

RESILIENCE

A Publication of Project Harvest

Winter 2019-2020



At the Village Level - Women Inspire and Challenge Men to Change

Donors often ask Project Harvest “Where are the men?” Behind that question is the misconception drawn from the stories and pictures that appear in this newsletter, that men are nowhere to be seen. A deeper question needs to be asked. To what extent in the traditional rural communities where Project Harvest works are men responsible for keeping women uneducated, undervalued, isolated and without a voice in the critical decisions that impact their lives?

The evidence is that some men are changing but slowly. What is bringing about these changes? Women are inspiring the men and challenging their attitudes of dominance and control.

Traditionally men rise at day break, eat, go to work in the fields and return mid-afternoon to rest for the day. The weeks or months when they are not working on their own plots of land they work (when they can find it) as day laborers and come home with money in their pockets enhancing their status and power.

Women on the other hand are responsible for the maintenance of their homes. They get up before dawn, start the fire, make the coffee and tortillas, ensuring the men go to work with something in their stomach, sweep, prepare the children for school, carry water long distances, wash clothes, cook, etc. They retire after sundown. These tasks are only a tiny part of their bigger mission; they sustain the family structure. They worry about their children's safety and education. Women get little education, are often subject to domestic violence and have very little or no

source of income. Much of what women do is taken for granted; and therefore, never given its true value.

Alternatively Project Harvest comes with a program that allows women to put food on the table and to sell excess vegetables. This income helps pay for staples like salt, sugar and medicine, tangible contributions to the family's wellbeing. Equally important is a formation program provided by Project Harvest which also enhances women's self-esteem and their desire and ability to participate in community decisions.

Men take notice! They are in awe and respect of what the women are doing. The men, at the women's request, start to do the heavy work of terracing and preparing the land for the gardens, raising the protective fences, carrying the heavy bags of manure, and building the rain water catchment systems. The project becomes a joint undertaking. As one woman said, “We, now, always have the help of the men.”

As more women learn their rights; that they have legal recourse to denounce abusive treatment; that they deserve equal pay for equal work and a time for rest; that they should be able to attend meetings; the level of machismo starts to go down. It does not disappear.

PH's formation program is changing the lives of women with whom we work. Unfortunately this is a relatively small number of women compared to the greater need. **You, as a donor, can help empower more women to overcome inequality and exclusion by supporting the work of Project Harvest.**



Some of the men are slowly changing and expanding their traditional roles.

PROJECT HARVEST - GUATEMALA
EMPOWERING RURAL SUBSISTENCE COMMUNITIES

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Address: 17 Pancake Lane, Fonthill, ON, Canada L0S 1E2 A Federal Registered Charity n BN 82145 3503 RR 001



Letter from the Coordinator and Chair

Dear Friends and Supporters

A long-time partner organization of PH wrote to us recently . "... We want to affirm the success of the agricultural side of the project which generated trust and credibility in the community for its short-term results and then moved forward with longer-term issues such as community organization, local advocacy, and women's human rights and self-esteem.*" These words are an example of PH's achievements over this past year.

PH is also addressing climate change. An improved Rain Water Catchment System (RWCS) design is just one example. Other organizations are employing our trained Community Guides to build systems such as those of PH in other communities thus generating employment and saving water.

New Board officers and members have been elected: Gary



Newly designed expanded and reinforced roofs increase long term durability of RWCS.

Bowron, Chair, Nancy Willson, Vice-Chair, Katrina Simmons, Secretary, Paul Lemieux, Treasurer/General Coordinator and Anne Robinson. We have also secured the services of Ray Tisi, a chartered accountant, to augment our financial management. The new Board has adopted a Management Team Model of Governance in order to facilitate the implementation of our Strategic Plan in Canada and we have set a priority of engaging new volunteers and board members. Please become a part of the Project Harvest family, either as a prospective Board member or as a member of the fundraising, education, or communications committees. If you

are interested please do not hesitate to contact us!

Sincerely,
Gary Bowron
Chair of Board

Paul Lemieux
General Coordinator

* Letter dated 26/9/2019 from Mennonite Central Committee

From Dependence to Independence – an Entry and Exit Strategy

Many families ask Project Harvest to implement our integrated program of food security and leadership training in their communities, but once we are on the ground, communities don't want us to leave! So what is our exit strategy? Our entry to support and accompany a community is linked to our exit strategy. We want communities to become independent of us and able to function on their own. The following is our strategy as it pertains to family gardens.

In the first three years, families acquire up to 80% of the knowledge and practice of managing a vegetable garden. During this period they learn how to sow and harvest vegetables more than seven times. They are provided with important supports in terms of seeds, fertilizers, and regular technical accompaniment. In these years, the presence of a PH Agricultural Promoter in the community is very important. This is when Community Guides are trained so that in the future they will take on the responsibility for accompanying the families and their gardens.

After the initial three years, there are two more years of transitional accompaniment where the community groups can augment their knowledge and skills to be able to manage their gardens independently . Technical accompaniment is maintained, but it is reduced to a minimum as the Community Guides assume a more active role.

It is important to note that in years 4 and 5, we place emphasis on supporting families to adopt practices to save their own seeds and make their own organic fertilizer. By now, there is sufficient money from the sale of surplus produce to allow the option of buying seeds.

Our Agricultural Promoters are now free to turn their attention to new groups in new communities and work with new families. However, the process of organizational strengthening and leadership formation continues. With this support, families can now act as an independent, organized force and have a better chance of success in their search to secure their family and the community well-being. This shift to independence ensures that families continue their work despite the absence of Project Harvest's resources.



PH Agricultural Promoter, Paula Velasquez , at times walks 2 hours (with baby on her back) to provide technical advice.

Formation and Education Strategy

Project Harvest's mission is to empower women, girls and their families. It focuses on both improving their food security and leadership training. There are three key dimensions to our leadership training and formation.

The first is the formation of women augmenting their skills so that they can become more confident community leaders. This means choosing potential leaders who in the short term can form a Leadership Committee (Board of Directors) which can provide unity to a larger group of women. They will be able to implement the work of Project Harvest; learn to understand their rights; define and articulate their problems; and make proposals. All this is to be carried out with the help of an annual work plan. This process creates a slow but sure sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

The PH formation program supports women and girls to learn about and understand their rights; define and articulate their problems; and make proposals.



The second area of formation focuses on education to improve immediate living conditions of the families in the areas of health, hygiene and nutrition. This is especially beneficial to children, though benefits all participants. Women learn to prepare and cook vegetables from the garden; they learn healthy practices around the use of water, and how to use latrines.

A third area of formation focuses on regional organization and the multiplication and sharing of knowledge. Drawing from the elected Leadership Committees women with developed and proven leadership skills begin to work to form a regional organization. These leaders acquire the knowledge to critically understand their reality and eventually they can join together to make their voices heard at the municipal and departmental levels. They also become better situated to join women of other organizations with similar aims.

Two additional components inform our formation strategy. One is a policy of educating our technical agricultural team to have a deeper understanding of the social, economic and political realities in the communities they serve. In this way they are in a better position to accompany the formation process of the women in Project Harvest.

The second component consists of using a replication model. This means that key community leaders (mostly members of Leadership Committees but also new potential young women leaders) receive training on particular issues with the Formation Officer. They then return to their communities to coordinate workshops with larger groups of women to replicate the themes they have studied. In this exercise they are accompanied and supported by the Agricultural Promoters. This model allows group leaders to answer questions from the groups, while they themselves acquire more confidence with the ability to reach more participants.

Many Thanks - University of McMaster Club Has Raised Hundreds of Dollars

Project Harvest McMaster (PHM) is an official club run by enthusiastic students at McMaster University in support of Project Harvest for over five years. They meet once every two weeks to organize awareness and fundraising events.

Past events include Paint & Dine, The Office Trivia Night, and Valentine's Day Photo Booth among others. Sign in to their Project Harvest McMaster Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ProjectHarvestMac/>



Part of the hilarity for a good cause!



Project Harvest - Guatemala / Financial Statement 2018	
ASSETS, REVENUES & EXPENSES	Totals 2018
ASSETS* - December 31, 2018	
Curent Assets: cash & cash equivalent : Project Harvest Program Funds, MCC Regular Program, MCC Grant for Emergency Program, Rotary Club Grant for Regular Program	138,737.02
Accounts receivable	4,199.29
Capital assets outside Canada (pick-up truck)	16,575.00
Total Assets	159,511.31
LIABILITIES - December 31, 2018	
Accounts payable	2,563.85
Amounts owing	1,121.94
Total Liabilities	3,685.79
Total Net Assets	155,825.52
REVENUE - January 1 to December 31, 2018	
Donations from Individuals	46,094.15
Donations from Institutions	15,387.00
MCC Grant for Regular Program	13,142.91
Rotary Club Grant for Regular Program	115,277.30
Exchange Gain	1,070.38
Total Revenue	190,971.74
EXPENSES - January 1 to December 31, 2018	
Regular Programs: Project Harvest, MCC, Rotary Club	136,157.00
Management & Administration in Guatemala & Canada	9,376.00
Fundraising in Canada	844.39
Total Expenses	146,377.39
Net Assets at the beginning of year - January 1, 2018	111,230.62
Increase in Net Assets at the end of year - Dec., 31, 2018	44,594.90
* Represents start up funds for next calendar year.	

Welcome and Thanks to
members of Guatemalan Team



Yenifer Castro Coxaj is PH's new Formation Officer. Yeni has a university degree in social work with an emphasis in community development. She has years of experience working with CARITAS in the Dept. of Quiché. We welcome her to the PH family.



We are saddened that Arlen de León, PH's Formation Officer, has left us after four years of dedicated and tremendous work on the ground. We wish her all the best in her new position with an international development organization.

Please Donate!

Online at: projectharvest.org

Or **Project Harvest-Guatemala**
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Ontario, Canada L0S 1E2



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



www.facebook.com/project.harvest2



Visit our **NEW Website:** projectharvest.org

*In Gratitude we
thank you for
supporting our work!*

You, our donors, are with us when the harvest comes in!

Please continue to stand with us and allow us to do this work in your name.

Your support for this *"fantastic program"** allows "these villagers the means to both feed their families properly and gain a sense of hope for the future"*.

Join our:

"One" Campaign
Give a Gift of Gardens
Start with ONE FAMILY

(see our website for more information.)

* Letter dated 03/29/2019 from a PH partner organization:
International Services Committee, Rotary Burlington North



BY THE
NUMBERS

PROJECT HARVEST – Guatemala

Unanticipated Community Benefits

When Project Harvest is invited into a community with its integrated program focused on gardens, rainwater harvesting, organization and training, it is laying down a foundation for a very specific improvement in the well-being of the families of the community. Project Harvest does not and cannot meet all the needs of a community, but at times there are unanticipated benefits. Because of our presence other allied organizations become interested in implementing additional community projects in collaboration and coordination with Project Harvest community groups. We like to think of these extras as positive consequences of Project Harvest's engagement in a community. Here are some recent examples:



1 new
potable
water
Reservoir^{1*}

250 Solar
Energy
Kits^{2*}



200
Ecological
Filters^{3*}



1 sink (communal)
for clothes
washing^{4*}



6,500
Tree
Saplings^{5**}



10
Chicken
Coops^{6***}



1. 1 Natural Spring*, 1 holding tank*, for 100,000 liters of water, gave 129 families clean drinking water and countless healthy stomachs relieved of drinking water from 1 polluted stream in the community of Oquen.

2. 250 Solar Energy Kits* distributed in the communities of Oquen and Tunucó Abajo provided a solar panel, a battery, a lamp and a telephone charger. This is a saving of \$164 per family per year by not having to buy candles or pay to have cell phones charged. **Note:** Therefore eliminating the pollution from kerosene oil.

3. 200 Ecological Filters* distributed to provide cleaner water for the 1,000 family members and 5 schools of Tunicó Abajo while a more permanent solution is developed for potable water.

4. 1 Pila/Communal Clothes Washing Sink* and 1 Water Jug Filling Station* in the community of Tunucó Abajo.

5. 6,500 Tree Saplings** for 135 families in the communities of Vasquez, Cuesta del Aire, Casa Blanca and Chiyat.

6. 10 Chicken Coops** for 230 hens** laying 210 protein dense eggs per day for families in Cuesta del Aire.

* The Rotary Club of Burlington North, ** ELVITA and *** COSAMI provided the financial support / Project Harvest provided some of the operational, accompaniment and educational support for these unforeseen benefits of the original project.

TO STAY OR GO - A MIGRANT'S DILEMMA

DECISION

If your crops have been dried to a crisp; if your home has been inundated with water; if you don't have anything to eat, desperation will drive you to flee your community.

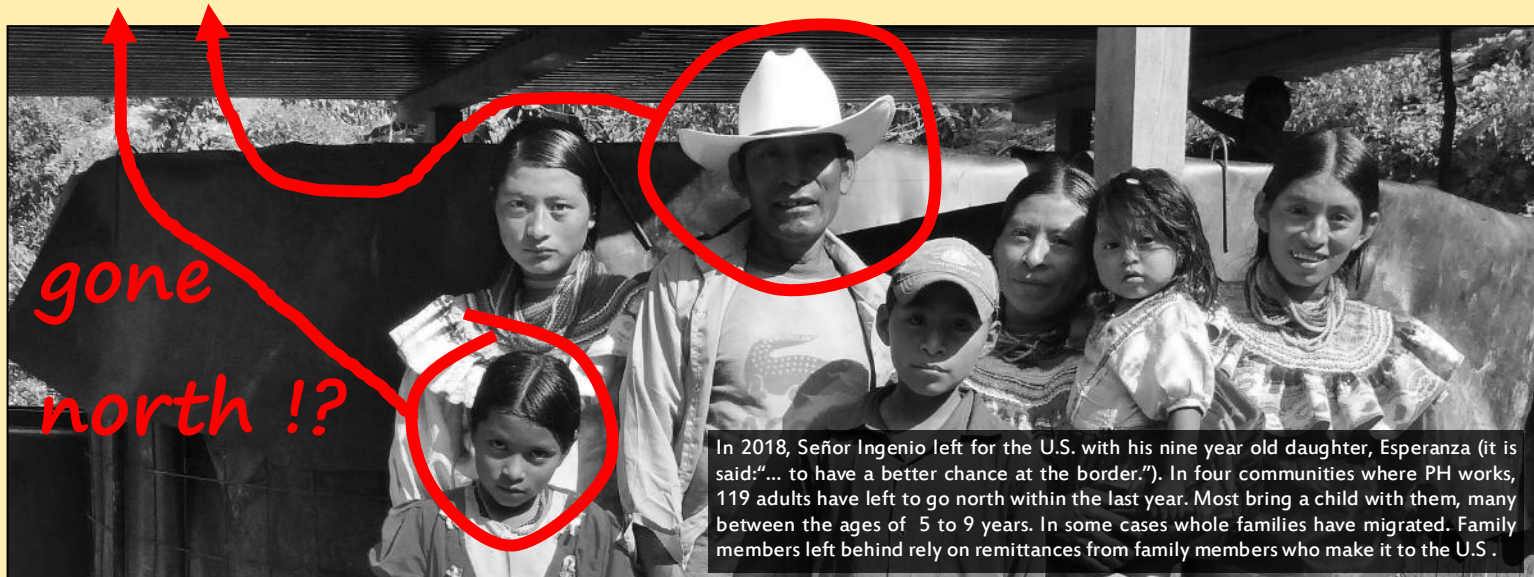
Tragically, this is the stark reality that Project Harvest – Guatemala has seen unfold with some of the families in the communities where we work. The situation has become desperate. Families face an impossible choice: stay and risk famine, or gamble everything

than five months.**

FOOD INSECURITY

People face food insecurity. As one farmer said, "My children have gone to bed hungry for the past three years. Our crops failed and the coffee farms have cut wages."*

Coffee is an important main cash crop, and for decades, many *campesinos* relied on seasonal work at commercial plantations to supplement their subsistent way of life. But a global price crash



on the perilous migrant journey north. "They risk their lives if they stay – and if they go".*

What is it that drives so many family members, and in some cases whole families, to incur crippling debts, leave everything behind and put their lives at risk to try to enter the U.S.? Guatemalan migration to the U.S. has spiked in recent years. Entire families have been migrating in record numbers. Since October 2018, more than 167,000 Guatemalans travelling in family groups have been apprehended at the US border, compared with 23,000 in 2016.* The number of unaccompanied children has also increased: American authorities recorded twenty-two thousand children from Guatemala last year (2018).**

CAUSES – CLIMATE CHANGE

The causes of migration are complex. Often cited are rampant gang violence in urban areas and extreme poverty in the countryside. But experts say the big picture is that changing climate is forcing farmers off their land leaving them without anything to eat.

Climate change has meant increasingly wide fluctuations in temperature, unexpected surges in heat followed by morning frosts, and unpredictable rainfall. Almost half a year's worth of precipitation might fall in a single week, which floods the soil and destroys crops. Grain and vegetable harvests, which once produced enough food to feed a family for close to a year, now lasts less

and a deadly rust fungus, which thrives in hot and humid conditions exacerbated by the climate crisis, which has wiped out about 80% of some regions' coffee production in the past five years. This has led to less work, lower pay and more hunger.

Since 2016, according to health centre officials at least 800 children under the age of five in one of the areas where Project Harvest works have been diagnosed with acute malnourishment. The chronic malnutrition rate in rural areas, which hovers around sixty five per cent, is among the highest in the Western Hemisphere.**

BRINGING HOPE

Project Harvest's integrated program of food security and leadership training helps families deal with some of these challenges. Growing nutritious food, fostering crop diversification, promoting reforestation and conserving water by means of rain water catchment systems all help to provide food security so that people don't have to migrate.

From the perspective of global environmental justice those least responsible for creating climate change are the ones who suffer the most from its consequences by losing their lives and livelihoods.

By taking action and fundraising with us you can make a real difference in people's lives. The need is great! Learn more, tell others, and act now!

* The Guardian, Aug 7, 2019 **The New Yorker, April 3, 2019

PROJECT HARVEST - GUATEMALA
EMPOWERS RURAL FAMILIES THROUGH TRAINING
IN FOOD SECURITY AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

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