

RESILIENCE



A Publication of Project Harvest

Winter 2024-2025



Project Harvest's Rain Water Catchment System - Appropriate Infrastructure for Climate Change Resilience

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It's always a joy to share our annual update on **Project Harvest's** work in rural Guatemala. Thanks to generous donors like you, we can confidently plan for the coming year. Please consider becoming a monthly donor to help sustain our efforts. With contributions of time and expertise from our six board members and volunteers, our administrative costs remain exceptionally low, enabling our **Program Director, Erwin Rabanales**, to focus on his excellent work in Guatemala.

Project Harvest is a small but mighty organization with a reputation for empowering communities—a legacy I'm incredibly proud of. Please take a moment to read the reports, enjoy the photos, and feel free to reach out with your thoughts.

I also extend heartfelt thanks to **Paul Lemieux**, our **General Coordinator**, for his countless hours of work, dedication and skill ensuring the program's success.

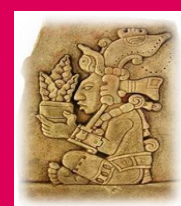
Wishing you a joyful holiday season,

Nancy Willson
Chair of the Board

PROJECT HARVEST - GUATEMALA
EMPOWERING RURAL SUBSISTENCE COMMUNITIES

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How Sustainable is the Work of Project Harvest?

To "sustain" means to endure over time. **Project Harvest** has extensively analyzed its work to understand its long-term impact. The central questions are: Does the work last after staff leave the community? Are barriers to dignified living reduced? Do family gardens continue? Are women and girls empowered to improve their lives?



Family members gain self-confidence by growing nutritious food for their table and by selling some for additional family income.

Context

Project Harvest works with marginalized rural families facing socio-economic isolation and environmental challenges. Its programs focus on addressing food insecurity through training in food production, which also creates income opportunities. Additionally, the organization advocates for women's rights and self-empowerment, helping them organize and become active agents of change.

Long-Lasting Impacts

Project Harvest's initiatives have led to the following significant, enduring changes:

1. Families grow healthy food in their home gardens, diversifying consumption.
2. Surplus produce generates additional income.
3. Families gain confidence through successful gardening efforts.
4. Participants acquire skills in vegetable cultivation and commercialization.
5. Women and youth find their voice, actively engaging in workshops.
6. Women's groups enhance their organization, securing external support.
7. Communities build rainwater catchment systems to sustain crops during dry seasons.
8. Families use rainwater harvesting infrastructure as a climate adaptation strategy.

These positive changes foster self-sufficiency, participation, and collective action, transforming communities' outlook and resilience.

Empowering Concepts

Project Harvest's strategy unlocks two essential concepts:

1. Poor rural families, with the right resources, can harness their resilience to improve their lives.

2. Empowered communities can tackle structural and environmental challenges, increasing their capacity for decision-making and climate adaptation.

Ultimately, **Project Harvest's** work is sustainable, leaving participants to continue their journey of self-reliance long after the project concludes.

How Is Climate Change Impacting Rural Communities?

What is happening in Guatemala?

Guatemala's fertile land, with its diverse soils, climates, and ecosystems, is under threat due to massive deforestation, mining, and large-scale monocultures of African palm, sugar cane, and other export crops. In 2024, the El Niño phenomenon caused extreme droughts and soaring temperatures, drying up rivers and delaying basic grain planting. Additionally, the first half of 2024 saw 2,343 forest fires burn 40,747 hectares nationwide.

Challenges for Rural Communities

These communities consist of small-scale farmers cultivating vegetables and basic grains on minimal plots. Their production relies entirely on natural rainfall cycles and soil fertility, making them highly vulnerable to both droughts and excessive rainfall, leading to crop failures. This directly impacts food availability, with rising prices worsening an already precarious situation for families. In response, they are urging the government to address the escalating hunger crisis.

Project Harvest's Response

Project Harvest focuses on building resilience by teaching agro-ecological techniques to improve soil health. Additionally, when funding permits, we provide infrastructure for rainwater harvesting, supporting irrigation during dry seasons or droughts. This training also strengthens group cohesion, further enhancing family and community resilience.



Project Harvest believes infrastructure, such as this rain water catchment reservoir, is not only critical for climate change resilience but also in providing an important tool for economic advancement.
(Roof of this reservoir was built after picture was taken.)

PROJECT HARVEST - Guatemala



**Number of Reservoirs
Installed: 194**



**BY THE
NUMBERS
IN 2024**



**Capacity: 16,505 liters
of Rain Water**



**Rainwater Catchments Systems:
Infrastructure Support for Climate Change Resilience**



**PH System costs 1/3 less
than Conventional Systems**

Project Harvest's Work - a Catalyst for Success

When **Project Harvest** began work in Casa Blanca two decades ago, **Elena Carrillo** and **Marcos Osorio** were quick to embrace the initiative.

Marcos reflects: "We didn't know how to grow vegetables. We saw them in other areas but thought it wouldn't work



Marcos Osorio, Elena Carrillo, and their family of twelve live in Casa Blanca, Totonicapán. Initially, they started with a few raised beds covering 40 square meters. Now, with available land, their vegetable plots have expanded to 200 square meters, significantly increasing their harvest.

here because of our poor soil. **Project Harvest** helped us prepare terraces, provided seeds, and even brought fertilizers." Thanks to this support, they began cultivating carrots, onions, Swiss chard, and more, diversifying their diet beyond the traditional "milpa" crops of maize, beans, and squash.

Elena adds, "Now, we have fresh vegetables from our garden. We no longer need to buy them, and we even sell some in the community. This provides extra income for our family." Their garden has since grown to five times its original size.

"Thanks to God, this gives us income." *Doña Elena, from the community of Casa Blanca, Totonicapán, 2024*

Elena's leadership skills, honed through **Project Harvest's** women's program, enabled her and other women leaders to secure additional support in 2022. One NGO provided fruit trees, seeds, and compost. Now, the community is constructing a greenhouse and plans to build an 8,000-liter water reservoir to benefit all 37 **Project Harvest** families in Casa Blanca.

"When other agencies visit, they see our gardens and the improved road we built, and they're impressed with our organization," **Elena** proudly shares. "Without **Project Harvest**, we'd still be abandoned."

The *Escuela Campesina* – a Project Harvest School Initiative

With over 20 years of experience, **Project Harvest** has learned that significant, lasting change in rural communities requires key elements. These are now part of a new strategy, the *Escuela Campesina* 'Peasant School' Initiative, designed to expand our impact and improve family living conditions both quantitatively and qualitatively.



The 'School' will allow Project Harvest to multiply the number of participants it reaches.

Three Core Elements of the Initiative

1. **Ongoing Agro-ecological Training:** Blending theory with practice, this training integrates external and local knowledge in horticultural food production while addressing environmental concerns.
2. **Scaling-up from Two Families to the Community:** The program begins with two families per community, training them as leaders who will organize and train others, amplifying the initiative's impact.
3. **Focus on Poor Regions with Growth Potential:** The initiative targets families with basic resources like arable land and literacy, but who need an initial catalyst to ignite a transformative development process.

Initial Steps

- **Community Selection:** Twelve communities—six in Momostenango and six across Jocotán, Camotán, and La Unión—have been chosen for new projects.
- **Leadership Development:** One woman and man with strong leadership potential and skills are selected from each community for intensive year-long training.

Training Focus

- **Agricultural Skills:** Techniques in climate change adaptation, vegetable production, soil conservation, pest control, post-harvest management, and commercialization.
- **Community Leadership Skills:** Group organization, project management, and democratic practices.

By equipping families with practical skills and leadership training, **Project Harvest** empowers communities to drive their own development and build resilience to climate change.

New Government: Between Hope and Uncertainty for Rural Communities

President Bernardo Arévalo's administration has focused on combating corruption, but progress has been slow due to state powers being co-opted by mafias and bad actors, hindering governance. Despite these challenges, significant advances have been made:

1. **Inclusive Governance:** Civil society has played a pivotal role in selecting governors, with six appointees from the Mayan indigenous movement.
2. **Cost of Living Relief:**
 - Lowered electricity costs for 3 million poor households.
 - Provided \$200 food vouchers to 100,000 impoverished rural families.
 - Introduced a means test to ensure aid reaches eligible families, reducing political clientelism.
3. **Economic and Social Development:** A \$2.6 billion budget expansion supports initiatives such as:
 - Supplies of fertilizers, seeds, and tools for small-scale agricultural producers.
 - \$9 million in agricultural loans to reduce production costs and ensure affordable food for families.
 - \$304 million allocated to Department Development Councils for projects in water, sanitation, drainage, and rural roads.



President Arévalo's government aims to deliver tangible benefits for all Guatemalans. With support from ancestral authorities, the administration is committed to transparency and ensuring resources reach those in greatest need while struggling to strengthen democracy in a fragile political environment.

| Project Harvest - Guatemala / Financial Statement 2023 | Totals 2023 | Totals 2022 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| ASSETS - December 31, 2023 | | |
| Current Assets: cash & cash equivalent: Project Harvest Program Funds, CCAMRE Regular Program | 93,420.62 | 140,738.20 |
| Accounts receivable | 4,771.21 | 3,039.05 |
| Capital assets outside Canada (pick-up truck) | 2002.60 | 4309.90 |
| Total Assets | 100,194.43 | 148,087.15 |
| LIABILITIES - December 31, 2023 | | |
| Accounts payable - Guatemala | 193.06 | 721.66 |
| Amounts owing - Canada | -0.09 | -0.09 |
| Total Liabilities | 192.97 | 721.57 |
| Total Net Assets (Represents starting balance for Jan., 1, 2024) | 100,001.46 | 147,365.58 |
| REVENUE - January 1 to December 31, 2023 | | |
| Donations from Individuals | 59,535.68 | 73,099.49 |
| Donations from Institutions / Interest income | 8,439.45 | 2,057.81 |
| CCAMRE Grant for Regular Program | 10,487.12 | 35,608.08 |
| Exchange Gain or Loss | 140.29 | -2213.36 |
| Total Revenue | 78,602.54 | 108,552.02 |
| EXPENSES - January 1 to December 31, 2023 | | |
| Regular Programs: Project Harvest, MCC, Rotary Club | 119,795.25 | 99,700.26 |
| Management & Administration in Guatemala & Canada | 2,782.65 | 3,003.72 |
| Interest and bank charges | 1,232.07 | 1,585.08 |
| Fundraising in Canada | 941.38 | 986.93 |
| Total Expenses | 124,751.35 | 105,275.99 |
| Net Assets at the beginning of year - January 1, 2023 | 147,365.58 | 137,630.80 |
| Adjustments of year end currencies revaluation | -936.95 | 2,032.03 |
| Increase in Net Assets at the end of year - December 31, 2023 | -46,427.17 | 7,702.75 |
| Total Net Assets (Represents starting balance for Jan., 1, 2024) | 100,001.46 | 147,365.58 |

Please Donate!
Become a
Monthly Donor!

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