



**FOOD FOR  
THE HUNGRY**

**PREPARED FOR**

# **GUATEMALA**

ACUL, RIO AZUL, XONCA, VILLA HORTENSIA II, SAN JUAN COTZAL

**YEAR-END PROGRESS REPORT  
FISCAL YEAR 2022**


WRITTEN BY **ALBERTO LÓPEZ, PROGRAM COORDINATOR OF THE IXIL REGION WITH SUPPORT OF THE IXIL TEAM, FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY (FH) GUATEMALA.**

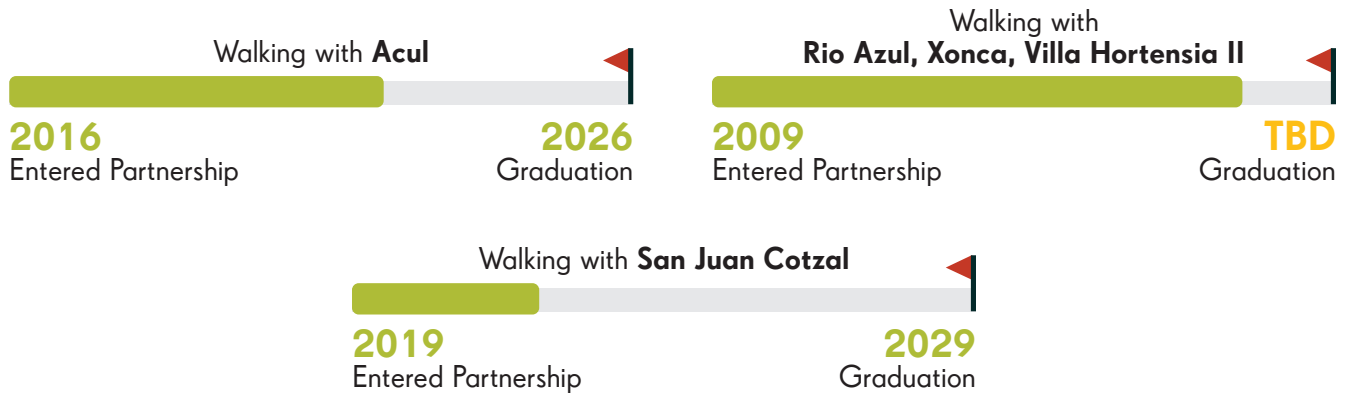
TRANSLATED BY **INGRID DELGADO.**

PREPARED BY **FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY (FH) CANADA**



# INTRODUCTION

-  Communities: **12**
-  Total Households: **3,852**
-  Total Population: **18,282**
-  Program Participants: **4,604**



Food for the Hungry’s (FH) strategy allows us to partner with local leaders to develop transformative solutions that are both sustainable and implemented by the hands of the communities themselves. We are grateful to work with municipal governments, community leadership, church leaders, families, and children to grow communities in the areas of livelihoods and food security, childhood education, health and nutrition, leadership development, and resilience toward disasters.

Through a special project in San Juan Cotzal called Better Coffee, Better Lives, FH is strengthening the livelihoods of vulnerable households. By increasing the technical capacities of 100 smallholder coffee producers in the communities of Chichel and Santa Avalina, FH is helping coffee growers sustainably increase their income and food security, directly impacting a total of 600 people! To find out more, or receive a full report on this project, contact Mike Janz at [mike.janz@fhcanada.org](mailto:mike.janz@fhcanada.org).



**“ Planting different types of vegetables brings us nutritional benefits that helps us avoid all kinds of diseases, and so our children and grandchildren can be healthy and no more eat canned food or junk food.**

— Jacinto, Community Member, Acul







## LIVELIHOODS

### GOAL

**To improve food security for the most vulnerable families and to improve the economic, social, and political empowerment of women**

*“I have participated in the Savings and Loans Group since its beginning, and I have seen the hand of God move in my family. Thanks to this, we now sell fresh eggs in our community, also to improve the nutrition and life of my eight children.”*

— María, Business Woman, Xonca

### Nutrition for My Family

FH staff visited families growing kitchen gardens to provide encouragement, refresher training, and help solve problems. Some families received materials, construction plans, and training for vermicompost production. Vermicompost only requires vegetable scraps and animal manure for the worms to produce rich, organic fertilizer. FH also trained Lead Farmers on agricultural techniques including making and applying non-chemical pesticides. By making their own garden supplies, families become more independent.

FH introduced rabbit rearing as a low-cost, high protein food source for families. Participants received materials and instructions to build rabbit hutches, education on how to raise and care for the animals (including disease prevention and treatment), and home visits from FH staff. The rabbits received routine vaccines. Families look forward not only to improved nutrition in their homes, but also to the income that rabbits will bring as they reproduce and are sold in local markets. FH conducted a cooking demonstration on rabbit stew and gave participants the recipe to try at home.

### Weaving Dreams

FH staff trained and visited new Savings and Loans Groups. Members learned how to set individual goals and self-assessments as well as practical strategies to achieve their goals. Women with new business plans received technical support, including information on customer service, distribution, pricing, promotion, and production. Pig raising, selling food, and selling clothes are three of the new initiatives.

As women save money in their groups and access loans, they're also able to further develop and expand their businesses. This will not only raise household income and increase food security, but also lift up women as key actors within their homes and communities. Most of the women are using their loans to purchase thread for weaving traditional güipiles (embroidered blouse), scarves, bags, and embroidery that represent their cultural diversity.

Well-established savings groups are forming “platforms” to increase their potential and impact. Representatives from eight or nine savings groups come together to create more powerful businesses than the individual women can achieve on their own. One platform in Acul, Women for Sustainable Development, began a new strawberry production project. In Rio Azul, the Ixil Working Women platform launched a tortilla shop to sell tortillas for all three daily meals.







# LIVELIHOODS

## ACTIVITIES

**40** families received **vermicompost kits**



**27** families received **rabbit hutch kits**



**450** families with kitchen gardens received **seeds and fertilizer**



**29** active **Savings and Loans Groups** with 256 women participating



**MORE IMPACT NUMBERS ON THE LAST PAGE**

“Platforms” function as powerful cooperatives to strengthen women’s economic potential, social influence, and capacity to build up their communities.





# EDUCATION

## GOAL

**Increase access to education for children and adolescents**

*"I feel very grateful and happy with the support of the school supplies that the FH donors gave me. It was of great benefit to my educational process because I am a person with limited resources. I wish that God [will] bless the life of each one of the donors who sent us school supplies."*

— Gloria, Grade 8, Chichel Community

COVID-19 exacerbated some families' lack of interest in supporting their children's education as the time children were allowed to be in school was limited. Because most parents don't know how to read or write, they can't help their children with school work or home study. These are two of the main reasons for school dropouts this year.

So, in December and March, staff made follow-up visits to children to raise awareness about the importance of education. They encouraged children to continue going to school and spoke to parents about how important education is for their children to have a better future. These visits are coordinated with the schools' principals who help identify children who have expressed a desire to stop school or who are struggling academically. They also delivered school supplies to elementary school students to practically help them stay in school all the way through to graduation.

## ACTIVITIES



1,037

**school supplies kits** delivered to elementary and middle school children

23

adolescents received follow-up visits

133

**home visits** conducted to support children

3

**classrooms** constructed in Acul Nueva Esperanza School to serve **27 students**



**MORE IMPACT NUMBERS ON THE LAST PAGE**



Having a clean, safe, and colourful environment helps motivate these students at Nueva Esperanza to come to school.





## GOAL

### Improve the physical and mental health of families

*"I wish that all the families in my community can enjoy good health, that the children will grow up healthy, that we all have access to basic services, and that we are supplied with sufficient resources. Above all, [I wish that] we have our eyes set first on God."*

— Magdalena, Leader Mother, Acul

Communities in San Juan Cotzal learned essential care practices for mothers and newborns. Lessons included good nutrition during pregnancy and how to care for a newborn and recognize danger signs in your infant. Women in Villa Hortensia II, Acul, Rio Azul, and Xonca took health workshops on exclusive breastfeeding for babies.

Malnutrition negatively affects children's lifelong social and economic potential. During 2022, FH Guatemala conducted home visits to families with children aged 0 - 5 years old to promote growth monitoring and support parents whose children are struggling. FH staff provided Incaparina, a protein drink mix, to families with children identified by the local health centre as underweight. Parents were taught how to properly mix the nutritional supplement for their children as a drink and also received recipes for how to incorporate the mix into beans and tortillas.

### Supporting Mental Health

The historical effects of war on the Ixil population has negatively influenced their culture, resulting in ongoing struggles with mental health and relational brokenness. To address this foundational issue, FH launched a mental health pilot project in Acul. Using World Health Organization (WHO) curriculum, FH staff trained 11 Cascade Health Group leaders to facilitate peer-support groups for 80 women in their community. In these groups, women find a safe space to share their struggles and learn ways to manage practical problems such as unemployment and interpersonal conflict as well as personal mental health challenges like depression, anxiety, stress, and grief. Participants are taught coping tools including breathing exercises and how to share their problems with trusted people.

So far, the results are encouraging. Eleven women have been referred to a local psychologist for extra support and 10 are receiving the help they need. As the pilot project wraps up in the next few months, a full evaluation will be conducted to understand the lessons learned and how to improve on future implementations.







# HEALTH

## ACTIVITIES



**818** people (203 families) given access to **clean water** at their homes through the construction of a new water system  
 READ JUANA'S STORY ABOUT GETTING CLEAN WATER ON PAGE 11

**266** volunteer **mothers trained in health** messages

**64+** times a local radio station aired "**Stories of Transformation**" to strengthen family mental health in the wake of COVID-19

**60** **home visits** made to families with children under 5



MORE IMPACT NUMBERS ON THE LAST PAGE



Prenatal and postnatal care are two of the critical topics covered by soon-to-be moms groups.



Moms in Acul learn the fundamentals of breastfeeding, a practice that can boost their babies' immune systems.





# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

## GOAL

**Strengthen community resilience and promote healthy environments for prevention of violence**

*“Before it was very different—no one was interested in us as a community nor did the municipal authorities implement workshops or training to improve our way of thinking. Thank God for FH Guatemala, for strengthening our knowledge and teaching us how to lead our development.”*

— Baltazar, Community Mayor, San Juan Cotzal

## Building Resilient Communities

In 2022, FH continued to support community leaders through phone calls. Leaders reported that families are in good health and regularly hold meetings to share information related to community health and safety. By implementing government health protocols, churches are all able to meet in person again!

Community and church leaders took Resilient Communities training to understand the risk of disasters and how to strengthen community and institutional capacities to identify vulnerabilities and prevent and mitigate the impact of disasters. FH also facilitated the community process to select volunteers for Local Coordinators for Disaster Reduction (COLRED) groups. These groups will be trained using a national curriculum and certified by the government. Their function will be to raise awareness regarding potential disasters and mobilize people to prepare for them.

“We did not plan to form a COLRED group, but thanks to this strategy, we were able to evacuate five families who were at risk during the storm,” Jesus, a team member, testified.



## Eliminating Family Violence

The Families Free of Violence project aims to promote healthy environments, positive relationships, and harmonious family life. FH trained families, children, adolescents, and leaders. Follow-up on training was conducted for caregivers on the prevention of domestic violence to strengthen family ties and reduce toxic stress, especially for children. After the training, caregivers report being better able to identify their emotions, take charge of them, and turn to support networks when facing adversity. Adolescents also received their own training targeting the issues that youth, in particular, face, including strengthening self-esteem and creating support networks. Community and church leaders took workshops on preventing intra-family violence and learned biblically based ways to educate and discipline children with love, without hitting or humiliating them. As domestic violence goes down in the communities, the physical, emotional, and social development of children will improve.





# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

## ACTIVITIES



**444** children, youth, caregivers, and leaders trained on **preventing family violence**

**21** community leaders trained on coordinating local **response to disasters**

**96** community and church leaders trained on **community resilience** and received Covid-19 emergency kits

**12** community leaders contacted regarding **status of COVID-19** among families



**MORE IMPACT NUMBERS ON THE LAST PAGE**



Disaster response teams map out their communities and plan for emergencies.



Church and community leaders being trained on bolstering resilience in the Acul communities.

## IMPACT STORY

# A BOTTLE OF HOPE

## Xonca, Guatemala

Juana will never forget the little water bottle that she carried to school every day. The simple bottle became a distinct part of her childhood, symbolizing the ever-present need for water that strained her family's resources and the health of her community.

"My life before participating in FH programs was very difficult," Juana remembers, "especially because in my home we did not have enough water, which cost us a lot."

The nearest water was available for sale in a market several kilometres away, making water an added expense which Juana's family didn't always have enough money to buy.

"I remember when I was in Grade 2," she recalls, "my teacher asked us to bring a bottle of water to school so we could wash our hands and teeth. The lack of water in my community affected us everyday because we had to get up very early to go to the store and my mother had to save the little water she had."

Today, Juana is in Grade 7, and the water bottle has faded to a memory—a memory she carries with her as a reminder of how her community has grown.

"I no longer have to carry my water bottle, because now thanks to the water system, every day in the community we have water. The children are already enjoying this benefit and will no longer have to carry their water bottle as I once did. I am very grateful that now we can use water at all times."



Juana with her mother, sister, and brother.



For Juana's family, access to water has not only cut household costs, but improved their crops and family income, meaning Juana can eat nutritious food and buy school supplies. These changes will help Juana as she works toward her dream of studying medicine and becoming a doctor to support her family and community.

"I feel very happy," she smiles, "to see the beautiful changes in my life and in my community through all the activities that FH has carried out for the families of Xonca!"



Clement and Pedro, Xonca Water Project Committee members, beam with pride in front of the distribution tank of the community's new water system.



## Thank You

FH Canada, FH Guatemala, and the families in our Ixil partner communities thank you for walking with them on their journey toward thriving! Your support is funding cutting edge initiatives to develop sustainable livelihoods, strengthen community resilience, and put mental health and family peace first.

## APPENDIX MEASURING SUCCESS!

The report above is a summarized snapshot of what community leaders and families in San Juan Cotzal, Villa Hortensia II, Rio Azul, Xonca, and Acul, with the support of FH Guatemala, have accomplished this year. Below are more numbers that paint a fuller picture of what has been happening on the road to sustainability.

### LIVELIHOODS

#### Successes from 2022

- 40 families provided materials to construct vermicomposters
- 27 families provided materials to construct rabbit hutches
- 16 families provided with 32 rabbits
- 45 Lead Farmers trained on family garden management
- 450 families provided vegetable seeds and organic fertilizer for their family gardens
- 9 Lead Farmers trained in backyard animal husbandry
- 10 NEW Savings and Loans groups established
- 96 women trained on personal development goals
- 124 women trained on business skills
- 13 women started small businesses with savings group loans

### EDUCATION

#### Successes from 2022

- 45 follow-up visits to children who received reading, writing, and math skills books
- 88 visits made to children to encourage the importance of education
- 778 elementary school children received school supplies
- 259 middle school children received school supplies
- 23 adolescents received follow-up visits

### HEALTH

#### Successes from 2022

- 266 volunteer mothers trained on essential care for newborns
- 60 home visits made to families with children under 5
- 12 health centers/posts received training on multivitamins
- 818 people (203 families) given access to clean water at their homes through the construction of a new water system

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

#### Successes from 2022

- 84 community leaders trained on prevention of domestic violence
- 139 adolescents trained on prevention of domestic violence
- 96 caregivers trained on prevention of domestic violence
- 125 children trained on prevention of domestic violence
- 12 community leaders contacted to determine the status of the communities regarding COVID-19
- 32 radio spots broadcasting messaging on the prevention of COVID-19
- 72 community leaders received quarterly telephone messages on preventing COVID-19
- 96 community and church leaders trained on community resilience and received COVID-19 emergency kits
- 9 community leaders evaluated their annual development plan
- 3 community elections held for local disaster reduction coordinators
- 21 community leaders trained on local coordination of disaster risk reduction

### COFFEE PROJECT (REPORT)

#### Successes from 2022

- 100 families provided seeds and compost for their family gardens
- 100 families received follow-up visits to support the management of family gardens
- 38 families received chickens and supplies for chicken coops
- 13 individuals trained on beekeeping and received beehives
- 25 families received training and supplies to build water harvesting systems for their farms
- 1 coffee nursery established with drought-tolerant coffee varieties
- 43 coffee farmers applied to join a coffee cooperative