



## GUATEMALA

Atilán Highlands

## Balanced Nutrition for Mayan Children

### Project background

According to the World Food Organization, Guatemala ranks among the five countries with the highest rate of chronic malnutrition in the world. In the Department of Sololá in Guatemala, over 65% of children face malnutrition. In indigenous village communities, these numbers even raise to 75%. The reasons are manifold: The maize harvests of the Mayan families are threatened by the increasing overexploitation of land and difficult climatic conditions. Many children suffer diarrhoeal diseases due to poor hygiene conditions. In addition, families often lack knowledge about healthy nutrition and therefore have an unbalanced diet.

### Project goals

- 125 families increase the availability of nutritious food through a diversified and sustainable maize cultivation and poultry farming.
- 125 families know the basics of healthy nutrition and are in the position to feed their children with a balanced diet.
- 125 families handle water and food more hygienically and understand the relationship between hygiene and diarrhea.
- 125 families know and use the services of the health centres if their children are malnourished

### Project activities

#### *Diversification of Maize Fields*

In the Mayan culture, maize is the most important staple food. For covering their needs, most families grow their own maize. Today the soil is overexploited through the one-sided cultivation and improper practices. An agronomist helps the families to make their cultivation practices more sustainable and climate resistant. The families learn in practical workshops, to diversify the fields with beans, local herbs and fruit trees. A further problem is crop losses due to incorrect storage. We teach the families how they can store the yields dry and safe from parasites.

A regular intake of proteins is very important for the healthy development of children. Often the knowledge about animal husbandry is lacking. In workshops and by means of visits, the families improve their poultry farming so that they can regularly harvest eggs and meat.

#### *Awareness Campaign*

In workshops, we sensitise the village communities with ludic activities to the signs and causes of chronic malnourishment and its effects on health and the cognitive and physical development of children.

#### *Workshops on Healthy Eating*

In workshops, the 125 families learn the role of proteins, carbohydrates, micronutrients and

### Project location

Pajomel, Chuitzanchaj and Laguna Seca, Municipality of Santa Cruz la Laguna, Atilán-Highlands, Department Sololá, Guatemala

### Themes

Food security, Hygiene, Awareness-raising, early childhood development, Assistance for self-help

### Program

Education: Bridges to School and Work  
Water: Better use of water

### Duration

2017 to 2019

### Budget

CHF 738'482

## What do we stand for at Vivamos Mejor

### Independent and direct

Vivamos Mejor, a Swiss charity with no political or religious affiliations, has been working to improve living conditions in Latin America for 35 years. We have long-term partnerships with local NGOs who work directly with motivated and proactive beneficiaries with limited means. Thanks to our financing, the partner NGOs implement sustainable projects, involving local authorities who also share some of the responsibility. Our beneficiaries receive an initial helping hand, but right from the start they do much of the work themselves to establish an independent foundation. After the conclusion of the project, beneficiaries and local stakeholders continue the work independently.

### Focussed and professional

Our projects focus on water and education but also include gender issues and community development. We prepare young children for school, support young people with labour market integration, and instruct small-scale farmers in sustainable methods of managing their natural resources including water, forests and land. Vivamos Mejor encourages beneficiaries and partner organisations to share their knowledge.

### Efficient and transparent

Vivamos Mejor is a member of Swiss Solidarity. We monitor target achievement and measure the impact of our work in conjunction with Swiss and local universities. Vivamos Mejor was the winner of the 2016 Impact Award from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the NADEL Centre for Development and Cooperation (ETH-NADEL).

We guarantee a transparent use of funds by regularly visiting local projects, as well as expecting that the local partner organisations submit operational reports and are independently audited. The Swiss accounts are independently audited by BDO AG. We operate a lean business model and we only spend as much money in Switzerland as is necessary to ensure that our work is carried out professionally and efficiently.

### Vivamos Mejor

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vitamins. The project team integrates this into interactively designed cooking workshops. The women cook the new products together and integrate them into their existing dishes.

### Breastfeeding and appropriate Nutrition

Diet during the first two years of life makes a decisive difference to a healthy development. In workshops, 120 pregnant or child-bearing women age learn to adequately feed themselves and their children. The project team actively promotes breastfeeding.

### Promotion of Handwashing and Boiling of Drinking Water

In practical workshops, the women learn how to handle food more hygienically and store their household water correctly. Playfully, parents and children train basic hygiene behavior.

### Latrines and Water Filters

Not all families have a functioning latrine. We support the building and improvements of about 100 latrines. We also sensitise the families to the consistent boiling of drinking water. Depending upon the situation, we finance water filters.

### Target group

Directs: 125 indigenous families  
Indirect: another 100 autres families  
(700 persons)

### Costs

The total budget payable by Vivamos Mejor amounts to CHF 738'482.

For this financing we depend on contributions from companies, cantons, foundations and local councils.

### Local contributions

The total costs do not include local contributions to the value of CHF 119,200. The acquisition of vehicles is covered by our partner. The families bear 20% of the infrastructure costs for improving the hygiene conditions.

### Project results

- 115 families have diversified their fields with 1'497 trees.
- 95 families learned how to store their crops correctly to minimize losses.
- 123 women took part in courses on a balanced diet for their families.
- 98 women learned how to improve their meals in cooking courses.
- 93 families learned hygiene practices.

### Local project partner

Vivamos Mejor works together with a local grassroots organisation in each country and only uses experienced and qualified local staff. Our project partner in Guatemala is the «Asociación Vivamos Mejor Guatemala» AVMG, which is headquartered in Panajachel. They are responsible for the operational implementation of the project as well as for liaising with state authorities. AVMG works with results-oriented monitoring instruments and employs a fully transparent accounting system.

## Project impressions



A mother warms milk for her baby.



An Agronomist and technicians support the sustainable cultivation of the fields.



Mothers learn basic knowledge about improved nutrition and hygiene from indigenous social workers.

