “educator” in the Guatemalan context. This entails deviating from the known model of “teacher” (which in Guatemala is a job often noted for its passivity and rigid adherence to status quo) by creating and utilizing high-impact educators with vivid clarity of objectives and intentionality in the classroom.*
 - The average Guatemalan school operates for only 4-5 hours per day. Significant chunks of the limited classroom time are lost due to an absence of strong routines and deliberate transitions. A large focus of this first part of the year has been on establishing routines to maximize efficiency. Students arrive at the Starfish Impact School at 7:15 and leave at 4:30. Over the course of these first four months, mentors and educators have successfully established routines that minimize time-loss for everyday tasks (washing dishes, transitioning between classrooms, use of library books, etc.).
 - Perhaps the most notable—and radical—achievement of the first four months of schooling is the immediate impact of the teaching techniques. This is arguably the starkest contrast to traditional schools where passive

learning is the norm (frequently the teacher sits at a desk while students copy the contents of a textbook off the chalk board). Students of the Starfish Impact School are engaged. Educators circulate throughout the room and employ highly deliberate techniques that stretch learning and keep students thinking. The investment in acquiring and practicing these teaching skills is producing powerful results and is among the most noted differences compared to other schools, according to students. These techniques are crucial, particularly due to the use of the “block plan” that features 90-minute periods.

- *Redefine the word “school” for all stakeholders by evidencing what a quality education can achieve in both its process and result. Students and families are accustomed to schools being foreign entities (parents most often lack sufficient Spanish to speak with teachers) that can provoke fear and alienation. The Starfish Impact School, with its indigenous staff and celebration of Mayan identity and community, will foster an unprecedented partnership with parents who will also receive support in their homes.*
 - The Starfish Impact School is defined by the fact that it is led and run by women from the communities we serve. However, because the school is so unconventional within the context of Guatemala, leadership of the new systems and design is critical. In March, educational consultant Rob Jentsch conducted a weeklong visit to support the school’s leadership with the design of systems to address emerging needs, personal coaching, and support for how to prioritize tasks when everything feels important. In February, School Director Vilma Saloj was interviewed for a [blog](#) on women’s leadership.
 - The school operates in the small city of Panajachel in a temporary facility while Starfish builds its permanent structure just outside the capital city of Sololá (estimated completion date is October 2018). Compared to the permanent structure that will be ready for the 2019 year, Panajachel is roughly 30 minutes further from the villages of the Girl Pioneers. Many had never set foot in that town prior to enrolling in the school. While we complete the permanent building (which can be accessed easily with public transportation), Starfish is running its own transportation each morning and evening and picks up clusters of students at designated locations. Mentors have helped families organize themselves, taking turns walking groups of students to/from the bus stop. Mentors have been riding the bus to/from school each day with the students to help placate parental concerns, forge closer relationships with and among students, and to establish routines.
- *Infuse national secondary school curriculum with “real world” skills through consultation with experts and private sector entities. In contrast to the typical secondary school education (average of 600 classroom hours/year), the Starfish Impact School will have approximately 1600 annual hours of instruction to*

significantly complement the national curriculum with tangible skill development and practice.

- As predicted, this area is the most challenging element. As products of the traditional school system, Starfish educators confront the challenging task of relearning the content in their subject to a level where they can transmit it to their students. Simultaneously, these educators need to unpack their curriculum and design lesson plans based on ambitious academic benchmarks. The most challenging subjects are those with content that is sequential, for example math and language arts (as an educator, you must know the previous year's content to effectively teach the current year). We are deepening partnerships to accelerate the pace of content mastery, particularly in these two subjects. In the case of Spanish language arts, we have negotiated the placement of our future 8th grade educator in a Teacher Assistant position in the Antigua International School. She will be accompanying two veteran Spanish teachers. For math, a different organizational partnership with Teachers2Teachers is proving to be very functional to keep educators at the right pace.
- *Attract, select, and bring on board high-aptitude girls from motivated families.*
 - Students of the school are, on average, 14 years old. Based on the baseline demographic data, Girl Pioneers started school on average at age 6.5, which explains the slightly older age relative to their current grade. The average household has seven members, and the mothers of Girl Pioneers were, on average, 19 years old when they started their families.
 - In January, Starfish commissioned a baseline health survey of all 48 Girl Pioneers in the 7th grade. The purpose was to get a general idea of what health issues may impact student achievement and what areas the school should prioritize. A volunteer infectious disease physician conducted the study. Some of the more immediate lessons and actions based on this study are:
 - Well over half of the students presented significant oral hygiene problems. Many did not own toothbrushes. We have integrated tooth brushing as a part of the school routine and are negotiating with a dental school to address issues of cavities.
 - 15% of students required glasses. All have since been issued the appropriate eyewear.
 - Roughly half tested positive for parasites. All students have taken anti-parasite medication. Parasite prevention is part of Starfish's focus on hygiene (covered in mentorship sessions that occur twice a week).
 - Nutrition is a priority. Food is not typically served in a normal Guatemalan school (since the school day is significantly shorter). Starfish is serving both breakfast and lunch to students. Two graduates of the Starfish mentorship program operate the kitchen. The physician who conducted the study and a trained nutritionist

visited with the kitchen staff and conducted home visits to assess the nutritional situation. They are helping craft a school menu that is cost effective but incorporates a balanced diet.

9. Project Timeline

There are no project timeline updates that have significantly affected the implementation of the school and this grant. Worth noting is the ongoing school construction project, that we expect to have completed in approximately 18 months.

10. Message for Membership and Donors

Unlocking her infinite impact: An interview with Linda (age 13), a student at the Starfish Impact School

Why did you decide to enroll in the Starfish Impact School?

First, I wanted to spend time with more girls my age because in my old school, I didn't talk much with other girls. I was also interested because here they are helping women and giving more value and importance to women, which other schools don't do. I want to keep studying and achieve my dreams. I don't have a specific dream right now, I just want to keep learning and growing.

How is this school different?

Education is the most important thing at the Starfish Impact School. At my old school, they just told us to copy from the book and they didn't really teach us; we just copied. Here, they give an explanation of everything and make sure you understand. I also like CI because here we can share our feelings and thoughts. We use our emotional thermometer to check in with how we are doing. CI supports women with their studies. There are many women that aren't studying, but CI helps them so they can achieve their dreams.

What is your favorite class?

My favorite class? It's hard to pick just one! I guess I would say it is math or social studies. There are similarities between the two because in geography, you also study numbers when you're looking at population and other things. Math is easy for me and I like it because I understand it. I didn't used to like math in my old school because it was confusing and I didn't understand it because it wasn't explained to me well. That's why I thought I wasn't good at it and that I was better at language arts. But now Señora Celestina explains everything and I realized that I actually am very good at math. I even tutor my siblings and cousins and help them with their homework.

How have you changed since last July when you were in "Little Stars School" (Starfish's six month induction program for incoming 7th graders)?

When I started with Escuela Estrellitas, I didn't speak very much with my classmates and I was more closed off, but now I have confidence and trust. I learned more about

the competencies and I practice them often. Before I didn't practice them so much because I wasn't sure if I was doing it right. Now I turn in all my homework on time. I help my cousin with her math homework. Before I didn't know how to solve word problems either, but I learned it here and so I help her. She tells me, "Wow, you really are learning so much at your new school!" She recently got a 100 on her math exam. I'm also teaching my little brother about chiaroscuro and helping him learn about shading and art.

11. Expenses Incurred During Reporting Period

| Line Item | Cost per Unit | Units | Total | DFW 2017 investment | Expense incurred as of May 2017 |
|--|---------------|-------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Salary (75%)- Current Country Director (emerging Starfish Impact School Leader) | \$21,000 | 1 | \$21,000 | \$2,500 | \$1,250 |
| Salary (100%)- Current Coordinator of Innovation and Partnership (emerging Director of Instruction and Growth) | \$28,000 | 1 | \$28,000 | \$5,000 | \$2,500 |
| Starfish Impact School educator salaries | \$4,750 | 8 | \$36,000 | \$5,000 | \$2,500 |
| Salary (25%) Mentor training and implementation of innovations to improve academic achievement for 72 Girl Pioneers and families in Starfish wrap-around program | \$1,450 | 5 | \$7,250 | \$4,000 | \$2,000 |
| Salary (50%) of Coordinator of Innovation and staff wellness | \$3,650 | 1 | \$3,650 | \$1,000 | \$500 |
| Salary (50%) In-Country project administration | \$3,500 | 1 | \$3,500 | \$500 | \$250 |
| School recruiter travel expenses to/from rural villages | \$1,000 | 1 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,000 ¹ |
| Teaching supplies per student | \$100 | 40 | \$4,000 | \$1,000 | \$500 |
| | | | TOTAL | \$20,000 | \$10,500 |

¹ While the rest of the costs have accrued expenses at approximately 50% of the full investment due to the halfway point in the school year, the school recruiter travel cost has been spent in full as the initial phase of the recruitment process has just come to a close.