



Casa Guatemala



CASA GUATEMALA

Casa Guatemala

Mission statement:

Casa Guatemala seeks to provide a safe home, love and nurturing, proper health care and an excellent education to the children of Guatemala who are abused, abandoned, malnourished, or living in extreme poverty.

Vision:

Casa Guatemala strives to equip the children in their care with the skills and education needed to become upstanding, empowered citizens of their communities in order to break the cycle of poverty and abuse from which they come. Casa Guatemala works to become fully self-sustained through the social enterprises they run which, provide both financial support and meaningful job training for the youth of the communities they serve.

History:

Casa Guatemala was established in 1977 and originally named Casa Canada as the original founders were a Canadian couple who reached out to assist the malnourished, orphaned and abused children during the brutal civil war. Their early efforts catalyzed the mission of the organization to provide a safe home, nurturing, health care and an education for the children of Guatemala who are abused, abandoned, malnourished, or living in extreme poverty.

Casa Guatemala has three locations in Guatemala; a nursery and administration centre in the Capital city and the Children's Village of Rio Dulce, where the majority of children we serve live. Since 1987, this centre has been home to up to 250 children during the school year and provides educational and health care services to up to 300 children per year. These children are either Wards of the State in our care, or children from the surrounding Mayan villages who live in cases of extreme poverty that, without Casa Guatemala, would have no other option for an education.



Community Context:

Situated in Las Brisas, Rio Dulce, Casa Guatemala's Children's Village is a paradise filled with laughter, learning and love. Spanning over 100 acres of tropical jungle are the many buildings that make up the community. These include separate housing for the boys and girls, local staff and primary school, medical clinic, library, carpentry shop, outdoor playing fields and a dining hall, where the meat, fresh fruits and vegetables from the school's farm are served. The farm is both a learning tool where the children gain the agricultural skills needed in the outside world and a source of provisions for a balanced diet. Apart from the wide variety of produce grown, the farm raises pigs and Tilapia, a type of fish, the surplus of which is sold in the local community to aid in the self sufficiency of the project on a whole. The medical clinic provides free health care services for the children of the centre as well as the many local indigenous communities in the area. We currently serve 30 different rural communities in the Izabal region of Guatemala and 87% of the children in our care come from indigenous Mayan backgrounds.



Population Served by the Organization in the last completed fiscal year:

The majority of the population served by our organization live in poverty or extreme poverty with very little access to public services such as education, healthcare or social services. The majority of our children are at risk of chronic malnutrition or have been diagnosed with malnutrition before being referred to our organization. We are located in an extremely isolated area of rural Guatemala where most family's lack access to roadways, electricity, running water or proper sanitation

Race/Ethnicity & Gender	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%
Latino	15	13.50	20	13.90	35	14
Other: Mayan	96	86.50	124	86.10	220	86
Total	111	100.00	144	100.00	255	100

Age Groups	#	% of Total
0 to 5 years	28	11
6 to 12 years	203	80
13 to 18 years	24	9
Total	100	100



Programming:

Education Program:

Casa Guatemala operates our own private primary school, which is registered and certified by the Guatemalan Ministry of Education. We provide pre-kinder through grade six courses for an average of 250 at risk children per year, 50% of which live onsite while the other half travel to and from their homes daily. These services are provided free of charge and all of the needs of the children are covered by Casa Guatemala including the school supplies, books, clothing, and shoes for example. The school staffs 15 local certified teachers as well as the school director who oversees the program and day-to-day management of the project. Since 1987, we have been providing our education program for the most at risk children in Guatemala including the children from impoverished Mayan families in the surrounding villages and orphaned and abused children that have been put in our care by the Guatemalan Ministry of Child Services. Currently, our program is focused on children from the poor, indigenous communities in the region due to the change of international adoption laws in 2007. As there are no longer any international adoptions, we no longer are able run our adoption program. Since then, we have opened our doors to more and more families who live in isolated areas without access to roads, electricity, healthcare, proper nutrition or schools for their children. In working with these communities, we are able to have long term impacts on the communities, preventing the need for families to give their children up or have them taken away by the government. We have worked to increase literacy rates and school attendance and lower cases of malnutrition in communities where usually only 30% of children finish the 6th grade and up to 54% suffer from chronic malnutrition.

Nutrition Program:

Casa Guatemala strives to fight the highest rates of child malnutrition in the western hemisphere by providing nutritious meals and snacks 5 times a day to the children in our care. The children receive a healthy and hot breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as two recess snacks in the morning and in the afternoon.

The base of our diet is the local black beans, rice and corn tortillas but we like to mix in lots of eggs, vegetables, pastas, and when possible, meat as well. The children are served a fortified soy drink with vitamins and minerals to ensure they are getting all the nutrients they need. This hot beverage is served at least twice a day with the breakfast and recess snack to ensure that all the kids receive their daily needed dosis of vitamins.

Though we have to purchase the majority of our meats and vegetable the food and pork we produce on our farm subsidizes this. We also grow a wide variety of fruit for the children as well. Our nutrition program mainly relies on inkind donation of dry and canned goods as well as the produce we purchase on a weekly basis.

On occasions were we have an abundance of donations, we are also able to provide dry goods for the children to take home to their families during the holidays so we can ensure they continue to receive a balanced diet when they are in their home.

For many of the children who come to Casa Guatemala daily, the meals and snacks they receive onsite, are the only food they will eat each day. In some homes, there will only be tortillas with salt to eat. For these children we offer the opportunity to come in early before school to have a hot breakfast with the children who live onsite and stay until after dinner if there is nothing to eat in their homes.

On average, we annually serve:

- **49,275 Breakfasts**
- **182,500 Snacks**
- **91,250 Lunches**
- **49,275 Dinners**



Healthcare Program:

Since our founding, healthcare has been an integral part of our mission. Since 1977 we have worked to rehabilitate malnourished children; provided logistics and coordination for hundreds of maxio-facial surgeries for cleft lip and cleft palate; and attended to thousands of children in our clinics. We regularly bring in groups of doctors and individual medical professionals to work in our clinic so that we are able to provide year round medical services to the children in our care and the families from the villages in the surrounding area.

Currently, our clinic has a full time local nurse's assistant who speaks the local Q'eqchi' Mayan language. International nurses and doctors, who volunteer their time with us throughout the year, accompany her. We rely on donations of medicines and supplies to equip the clinic so that we are able to treat the children as well as the villagers.

Our most common illnesses are gastro-intestinal, skin infections and bronchial infections when treating the members of the local Mayan communities. Most of these stem from a lack of clean water and proper sanitary installations in their homes as well as having wood burning stoves with no ventilation within their main dwellings.

We also treat a lot of pregnant women and newborn babies, though we do not cover deliveries in our facility. Any emergency cases are coordinated with the local ambulance service. Casa Guatemala provides emergency boat transportation to the nearest town and coordinates for the ambulance to take the patients to the closest hospital, which is ninety minutes away. Casa Guatemala also covers the cost of the ambulance since our patients do not have the funds to do so.

The children in our education program are treated for all of their common colds, scrapes and cuts and any other sicknesses that they may incur. We work with the children to monitor their growth by regularly charting their height and weight with our visiting teams of doctors. These visiting doctors also provide deworming medicines once every three months and regular teeth checks. We work with a small volunteer dental clinic to ensure that all dental issues are also covered. All of our medical services are completely free for the children in our care and their families. Should there be any major illnesses, accidents or emergencies, Casa Guatemala covers all the expenses of getting the needed medical care for the children.



Agriculture Program:

Casa Guatemala runs a large farm in order to teach the children sustainable farming practices. We focus on growing fruits and vegetables with the kids, and raising pigs, chickens and fish for our own consumption. The children learn about the importance of sustainable farming practices such as crop variation, using compost and rotating crops. They can then take these skills back to their villages where they mostly practice slash and burn farming which is very damaging to the environment.

All of the children from grades three through six participate in the agriculture program and each grade works in a specific area so that they can grow a crop from seed all the way through harvest. We ensure that both the boys and the girls work equally in the farm and also in the kitchen to ensure gender equality. Having this equality is very different from the traditional roles in their homes and it is helpful in changing cultural norms where women have less opportunities to work outside of the home. The farm employs 5 men who tend to the animals and crops and teach the children what to do in order to have successful harvests.



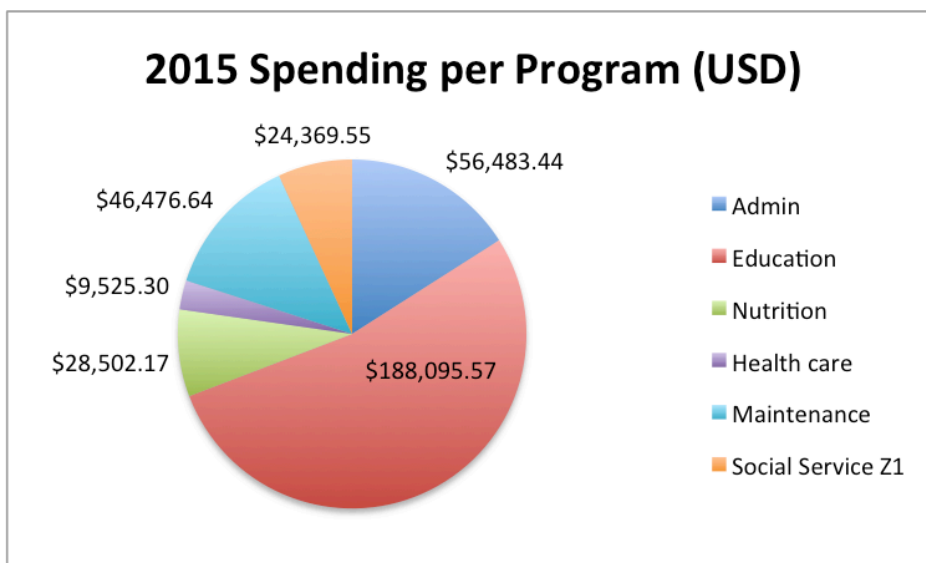
External Opportunities:

Casa Guatemala has been operating since 1977, which means there have been hundreds of volunteers and donors over the years. This recognition helps to spread the word about our work via first hand experiences and helps to raise awareness and funding all around the world. Our board of directors works to strengthen these ties by cultivating strong relationships with our past volunteers and donors and keeping them engaged with our work by updating them regularly via email and social media. The majority of our funding comes from individual donors from around the world so it is very important to maintain these relationships. We are also currently updating our website so that can attract more new donors and volunteers to our organization. Having a

strong website is integral to an organization's success in today's world and so we are working hard to create a new site that is mobile-friendly on which donors can easily make online donations. Casa Guatemala also utilizes additional fundraising websites to engage our supporters in creating their own personal fundraising pages and specific campaigns for our programs. Our volunteers helps to keep our social media sites up to date with new content that helps to keep our stakeholders informed about what we are doing and how they can help.

External Threats:

Casa Guatemala still struggles to ensure all of the funds needed to cover the budget are secured each year. Because we do rely so much on individual funding as opposed to larger, grant funding, we often lack the resources needed to cover all of our costs. For many years the organization has operated in "crisis mode" in which we were always on the brink of closing our doors. The global financial crisis has been incredibly hard on our organization as it has with so many other small organizations around the world. In order to combat this external threat, our newly elected board of directors has been busy looking for alternative sources of revenue for the organization including more secured grant funding and corporate sponsorship. In 2017 we will also be applying for subsidized funding of the school from the Guatemalan Government, which, if achieved, will greatly improve our long-term financial sustainability.



ORGANIZATION INFORMATION	
Organization's Name: Casa Guatemala ONG	
Staff Leader & Title: Heather Graham, Executive Director	
Board Leader & Affiliation: Angelina Galdamez, Founder	
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Current FY operating budget as approved by board of directors: \$400,000.00	Current FY end date: 12/31/2016