



Growing Our Reach & Strengthening Our Roots

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Dear Reading Village Friends and Family,

In September, I joined Reading Village as the Executive Director. I immediately learned that **education eludes 90% of teens in the region we serve**. In these communities something as simple as not being able to afford the transportation to and from school (on average about \$1/day) prevents a child from getting an education. Too often parents are faced with the tough choice between feeding a child and sending that child to school.

We are happy to report that in 2017 we grew our Leaders and Readers Program by 30%, providing 95 teens with high school scholarships and 260 hours of leadership training. In turn these teens inspire elementary school-aged children to love reading, while they also teach the children important **critical thinking** and **language skills not taught in the school system**. **This allows each youth leader** to become their own **agent of change**, building a better future through education and literacy for themselves and their communities.

Your support in 2017 allowed Reading Village to not only offer these teens a chance to **stay in school**, to **grow**, and to **thrive**; but also to **expand** our reach and to **strengthen** our roots.

Together we make amazing things possible. For all you do, thank you!

Carolyn Fairman, Executive Director

**Thank you for the
confidence that you
have placed in me and
the encouragement
you've given me to
continue my studies
and reach my goals.**

AURORA, AGE 16
CHUIQUEL



Growing Our Reach

It all started with six teens and one simple wish - to see every child reach his or her full potential. Twelve years later, we've grown tremendously, improving the lives of thousands of people - refining our model, strengthening our roots, and deepening our impact. In Guatemala, 76% of the population lives in poverty. In the Department (State) of Sololá - where Reading Village's work is focused - 40% of the population has had no formal education and only 5% make it past the third grade. We've worked in partnership with indigenous communities to help children establish critical literacy skills and support teens in their journey to graduate from high school. Our ultimate goal has always been to develop young leaders who are attending university, pursuing professional careers which can double their household incomes, and working to develop their communities.

Additionally, we've created an access to books that has never before existed. We're so excited that last year we were able to grow our Independent Reading Initiative from eight micro-libraries in 2016 to 30 micro-libraries in 2017. This initiative has allowed us to amplify our effort to develop a culture of literacy beyond the weekly teen-led reading sessions and reach hundreds more people.

Being a part of the Sololá community for 12 years has allowed us to grow both the reach and quality of our program and we're proud of the depth and breadth of our positive impact to date. The numbers below reflect where the Leaders and Readers Program began in 2009 compared to 2017:

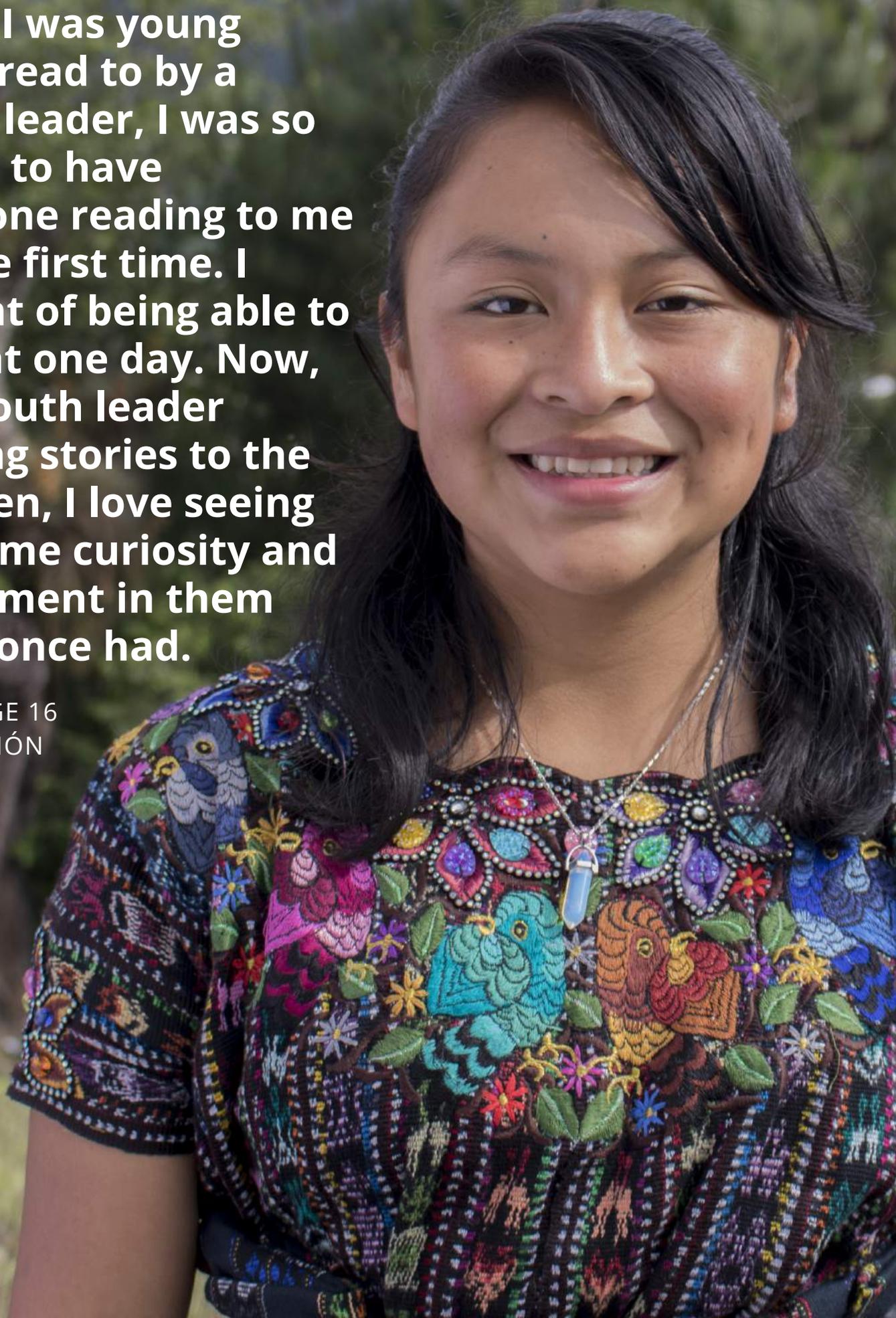
- **1 TO 3** MUNICIPALITIES
- **1 TO 5** COMMUNITIES
- **1 TO 15** PARTNER SCHOOLS
- **0 TO 20** GRADUATES
- **0 TO 30** MICRO-LIBRARIES
- **1 TO 30** VILLAGES
- **6 TO 95** TEENS IN THE PROGRAM
- **42 TO 260** HOURS OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING

When it's time for me to work with my peers, I forget my problems and everything going on in my life. They are like a second family for me and all together we are determined to help our communities move out of poverty. CARMEN MARIA, AGE 18, PUJUIL

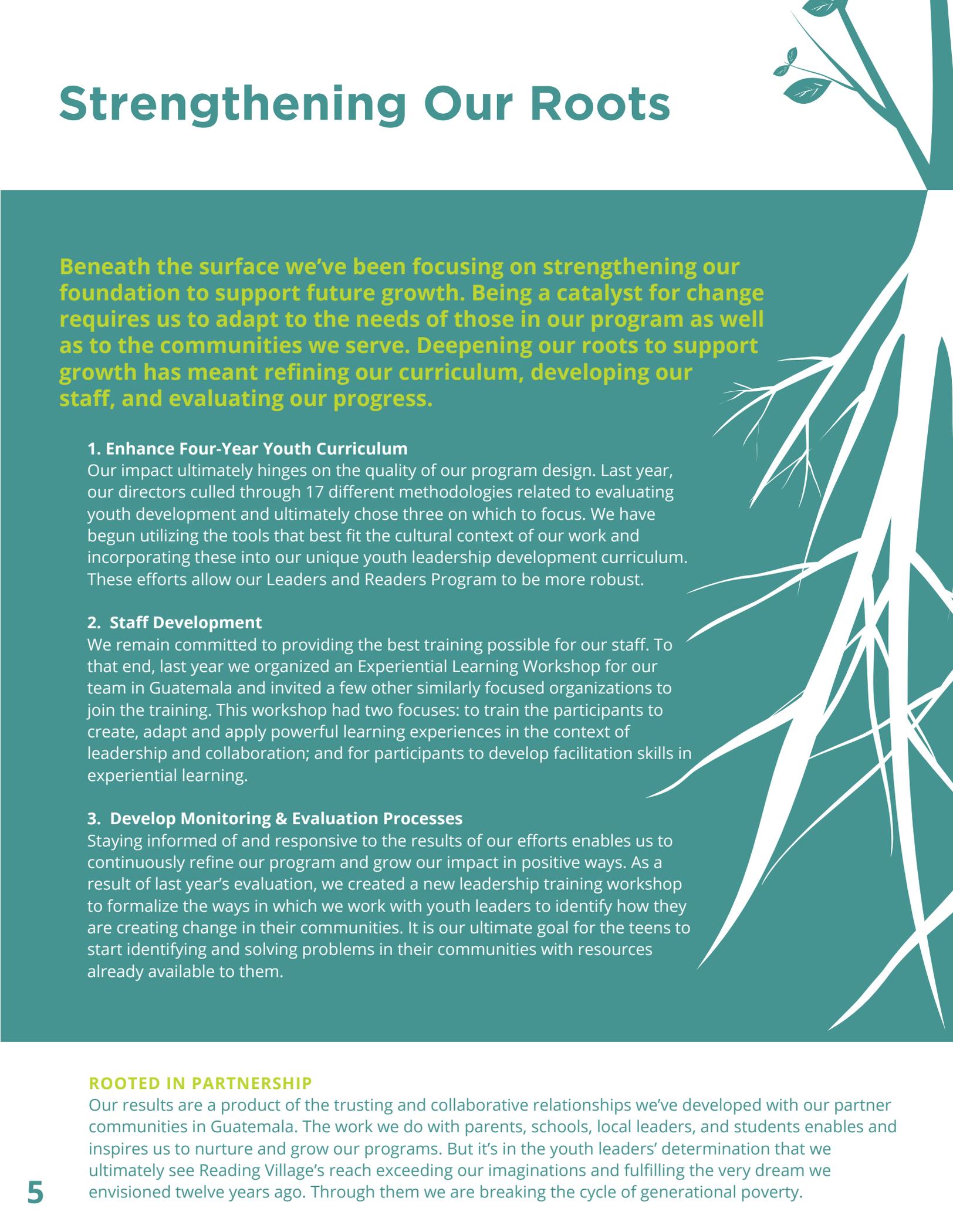


When I was young being read to by a youth leader, I was so happy to have someone reading to me for the first time. I dreamt of being able to do that one day. Now, as a youth leader reading stories to the children, I love seeing the same curiosity and excitement in them that I once had.

SONIA, AGE 16
CONCEPCIÓN



Strengthening Our Roots



Beneath the surface we've been focusing on strengthening our foundation to support future growth. Being a catalyst for change requires us to adapt to the needs of those in our program as well as to the communities we serve. Deepening our roots to support growth has meant refining our curriculum, developing our staff, and evaluating our progress.

1. Enhance Four-Year Youth Curriculum

Our impact ultimately hinges on the quality of our program design. Last year, our directors culled through 17 different methodologies related to evaluating youth development and ultimately chose three on which to focus. We have begun utilizing the tools that best fit the cultural context of our work and incorporating these into our unique youth leadership development curriculum. These efforts allow our Leaders and Readers Program to be more robust.

2. Staff Development

We remain committed to providing the best training possible for our staff. To that end, last year we organized an Experiential Learning Workshop for our team in Guatemala and invited a few other similarly focused organizations to join the training. This workshop had two focuses: to train the participants to create, adapt and apply powerful learning experiences in the context of leadership and collaboration; and for participants to develop facilitation skills in experiential learning.

3. Develop Monitoring & Evaluation Processes

Staying informed of and responsive to the results of our efforts enables us to continuously refine our program and grow our impact in positive ways. As a result of last year's evaluation, we created a new leadership training workshop to formalize the ways in which we work with youth leaders to identify how they are creating change in their communities. It is our ultimate goal for the teens to start identifying and solving problems in their communities with resources already available to them.

ROOTED IN PARTNERSHIP

Our results are a product of the trusting and collaborative relationships we've developed with our partner communities in Guatemala. The work we do with parents, schools, local leaders, and students enables and inspires us to nurture and grow our programs. But it's in the youth leaders' determination that we ultimately see Reading Village's reach exceeding our imaginations and fulfilling the very dream we envisioned twelve years ago. Through them we are breaking the cycle of generational poverty.

It makes me happy to think of myself as a caterpillar. One day I will become a butterfly because I am experimenting and discovering new things.

**BEVERLY, AGE 16
CHUIQUEL**



Cultivating Our Community



THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF YOUR INVESTMENT

In 2017, the **organizational budget was \$306,349**. With 95 teens in the Leaders and Readers Program, that's just **\$3,225 per teen per year**, providing not only a high school education, but also leadership training and mentoring. According to their high school teachers, these teens are out-performing the other students in their classes and becoming leaders in their classrooms. In turn, the teens are becoming role models in their communities, reading to thousands of children, and spreading critical language skills that will help the younger generation stay in school longer.

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