Book collections are growing and so are the number of schools where Child Aid is working. Two recent district-wide expansions of our programs – throughout the districts of San Antonio Palopó and San Andrés Semetabaj – have added 27 new schools.

Child Aid is helping to overcome a significant barrier the teachers in these schools have faced: the lack of books in their classrooms, both when they were students themselves, and later, when they became the teachers. The book collections Child Aid provides can number as many as 4,000 new volumes to a school during its four years in our program.

But ironically, this has created new challenges, for example: how to make these books easily accessible to students and teachers; how to categorize and catalogue them; how to display and share them in pedagogically effective ways; and how to choose and use the right books to help teach a given lesson’s content.

The result is that children begin to see reading as useful and meaningful in their lives.

To respond to these happy challenges, we are leveraging our staff’s library management skills to pilot a new level of support for the use of books and literacy programs throughout a school.

Creatively using their new book collections across multiple subjects is an important skill for teachers. When Graciela Landa, one of our senior Trainers, was on a follow-up visit to a school in Patzún, she discovered that the school had started a schoolyard garden program. Graciela and Kelly Batz, a Child Aid Literacy Trainer also assigned to this school, put their heads together, and helped develop a lesson plan with the teacher Graciela had come to see. Kelly showed the teacher how to find an appropriate set of books on horticulture and plants, and how

YOU Are Helping Children Learn to Read—and to Make the Most of BOOKS!

Book collections made possible through your donations are becoming more accessible

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Children at the Agua Escondida School are excited to fill their new bookshelves with hundreds of new books.
to use them in her lesson plan. Such teachable moments are frequent and numerous, and their result is that children experience reading as something useful and meaningful in their lives.

Our Literacy Trainers, experts at building teacher skills through group training and one-on-one coaching, will now also help teachers and principals improve their schools’ learning environments, focusing on book collections. New initiatives will include:

- **Increasing the capacity of principals, teachers, and students to understand, teach and maintain a simple book categorization system;**

- **Providing specialized group training to principals and school literacy committee members on library activities, such as book clubs, contests and games, and reading diaries;**

- **Increasing the principals’ capacity to utilize the Ministry of Education’s activities and initiatives;**

- **Working one-on-one with teachers to plan and model book utilization across multiple subjects.**

With your contribution, the enhanced library support schools will receive will improve teachers’ abilities to employ new literacy tools, increase the effectiveness of our book donation activities, and improve children’s access to books. Your gift makes a difference. Consider signing up for a reoccurring monthly contribution that will help Child Aid to open the world of books to so many eager and hard-working children.

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**Child Aid Receives Distinction in International Service Award Thanks to Our DONORS!**

The University of Idaho presented their Distinction in International Service Award to Child Aid in April. Students and staff of the International Studies program choose a recipient of this prize every year, to recognize the accomplishments of internationally-focused NGOs in the Pacific Northwest. Their selection process is rigorous, examining the scope, sustainability, and transparency of the charity’s work. Gali- cia Álvarez, the chair of the selection committee, shared the experience of reducing their list of 60 worthy charities down to just one:

“As we researched your organization, we developed an attachment for the children. We agreed that it was wonderful that people from their own villages could help educate their children and help their own community grow, by training the teachers and librarians. We think education helps to reduce poverty and crime. ...Guatemala has the lowest literacy rate in Latin America, so we really found it encouraging that Child Aid focuses on helping these children succeed.”

Greg Meenahan, Child Aid’s Chief Operating Officer, met with the International Studies students and professors, and also spoke to the local media about the importance of our work. We have new friends among these devoted students, who are becoming active, forward-thinking citizens of the world.

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**Remember Child Aid with a gift in your will**
A student in the San Gabriel School first grade classroom participates in a reading aloud activity. Literacy Trainer Jorge Sanum’s mother never attended a day of school in her life. The fact that her son has recently received a teaching degree from a university fills her with pride; it is an achievement she could never have imagined for herself. After his graduation, Jorge wrote to CEO Nancy Press to thank her for the support of Child Aid’s Fondo Educativo (Education Fund), a benefit for our Guatemalan staff to help them pursue post-secondary education. Jorge wrote:

“I am writing to thank you deeply for the support of Child Aid’s educational fund. With this support, I was able to achieve my goal: to graduate from university as a Professor of Secondary Education in History and Social Sciences. I am the first in my family who has had the opportunity to attend and graduate from a university. My mom doesn’t know how to read or write, and wasn’t able to attend even one day of school: she is now very proud of me for reaching my goal. But without the support of Child Aid I would not have achieved this, as I already have a family of my own to take care of. A thousand thanks.”

Child Aid’s Coordinator for Teacher Training, Graciela Pichiya, is also using the Fondo Educativo. She is pursuing a law degree, both to benefit her community and, ultimately, to make a difference for all Guatemalan women. Women in Guatemala, she notes, especially indigenous women, are undervalued, and do not have opportunities to grow intellectually, much less to attain a profession. “I want to project an image of a woman who can be someone important, who can have an important role in society, who can provide new ideas to change Guatemala. Perhaps I won’t be the president of Guatemala – before, I wanted to be president, but not now – but I can provide good ideas to my community and my family.” Graciela is a source of constant encouragement to all of the teachers in our program.

Jorge and Graciela are not exceptions among our staff. Eleven of the 14 Guatemalan staff members are using the Fund to further their studies. Throughout their lives, these men and women have overcome substantial obstacles that stood in the way of their educations. They are now tireless proponents of Child Aid’s programs, and as they continue to pursue their studies, they become increasingly important innovators and leaders within our organization. This improves the efficacy of our work, and is making it possible for us to scale up our operations. By making a gift to Child Aid today, you are helping to support Guatemalan literacy champions who are committed to the transformation of public education. With your support, we will continue to have an ever-wider impact on the quality of teachers in the early grades in Guatemala.
Every child deserves an education. Building a foundation of literacy and critical thinking in primary school is a key first step. But for many years, Guatemala has come out at the bottom of international statistics on literacy and school performance. The current Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), with help from USAID and the World Bank, has spent the last five years addressing this problem in primary schools by developing an excellent National Curriculum, and by launching a project with USAID called Leamos Juntos (Let’s Read Together). Leamos Juntos is a major literacy initiative, intended to raise awareness; provide books to classrooms; encourage daily, silent reading times in classes; and mandate reading committees in schools.

Part of this ongoing initiative included a national two-day conference held in Guatemala City in April: “Innovations in Reading for Learning.” Representatives of national and local departments of education and education-focused NGOs competed for a spot on the program to present their work on improving literacy in Guatemalan classrooms.

Child Aid was selected to give a panel presentation. Child Aid CEO Nancy Press traveled to Guatemala City, and together with senior Guatemalan staff, gave our presentation, “Putting Leamos Juntos into Practice: Classrooms, Schools, & Communities.” The presentation was intended to demonstrate the many ways that Child Aid programs did the necessary work of providing methods and strategies for teachers and school directors to bring the lofty goals of Leamos Juntos down to the level of the classroom. It was attended by a full house of MINEDUC and USAID representatives, school district superintendents, and teachers. We shared our solution to the problem of how to increase the quality of literacy instruction in rural Guatemala, where teachers have only received low levels of education and training.

Child Aid’s presenters were Nancy, Angus Fredenburg, Graciela Pichiya, and Carlos Pos, who were all happily surprised by the rapt attention of the standing room-only audience and by their stream of questions. Several people stood up and gave unsolicited praise for our work, and several others asked us to work in their districts. We received far more requests than we – at present – have the capacity to accept. But thanks to the loyalty of donors like you, we anticipate continued, efficient scaling up of our programs. Your gift could help us to say “Yes!” to new districts.

This conference brought a bright flash of hope that the entrenched problems in the Guatemalan school system will finally be addressed, through the collaboration of Guatemalan teachers, the Ministry of Education, and international NGOs like Child Aid.