

PROJECT HARVEST - GUATEMALA

EMPOWERING RURAL SUBSISTENCE FARMERS



An Innovative Program

VISION

The right to food is a human right. Project Harvest's dream is a world free from hunger, in which every child, woman and man can fully enjoy all their rights as human beings, particularly their right to food: adequate, nutritious and culturally appropriate food.

GOALS and OBJECTIVES



1. Project Harvest is committed to supporting excluded and economically poor rural farming families (campesinas/os) and their communities, as they become more self-sufficient, self-confident and empowered, through the production of high quality food, group organization, community participation and development.

- Support the construction of 1,000 organic vegetable gardens for yearlong production, including rain water catchment systems, as a means of improving food security, nutrition and the health of rural families.



2. Project Harvest is dedicated to strengthening the organizational capacity of marginalized groups of women, in order to support them to achieve food sustainability and be able to direct their own community development.

- Provide 1,000 educational workshops and meetings to increase the knowledge, understanding and abilities of project participants, so that they are better able to know their rights, responsibilities and opportunities, as engaged citizens in the development of their communities.



AN AGRO-ECOLOGICAL & HUMAN RIGHTS MODEL

Project Harvest, with years of in-the-field experience, has been developing an innovative strategy to diversify food production. At the same time that poor farmers are producing basic corn and beans, they are also learning how to cultivate vegetables in family gardens.

This is a strategy that simultaneously seeks to contribute to improving the availability and diversity of food, while strengthening the organizational base of families and improving their understanding of the social and economic conditions that keep them captive in poverty. Being organized helps groups of people to develop citizen participation strategies for influencing structures of power and thus transforming the environment that keeps them living in poverty. **Specifically Project Harvest's work focuses on the following:**



1. AGRO-ECOLOGICAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT



This requires dialogue between our agricultural promoters and poor families. Conversations are essential for the adoption of new knowledge and techniques. The introduction of vegetable seeds means learning new planting details. Bean seeds are not planted and tended the same way as carrots! Techniques also include the development of organic fertilizers, organic pesticide production and their use.

2. SOIL CONSERVATION & PLANT DIVERSITY



Project Harvest helps create healthy soils by producing and using fertilizers such as animal manure, organic compost and worm castings. The use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers is avoided. Biodiversity is promoted by planting a variety of seeds and seedlings for vegetables and indigenous plants. These also help provide food throughout an extended season as different crops mature. Seeds are saved and shared.

2. WATER CONSERVATION



The growing season is extended by capturing rainwater and storing it for use during the dry season. Project participants learn how to construct and maintain a Rain Water Catchment System. The system provides a family the means of irrigating their garden so that women are able to cultivate and harvest vegetables in the long dry period. A cistern holds approximately 12,000 litres of water.

4. FOOD PRODUCTION AND DIVERSIFYING LIVELIHOODS



The first priority is for families to grow nutritious food for their own use. On the other hand we are working towards a more long-range goal. As families learn how to grow vegetables, they will be in a position to intensify production and achieve volumes that will not only satisfy their family's needs, but have a surplus to sell at local markets. The income will enable the purchase of clothing, medicine and other items, but most importantly the education of their children.

5. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION & SOCIAL FORMATION



Women play a key role in project planning and implementation. Formation is provided in the areas of horticulture, nutrition, organization and citizen participation. Women are central in producing food and advocating for community development. Being organized is crucial.

Formation is key so that these women understand their rights as citizens and the actions that they can take when these rights are violated. The hope is that as a result of their new skills and knowledge, they will have a voice in shaping public policies, especially the right to food.

PROJECT HARVEST'S GUATEMALAN TEAM



Olga Tumax - Agriculture Promoter

Olga is a teacher & organizer respected by both women and men for her deep knowledge and experience in food production and community development.



Saulo Ixén - Agriculture Promoter

Saulo has years of formal and informal experience in all aspects of horticulture. He is expert in guiding and motivating rural families to produce vegetables.



Santos Maria Mendez - Agriculture Promoter

Santos Maria is a born teacher and organizer. She has outstanding knowledge of organic vegetable gardens, worm compost production & marketing.



Arlen de León - Formation Promoter

Arlen studied political science & sociology. From a young age has been an observer, participant and leader in the social movements for change.



Erwin Rabanales - Program Director

Erwin has extensive experience in the production of food, economic empowerment, civil rights and social action, environmental issues, and disaster and humanitarian relief.



Maria Angelica Balan - General Accountant

Angelica has over twenty years experience working for a variety of Guatemalan NGO's.

HUNGER—a Human Right Violated in Guatemala

Poverty and hunger in Guatemala are the faces of women, children, campesinos/as and indigenous people. Most live in the highlands and the “dry corridor”, a semi-arid zone with periods of droughts, degraded soils and low agricultural yields.

- “49.8 % of children under 5 have chronic malnutrition, the 4th highest in the world.”*
- A United Nations Special Rapporteur attributed these conditions to a large extent on the “inequitable distribution of wealth, high concentration of land ownership, and inadequate minimum wage in the country”. **
- The **minimum wage** for an agricultural worker is **\$441/month (\$20.00/day or \$2.51/hr.)**. The basic food basket cost is **\$547/month**, while the vital basic basket (health, education, housing, clothing, etc.,) is **\$998/month**. ***



The majority of rural farmers (campesinas/os):



- lack enough land and inputs to grow sufficient food on their small or rented plots of land;
- lack other sources of income and must increase their earnings by selling their labour, often at **below minimum wage**, for example, harvesting coffee or sugar on large, export plantations;
- lack the resources for an integrated horticultural system to maintain yearlong food production;
- lack some of the skills needed to be better organized and able to address long standing development and participation challenges.

As a result, in the absence of a profound rural development program, the majority of campesinas/os remain very poor and live from hand to mouth with little left over to improve the quality of their lives.

*World Food Program web site 2015 ** Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, UNHRC, 2010 ***Instituto Nacional de Estadística-INE, as of Feb/2015

WE ARE NOT ASKING YOU TO GO TO GUATEMALA, SUPPORT PROJECT HARVEST & YOU ARE THERE!

Are you inspired by the work of Project Harvest?

Are you shocked by the struggle of so many people to have enough nutritious food to satisfy their daily hunger?

Are you outraged by the fact that despite the human right to food being a universal obligation, many children, women and

men do not have access to adequate and nutritious food?



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

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

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

E-mail: project.harvest.guatemala@gmail.com

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Collectively, Project Harvest's Board members have years of experience working with agro-ecological and social justice organizations. In their working lives they have managed and directed organizations in a variety of fields pertaining to education, health, social development and agriculture. They consist of farmers, health care workers and educators. All have been involved in overseas projects either here or abroad. They are committed to advocating for the Human Right to Food. Part of that commitment means accompanying Guatemalan communities and supporting them to grow their own food and become better organized. Board members believe empowered communities can advocate for themselves and work to improve their conditions of life.