

Annual Report July 2012-June 2013

LA SEMILLA DEL PROGRESO - HONDURAS

In January 2013, Colorado dental hygienist, Laura Robison, traveled to Honduras with her husband Paul to teach in dental hygiene clinics organized by La Semilla del Progreso.



Laura gives a class on caring for teeth.

The objective of the clinics was to show children and their mothers how to care for and preserve teeth - not to pull rotten teeth which is so common! Persons from 16 villages came to participate in the 5 clinics which were held in rural towns with central locations.

Training 2 young women to be able to continue working in dental education was an important part of the trip. Sara Tujal and Verónica López understand how much Hondurans suffer from problems with their teeth. They both have a commitment to service and had a strong interest in learning about dental hygiene. After 3 dental education clinics, Laura totally lost her voice, so Sara and Verónica stepped in and, with the La Semilla staff, became the lead teachers for the

Each child was given individual instruction.



last 2 clinics. They are natural teachers and did a great job.

COMUCAP - HONDURAS

COMUCAP is a cooperative of over 250 rural women organized in 16 groups in farming communities. Some of their members had participated in La Semilla's dental

hygiene clinics and were so impressed that they asked their cooperative to bring one of the young women to give classes for their groups. Verónica López (photo right) was hired by COMUCAP, and during her school break she led 3 dental hygiene clinics organized by COMUCAP with 120 families participating.



The donation of 1,861 tooth brushes provided brushes for everyone attending the clinics, plus enough for follow-up La Semilla staff will do.

It's not just brushing. It is also what kids are eating! Sara shows these Lenca mothers and children a lollipop. Soda pop and sucking candy decays kid's teeth.



ENSURING SECURE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Families can have food security! They could, but they do not. In Guatemala the chronic undernutrition rate for children under 5 is 49.8 percent, the highest in the Western Hemisphere. (Statistics are 2013 - UN World Food Program) Faced with insufficient nutrients, a child's body compensates by simply stopping to grow. Medically this is called "stunting" and it is suffered by 34% of children in Honduras and 48% in Guatemala. The health consequences, both physical and mental, continue on through adulthood.

Focusing on this reality, EPIC puts the greatest portion of its financial support into agricultural programs working for **Secure Access to Nutritious Food**. Year after year these programs have proven that they can double and then triple the food production of the farmers with whom they are working.

These are the guidelines for the agricultural work EPIC supports, and they ensure families' access to food:

Food must be sufficient, nutritious and safe

First increase yields of staple food crops

Double and triple corn and beans harvests!

Then diversify for better nutrition

Fruits, vegetables, poultry and cows

Third grow a high value cash crop for income

Farm sustainably and organically!

FUNDAMARCOS - SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH IN GUATEMALA



This year FUNDAMARCOS taught approximately 240 farm families in 15 communities to use new agricultural practices specifically adapted for hillside farms. Practicing the kind of farming that emphasizes more food production while conserving resources, often involves integrating crops and livestock for mutually beneficial operations. The farmer in the photo is growing beans, fertilized organically and planted on the contour. A series of grass filter barriers prevent soil erosion and water run-off. To make the barriers he plants a type of grass that he cuts as nutritious fodder for his 1 or 2 grass-fed cows. Then the manure is

layered with crop residues to make compost for fertilizing crops the next season.



More eggs and vegetables

Families are building corrals for their poultry that include nest boxes and a roofed area to protect the birds from rain. If chickens and turkeys are kept fenced in rather than running loose, it becomes possible to grow vegetable gardens. Loose chickens love eating up vegetable gardens! However, if the family has a garden, all the waste can be fed to the chickens. With corralled



poultry, it is possible to collect the manure which can then be used to make valuable compost. Vaccinating poultry (photo left) reduces their mortality and the families have more eggs, plus meat for special occasions.

Promoting Traditional Foods

Once farmers begin to farm organically and stop using herbicides, the native greens and

volunteer food plants that Maya people have eaten for centuries come back! These traditional foods are very nutritious, resistant to pests, and resilient in adverse growing conditions. FUNDAMARCOS promotes esteem for these “free” foods, teaches their nutritional value, and women’s groups create new recipes using them.



Coming home from school, this girl carries some wild greens she picked that will be part of tonight’s supper.

MOBILE SCHOOL OF SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION - GUATEMALA

The purpose of the Mobile School is to share with other development organizations the very productive practices of sustainable organic farming that have been developed in EPIC’s agricultural projects. Felipe Tomás, the director and lead teacher, brings over 35 years of teaching sustainable agriculture throughout Central America and Mexico.

Agricultural Teaching Spreads to Alta Verapaz

ASOSAP is an NGO working successfully in health care in the Guatemalan department of Alta Verapaz. It works primarily with Pokomchi Maya, whereas FUNDAMARCOS is working in an Achi Maya area. ASOSAP sent a group of farmers and staff to visit the agriculture work of FUNDAMARCOS because they had seen the need to increase agricultural production to achieve their goal of improving health. The group was so impressed with the sustainable agricultural practices they saw that ASOSAP is now paying FUNDAMARCOS to train its young agricultural director. In addition, the Mobile School is doing trainings of several days each in Alta Verapaz with ASOSAP. Thus agricultural outreach is expanded as ASOSAP develops its own sustainable agriculture program.

FUNDACIÓN SERGIO MÉNDEZ ARCEO - MEXICO

This Mexican foundation annually presents Human Rights Awards for the individual and the group most on the forefront of working for human rights in Mexico. By receiving this award, the person or organization is given publicity and support for their struggle and cause.

This year the individual award was given to Estela Angeles Mondragón, lawyer for the Tarahumaras of Northern Mexico. In 1926 the Tarahumaras were given legal right to their ancestral land by the Mexican government. However, cattle ranchers from other areas have continually invaded. Estela’s husband successfully represented the Tarahumaras in court and as a result was assassinated. Estela has continued to fight for the Tarahumaras. Her office was burned down, and she has suffered death threats and many aggressive actions. The objective of the award is to support the rights of the Tarahumaras and to hopefully provide some protection to Estela through publicity about her situation.



LA CASA PARA LA CULTURA MAYA - GUATEMALA

The indigenous people of Central America and Mexico tend to be the most disadvantaged and poorest of the society. For example, the chronic undernutrition rate for children under 5 in indigenous areas of Guatemala rises to 69.5 percent! For this reason much of EPIC's work in Central America is in Maya and Lenca areas. La Casa para la Cultura Maya is dedicated to preserve, esteem, and promote Mayan culture.

This is a time of very rapid cultural change in Mayan communities. For 3 years La Casa para la Cultura Maya participated in an oral history project implemented by university students and coordinated by San Carlos University. Each year a group of students video taped interviews with older men and women to document the customs and values the elderly remember. This year, 45 to 50 year old movies and photographs were digitalized to the begin a visual history library.



CRECIENDO JUNTOS - COLOMBIA

Creciendo Juntos is a Colombian non-profit working in a very poor area on the outskirts of Bogota. All types of violence confront families living here - political, domestic, drug and gang related. This year EPIC sponsored a weekend workshop on conflict resolution for mothers living in the midst of this violence. It provided an opportunity to withdraw to a safe place to share and exchange ideas and to receive teachings on conflict transformation. The women experienced renewal, returned home with new ideas, and found new courage for dealing with the violence they encounter daily.

APRODENI - EL SALVADOR

In 2011 EPIC sponsored a visit to Honduras by Salvadoran farmers to see the work of COSECHA, another EPIC partner organization. This began a very valuable farmers-to-farmer teaching experience between people living in similar dry areas and dealing with similar problems.

Without irrigation these farmers of El Salvador are unable to grow crops during the long dry season. In Honduras one farmer had invented a very inexpensive hand pump for irrigation. Hearing great stories from those who visited Honduras, APRODENI requested funds from EPIC to bring 2 men from Honduras to give a course on making hand pumps. The pump being installed in the photo is now in use to irrigate a group project producing vegetables for home consumption and income. One farmer is modifying the original design of the pump to make a pump that can take water to more distant fields. The farmers also want to develop fish ponds for raising tilapia for family nutrition and for sale.

