



**FOOD FOR
THE HUNGRY**



GUATEMALA
NEBAJ COMMUNITIES
2019 YEAR END PROGRESS REPORT

PREPARED BY
Food for the Hungry (FH) Guatemala
& Food for the Hungry (FH) Canada



INTRODUCTION

Food for the Hungry (FH) Guatemala continues with its commitment to graduate communities out of extreme poverty, providing a safe environment and opportunities for these communities to thrive.

In the communities of Villa Hortensia II, Rio Azul, Xonca, and Acul, FH implements programs and activities to

help leaders and families lift themselves out of poverty. Programs in the areas of education, health, livelihoods, and leadership training have provided these four communities with a path forward towards a brighter future for their families.

EDUCATION

FH staff conducted eight sessions for over 1,100 children in Grades 1-6 using the High-5 curriculum. The curriculum focuses on five Christian values: love, hope, thanksgiving, respect, and honesty while also building the next generation to live in harmony and trust with one another. For middle schoolers, values-based lessons included topics on gratefulness, hard work, loving others, and respect for parents. A total of 305 students across the four communities participated in sessions held over the last six months of the year.

In Villa Hortensia II, teachers and all 172 elementary children, together with their families, conducted a cleaning campaign in the community in early June. They also formed groups to hold additional cleaning days every three months. Unlike the beginning of the year, there is now a clean and orderly community which has also led to a decrease in the proliferation of flies. The children have developed the habit of keeping their school environment clean.

As part of the new focus on early childhood education, FH education facilitators ran trial lessons on emotional health in Acul and Rio Azul. A total of 108 children

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between the ages of four and seven learned about self-regulating their emotions: how to identify them, naming their emotions, and healthy ways to react and regulate themselves. Learning about emotions and how to control them helps children have healthy relationships.

FH Guatemala's kindergarten program also continued through the second half of the year. Children from pre-school and Grade 1 developed their fine and general motor skills through crafts, stories, and reenactments.

In September, middle school students of Rio Azul, Acul, and Xonca participated in a special training on teen pregnancy. FH and the Ministry of Health partnered to share this topic to help youth learn how an unexpected pregnancy can change their whole life and the importance of taking care of themselves for the sake of their life goals. Attendance was positive, with 267



students participated in the session—115 boys and 152 girls.

FH Guatemala offers assistance to students continuing into secondary education. In order to receive funding, students must apply with the local FH office. Grants are awarded based on family need, student motivation, and grades. Students studying at a private school receive 50 percent of tuition costs and those going to a public school receive 100 percent of tuition costs. Currently, there are 20 students in FH's high school assistance program, half of which are girls. Of the four FH partnered communities, Rio Azul is the only one with a public high school, so students from the other communities travel there for education. The school offers four career streams: Expert Accountant, Development Expert, Baccalaureate in Education, and Children Teaching.

FH staff made a total of 140 home visits in the last six months of the fiscal year. Home visits provide an opportunity for FH staff to meet with parents and ensure they are supporting their children in their studies, and encourage them to make their children's education a priority. During visits, staff also assist children with reading and mathematics and encourage them to be diligent in their studies.

One significant challenge recently faced by community members has been the high level of migration of families out of the communities. The appeal of a better life in the United States has swayed several families to leave Guatemala and head north. This has increased school dropout rates, especially in middle school. Home visits are an opportunity to talk with parents and explain the detriment caused to children when uprooted from school.

During home visits, staff assist children in reading and mathematics and encourage them to be diligent in their studies.

KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM ATTENDANCE

| Community | # of Children |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Acul | 14 |
| Río Azul | 49 |
| Villa Hortensia II | 34 |
| Xonca | 22 |
| | 119 |



Children celebrate the Day of the Child in Guatemala.

HEALTH

Cascade Health group members and Growth Promotion and Monitoring teams (GPM) continued to operate through the second half of this fiscal year. As Rio Azul, Xonca, and Villa Hortensia II near graduation, FH staff are focused on ensuring these groups are ready to continue on their own and that they are recognized by the Ministry of Health.

GPM teams continue to identify the children in their communities who are not adequately gaining weight. They provide counselling and home visits to those mothers to support them with their children’s nutritional needs. A total of 117 visits were made to children with low-weight. The teams also met with community leadership and Cascade Health group leaders to share nutritional information from the GPM meetings and determine if follow up visits are required.

Lessons around early childhood stimulation continued with “Do and Play” sessions. This has helped mothers from Villa Hortensia II, Acul, Xonca, and Río Azul to take time to care for their children, play, sing, and teach them colours. It has helped mothers strengthen their relationships with their children.

In June, Cascade Health group leaders and the GPM leaders met to share experiences, motivate, and encourage each other to continue to better the health of the children in their community.

Two medical teams visited the community of Villa Hortensia II during the summer. The teams performed check-ups on children and assisted with the installation of 50 fuel efficient stoves. The stoves will help decrease respiratory issues for families caused by smoke from indoor cooking fires.

In September, a group of midwives and health committee members from each community were trained on family emergency planning, highlighting childbirth and steps to follow to avoid risking the mother's life.

The GPM teams trained pregnant women on several useful topics such as maternal health, chronic



Cascade groups are made up mainly of mothers who place a high value on family health. They track the growth and weight of local children and advocate for the implementation of health and sanitation practices in the community.

CASCADE HEALTH GROUPS & GROWTH PROMOTION AND MONITORING (GPM) TEAMS

| Community | No. of Cascade Groups | No. of Cascade Group Members | No. of GPM Teams | No. of Home Visits from Cascade Groups and GPM Teams |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Río Azul | 5 | 61 | 5 | 244 |
| Xonca | 3 | 36 | 5 | 144 |
| Acul | 1 | 8 | 5 | 32 |
| Villa Hortensia II | 1 | 10 | 5 | 40 |
| Total | 10 | 15 | 20 | 460 |

malnutrition, nutrition during pregnancy, prenatal care, exclusive breastfeeding, warning signs during pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum, the newborn, and how to prepare a family emergency plan.

Cascade group and growth promotion meetings were interrupted this year by Guatemala's 2019 national elections. Political parties held many community meetings to garner support, which unfortunately took mothers away from attending FH facilitated meetings. Now that the elections are over, mothers seem to be regularly attending Cascade group and growth promotion meetings again.

Fresh produce from family gardens is improving the day-to-day health of many families. Access to a variety of nutritious vegetables particularly helps mothers with children under age five by reducing chronic malnutrition. The sale of excess produce is also helping to increase

Fresh produce from family gardens improves the day-to-day health of many families.

family income. This allows other foods to be purchased to supplement the family diet.

Cooking demonstrations were held in the four communities using vegetables from the second harvest of the year. This helped families use garden produce to feed their children. Cooking demonstrations are performed twice a year, at the end of each harvest, so that mothers learn new ways of preparing what they've grown and harvested.



Since Guatemala has one of the highest malnutrition rates in the world, it is important that families and schools in partner communities are supplied with high-nutrient foods. Food for the Hungry ships and distributes millions of servings of soup mix every year, which are incorporated into school feeding programs and distributed to vulnerable families.

LIVELIHOODS

In order to boost garden production and further raise family incomes, FH staff trained 220 households in family garden management. Topics included land selection, preparation, planting, and harvest management. At mid-year, there were a total of 140 family gardens. In the last half of the fiscal year, community members established another 80 family gardens—60 of these in the community of Acul. FH staff made a total of 350 home visits to the 220 families with gardens to provide guidance and support.

Community agriculture promoters, with assistance from FH agriculture promoters, trained a total of 75 gardeners on the development and harvest of lombricompost. This type of composting uses worms to produce organic fertilizers and provides a way to make use of crop waste. The rich fertilizer applied to family gardens boosts crop production.

FH empowers families to improve their household income through Savings and Loans groups. These groups build significant social capital for those involved

as they support one another and become friends who share their successes and worries. This year, savings groups from Acul and Rio Azul met together to share their experiences. The women of Rio Azul, a community nearing graduation, have well-established groups and were able to offer advice to the women from Acul, a community only halfway through its development journey whose groups are not as established.

FH staff continue to support savings groups with regular visits. Through FH facilitated evaluations, women identified their strengths and weaknesses as a group, analyzed their work through the year, and came up with a plan for improvements next year. FH staff provided guidance to women starting up businesses. This was done through individual home visits to discuss potential business plans. This year, 10 more women started businesses after receiving individual coaching.

Representatives from each savings group came together to learn from one another and work together on larger initiatives. This collaboration is formatted to work like a



Family gardens provide FH partnered communities with fruits and vegetables which supplement family diets with much needed nutrients. Additionally, families can sell excess produce for another source of income.

more extensive women's savings group. All the women work together to identify community needs and find solutions. FH provides support and guides the groups to work together. FH also helps them identify what is really a need for the community and suggests solutions that will benefit the communities. There are two collaborative groups in the Ixil region—one is formed by members from Xonca, Rio Azul, and Antiguo Xonca; and the second is made of members from Acul and La Pista. Support was given to this new initiative to create a new income-generating business which will provide rentals of 100 chairs and 12 tables for a variety of events.

In May, a group of women were trained in growing oyster mushrooms. The project started as a pilot initiative to see how women and their families would respond to this different source of protein. FH provided mushroom spores and trained the mothers on how to grow the mushrooms. The mothers and their families were very excited to learn how to prepare mushrooms to complement traditional meals. The participants shared

what they learned with their communities and have taught their friends. This activity no longer requires training or support from FH since the women keep on sharing the spores from their harvest and help each other cultivate new mushroom crops.

SAVINGS & LOANS GROUPS SUMMARY

| Community | # of Saving and Loans Groups | # of Participants |
|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Río Azul | 4 | 50 |
| Xonca | 3 | 30 |
| Acul | 2 | 18 |
| Villa Hortensia II | 1 | 14 |
| Total | 10 | 112 |

SAVINGS & LOANS GROUPS FINANCES

AS AT SEPTEMBER 30, 2018

| Community | Group Name | # of Members | Savings | | Loans Granted | | # of Loans |
|--------------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| | | | GTQ | CAD | GTQ | CAD | |
| Acul | Mujeres Intelectuales | 11 | Q9,440 | \$1,660 | Q18,050 | \$3,173 | 42 |
| | Mujeres Tejedoras | 14 | Q3,750 | \$659 | Q25,640 | \$4,507 | 32 |
| | Mujeres Ixiles | (closed) | | | | | |
| | Mujeres Activas (new) | 14 | Q4,170 | \$733 | Q3,800 | \$668 | 4 |
| | Mujeres de la Libertad | 11 | Q8,520 | \$1,498 | Q59,350 | \$10,434 | 47 |
| Sub-Total | 4 Groups | 50 | Q25,880 | \$4,550 | Q106,840 | \$18,784 | 125 |
| Río Azul | Las Rosas | 11 | Q15,733 | \$2,766 | Q197,500 | \$34,723 | 128 |
| | Las Margaritas Unidas | 9 | Q11,657 | \$2,049 | Q145,200 | \$25,528 | 131 |
| | Mujeres de Agua Azul | 10 | Q6,291 | \$1,106 | Q54,400 | \$9,564 | 122 |
| Sub-Total | 3 Groups | 30 | Q33,681 | \$5,921 | Q397,100 | \$69,817 | 381 |
| Villa Hortensia II | Las Palmeras | 7 | Q17,525 | \$3,081 | Q140,600 | \$24,719 | 122 |
| | Azu Cenas | 11 | Q24,600 | \$4,325 | Q247,480 | \$43,511 | 161 |
| Sub-Total | 2 Groups | 18 | Q42,125 | \$7,406 | Q388,080 | \$68,231 | 283 |
| Xonca | Mujeres Ixiles | 14 | Q11,074 | \$1,947 | Q83,150 | \$14,619 | 187 |
| Sub-Total | 1 Group | 14 | Q11,074 | \$1,947 | Q83,150 | \$14,619 | 187 |

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

While it is critical to train and develop the formal leaders of the communities, it is also important to empower those who take on other leadership roles.

Within Savings and Loans groups, women have taken the initiative to learn more about women's and children's rights through a workshop. FH provided guidance on how to coordinate and manage the event since they wanted all of the women from the savings groups to attend. Two different sessions took place--one in the town of Nebaj and the other in Acul, with a total of 135 women participating. The people who shared the training were from the Human Rights Procurator and a women's development association from Nebaj. The participants learned about how the law protects them and what their rights are as women. They also learned from whom and where they can receive support, and what process should be taken to address issues of abuse.

María, who is part of the Nebaj Women's Network, conducted a women's self-esteem workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to teach women about their inherent worth independent of their current circumstances. A total of 165 women from all four communities and an additional 150 women from another community called Salquil attended the workshop.

Community leaders continued to plan around disaster risk reduction. In the second half of the year, they focused on the modules of Control Analysis and Risk Mapping.

In September, church teachers received refresher training on the AWANA children's club program. Six Acul churches, four Río Azul churches, one Xonca church, and two Villa Hortensia II churches held these training workshops. The two day workshops were given to AWANA program leaders who are called "multipliers" because they multiply what they learn every time they give classes. This refresher training is usually done once

a year and is critical for churches with new teachers. The AWANA program is key to reaching more children and youth with God's message of love and building in them Christian character and a biblical worldview during childhood.

Church leaders learned how beneficial it can be to have a higher level of involvement with community members and development leaders. By doing so they can share the love of God and demonstrate care for others.



Community leaders come together to form a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plan in order to best overcome periods of drought or disaster should they affect the community.

IMPACT STORY

Weathering the Storm

Why does poverty so often follow tragedy? The feeling of defeat, of being battered by life's tragedies can be a crippling mindset that makes way for poverty.

For 66 year-old Pedro, the loss of close family members left him in a state of crippling grief. In 2012 he lost his wife to illness. Four months later, his son was shot by criminals in Guatemala city. The loss was too much for him to bear. Despite his position as a respected leader in the community, Pedro found himself in a slump.

After several years, FH staff paid Pedro a visit in his home. They asked him his story, and how he's processed his grief over the years. Pedro explained, "The death of a loved one is not an easy thing to stand but I trust that God is my strength and my refuge." Pedro was ready to embrace life again.

Having spent many years believing that the FH training workshops were a waste of time, Pedro surprised FH staff when he showed up for his first Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) workshop in 2019. The point of DRR workshops is to help communities remain resilient in times of disaster. Having a plan in place helps communities weather all the storms in life, from droughts to hurricanes. It felt good to be involved in community leadership again.

Because he'd faced storms of grief in his own life, Pedro knew how important it would be for his community to be resilient in theirs. It was rewarding to come up with a plan to help his community fight poverty.

"Being part of the community leadership has been important for me, I feel committed and courageous, I feel happy because now I have the opportunity to give something back in the place I have lived for so many years," explains Pedro.



THANK YOU

FH Guatemala, FH Canada, and families of Rio Azul thank you for walking with them on their development journey. Your support is changing the daily lives of many people and creating a bright future for their children.

IMPACT STORY

A Fresh Take On Nutrition

Many mothers in rural Guatemala must work hard to keep their children healthy. Since Guatemala has one of the highest malnutrition rates in the world, this task can be a major battle. This reality is no exception in the community of Acul.

Anita was a new mother in Acul, doing her best to keep her one-year old daughter, Elena, well-fed. But no matter what she did, her baby girl continued to lose weight. She was sure that the mashed tortillas and beans she fed her daughter would be enough to keep her healthy. But it wasn't.

Concerned about her daughter's health, Anita met with FH staff to ask for help. FH staff suggested supplementing her daughter's diet with fresh vegetables, which would provide the vitamins and nutrients necessary for growth and development. Anita knew that her neighbours had fresh vegetables she could buy, and she began to incorporate those into her young daughter's diet.

It worked! Anita's daughter's health returned, and Anita knew that growing her own vegetables would be the key to her family's nutrition. FH helped Anita set up a family garden, supplying her with seeds and gardening training to go along!

"Now I prepare Elena's food with the recipes that the staff of FH taught me and I use the vegetables I grow in my garden. I make radish salad, carrot patties, chard patties, cauliflower shrouded in egg, and broccoli salad," Anita describes.

Today Elena is thriving in kindergarten. Her teacher says she's an intelligent and active girl, who brings life and energy into the classroom! It's thanks to a nutritious diet of fresh fruits and vegetables and to a mother who's worked hard to provide it.



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IMPACT STORY

No More Germs!

Since Ana became a mother, her life has been full of demands. At 26, she takes care of her three young children at home. Every day, she's working on a seemingly endless to-do list of responsibilities.

You can imagine how overwhelmed she felt when her young daughter began to lose weight due to malnutrition. There was already so much to worry about!

Cascade group members were full of advice for Ana, and she had a hard time accepting all of it. They suggested she take measurements of her children to track their growth. They offered tips on keeping her home more sanitary.

Ana didn't want the advice and didn't apply what was being taught in Cascade group meetings. Her time was already filled up.

But her daughter was only getting worse; she was losing more and more weight. After one particular checkup, a doctor told Ana that her daughter was seriously sick. It was time to make some changes.

Ana began to closely monitor her daughter's health. She began taking her daughter's weight and height measurements, making her child's health a priority. She even set aside time from other pressing responsibilities to focus on her daughter's needs. She started to get serious

about handwashing, and making food over clean surfaces. Since then, her daughter has gained 3 pounds!

"I realize that good health practices help me take care of my family. Thank God I accepted the ideas on time before my daughter got worse!" Ana exclaims. She goes on to explain, "Before FH began working in the community, no one advised us on the care of our children. I realize that in our knowledge we were weak."

Today, Ana is a big advocate of Cascade groups. Instead of simply showing up for meetings, Ana is a major participant. She's seen the miracles of hygiene firsthand!



THANK YOU

FH Guatemala, FH Canada, and families of Villa Hortensia II thank you for walking with them on their development journey. Your support is changing the daily lives of many people and creating a bright future for their children.

IMPACT STORY

For Kids to be Kids

In Canada, it's taken for granted that kids get to be kids. Canadians believe that children are supposed to play, learn, and not be weighed down with the responsibility of surviving poverty.

In the small community of Xonca in Guatemala, many children aren't afforded that luxury. This is eight-year-old Fernando's case, who had to stay home from school to take care of younger siblings while both of his parents worked. Without any friends around to play with, Fernando's social abilities were negatively impacted during this developmentally crucial time.

When FH staff met with his parents, they reinforced how important education is to a child and offered the parents support to make this happen. FH staff made regular home visits and helped teach Fernando basic lessons he would need to start school. FH staff worked with Fernando's parents on a plan so he could eventually join school with other kids. And the plan worked!

Starting school at a later age didn't come without challenges for Fernando. Shy and insecure at first, he struggled to gain the confidence he needed to thrive in class. He kept on trying and through a combination of classroom involvement and tutoring, Fernando began to thrive.

"What I like most and what I have learned from the FH teacher is to help and serve others," explained Fernando.

Now, Fernando is a leader in his class, sharing the things he's learned from his tutoring sessions with other students. Not only is he keeping up with the class, other students look to him as a leader and role model.

"I feel happy to be appreciated and recognized, I thank FH, Canada for their support in changing my way of acting and my life," concludes Fernando.



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FH Guatemala, FH Canada, and families of Xonca thank you for walking with them on their development journey. Your support is changing the daily lives of many people and creating a bright future for their children.