



Sombrilla

International Development Society

About Us

Sombrilla is an Alberta-based, independent, non-governmental organization, founded in 1985 as a registered charity to facilitate projects supporting sustainable development, social justice, gender equity and human rights.

Our Mission

Sombrilla partners with communities in Latin America to empower them to assert their democratic, economic, cultural, and social rights.

Our Partners

Sombrilla develops partnerships with Latin American community-based organizations that share our mission in order to assist them in reaching their goal.

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Secondary Education in Guatemala

Indigenous communities have traditionally been seriously underrepresented in education spending, and as a result they have the highest illiteracy and drop-out rates in the country.

In response to this need, Nancy Cowle and Paul Layte initiated the Tierra Colorada School Project in 2008.

They began to work with the teachers of the school

to improve the building and facilities of a school in the rural community of Tierra Colorada near to Quetzaltenango.

At that time, the school was very run down and overcrowded. Nancy and

Paul were able to add a second level to the school and to replace

the kitchen and bathrooms. After the second floor had been added the teachers suggested using the space in the afternoon for a secondary program. This program is the equivalent to our junior high school.



Importance of Education

Education is of critical importance for Guatemala, where over 40 percent of the population is under the age of 15, and the population is growing by more than two percent annually.

While the Tierra Colorada School was a primary school for grades 1-6, funded through the Government of Guatemala, a secondary program (grades 7-9) was not available.

In Guatemala, government support for education has been limited in recent years, with some focus on primary but less funding for secondary education.

Education for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Children

In 2012, Sombrilla continued the work of Nancy and Paul and started funding the school, mainly by providing the salaries for 8 teachers. Since the establishment of the secondary program, on average 100 students were enrolled every year.

The majority of the students would not have been able to continue their education without this program. Many of the students are indigenous children from rural

communities. Completing the additional 3 years of education increased their opportunities to find a job or continue



Thanks in part to Sombrilla's financial commitment approx. 100 students successfully graduate from Tierra Colorada Secondary School on an annual basis.

Government Support

Recently, the lobbying efforts of the parents and teachers have been successful and in 2017 the Government of Guatemala has provided funding for one of the three grades in the secondary

program. In addition, the government has committed to funding for an additional grade in 2018. Based on these positive developments, Sombrilla expects the secondary program to be entirely

funded by the Guatemalan government within the next few years.

