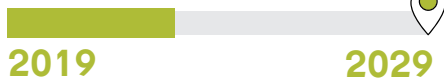




FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY

ACUL, SAN JUAN COTZAL, RIO AZUL, XONCA, AND VILLA HORTENSIA II GUATEMALA MID-YEAR COMMUNITY UPDATE 2023

Walking with Cotzal



Walking with Acul, Nebaj



Walking with Nebaj Rio Azul, Xonca, Villa Hortensia II



FH COMMUNITIES IN GUATEMALA

8 IN COTZAL

4 IN NEBAJ

POPULATION

18,282

HOUSEHOLDS

3,852

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

1,539

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the storms Eta and Iota, family gardens have been transformational for families who experienced set-backs. They are providing desperately needed income and nutrition, especially when it comes to complementary feeding for children. The variety of foods produced by the gardens give children essential vitamins and minerals critical to healthy physical and mental development. The project Nutrition For My Family continues to promote life-giving gardens through training, seeds, and technical support.

The work of Leader Mothers continues to be a pillar of family and community health. Groups of women are learning from FH and teaching their neighbours good sanitation and hygiene practices as well as how to provide the best nutrition for infants and children. Savings and Loans Groups also continue to grow their savings and empower women, to provide for their families.



[FH] has helped us organize to form a [disaster] committee. [Previously], no one had cared about us and we did not know the process to create this committee. Now we are ready for any emergency—FH has trained us with topics that help save lives!



- Nicolas, coordinator of the Local Committee for Disaster Reduction, Tixelap

Written by Alberto López, FH Guatemala
Prepared by FH Canada



Single Mother Grows Hope

Story collected by Francisco and written by Pedro

When María's husband unexpectedly passed away, she and her daughters, Yamilin (6) and Ana (3), moved back in with her aging mother and two sisters.

María describes the limitations her all-female household faces: "There are not many work opportunities in the community, just a few seasonal opportunities during the year that we as women can work in, like corn fertilization or harvesting." In remote communities like Chisis, it's common to see women and young children working in the fields as day labourers, losing the opportunity to study or having to work and study at the same time.

Since she was a child, María learned to earn her own money. "For a long time I have been weaving. My sisters and I dedicate our time to this. We make güipiles (traditional blouses) and scarfs; this is our main source of income. We all cooperate to make our ends meet and to sustain our family."

They also tried growing their own food. María says, "Without knowledge in planting other types of crops [like] vegetables and fruits, we had to buy [food] in the market. The long distance between our community and the main town of Cotzal makes it difficult to purchase food, seeds, and fertilizer because the transportation fees are very high."

Food security for rural families like María's continues to be an issue. Through organic, family vegetable gardens, however, families can gain access to available, fresh food. So, María joined FH's program, Nutrition For My Family.

"Nutrition For My Family is an opportunity to learn and produce my own food in my garden. With this, I can have another source of income and support my family. All the resources that are necessary to grow [food] we have at hand," says María.

María now leads a group of 10 other farmers—teaching, mentoring, and encouraging families in her community toward a sustainable way of life.

"I hope that everything will improve, from expanding my garden to growing spiritually to supporting others with the skills I have."

- María



Supporting Youth Mental Health

FH facilitates mental health training with adolescents and young adults. The training aims to improve the knowledge, attitudes, and aptitudes of participants and to help them develop good mental health and relational skills. Participants learned how to reconcile and maintain healthy relationships and deepen their trust in God. These youth are bravely sharing what they learn with their family members and friends.

Home visits by FH staff encourage families and sometimes unearth educational struggles that need to be addressed. For example, staff recently learned that some children stop going to school because they have a learning difficulty that the teacher is unaware of. By talking together, FH staff, parents, and teachers developed solutions to help the students.



Hands of Blessing

Mothers have been learning that their hands are “instruments of blessing for the care of their children” and that they have “authority over germs”—such powerful ways to conceptualize the impact of handwashing! Mothers no longer feel helpless in the face of their children’s diseases—now they know how to prevent and treat them.

Recently, FH completed a pilot project designed to help women improve their management of practical problems like unemployment and interpersonal conflict as well as mental health struggles like depression, anxiety, and grief. The techniques they learned helped reduce the average number of days they couldn’t perform daily activities due to the problems they were facing. The post-project assessments show a significant reduction in the women’s depressive symptoms!



53 adolescents trained in good mental health

623 students received school supplies

60 mothers trained in early childhood development

91 mothers participated in mental health groups



“ I get excited when the [FH facilitator] comes to teach the topics because I know I am going to learn new things! After each meeting, I share what I learned with my neighbours. I like to help like Jesus did. ”

- Rosa, Leader Mother, Rio Azul

Livelihoods & Leadership



Raising Nutrition and Income

FH staff and local volunteers distributed organic fertilizer, plug plants, and vegetable seeds including carrot, swiss chard, radish, zucchini, and coriander to families with home gardens. FH staff met with families raising rabbits to support them in rabbit breeding. Rabbits received their routine vaccinations to keep them healthy.

Participants in FH's coffee project continued to develop the coffee plant nursery by preparing and filling polypots, transplanting coffee seedlings from the growing beds to the pots, and providing them with irrigation and fertilizer. After two months, these 6,000 seedlings will be ready to be permanently transplanted into coffee orchards.

Cultivating Peaceful Homes

FH trained families on early childhood parenting and how to prevent domestic violence against women and children. The training aims to reduce toxic stress in the home that has lifelong negative impacts on children. Participants also learned how to restore healthy relationships between fathers and sons. FH conducted training for youth on nonviolent relationships and healthy communication as well as how to value their own and others' ideas, feelings, needs, and beliefs.

FH trained leaders on community resilience to natural disasters and conflicts. FH held workshops to identify the risks and vulnerabilities of each community and develop emergency action plans. Work was also done to strengthen the skills and resources of communities to manage their own projects and encourage citizen participation in decision-making.



6,000 high quality coffee seedlings transplanted
450 families received seeds, plug plants, and organic fertilizer

68 caregivers trained in parenting practices to reduce domestic violence
392 children and adolescents trained in character development and life skills



Thank You!

FH Canada, FH Guatemala, and the partner families in Acul, Xonca, Villa Hortensia II, and Cotzal, thank you for your enthusiastic support! Your contributions to fighting poverty in Guatemala are improving nutrition and livelihoods, strengthening the mental health of women and youth, and cultivating peaceful homes with strong familial bonds.