

**Seeds for a Future**  
*Semillas Para el Futuro*



**~ Seeds for a Future ~  
Helping rural families  
in Guatemala build a  
better future for  
themselves**



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## Our first meetings

- Educators, NGO leaders, anthropologists, Ministry of Culture, businesspeople
- Community leaders and citizens in Chocolá





Pre-Classic Maya Archeology site; Chocolá, 2004



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Poverty, malnutrition and food insecurity afflict a majority of families in rural Guatemala

*When you don't have food & economic security for your family, it's hard to think of anything else.*

**Our main focus became helping families fight malnutrition & improve family economy – TO BUILD BETTER LIVES.**

## **Societal Context (and unmet SDGs)**

- Decades of authoritarian rule
- Discrimination and marginalization of indigenous groups
- Failure to develop strong civil structures
- Hyper-patronism in gov't and private sectors
- Breathtaking levels of government and private corruption

## **Exacerbated In Chocolá by:**

- Cultural dislocation
- Persistent distrust following civil war
- Inter-religious quarreling
- Parochialism
- Destructive, clannish gossip

## Our grassroots programs would focus on:

- Diversifying farm crops to improve income
- Fighting malnutrition with family gardens
- Improving family income by reducing food buying, and sale of extra produce

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## Diversification & Learning = Better Farm Crop Income

- Adding cacao, timber & fruits means higher, year-round income (coffee produces income only once a year)
- Pruning & fertilization knowledge & practices are updated





# Family Nutrition Gardens

- Training in soil preparation, plant care, and organic fertilizer and pest control.
- Simple, affordable methods to protect gardens.
- Families have better nutrition, cut spending, can sell surplus.



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## The CASA GRANJA features:



- Gardening for nutrition & sufficient food
- Poultry and small animals for protein
- Using family resources productively
- Affordability: low cash outlay by family
- Recycling, re-purposing and composting
- Ecologically sound practices

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## Our local Extensionists are trained to:



- Provide technical training
- Actively include local skills and knowledge
- Promote the exchange of ideas
- Strengthen the family
- Support leadership development
- Encourage entrepreneurial thinking

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## Main components of the CASA GRANJA program:



- Initial planning with each family
- Accompaniment & coaching over 12 months via weekly household visits
- Periodic small group meetings & activities
- In-home, one-on-one learning sessions
- Integration with other learning topics

## WHAT MAKES OUR APPROACH DIFFERENT?


- INTEGRATION
- FLEXIBILITY, and
- ACCOMPANIMENT

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## With underlying emphasis on:

Empowering women and youth  
Promoting respect and sharing  
Developing teamwork and cooperation  
Fostering leadership skills





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## Other important factors for creating acceptance and sustainability:

- Sensitivity to cultural context
- Relevance to needs and interests
- Ethnic, political and religious neutrality
- Field staff are local to the area
- Use of appropriate learning techniques
- Design for affordability & early success

## And yet a few more...

- Self-selection by families indicates a willingness to learn and do their part
- Encourage innovation and learning from failure as well as success.
- Encourage sharing of both knowledge and resources
- Focus on native or well-adapted plants, and animals that will thrive in the area.



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“It is we ourselves who are going to achieve our development; we are the ones that have to work hard to advance, and with the help of the people of Semillas Para el Futuro – who are not from Guatemala, but who are concerned to help us – the rural people here will live better, in ways we never thought of.”

Doña Dominga Barreno

## SUCCESSFUL AND GROWING

**2009:** 15 Families in one community

**2021:** 14 Communities being served

1,900 Families have completed the program

14,860 People have benefitted (avg family = 7.7)

20,000 Native timber and fruit trees planted

## SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN:

From 3-year research study by the **Institute for Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP)** of Seeds for a Future's methods:

*"In conclusion, this study provides evidence that an integrated approach involving health, nutrition and agriculture with a duration of at least 24 months of follow up may have a **significant positive impact in nutrition outcomes**, especially in hemoglobin and iron status biomarkers, of mothers and children under five years of age in rural populations."*

## We are grateful for the support of:

- Institute for Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP)
- The Ministry of Culture, Institute of Archaeology & History
- Nestle Foundation of Switzerland
- Universidad del Valle
- Universidad Panamericana
- Centro Universitario del Sur Occidente (USAC CONSUROCC)
- Escuela Nacional Central de Agricultura (ENCA)
- Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation
- Pegasus Liberty Foundation
- Riester Conservation Foundation
- Arkay Foundation
- China-Taiwan Embassy in Guatemala -- among others.

We owe special acknowledgement to **the dedication and hard work of Ing. Armando Astorga and our Field Team**, and to the invaluable guidance, friendship and support of many individuals and NGOS.



## What about the Future?

**Guatemala's malnutrition rate is the 6<sup>th</sup> highest in the world.**

**The % suffering malnutrition has scarcely changed in over half a century – but with population growth, the number affected has increased dramatically.**

**1.8 million young children live in poverty, 800K in extreme poverty. They will lose 30% of their brain capacity for life, due to the effects of malnutrition & food insecurity.**

**HOW CAN THIS BE CHANGED?**

## The CASA GRANJA EXTENSION PROGRAM

- A 7-month program implemented in partnership with a community organization in each new location.
- Our top team trains local extensionists and families, starting with an intensive 7-day visit of classroom & field learning.
- Follow-up coaching and mentoring occurs over the next 6 months.
- **RESULT:** up to 20 families with well-started Backyard Farms and up to 10 local extensionists trained to provide coaching and accompaniment to families in their community.

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## **Visions With a Longer View**

- **A National Casa Granja Extension/Outreach Service based on Seeds for a Future's concepts and methods.**
- **A Regional Agricultural Learning Campus in Chocó, with scholarships for students from rural areas, to teach:**
  - **Sustainable agriculture**
  - **The integrated Casa Granja program**
  - **Improved farming techniques for small-holder farmers**
  - **Environmental protection**

**For these options, an international organization, university or other major partner is needed.**