

# Cooperative for Education (CoEd)



Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Guatemala through Education

## 2022 Annual Report

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Rise student Rosa Virginia (R) and her mother Leoncia (L) welcome Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Gaby Moreno (L center), and Rotary International's first female president Jennifer Jones (R center) to help celebrate 25 years of Cooperative for Education (CoEd)'s partnership with Rotary, known as the Guatemala Literacy Project. *Chimaltenango, February 2023.*

Ever since March 2020, when the upheaval of a global pandemic changed the face of education in our world forever, we've headed into each day with uncertainty. Every time schools opened again, we asked ourselves, is today the day the world finally goes back to normal? In 2022, it certainly started to look that way—at least in the U.S. It took a little longer for widespread reopening to take place in Guatemala. The school year started optimistically in February 2022, with plans for split-schedule learning to allow for social distancing. Teachers pulled double (or even quadruple!) duty, conducting the same lessons over and over for multiple smaller classes. We carefully observed COVID precautions when delivering **CoEd textbooks to four new schools (serving almost 400 students)** and setting up **one new Computer Center (serving 150 students)** in April.

In-person learning remained unpredictable, as the country continued to suffer waves of COVID into July. But finally in the latter half of the year, many schools re-opened once again—this time for good. Group activities were able to resume, and we carried out a normal year of in-person training—albeit on a packed schedule. It was all hands on deck as our

program teams carried out a week of intensive **Spark Reading Program training for 273 teachers at 36 schools, benefiting more than 6,700 students!** Staff from our other programs all pitched in to help deliver materials in preparation for this herculean effort! Meanwhile, the Rise team conducted workshops for **820 Rise students across 22 communities** throughout 2022.

Just think: Six years ago, our four program teams were not even housed in the same facility. This unprecedented opportunity for cross-program collaboration is the fruit borne of a few improvements over the years: The Education Center in San Lucas that we moved into in 2017 allows all of our programs to be housed under the same roof. Longtime staff member Augusto Bal has served as Subdirector of Programs since 2018 to oversee all four programs and foster this kind of collaboration—not only between programs, but with other actors such as the Ministry of Education and research institutions. And so, even before the pandemic, we were already building to new heights, thanks to YOUR support over the years. And now—**it's time to CELEBRATE!**





Students at the CoEd Computer Center at Chimazat excitedly welcome the first CoEd volunteers to visit their school since before the pandemic began! In this case, they're celebrating the purchase of brand-new equipment with money saved through the school's revolving fund. *Chimaltenango, July 2022.*

## The GLP's Silver Celebration

Now that COVID levels are finally receding, CoEd tours are back—and better than ever! The biggest tour season in CoEd history kicked off this January, with over 200 visitors expected to our projects throughout 2023. Our February tours were joined by some very special guests—Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Gaby Moreno and 2022-23 Rotary International President Jennifer Jones! Gaby and Jennifer joined the tour to help celebrate the 25-year anniversary of the Guatemala Literacy Project (GLP)—CoEd's partnership with Rotary clubs around the world to improve education for underserved students in Guatemala. 25 years ago, two out of three rural Guatemalans could not read or write. Today, it's just one out of every three. By working together, our *collective* power can truly change the world. A video of Gaby and Jennifer's visit helped to spread the word about the GLP's work to an international audience of 20,000 Rotarians at the 2023 Rotary International Convention in Melbourne, Australia, while Gaby tells the story of the visit in an interview published in the June 2023 *Rotary* magazine.

## Welcoming New Faces

If you joined us for one of the tours this February, you might have noticed some new faces among our Guatemala staff. We're proud to welcome Joanne Wessels as our new General Director of Guatemala Operations. (We also bid a fond farewell to former General Director Rony Mejía, who is now using his skills and experience to benefit Guatemala at a whole new level through a position with USAID!) Joanne brings 16 years of experience in development as a program director, interim executive director, and strategy consultant, and we're excited to have her on the team! Please see the attached personal introduction letter from Joanne.

Finally, we have an exciting personnel update to share on the U.S. side: We're pleased to announce that Abby Gaide is our new Director of Development! For the past five years, Abby has worked with our Rise Youth Development Program, guiding its expansion to reach—you guessed it—*yet another* milestone worth celebrating in the past year!

## Celebrating 1,000 Girls Served by Rise

We're incredibly proud that the Guatemala Literacy Project is 2022-23 RI President Jennifer's spotlight project for Basic Education and Literacy as part of her worldwide Imagine Impact Tour—especially since it gives us the opportunity to put another critically-needed project in the spotlight as well. Way back in 2016, we launched a major expansion of our Rise Youth Development Program with a focus on expanding access to education for girls. In Guatemala, girls are typically excluded from education, with 1.5 boys in school for every girl in some communities where we work. Under the name "Thousand Girls Initiative," our massive upscaling of the Rise Program aimed to even the playing field by selecting mainly girls (about 80%) to receive scholarships, support services, and leadership development through Rise, ensuring that they graduate with the skills to lead Guatemala to a brighter future.

Educating girls has been called "the best investment in the developing world" and has been shown to improve outcomes on a wide range of poverty indicators—it can even transform entire communities! Therefore, our expansion of Rise aligns strongly with TWO Sustainable Development Goals: Quality Education and Gender Equality. It also aligns with international development



Future Rise scholars? Girls benefiting from the Spark Reading Program in Chajalajjá show Executive Director Joe Berninger some of their favorite new books. *Chimaltenango, Feb. 2023.*

priorities such as Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy—shoutout to our friends north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, who continue to sponsor Rise Scholars through Canadian Friends of Cooperative for Education. In fact, thanks to partnership with Rotary, Canadian Friends of Cooperative for Education, and numerous foundation, corporate, church, and individual supporters like YOU, we are proud to announce that **we reached the milestone of 1,000 girls served through Rise in 2022!**

## Continuing the Charge

Even as we celebrate the milestones reached in the past year, we know that our work is far from over. The pandemic has left a lingering effect on education—Guatemalan newspaper *Prensa Libre* reports that more than 100,000 children have dropped out of school in Guatemala in recent years, the majority at the gap between primary and middle school (where our Rise Program's intervention focuses most). Our local staff's own experience living and working in the regions we serve shows that the pandemic has doubled the number of families in need of scholarships to send their children to school. That's why we're not resting on our laurels. **Continued expansion of the Rise Program is the BEST way to help Guatemala respond to the lingering challenges of COVID-19, and we've already set our sights on the next milestone: 1,500 students by 2028.** Rise gets students back into their next level of education and sees them all the way to high-school graduation—the milestone USAID reports is necessary for a Guatemalan youth to break the cycle of poverty.

Thanks to the innovations made during the pandemic, we're continuing to deliver the same high-quality programs as always—with a twist. Computer students now complete independent learning through the *Aprende TACs* virtual learning platform, and textbook teachers have access to more virtual materials than ever before thanks to



CoEd's Textbook Program remains a tried-and-true way to improve educational quality, and will continue to expand steadily each year. *Alta Verapaz, March 2022.*

partnership with textbook publisher Santillana. Rise students are able to access tele-counseling from licensed psychologists through partnership with TuConsejería, who is also contributing to the youth development curriculum for Rise workshops. The Student Relief Fund continues to provide as-needed emergency support to help families overcome unforeseen circumstances such as food scarcity or natural disasters. *Tarjetones* take-home reading cards remain an important tool in the Spark Reading Program team's toolkit for putting reading materials into Guatemalan homes to ensure that children can read every day—even if in-person learning is suspended.

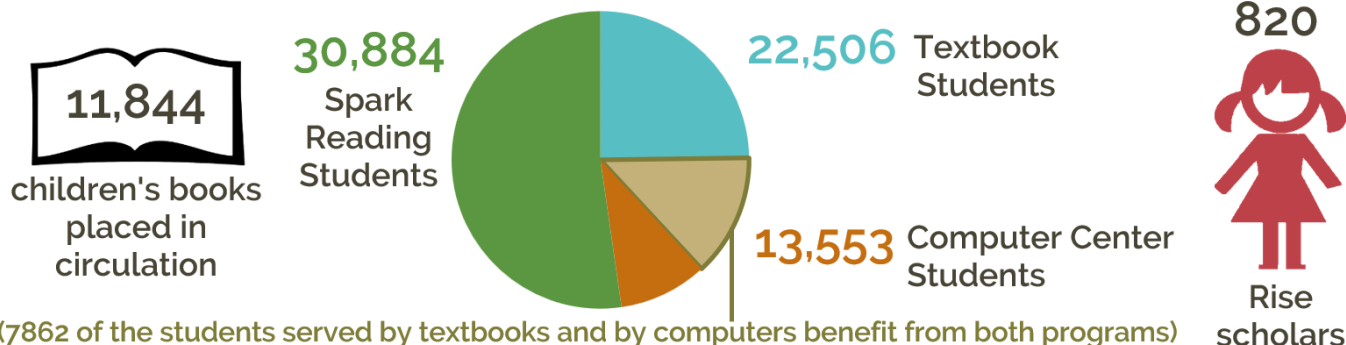
**THANK YOU for remaining our steadfast supporters throughout these years of transitions and turmoil.** Despite all that's happened, the children of Guatemala know they can count on you to step up and continue transforming lives, no matter what comes next.

Yours in service,

Joe Berninger  
Executive Director

Joanne Wessels  
Guatemala General Director

## How Your Support Made a Difference in 2022





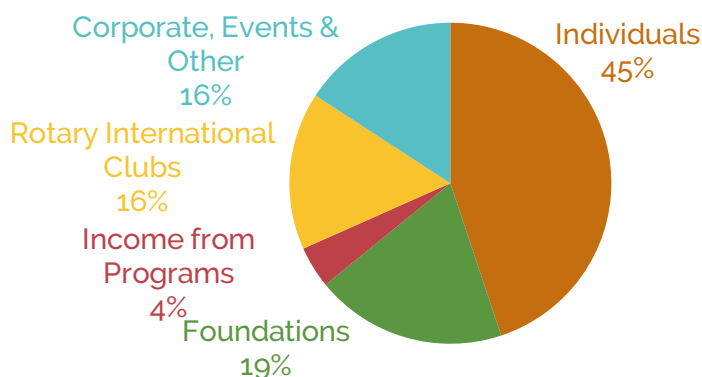
## Financial Highlights

(January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022)

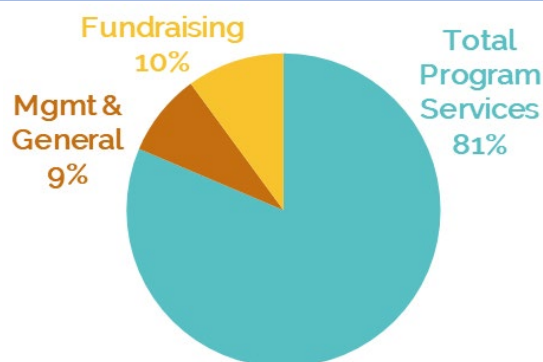
| ANNUAL REVENUE 2022                | Jan. – Dec.<br>2021 | Jan. – Dec.<br>2022 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Individuals                        | \$1,304,454         | \$1,547,149         |
| Foundations                        | \$715,043           | \$662,657           |
| Income from Programs               | \$26,525            | \$145,113           |
| Rotary International Clubs         | \$614,259           | \$547,225           |
| Corporate, Events & Other          | \$505,991           | \$548,731           |
| <b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>               | <b>\$3,166,272</b>  | <b>\$3,450,875</b>  |
| ANNUAL EXPENSES 2022               |                     |                     |
| Program Services                   |                     |                     |
| Textbook Cooperatives              | \$286,944           | \$337,343           |
| Computer Centers                   | \$267,076           | \$336,324           |
| Spark Reading Program              | \$445,042           | \$581,673           |
| Rise Youth Development Program     | \$764,667           | \$839,223           |
| Direct Education (Bridges Program) | \$392,431           | \$566,475           |
| <b>Total Program Services</b>      | <b>\$2,156,160</b>  | <b>\$2,661,038</b>  |
| Mgmt & General                     | \$214,799           | \$279,236           |
| Fundraising                        | \$278,714           | \$328,690           |
| <b>Total Support Services</b>      | <b>\$493,513</b>    | <b>\$607,926</b>    |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>              | <b>\$2,649,673</b>  | <b>\$3,268,964</b>  |
| Contribution to Net Income*        | \$516,599           | \$181,911           |
| Total End-of-Year Net Assets       | \$3,902,835         | \$4,084,746         |

\* The change in net assets across the last two years reflects the challenges of balancing income and expense while the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect program activities unpredictably. Program expenses continued to be lower than projected as many activities happened virtually at reduced cost. By the second half of 2022, program activities (including tours) finally began to return to normal. Pandemic-related delays continued to affect 2022 financials, with some corresponding funds held for future years to complete these services as originally planned when circumstances return to normal (for example, measurable results testing of Spark Program students, which is just now beginning to resume in 2023).

### Annual Revenue 2022



### Annual Expenses 2022





# Board Service\*

\*as of 12/31/22



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## Asociación COED

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April 3, 2023

Dear CoEd Supporters,

Over the past few months, I have regularly thought back to that first time I set foot on “CoEd soil.” It was pouring rain and Waze had sent me to the wrong location, so I arrived slightly late and soaking wet for my interview. But, once inside the Educational Center in San Lucas, I was met with an abundance of positive energy and before I knew it, we were wrapping up a two-hour, dynamic and inspiring conversation about education in Guatemala. I clearly remember driving back home that day with a smile on my face!

Fast forward six months and my “first -date- like” excitement has given way to a deep enthusiasm. When I started, in November 2022, CoEd was celebrating 25 years of breaking the cycle of poverty in Guatemala through education. And, as I did more research, I learned just how much there is to celebrate and be thankful for.

First, we have the privilege of working with a highly committed, skilled, and professional team. *Buena gente*. Most of our dedicated staff has worked for CoEd for many, many years. Several of those who left regretted their decision and returned. Why? Because of our consistently positive, collaborative, and respectful work environment.

On more than one early -morning drive to work, reflecting on the passionate dedication of my colleagues has taken me back to when I first came to Guatemala, almost 17 years ago. It was 2006 and the beginning of a new chapter, away from The Netherlands, following my dreams and ideals. In the years that followed, I first volunteered and then worked for several great health and humanitarian nonprofits, where I gained experience in all “the good, the bad and the ugly” of working in development. Working for CoEd makes it easy to focus on “the good.” To feel that passion again and dream big about how we might inspire learning and transform education in the years to come.

It is also easy because there is so much alignment between CoEd's vision and my own personal motivation and what I truly wish for Guatemala, the country that I have come to call home: as a mother of 7-year-old twins (born and being raised in Guatemala), I can say that quality education for all —and particularly girls' education and inclusive education— are causes close to my heart. It has gotten to the point that the only time when I don't think about education, is when I am asleep!

Furthermore, CoEd has impacted the educational outcomes of **more than 278,000 students** through four tried-and-true programs: Spark Reading, Textbooks, Computer Centers, and Rise Youth Development. Thanks to a clear focus (quality education), strategic area of intervention (developing key competencies) and a model that has sustainability at the front end of what we do, CoEd is making **360 existing schools** better, in respectful partnership with the educational community of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and graduates. This is a huge accomplishment, especially considering these under-resourced schools are located all over Guatemala (**12 departments**). Amazing!

Finally, CoEd has built meaningful relationships that have led to life-changing experiences and opportunities for students and supporters alike. How many of those who came to serve returned home feeling enriched by new insights that subsequently positively impacted their lives? During my relatively short time at CoEd, I have been fortunate to meet and get to know many of our most dedicated supporters and friends. Your action through service is inspiring!

Likewise, we have witnessed countless examples of what can happen when you connect young Guatemalans to opportunity. I recall meeting this beautiful 15-year-old girl from rural La Colina who dreams of becoming a criminologist. And Sheila's sponsored student, who is pursuing a career in sustainable architecture. And then there is Helen's sponsored student, who feels so motivated by her sponsor's support and compassion that she now wants to give back and sponsor others herself. Imagine how many more girls and boys can unlock their potential through education!

With so much to celebrate, it may be tempting to get all *acomodado*. But what really excites me about CoEd is the commitment to not shy away from difficult questions. We are continuously asking ourselves: "What can we do differently? What can we do better?"

Perhaps this process of reflection, learning, and re-imagining is now more important than ever. With the pandemic, the world has faced one of the most dangerous challenges in our lifetime. A human crisis with severe health and socio-economic consequences. With resilience and agility, creativity and innovation, CoEd was able to continue serving in this time of great need, turning challenge into opportunity.

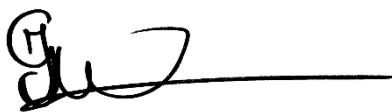
Although 2023 has started with renewed optimism, globally and at CoEd, Guatemala's reality of poverty and low human development remains. Educational gaps are widening, and barriers and deficiencies have worsened. Society continues to be characterised by deep inequality and exclusion. With so many exciting things happening in education worldwide, there is a big risk that rural Guatemalan girls and boys, who don't have access to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competencies, will only fall further behind.

And that is exactly where CoEd can make a huge difference. With our track record, educational expertise, solid foundation, geographical reach and approach to partnership and collaboration, we are uniquely set up to be at the forefront of educational development and innovation in Guatemala and —who knows— maybe even leading the way for other nonprofits working throughout Latin America.

To me, supporting CoEd in further fulfilling its mission, by building upon what we do well while at the same time pioneering new dreams and ambitions, is a dream come true.

I cannot wait to see what the next 25 years have in store for CoEd!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Joanne Wessels', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joanne Wessels  
General Director, CoEd Guatemala