

Guatemala, 9th of May, 2011

- Name of the approach/ tool/project;

**Ak' Tenamit's** Teacher/Student Teaching Model: An adapted curriculum designed specifically to eliminate the critical barriers faced by rural, indigenous Guatemalans

- Description (methodology, techniques and strategies used);

The Teacher/Student Teaching Model is a curriculum designed to provide an alternative to the Guatemala education system, which, through a lack of schools, culturally-appropriate material, and economic obstacles, has isolated rural communities. Ak' Tenamit has, for years, worked to push the greater education system to take into account all realities, and to recognize that a universal curriculum, designed for the country's powerful, urban and non-indigenous minority, creates little opportunity for the rural, indigenous majority to develop. Therefore, the non-governmental organization designed a rural-appropriate system, teaching relevant material and skills that directly responds to the reality, challenges and potential, rural job market from which its students come.

In an attempt to strengthen the individual and collective self-esteem of the Mayan people and sense of cultural identity, Ak' Tenamit has made concentrated effort to incorporate traditional knowledge and authorities in the classroom. This knowledge is especially vital now as communities are forced to adapt to rapid climate change.

- Implementation methodologies;

While many factors contribute to the rural, indigenous population from leaving their studies as an early age, Ak' Tenamit has facilitated the breaking of this system. The organization has created a unique, alternative payment method, allowing students to finance their schooling through the resources that exist in the villages. As opposed to traditional cash payments, shortly after the school's inception, the founding team and local leaders recognized that by not taking this reality into account. Therefore, students provide donations of corn, beans, and manual labor.

The school's headquarters is located in a national park and in the heart of one of Guatemala's rainforests. This intentional location assures that while students gain their education, they remain comfortable in a rural setting. Brain drain is an unfortunate reality in Guatemala and many parts of the developing world. Young people see the opportunities offered to them outside of their villages and rarely, when provided the gift of education, are encouraged to go back or empowered with the tools to make positive changes.

- What is innovative about this approach/tool/project;

In most rural and indigenous Guatemalan communities, young Mayan girls and boys study through primary school. At 12 years old, after "graduating" from elementary school, our young boy is left with few options. He can work alongside his father in the fields, tending to corn, and hoping to grow enough to feed all the mouths at their table. He may travel to the city some six hours away from his rural village to work menial labor or as a security guard. There is no better life to look forward to. Or he might make the biggest sacrifice of all, leaving not only culture, but country behind. He would travel to the United States aware that he might not see his family for a decade or ever again. These young men face a bleak future: a dangerous journey, with only the lowest of wages once they reach their destination.

The little girl's future is even bleaker. She will face expectations as early as twelve to have children and assume familial responsibility, thus perpetuating a nearly endless cycle of poverty.

Studying sustainable tourism and sustainable rural development, the indigenous youth at the school are able to

- Evidence of results and impact;

Only one in ten Mayan men graduate from high school, and the same is true for only one in twenty of their sisters. Ak' Tenamit has worked for 19 years in the field of education, and since 2002 has matriculated students at the high school level. In 2010, although nationwide the aforementioned numbers held true, Ak Tenamit graduated just over 100 students, nearly half of who were young women. Graduates leave the school inspired to improve their villages. Many serve on village boards, start community-based projects, work with both governmental and non-governmental organizations and become the agents of change to break this vicious cycle.

- Costs associated with the development and implementation of the activity;

\$500,000

- Contact information.

Jesse Schauben – Technical Advisor

Office - (+502) 2254-3346

Cell – (+502) 5526-2374)

E-mail: [jesse@aktenamit.org](mailto:jesse@aktenamit.org)