

# RESILIENCE



A Publication of Project Harvest

Winter 2020-2021

Which is your first territory? Is it your home, your neighborhood, your city, your country? Or is it your body? Many campesina women conceive of their bodies as the only personal territory which they have, a territory which, sadly, can be and is violated in many ways.

In the poor communities where Project Harvest works it is very common to see women who are shy, who feel ashamed, who look down, who are afraid to participate, and who do not speak. The reason for these feelings

corresponds to the systematic violence to which their mind, body and spirit are subjected. This situation facing women is sanctioned by the very institutions in their community which ought to be protecting their territory: the church, the school, and the family.

Subtle and overt violence has become part of rural women's daily lives leaving an invisible mark. (Patriarchy has a long history.) Women grow up with fear which manifests itself collectively in the way they feel, think and perceive the world. If we do not take action to diminish this fear and contribute to the liberation of women, it will be difficult for them to advance in the struggle for their rights as women.

Changing this reality takes a lot of effort, but formation makes it possible. The methodology used by Project Harvest contains elements which allow women to raise their self-esteem and build collective safe spaces. The for-

mation program contributes to defending the body as their personal territory by way of the training itself, meetings and workshops, discussions, and analysis of issues concerning women's life experience. In each workshop a safe spiritual space (in Spanish *Mística*) is promoted, where stories and symbols are shared, representing women's struggles and

"Our body is our first territory."

Yenifer Castro, Formation Officer, leads workshop session in Pitahaya.

inspiring them to work for change. The group dynamics, games and activities incorporate movement, laughter and fun. The shared activities are aimed at exposing and rejecting the violence experienced by the women. Through workshops offered by Project Harvest, women gain confidence in their role as leaders, and lose their fear of expressing opinions and of leading groups of women.

The "body-territory" approach is both personal and social. The key to Project Harvest's formation program incorporates tenderness and understanding, allowing the hearts of women to heal from within. It is a challenge, given the realities that oppress them, but it is a challenge that must be assumed and taken up with much love and courage.



**PROJECT HARVEST - GUATEMALA**  
EMPOWERING RURAL SUBSISTENCE COMMUNITIES

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# Letter from the Coordinator and Chair

Dear Friends and Supporters

In Guatemala, this is a time of food scarcity. For those living in isolated rural communities, having enough food to eat is an even greater concern than catching the COVID 19 virus. Fortunately, the families with whom Project Harvest works are better prepared to sustain themselves.

Serious restrictions on the movement of our personnel in Guatemala have challenged the Project Harvest model of development. Can the family gardens in the 12 communities where we work continue to function? Despite many obstacles, our network of Agricultural Promoters, Community Guides and Women's Committees has been able to distribute seeds and organic fertilizers to all communities. Six months into the pandemic, a sampling survey of the 500 families generated data and photos. The results are gratifying.

"The gardens are still producing." These are the words which



The goal: adequate food and nutrition.

we keep hearing. The survey demonstrates that families have become accustomed to working in their gardens with little accompaniment or outside supervision. Families have assumed the responsibility to maintain and grow their gardens. The survey found that 63% of the gardens were deemed to be in excellent or good condition; 26% were only average due to heavy rains and hail shortly after planting; 11% had problems and needed more work.

Our conclusions are that families value the gardens and that most have acquired the skills and motivation to proceed on their own initiative. Relatively few still need regular visits and support in solving horticultural problems. The Project Harvest model of emphasizing food production and formation works. These positive results confirm the importance of expanding Project Harvest's viable and valuable model into more communities. With your continued support we can do so.

Sincerely,

Gary Bowron  
Chair of Board

Paul Lemieux  
General Coordinator

## Women's Leadership and Collective Action

Project Harvest focuses on two critical requirements to improve community wellbeing. For a limited time, we teach skills and provide primary resources to grow food for family consumption and sale. The second is to provide a leadership formation program to support women to organize themselves and to solicit and manage their own community development projects (examples below). Project Harvest does not believe it should be involved in a multitude of community development concerns which would dissipate its impact and effectiveness, but rather it prepares women leaders to take on these responsibilities themselves.

Project Harvest's formation program empowers women to contribute to successful initiatives which benefit both the women involved and their communities. The program motivates women to participate in leadership and decision-making roles at the community and municipal levels.

The following are a few examples of how the formation program has led to community improvements. These are not a by-product of the Project's work, as much as a strategic principle which supports leadership and organization. This in turn creates the synergy for the rights of women to move forward.

- ◆ Women leaders from the communities of Pitahaya, Oquen, Parracán, Chiyat and Cuesta del Aire have held community decision-making positions on committees for water and education, as well as participating in Community Development Councils (CO-CODE). The latter is the highest representative body of the community.
- ◆ The Pitahaya Women's Committee lobbied municipal and departmental authorities for two projects:
  - ◆ A potable water project which is benefiting the community's 158 families.
  - ◆ A community center which is used for primary health care for the entire community.
- ◆ The Women's Committee of Oquen organized itself to ask the health authorities for workshops on reproductive health issues.
- ◆ The Women's Groups from Cuesta del Aire, Vazquez and Casa Blanca solicited non-governmental organizations to contribute to the reforestation of their communities and obtained 8,000 trees of 3 different species for reforestation and environmental care.
- ◆ The president of Casa Blanca Xecaja's Women's Committee organized women to demand that the mayor and municipality provide the necessary corn and beans to help the community cope with the food shortages caused by the pandemic.



Organization and democratic participation reap positive returns.



## Four Elements on the Road to Form Leaders for Community Development

Project Harvest's formation strategy seeks to create a critical consciousness, especially among women, so that they will become agents of their own change. It helps women realize that their poverty is rooted in centuries of marginalization, oppression and discrimination, motivating them to change this reality. The process to achieve this goal requires patience and trust. Project Harvest must be a credible organization which listens, accomplishes what it says it will do, and inspires hope for improving the well-being of the families and the communities which it accompanies on this journey.



Gaining trust, responding to needs, organization and leadership formation lead to community development.

Project Harvest believes there are four essential elements that need to be fulfilled to set the stage for social change. These elements are as follows:

Gaining trust, responding to needs, organization and leadership formation lead to community development.

## 1. Establishing a relationship

**of trust:** It begins with knowing and appreciating the political, economic, social, cultural and physical space of each community. Project Harvest's promoters (i.e. its Guatemalan team members) share life stories with project beneficiaries. They identify the community authorities. During the visits to the gardens, the team listens carefully as beneficiaries share stories of community daily life, noting if there is any danger, any celebration, any funeral, etc. They identify the people who may resist some aspects of the activities. All of these actions allow the Project Harvest team to know the reality of these 12 communities and to gain their trust.

**2. Response to the felt needs of the community:** Project Harvest closely accompanies the process of building the gardens. Staff listen carefully to understand each community's problems, and motivates members to work towards solutions. As a result, the plans and efforts of the women's groups are oriented to respond to the particular needs of the each community. The success of the vegetable garden program is also largely due to the fact that it responds to a basic need of the population, which is food – a constant need which concerns the whole family.

**3. Development of an organized structure:** Transformative change requires organization. The women's groups are organized into Women's Committees with at least five members in each committee who have designated roles. The Committees are spaces for planning, leadership development and decision making. These Committees are a nucleus where women are recognized in their communities and have their voices heard. They allow women to acquire skills to be able to solicit their own development projects and then to manage them.

**4. Detection and development of women who show signs of leadership:** The Project participants do not all advance equally on the road to leadership. Some women display their leadership potential and energize the process quickly while for other women the build-up of their self-esteem takes longer. Presently there are 50 women leaders who occupy positions on the Women's Committees. They are given special training in management and leadership skills with the intention that they will apply what they have learned in their communities; and they will become the agents of change.

Many Thanks to HOLA (Hands of Latin America) a University of Guelph Club!

**HOLA – Hands of Latin America** is a passionate group of university students with a mission to promote and support sustainable development in Latin America. They generously donated over \$4,500 to **Project Harvest's "ONE" Campaign**. This means supporting family gardens with seeds, organic fertilizer, garden tools, formation workshops and a rainwater catchment system. Their support unquestionably allows Project Harvest to continue to address inequality in Guatemala. Facebook page: [https://www.facebook.com/HandsofLatinAmerica/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/HandsofLatinAmerica/?ref=page_internal)

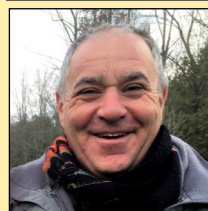




# Project Harvest - Guatemala / Financial Statement 2019

ASSETS, REVENUES & EXPENSES	Totals 2019	Totals 2018
<b>ASSETS - December 31, 2019</b>		
Current Assets: cash & cash equivalent: Project Harvest Program Funds, MCC Regular Program, Rotary Club Grant for Regular Program	66,792.02	138,737.02
Accounts receivable	4,020.52	4,199.29
Capital assets outside Canada (pick-up truck)	9,317.65	16,575.00
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>80,130.19</b>	<b>159,511.31</b>
<b>LIABILITIES - December 31, 2019</b>		
Accounts payable	533.64	2,563.85
Amounts owing	7.21	1,121.94
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>540.85</b>	<b>3,685.79</b>
<b>Total Net Assets (Represents starting balance for Jan., 1, 2020)</b>	<b>79,589.34</b>	<b>155,825.52</b>
<b>REVENUE - January 1 to December 31, 2019</b>		
Donations from Individuals	61,249.04	46,094.15
Donations from Institutions	7,620.00	15,387.00
MCC Grant for Regular Program	2,469.62	13,142.91
Rotary Club Grant for Regular Program	38,897.00	115,277.30
Exchange Gain	-0.12	1,070.38
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>110,235.54</b>	<b>190,971.74</b>
<b>EXPENSES - January 1 to December 31, 2019</b>		
Regular Programs: Project Harvest, MCC, Rotary Club	171,491.38	136,157.00
Management & Administration in Guatemala & Canada	10,323.73	9,376.00
Fundraising in Canada	1,021.59	844.39
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>182,836.70</b>	<b>146,377.39</b>
<b>Net Assets at the beginning of year - January 1, 2019</b>	<b>155,825.52</b>	<b>111,230.62</b>
<b>Increase in Net Assets at the end of year - December 31, 2019</b>	<b>-76,236.18</b>	<b>44,594.90</b>

Welcome to new members of Board of Directors



Simon Appolloni, whether through Development and Peace, University of Toronto, or Project Harvest, Simon educates and acts for a just planet.



Yola Bernert, comes to the Board, with a BEd, experience as an entrepreneur, and an active member with the Diocesan Council of Development & Peace.

Please Donate!

Online at: [projectharvest.org](http://projectharvest.org)

Or by Mail:

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Visit our Website: [projectharvest.org](http://projectharvest.org)



"In this time of COVID 19 when people around the world are experiencing increasing hunger, we thank you our donors and we are GRATEFUL for your support."



**BY THE  
NUMBERS  
IN 2020**

# PROJECT HARVEST - Guatemala

## COVID 19 – Exposes Need for Pro-Food Policies

In Guatemala's rural "dry corridor" over a million people require food assistance (Oxfam)\*, the result of the global pandemic compounded by years of neglect and the negative impacts of climate change. Project Harvest works with 500 families in this area haunted by hunger. The Project's permanent program is a development model which provides these families the means of growing some of their own food, capturing rain water and thus shielding them from the food insecurity crisis made worse by COVID 19.

Project Harvest's proven model has the potential of helping thousands of rural families. Unfortunately, the government's rural development model focuses largely on supporting the monoculture production of crops for export. This government model exacerbates historical inequalities regarding land tenure, cheap labor and the exploitation of natural resources. These policies leave most rural families extremely vulnerable to shocks like the pandemic as illustrated in the grim statistics below.

The Project Harvest model implemented in 12 communities where it works is supporting the most vulnerable families by strengthening their capacities and empowering women. Project Harvest offers tangible hope to families who are producing their own nutritious food using the resources and skills imparted in the Project's horticultural method. Project Harvest would like to see the national government present an agenda for strategic change by investing in rural communities and promoting an agenda to combat hunger.

### Government Abandons Rural Areas During COVID 19



**400% increase in families facing  
severe food insecurity<sup>1</sup>**



**130% increase of acute  
malnutrition / children < 5 yrs.<sup>2</sup>**



**50% less than needed to survive  
given to neediest families<sup>3</sup>**

### Project Harvest's Work : An Alternative Model to Replicate



**Seedlings: 130,000/ Seeds: 100  
lbs. / Fertilizer: 50,000 lbs.**



**2,500,000 liters of rain water  
collected for family gardens**



**100+ lbs. / approx., of food  
produced by each family**

1. In relation to 2019\*\*\* 2. in the first four months of the pandemic - exceeding the total number of cases in 2019 - The Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance\* 3. \$36 of the \$72 needed to comply with the 2,100 kcal / person / day is the only government program given to the most vulnerable rural families in a one-time food ration promised to be delivered to families to supply a month of food.\*\*

\*Oxfam report, Hunger Is the Measure of Covid-19 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/El%20hambre%20es%20la%20medida%20del%20COVID-19.pdf> ,

\*\* <https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/comunitario/asistencia-alimentaria-una-deuda-con-la-poblacion-del-corredor-seco-en-medio-de-la-pandemia/>

\*\*\* <https://elperiodico.com.gt/domingo/2020/07/12/el-hambre-golpea-en-el-corredor-seco/>



# "Hunger May Kill Us before the Coronavirus."

Project Harvest works in 12 communities impacted by COVID 19. The pandemic has exacerbated poverty, malnutrition and discrimination in most rural communities, pushing families into food insecurity as a result of escalating unemployment and the economic disorder caused by the virus.

## Fragile Family Economies in Collapse

"I left, with 10 others, walking three days to the Honduran border looking for work picking coffee; but no one was hiring. So, I walked back with nothing in my wallet or in my stomach." Miguel, a resident of Pitahaya, told his family on his return home.

The sources of income of campesino families depend on their economic connections held mostly outside their communities: their work on large export oriented plantations, family remittances from the U.S.A., migration to neighboring countries to look for jobs during harvest times, and work as itinerant traders. The paralyzing restrictions on inter-community movement to contain the virus have greatly limited the ability of families to seek out these sources of economic income. As a result hunger has increased, poverty has worsened.

## Food Production Down

"The land we rent to grow food is worn out. Without fertilizer we can only grow half of the crops we are used to harvesting." Maria Dolores, from Casa Blanca, explains the situation they find themselves in this year.

Campesino families rely on producing half of their annual basic food needs on rented plots of land. It is a bare subsistence or below subsistence existence. It is based mainly on the production of corn and beans. Farmers need inputs for production (fertilizers, occasional remedies for plagues) but, as a consequence of the family economic crisis, most inputs have become unaffordable. This has led to a decrease in the production of

basic grains on which they rely. Nevertheless, the families with whom Project Harvest works have gardens which have been a very helpful alternative for feeding their family. (See **By the Numbers** on flip side of this page.)

## Medical Resources Unavailable

"The nurses from government run Health Centers have stopped their monthly monitoring visits to the most severely malnourished children in the community." Gabriela, from Tunuco Abajo, speaks of feeling distraught by the lack of government services.



In rural areas compliance with government restrictive and preventative measures is next to impossible. The health system at the community level is precarious; the human, material and financial resources needed to address this pandemic are not available. Measures to prevent the spread of the virus are

difficult to practice. Families live in cramped quarters with limited money to buy hygiene supplies. One home-made mask is shared between all family members and used only when they go to market.

## Inadequate Government Response

"We're abandoned to our own fate." Comment by community leader, Isaías, from Chiyat, on the government's lack of efficiency in implementing support programs for the rural population.

The national government's responsibility to ensure citizens' rights to health, food and work is lacking. Families are being hit hard in this crisis. The inequality gap has worsened, as evidenced by insufficient investment to address the crisis in rural areas. Many poor Guatemalans say they still have not received any government support.\* The communities are expressing themselves in the voices of their people who say, "We feel forgotten; the government is turning its back on us".

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

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