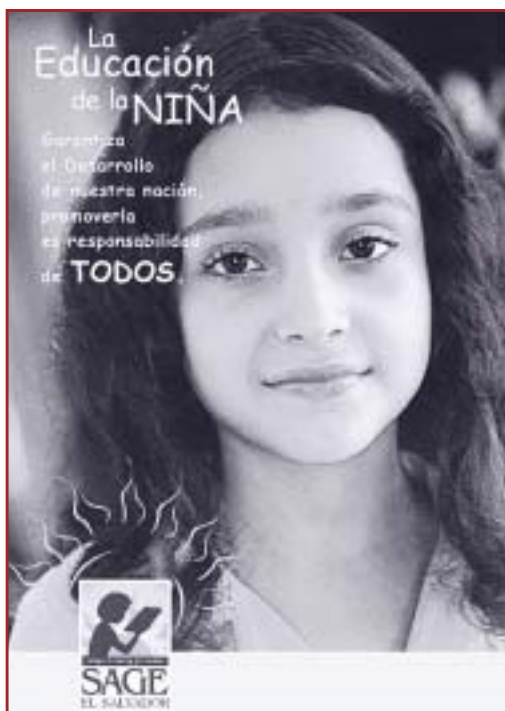


# Strategies that Succeed

## Stories from the SAGE Project

### 10. Private Sector Enhances Girls' Education in El Salvador



*Pollo Campero recently offered this schoolgirl—used in much SAGE El Salvador promotional material—a full scholarship, including transportation to school, uniforms, and books.*

**S**AGE El Salvador based on its multi-sectoral approach decided to mobilize the business sector in support of girls' education. As a result,

Lady of El Salvador, Lourdes Rodríguez de Flores. The letter invited them to participate in a roundtable to discuss the importance of girls' education to the

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Arrocera San Francisco, a rice distributor and one of the most important food industries in El Salvador, agreed to include the message, "Support girls' education!" on 20,000 bags of rice and beans. Like Pollo Campero, Arrocera San Francisco has broad popular appeal and is a household name in El Salvador.

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at the end of October 2002, a select group of influential leaders in El Salvador's business and media sectors received a hand-signed letter from the First

country's development. On November 13, with support from the SAGE El Salvador project, key decision makers sat down together to examine the issues of girls' education and tried to identify strategies for making girls' education a national priority.

Implemented by the Academy for Educational Development, SAGE has been working in five countries (El Salvador, Guinea, Mali, Ghana and the Democratic Republic of Congo) to develop multi-



*Seventy-five thousand of these placemats designed to promote girls' education have been printed and distributed to every Pollo Campero restaurant in El Salvador.*

sectoral partnerships in support of girls' education. In SAGE El Salvador, partnerships have been developed with the public sector, businesses, the media, and the religious sector. By achieving support from these different sectors, SAGE has brought the issues of girls' education to the forefront of the national agenda in El Salvador.

SAGE El Salvador has had unique challenges. On the surface, girls' enrollment rates in primary school are nearly equal to that of boys, but this masks differences between urban and rural areas, differences in retention and achievement, and differences in girls' completion rates. In addition, El

Salvador and its educational system have been suffering from a turbulent political history, and the aftermaths of Hurricane Mitch of 1998 and the devastating earthquakes of early 2001.

To best address these challenges, SAGE El Salvador set their sights on developing strong partnerships with a variety of sectors, in particular the business sector. Recognizing the strength of the model employed by the network of Business Roundtable associations, associations of American CEOs committed to improving public policy, SAGE El Salvador used a two pronged approach to engage local Salvadoran businesses. First, key repre-

sentatives from the business and media sectors were brought together for a roundtable discussion. Secondly, SAGE El Salvador used the opportunity to make contacts in the business sector and obtain specific and practical commitments in support of girls' education. One of the long-term objectives of the roundtable was to move business decision-makers from an acknowledgement of the importance of keeping girls in school to action in support of retention of girls in school.

A technical committee coordinated by SAGE El Salvador, with representatives from the Ministry of Education, the National Secretariat of the Family, and USAID El Salvador, met on several occasions prior to the roundtable to plan. At their request, the First Lady of El Salvador agreed to serve as host for the event and sent out invitations to key business and media leaders. Thus a network of key influential people was developed to support girls' education.

Held over breakfast, the roundtable was designed to be short to fit into the busy

schedules of the attendees. After viewing the SAGE video, “The Future is Now”, the participants listened to the SAGE country coordinator give an overview of SAGE, with an emphasis on the importance of girls’ education to social and economic development. Participants were later broken down into smaller groups to discuss issues in girls’ education and to address the potential contributions of their companies to this effort. There was a press conference at the conclusion of the roundtable with TV, radio, and newspapers represented. Soon after the conclusion of the roundtable, SAGE El Salvador actively pursued several business contacts to obtain material support for girls’ education.

One of the first to respond positively was Pollo Campero, one of the largest fried chicken restaurant chains in Central America. SAGE El Salvador felt that working with Pollo Campero would be an excellent opportunity to gain support given the existence of their restaurants in all parts of the country, both urban and rural. The marketing manager was contacted first and was provided with an overview

of the SAGE project. She was interested in SAGE and had some familiarity with it through the television coverage which it had received. After several weeks of intense follow-up by SAGE El Salvador, a meeting with the General

Manager was scheduled. As a result of the meeting, the General Manager printed messages about girls’ education on 50,000 paper place mats used in their restaurants. Flotania, a fictional cartoon character, part of Pollo Campero’s Camperonix , “planet rescue team”, was used to motivate girls to stay in school and to achieve in school.

Another business to express interest in actively supporting girls’ education was Arrocera San Francisco, a rice distributor and one of the most important food industries in El Salvador. The company agreed to



*A future graduate ponders her future.*

include the message, “Support girls’ education!” on approximately 20,000 bags of rice and beans. Like Pollo Campero, Arrocera San Francisco has broad popular appeal and is a household name in El Salvador. Including this message on rice and bean bags, products that are consumed on a daily basis in every Salvadoran home, could have an even bigger impact than other SAGE activities.

Finally, another example of how SAGE has successfully engaged the business sector in its work is its partnership with Educational Services Editors (ESE). ESE offered

*At a recent press conference in El Salvador, attended by the country's First Lady, the Minister of Education, and representatives of the SAMIX group and Pollo Campero, the First Lady signed an official agreement with SAMIX to air the girls' education radio spots on their nine radio stations for six months beginning in September 2002. The radio spots will be aired during prime time and at no charge. Pollo Campero announced that it will print 75,000 girls' education placemats, 50% more than they had originally offered—and explained to the reporters that this was only an initial printing! The placemats are now in every Pollo Campero restaurant in the country.*

to include a message supporting girls' education on the back cover of every school textbook that they edit and publish. The design of the back cover includes a girl student in front of a door, with the following motto: "Girls' education...a door to development."

### A Final Note

With the involvement of the First Lady of El Salvador in the development and implementation of a roundtable for influential business and media leaders, and her support at subsequent roundtables, the importance of girls' education to the national government was and continues to be emphasized in El Salvador. Through SAGE El Salvador's partnerships with the business sector, the message "Girls' Education is a Key to Development" has

been disseminated to a broad audience. This has enabled SAGE to achieve its key objective, to bring the issue of girls' education to the national agenda and to continue raising the awareness of parents and communities about the importance of girls' retention and achievement at schools.

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Contributors: Marta Alicia de Erazo, Fernando Herrera, Patricia de Hernandez, and Nora Kruk  
Written by Debra Schumann  
Edited by Giselle Mitton

For further information, contact  
May Rihani or Giselle Mitton  
Academy for Educational  
Development  
1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20009  
[www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org)



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