

RESILIENCE

A Publication of Project Harvest

Winter 2025-2026



Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is our great pleasure to send you a special greeting as we launch **Project Harvest's 25th Anniversary Celebrations**. We warmly thank you for your steadfast support over the many years that **Project Harvest** has worked to improve the lives of rural Guatemalans.

We also acknowledge the past and present board directors, partners, friends, and Guatemalan staff who have made **Project Harvest** what it is today — a small organization that consistently “punches above its weight.” Its milestones reflect the remarkable impact it has had on the well-being of rural communities (see pages 4–5).

Project Harvest works with campesina/o families who have rarely received long-term outside support, helping them to grow food, strengthen their organizations, and advocate for their basic rights. Together, we can take pride in the small but meaningful “grains of sand” each of us has contributed to this shared transformation.

Sincerely,

Nancy Willson
Chair of the Board

Paul Lemieux
General Coordinator



**Project Harvest's
25th Anniversary Year
Begins —
Twenty five years of working for
Food Justice and Human Rights**

With Appreciation and Gratitude to Past and Present Guatemalan Staff, Board Directors, Friends, and Partners						
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PROJECT HARVEST - GUATEMALA

EMPOWERING RURAL SUBSISTENCE COMMUNITIES

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Imperceptible Attitudinal Changes Spark Unintended Positive Actions



Community leader, Don Antonio Escalante, and Program Director, Erwin Rabanales examine some of the 7,000 coffee seedlings ready for sale.

Project Harvest’s work in Guatemala focuses on improving the well-being of communities by strengthening local organization and food security.

Yet beyond these visible achievements lie many subtle changes — quiet but meaningful transformations. These are changes in awareness, attitude, and spirit — not always measurable, but vital to building stronger, more resilient communities. These intangible changes in attitude then result in many concrete actions. Much of this progress is made possible because of the skills, dedication, sensitivity and earned confidence of **Project Harvest’s** Guatemalan team.

At the community level, training and organizational supports have sparked broader collective achievements. Several villages have introduced piped water systems that now serve entire communities, while in Oquén, residents organized to repair roads damaged by tropical storms, thanks to the community leadership and teamwork skills developed

through the project.

At the family level, indirect results are equally powerful — community members are more open to guidance in conflict resolution, health care, and have renewed motivation despite difficult times. Encouraged by **Project Harvest’s** accompaniment, many families have begun new productive ventures that strengthen both their food supply and income.

One such case is Don Antonio Escalante of Peña Blanca, expanded his garden to grow onions and established a coffee nursery with 7,000 seedlings — expected to yield a net income of about \$3,200 — a meaningful improvement for his family’s livelihood.

Whether rebuilding roads or saving livestock, these stories reveal the unseen but enduring impact of **Project Harvest** — fostering resilience, solidarity, and hope across rural Guatemala.

"We Women Must Keep Going"

Paula Velásquez's Story



"Paula says "She absorbed the values of community work and improving food security that have guided her ever since."

Across rural Guatemala, women are transforming their lives and communities through their family gardens. One of them is Paula Velásquez, whose journey from a young participant to a community promoter captures the essence of **Project Harvest's** mission — cultivating self-reliance, resilience, and women's leadership.

Paula's connection with **Project Harvest** began in childhood. "Since I was little girl, I went to the meetings with my mother," she recalls. "When she couldn't go, I went in her place." What began as a child's curiosity grew into a lifelong commitment to community work and improving food security.

When Paula married in 2012, she decided to start her own garden. "I had always helped my mother with hers," she explains. "When I got married, I asked my in-laws to lend me a small piece of land. That's where I started planting vegetables."

In a culture where women rarely own land, Paula's initiative became an act of independence. "Having our own garden makes life easier," she says. "You just pick what you need — broccoli, cauliflower — fresh and organic. It helps the whole family. If my husband doesn't have money, I can still make sure there's food on the table."

Paula's dedication and knowledge led **Project Harvest** to invite

her to become a community promoter. "At first, I doubted myself," she admits. "But my parents encouraged me. Becoming a promoter meant teaching others what I had learned."

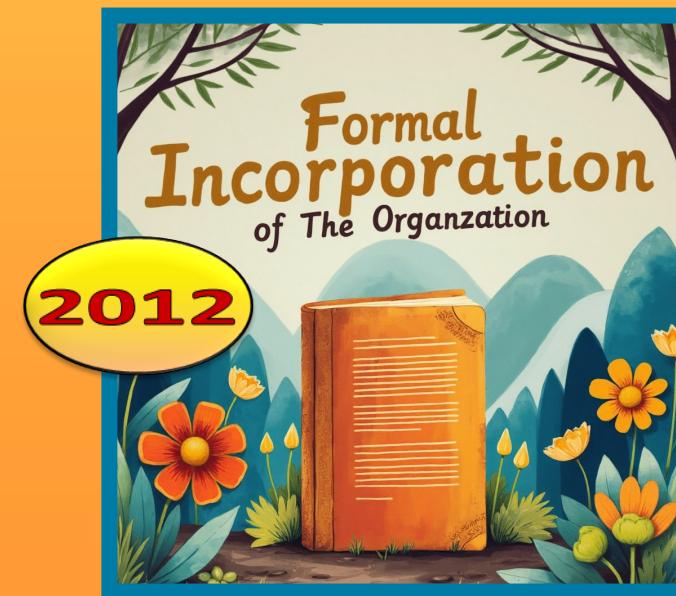
She values the trust **Project Harvest** placed in her. "They didn't see whether I was a woman or had a family — they gave me an opportunity. That means a lot to me."

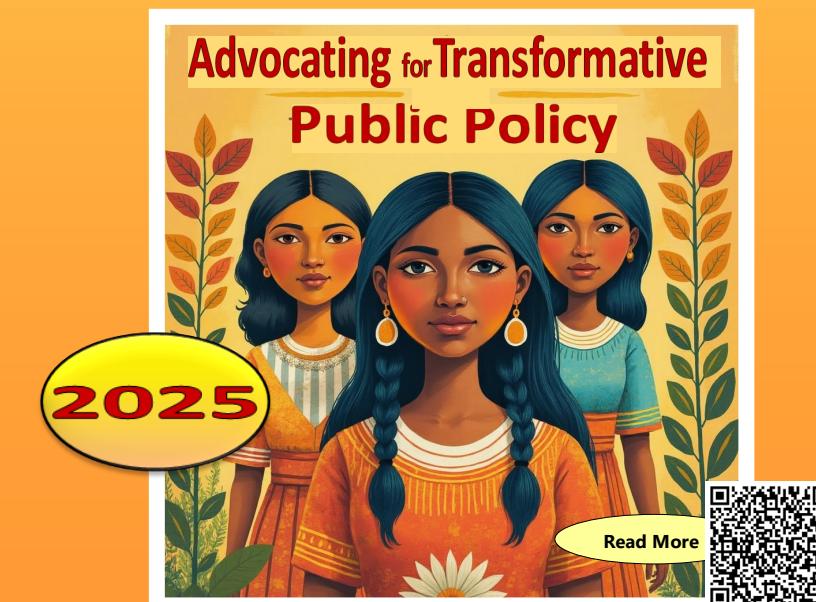
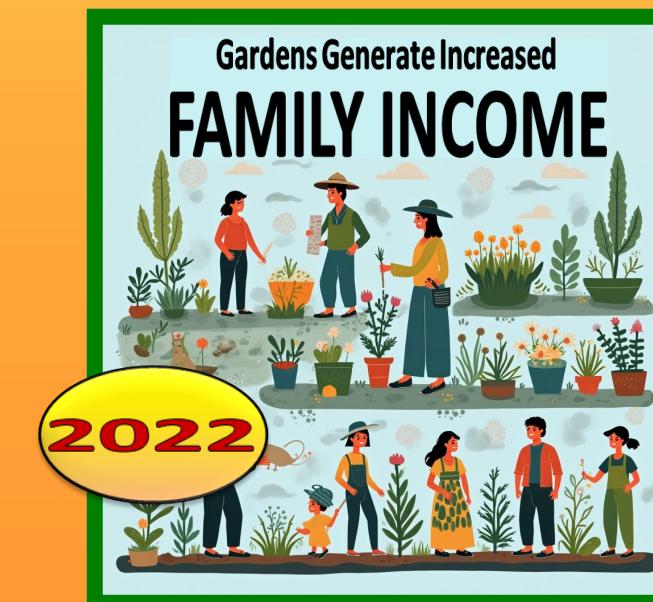
As a promoter, Paula now trains other women to grow their own food. She understands the challenges they face — cultural restrictions, fear, and lack of support. "If a woman can't go out, she can't move forward," she says. "But when she finds courage to participate, that's when change begins."

Even when she feels discouraged, Paula says the project renews her spirit. "When I go to a meeting and hear a few encouraging words, I tell myself, 'I have to keep going.' Life has its difficulties, but we must keep moving forward."

Today, Paula's garden thrives, and so does her confidence. "We are happy because we're harvesting broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage. The families are eating what we've grown. We're grateful for the support we've received."

Through stories like Paula's, **Project Harvest** continues to grow seeds of empowerment — one garden, one woman, one family at a time.





Women Raising Their Voices to Shape a New Water Law



In Guatemala, six out of ten households still lack access to safe drinking water. For more than fifty years, efforts to pass a National Water Law have stalled in Congress. Now, a new national dialogue has begun — offering a rare opportunity for communities to help shape legislation that will determine how water is managed and protected.

Women leaders from the communities where **Project Harvest** works recently came together in two regional workshops to take part in this consultation process. They spoke about the daily struggles caused by water scarcity and how climate change, deforestation, and environmental degradation have worsened droughts, floods, and declining crop yields.

At the end of their discussions, the women developed ten recommendations for the new law, including the promotion of rainwater harvesting, recognition of women's right to water access, stricter regulation of corporate use, and measures to protect rivers and reforest watersheds.

These proposals represent more than policy ideas — they are the collective voice of rural women demanding justice. Through continued advocacy, **Project Harvest** and its women leaders are ensuring that the country's new water law reflects the rights, needs, and wisdom of the communities who depend on this vital resource.

* <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-collecting-water-often-colossal-waste-time-women-and-girls>

** <https://www.iadb.org/en/projects-and-results/results-and-effectiveness/impact-region/greater-access-potable-water-and-sanitation-transforms-communities-guatemala>

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Seizing the Moment: Advocating for Change



Across Guatemala's rural communities, women leaders supported by Project Harvest are stepping forward — not only to grow food and strengthen families, but to shape the future of their country. For decades, rural families have struggled to meet their most basic needs: water, health care, education, land, and food. Now, with a more open and progressive government in place, there is an unprecedented opportunity for their voices to be heard.

Through **Project Harvest's Education and Formation Program**, women have gained the skills and confidence to advocate for fair and inclusive public policies* — policies that

that recognize their rights and address the root causes of poverty. Their leadership is already contributing with others to make a difference: ending clientelism, reducing corruption, and pushing for new laws to protect vital resources like water (see related article on page 6).

This is a powerful moment — one of courage, organization, and hope — as communities come together to advocate for the change they've long envisioned.

*Public policies are principles, laws, actions, or guidelines established by government to address societal issues, problems, or the public interest, guiding the government's actions and influencing the lives of citizens.

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Government of Canada Funds Project Harvest Initiative

The **Canada Fund for Local Initiatives** in Guatemala, through the **Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD)**, has entered into a Contribution Agreement with **Project Harvest** to implement a five-month project* aimed at advancing women's empowerment and resilient food systems.

The project seeks to strengthen the leadership of Chortí and K'iche' women in the departments of Totonicapán, Chiquimula, and Zacapa. Its core objectives are to enhance food security and promote equitable access to water through the creation of 551 agro-ecological family gardens and the formation of a women's network.



Esmeralda Soc, Project Harvest's new Formation Officer, leads a workshop on a proposed new Water Law.

Through targeted training, community-level campaigns, and ongoing technical accompaniment, the initiative will combine practical agricultural support with leadership development and public policy advocacy.

The expected results include improved household nutrition, increased family income, and a stronger presence of rural women in municipal, departmental and national discussions on food and water rights.

*Check out Instagram and Facebook for regular updates.

Project Harvest - Guatemala / Financial Statement 2024	Totals 2024	Totals 2023
ASSETS - December 31, 2024		
Current Assets: cash & cash equivalent: Project Harvest Program Funds, CCAMRE Regular Program	177,373.38	93,419.02
Accounts receivable	3,853.35	4,771.21
Capital assets outside Canada (pick-up truck)	-	2,002.60
Total Assets	181,226.73	100,192.83
LIABILITIES - December 31, 2024		
Accounts payable - Guatemala	-	193.06
Amounts owning - Canada	(0.10)	(0.09)
Total Liabilities	(0.10)	192.97
Total Net Assets (Represents starting balance for Jan., 1, 2025)	181,226.83	99,999.86
REVENUE - January 1 to December 31, 2024		
Donations from Individuals	106,332.68	59,535.68
Donations from Institutions / Interest income	27,924.36	8,441.67
CCAMRE Grant for Regular Program	47,005.57	10,487.12
Exchange Gain or Loss	(3,024.29)	140.29
Total Revenue	178,238.32	78,604.76
EXPENSES - January 1 to December 31, 2024		
Regular Programs: Project Harvest, CCAMRE	101,684.43	119,795.25
Management & Administration in Guatemala & Canada	2,874.27	2,782.65
Interest and bank charges	1,956.29	1,232.07
Fundraising in Canada	1,118.01	941.38
Total Expenses	107,633.00	124,751.35
Net Assets at the beginning of year - January 1, 2025	99,999.86	147,365.58
Adjustments of year end currencies revaluation	4,573.07	(936.95)
Increase in Net Assets at the end of year - Dec., 31, 2024	76,653.90	(46,428.77)
Total Net Assets (Represents starting balance for Jan., 1, 2025)	181,226.83	99,999.86

Please Donate!

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