



# impact report

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**PARTNERSHIPS FOR  
SELF-RELIANCE**  
**LIVE. LEARN. THRIVE!**





Guatemala's crippling civil war officially ended in 1996. In 2000, the country dared to adopt the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. These include specific actions to eradicate extreme poverty, ensure primary education, promote gender equality, empower women, ensure a healthy environment, improve health care and partner to improve access to resources such as technology. The road has not been easy, but gains have been made:

- ◆ People living in extreme poverty has declined 16%.
- ◆ Enrollment in primary education has increased 14%.
- ◆ The spread of infectious diseases has slowed. As one example, tuberculosis-related deaths are down 84%.

In its recent *Poverty in Guatemala*, the World Bank reported that “due to the limited size and effectiveness of the state, the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is critical.” With our enduring presence since 1992, Xela AID is proud as an NGO to have played a key role in these and other gains in the San Martín Sacatepequez region, the seat of Mám-speaking Mayan culture.

For more than two decades, Xela AID has worked in the region's poorest communities. The hardships faced by those we serve are far-reaching, so we fight to beat poverty on many fronts you'll read about herein. Our staff in-country are Guatemalan, and we work with local partners because we know that local solutions are lasting solutions.

This document is testament to our many successes together. You've helped Xela AID create a better world for the most vulnerable among us — people who've lacked education, gone hungry and endured chronic illnesses. For your support, we thank you.

Yet, there is still so much to be done. Access to clean water, health care and education are still the exception rather than the rule in rural Guatemala where 73% of all people live below the national poverty line, and 14% — 4,000 people in the region Xela AID serves — still live on less than \$1.25 a day. Women still earn less than half what men do for equal work, and only 4% of those in leadership roles are women. Children who speak only Mám when they enter grade school are still three times as likely as their Spanish-speaking counterparts to drop out of school by the sixth grade.

We believe that everyone deserves a chance to thrive, and we know you do, too. You help Xela AID respond to this tremendous need and to make real, lasting change. You hold in your hands the report card on how we're doing together. It's something to be proud of.



  
SUSAN RIKALO  
*Chair of the Board*



  
LESLIE BAER DINKEL  
*Executive Director*

# Our Strategies for Lasting Change



## EDUCATING CHILDREN, TRAINING LEADERS

In rural Guatemala, the average child attends school just four years, and only three in 10 children graduate from 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Girls represent just 35% of all pupils. Xela AID far outperforms the norm. Our average student studies 12 years, surpasses 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and a solid 54% of students in our programs K-college are girls and women. And where once not a single native Mám speaker had graduated from high school, Xela AID has graduated 300 — and 15 more from college, so far.



## EMPOWERING WOMEN, COMBATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Because we know that investments in women are especially effective at beating poverty, we focus on women. We empower adult women by teaching them to read and write and providing training to improve their marketable skills. We provide one-on-one therapy and support groups to one day end the crippling cycle of domestic violence — the second most prevalent cause of death in rural Guatemala.



## CREATING JOBS, FUELING SMALL BUSINESSES

Employment, alongside education, is a second essential ingredient to break the chains of poverty. But paying jobs are scarce in the highlands poverty belt, where the lion's share of residents are subsistence farmers or find day work planting and harvesting. We hire indigenous youth graduates from our education programs, provide leadership and entrepreneurship training, support a weaving cooperative, and have provided microloans for successful small-business startups.



## PREVENTING DISEASE, PROMOTING WELLNESS

Children who are sick cannot learn. Nor can parents who are ill work to provide for their families. This makes health an essential ingredient for self-reliance. In rural Guatemala, where respiratory infections are the leading cause of death, and the risk from other infectious diseases is still ranked high, health services provided by Xela AID are critical. Our clinic remains the only medical facility within a 45-minute drive that is stocked with life-saving medicines, and the only choice for the poor.



## RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

Not every situation can be planned for. Xela AID continues its emergency relief efforts fostering abandoned children, assisting battered women with therapy and legal assistance, providing food and shelter to those in extreme poverty, and providing life-saving clean water, warm blankets and shelter in the wake of hurricanes, earthquakes and floods.



*Enthusiastic students learn in Xela AID-supported classroom*

# Xela AID's Impact and A Sampling of Success Stories - 1



Teacher-in-training Alicia

## EDUCATED

Alicia dreamed of being a teacher, but she knew her parents could not support her studies. However, she was determined, and she studied hard. At age 17, she presented her excellent grades to Xela AID staff, who hired her to help launch an adult literacy program. Alicia's salary covered expenses at home and at school, and her parents agreed to let her continue studying. When a young woman in Xela AID's Leadership Training program graduated from college, Alicia was inspired. Six years later, her dream came true. She earned a teaching credential and is now studying to become a teacher at Xela AID's future Montessori preschool.



### Educational Impact by the Numbers

- ♦ Total learning hours for individuals in six educational programs: **286,860**
- ♦ Nutritious meals served to preschoolers: **25,440**
- ♦ Number of students in Xela AID's Work Study Scholarship program: **105**



Proud reader Catarina and daughter Sylvia

## EMPOWERED

Catarina never went to school. As a child, she spent long days in the fields with her parents planting and harvesting potatoes. But she wanted more. When Xela AID began a literacy program in her village, Catarina was one of the first to sign up. Today, she reads and writes at fifth-grade level. Through the program, she has also learned to sew, and she gives back by tutoring adult women in her neighborhood. Catarina still farms potatoes, and is saving money to make sure her daughter, Sylvia, can go to high school. "I am so grateful that I am now able to read to my children," Catarina says. "And I am proud that my two older children are top students."



### Women's Empowerment by the Numbers

- ♦ Women and girls empowered through education, health, economic development and emergency relief programs: **3,981**
- ♦ Percentage of women enrolled in all educational programs: **54**
- ♦ Overall percentage of services provided to women: **76**



Nurse Estrella (left) and colleague

## EMPLOYED

Estrella dreamed of becoming a nurse. When she was 12, a Xela AID scholarship made it possible for her to attend school. Life was especially tough for her mother, who was raising three children alone. So when Estrella turned 16, her mother asked her to quit school and go to work. "I had to abandon my dream," Estrella recalls through tears. When times improved, and with Xela AID's help, she returned to school and became first in her family to graduate high school. And she was among the village's very first young women to graduate from college. Estrella is living her dream as a nurse. She says, "I can't wait to go to work each day!"



### Economic Development by the Numbers

- ♦ Individuals receiving income through five small businesses: **42**
- ♦ Leadership Program individual learning hours to develop business skills: **10,080**

# Xela AID's Impact and A Sampling of Success Stories - 2



Anna (left) post-surgery with sister Jennifer

## CURED

Little Anna was often short of breath. Her mother, Juana, brought Anna to Xela AID's Clinic for an early-detection health screening. The screening confirmed Anna had a heart condition that required surgery — soon. Public hospitals had months-long waiting lists, and Juana could not afford her daughter's life-saving surgery at a private hospital. Xela AID doctors in the U.S. and Guatemala intervened at a public hospital to get Anna the surgery she needed in weeks, rather than months, and it was an overwhelming success. Today, Anna enjoys running and playing with her sister, Jennifer. Her grateful mother says, "Anna is alive because of Xela AID."



### Health and Clean Environment by the Numbers

- ◆ Health care by individual appointments: **5,480**
- ◆ In-home water filters delivered: **46** Individuals served: **276**
- ◆ Families benefiting from family planning services: **48**
- ◆ In 2015, we launched the Clean-Burning Stove Project.



Respected community leader Luciana

## RESCUED

Born out of wedlock, Luciana grew up feeling completely unwanted. As a teenager, she escaped a loveless home and became a cook, but her employers betrayed her. They took her far from her village, took away her shoes, and locked her up at night. "I was truly a slave," she recalls. She eventually escaped, but a decade later found herself in a violent marriage. Beaten, bruised and alone, she lost hope and considered suicide. Then she received therapy and learned business skills through Xela AID programs. Eventually, she became president of Xela AID's weaving cooperative, established herself as a community leader and, to give back, she is a foster mom. Smiling broadly, she says, "Xela AID changed my life."



### Emergency Relief by the Numbers

- ◆ Number of children in foster care: **4**
- ◆ Mental health care by individual therapy hours: **3,744**



Xela AID Staff Members Arlene and Alicia

## INSPIRED

After graduating from college, Arlene's next career move evaded her. "Something was missing in my life," the 22-year-old recalls. When an opportunity to study abroad presented itself, she jumped at the chance. In the village of San Martín, where Xela AID is based, Arlene taught adult women the alphabet, how to write their names and more. These activities gave her a sense of purpose and the desire to continue to serve. "Xela AID staff bring resources, hope, and they've changed thousands of lives," she says. Arlene is now a Xela AID staff member. "Serving others less fortunate gives me an indescribable joy, and it will remain a part of my life."



### Volunteerism by the Numbers

- ◆ Number of volunteers engaged in life-changing service experience: **89**
- ◆ In-country volunteer service hours: **13,072**
- ◆ In 2015, we added the Betty Rikalo Welcome Center to enhance the volunteer experience.



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## BE THE CHANGE!

- ♦ **Volunteer** on a service project.
- ♦ **Sponsor** a child to go to school.
- ♦ **Donate** to provide tools to thrive.  
Make your tax-deductible donation online at [xelaaid.org](http://xelaaid.org).
- ♦ **Host** a Xela AID informational session for family and friends.
- ♦ **Contact** us to learn more:  
Write [info@xelaaid.org](mailto:info@xelaaid.org) or call (714) 232-8669



*Villagers line up to receive Xela AID services.*

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Guatemalan Ministry of Education  
Guatemalan Ministry of Health  
Habitat for Humanity (low-cost housing)  
INTECAP (skills training)  
Peace Corps (special projects)  
Red Cross (PAP and HIV testing)  
Rotary International (clean water and sanitation)  
SOSEP (preschool project)  
Thrive (skills training)  
VOSH (optometry services)

### ON THE COVER

These children attend Xela AID's San Martín Tots preschool — five of 52 lucky children who receive daily instruction and two nutritious, hot meals each day.

The lion's share of children in Xela AID programs graduate from high school, far surpassing norms in rural Guatemala, where only 30 percent of all children make it through the sixth grade, and indigenous children fare worse at only one in 10.

Zoned for just 30 students, Xela AID's current preschool will be replaced by a new Montessori Preschool for 90 children. Become a San Martín Tots Angel by making a gift to help build the new preschool. To find out how, see *Be the Change*, above.

Xela AID is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, EIN #45-3658025. All or part of your contributions may be tax deductible.