UNESCO Position Paper – Guatemala

Molly O’Neill – Branksome Hall – November 10th - 13th 2016

Topic 1: Governance and its Effects on Education

Education plays a vital role in modern day society. Education enables people to work to make a living and expand the knowledge of the human population. However, without access to basic education, many people across the globe are deprived of this and are unable to achieve the success they would be able to if they had the proper access to basic education. In developing countries, corrupt countries and unstable countries, education can be very hard to come by for families and their children. With many barriers to reach world-wide accessible education, the topic often becomes overlooked and then goals very hard to achieve, but with global involvement and a communal solution, education and can be achieved in all countries.

Guatemala has experienced its share of government corruption and also lack of access to education. There are many remote regions in Guatemala where access to education is very poor as well as the materials classrooms do have access to are insufficient and are usually in very low supply. In addition, there are many over twenty Indigenous languages spoken throughout Guatemala which continues to make it more difficult to focus education on every child in the country.[[1]](#footnote-1) Within Guatemala, corruption had been tolerated for many years leading to impunity and an excess in crime. This distracted the government from focusing on issues like the lack of education in rural communities. With more than half of the population living under the poverty, many children are forced to drop out of school with an incomplete education. This could be combated with aid from the Guatemalan government and with foreign aid.

The Guatemalan Government has been successful in helping young women prevent unwanted pregnancies and helping the young women stay in school. The “Abreindo Oppotunidades” (“Opening Opportunities”) programme has reached over 6,000 girls and all the girls in the program completed sixth grade of schooling compared to the national average of 82 percent.[[2]](#footnote-2) By taking steps to help reach girls across the country, the Guatemalan Government is beginning to see improvement in education in the country. However, there is still much work to be done. There needs to be action taken in the international community through the donation of foreign aid in developing countries to aid in the development in infrastructure and education as well as develop better foreign relations with those corrupt countries. Additionally, countries with more developed education systems should aid those without with both advice and financial aid to help those countries invest in effective learning programs instead of letting governments take this aid and use it for other investments. For this situation, there should be an international agreement that whatever aid is being given, it must strictly be used towards the development of education programs across countries. These actions will help fix the issues within the countries government to allow all children across the globe to access a quality education to improve the lives of many future generations.

Topic 2: Preservation of World Heritage Sites

Currently, there are a total of 1052 World Heritage sites in 165 different countries.[[3]](#footnote-3) There are three different types of World Heritage sites, cultural sites, natural sites, and mixed sites. The designated World Heritage sites play a vital role in a countries culture and help to explain the story behind countries’ heritage. However, there are multiple factors that put these sites at risk and need to be controlled in order for the preservation of these sites. Additionally, World Heritage sites greatly impact a country’s tourism industry and without the existence and preservation of these sites, many countries would suffer greatly. It is very important to find a solution to the current issues at hand and continue to value and protect these sites.

Guatemala currently has three World Heritage sites recognized by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICMOS) and the World Conservation Union (WCU). Guatemala’s World Heritage Sites are very important to Guatemala’s history but also play an important role in the tourist industry. Tikal National Park in Guatemala is a historic Mayan complex of temples and palaces that is visited year round and reflects on cultural evolution in Guatemala.[[4]](#footnote-4) Climate change and conflict zones are becoming bigger issues than themselves and are coming with many consequences. Sea levels are rising and creating threats to World Heritage sites and conflict zones like Syria and Iraq are facing threats that could lead to the destruction of the World Heritage sites. It is imperative that the global community creates a solution to help protect these sites and prevent further harm from effecting the sites.

Guatemala has done a sufficient job of maintaining its designated World Heritage sites. Although Guatemala does suffer from environmental issues such as air pollution and deforestation, Guatemala is taking steps towards countering these harmful actions to help create a better society for its people.[[5]](#footnote-5) Additionally, Guatemala has maintained good relations with its bordering countries and other nations such as the United States, China, South Korea, Spain, and Russia. By maintaining strong relations with other nations, Guatemala has been able to deal with conflicts that arise with rationality and have been able to solve past conflicts without many issues. In order to help resolve conflicts in war zones, the international community needs to take action to stop terrorist groups like such as ISIS by contributing financial aid to countries military as well as possibly deploying troops to assist with the conflict. By working together as an international community, member nations will be able to develop stronger relationships and build trust and create alliances. By improving relations around the globe and by creating agreements among member nations, the global community will be able to develop a standard of the treatment of these sites and be able to maintain more positive relations as well as helping to keep the World Heritage sites protected.

Topic 3: Supporting and Accomplishing Education 2030

In 2015 at the World Education Forum, the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 was adopted with the hopes of improving education for people all over the world.[[6]](#footnote-6) The declaration established goals for developing education in countries but was lacking in many specifics. The declaration did not fully take into account the situations different countries are in and fails to provide extra support for those nations. Education 2030 focuses on an educational approach that promotes inclusion, equity, learning at all levels, quality within a lifelong learning opportunities.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Guatemala has already begun to take steps to improve access to education in rural communities and also has begun programs that focus on teaching girls to help them stay in schools longer. However, there is not enough resources are being put into education in countries around the world. In 2012, the World Bank for the UNESCO Institute for Statistics published the expenditure of education as a percent total of government expenditure. Guatemala fell around 21% which was relatively high compared to some of the other countries who’s number was also recorded.[[8]](#footnote-8) The Declaration of Incheon focuses on gender equality and quality of learning, but in countries suffering from poverty much like Guatemala, where over half of the population lives under the poverty line, it is very hard to achieve the goals of the Declaration.

It is very crucial that every nation plays their role to lead to the success of the Education 2030 goals and that all countries do their part in this large plan. Guatemala will continue to develop and implement educational programs within rural areas targeted towards all people. It will be necessary for governments to ensure that all communities within their countries have access to learning, but also have access to learning in their own language and at multiple skill levels. Nations’ governments will have to develop a hiring process for potential teachers to ensure that every community across the globe has proper access to education. Additionally, international cooperation will be required in order to achieve the goals of the agenda. Nations can support one another by providing technical advice as well as financial aid to help improve the quality of education directed towards people across the globe. With global cooperation, the agenda for Education 2030 will be able to be accomplished.

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