

RESILIENCE



A Publication of Project Harvest

Winter 2022-2023

Dear Friends and Supporters

This edition of Resilience grapples with some of Guatemala's

difficult and complex issues and the people with whom we work as they struggle for hope and dignity in the midst of tragedy and historical wrongs.

The **COVID-19** pandemic has revealed more clearly the structural exclusion in which Guatemala's rural population live, the majority of whom are indigenous peoples. The vaccination rate in Guatemala is less than 50%. The villages of the dry corridor endured the worst peaks of the pandemic without the support of government institutions or health centers which mostly focussed on urban populations. In the communities where **Project Harvest** works many people died. Many families assumed with resignation that it was "God's will" or simply because "it was their turn to die".

Living with the virus has severe health consequences for those in rural communities; most notably in the shortage of food. This edition of Resilience explores what communities, in the face of food insecurity, are doing for themselves - not just waiting for a hand out. They are working hard, organizing

themselves and defending the **Human Right to Food**. They understand that their government has the responsibility to re-

spond to citizen's needs, not just by handing out food aid in an emergency but by providing the means for people to grow their own food or ensuring that all citizens can earn a living wage.

Key to the success of **Project Harvest's** endeavours is the dedicated work of our skilled **Agricultural Promoters**.

They are selfless, salt of the earth people, who go way beyond a basic job requirement. They rise before dawn to prepare themselves to travel miles by bus, motorcycle, or 'tuk-tuk' and then by foot to visit the far away communities they accompany.

In 2015, Santos María Méndez moved from being a Community Guide to sharing her extraordinary horticultural gifts in many more PH communities as a Promoter.

Finally, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, several used cell phones were delivered to Guatemala allowing us to document more clearly the progress and achievements of the families with whom we work.

Sincerely,

Gary Bowron
Chair of the Board



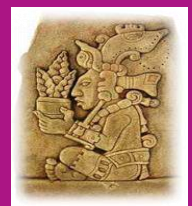
What is the responsibility of a government to uphold the Human Right to Food? Government-provided school snacks to children who arrive hungry does not absolve them from their obligation to assure families have the means to provide for themselves. Photo : Oquen primary school , Chiquimula, Guatemala.



PROJECT HARVEST - GUATEMALA
EMPOWERING RURAL SUBSISTENCE COMMUNITIES

E-mail: project.harvest.guatemala@gmail.com Website: projectharvest.org

Address: 17 Pancake Lane, Fonthill, ON, Canada L0S 1E2 A Federal Registered Charity n BN 82145 3503 RR 0001



Project Harvest's Agricultural Promoters – Salt of the Earth People

Agricultural promoters are critical to **Project Harvest's** successful programs in 13 communities. Their dedication and commitment to improving the lives of the families in these communities are just two of their characteristics. A deep sense of empathy and a good knowledge of the best horticultural practices are two additional qualities they possess.

Project Harvest is always trying to detect these unique individuals and nurture them in their development. The promoters are women. They rise out of their communities. They know and experience the same difficulties other women face in getting ahead in a world of limitations. They become leaders with knowledge in different areas of life: health, economics, family relations, and education as well as in agriculture. They organize groups and committees. They promote community development projects, and they carry out negotiations with municipalities and other government agencies and NGOs.



Since 2004, **Olga Ramona Tumax** has shared her depth of experience and the wisdom of an Elder with PH community members.



Paula Bruna Velásquez, Promoter since 2018, learned her skills and way of bring a servant to the people at her mother's side from a very early age.

tems and the importance of using organic fertilizers.

A promoter's principal role is to teach women how to cultivate a vegetable garden. She is also prepared with knowledge of planting methods, seed harvesting, use of organic inputs, soil and water conservation, care of fences, and care of rainwater harvesting tanks for irrigation. She visits the gardens regularly to verify that there are no pests, diseases or losses. She knows

how to solve problems using natural and organic methods.

To the women with whom they work, promoters become counselors, friends, and the ones who listen to the various problems project participants may have on matters such as health, reproductive health, education, cooking, and domestic problems, among others. They maintain a listening approach and know that a woman, who has fundamental concerns about their health or other issues, will not be able to concentrate on their garden. She gives them timely and appropriate advice. Only after this listening, accompaniment and counseling work is done, does the promoter go to the garden to carry out her work with her fellow beneficiaries.

"El Campo" (the countryside) runs deep in their veins. Promoters maintain their own crops, so they have a good knowledge of agriculture and know how to use tools such as hoes, machetes, axes and rakes. They understand the difficulties faced by farmers with their basic grains, corn and bean crops. In addition, they know about planting vegetables, preparing the land to make it fertile, various sowing methods, planting sys-

Edilia García, six years a PH Promoter, brought her energy and spirit to learn and teach in far flung communities by motorcycle.



Project Harvest is immensely grateful for their dedication to the work of improving people's lives.

Gardens - a Relief and a Hope

Chiyat and Parracaná

These two communities of Totonicapán, where **Project Harvest** has been working have shown very satisfying results. At first the gardens were small even though, unlike other communities, they have larger plots of land available. **Project Harvest's** Promoters worked with the families to show them how to produce vegetables. After two years of seeing the benefits, all of the families decided to increase the size of the area sown.



In Chiyat and Parracaná, families with a little more land have recognized the value of producing vegetables not only for eating but as a viable source of income.

The families are very motivated and the gardens have been fully incorporated into their survival strategy. The families' goal is to continue progressively increasing the number of vegetables planted and to enlarge the amount of land designated for this purpose. Only 80 plants were grown in the first years but in 2022 each family put in the ground 450 plants. The crops are broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, onion, radish, cilantro and native herbs such as bleado, mustard, and cabbage, among others. In Parracaná, at least three families are already planting up to 2,000 vege-

tables plants using their own resources, asking **Project Harvest** to only pick up the plants from a garden center and deliver them to the community.

In both communities, there is evidence that the work of **Project Harvest** has generated interest in families that are not part of the group with which we work and have asked for technical support.

Peña Blanca

In Peña Blanca, the presence of **Project Harvest** has made it possible for 22 families to be trained in the production of vegetable gardens. Although this is only the beginning, the results show the potential of the work. They have grown broccoli, cauliflower, onions, cabbage, coriander, radish; all vegetables that they never imagined they could grow and obtain such a good harvest. Some of the knowledge they have acquired in training through the learning-by-doing method include making terraces, incorporating organic fertilizers, and sowing seeds that they had never planted before. Preliminary records show that the harvest raised the equivalent of Q386.00 (\$77) in terms of what the families consumed and Q367.00 (\$73) of monetary income from the sale of vegetables from the garden. This concrete result means increased availability of food harvested for themselves and cash to help relieve their enormous health needs. It also boosts the families' morale as they continue to progress in their knowledge about gardens and see the quality of their crops improve.



In Peña Blanca, a cover crop of beans not only adds nitrogen but secures the soil during a harsh rainy season and provides nourishing vegetable protein.

Timuxan

In rural communities of the dry corridor of Guatemala there is an immense vacuum on the part of the government support in its role as generator and enhancer of agricultural development. The community of Timuxan, neighboring Peña Blanca, upon seeing **Project Harvest's** work, requested concrete support. **Project Harvest** responded with technical advice on how to develop their own gardens. They bought their own seedlings and seeds, they prepared their soil, planted and attained their first harvest. Thus, a group of 14 more families are now working their gardens in the community of Timuxan, as a result of **P H's** presence in Peña Blanca.



The "Wow" Effect! The gardens in Peña Blanca have so inspired the neighbouring community of Timuxan that, with PH's technical support, families are beginning to replicate what they have seen.

Fundraising Endeavours: Yola Bernert Paddled 202km for Women's Empowerment You Too Can Walk, Run, Swim or Bike for Project Harvest

"Hi, my name is Yola, and I am member and proud supporter of Project Harvest's work in Guatemala. Some days it is beyond comprehension when I think about the difficulties and challenges which Guatemalan women face: drought, famine, and discrimination. Yet somehow, they push through, care and provide for their families.

Their resilience motivated me! As a personal challenge and fundraiser for Project Harvest, I paddled from Kingston to Ottawa via the Rideau Canal, 202km in 9 days and to date raised \$572.

By far this was one of the hardest physical challenges I have ever put myself through, yet incomparable to the daily life of a rural Guatemalan woman."



"I am deeply touched by all the support I received and would like to encourage you to consider doing something similar. You can do it virtually as well! Contact **Project Harvest** to get started."
Yola Bernert

Project Harvest - Guatemala / Financial Statement 2021	Totals 2021	Totals 2020
ASSETS - December 31, 2021		
Current Assets: cash & cash equivalent: Project Harvest Program Funds, MCC Regular Program, Rotary Club Grant for Regular Program	126,048.22	79,816.59
Accounts receivable	7,819.63	7,335.55
Capital assets outside Canada (pick-up truck)	5,305.59	6,387.38
Total Assets	139,173.44	93,539.52
LIABILITIES - December 31, 2021		
Accounts payable - Guatemala	307.84	1,950.06
Amounts owing - Canada	-0.08	1,396.45
Total Liabilities	307.76	3,346.51
Total Net Assets (Represents starting balance for Jan., 1, 2022)	138,865.68	90,193.01
REVENUE - January 1 to December 31, 2021		
Donations from Individuals	66,623.68	66,100.85
Donations from Institutions	13,532.79	13,655.00
Canadian Central America Relief Effort (CCAMRE)	20,911.29	00000.00
Rotary Club Grant for Regular Program	44,910.46	51,459.74
Exchange Gain or Loss	-935.35	-00000.12
Total Revenue	145,042.87	128,516.80
EXPENSES - January 1 to December 31, 2021		
Regular Programs: Project Harvest, CCAMRE, Rotary Club	88,440.01	100,511.90
Management & Administration in Guatemala & Canada	7,969.68	9,053.84
Interest and bank charges	1,199.67	2,144.31
Fundraising in Canada	1,026.95	913.05
Total Expenses	98,636.31	112,623.10
Net Assets at the beginning of year - January 1, 2021	90,588.57	74,299.31
Increase in Net Assets at the end of year - December 31, 2021	48,277.11	15,893.70
Total Net Assets (Represents starting balance for Jan., 1, 2022)	138,865.68	90,193.01

Please Donate!
Become a Monthly Donor!

Online at: projectharvest.org

Or by Mail:
Project Harvest-Guatemala
17 Pancake Lane, Fonthill, Ontario,
Canada L0S 1E2

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

 <https://www.facebook.com/project.harvest.guatemala/>

 <https://www.instagram.com/projectharvestguatemala/>

Visit our **Website**: projectharvest.org



BY THE
NUMBERS
IN 2022

PROJECT HARVEST - Guatemala

They Have Started Knocking On Doors!

Nineteen women have been elected to speak on behalf of the 3,800 beneficiaries of **Project Harvest**. They have chosen the name "Women Who Work the Land" and their greatest dream is to improve the situation in their communities so more people can live a dignified life where their rights are realized.

In May, 2022, these community leaders, accompanied by members of the **Project Harvest** team, began knocking on doors of governmental and non-governmental institutions. To date, they have contacted 25 public and private entities.



Ten organizations agreed to meet with them, allowing the women an opportunity to articulate with clarity and conviction the situation in their communities and the work they do. They requested support for food and agricultural inputs. The reaction of

- **85 women from 13 communities met in 5 inter-community assemblies**

their audience was applause and admiration for their effective presentation and the high level of organization they showed.

What Has Been Achieved So Far?

A delegation of leaders met with representatives from the **Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA)**. After learning about how MAGA works, the community of **Cuesta del Aire** was able to obtain seeds and arrange a visit by an agricultural outreach worker who shared his knowledge about improving productivity.

- **100's of formation sessions held – the sparks which have led to actions!**

Representatives of the **Western Cooperation Association for Rural Development (CDRO)** discussed the possibility of coordinating a project in the future. Meanwhile, two members of the **Vasquez** community were able to enroll in one of CDRO's tailoring course. In addition, in **Vasquez**, twenty families obtained six varieties of seedlings from the **Municipal Government of Totonicapán** to plant in their gardens.

- **19 women are elected to represent an organization of 540 members with 3,800 beneficiaries**



After several meetings, the **Women's Committees of the Casa Blanca/Xecaja** and **Chiyat** communities were invited to sign a letter of intent with the NGO **HELVETAS** (a Swiss association for international cooperation) to participate in a project called **Ixoquib' Juyub' (Women of the Mountain)**. This project will focus on climate change adaptation actions including the sustainable use of natural resources such as forest and water conservation and agricultural production. As well, the project will continue to promote the voice of women when it comes to developing municipal policies.



Many of the ten meetings with NGOs, government agencies and foundations have the possibility of bearing fruit. As women, the new rural leaders understand that building bridges of support requires time, persistence and a clear vision. They know that continued struggle at many levels is required to assure that their communities live with dignity.

- **New Rural Leaders identify 25 entities and begin the process of soliciting support for community needs**

Why Are Some People Eating Only One Meal A Day?

Government's Responsibility

Too many rural people in Guatemala subsist on one meal a day. The **Human Right to Food** is a government responsibility. The government's obligation is to ensure conditions for people to feed themselves adequately either by producing their own food or by means of well-paid, decent jobs that allow them to buy food. Food handouts in times of disasters are not enough. The family gardens which **Project Harvest** supports do not solve all of a family's needs, particularly for their staples of corn and beans nor for their health, education and transportation costs. For this reason, **Project Harvest** continues to train leaders to defend the right of their communities to adequate nutrition.

Today's Reality

During the past years, **Project Harvest** has helped organize five inter-community assemblies. Eighty-five leaders from 13 communities have had the opportunity to meet and discuss their common reality and aspirations. This year they discussed the impact of the doubling of global food costs, the miserable wages earned for casual jobs, and the tripling of the cost of agricultural inputs. In addition, they see climate change continuing to

devastate their staple crops of corn and beans. All this generates hunger. They have also come to know that today's food crisis has historical causes rooted in a lack of land, a lack of land titles as well as a lack of government run financial, technical and input support programs to strengthen family agriculture.

Actions

In the face of this, participants in the assemblies shared ideas on how to assure the sustainability of their productive gardens. They also agreed that they must knock on the doors of government and NGO offices to solicit support in

addressing their immediate needs for food aid and in obtaining inputs to help them grow their own food.

During the assemblies, 7 K'iche' and 12 Ch'orti' women were elected to carry the voice of their communities into the public sphere. These women are aware of the limitations indigenous women face when it comes to making their voices heard: lack of self-confidence, an ingrained fear of assuming leadership positions, and objectification imposed on them by a machismo culture and extreme poverty. Despite these limitations, the women have formed two departmental boards of directors.

Exercising their collective rights in an organization of more than 540 members is a challenging yet empowering act. As

you read this article, they have already begun to stand up and speak out. They have narrated their stories, sometimes haltingly, but with clear and firm ideas. They have explained their challenges and presented their proposals to government agencies, NGOs and private foundations. They have addressed the growing food emergency exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic as they presented proposals to people far beyond **Project**



"....in Guatemala, where two thirds of the more than 16 million population already live on less than 2 US dollars per day. Almost half of children are stunted - meaning they're chronically malnourished - that's one of the highest figures in the world."*

* Deutsche Welle (DW) <https://www.dw.com/en/food-crisis-in-guatemala-why-people-are-eating-only-one-meal-a-day/a-5728282>

Harvest. We celebrate them!

Long Term Challenges

Achieving progress regarding the right to food requires both medium and long-term efforts on the part of civil society. It is a complex challenge, involving education, strong organizational skills, and alliances. It is the path on which **Project Harvest** has been advancing since it first introduced its formation program – the spark which has led to action. It began by helping community members to reflect critically on the reality of their life and to learn about their constitutional, indigenous and universal rights.

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

E-mail: project.harvest.guatemala@gmail.com
Address: 17 Pancake Lane, Fonthill, ON, Canada L0S 1E2

Website: projectharvest.org
A Federal Registered Charity BN 82145 3503 RR 0001

