



Maya Educational Foundation

Providing educational opportunities

2015-2016 Report

The Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) supports the educational and professional advancement of the Maya people in Guatemala, southern Mexico, and Belize, with special consideration given to women and girls and to indigenous groups from remote areas.



FEPMaya students visit the archaeological site of Iximché,
ancient capital city of the Kaqchikel Maya people of Guatemala.

Contents

President's Letter	2
Taking the Leap, Increasing the Challenge	3
Building Bridges instead of Walls	4
Your Donations at Work	5
Connections in Action	6

For information on our work,
partners, and projects, please
visit our website
www.mayaedufound.org

I will soon graduate as a medical doctor. The expenses for this career are very high and I would have never been able to cover them and pursue my studies without the support from MEF. In the program I also had the opportunity to strengthen the spiritual and cultural aspects of my life.



FEP Maya student Lisbeth,
Guatemala, 2015



English Language Program students
and teacher in Antigua, Guatemala.

Dear Friends,

In the early 1980s, after finishing my doctoral research in the largely Maya town of Tecpán Guatemala, I began thinking of how I might give back to a community that had supported my work in so many ways. There were scores of individuals to whom I owed a great debt, and I also recognized that the community as a whole was very important to me. And not just the people of Tecpán. I was indebted to many more people, and institutions, in surrounding towns as well as in Guatemala City and Antigua. How to even begin saying thank you?

Those years also coincided with a very bleak period in Guatemala's history. The decades-long civil war was raging and yet, in spite of the often grim times, I found families working hard to better their lives. Education was something so many of my friends wanted for their children, education that would take them beyond the level of their parents' studies, perhaps into secondary school or, if possible (and often only a distant dream), to university.

While doing research I made frequent use of the wonderful facilities at the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA) in the colonial capital of Antigua. Founded in 1978, CIRMA provided me with unique historical and photographic archives for my research projects. It was through CIRMA that I learned of the creation of the Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) in 1992. Focused on educational initiatives in Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize, MEF was the perfect organization to which I could donate time and money. It supported my wish to help provide educational opportunities to smart and ambitious Maya students, ones who otherwise would not have a chance to go on in school. Since the earliest days of MEF I have been an avid supporter and know many of you share this deep appreciation.

Christine Eber is one of the people who has committed much energy to MEF. She joined the board in 2004 and served as its president from 2012-2015. We thank Christine for her dedicated and heart-felt service as well as her continued and creative efforts raising funds for MEF. At the same time we welcome two new members: Christa Little-Siebold and Edward Fischer. Christa is an Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at College of the Atlantic and was central in the organization of the Guatemalan Scholars Network meeting in Antigua in summer 2015; Ted is Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at Vanderbilt University. Both have done extensive fieldwork in Guatemala. Welcome!

This year I will have the chance to participate in the MEF-sponsored English Language Program, something I've wanted to do for years. For two weeks our small group of volunteers from the U.S. will work intensely with fourteen FEP Maya university students on their English-language skills. I'll report back on my experiences in my next letter.

In closing I want to ask that you contribute generously to MEF. Funds are needed now more than ever before as we continue to support a wide range of programs and stretch to meet the growing need for university scholarships. On behalf of all the Maya individuals and institutions that benefit from MEF funding, I thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Carol'.

Carol Hendrickson

Taking the Leap, Increasing the Challenge

Now in its 23rd year, the Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) is going forward, strong and determined, with committed donors, a dynamic board, amazing partners and volunteers, and dedicated staff. We continue to focus on providing educational opportunities for young Mayas in Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize so that they can achieve their goals and fulfill their potential.

In recent reports we described how our scholars are reaching higher and are going further in their education than ever before. This trend continues at a fast pace. In the past three years in particular, we have seen a large push towards university degrees in the programs we support. Our partners have been inundated with applications from hopeful young Mayas who are qualified and want nothing more than to attend universities or technical colleges but cannot afford to do so for a lack of resources. Of course, higher levels of education require more funding, especially for university studies. Scholarship costs for full-time university students can range from US\$2,000 to US\$2,500 per student per year and, even at that rate of support, the students themselves also need to contribute

a portion by working part-time, holding assistantships, or having additional support from their families.

With advanced degrees these young people have better employment opportunities and a chance to build better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities. With scholarship funding, MEF is making a deliberate investment in the young people of the countries where we work. The results may not be immediately apparent—it takes between five and seven years to complete a university degree—but the eventual benefits are clear. In the meantime, there is a ripple effect in the students' lives that is powerful and effects lasting change. MEF scholars and graduates are already making a difference, whether it's the midwife who is helping Maya women have healthy births in Chiapas (from MEF's Chuj scholarship program), the physician (a former Sna Jtz'ibajom scholar) who travels to rural communities and can discuss health concerns with elderly, monolingual patients in their local Mayan language, or the law student who now provides legal help to his community members in Cajolá (a former Grupo Cajolá student).

The challenge for us is to raise a great deal more funding to meet this growing need.



Christine Eber visits with the Chuj scholars
in the Tzisco area of Chiapas, Mexico, 2015.

Building Bridges instead of Walls

MEF partners with like-minded nonprofits in the countries we serve. These partnerships help increase educational opportunities, not only in terms of scholarship funding but with in-country student support, mentoring, and role models as well as, at times, the construction of schools or the employment of good teachers.

When all looks bleak and hopeless, of course people will want to leave their communities and even their countries. The director of MEF partner Amigos de San Cristóbal in Chiapas, Mexico, which supports educational and social projects in San Cristóbal, recently wrote about the economic and social challenges that are shaping life in Mexico today and are pushing people to emigrate. Here is an excerpt from Ana Cristina Vázquez Carpizo's letter:

Most of the people who leave our country do not do it by choice but because of great need. The case of Chiapas is especially difficult since it is the poorest state in Mexico. In Amigos de San Cristóbal we want these Mexicans who migrate, often risking their own lives, to stay in our country. We want them to have the opportunities they have been denied. We want them to live here with their families and loved ones. We want to help them build a future with hope and fulfillment. That is why we do what we do. Every day at Amigos we strive to contribute to the construction of alternatives that allow people to remain in their communities, in dignified and healthy conditions. The solidarity of MEF is an invaluable support without which we could not do our job. Today more than ever, we need your help to continue building together the Mexico of which we dream, the Mexico we all deserve. KOLAWALIK TA AKOTOLIK!!! THANK YOU ALL!!!

Caryn Maxim of MEF partner Grupo Cajolá in Cajolá, Guatemala, reports:

Cajolá has a population of 20,000 people, 93% of whom are Mam Maya. Only half the population has had any education, and the majority of those are men. Ninety-four percent live in poverty, with 57% in extreme poverty. More than a third of the population has now emigrated to the U.S.

Grupo Cajolá has worked to improve the school system in the community and aims to develop more educational programs so that townspeople won't feel the need to emigrate to the U.S. Since 2006, with support from MEF, Grupo Cajolá has given 101 scholarships, created a public middle school, and now has 10 university students supported by MEF scholarships. Our ongoing project with MEF increases the capacity for development in Cajolá by investing in the education of professionals who are committed to their community and their Mam Maya identity.



Student Marcela from Grupo Cajolá 2015,
studying to become a teacher.

Your Donations at Work

This fiscal year 2015-16, with your generous donations, MEF is able to give vital program support to a total of 19 partners, 12 of them in Guatemala, 5 in Mexico, and 2 in Belize. The major part of MEF funding goes to scholarships for Maya students at various levels but is focused primarily on high-school and university levels.

- In addition to scholarship programs, MEF funding benefits the work of partners who offer informal education. For example, in Guatemala the non-profits Fundación Tradiciones Mayas/Maya Traditions and Oxlajuj B'atz'/Thirteen Threads empower Maya women weavers by bringing to their rural communities customized workshops on topics that the women choose. In Chiapas, the women writers' and theater group FOMMA (Strength of the Maya Woman) offers skill and job training workshops for adults, including Spanish literacy classes; Sna Jtz'ibajom (House of the Writer) brings indigenous language courses and culturally relevant educational theater performances to Maya communities in Chiapas.

Student studying to read his Mayan language in a workshop given by Sna Jtz'ibajom, Chiapas, 2015.



Your support makes it possible for MEF this year to provide scholarships for 164 university students, 227 middle and high-school age students, and 50 elementary-school children.

- MEF support also goes to the social science research center CIRMA (Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica) in Antigua, an institution famous for its historical and photo archives and a must-visit resource for anyone wanting to learn about Guatemala's rich history and culture. More and more MEF-supported students in Guatemala have been able to take advantage of this resource and are visiting CIRMA to consult its library and archives. With scanning and digitizing projects underway, CIRMA will soon have more of its resources available on-line for scholars and the general public. In the near future, we plan to offer a number of scholarships for students interested in studying library sciences.



Students from the Escuela de Historia of Universidad de San Carlos consulting old newspapers, CIRMA, 2015.

Connections in Action

In this year's report we would like to shine light on initiatives that show MEF's outreach gaining momentum and MEF forming connections in the U.S. and the countries we serve. We are gratified to see these symbiotic relationships and developments. Here are some examples:

- At most of our programs we are observing a marked increase in older and former students mentoring and motivating younger students. We are also seeing MEF-supported groups partnering with smaller programs and taking on extra responsibilities where MEF needs their help.
- In Guatemala, MEF's oldest partner FEPMaya (Fundación para Estudios y Profesionalización Maya), which is already serving 50 university students, has taken on the supervision of MEF's 15 Todos Santos scholarships and is bringing the high-school and university students to the capital for monthly student meetings. According to Todos Santos program supervisor Felipa Jiménez, this has boosted the students' morale and goals greatly. Felipa is retiring this year and we thank her for her many years of volunteer service! In Chiapas, Sna Jtz'ibajom supervises 20 students and also accepted our request to include the dental student from Chenalhó in their group. In the Toledo district of southern Belize, the Julian Cho Society makes it possible for us to offer up to 15 scholarships to Maya students. We are fortunate that we can count on our partners and are grateful for their commitment.
- The Chiapas Highland Maya Fund aided our work in Mexico by initially granting scholarships for two Maya women to study nursing in Chiapas. In partnership with MEF and the Western New York Latin American Solidarity Committee, the Fund later gave additional support to sponsor Ceiba Marisol, the young Maya woman from the Chenalhó program who has begun to study dentistry.
- The Shelton H. Davis Fund has been a MEF partner since 2010 and is supporting a group of younger students in Todos Santos. It has recently decided to also help us with university scholarships for students in Todos Santos who are graduating from high school. We are deeply grateful to Shelton Davis's family and friends.
- MEF also enjoys collaborations with like-minded organizations such as Starfish/Estrella de Mar, a foundation that started by having two of its former students join FEPMaya, then sponsoring two more last year, with two additional Starfish students slated to join FEPMaya's university scholars in 2016.
- In the past two years we have forged closer ties with MAM (Mayas for Ancient Mayan), and several groups



Todos Santos student and his mother, 2015.

of MEF students were able to attend MAM's exciting and well-received epigraphy congresses in Guatemala and Mexico.

- Two schools—one in California, one in Texas—contacted us this year and then raised funds (one with a bake sale) for Maya students in Guatemala. We were amazed and touched by these middle and high-school students in the U.S. caring about students far away. Colegio Paxil and Tz'utujil students benefited from these special donations. Thank you!

- We are glad to continue our strong bond with the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation into the future and hope to honor its late former President Flavia Derossi Robinson by following her call to action and helping indigenous groups, especially women and children in rural Guatemala.
- We also thank our friends at Maya Traditions for supervising the Ben and Lois Paul program and for making a video during a recent visit with the Tz'utujil students.



Petrona, a Tz'utujil student
in the Ben and Lois Paul program, 2015.



Corn planting ritual at Colegio Paxil,
Nebaj, Guatemala, 2015.

Cristina Coc at the Julian Cho Society, MEF's partner in the Toledo District of southern Belize writes:

The scholarship program continues to be an important part of the development of our Maya communities. The much needed aid to families to support their children to attend school is integral in achieving a more literate generation of young leaders from rural Toledo. The numbers we can support may be small but the impact is exceptional.

The Belize program for Maya high school and university students has shown results and produced many successful vocational high school graduates who work in business and tourism, several teachers, and a young woman biologist.

Carolina graduated from the Julian Cho Society's
Technical High School this year.



Please, give the gift of education to a student in Guatemala, Chiapas, or Belize.
The young people you support through MEF are the hope and future of their countries. Thank you!

How You Can Help

There are several ways you can help the Maya Educational Foundation:

- ✓ by making a financial contribution
- ✓ by considering a bequest to MEF
- ✓ by asking family and friends to make a donation to MEF in your honor (birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, special occasions)
- ✓ by volunteering your time and expertise
- ✓ by making an in-kind contribution
- ✓ by exploring and utilizing employer matches to multiply your donations
- ✓ by liking us on Facebook and spreading the word about our work and mission

MEF is a 501(c)(3) public charity. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Your Donations at Work

- \$ 200 supports the education of a university student for one month.
- \$ 100 supports a student in high school for one month.
- \$ 50 supports a student in middle school for one month.
- \$ 30 helps parents send a child to elementary school for one month.
- \$ 50 covers the cost of weekend workshops teaching individuals how to read and write their native language.

Any amount helps Maya students with their education and provides workshops and vocational training to women and whole communities.

Your donation to MEF will help change lives.

Maya Educational Foundation

P.O. Box 1483, Wellfleet, MA 02667, USA
mayaedufound@aol.com • www.mayaedufound.org
Tel: (508) 349-1330 • Fax: (508) 349-0252



YES, I want to support the Maya Educational Foundation programs!

US\$ _____ Check enclosed payable to Maya Educational Foundation

US\$ _____ Charge to ☐ Master Card ☐ Visa ☐ Discover

Credit Card No. _____

Expiration date _____ Security code (on the back) _____

Signature _____

Phone _____

Please send a receipt for this tax-deductible donation to:

Name/Organization _____ e-mail _____

Street/P.O. Box, City, State, Zip, Country _____

☐ I want to go green and receive MEF newsletters by e-mail only to the address provided above.

I/we pledge a monthly gift of US\$ _____
for _____ months
☐ Credit Card (*MEF will charge your credit card monthly.
Minimum pledge of US\$10 required*)

☐ I am considering a bequest to MEF. Please contact me.

**You can also donate securely on line
at www.mayaedufound.org
by clicking on the **Donate Now** button**