

# PROJECT HARVEST - GUATEMALA

EMPOWERING RURAL SUBSISTENCE FARMERS



# RESILIENCE

Newsletter Vol. 4. Winter 2015-2016

Dear Friends and Supporters

"Before Project Harvest started, the kids from here (Pitahaya) were not able to grow properly or learn as easily." Ailsa Litchfield, 12 yrs. old, a Project Harvest donor, wrote these words in her blog after visiting Guatemala with her family in early 2015. She put her finger on Project Harvest's reason for being: the right to food as a human right. It is this vision toward which Project Harvest continues to contribute its time, energy and expertise. We stand in solidarity with the rural farmers with whom we work on both short and long term solutions.

2015 has been yet another hard year for these children, women and men because of drought and crop losses. Despite this, their spirit of resilience is resolute.

In this issue of Resilience, we are pleased to report on some of their determination. Gardens have been started in the harshest

terrain yet some of the women are on the cusp of marketing their excess produce.

We also want to draw your attention to the contributions, perseverance and hard work of some of our individual friends and donors, institutions and organizations like the MCC, the Rotary Club and RTO. As Ailsa wrote, "The mothers all said their kids are much healthier now." With each effort we can all create hope for a better life.

More about Ailsa, new communities and our partners, plus our financial report, are included in this issue.

Saludos,

Paul Lemieux  
General Coordinator

Barbara Bishop  
Chair of Board

P.S. Send us **your e-mail address** to receive our new **electronic Newsletters** – see back page.

## THANKS TO GOOD FRIENDS AND PARTNERS



*The women's leadership led the whole community of 158 families in obtaining emergency food rations.*

**Project Harvest** continues to develop partnerships with like-minded organizations, institutions and friends who collaborate in our common goal to empower subsistence rural farmers. With gratitude we pay tribute to their support.

**Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)** "is a global, non-profit organization that strives to share God's love and compassion through relief, development and peacebuilding". Project Harvest has worked with the MCC for the past 6 years to improve the nutritional well-being of 40 families in the community of Casa Blanca/Xecaja. MCC also responded to the emergency food crisis brought on by drought in the community of Pitahaya. They provided new seeds for re-sowing, agricultural inputs to improve garden soils and are still providing food rations to the entire 158 families living in this community. \* <http://mcccanada.ca/>

# HOPE IS SOWN IN TWO NEW COMMUNITIES

**P**roject Harvest began to work in two new communities, Oquen and Tunuco, in the center of Guatemala's rugged Dry Corridor in June of 2015. Sixty-six families will benefit from food they will be able to produce using an integrated horticultural system, and from our formation program. The three year program is made possible by the financial support of the Rotary Club of Burlington North and Rotary International.



*Agustina López stands in one of 66 new gardens providing families with nutritious vegetables.*

The families involved began by chiseling out terraces from steep slopes, clearing the land of rocks and weeds, and preparing plots for sowing. The gardens they plant will contribute to the nutrition of their families, especially the children. The goal is to move people from only growing corn and beans to maintaining their own vegetable garden. The families are working towards pooling their excess produce to sell at a local market in order to generate increased family income.



*María de los Santos with her newly planted bed of onions.*

There is a process that Project Harvest follows in order to achieve this. First, select 33 participant families based on economic need and the requirements necessary to fulfill the project's goals. Participants need to have a space for a garden and a positive attitude toward learning new techniques. 33 is an ideal number to work with in each

community. It allows us to have three small groups of 11 families. A leader or "link" is selected within each group. These community "links" are chosen for their special aptitudes: a green thumb, an eagerness to learn, a willingness to serve and teach the other 10 families with whom they will be working.

Program Director, Erwin Rabanales, coordinates the implementation of the project's work plan in each community. In

Oquen and Tunuco, Agricultural Promoter Santos Maria Mendez, a born gardener with a magic touch, provides leadership, technical and ecological assistance. As well, Formation Promoter Arlen de Leon, engages the families in a formation program with a focus on community organization, self-esteem and human rights issues. This formation is designed to enhance the participation of women in the affairs of their communities.

There are still many challenges to overcome, due to the isolated and barren location of the communities.

One challenge is supporting families who have never grown a garden to actually being able to sell excess produce within the three years of the project. The first goal is to produce nutritious food for their family. The second is to generate more family income. We are not waiting until the third year to start the process of marketing. An innovative pilot has already begun to grow an excess of onions for participants to jointly market them in the first growing season. We will update the progress of this pilot in our next newsletter.

## THANKS TO GOOD FRIENDS AND PARTNERS

### Rotary Club of Burlington North

**(RCBN)** is part of a worldwide organization providing humanitarian service. Their motto is Service Above Self. Rotary's main objective is service.\* Project Harvest is currently part of a Rotary Global Grant to implement a project in two new communities in Guatemala. The project is to support building family gardens that will provide a sustainable source of nutrition, an adequate supply of food and a new source of family income. Rotary has also purchased a new truck to replace our very old one. (See article entitled *New Communities*) \* <http://portal.clubrunner.ca/146>



*Members of Chiquimula's Rotary Club visit the new gardens they are helping to finance with funds raised in Canada & Internationally.*

**Ailsa Litchfield** nicknamed "**The Heart of Pitahaya**" (El Corazón de Pitahaya) by the local women. Two years ago Ailsa asked her friends for donations to Project Harvest instead of birthday presents. Early in 2015, her family embarked on a trip to Central America that included a few days for them to visit a community in Guatemala where her birthday donations had gone. This is her Blog Post\* after the visit:



*Ailsa visits the community she supported when on an educational tour through Central America.*

wasn't enough healthy food when she was growing in her mom's tummy or when she was a little kid. **The mothers all said their kids are much healthier now.** And the little babies on their laps were all happy looking."\* <http://salsasojournals.travellerspoint.com/19/>

"We went to the community of Pitahaya and the ladies showed us their gardens. They were very proud of them! I would have been proud too if it was my garden! Their veggies were much bigger than the ones we grow at home in Canada. The earth all around was very rocky and very dry but the ground in their gardens was dark brown and much softer because they used a lot of composted stuff and watered it daily. It took them 20 days to dig the hole in the earth to build the container to catch the rain so that there would be enough water for their veggies for the whole dry season. **Before Project Harvest started, the kids from here were not able to grow properly or learn as easily.** We met one little girl who was so tiny because there

## THANKS TO GOOD FRIENDS

**Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTO)** have a special project called "In Service to Others"\*. Through this project they have supported the work of Project Harvest by providing critical resources from seeds to cisterns, so that families in extreme poverty can grow gardens to augment their diet. \* <http://www.rto-ero.org/>



*Children working alongside their parents learn gardening skills.*

**Project Harvest McMaster (PHM)** is an official club run by enthusiastic students at McMaster University in support of Project Harvest. This year their events cover everything from a leadership workshop, to a hunger games tournament, to a sale of fresh fruit smoothies and Guatemalan coffee. Sign in to their Project Harvest McMaster Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ProjectHarvestMac/>



**University of Guelph** students as part of their Semester Abroad Program,\* visited the community of Casa Blanca-Xecaja in 2015. They spoke to the Project Harvest participants and team members, learning firsthand, about the successes and challenges of an on the ground development program. Three of them, upon their return to Canada, have participated in the building of a new prototype rainwater catchment system that Project Harvest is developing for eventual use in Guatemala. \* <https://www.uoguelph.ca/cip/guelph-students-study-abroad-options/semester->



*U of Guelph students participate in building prototype rainwater catchment for use in Guatemala.*

## Thank You

I don't think that we can adequately express the gratitude of the families in the communities with which we work. The women take such pride in being able to grow the vegetables that supplement their diet of corn and beans. Equally significant are the leadership skills that women acquire enabling them to improve their community.

Your concern and solidarity enables the Guatemala team to continue this work. Building terraces, enhancing dry, rocky soil, building a water catchment system and planting protective barriers are just a beginning.

Please accept our deepest appreciation for your thoughtfulness and generosity.

**Please  
Donate**

## PLEASE BE PART OF OUR WORK!

Your donation to Project Harvest enables our team in Guatemala to support our current programs and to expand into new communities.

**Please donate! Make our work possible.**

### Project Harvest - Guatemala

#### REVENUE, EXPENSES & ASSETS for 2013 and 2014

REVENUES	Totals 2013	Totals 2014
Donations from Individuals	27,190.99	28,562.98
Grants from Institutions	36,667.00	42,626.95
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>63,857.99</b>	<b>71,189.93</b>
EXPENSES		
Program expenses in Guatemala	63,343.71	64,010.17
Administration in Guatemala	2,440.00	2,664.99
Administration in Canada	828.72	2,673.22
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>66,611.43</b>	<b>69,348.38</b>
Excess of revenues over expenses	(2,753.44)	1,841.55
Assets at beginning of the year	<b>32,878.54</b>	<b>30,125.10</b>
<b>NET ASSETS* – END of YEAR</b>	<b>30,125.10</b>	<b>31,966.65</b>

\* Represents start up funds for next calendar year.



Donate online at our **Website:** <http://projectharvest.org/donate/>



Mail your cheque to our **Official Address: Project Harvest - Guatemala, 17 Pancake Lane, Fonthill, ON, Canada. L0S 1E2**



**E-mail:** [project.harvest.guatemala@gmail.com](mailto:project.harvest.guatemala@gmail.com)



**Find us on Facebook** [TO SUBSCRIBE SEND US AN E-MAIL](#)

**Federal Registered Charitable Organization BN 82145 3503 RR 001**

