

Section I

Creativity and Entrepreneurship in Latin America

Testimonial

Association Our Godchildren of Guatemala (ANA de G) (Asociación Nuestros Ahijados de Guatemala)

Testimony of Vanessa Rodas de Montenegro

... my greatest satisfaction is *the opportunity to serve* ...

For 30 years, ANA de G has had the vision of addressing basic needs based on education as a long-term solution against poverty. The Mother's Club is a strategic program because it supports socially disadvantaged Guatemalan women by empowering them in different areas of their lives since most of them have single-parent families and are illiterate. Empowerment has been achieved by building dynamic capacities to eradicate circles of domestic violence and to get out of the conditions of poverty or extreme poverty in which they live.

In addition, entrepreneurship has been the key mechanism for them to overcome their situation of vulnerability and sustainably generate income through their own business or a microenterprise, whose activity ranges from production to the commercialization of local products, goods, or services. This is accompanied by participation in self-help groups and ongoing training. A very important challenge to overcome is the prevailing machismo in the territory. For this reason, recently, the Parents' Club initiative began with complementary and entrepreneurial activities to reinforce gender equality and respect for the human rights of their wives, daughters, and sons. This group is made up of unemployed parents, with some disability or illness, and the elderly.

This model of empowerment through entrepreneurship with education has multidimensional benefits both at the personal level of women and at the

2 *Testimony of Vanessa Rodas de Montenegro*

collective level of the communities where they live. ANA de G's support is comprehensive, and practically the 200 people in these programs have stated that their lives have changed because their microbusiness (entrepreneurship) allows them to feel their usefulness, self-worth, and productiveness; in addition, it awakens solidarity between them to move forward as a community. These programs have made it possible to advance on a culture of "achievement" to leave welfare assistance and motivate them to change the negative and become productive mothers, innovators, and agents of change with their economic income.

The process begins with literacy and training in trade workshops (education), and with a collaborative approach, they also dignify their homes. I believe that ANA de G processes should be strengthened through social reinvention and innovation to achieve sustainable community and local development ventures, which would allow achieving mobilization, relocation, and multimedia with sustained governance framed in the different realities, values, and own needs as a starting point.