You Picked a Winner!

Child Aid Receives a Perfect Score of 100 from Charity Navigator

Charity Navigator is the largest, most utilized and trusted evaluator of charities, both national and international. They currently evaluate over 8,000 non-profits. This month, they announced that they had revamped their ranking system, and we were informed that Child Aid is one of only 52 charities to receive a perfect score of 100. This represents less than 1% of all rated charities on the site. Moreover, we are one of only 7 international organizations who received this score!

Your gifts and support have enabled us to run an efficient, growing, healthy and transparent organization. Without you, our work to overcome the pressing challenges of Guatemalan children and indigenous communities would be impossible.

Child Aid’s commitment to transparency and accountability has earned us a four-star Charity Navigator rating for 5 years in a row. Since 2002, using objective analysis, they have awarded only the most fiscally responsible organizations a 4-star rating. On June 1, 2016, they upgraded their methodology for rating each charity to more accurately reflect the realities of charitable work.

Michael Thatcher, President & CEO of Charity Navigator, notes that much less than 1% of charities rated by Charity Navigator received the distinction of a perfect score. “When people support Child Aid, they can trust that their donations are going to a financially responsible, ethical charity.”

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When Child Aid began working with Jasmine’s school, her demeanor and outlook changed, as her teacher began using more and more of the new teaching methods she had learned through Child Aid training. These new techniques not only instill the fundamentals of reading, but bring creativity, interaction, and fun to the learning process – and Jasmine opened up.

Rode told us that she first noticed Jasmine perking up during story time, an activity introduced by Child Aid trainers. After this small toehold was established, Jasmine began interacting with the kids in her reading group, and even answering their questions. “She came out of her shell,” Rode said.

Now, all of the teachers in the Godinez school have graduated from the Child Aid program, and Jasmine is thriving in her stud-
Luis Miguel Can is a sixth-grade teacher in the remote village of Choq’ol, Guatemala. He grew up in a similarly isolated village in the country’s mountainous Central Highlands. Like the majority of indigenous children in Guatemala, he never had access to books.

Sr. Can struggled his way through Guatemala’s neglected educational system, and made it all the way through high school against the odds – only one out of ten primary school children succeed in doing so. At 18, he became an elementary school teacher, but had no idea how to teach or promote reading. The idea of reading aloud to his students or engaging them in a book never even occurred to him. Of course, it hardly would have mattered anyway. He had no books.

“Teachers face so many obstacles here,” Mr. Can said. “The main one is lack of books and materials. The little money we get is for pens and maybe erasers. But never books.”

Mr. Can’s challenges – both as a child struggling to learn to read, and now as a teacher with few books and no practical training – are commonplace in Guatemala.

Most teachers simply never bother teaching anything beyond the most basic reading skills. And without books, resources, training, or support, it is no surprise that this is the best they can do.

When Child Aid came to Choq’ol, we delivered hundreds of storybooks to each of the school’s six classrooms, and delivered our intensive teacher training program for all of Choq’ol’s teachers. Even after the first year of the four-year program, the teachers saw progress in their classrooms. Sr. Can said, “I use Child Aid’s techniques all the time. It has been a wonderful experience, and the kids are really picking up reading. If I’d had this program when I was a kid, I would have read every single day.” Your support will make it possible for thousands of children, year after year, to change Guatemala’s dismal statistics and complete and excel in school.

After four years, Choq’ol recently graduated from the Child Aid program, and teachers report that their little school has been transformed. Estela Matzar, a second-grade teacher there, recently shared her perspective with our staff. “Everything about our school’s environment has changed. With Child Aid, every year we gained new methodologies to engage our students in learning. These changes have allowed our little school to become highly developed and effective, and our children are getting the education they deserve and need.”
“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,” said Graciela Pichiya, a supervisor of Literacy Coaches for Child Aid in Guatemala, who has just been promoted to Gerente de Equipo, Team Leader.

Women in Guatemala, Graciela notes, especially indigenous women, are undervalued, and have few opportunities to grow intellectually, much less to attain a profession. “I am a woman – indigenous, Mayan, Kaqchikel – with high professional aspirations. I would like to be an example for indigenous women and families in Guatemala. I can provide good ideas to my community and my family.”

Graciela speaks K’iche’, Kaqchikel, and Tz’utujil, in addition to Spanish; and along with the rest of our staff, is now taking English classes. Before joining us in 2010, Graciela was a nun for 14 years, working as a missionary with young women and families; she later became a teacher, trainer, and program coordinator with a social services non-profit promoting education and health. In Child Aid, she found an organization that addressed the problems she had experienced herself as a child in the Guatemalan school system, and found a method and approach that she believed could make a difference in the lives of the next generation of Guatemalans. She joined Child Aid as a Literacy Coach, later becoming a supervisor. After inspiring her co-workers and hundreds of teachers for seven years, this year she is stepping into the new Team Leader position.

The Guatemalan team of supervisors felt that they needed a person to be in charge of the daily program implementation, someone they would go to with their day-to-day issues and needs. The staff was completely unanimous in favor of Graciela’s appointment to the position. A natural and skillful leader, Graciela has cultivated a positive and strong relationship with all of the trainers as well as her peers.

Graciela is transitioning gracefully into her new role, and is collaborating closely with our Director of Pedagogy, Annie Blakeslee, in the continuing improvement of our program. As Graciela and Annie collaborate on the ongoing development of our program and the curriculum, a bridge is created between educational theory on the one side, and the difficult realities of Guatemalans on the other.

Your support has contributed to Graciela’s role in addressing the deeply entrenched problems in Guatemala’s educational system. Show your support today for all 13 Guatemalan women on the Child Aid staff, and make a difference for the next generation of Guatemala’s children.