

Appendix D: Sponsorship Statement

There have been many concerns raised in the nonprofit world about the ethics of 1:1 sponsorship of students by individual donors and families. However, Cooperative for Education (CoEd) has found this model to be not only an important way to improve funding sustainability by diversifying income sources, but an important aspect of the support system that surrounds and uplifts students in our Rise Youth Development Program. We believe that when steps are taken to mitigate the very real risks inherent in this model, the benefits to the students outweigh the risks involved.

The Problem with Sponsorships—and CoEd's Response

CoEd takes steps to ensure that students are protected and empowered first and foremost. Our [Youth Protection Policy](#) is meant to protect both the sponsor and student. We do not share full names with donors or students, out of respect for the privacy of each. We also screen new sponsors through the National Sex Offender Registry. We reserve the right to decline or discontinue any sponsorship or travel participant that may pose a risk.

While sponsorship programs can certainly run the risk of reinforcing paternalistic dynamics, we see sponsors as joining the team of support that surrounds a student to empower them to reach their full potential. Students in the Rise Program benefit from frequent mentoring and home visits from their local facilitator, as-needed counseling from a staff psychologist, community-building with their peers in the program, mentorship from program graduates—and their sponsors. Sponsors offer motivation and encouragement from around the world, demonstrating to students that they are worth believing—and investing—in. Our commitment to ethical storytelling ensures that we honor students' dignity and resilience in any stories that we share. Many Rise students and graduates are eager to serve as advocates for girls' education to a wider international audience.

Research conducted on international sponsorship programs has demonstrated a significant positive impact on children's lives. A six-country study (including Guatemala) of children who had participated in a sponsorship program providing tuition support in combination with tutoring and personal development opportunities found that secondary completion rates increased by a third among children who had received a sponsorship.¹ Follow-up studies found that children currently receiving sponsorships demonstrated:

- Higher expectations for their own futures, both in terms of years of school completed and in pursuing white-collar jobs.²
- Increased happiness and self-efficacy and corresponding decreases in hopelessness.³

¹ Wydick, B., Glewwe, P., & Rutledge, L. (2013). Does international child sponsorship work? A six-country study of impacts on adult life outcomes. *Journal of Political Economy*, 121(2), 393-436.

² Ross, Phillip, and Bruce Wydick. 2011. "The Impact of Child Sponsorship on Self-Esteem, Life-Expectations, and Reference Points: Evidence from Kenya." Working paper, Univ. San Francisco.

³ Glewwe, Paul, and Bruce Wydick. 2013. "Child Sponsorship and Child Psychology: Evidence from Children's Drawings in Indonesia." Working paper, Univ. San Francisco.

In contrast, research by Kathleen Nolan expressing concerns over sponsorship models (and their “noted absence of a more critical examination of the root causes of poverty and global injustices”) focuses instead on donor motivations for becoming involved as sponsors, not citing any effects (positive or negative) on the lives of the children served.⁴ However, within the context of CoEd’s work, the sponsorship model exists as a critical bridge to allow the most disadvantaged students equal access to educational programs that aim to break the cycle of poverty. Contrary to Nolan’s opinion, CoEd’s sponsorship model does not merely provide a “band-aid,” but ensures that the most vulnerable children have equal opportunity to benefit from our holistic attempts to systemically address poverty in Guatemala through education.

Achieving Financial Sustainability as an Organization

For about the first 15 years of CoEd’s existence, the majority of our funding was received through foundation support and Rotary partnership. Industry trends dictate that a healthier funding portfolio is more balanced, with 67% of funds donated to nonprofits coming from individual donors. Once we began to grow the Rise Youth Development Program in response to the high need and demand observed in Guatemala, we began to see an additional benefit: diversifying our funding sources to be more in line with industry standards. A broad base of individual donor support in the form of Rise sponsors represents a healthier, more sustainable funding portfolio, as individual donors are easier to replace than the loss of a single large foundation gift. The model ensures that we will be able to continue transforming lives in Guatemala for many years to come.

⁴ Nolan, Kathleen T. (2020). Better than nothing? a review and critique of child sponsorship. In *Research, Society and Development*, v. 9, n.8 (pp. 1-36), p. 2.