



# **HIGHLAND**

Support Project



# PARTNERS IN SERVICE X

For 25 years, Partners in Service is a non profit program of Highland Support Project that provides North Americans with meaningful service and learning opportunities while delivering valuable resources to grassroots Guatemalan organizations.

## X GOALS

- X Provide a safe environment for participants by focusing on security procedures, cooperation with local officials and contracting with reputable service providers.
- X Develop resources for vital grassroots organizations that empower them rather than foster dependency.
- X Provide quality services while keeping prices as low as possible to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to serve.



Paola Tzep

I have been blessed with the opportunity to work with Highland Support Project for all of my life. My parents are the directors. I was an infant when I was taken on my first trip to Guatemala. My earliest memories are images of the post civil war military state.

-Rubensb (Volunteer)



# OUR PROJECTS



1. STOVE BUILDING



2. REFORESTATION



3. MAYA ARTS PROGRAM



4. APPROPRIATE HEALTH  
CARE



**“I worked with HSP to build stoves for the indigenous people. I had a great exposure to diversity and I was amazed to see how women are now taking initiatives to be educated despite having socio-economical barriers. They knew the ventilated stoves could change the future of their kids. The families were very welcoming and we all had a great experience in the highlands of Guatemala. Other students should take this opportunity to explore different cultures, which can open a new window for them.”**

**-BF (Volunteer)**

# STOVE BUILDING

--- X

Epidemiological research demonstrates that the two leading causes of mortality in our partner communities are upper respiratory infections and water born containments. These are both linked to the practice of cooking on open pit fires in tiny, unventilated homes.

These stoves improve the health, wealth and environment of the community by channeling the thick smoke from cooking fires out of the unventilated brick dwellings. They are built with a chimney that carries smoke out of the house. They decrease the amount of money women must spend on cooking fuel because they are significantly more fuel-efficient. Finally, the stoves improve the environment of the community by decreasing the amount of deforestation regionally. This is very important in improving the quality of drinking water, stabilizing weather patterns, maintaining topsoil and combating the erosion that slowly washed away their old villages.

The importance of these stoves can be appreciated when one considers that the average cost for treating an upper respiratory infection is \$65.00. With a family of six contracting an infection several times a year, it is easy to visualize the considerable difference these stoves make in the lives of rural Mayan families. Furthermore, the primary cause of fatality in recent natural catastrophes in Central America has been from mudslides linked directly to deforestation caused by the ravenous demand for cooking fuel.

The stoves are not challenging to build and Guatemalan masons familiar with stove building assist our volunteers.



# REFORESTATION

There is a critical need to replace the vast tracts of forest that have disappeared throughout Central America. These forests are the most important element to halting soil erosion that contaminates local drinking supplies, washes away the valuable topsoil and often claims lives in massive mudslides. The forest is also important for stable weather patterns globally and counteracting greenhouse gasses causing global warming.

Our program focuses on reforesting areas of human occupation such as villages, towns and urban areas. Volunteers will have the opportunity to participate in various stages of reforestation from soil preparation and transplanting to working in the nursery.



**A DIFFERENT APPROACH...  
HOPE, NOT CHARITY, OPPORTUNITY  
NOT DEPENDENCY.**

# MAYA ARTS PROJECT

Volunteer teams work with Maya education professionals in rotating arts program organized through our network of participating rural community organizations. Our program is realized in conjunction with the government's education ministry and is part of an ongoing effort to improve critical and creative thinking skills in rural Mayan communities.



The Highland Support Project is one of few non-profit networks that doesn't focus on development from a Western perspective. Their methodology is one of "transformational development", meaning that communities lift themselves out of poverty by participating in their programming, and do so sustainably. I really think that HSP is doing that that almost no other organizations working in Guatemala are doing. Their methods may not be as flashy, but they help people from the ground up. Highly recommend participating in one of their amazing trips!

**-ar129 (Volunteer)**



# APPROPRIATE HEALTH CARE

We support the development of community-based health systems through the training, equipping and support of local initiatives.

Rather than compete with or displace local efforts, our model is to channel assistance into existing community health infrastructure.

Visiting health professionals may collaborate with ambulatory diagnostic clinics, training local healthcare actors, building sustainable health infrastructure.

We facilitate surgical and dental team visits with in-country clinical partners to Maya Villages.

A cornerstone of our programming is to provide visiting medical professionals with an education concerning evidence-based practices and contextual understanding of healthcare in rural communities.



I truly enjoyed my trip to Guatemala. I feel as if we have left an impact of who we are and what we stand for with the Myan Woman. The fact that they know others will struggle for their lively hood helps them know they are not alone. I felt like the support helped them more than the physical labor.

-Sesen (V olunteer).



KEEP GROWING...



5. SANITATION



6. DRAINAGE



7. WATER



8. HORTICULTURE



"I had a great time in December traveling to Guatemala with Highland Support Project! I wish I had been able to spend more time building the stoves--one week was NOT long enough for everything I wanted to do! My group was relatively small, but we had a really good time. Everyone was so friendly and helpful. I appreciated the whole experience a lot."

-Madison J. (Volunteer)



# SANITATION

A critical issue for many Highland communities is the lack of sanitation and drainage systems. Due to population growth and government limits on where Maya communities can homestead the population density is skyrocketing. This poses a critical issue for topsoil and ground water contamination that the government has yet resolve.

We work with community development boards to implement appropriate sanitation solutions based on gravity systems that employ green waste management. We construct treatment facilities that utilize a gradation of rock and gravel that passes to a green zone. This low maintenance and sustainable solution eliminates one of the primary health issues in the region.

# DRAINAGE

Due to climate change, there has been a recent dramatic rise in the number of mudslides that have devastated communities. Many community structures are in danger of having foundations washed away due to the lack of drainage.

Teams may partner with community groups to construct retaining walls, channels, and drains as well as erosion prevention projects.



These project trips are custom coordinated with the communities that have the needs identified and the visiting sponsor team.

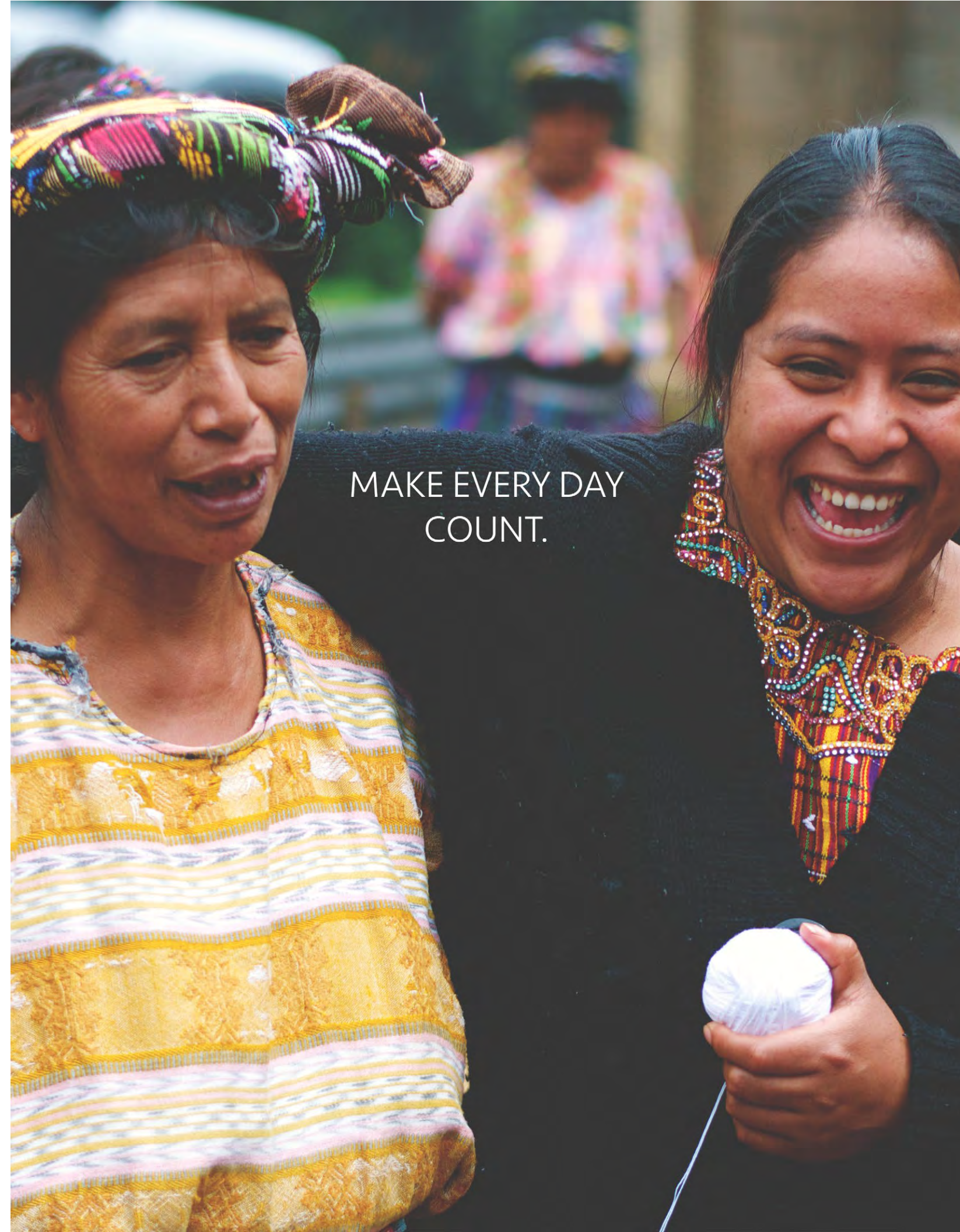


START WHERE YOU ARE.  
USE WHAT YOU HAVE.  
DO WHAT YOU CAN.

# WATER

Changing weather patterns and population growth has dramatically impacted water security for highland communities. In recent years, wells have gone dry for months at a time.

Groups can partner with us to build water reserve tanks to combat the changing weather patterns and enable communities to store more water during the rainy season.



MAKE EVERY DAY  
COUNT.



# HORTICULTURE



# HORTICULTURE

The Highland Support Project focuses on improving horticultural practices as a component of integrated health programming with Indigenous women. The objective is to assist women to produce higher quantity and quality of produce at a reduced cost utilizing sustainable techniques for domestic consumption. Horticulture is the science and art of growing (plants) - fruits, vegetables, flowers, and any other cultivar. It also includes plant conservation, landscape restoration, soil management, landscape and garden design, construction, maintenance, and arboriculture. In contrast to agriculture, horticulture does not include large-scale crop production or animal husbandry. A majority of typical development programs focus on integrating small farmers into a deadly debt cycle with rising input costs plus declining commodity prices. The long-term impact of such strategies is typically dependence on market forces that lead to boom and bust cycles resulting in loss of lands. Furthermore, the marginal income as small-time commodity producers does not generate sufficient profits actually to meet caloric needs of producers. We frequently witness the families of full-time agriculturalist suffering from a combination of malnutrition, undernutrition compounded by hypertension and diabetes.

Highland Indigenous communities have been relegated to marginal lands with limited access to sufficient acreage for agricultural production. Much of the available land has become infertile from decades of chemical farming that has plunged many smallscale farmers into a deadly debt cycle with input cost increases while commodity prices continue to decline.

Our response has been to partner horticulture and Indigenous specialists together to share knowledge and assist communities in developing food sovereignty strategies. This programming includes the construction of raised beds, greenhouses and irrigation systems, organic composting techniques, worm farms and seed saving.

# ONE SAMPLE ITINERARY

## SATURDAY

- \* Arrive in Guatemala City on flight from the United States - departure city depends on group.
- \* Drive to Chichicastenango in private van where team will spend first night.
- \* Visit Child Nutrition Center and Economic Development Program.

## SUNDAY

- \* Tour Largest outdoor indigenous market in Guatemala.
- \* Drive to Quetzaltenango where team will be housed for the week in the very comfortable Catholic Family Center (COFA).
- \* Visit with Mayan community activist.

## MONDAY

- \* Work in community - for most teams this will be Santa Catarina Ixtahuacan
- \* Video - El Norte with discussion in COFA.

## TUESDAY

- \* Work in community.
- \* Video - Romero with discussion.

## WEDNESDAY

- \* Work in community.
- \* Relax at natural hot spring.
- \* Meet with women's organizer.

## THURSDAY

- \* Work in community - participate in reforestation project
- \* International dinner and poverty workshops

## FRIDAY

- \* Travel to Antigua and check into very cool hotel.
- \* Meet with Human Rights Activist
- \* Shopping and sightseeing in Antigua

## SATURDAY

- \* Return flight to the United States



**MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE**

Xeabaj, Sololá

# Where Am I Going?



## Quetzaltenango

Also known by its Maya name, Xelajú; is the second largest city of Guatemala. It has an estimated population of 225 thousand. Quetzaltenango is located in a mountain valley at an elevation of 2,330 meters above sea level at its lowest part.



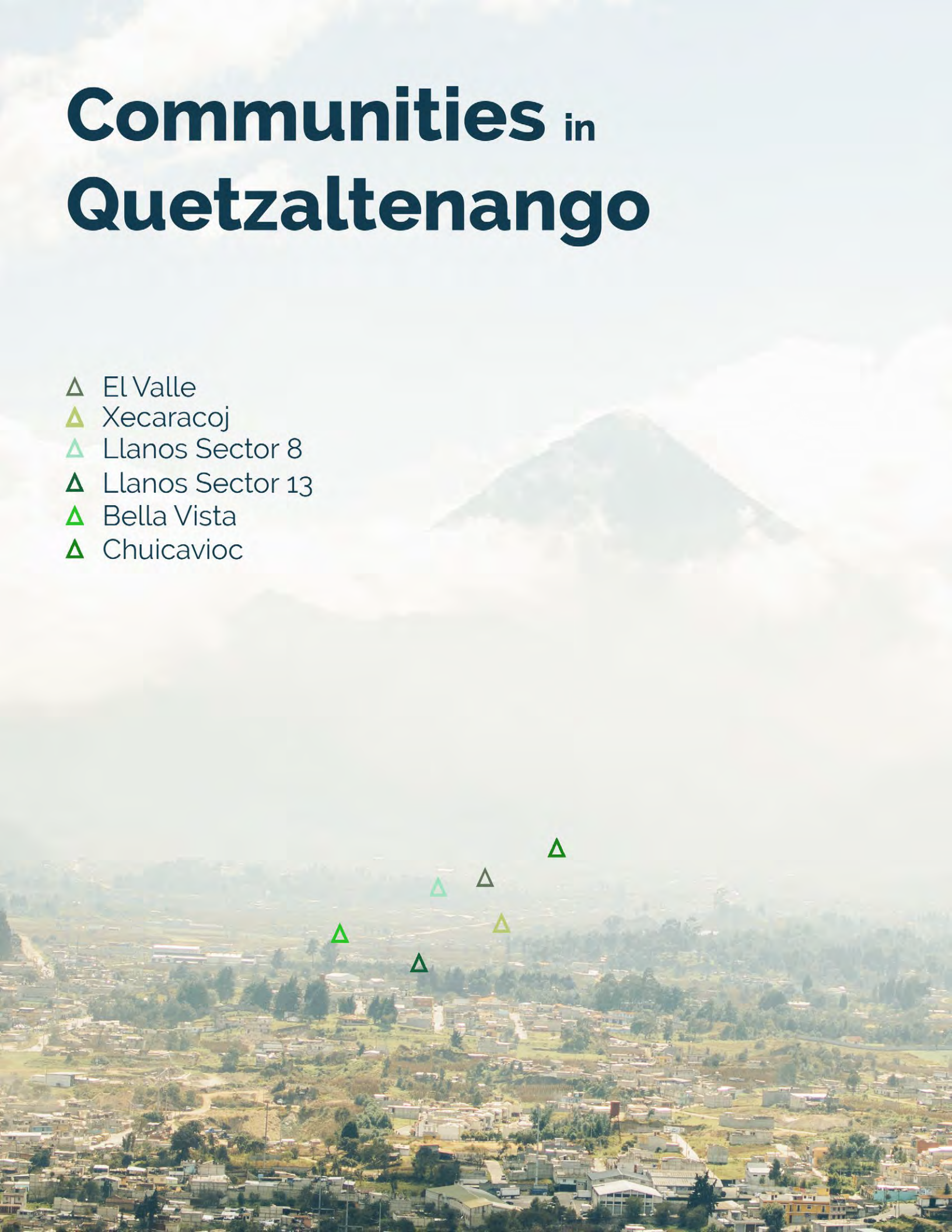
## Sololá



The indigenous population resides in various villages around Lake Atitlán and maintains their Mayan traditions through language, food and customs.. Kaqchiquel and Tz'utujil are the main indigenous languages spoken.

# Communities in Quetzaltenango

- △ El Valle
- △ Xecaracoj
- △ Llanos Sector 8
- △ Llanos Sector 13
- △ Bella Vista
- △ Chuicavioc



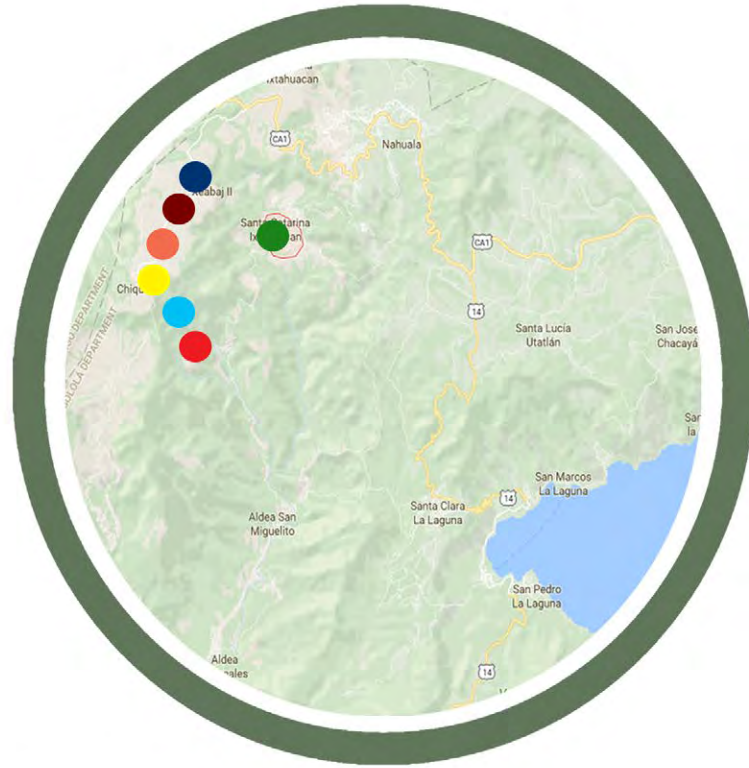
# COMMUNITIES in SAN JUAN OSTUNCALCO

- Agua Escondida
- Lagunas Cuaches
- Caserío Belén
- Chanschenel
- Espumpuja
- El Manantial
- La Cumbre
- Tizate



# Communities in Sololá.

- Xeabaj II
- Xeabaj I
- Chuicutama
- Chiquisis
- Pacutama
- Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán
- Pacorral



# Guatemala

IS WAITING FOR YOU...





# What Fun Thing Can I Do?



## San Juan La Laguna \_ \_ \_ x



We visit San Juan La Laguna, community located 30 minutes from Panajachel (Lake Atitlán). Here we have the coffee coop tour where you can learn about coffee **production** from plantation to the cup.

## x Quetzaltenango

We can walk around the central park enjoying the beautiful architecture it has, and we'll be visiting the volcanic hot-springs in Zunil.



## Antigua Guatemala \_ \_ \_ x



Enjoy your time walking in the cobblestone streets, visiting museums, churches or ruins and shopping of course.

# SAFETY

HSP makes safety our top priority and follow these safety precautions:

- \* We do not travel after dark.
- \* We rent ordinary passenger vans with no markings.
- \* We limit travel to areas that fall inside the region known as the "golden triangle of tourism." The Guatemalan government takes special care that this area remains trouble-free, as it is a key source of income for Guatemala.
- \* We check the State Department travel advisories on a weekly basis.
- \* We maintain ongoing relations with local police departments.

HSP has coordinated an average of ten teams a year for the past 15 years through our Partners in Service program, with anywhere from 100 to 400 people serving with us each year. Thanks to our dedication to safety precautions, good leadership, and long-term relationships in the areas we serve, we have never had a single security issue.

Many teams and individuals return with us year after year, with almost 80% of Partners in Service participants returning with us to Guatemala within two years of their last trip. We offer our spotless record and high return rate of teams as a testament to the quality and safety of the service trips we provide.



# HEALTH INFORMATION

## Inoculations and First Aid

The standard tetanus and hepatitis (A,B,C) vaccinations are suggested. Vaccinations for tropical diseases are NOT required because we are operating in the temperate highlands region. We always bring a first aid kit to treat minor medical needs. Every team is accompanied by professional guides trained in CPR and first aid.

## Health

Health should not be a problem if precautions are taken with drinking water, milk, uncooked vegetables, and peeled fruits. Carelessness on this point is likely to lead to amebic dysentery, which is endemic.

HSP requires medical and emergency medical evacuation insurance for every trip participant. In addition, we recommend having both a medical and dental checkup prior to travel. We also recommend having an optical checkup and obtaining spare eyeglasses/contact lenses to travel with. Finally, we recommend obtaining a letter from your physician explaining the details of any special health concerns or preexisting conditions.

## Intestinal Upsets

A few participants experience slight intestinal problems. These upsets are not a big deal and usually just mean a day of rest. To avoid the situation, don't eat uncooked fish or vegetables, always peel your own fruit, and give up salads and tap water for the week. Bottled water is abundant and safe. DON'T HAVE A DRINK WITH ICE CUBES AND DON'T SHOWER WITH YOUR MOUTH OPEN. Be wary of milk or milk products.

## Diarrhea

Food poison germs normally cause diarrhea. Drinking water is rarely the culprit. Exposure to various organisms such as viruses, bacteria, amoebae (the most common cause), salmonella, and cholera can give rise to diarrhea. If diarrhea is acute (i.e., you can time the onset to the minute) then it most likely due to a virus or a bacterium and/or dysentery and will pass. If it is sub-acute, then inform a Partners in Service staff person for medical attention. You may wish to pack Cipro or Pepto-Bismol in case of intestinal upset or diarrhea. Many people who travel to the developing world take Cipro as a preventative measure.

Highland Support Project does not recommend this personally. Some participants have also taken Pepto-Bismol daily as a preventative. In general, we have taken Cipro to be used as a treatment as soon as someone starts experiencing intestinal problems and the problem has resolved itself quickly. WE ARE NOT MEDICAL EXPERTS. PLEASE CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR.

## Other Considerations

The Highlands of Guatemala has a very temperate climate. It can be cold during the evening and in the shade. We suggest that participants bring clothing that can be worn in layers.

It is important to realize that you will be at high elevations and certain precautions are warranted. We suggest that you invest in a good pair of sunglasses, sunscreen, and lip balm. It is also important to remember to take it easy and not overly exert yourself at these elevations. Participants with heart conditions need to inform and remind Highland Support Project staff of their medical conditions.

## Emergency Contact

Karen Mayorga

karen@highlandpartners.org

US phone number: 804 464 3467

Guatemala number: 011 502 5016 6370



# HOUSING & FOOD

We prefer teams to stay in Community Center. The rooming is double-to-triple occupancy with a private bath in each room. There is hot water and laundered bedding. There is also ample space for team meetings and recreation rooms. Teams staying in a community will enjoy two meals a day in a dining hall. The food is prepared in their kitchen by their full time staff. Many organizations and church groups use these facilities and their health record is excellent. The menu is more varied than what one might expect and they even offer fresh salads that are safe to consume.

Teams that visit Antigua are treated to a real jewel. The Hotel San Sebastian is not a five star but it is the coolest hotel we have ever seen. The owners are very talented tradesmen who have rebuilt many of the luxury homes and hotels in Antigua. They also have a very brisk trade in art restoration and have decorated the rooms with a wide assortment of "cool stuff". Teams will eat two meals in the famed restaurant Dona Luisa.

Teams may elect to stay in the rural communities where the work projects are realized. The conditions are not as comfortable and sanitation is a consideration. Teams are housed communally and should expect to sleep on the floor. We require an additional team orientation and there are additional supplies that the team as well as individuals will need. Teams that have elected to stay in the communities report that it was the most significant decision they made and highly recommend it.

*El refugio, Quetzaltenango*



# How Much Does It Cost?

## If I have to cancel, what are the policies?

We ask for a \$250 deposit. **HSP is a 501(c)(3)** As an organization recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt organization, all trip cost and project donations are tax deductible.

## How can I raise money for the trip or our project?

You can use AlterNatives platform, selling the products that we offer and raising a percentage towards your trip. We can also help you to set up a fundraising page where you can promote your desire and give you all the materials for you to promote the page.

The prices vary depending of the trip. If it is a trip that Highland Support Project is promoting the price is \$1200 + airfare. For more information contact: [info@highlandpartners.org](mailto:info@highlandpartners.org)



# What Does Money Cover?

The price covers, ground transportation in country, all meals, lodging in all the places that begin in Panajachel, Chichicastenango, Quetzaltenango/Community lodging and Antigua Guatemala. It also covers the cost of stove materials, masons, cooks, drivers, staff and programming costs to cover our work when teams are not in country.



Lodging



Meals

Transportation



## PAPERWORK

Volunteer Profile and Release of Claim Form filled online in addition to any paperwork your organization required for a volunteer/mission trip.

## DOCUMENTATION

All that is required to enter Guatemala is a current passport that will not expire within 6 months of your trip.

## MEETINGS

We will provide staff for an informational meeting to provide a presentation to interested groups and answer questions. Once a group has been formed, we provide one pre-trip preparation meeting.

WHAT WE DO FOR OURSELVES DIES WITH US.  
WHAT WE DO FOR OTHERS AND THE WORLD REMAINS  
AND IS *immortal.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US

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