

Cooperative for Education (CoEd)



Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Guatemala through Education

2023 Annual Report

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More than 170 volunteers traveled to Guatemala to visit and support Cooperative for Education (CoEd) projects in 2023—the most ever in a single year, thanks to our new partnerships! *Chimaltenango, February 2023.*

Thankfully, in 2023, we finally began to put the pandemic behind us. Schools reopened as usual in February, and for the first time since 2020, students returned to relatively normal in-person learning for most of the year. From the U.S. to Guatemala, we were all looking forward to finally getting back on track. It didn't take long to realize that we would soon be heading into uncharted territory!

All Aboard!

The year kicked off with the **25th-anniversary celebration of the Guatemala Literacy Project (GLP)**—a network of Rotarians and CoEd who work together to improve literacy in Guatemala. In last year's annual report, you read all about how we welcomed Rotary International's first female president, Jennifer Jones, and special guest, Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Gaby Moreno to Guatemala to visit our programs in February. However, Gaby and Jennifer weren't the only exciting new friends we welcomed on board this year!

Gaby and Jennifer brought with them filmmaker Zara Janjua to record a documentary, *The Gift of Reading*, that will be premiering soon at indie film festivals around the country! The trailer first aired before an audience of 16,000 Rotarians at the June 2023 Rotary International Convention in Melbourne, Australia. See it for yourself at <https://www.zarajanjua.com/filmmaker/>

We also had the honor of hosting two special groups in Guatemala to visit our programs and volunteer alongside the children and families we serve. A large local church and an international corporation both partnered with us to deepen their impact in the world while educating a whole new audience about Guatemala's culture and development challenges!

Visitors rolled up their sleeves and got down to work: from helping package Spark Reading books for schools to following the instructions of our Rise scholars as they directed their local service project (renovating the home of a family in need). In all, 173 volunteers traveled to Guatemala with CoEd in 2023 to help inaugurate and support our four main programs. Together, we:

- Delivered first-ever **textbooks** to **390 students** at **3 new schools**.
- Established **2 new Computer Centers**, bringing 21st-century technological skills to **400 NEW youth**.
- **Trained 243 primary-school teachers** in best practices for early literacy education through the **Spark Reading Program**, transforming **5,711 students** into lifelong readers and learners.
- Provided scholarships, social support, and youth development to **931 students** in **22 communities** through the **Rise Program**.



CoEd directors Joe Berninger (2nd from left) and Joanne Wessels (2nd from right) join Rotarians and community members to cut the ribbon at a new CoEd Computer Center. *Totonicapán, Feb. 2023.*

beneficiary feedback has been important for all of our programs. For example, many of our Computer Center schools were having difficulty affording the revolving fund fees, with many even considering leaving the program. So our Guatemala staff visited each of the computer schools to hear out their concerns, and ultimately adjusted the structure of the revolving fund to be more affordable. We're now launching into a similar process for Rise, working with an expert in human-centered design to complete a comprehensive impact study. Our staff will accompany and assist throughout the process, which includes surveys, focus groups, and a literature review. The goal is to provide the opportunity for the families we serve to identify in their own words what success looks like to them, what aspects of the program's current design best help them to achieve it, and areas for further improvement.

A Mission of Education

Did you know that our mission of education extends *beyond* the children and teachers we serve in Guatemala? Trips like those described above are a key part of our fifth program: Bridges. Bridges works with students and groups across the U.S. and Canada each year, creating awareness that drives people around the world to action through service. Through tours, educational presentations, and partnerships with schools and other nonprofits, we increase international understanding of Guatemala's rich culture and its development challenges. Ultimately, this program enables individuals in the U.S. and Canada to discover how their gifts and talents can best be called forth to help others.

Making Sure We're On the Right Track

During the pandemic, each of our programs incorporated improvements that have become a permanent part of our services—from emergency financial support and telecounseling for Rise students to take-home reading materials for Spark students, to name a few. These aspects continue to be an important part of our everyday work, because the truth is: things aren't back to normal. **Nearly three years of interrupted learning has had a dramatic effect on the educational landscape.** Moreover, the lingering health and economic challenges of the pandemic continue to impact the families we serve every day.

In the post-pandemic context, **re-evaluating and listening to**

Full Speed Ahead

Our commitment to reassessing community needs in the wake of the pandemic is leading the way in helping Guatemala recover from COVID-19's lingering challenges. Even Ministry of Education supervisors took great interest in test results for students in the Spark Reading Program in 2023. For the first year since the pandemic, we were able to resume pre- and post-testing of Spark students using the *Medición Independiente de Aprendizaje* (MIA) graded reading tools, which evaluate individual student progress so teachers can help them improve, while also providing feedback about program design.

MIA results painted a stark picture of the need to recuperate foundational literacy skills after almost three years of interrupted learning. Students are lagging behind at the earliest levels, with two-thirds of third-graders still unable to answer a simple comprehension question. The good news is that the Spark Program is well-positioned to help address these challenges. In our best-performing Spark schools, **after just five months of using Spark methods, five times as many students had gained *all* of the required basic literacy skills** (fluency, comprehension, etc.)

This year, we're targeting Spark's intervention even further with a Guide



During CoEd's service trips, volunteers spend time reading with Spark students, seeing firsthand how the program has impacted their learning. *Sacatepéquez, February 2023.*

to Learning at the Right Level (*GANA*), designed by Spark's team of education experts. *GANA* provides a series of step-by-step instructions for teachers to follow in their classrooms to get kids reading in 50 days or less! Take home workbooks for students (*cuadernillos*) complement the process, which is also tied to regular MIA evaluations so progress can be continually monitored.

Along for the Ride

The foundational learning recovery provided by the Spark Reading Program is helping to address post-pandemic challenges at the earliest levels of education. But what about those kids who can't even afford to continue in school? The pandemic has doubled the number of families in need of financial support to keep their kids in school. Every time CoEd staff come to town, eager sixth-graders show up brandishing their outstanding report cards, hoping to qualify for a Rise scholarship to go on to middle school. Could you say no to all those hopeful faces?

We can't either.

That's why we're expanding the Rise Program dramatically. Thanks in part to an unprecedented end-of-year gift from a partner foundation designated for Rise expansion, we've already grown the program's scale to over 1,050 students—a 13% increase over last year at this time. We also began providing Rise scholarships in two NEW communities, San Martín Jilotepeque and Balanyá. The need is so great in these communities, that up to 500 Rise students could eventually benefit in those towns alone. Finally, we're partnering with local Guatemalan companies and Rotarians to host Career Days for Rise students. First piloted in August 2023, these events help graduating middle schoolers choose a focus area to study in high school and help graduating high schoolers prepare for job interviews and the workforce.



Guatemalan Rotarians share their professional expertise and career advice with Rise students during the program's new Career Days. *Chimaltenango, August 2023.*

Lighting the Path

The pandemic has left us in uncharted territory. But CoEd programs are up to the challenge of leading the way forward—from the Spark Program's new initiatives for foundational learning recovery at the earliest levels, all the way to the Rise Program, which is getting kids back into school and helping them graduate with the skills to obtain professional jobs. There's still a long road ahead, but thanks to the resilience and determination of the students and teachers we serve—and steadfast supporters like YOU who believe in their potential—vulnerable communities in Guatemala have a solid path forward. They have a chance to overcome the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. THANK YOU for serving as a guiding light on this journey—a beacon of hope for a brighter Guatemala.

Yours in service,

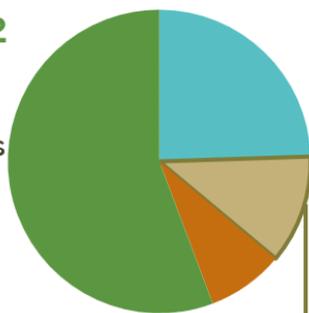

 Joe Berninger
 Executive Director


 Joanne Wessels
 Guatemala General Director

How Your Support Made a Difference in 2023


 9,882
 children's books
 placed in circulation

33,812
 Spark
 Reading
 Students



21,870
 Textbook
 Students

11,996
 Computer
 Center
 Students

931

 Rise
 scholars

(7019 of the students served by textbooks and by computers benefit from both programs)



Financial Highlights

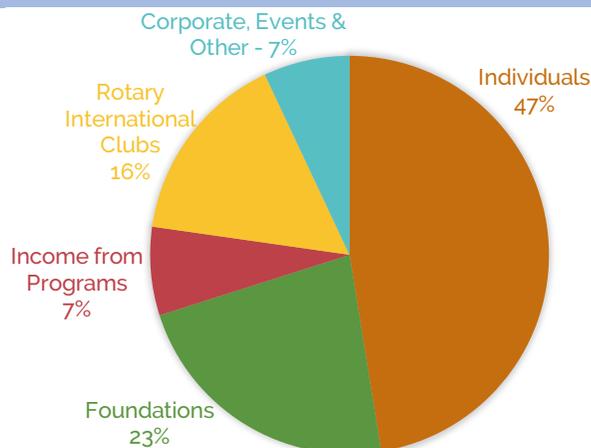
(January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023)

ANNUAL REVENUE 2023	Jan. – Dec. 2022*	Jan. – Dec. 2023
Individuals	\$1,547,149	\$1,997,880
Foundations	\$662,657	\$952,094
Income from Programs	\$145,113	\$302,195
Rotary International Clubs	\$547,225	\$663,172
Corporate, Events & Other	\$563,754	\$293,813
TOTAL REVENUE	\$3,465,898	\$4,209,154
ANNUAL EXPENSES 2023		
Program Services		
Textbook Cooperatives	\$337,343	\$397,905
Computer Centers	\$336,324	\$395,229
Spark Reading Program	\$581,673	\$592,514
Rise Youth Development Program	\$839,223	\$1,007,033
Direct Education (Bridges Program)	\$566,475	\$646,575
Total Program Services	\$2,661,038	\$3,039,256
Mgmt & General	\$279,236	\$253,740
Fundraising	\$343,713	\$387,301
Total Support Services	\$622,949	\$641,040
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$3,283,987	\$3,680,296
Contribution to Net Income	\$181,911	\$528,858**
Total End-of-Year Net Assets	\$4,084,746	\$4,760,034

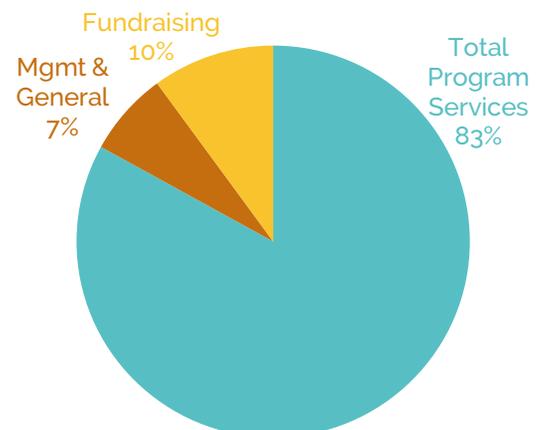
* Numbers for 2022 reflect the final audited numbers; 2023 numbers are still in draft status pending audit.

** The majority of the contribution to net income in 2023 represents a one-time reclassification of funds to set up a mini-endowment in Guatemala to help pay operating expenses.

Annual Revenue 2023



Annual Expenses 2023



Board Service*

*as of 12/31/23



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(Guatemala Literacy Project)

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