

History Highlights



The Growth of Education

When Spectrum first began, education was a low priority for everyone. Families were in desperate need of food and clothing, and even the little money teenage children could make helped the family. Some children, even as young as eight years old, were not enrolled in school so that they could care for their younger siblings and allow the parents to work. School expenses, such as shoes, uniforms, and supplies, seemed insurmountable to other families. Another obstacle was that birth certificates were required for enrollment, but typically certificates were not released until the family paid the hospital bill for the child's birth, and many families still owed money.

For those who were fortunate enough to be enrolled during that era, schools were frequently closed, particularly during the rainy season when the muddy unpaved roads prevented the teachers from coming to work. There were no substitute teachers – if the teacher was absent for any reason, the class was released for the day. The school day was on average only three or four hours long as school buildings hosted double sessions. The morning session was generally considered to be higher quality. On Spectrum's outreach days, kids regularly skipped school (if it was happening) to help the family by receiving clothes, fruit, and other goodies. For most children, it was a significant achievement to finish elementary school.

If you believe that education is the primary path out of poverty, you will be pleased to know that things have changed in the neighborhoods where we serve. Now almost all families are concerned that their kids make it to school on time every day. More paved roads help keep the teachers at work. Most kids are finishing elementary school and even middle school, and we are seeing more go on to high school. This is encouraging because more hangs in the balance than just a diploma or a better job. Kids who stay in school are more likely to stay on a path which leads to being productive citizens. Those who are not attending school have extra free time and less supervision, and thus are more easily drawn onto a path of pitfalls such as early sexual activity, drugs, gangs, crime, and jail, and sometimes, tragically, even death.

We care about the children in our neighborhoods, and so we want to champion education and support those who are making it a priority. One of the ways we support education and show we care is through our annual school supplies distribution. As these students finish school and become better prepared for life, we believe that they will flourish and that their communities will flourish as well.

