

# Building a Bottle School

BIENVENIDOS  
A

INAUGURACION

ESCUELA

AMBIENTAL

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Welcome to Guatemala!

My name is Stephanie Olivas and I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala.



DEPARTA	
1 PETEN	16 EL
2 QUICHE	17 ES
3 ALTA VERAPAZ	18 S
4 BAJA VERAPAZ	19 Z
5 IZABEL	20 C
6 HUEHUETENANGO	21 J
7 SAN MARCOS	22
8 QUEZALTENANGO	
9 TONICAPAN	
10 SOLOLA	
11 RETALHULEU	
12 SUCHITEPEQUEZ	
13 CHIMALTENANGO	
14 SACATEPEQUEZ	
15 GUATEMALA	

Guatemala is a beautiful country in Central America. It is known as the “land of colors.” It has rivers, forests, mountains, caves, beaches, deserts, and tropical birds and animals.

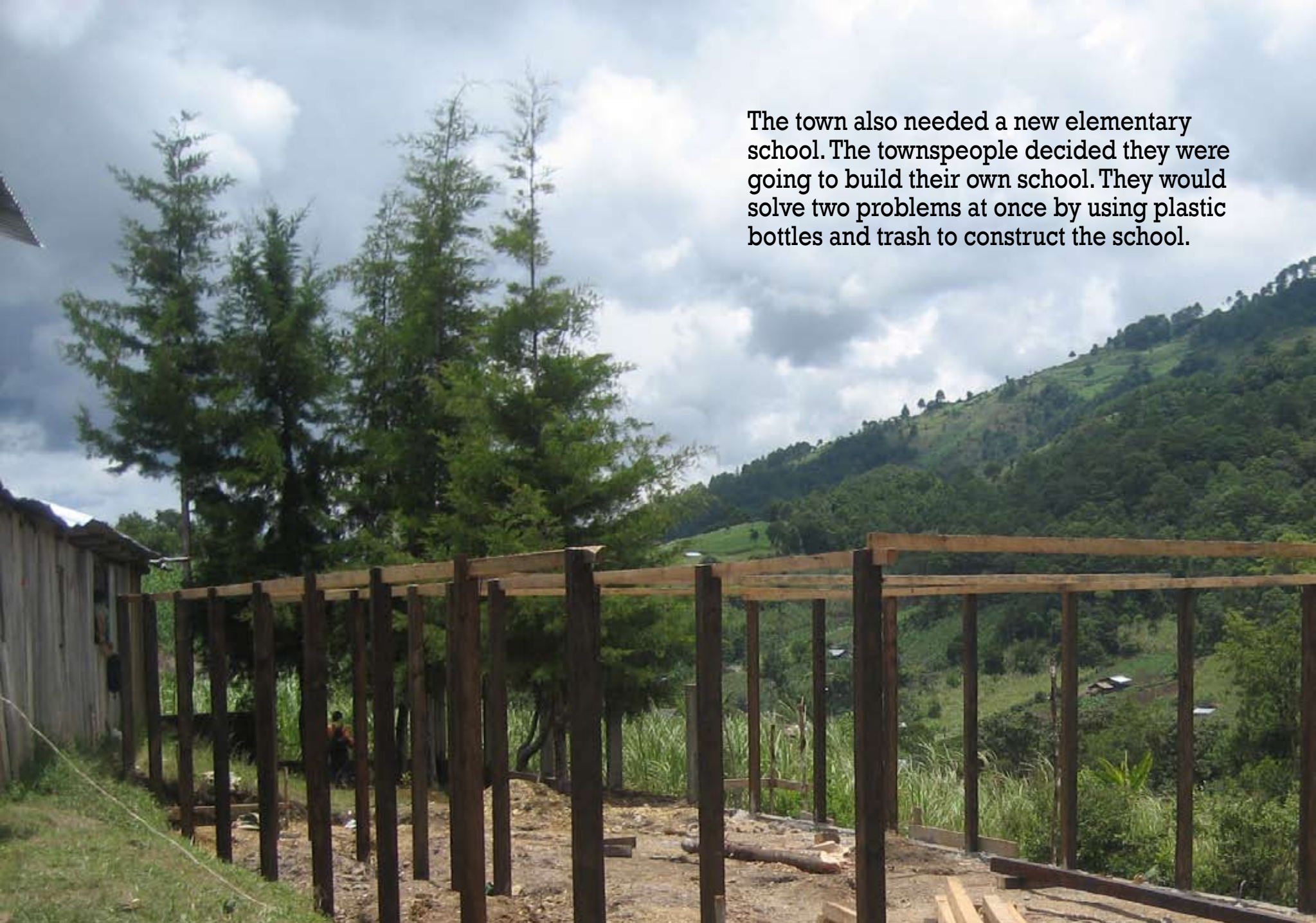


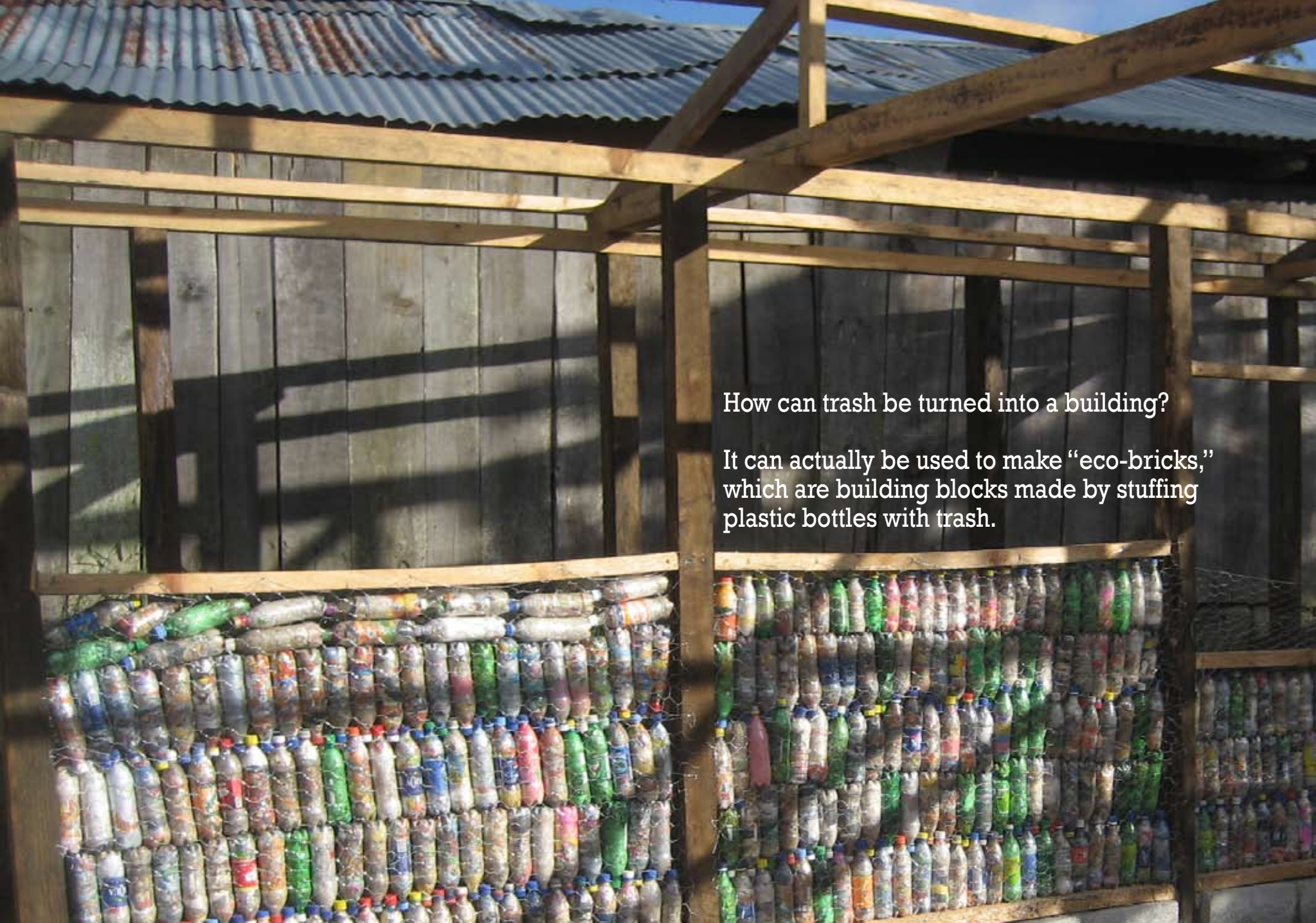


As a Peace Corps Volunteer, I worked in a small indigenous community in the mountains.

Trash removal is a common problem in rural communities, where there is no municipal garbage collection. People typically throw it on the ground or burn it.

The town also needed a new elementary school. The townspeople decided they were going to build their own school. They would solve two problems at once by using plastic bottles and trash to construct the school.





How can trash be turned into a building?

It can actually be used to make “eco-bricks,” which are building blocks made by stuffing plastic bottles with trash.



The bottles are placed in layers inside of a frame of wood, cement, or metal. The frame is then covered with cement to form the walls.



We didn't have enough money to pay people to build the school, so the parents of the students agreed to do the actual building.



Students collected trash and stuffed bottles, even using their recess time to hunt for trash.



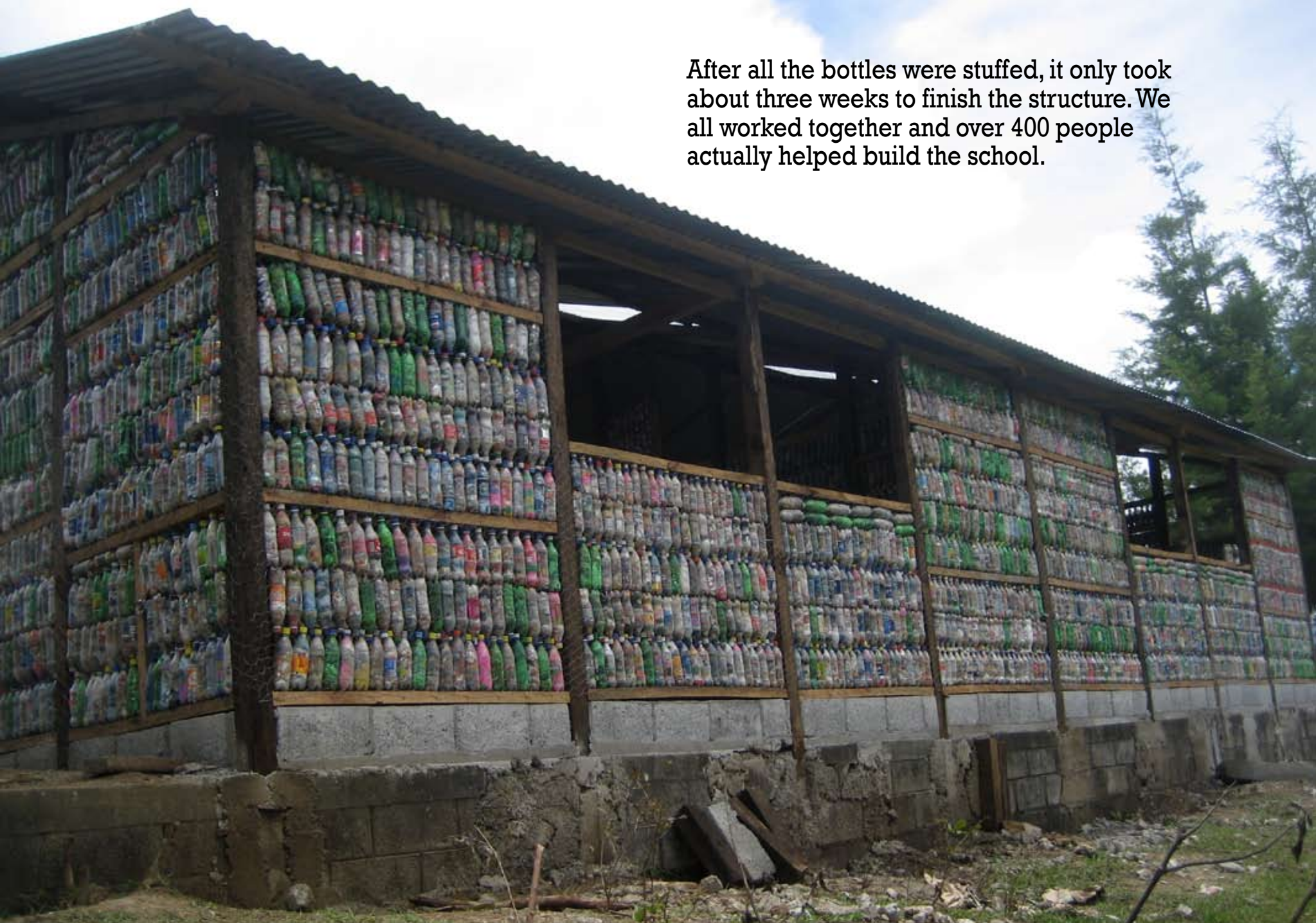


Stuffing bottles is hard work!  
Each bottle takes several hours  
to stuff and requires a lot of trash.  
The bottles needed to be stuffed  
very densely so they would be  
solid like bricks.

The amount of trash I generated in two weeks was barely enough to fill one bottle. And we needed 5,000 plastic bottles to build the school.



After all the bottles were stuffed, it only took about three weeks to finish the structure. We all worked together and over 400 people actually helped build the school.






When school started in January, the students were so excited to use the new school rooms. They now have windows, real walls, and a cement floor. We painted world maps and a map of Guatemala on the new walls of the school.

Not only do the students have a new school, we removed over 5,000 pounds of trash from the region! The community is much cleaner, and families are so proud and happy about their new school.



A woman wearing a green shirt and a grey cap is smiling broadly, surrounded by several children. One child is eating a lollipop. The background shows a stone wall and a hanging bag. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**This project shows how people can make a real difference in their communities when they work together. I hope that when I come back to visit I will see more bottle structures, and a cleaner and healthier Guatemala.**



PAUL D. COVERDELL

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