

Presbyterian Hunger Program — Partnerships in Guatemala



Presbyterian Hunger Program's mission is clear: to alleviate hunger and eliminate its causes. We recognize the ministry of thousands of Presbyterian congregations responding to needs in their own communities, creatively and generously. The Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) supports work in the United States and around the world that aims to change the systems that keep people hungry and in poverty.

With the approval of its Advisory Committee, each year the Hunger Program supports the work of dozens of organizations in the United States and around the world. With these grant partners, we work in five areas: food relief that is combined with root cause work; sustainable development; advocacy; intentional and sustainable living; and education.

In the past few decades, Presbyterian Hunger Program has been blessed to partner with a variety of organizations in Guatemala. We have stood with Guatemalans standing for justice related to land and livelihoods, working to achieve healthier, more livable environments, and providing training and resources so that families and communities can grow more and better food. Recent partners have included:

Food 4 Farmers. The *Beekeeping for Lasting Food Security in Guatemala* project offered training for indigenous farmers who are members of the Maya Ixil coffee cooperative in Quiché. Coffee rust drastically damaged coffee production there, and the poverty rate was the highest in Guatemala. A community apiary school was established, and participants learned to make hives, prevent diseases, and run a small business. An apiculture technician provided on-site visits focused on maintenance, techniques, and climate change adaptation. 15 young adults also learned artisanal sewing skills to establish small businesses making protective beekeeping gear. 

Pueblo a Pueblo. Participating youth from Guineales, Xojolá, Nueva Vida, and San Antonio Chacayá, and Las Barrancas received training in organic agriculture, entrepreneurship, and leadership. These youth leaders, along with teachers, students, and parents, participated in designing, planting, and maintaining organic school gardens. The youth demonstrated knowledge and skills that could be trusted. More than a thousand students gained greater access to nutritious foods, and many learned skills to continue gardening.

"The knowledge gained in these workshops has transformed my life, as I now find myself more fearless in everyday situations. With the tools I have been given, I now know there is absolutely nothing I cannot achieve ... My grandfather and his wealth of knowledge has been a great asset in our endeavors and this makes me feel extremely proud ... I have also shared the things I have learned about agriculture with my grandfather and he has put those things into practice ... after I taught him about using chicken and cow manure, for example, he has seen an improvement in the health of his corn plantations and has been able to save more money." —Maria, Nueva Vida



Alliance for International Reforestation. During a sustainable farming project, community tree nurseries were established, and more than 40,000 trees each year were planted. Some of the trees were for reforesting mountain slopes, and others for regenerative farming, which reduces soil erosion and improves crop yields. Farmers attended trainings, introduced new vegetable crops, and reduced or eliminated dangerous chemicals from their farms, almost immediately improving the health of their families. Preschool parents learned about nutrition and benefitted from new organic vegetable gardens; and fruit trees were introduced. By farming with trees, corn and bean crops were expected to be measurably larger. Some farmers learned to plant, graft, and care for avocado trees. Grown using organic fertilizer the farmers made, the avocados are highly nutritious and can also be sold. Two rainwater cisterns and hoses were purchased to help mitigate the effects of drought.

Don agreed to try "Bocashi" compost and to avoid using chemicals in his fruit orchards of peaches, plums and apples. He was astonished to find that his orchards produced the same quantity of delicious fruit without spending one cent on chemical fertilizers or pesticides. His children do not have sore throats caused by chemicals, and he had more income in the first year participating in the AIR program. Photo of growers at San Lucas Toliman tree nursery, by AIR Guatemala



EcoLogic Development Fund. Participants from communities in Sarstún learned about alley-cropping and established nurseries to produce native trees. Thousands of trees are now helping to restore areas that were degraded around microwatersheds, the main source of drinking water for communities. Local women learned to build and maintain fuel-efficient wood-burning stoves. At least 130 stoves were installed during the time that the Presbyterian Hunger Program was partnering with EcoLogic, and hundreds of acres of agroforestry plots were established. Families attended training and piloted backyard vegetable gardens to improve food security, diversify their diets, and share their learning with others in their communities.

Earlier partners working in Guatemala included Asociación de Representantes de Comisión de Atención a conflictos Junkolál Todos Unidos, Semilla Nueva, COFOA/PICO Central America, and the Conference of Evangelical Churches of Guatemala. PHP has also supported a food and nutrition program, emergency assistance for migrants and uprooted people, an indigenous women's community, and projects including "Weaving the Strands of Hope" and "The Santa Cruz Stoves Project."



In 2007 the PC(USA) teamed up with Lutheran World Relief, Catholic Relief Services and the University of Minnesota to offer congregations the option of purchasing responsibly harvested **Eco-Palm** branches for Palm Sunday. The palms come from communities in Mexico and Guatemala where workers are paid fairly and engage in sustainable harvesting in order to protect the local ecosystem.

Front photos l-r: students at PAIN Preschool, AIR Guatemala; Maya Ixil beekeepers working the school apiary hives, Food 4 Farmers; Maria, Pueblo a Pueblo; women with their stoves, EcoLogic.



Supported by the One Great Hour of Sharing and gifts from individuals, churches, and presbyteries, the Presbyterian Hunger Program works to alleviate hunger and eliminate its underlying causes around the world. Join our efforts, and learn more at www.pcusa.org/hunger.