

Planting the seeds for a better future

- Final Report, July 2022 -

The direct beneficiaries of the project are 300 Mayan families (1,500 people) from 13 women's groups organized in three municipalities: Nentón, San Antonio Huista and Petatán in northwestern Huehuetenango, Guatemala - see below:

<i>Municipalities</i>	<i>Communities (plus families per community)</i>
Nenton	Aldea Canquintic (50), Aldea Las Palmas (50)
San Antonio de Huista	Caserio Galera (15), Caserío Cieneguita (20), Cantón Independencia (15), Cantón Reforma (15), Aldeo Rancho Viejo (20), Caserío La Cabana (20)
Petatán	Aldea Cabic with two women's groups (28), Cantón Sabino (22), Aldea Trapichitos (25), Cantón San Nicoláz (20)

The project is locally organized by the long established project partner ADSOSMHU¹ in San Antonio de Huista. ADSOSMHU is managed by the former teacher Rubén López Herrera. The organization maintains a network of overall 17 groups in different communities close to San Antonio de Huista to improve the living conditions of the Mayan population. Improving the living conditions is essential in Guatemala since it is the most malnourished country in Latin America and the Caribbean with 46.5 percent of children under the age of 5 that are stunted. The Mayans are the poorest part of the population in the country.

By providing the seeds, other materials and technical support, these 300 families can start to improve their livelihoods by growing, tending and harvesting their own crops as the basis for their food needs. And a well-nourished, healthier population is the first step toward a better future in the Huista region.



According to the four work components established in the project the below activities were executed.

¹ Associació para el Desenvolupament SOSostenible de la Mancomunitat HUista

1. Organizational Strengthening

Overall 15 meetings took place between July-Sep, 2021 with selected persons from the groups. The group meetings were affected by the Covid restrictions, who prohibit people from holding meetings with more than 10 (for some time even only five) people. This meant that only parts of the groups could attend.

The monitoring visits planned throughout the project have been also affected by the Covid situation. Monitoring was done via telephone and from time to time by visiting group directors in the field.

2. General Trainings

Generally the project aimed for a participation of at least 95% of the project members in all workshops. However, due to the Covid situation not all members of a group from a community were always allowed to attend. So, we trained part of a group with the obligation for the participating members to repeat this for their local communication groups. This is definitely sub-optimal but there was no other choice since no technical infrastructure exist for video- or audio-conferences.



In November workshops were held on women's rights and legal mechanisms and procedures for their defense; in light of organized crime, drug addiction and alcoholism. A representative of a commission for Human Rights in the district was present. The most affected sector are women's rights, who in most cases do not dare to denounce their perpetrators and remain silent. One of the main causes of this silence, as expressed by the participants themselves, is the lack of knowledge of their rights, which are valid in Guatemala and of the legal mechanisms that must be followed when this type of situation arises; they also spoke of the need to provide this training to their partners, since men often act violently out of ignorance.

The workshop with 30 young selected women on Reproductive Health and Gender was executed in January.

3. Technical Trainings

The purchase of local native creole corn and bean plus herb seeds was carried out and distributed to each groups, taking advantage of the starting rainy season in July 2021.



Each of the group members carried out the preparation (cleaning or stubble burning) of their available land.



Fifteen practices were done shortly before the harvest of corn and beans in September how to select and preserve the seeds of all distributed plants. This should enable all families to use the seeds for the coming years and reach the gained sustainability of the project.



Fifteen Agroecological practices on Management Techniques of the Medicinal Garden and techniques for the elaboration of medicines were carried out with the different groups in October, 2021. Most of the participants recognize and value the timeliness of these trainings given the relevant role that natural medicine is taking in the region also for the treatment of Covid; as part of this activity, information was exchanged on how to prepare medicines based on medicinal plants that are produced in the region, such as: Ginger tea with garlic, purple onion, juice, oregano and Creole lemon peels, cinnamon; baths and eucalyptus leaf infusions, among others.

Thirteen Agroecological practices on Farm Management and poultry care were executed.

Generally, 85% of the families took part in the trainings.

4. Technical Assistance

As mentioned in the second report local corn and bean seeds were planted by all group members in July. Due to the characteristics of this native creole seeds the harvest was carried out in most places at the end of September and in colder regions in October. The families were quite happy for the good harvest, because unlike in other years, the rainy season 2021 did not show a shortage or excess of rain or pests, so they obtained an average of 4 sacks of corn and 30 pounds of beans.

The vegetables and their seeds were delivered in December 2021 as this is a good time for planting them.



As planned the citrus trees were delivered to the members in November - see below.



Many members asked in addition to the planned citrus trees for avocado trees. Since it was understood that a diversity of their fruit trees is valuable we negotiated this with the supplier. This required more time to deliver the trees which happened in November when the dry seasons started. Together with the delivery education was provided how to best grow the trees. By now 80% of all planted trees are healthy and growing further.

At the beginning of December the poultry were delivered to the groups and the training was provided in 12 practices emphasizing the importance to vaccinate them regularly, provide a place which is neither too cold nor too humid.



During all the project time a coordinator of ADSOSMHU visited all groups regularly to provide them with advice.

The project ended in May 2022 but assistance is still provided for the next months when required.