



# RESILIENCE

A Publication of  
Project Harvest  
Winter 2016-2017

## SUCCESS IN CHIQUIMULA COMMUNITIES

In July 2015, Project Harvest expanded its work into two new communities, Tunuco Abajo and Oquen. Both communities are extremely poor. A primary reason for this is their geographical location in the heart of Guatemala's dry corridor. It is here that the effects of climate change have been most severe. Recurring droughts have had a terrible impact on the lives of people living in this area. Despite these challenges we decided to locate here and to test the Project Harvest model, that is, to improve family food security, through the implementation of family gardens. In each of these two new communities we are working with 33 families. In total, the number of people benefiting are 456 men, women, children, teenagers and the elderly.

On average the gardens measure 100 square meters. In the beginning the soils were very poor. The land was transformed by using good soil conservation practices such as terracing and the application of abundant organic matter such as worm compost and the use of good quality seeds. The gardens are duly fenced to keep animals out. Santos Méndez, agricultural promoter who is in charge of the technical support, is accompanying the process.

During the first year there were two plantings, taking advantage of the rainy season. These first plantings generated confidence among participating families since crops were abundant. The harvest consisted of radishes, Swiss chard, cabbage,

lettuce and onions, in addition to other native crops such as chipilín and quilete. Of the total harvest, 70% was earmarked for family consumption and 30% was for sale in the community or in local markets. Some families managed to earn up to \$150 by their sales. This money is very important because it serves to buy soap, sugar, salt and some basic medicines for families. This success is the result of being clear about what we are doing based on our experience of systematically developing our model.

All together Project Harvest works in ten communities with a total 414 families. Each community has a Board of Directors which acquires capabilities of leadership. The concrete evidence of our success in the implementation of

family gardens to help feed the families and enhance their respective organizational skills can be seen by neighboring communities. They are now asking to be part of Project Harvest because they can see how effective our work is. We are becoming a benchmark in the region regarding our approach and method of work.

*[Above photo] A newly designed prototype tank for collecting rain water was constructed by Pitahaya community members. April, 2016.*

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**PROJECT HARVEST - Guatemala**

**EMPOWERING RURAL SUBSISTENCE FARMERS**

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# LETTER FROM THE COORDINATOR AND CHAIR

Dear Friends and Supporters

We are pleased to report that this year, 2016, significant progress has been made in the communities where Project Harvest works. In this issue of **Resilience** you will read about these successes. They range from the ongoing formation program to the consolidation of Project Harvest's horticultural program in both established and new communities. The progress you read about here is due mainly to the resilience of the subsistence, farming families in these communities.

Resilience takes many forms. In the communities where Project Harvest works, resilience means creating hope. They create their hope by working hard and having faith in themselves that they can improve their own lives.

Continuous drought and hunger have not broken the spirit and hope of these families. They did not refuse to plant even though the situation looked bleak once again. They planted and cultivated their precious maize and beans and waited for the rains. This year, unlike in the past four years, they have been rewarded. This year's harvest is "normal".

They have shown the same tenacity in the face of unimaginable challenges to build gardens and grow vegetables on the sides of steep, barren hillsides. They had become doubtful from past promises of food security when they were only handed a few packets of seed and told to plant them. It was hard to accept the notion that viable vegetable producing gardens would be possible. However, their trust in Project Harvest's vision and their own hard work has paid off. Their gardens are incredible to behold!

Saludos,

Paul Lemieux  
General Coordinator

Barbara Bishop  
Chair of Board



## NEW COMMUNITIES IN 2016-LA CEIBA and LA LIBERTAD



*Women of La Ceiba - The contrast between their colorful dress and their acute poverty shocks the eye.*

This year, 2016, Project Harvest widened its program into two new communities, La Ceiba and La Libertad (22 and 33 new families respectively in each community). Families on average have 8 children. Both communities share some characteristics such as the same level of extreme poverty. The topography of the communities is steep (up to 60% slope). The soils are extremely rocky and shallow, and have little natural fertility. Both communities are out of the reach of economic and social support programs from State institutions and other development agencies. This poverty and marginalization were the main criteria for the decision by Project Harvest to work in this area.

La Ceiba is a Maya Chorti community, where the contrast between their colorful dress and their acute poverty shocks the

eye. Fortunately, they have a primary school up to the sixth grade but there are no latrines, no running water, and no health center. Survival depends on whether there is sufficient rainfall to allow the community to harvest corn and enough beans to eat for at least 6 months of the year. For the other 6 months they must find a way to sell their labour on nearby coffee plantations or on the more distant sugar plantations. Many of the young men who work under the demanding physical conditions of the sugar harvest turn to drink. Alcoholism is a major problem.

Notwithstanding the adverse situation of these families, their faces fill with happiness and enthusiasm at the prospect of working with Project Harvest.



# FORMATION PROGRAM

## CONTEXT

Project Harvest works with women who live in poverty or extreme poverty, are marginalized, experience discrimination, and are malnourished. They confront on a daily basis the need to care for and feed their families. Project Harvest's program not only focusses on improving food security but also addresses the exclusion and inequality that women face.



*Workshop on discrimination, Pitahaya, March 2016. Providing opportunities for women to reflect on their reality and develop new skills is critical for their own self development.*

## OBJECTIVES and STRATEGY

Our formation program aims to equip these groups of women with the capacity to know and exercise their rights as women in a very challenging environment. This means providing spaces for reflection and development of analytical skills.

A second objective is to strengthen the organizational capacity of women participating in Project Harvest so that they are able to create a sustainable, organized structure, be it a Board, a Committee or an Association.

This formation strategy focusses on the training and strengthening of leaders and potential leaders. By concentrating on forming community leaders, the organized structures they create are strengthened. They can articulate and solicit for their own development projects. They develop leadership skills so that they are better able to represent women's needs in community decision making bodies.

## THEMES

This year alone 74 workshops have been held with over 1,439 attendees. Participants have discussed themes of community leadership, gender equality, violence, oppression and discrimination, relationships of power in their society, community and homes.

A special request made by the women was to facilitate the local health centers to provide information on family planning and to help them identify the danger signs in a pregnancy.

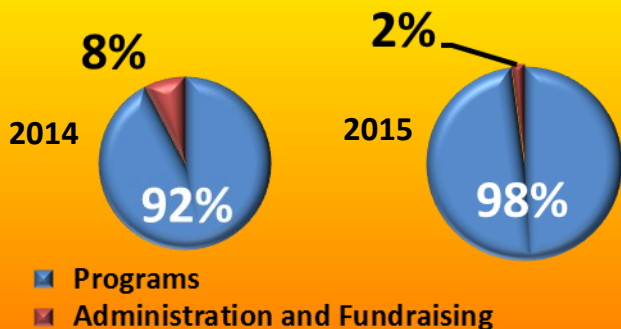
## SOME of the RESULTS

1. Women grow personally and acquire a deeper understanding of the roots of their reality and the need to change it.
2. They can identify who exercises power in the family and community and how that power is used to control them.
3. They know that violence against women, traditionally accepted as normal, is not normal.

# THANK YOU



## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

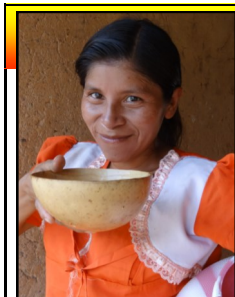


## Project Harvest - Guatemala / Financial Statement 2015

### REVENUE, EXPENSES & ASSETS for 2014 and 2015

REVENUES	Totals 2014	Totals 2015
Donations from Individuals	28,562.98	43,108.25
Donations from Institutions	42,626.95	12,147.87
MCC Grant for Regular Program		18,635.11
MCC Grant for Emergency Program		95,886.67
Rotary Club Grant for Regular Program		63,781.17
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>71,189.93</b>	<b>233,559.07</b>
EXPENSES		
Program expenses in Guatemala	64,010.17	50,881.98
Admin., in Guatemala & Canada	4,625.62	4,055.41
Fundraising in Canada	712.59	834.88
MCC Regular Program		18,635.11
MCC Emergency Program		92,383.31
Rotary Club Regular Program		60,604.99
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>69,348.38</b>	<b>227,395.68</b>
Excess of revenues over expenses	1,841.55	6,163.39
Assets at beginning of the year	<b>30,125.10</b>	<b>31,888.43</b>
<b>NET ASSETS* - END of YEAR</b>	<b>31,966.65</b>	<b>35,053.14</b>

\* Represents startup funds for next calendar year.



## PLEASE BE PART OF OUR WORK!

Support takes many forms. Support for **Project Harvest** is following us on social media and telling others about us. Another essential component of support is financial. Project Harvest is particularly grateful for your donation. It makes it possible to work in several communities where participants improve their nutrition and food security and acquire leadership training. To sustain this important work, we invite you to continue your financial support or become a first time donor. Consider becoming a monthly donor! Every dollar is valued and so appreciated. Thank you!

**Please donate! Help make our work possible.**

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## NEW MEMBERS OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS & GUATEMALAN TEAM



**Katrina Simmons** has spent 25 years working in community gardens and organic farms, writing for books, newspapers, magazines and documentary films that advocate for equitable and sustainable food systems. She is currently a chef in Hamilton, Ontario.



**Marika Ince** is deeply rooted in the farming tradition since she began managing her family's roadside fruit and vegetable stand at the age of eight. As an educator she believes that social justice is best cultivated through education and engagement.



**Edilia García Avalos** acquired her organizational and horticultural skills growing up in the close company of her mother, a local community leader. She is a go-getter and self-starter. Her formal training is in the area of business administration.



# PROJECT HARVEST - Guatemala



## VISION:

⦿ A WORLD FREE FROM HUNGER. ⦿ A WORLD WHERE THE HUMAN RIGHT TO FOOD IS ABSOLUTE AND UNCONDITIONAL; ⦿ A WORLD WHERE EVERY CHILD, WOMAN AND MAN CAN FULLY ACCESS ADEQUATE, NUTRITIOUS AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE FOOD.



Present in

**10**

COMMUNITIES

**19**

COMMUNITY  
PROMOTORS



**2,691**

PEOPLE  
IMPACTED



2016 BY THE  
NUMBERS



**404**

FAMILY  
GARDENS

**110** TONS  
OF FOOD  
PRODUCED



**414**

FAMILIES  
INVOLVED



**1,439**

WORKSHOP  
ATTENDEES



**74**

FORMATION  
WORKSHOPS



## MISSION:

⦿ TO EMPOWER EXCLUDED, SUBSISTENCE FARMING FAMILIES ⦿ TO IMPROVE THEIR FOOD SECURITY BY PRODUCING HIGH QUALITY FOOD ⦿ TO STRENGTHEN THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS OF THEIR RIGHTS.



# THE HUMAN RIGHT TO FOOD

Hunger is a manifestation of the lack of compliance on part of the State to ensure the right that each person has to receive an adequate amount of culturally appropriate food.

The following statistics give us an overview of the Guatemalan reality. By the year 2015, it was estimated that the poor in Guatemala accounted for 66.7% of the population. 92% of the farmers are at subsistence or below-subsistence level (i.e. what they pro-

ing handicrafts (hammocks and reed mats) or collecting and selling fire wood.

Even in normal times, with a good rainy season, when plantations provide temporary work and when they succeed in selling hand-crafted products, families are poorly fed throughout the year. However, when there are droughts or excessive rainfall, when diseases such as coffee blight impact the availability of work,



*Communities want to transform their reality. Here, they carry water to test a prototype cistern.*

duce on their plot of land isn't enough to feed themselves). It was also estimated that 23% of households suffered from hunger due to lack of economic resources.

In Guatemala, the legal agricultural minimum wage for the year 2016 is \$440. According to the National Institute of Statistics, the cost of a food basket (what a family of 5.8 members needs to eat to maintain needed calories) is \$598. The basic vital basket (what a family needs to spend on food, health, housing, education, and clothing) is \$1,091. These statistics speak for themselves.

However, the reality is much more dramatic. The farm families with whom Project Harvest works do not have their own land to produce the basics for a proper diet. Therefore they must rent land to do so. Even so they fail to produce sufficient food for the year and must seek temporary employment on coffee or sugar cane plantations, where they usually manage to work for 40 days annually, often earning wages below the minimum established by law. In order to survive, they employ survival tactics such as mak-

families suffer severe periods of hunger and poor health. Families are then in an extremely vulnerable position exacerbated by the fact that the Guatemalan government seems incapable of ensuring their right to food.

Changing this reality is a monumental task! Farmers are well aware that this situation is not normal. Some Guatemalans see the situation as unjust. They believe that the government and society in general have an obligation to guarantee them at least the right to feed themselves properly.

Where Project Harvest works with families, it contributes in two ways to promote the right to food. Firstly, by implementing gardens where families harvest vegetables that allow them to diversify their diet and secondly by way of a formation program. Project Harvest provides spaces for reflection and analysis about the circumstances that surround them and workshops that explore ways to contribute to the transformation of their reality in order to advance toward a more dignified life.

**PLEASE SUPPORT AND BE PART OF OUR WORK!**

Follow us on our Website, Facebook or Twitter. Your financial support is greatly appreciated and for that we thank you.



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