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LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

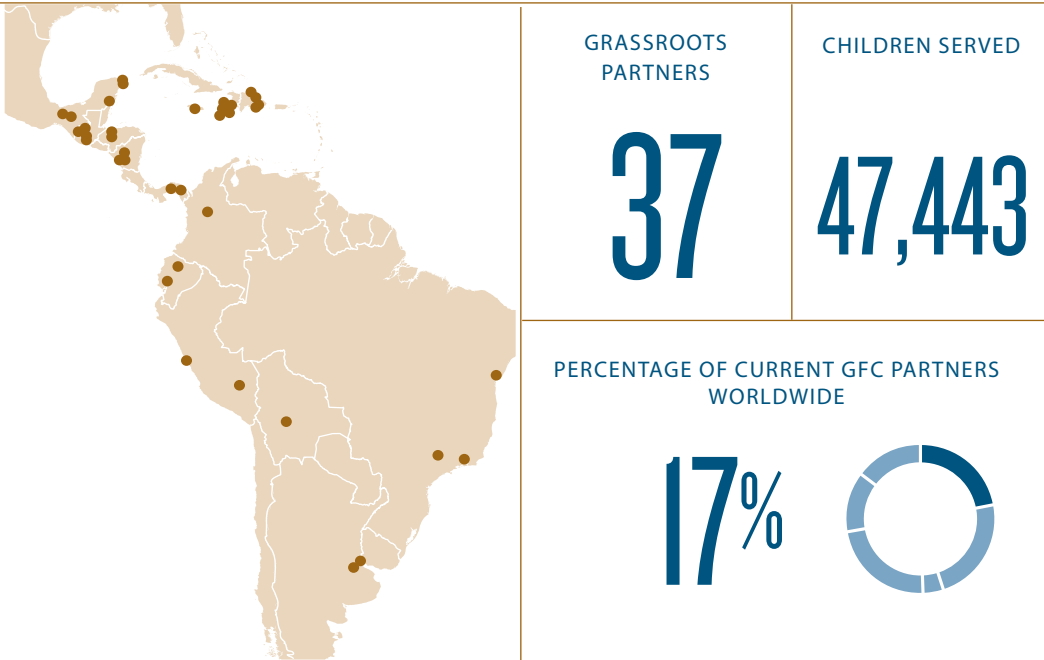
Latin America and the Caribbean boast vast resources and rich culture. The region is also home to a significant number of youth: approximately one in four individuals is between 15 and 29 years of age—and many of them face a host of challenges that prevent them from reaching their full potential.

Children and youth in the region have benefited from significant strides in education and health in recent years, but rampant violence means that they

are now more likely to die as a result of violence than of disease. High inflation rates, combined with high unemployment and a lack of opportunities, have pushed many toward drug abuse and gang violence. Youth homicide rates are soaring in several countries, leading to widespread migration and, at times, exploitation—particularly of girls and young women.

Fortunately, GFC partners have a finger on the pulse of the situation. They are addressing many

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COUNTRIES Argentina (2), Bolivia (1), Brazil (3), Colombia (1), Dominican Republic (4), Ecuador (2), Guatemala (4), Haiti (5), Honduras (2), Jamaica (1), Mexico (5), Nicaragua (3), Panama (2), Peru (2)

Regional statistics are current as of January 1, 2016.



SNAPSHOT



GFC program officer Sandra Macias del Villar (center) enjoys a laugh with students served by **Association Zanmi Timoun** in Haiti. Each year, Zanmi Timoun reaches 1,700 children—many of whom are survivors of exploitation, trafficking, or other forms of abuse—with reintegration services, education, and counseling. With the help of Zanmi Timoun’s accelerated learning program, 90 percent of students successfully completed their primary education last year.

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of the obstacles that children and youth face while growing up in a region with stark inequality and a lack of opportunities.

Associação Viva a Vida in Vila de Abrantes, Brazil, is one of the only organizations in the state of Bahia (which has the highest homicide rate in the country) working on preventing drug abuse. Its innovative programs—which include citizenship workshops, a theater program, and therapeutic recovery treatment—empower youth to make healthier choices. Viva a Vida’s approach is imperative for reducing violence and creating healthy alternatives for the young people the organization serves.

Like many of our partners, Viva a Vida also enacts change through society’s most important nucleus: family. Arielma Machado, mother of one of Viva a Vida’s beneficiaries, recently said, “I suffered from domestic violence; I didn’t know how to treat my daughter. But with Viva a Vida’s help, I learned how to say I love you and have my patience with my

children.” Thanks to Viva a Vida, Arielma has changed the way she interacts with her children, and is now working with other parents to adopt more peaceful practices and stop the cycle of violence.

In El Progreso, Honduras, **Organización para el Empoderamiento de la Juventud** (OYE) is building a generation of young leaders who are committed to improving their communities. El Progreso sits in the shadow of San Pedro Sula, which is the country’s epicenter of gang activity and drug trafficking and is widely considered the most dangerous city in the world. In a country plagued by violence and limited opportunities, OYE’s programs and community engagement projects—designed to build young people’s skills in the areas of education, leadership, and creative expression—are vital.

Across the region, grassroots organizations like these are filling the gaps, delivering critical programs to a generation who would otherwise be forgotten, and building a better society for us all.

REGIONAL FOCUSES

→ VIOLENCE & DRUG USE

A lack of economic, educational, and vocational opportunities in the region leads youth to become involved in gangs, violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. Gender-based violence is also a significant issue throughout the region.

→ MIGRATION

Whether it means crossing international borders or moving from rural to urban areas, migration is common, as poverty and insecurity motivate families to leave their homes in search of better opportunities. Migration divides families, weakens community ties, and exposes migrants to a host of risks. Children and youth—both those left behind by migrating parents and those who migrate themselves—are particularly vulnerable.

→ EDUCATION

Across the region, access to quality education is unequal, and poor children are much less likely to attend school than the general population. Costly supplies, uniforms, and fees, as well as language barriers and the distance between home and school, prevent many children from enrolling and staying in school.

→ MINORITY RIGHTS

In much of the region, children of indigenous and African descent face incredible challenges. Many live in rural areas and lack identification papers—two factors that severely limit their access to education and healthcare. Widespread discrimination further compounds their marginalization.



COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: MEXICO

GFC has a strong and growing presence in Mexico, with five active partners, including a cluster of three organizations that focus on gender equality in the state of Quintana Roo, where last year it was reported that 44 percent of women surveyed had been victims of violence in the last 12 months. There, **Centro Integral de Atención a las Mujeres** runs a peace education program targeted to communities with the highest rates of domestic violence. Meanwhile, **México y Caribe Jóvenes A.C.** works with indigenous boys and young men, promoting positive masculinity and equal gender relations through a comprehensive personal development program. And **Red + Positiva de Quintana Roo** runs a mobile service unit that is specifically designed to reach vulnerable communities, provide access to contraception, reduce adolescent pregnancy, and prevent domestic violence.

In Chiapas, one of the poorest states in Mexico, migrants are constantly moving from rural to urban areas in search of a better life. Many families settle in slums that lack even the most basic services—water, electricity, a sewer system—not to mention schools. Our partner **Fundación Yirtrak** provides quality education to both low-income and middle-class Chiapas families. In addition to traditional subjects, the school curriculum centers on themes of peace building, gender equality, creativity, and sustainability (including hands-on learning at the school's organic garden). Yirtrak's scholarship program ensures that all its students, regardless of economic background, have the education they need to thrive.

↑ Located in the Mexican state of Chiapas, **Chantiik Taj Tajinkutik** is dedicated to improving the lives of children who work on the streets of San Cristóbal de las Casas, with the goal of helping them break out of poverty and earn a fair wage as adults.

A six-month intensive training program—during which stipends are provided in exchange for full-time participation—equips young people with skills in baking, cooking, waitressing, and computers. At the same time, students attend workshops on human rights, literacy, and gender-based violence. And thanks to a partnership with the Mexican Indigenous Institute, Chantiik helps children take accelerated literacy courses so they can earn their primary- and secondary-school certificates.

CELEBRATING EVERYDAY HEROES: MAJOR AWARDS

Our partners regularly receive international recognition for their critical impact on children's lives. In November 2015, **Asociación Movimiento de Mujeres por Nuestros Derechos Humanos (MOMUNDH)** was among five GFC partners that received the inaugural With and For Girls Award, a global award designed to support strong, community-based, girl-driven organizations.

In Nicaragua, where two-thirds of rapes reported to the national police are committed against girls under the age of 17, MOMUNDH serves as a critical community resource. Created in 2006 by a group of young Nicaraguan women, MOMUNDH focuses on preventing and responding to gender-based violence and on promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights. Girls participate in hands-on, interactive life skills workshops where they learn about their rights and how to protect themselves from violence. A girls' soccer program encourages leadership skills and healthy behaviors, while Internet safety classes teach the girls how to safely use the web and social media.

Also in 2015, two of our partners in the region received the Global Rising Stars Award, a cash prize that includes capacity-building support to help promising organizations become more sustainable. One of the winners, **SAKALA**, serves as a safe haven for young people in Haiti's most



↑ Girls at a MOMUNDH workshop. © Kuba Okon / Stars Foundation / With and For Girls Collective

notorious slum, where violence is the leading cause of death. On the site of a former sweatshop in Port-au-Prince, children and youth play sports, work in the community garden, and get help with their schoolwork. Fellow awardee **Fundación Centro Una Brisa de Esperanza (FUBE)** provides free assistance to child survivors of sexual abuse through Bolivia's first and only dedicated center. Girls are FUBE's main beneficiaries, and a significant number are of indigenous descent. FUBE's comprehensive support system includes emergency assistance, counseling, support groups, and legal assistance.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: PIONEERING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN GUATEMALA

The second-largest city in Guatemala, Quetzaltenango, does not have enough schools to educate its growing population. What's more, the public schools that do exist are underfunded and overcrowded, and they often use outdated teaching methods that fail to keep children engaged. **Colegio Miguel Angel Asturias** is championing a new kind of learning in Guatemala, with an emphasis on critical thinking, reflection, and dialogue. The organization prioritizes retaining qualified and committed teachers, making sure they are paid fairly and receive regular training to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. Meanwhile, the neediest students receive full scholarships, while others pay a very low fee to attend. Colegio Miguel Angel Asturias runs a variety of initiatives, including an innovative educational-tourism program that generates income for the school. Looking ahead, the organization plans to replicate its model by opening additional schools across the country.