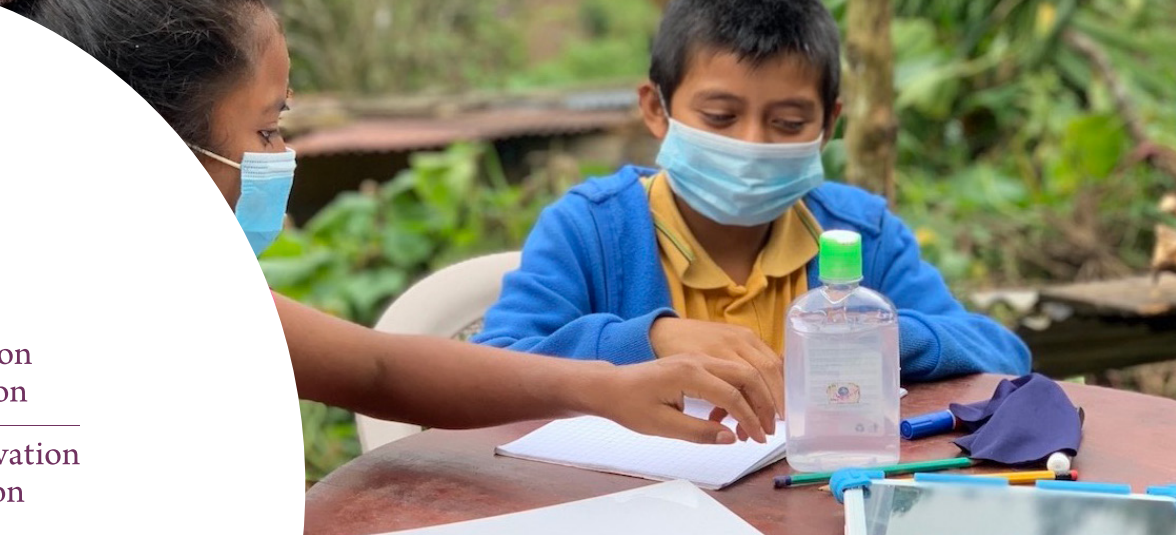




Fund for Innovation  
and Transformation

Fonds pour l'innovation  
et la transformation



## CANADA STUDENTS OFFERING SUPPORT (SOS)

# Girls Groundswell

### Context

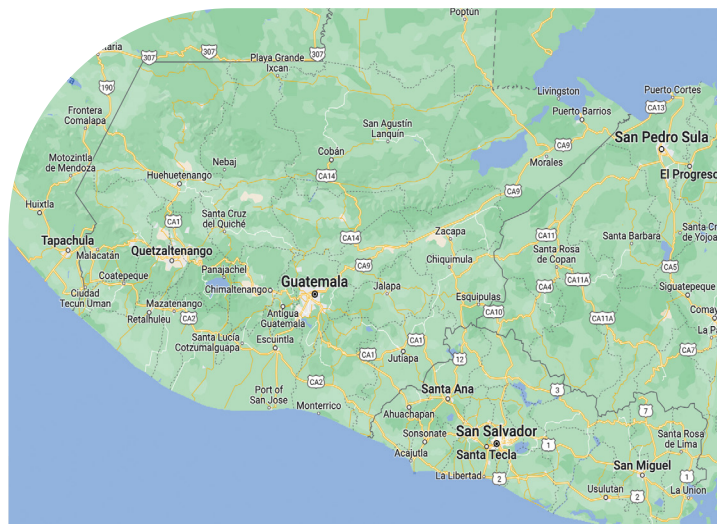
The Quiché and Alta Verapaz regions of Guatemala, which have the strongest presence of Mayan culture in the country, have some of the highest levels of poverty and lowest levels of educational performance. In Guatemala, only 67% of students who start primary school move on to lower secondary school, and only 56% of those move to the next stage of education - with continuation rates lowest among rural Mayan communities, and especially women and girls. In 2015, The Gender Inequality Index positioned Guatemala at 113 out of 159 countries, demonstrating a strong presence of discriminatory social norms.

### The Innovative Solution

Supported by FIT, Canada SOS and local partner SIDs tested an innovative solution aimed at empowering Mayan adolescents (ages 14-21) to become mentors, supporting grade 4-6 students by leading neighbourhood-based "learning circles". These circles were youth-driven learning spaces enabled by e-learning resources and inclusive community environments. The activities supported academic and personal development, both for mentees and mentors, leading to improved commitment to education, access to learning resources, and gender equality. The innovation, which also engaged parents and the community through dialogue and consultation, aimed to improve academic performance and retention among Indigenous Mayan youth, especially women and girls.

### Advancing Gender Equality

The project aimed to be gender transformative by focusing on cultural norms and addressing educational challenges faced by Indigenous girls. Prior to testing, a gender equality strategy was developed with local stakeholders. During testing, the project faced many challenges and had to reduce the target to a gender responsive goal. Overall, the approach did demonstrate progress in women and girls' access to education, improved academic performance, reduced gender gaps, and increased leadership and decision-making roles for Indigenous women and girls.



**COUNTRY**  
Guatemala

**AMOUNT**  
\$198,574

**TESTING PERIOD**  
15 months  
Ended May 2021



**GENDER RESPONSIVE (GE2)**

**THEME: EDUCATION**

# Testing Framework

The project used a Results-Based Management (RBM) framework, implementing gender-disaggregated measures. A pre-post measurement approach was used to assess participants' performance. The measurements collected data about students' Knowledge Attitude Practices (KAP), Commitment to Education, Self-Efficacy, and Gender Role Attitudes. Analytic data from the Rumie LearnCloud software was used to measure use of content. School records helped assess the changes in enrolment trends and numbers of both direct and indirect beneficiaries. Additionally, the qualitative methods of Rolling Profile Interviews, Staff Observation, and Community Dialogues were used to complement and support the interpretation of data. Evaluation was supported through engagement of a local partners, including a gender specialist.

## Results and Impact

Results indicated that the creation of learning spaces led to improved academic performance and retention among the target population. The number of students who continued studies after completion of grade 6 into "Lower Secondary" school rose by 22.7%, while 98.7% of mentors continued studying throughout the entirety of the program, including 96% who continued beyond graduation from lower secondary school. In 2018 and 2019, there was an average annual dropout rate of 16% among girls moving between successive levels of lower secondary studies. In 2021, the school saw 133% more girls registering to study in 2nd and 3rd year. Although, the enrolment rate cannot be attributed to the project alone, it was clear the innovation contributed to the results. Out of 475 primary target beneficiaries 417 (87%) demonstrated improved knowledge and attitudes toward gender equality at endline.

## Key Lessons

1. Training on gender equality is best delivered by individuals with lived experience of local conditions. However, there may be limited existing capacity within communities to deliver such trainings. Collaboration of additional organizations offers a promising approach to offer resources and best practices and adapt them to suit local contexts.
2. Engagement of mentors of different ages and grade levels helps to support learning among mentors through a cascading model.
3. The provision of modest scholarships for mentors is a highly important component to reduce financial barriers to immediate program participation and enable future educational planning.
4. Among parents there is a strong interest in supporting women's participation in education, but programming must help identify and remove the practical barriers that continue to cause inequities.

"Faced with the pandemic, boys and girls were going to stop attending school. Guate Groundswell came to support the children to continue with their learning through mentoring. Not only did mentees learn, but also mentors were trained to become leaders of their community. I see more participation of youth and children in school and community meetings."

- Orlando Ostuma Cruz, Parent (SFC)

### PARTNER ORGANIZATION

- Semilla de Innovación para Desarrollo Sostenible (SIDs)

### TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The project targeted 475 students as direct beneficiaries to benefit from "Learning circles".

45% of participants were women and girls.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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[Students Offering Support](#)

### ABOUT FIT

The Fund for Innovation and Transformation supports Canadian small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) testing innovative solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South.

