This year marked the first year of our work in Guatemala. The country has a long history of civil war and social injustice that has left millions of people without decent education, jobs and health. In the urban areas of Guatemala, where we work, communities are even more disadvantaged because they suffer from violence, gangs, drugs and criminal activity. The urban poor become victims of a negative cycle that repeats itself each generation. Families are broken, children are physically and emotionally wounded, and the innocent are forced to turn against their fellow man in order to survive.

Witnessing beautiful children experience such pain is something that we cannot ignore. In 2014, *Iniciativa Guatemala* began working with Guatemalan nonprofits to make youth development better in communities that suffer from urban poverty and violence. In places where children lived in the street, they now have a home and a family. Where children were vulnerable to drugs and gangs, we are seeing them enter our classrooms. Wounds that were once hidden are now being healed as families knock on our doors.

Today, Iniciativa’s donors are helping over 75 children and families break the cycle of poverty and violence.

Many children and families still need support to navigate the numerous problems faced in their community. In 2015, we remain committed to working with locals so that the urban poor have more opportunities not only for education, jobs, and health, but for their own happiness. We are motivated by the fact that impacting one life means changing the future for generations to come.

Joyfully,

Greg Lowden
Executive Director
Iniciativa Guatemala
Create a network of organizations so that our local partners use the best practices for helping youth-at-risk.

By working with multiple partners we learn how to continually make youth development better.
OUR MISSION

- Rescue kids from street-life
- Heal wounds from broken families
- Educate children that are in the street
- Mentor the decisions of youth pressured by evil
- Prepare teenagers to realize their dreams
- Create jobs for the marginalized
We have two types of partners

**Community Partners & Program Specific Partners**

**Community Partners:**
Iniciativa collaborates with partners that serve specific communities. These partners have the potential of managing a portfolio of programs that attack poverty and violence from different angles. Together, we are able to continually improve the way we help people.

**Program Specific Partners:**
Iniciativa looks for partners that specialize in certain areas. For example, organizations that just focus on mentorship or economic development. We support these partners and look for ways that their work can be utilized by one of our community partners.
Iniciativa created three partnerships with local organizations to jointly respond to the needs of the urban poor. We particularly chose these partners because they are gifted at helping people that struggle with poverty, drugs, violence and instability. They reach the heart. Working with talented locals is the best way to help at-risk families improve their wellbeing.

Together, we operate programs for refuge, psychology, education, mentorship and economic opportunity. Since the problems in dangerous communities are complex, we must respond with a holistic solution.

WHAT DID WE DO IN 2014?

Iniciativa helped 35 children that had dropped out, been expelled, or never studied, return to school. 73% passed their grade.

Iniciativa helped 30 youth-at-risk receive support through a mentorship program. Within the group, 75% of youth-at-risk for misconduct managed to completely turn their path away from delinquent behaviour.

Iniciativa helped its local partners provide one-on-one counselling and group therapy to teenagers. The majority consumed drugs, however, the program helped 61% turn down drugs for good.
Snapshot of our work: Iniciativa worked with the Resplandece team to staff their safe home with child care, psychology and tutoring. These three programs worked in unison to provide a home for four children that lived in the street. We are healing emotional wounds and enabling these children to take advantage of an education and a new life.

With the help of Leeds Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia we renovated the safe home adding a therapy room, tutoring space, better security, kitchen appliances, lighting, roofing and plumbing. For us, this was an investment in an amazing team that will help street youth for years to come. Iniciativa is working with Resplandece’s team for expansion so that a new school can be built specifically for at-risk children in the community.

Additionally, we supported therapy and education for four other children that were orphaned, and one professional training scholarship to Monica, our first beneficiary.
Iniciativa is unique because they not only believe in our hearts, but they help us grow with funding, program support and consulting. Iniciativa is part of our family and shares the same passion for the children. Having a partner like Iniciativa reminds us that people believe that Guatemalans can make a difference, and this motivates us everyday to help children with the most difficult circumstances.

– Marcela Olivet, President, Resplandece Guatemala
Snapshot of our work: Iniciativa worked with the GE team to add more teachers to their education program which provides schooling to youth-at-risk. Nearly all of the children in this program were not enrolled in any other school. Some had dropped out, others were expelled, and some simply had no resources to study. The program opened its doors in 2014 and took approximately 75 children off the street. Perhaps even more impressive, the program is designed to work alongside youth mentors that intervene when students experience behavioural or academic problems related to family issues, economic pressure or violence.

Iniciativa was able to pinpoint mentorship as the most essential risk prevention program that GE operates. Iniciativa added capacity for 30 youth-at-risk to enrol in a group mentorship program that also provides one on one counselling. The program’s success is visible in the changes the youth have made in their personal lives and family situations.

Programs:

- Education
- Psychology
- Mentorship
- Family Counselling
- Street Soccer
Iniciativa is an organization that knows how to see the needs of a person. They know how to understand the mission of another organization. They know how to position other organizations to achieve optimum success. But above all, they know how to support directly towards the primordial needs of children and families with love.

Iniciativa differs from others because they interact with our beneficiaries to discern with us the proper way to heal and create long-term change. By working with us, they know exactly how to support our greatest needs.

– Juan Carlos Molina, President, Guatemaltecos Extraordinarios
Snapshot of our work:

Iniciativa worked with UTZ to create a way for talented producers from low-income areas to access new markets that provide more sales, higher wages and better development for the communities where they live. Iniciativa collaborated with the UTZ team to build their company as an engine for sustainable social change in marginalized communities, including communities where Iniciativa works with other partners.

**Programs:**

- Micro-business
- Economic Development

Iniciativa was able to sell over $11,000 of products from UTZ, thereby impacting small producers and their communities. Additionally, Iniciativa helped UTZ attain an impact investor to help the team connect low-income producers to international markets.
What I like about Iniciativa’s heart and their vision is that they come to see what the needs are, and they take the time to sit down with the grassroots leaders and ask, “what do you need?” They take the time to ask these questions so that they can put the tools around the grassroots leaders so that their jobs become easier. Iniciativa looks at our work from the side-lines to identify a solution and asks, “Have you considered this? Is this relevant to what you are facing?”

What I appreciate about Iniciativa is that they do what they say they are doing. They are empowering local leaders.

– Jonathan Porta, Executive Director, UTZ
Iniciativa raised $52,312 towards 2014 operations.

The majority of funds came from individual donors. However, we received substantial support from businesses, churches, grants and product sales.

In addition to the 2014 funding sources, we received $22,300 in year-end donations towards operations in 2015.
Iniciativa utilized over $35,000 towards program operations for its partners.

Program breakdown was influenced by the date we created strategic alliances, and the most important needs of Iniciativa’s partners.
Thank you to all of our supporters for making our work possible, especially:

The Members of Leeds Episcopal Church
The Brotherhood of St. Andrew at Trinity Episcopal Church
The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia
And all other anonymous donors

www.iniciativaguatemala.org

Making Youth Development Better