



Project Schoolhouse

www.projectschoollhouse.org



Building Opportunities for Eager Minds

Since 2004, Project Schoolhouse has been building elementary schools, community water systems, and providing high school scholarships in rural communities in Nicaragua. We follow a minimalist non-interventionist development model that responds strictly to voiced need from our recipient communities. We can use your help to continue our work.



Who we are

Mission:

Project Schoolhouse builds educational opportunities in developing countries.

Through investment in schools, students, and communities, Project Schoolhouse works to help rural communities in developing countries to better advocate for themselves in changing regional economies and political systems. With an emphasis on community building and local volunteer participation, Project Schoolhouse partners with recipient communities to build new schools, provide clean water, improve sanitation, and help students continue their educations.

Improving the quality of children's education in rural communities is ever more important as rates of urbanization increase, global economic forces continually squeeze rural producers, and the growing technological requirements of doing business reach into the more remote regions of the world. Literacy and basic education are not luxuries, but represent crucial skills rural communities need in order to adequately advocate for themselves in changing economic and political environments.

Vision:

To achieve a world where all children have a secure dry place to learn, clean water to drink, and the opportunity to educate themselves to the extent of their capability or desire.

In developing countries, scarce resources limit the opportunities available to most people to achieve literacy and basic education. The repercussions of this lack of education are felt through every level of affected societies and perpetuate cultures of political disenfranchisement, cultural isolation, and stagnant economic development. Rural communities commonly suffer from the greatest economic privation and consequently are the slowest to overcome factors that keep them from emerging from poverty. Project Schoolhouse's ultimate objective is to remove limits on educational opportunities and allow these communities to start the transition towards literacy, education, and economic and political equality.





History

Project Schoolhouse was formed in 2004 to invest in education and water in rural communities in developing countries. Project Schoolhouse works to reduce poverty and inequality in rural communities by promoting literacy, basic education, and improved health through building schools, building community water systems, and providing secondary education scholarships. Since 2004, Project Schoolhouse has completed six elementary schools, three community water systems, and provided eight high school scholarships.

Project Schoolhouse is a very efficient organization uniquely positioned to implement self-sustaining rural school building projects. Run almost entirely by volunteers, PSH carries a very small administrative burden. Its directors are all either natives of Central America or are professionals with considerable experience working and living in Central America. This linguistic and cultural integration with recipient communities allows PSH to skillfully assess need and implement hands-on grassroots solutions that are cost-effective and self-sustaining.



Executive Director Thomas Barker is a 1996 graduate of Carleton College with a degree in Economics. He spent 1997 teaching English as a second language in a small community in Costa Rica. During his time in Costa Rica he was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study Economics in Argentina where he spent all of 1998. After extensive traveling through South America and Europe, he returned home to Wyoming in 2000. That summer he raised \$20,000 and returned to Costa Rica to build two additional classrooms at the school where he had previously taught. The experience was motivating and in 2004 he founded Project Schoolhouse to continue that work, this time in Nicaragua. Mr. Barker possesses the linguistic abilities, organizational skills, and the knowledge to successfully oversee grassroots education projects in remote rural regions in Nicaragua.



Project Schoolhouse partners with recipient communities willing to donate their own labor to build new schools. Often, existing conditions include dirt floors, leaky roofs, and inadequate space. Students and teachers distracted by mud, rain, and overcrowding find it difficult to do their jobs of learning and teaching. Dry, secure, spacious classroom environments greatly benefit developing communities and can mean the difference between learning or not.



The schools have metal beam supported tin roofs and venetian style windows for maximum air flow in summer and protection from weather in the winter. Schools are carefully oriented to account for prevailing winds and engineered to withstand earthquakes and handle heavy rain.

We carefully select potential communities based on a number of criteria, most important among which is their potential ability to work together over an extended period of time. Before a community can even be considered for a project, they must complete a written proposal, all participating families must agree to the significant volunteer requirements of our projects, and an organizational board must be formed with officers.

Our overriding philosophy is one of only responding to voiced need. In accordance with this, we only facilitate projects that communities request. So far, that has been comprised of building elementary schools, community water systems, and helping students attend high school.

For more information, go to: www.projectschoollhouse.org/Project/Schools



(Left) The original school in Kiwaska before Project Schoolhouse replaced it with the new 1500 sq ft three room schoolhouse in 2007 (Right).



Completed Schools

Escuela Thomas Langdon Barker - Kiwaska, Nicaragua

In July, 2007, Project Schoolhouse and the rural community of Kiwaska, Nicaragua finished construction of a new concrete, 1500 sq ft, 3-classroom school. Dry, secure, and spacious, the school was completed just under its projected budget of \$25,000. The process of building a 2 km road by hand, bringing water 1 km from a spring, and dealing the remote nature of this location made this school a considerable challenge. The upgrade was remarkable, however, and the spacious school now brags running water, on-site kitchen for noonday meals, and an ongoing adult literacy class.



Made of bamboo, palm fronds, and dirt floor, the school leaked and was near collapse

Escuela Cheryl Elliott Barker- El Aulo, Nicaragua

In June, 2008 Project Schoolhouse and the community of El Aulo completed another school using a design very similar to that employed in 2007 in Kiwaska. The existing school was ready to collapse and consisted of bamboo walls, dirt floor, and palm frond roof. As in Kiwaska, this new school boasts two new latrines with connecting covered sidewalk to the school that passes the running water installation for better hygiene and less mud tracked into classrooms. The community is currently working to mobilize and build a potable water system.

Escuela Santa Edubiges, Manceras, Nicaragua

Completed in August 2009, this three room school was a major upgrade for the community of Manceras, Nicaragua. Project Schoolhouse also built a potable water system that brings clean water to the school.





Completed Schools (cont)



Escuela Los Cien Amigos, Martillo, Nicaragua

Project Schoolhouse completed the community water system in Martillo in mid-2010, complete with running water carried to each of the 18 homes in the community as well as to the school. In 2011 the two room school was completed. This is the first project where Project Schoolhouse has assisted a community in the construction of both a complete community water system and a new school.

The previous school was rotten and had major leakage issues. During storms water would flood through the building, leaving deposits of mud, forcing school closure for cleanup.

Escuela Naranjo - Naranjo, Nicaragua

In 2012, Project Schoolhouse and the community of Naranjo, Nicaragua completed a new school. The new structure replaced an aging 250 sq ft school built of wood planks and a palm frond roof. One positive thinking local once said that “luckily enough light came in through the holes in the roof that the kids could see to read.” Luckily, the students no longer have to worry about trading off enough light to read for protection from the rain. The community is now working to build a community kitchen at the school to use for preparation of school lunches.



Escuela Sofia Mendoza - Sector Zamora Cuatro Esquinas, Nicaragua

In 2013, Project Schoolhouse finished Escuela Sofia Mendoza in a small community near Cuatro Esquinas, Nicaragua. The existing 200 sq ft structure (pictured left) which could not contain all 45 students, was replaced with a luxurious 1000 ft, 2-room, school. A community kitchen was also constructed. A community-wide water system completed the project.





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Water Projects

Water is life.

Communities without clean running water spend considerable time procuring water and still suffer from waterborne illness that hinders economic production and school attendance.

Project Schoolhouse builds community water systems that complement our school projects. We build gravity flow systems that produce perfectly clean spring water year round with minimal maintenance and no moving parts.

As with the school projects, we require significant buy-in from the community and they provide the majority of the labor as well as providing food and housing for the builders that Project Schoolhouse sends to oversee the project.



Bringing clean water to a community changes everything. Ten year old children no longer have to spend hours every day fetching contaminated surface water and can go to school. Incidence of waterborne illness disappears. The economic impact is profound as is the increase in school attendance and performance.

For more information, go to: www.projectschoollhouse.org/Project/Water



Sanitation

Hygiene and healthy sanitation facilities are a critical element of every Project Schoolhouse endeavor. At every new school we build latrines with proper venting, three meter pits, concrete foundations, and sidewalks to limit mud tracked back into the school. Proper sanitation is a powerful weapon against disease in rural regions and its benefits to education cannot be underestimated. Whenever possible, Project Schoolhouse builds new latrines for every family involved in a school and water project.





Scholarships

Since 2009, Project Schoolhouse has been helping students continue their educations past sixth grade. It costs up to \$50 per month to send a student to high school. That is a formidable cost for a parent who makes \$2 per day.

Project Schoolhouse builds elementary schools that go through grade six. Without assistance, most students cannot continue their studies. For that reason, we have started offering scholarships to qualified students to pay for them to pursue secondary educations.



Currently, five students are receiving scholarships from Project Schoolhouse. We make a five year commitment to students in order to get them all the way through the local secondary education program.

Because we work with rural youth who must travel significant distances to get to school, they often participate in a special program that meets once a week on Saturdays. These youth often work full time jobs all week and then spend the weekend traveling to the nearby city to take class. Travel times can exceed 5 hours each way and often the majority of the Project Schoolhouse scholarship goes to cover the cost of transportation.

At the beginning of every school year, each scholarship recipient receives \$100 worth of school supplies, clothes, and other equipment necessary to complete their schooling.

We require that each additional scholarship be completely funded with five year commitments before it is awarded to a student who has graduated with honors from one of the schools that Project Schoolhouse has built.

If you are interested in making a commitment to help fund a scholarship please contact us. Funding a scholarship can be done in a variety of ways: a one time payment of \$3,000 to fully fund a scholarship, five yearly payments of \$600, or a monthly commitment of \$50 for five years. Another option is to fully endow a scholarship in perpetuity for \$30,000.

The difference a secondary education makes in the lives of these children is enormous and opens the door to opportunities otherwise unimaginable.

For more information, go to: www.projectschoollhouse.org/Project/Scholarships



Why build schools?

H.G. Wells once said that “Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.” In developing countries, scarce resources drastically limit the opportunities available to most people to achieve literacy and basic education. The repercussions of this lack of education are felt through every level of affected societies and perpetuate cultures of political disenfranchisement, cultural isolation, and stagnant economic development. Rural communities commonly suffer from the greatest economic privation and consequently are the slowest to overcome factors that keep them from emerging from poverty.

Education is the key to development and progress, especially in communities experiencing high rates of teen pregnancy, domestic violence, illiteracy, poor hygiene, and environmental degradation. Project Schoolhouse is working to provide more opportunities for rural children to learn the tools they need to function in ever-changing political and economic environments. More importantly, building schools is a small logical step in the natural development of our recipient communities and represents a step they would take for themselves if only the resources were available. By providing these resources Project Schoolhouse becomes a partner in development driven through grassroots initiatives.

How much does a school cost?

Each school costs \$35,000.

What will my donation do?

- \$5000 will purchase all the materials for the roof of one school.
- \$2000 will buy all 2000 concrete blocks necessary for an entire school.
- \$1000 will build two new latrines.
- \$300 will pay the monthly salary of one of our two on-site supervisors/builders.
- \$50 will buy the concrete sink the children use to wash their hands.
- \$12 will buy one bag of cement. 1500 bags of cement are required for one school.

How do we choose recipient communities?

We don't. They choose us. Either through direct contact from the communities themselves or through reference from local authorities the communities come to us for help. Because we require an enormous amount of investment from the recipient community we only partner with those who demonstrate a strong commitment to the project. Applicants must submit a written proposal for a school to our offices with signatures of all committed volunteers before we start the selection process.

Is Project Schoolhouse affiliated with any political or religious organization or institution?

No. We are not members of or affiliated with any political or religious entity. We work to fulfill our educational mission while minimizing to the greatest extent possible any outside political, religious, or cultural impact. Our ultimate objective is to promote grassroots development that originates from within the recipient community itself.

Environmental Consciousness in Global Emergence

Education plays a key role in how communities deal with environmental issues. Although far removed from industrial and urban environmental issues, rural communities have an equally great responsibility to strategically deal with the greater impact their development will cause. Because these regions are still relatively pristine, however, there is a tremendous opportunity to prevent further degradation and negative impact.

As Project Schoolhouse invests in education in rural communities, a greater vehicle for environmental education, awareness, and innovation becomes available. We are dedicated to helping communities find ways to reduce their impact on their environment without impeding their economic, social, and political development.



Images



Nicknamed 'Terremoto' this child lives in Kiwaska and will attend the new school there in 2008.



Pouring concrete into the columns for the new school in El Aulo in March 2008.



Leon Schatz filmed and edited a video on the school in Kiwaska in 2007. These children are fascinated with videos of themselves.



To get materials to Kiwaska we eventually repaired 2 km of an old road. We had been moving materials by horse



Children in 'El Aulo' showing off new school supplies donated by Austin TX Independent School District (AISD)



Project Schoolhouse's in country director Maria Ines Garcia Bracamonte (front) and Doña Maria resident and volunteer cook from the recipient community of El Aulo. They were preparing lunch for the construction crew in March 2008.



Moving materials during the beginning of the construction of Escuela Thomas Langdon Barker



More materials transportation in 2007 for Escuela Thomas Langdon Barker



Contact Us

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