

Village Update

Batzchocolá, Guatemala



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Miguel Cruz Cobo is a community leader for the families of Batzchocolá as well as an individual demonstrating responsibility, honesty, fairness and integrity. He has played a primary role in the financial negotiations for the various projects within the community as well as his role as the community's Development Promoter. His strong values and qualities have been evident throughout his contributions. Miguel also highly values education and not only encourages his own three children to continue as far as they can, but he also makes great efforts in teaching about the importance of education to other families as well. For the entire community of Batzchocolá and the Agros team, Miguel is deeply appreciated and admired by all.

Community Organization

The following committees of Batzchocolá were trained regarding "The Function of the Members of the Leadership Board": the Women's Committee, Board of Community Development (COCODE), Water Committee, Education Committee, and the Board of Development. A corresponding manual has been devised and given to each board member of the committees.

The list of the board members of each of the committees has been updated. All of these groups are now legalized, each member having obtained their credential and legal status.

Housing and Infrastructure

As the result of negotiations conducted by the community, Batzchocolá will enter in to an informal partnership to receive support by the Swiss Cooperation in order to improve the community's houses. This partnership consists in the donation of funds for the purchase of building supplies for fifty homes. Agros is also donating materials needed to improve the floors of each home. The home-improvement and construction projects are underway and in full execution.

The fifteen composting latrines scheduled to be built have already been completed and assigned to the community. During the next months thirty-three additional latrines are on schedule to be built.

Similarly, fifteen efficient cook stoves have been completed and efforts are now being organized to begin the next thirty-three stoves for the community.

Forty-nine water basins were built with the families of Batzchocolá and are now being enjoyed as the result of a dream and hard team work.

Sustainable Economic Growth

Textile workshops have taught many of the women of Trapichitos primary and secondary colors and given the weavers of the community the opportunity to hear from a dyeing specialist from the city of Salcaja.

Agros staff has been putting together a marketing and design team, a group made up of individuals responsible for textiles and wood products, as well forestry conservation promoters. This group has begun conversations with the Institute of Design at the University of Rafael Landivar with hopes of having senior design students work in the community around developing a line of handicraft products, conducting a study of possible markets and promoting these products in the local, national and international markets. According to the advances made by the study, the demand for wood crafted for kitchen and home use is on the decline. With respect to the textiles, interviews and meetings with textile experts are in process in order to approach a more in-depth knowledge of this market.

Farmers are benefiting from technical assistance regarding the storage of 18,000 Bourbon coffee plants. Thirty-seven families are participating in this communal project in which they will plant the coffee over 10.75 acres of the land.

The 37 families participating on the land of the Alta Vista farm (provided by the government) are completing the planting of 19.89 acres of coffee. To date the families are already harvesting 48 acres and expect to have 25,900 pounds of coffee. The coffee has been contracted for sale by a US coffee buyer, Atlas Coffee.

Community Education and Training

25 women participating in the Community Bank of Batzchocolá were trained regarding the management and repayment of loans. Community promoter Miguel Cruz Cobo also participated in this training. The women have also greatly benefited from other workshops given in women leadership within the community development processes.

Sixteen women and one man took part in the textile and weaving workshop that gave follow-up to other previous workshops about measurement, designs and colors. These workshops have increased the participants' knowledge regarding weaving and has shown them new possibilities that offer variety for these handi-craft products and thus appeal to different buyers. One part of the training involved contrasting colors and the division between primary, secondary and tertiary colors where the participants learned hands-on by painting their own color wheel.

Technical assistance for the maintenance of the school's garden continues as the children grow their carrots, radishes, chard, sweet beets, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and lettuce. Forty children and three teachers are taking part in this community project and are now beginning to enjoy the radishes and chard which have been harvested and equally distributed to the families that have children in school.

A full day was recently dedicated to the health of the animals of Batzchocolá. As a measure of decreasing animal mortalities, 165 chickens, 35 chicks, 6 horses and 3 pigs were vaccinated, de-parasited and administered vitamins.