



Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL)

Enabling YOU to make a difference in OUR world ...



GULL Guatemala: Hope for Young Adults

Guatemala, 23–27 October, 2012

Guatemala – land of contrasts

A country of striking features with a strong indigenous culture, Guatemala's natural beauty and powerful identity contrast sharply with its bloody past and troubled present. Mountainous, heavily forested and dotted with Mayan ruins, lakes, volcanoes, orchids and exotic birds, Guatemala is one of the most beautiful countries in Central America. Its indigenous population, the Maya, make up about half of the population and Mayan languages are spoken alongside Spanish, the official language.

Sadly, social inequality is a characteristic of the country. Poverty is particularly widespread in the countryside and among indigenous communities. Illiteracy, infant mortality and malnutrition are among the highest in the region, life expectancy is among the lowest and, in common with many of its neighbours, the country is plagued by organized crime and violent street gangs.

Some key statistics: Republic of Guatemala

Capital: Guatemala City

Country population: 14.7 million (UN, 2011)

Languages: Spanish and more than 20 indigenous languages

GNI per capita: US \$2,870 (World Bank, 2011)

Source: Guatemala country profile

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1215758.stm



(Above) Guatemala and adjoining countries

Guatemala, Oct 12

The scale of child poverty

About two thirds of all Guatemalan children live in poverty. Sixty eight per cent of children under the age of six and 63 per cent of children under the age of 18 live below the poverty line. Here the 'poverty line' is defined as the yearly cost of food necessary to meet minimum caloric requirements plus a small percentage of that basic food cost added for essential non-food items such as housing, health-care, education and clothing. Over 81% of the poor and 91% of the extreme poor live in the countryside. Three quarters of all rural residents fall below the poverty line. [Source: www.avivara.org/aboutguatemala/]



Alejandra Oroxón (pictured left with Katy, a street child) works with street children in Guatemala City in her spare time. Alejandra is hopeful that GULL's philosophy of self-directed action learning will help to bring about a change in the plight of the poorest.



(Above & right) Alejandra gave Katy a bar of chocolate that Richard had brought with him from England. Together with her younger sister, Katy helps her mum by finding items of rubbish that can be re-sold. These photos were taken on one of Guatemala City's rubbish tips – a terrible place to live and work.

Guatemala, Oct 12

Introducing GULL to Guatemala: Inaugural Workshop

On Wednesday 24 October 2012, El Shaddai Ministries, a Guatemala City church with 12,000 + members and with more than 80 branch churches in Guatemala and internationally, hosted the inaugural GULL workshop in one of their spacious, modern conference rooms. The building complex also serves as the headquarters of a large media organization and the Universidad San Pablo de Guatemala (St Paul's University). The event was attended by more than 40 participants from churches and local, national and international non-government organizations.

Richard Teare provided an overview of GULL's mission and approach to self-directed action learning. At the end of the day, 23 participants from eight organizations agreed to join a GULL pilot programme with the aim of establishing GULL Guatemala and integrating the GULL system with each participating organization's respective efforts to serve economically poor and marginalized groups in Guatemala. El Shaddai also hosted a pilot briefing session on Friday 26 October and offered support for the GULL initiative via St Paul's University.



(Above) Mario Larios graciously hosted the GULL Guatemala workshop on behalf of El Shaddai Ministries.

Guatemala, Oct 12

'Young Adults with Purpose in Guatemala' and GULL

Developing pathways to micro enterprise and employment

'Young Adults With Purpose In Guatemala' is a movement of young adults aged 18 to 25, most of whom have recently left childcare. The young adults receive mentor support, continue their education and coordinate and participate in community development initiatives. The movement aids young adults in their transition from childhood to adulthood, sustaining the investment provided throughout their childhoods.

The founders of the 'Young Adults' movement (Alastair, Debbie and Jonathan Welford) have a powerful vision for serving and supporting Guatemala's vulnerable youth. For many years, they have been involved in the rescue and care of street children in Central and South America. Beyond this lies a major challenge: Equipping young adults for life and in particular to be self-reliant and financially independent. Given that most do not have relatives to assist them, the 'Young Adults' movement will use the GULL system to provide action learning pathways in preparation for employment – or self employment – with mentor support.



(Above) Some of GULL workshop participants at El Shaddai on 24 October 12.

Hope and opportunity for young adults in Guatemala

"GULL has the potential to be a great tool for young people in Guatemala. Many marginalized young people in our country are stuck and have little desire or motivation to change. The key is attitude. If attitudes of young people can change they will be enabled to transform others and future generations by taking action. They will break free from their habits and come alive. GULL can help us to achieve this." **Cesar and Carol de Lopez, Directors of Girls' home 'Mi Especial Tesoro', Guatemala.**



(Above) Jonathan Welford demonstrates his interpersonal skills across the age spectrum. This little girl had been crying until Jonnie picked her up and in no time at all she is smiling again!

Guatemala, Oct 12

(Below) On Friday 26 October, Jonathan Welford took Richard Teare to meet a Young Adults group in Chimaltenango – an hour's drive from Guatemala City. Jonathan, who will lead for GULL in Guatemala briefed the group and they are keen to get started. We'll begin with GULL for young adults in January, 2013.





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