




Chance for a Better Life

By [Rayna Topalska](#)

Employee Andreas Cloos has opened the door to a better future for children from poor families in Guatemala. It turns out he and SAP share a common passion.

Magdalena, one of the children supported by Tob'anik 

During his university studies, Andreas Cloos completed an internship at the Juan Sisay Language School in Quetzaltenango, the second largest city in Guatemala. Andreas, a solution architect for banking in SAP Custom Development, worked as an international coordinator at the school. While this was a great opportunity for him to experience the incredible Guatemalan culture and traditions, he also was confronted with many of the problems of the local population. "Guatemala has a high illiteracy rate. Many children from poor families don't go to school because their parents just can't afford it," explains Andreas. He felt personally affected and joined a project organized by the language school to support poor children.

Story Highlights

- Andreas Cloos, solution architect for banking, founded a charitable organization that pays school costs for impoverished children in Guatemala.
- Andreas' job has provided a basis for the charity work. He coordinates the collection of funds and updates school records and audits the financial statements.
- Education is opening up completely new prospects for the children.
- As part of SAP's 40x Engagement Initiative – part of the company's 40th anniversary celebration – SAP donated €4,000 to the project.

Tob'anik is founded

After his return to Germany, Andreas and some of his friends founded a charitable organization to facilitate the project with financial backing. Andreas calls the organization Tob'anik, which simply means "help" in the Mayan language, Quiché. Tob'anik's members raise funds in Germany and send them to Guatemala. The Spanish school selects the children who participate in the program and takes care of them. The money raised pays for the school fees, materials, uniforms, and shoes. "With this project, the local children have a chance for a better future," explains Andreas. "If they go to school, they will have much better opportunities to find a job later on."

When he took over the financing of the project in 2002, there were only 15 children participating in it. Currently there are 70. For every child, the organization spends about 130 to 140 Euros per year, which is enough to cover school related costs. However, Tob'anik not only collects donations; it also supports individual sponsorships. The organization assists in the communication between the sponsor and child by translating and forwarding letters and photos.



Andreas donating food to Oliver Leonardo and his family from the child's sponsor



Anibal can dream

The program means a lot of work for Andreas. Every two years he travels to Quetzaltenango to help the Juan Sisay Language School update their records and audit the financial statements. But the best part of the journey is meeting the children and their families. "It is wonderful to see the smiles on children's faces and to know that you are helping them," explains Andreas.



Anibal, who was supported by the organization for nearly ten years and wants to study computer science



On his trip this year, Andreas met most of the children in the project. He also learned about the progress of a former pupil named Anibal. The organization supported him for nearly ten years until he graduated from school. "It is amazing how Anibal's life has changed over the time he was in the project. He plans to work for a year to earn money for university and then he wants to study computer science. I can't describe how proud I feel of this young man," he reports. According to Andreas, this is just one of many similar stories.

From his volunteer work Andreas has learned to seek out challenges and capitalize on these opportunities. "Most of all, my volunteer work has given me a better perspective of what things are truly important in life," says Andreas.