

Seeds for a Future

Semillas para el Futuro

Rural Program Report 2018



www.seedsforafuture.org



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Seeds for a Future / Semillas Para El Futuro Program in Rural Guatemala

This report provides donors and other interested parties with information about **Seeds for a Future / Semillas Para El Futuro** (Seeds/Semillas), which is in its second decade conducting a successful and innovative program for integrated community development in rural Guatemala. We seek funding that will allow us to continue developing this program, as well as expand it to help additional families in the region of Suchitepequez and Retalhuleu.



Below we have addressed questions sometimes asked of Seeds/Semillas, outlined our program and provide additional information which we hope will be of interest, and of value in your in deciding on your support for Seeds/Semillas.

I. Origin of Seeds for a Future

Seeds for a Future was founded in 2006 by a group of international volunteers working on a Maya archaeological site at Chocolá, Guatemala. Their experiences in the modern-day village created a desire to help people, with whom they had worked side-by-side, to live healthier and more prosperous lives. Two other non-profit organizations emerged at roughly the same time: Amigos de Chocolá, which provides scholarships to promising students, and the Maya Health Alliance, which provides healthcare services and health education, principally to women of reproductive age and their children. The three NGOs continue to work in a collaborative alliance.

Seeds for a Future began by working with residents to identify and prioritize the community's perceived needs and wants, and its human and physical resources. This effort was led by Suzanne de Berge (planning and business management), Derek Steel (community resource development facilitator), Earl de Berge (political scientist), Alberto Rivera and Anne Kramer (both cultural anthropologists), Enrique Mateu (Minister of Culture for Guatemala) and by the elected leadership of the local governing body, known as the ECA (a farmer's cooperative association).

The core concept that emerged was to form a modest-sized program to explore and develop new, effective and practical strategies for addressing the problems of chronic malnutrition of mothers and their children among poor rural families. These were to be strategies that could be taught and applied at the household level, and after field testing, could be replicated in other communities.

Community meetings were held during 2007 & 2008 and goals were adopted in four basic categories: (1) family health and nutrition; (2) crop reform and diversification; (3) more learning opportunities; and (4) empowerment of women and youth through leadership training. Over the following years -- driven primarily by community input, response and success -- these categories evolved into the present-day integrated program.

The US non-profit organization, ***Seeds for a Future***, is the fund raising and policy-oversight arm of the effort. Early in 2007, ***Semillas Para el Futuro*** was created as a "sister" non-profit, registered with the Guatemalan government, with a board comprised primarily of Guatemalans. ***Semillas Para el Futuro*** is the "action arm", and implements our concepts, strategies and methods in Guatemala. (The name Seeds/Semillas will be used in the remainder of this proposal.)

Seeds/Semillas headquarters and Community Learning Center is located in the agricultural community of Chocolá, Suchitepequez, Guatemala. Components of the Center include indoor and outdoor classroom and meeting areas, a seedling nursery, an extensive demonstration center to display backyard farm options, and the Riester Computer Lab.

Our staff currently consists of a Project Manager, 4 Senior and 4 Junior Extensionists-Nutritionists, 2 Community Assistants and a Technology Manager/Computer Teacher. Project Manager since 2010, Armando Astorga is a Guatemalan Agronomy Engineer. He has been vital to transforming ideas and concepts into actual methods and practices. The Field Team he has built for implementing the integrated development program is comprised entirely of men and women local to the area of activity. At any given time, the Seeds/Semillas Field Team also usually includes from 1 to 4 Guatemalan advanced university students completing a field practicum. The students receive in-depth practical experience embedded in rural

communities, in exchange for assisting participating families and sharing what they have learned in their university studies.

An important feature that distinguishes Seeds/Semillas is the amount and quality of the on-going training given to our Field Team. Training is accomplished both in class settings and by shadowing more advanced team members. And it is supplemented by sponsored attendance at seminars and outside training events. Although Field Team members have areas of specialty pertinent to their job assignments, cross-training is required, and all are expected to be able to coach participants in the basics of home agriculture and nutrition. In addition to the obvious benefits of a well-trained team to mentor and coach the participating families, these local men and women comprise a very valuable resource for communities in the region.

One of our core values is that all persons shall be treated with respect, and Ing. Astorga has been very successful in ensuring that this value is modelled by our team members in their interactions with one another and with participating families, visiting consultants and other community members. Further, although team members have considerable training in our program areas, we strongly foster an awareness that anyone may have something of unique value to teach others, and openness to an exchange of knowledge is very important.

II. Methodology in Our 4 Core Areas

A. Food Security and Nutrition: This is the primary component of our integrated approach helping rural families whose resources are limited to have access to both sufficient food, and nutritious food. To accomplish this, we have developed the concept of the Backyard Farm (*Casa-Granja*), in which families are coached in how to: (1) organize and structure their household yard or patio space to maximize production of foods; (2) successfully raise nutritious vegetables, herbs and fruits, along with poultry, small animals and fish for protein; (3) understand nutrition needs, especially for children, and use the foods they have grown in familiar recipes; (4) maintain hygienic conditions and procedures in kitchens and food preparation via appropriate low-tech methods; and (5) manage both household and garden/animal wastes into compost and recycled/repurposed materials, and properly dispose of other solid waste.

In our approach, one size does not fit all. Each family's resources are different, and nature is full of surprises. The program must be flexible enough to provide practical assistance and offer a path to success that fits the circumstances of each family. The Backyard Farm program is designed so that, families receive regular in-home and classroom coaching and mentoring for a span of approximately 2 years. The general structural outlines of the program are as follows:

- a. Participating families "self-select" for participation in the program by indicating their interest. After receiving a thorough briefing on their responsibilities and ours, if the family commits to participate, senior members of our team visit the home. Together, the Team and the family assess available space and other relevant factors. A plan of action is jointly agreed for how their home space can be used to best advantage for a Nutrition Garden, to raise poultry or other protein sources, and grow fruit trees if possible, etc., and work begins.

- b. Seeds/Semillas provides initial seeds and seedlings, and starter animals if needed, but our primary “gift” to the families is coaching and mentoring on implementation of the action plan to convert their previously unused space into a productive Backyard Farm. As needed, we will also provide initial wire fencing for housing poultry and animals and protecting the Nutrition Garden.
 - i. Nutrition Garden plants are selected for nutritional value and cultural acceptance, as well as success in each target environment. In this area, these are primarily: bledo, flor amarilla, chipilín, quilete, quixtán, chaya, moringa, celery, onion, tomatoes, cucumber, cilantro, beets. Jalapeño, bell pepper, chard, radishes. Nutrition-rich micro-greens and Oyster mushrooms are especially important during rainy season months, when Nutrition Gardens may suffer rain damage.
 - ii. Typical animal protein sources include chickens, ducks, doves, chompipollos and other local bird types, rabbits, tilapia and snails. Some families have sufficient space and resources to raise a pig.
- c. As each family begins implementation of their plan, Seeds Team members start weekly visits to their assigned families for the purpose of:
 - i. Answering questions and providing guidance in planting, plant care, animal and poultry housing and care, treatment of any pests or diseases, problem resolution, etc.
 - ii. Assessing progress and recording advances or problems in the file that is maintained for each family.
 - iii. Encouraging participants to learn from both successes and mistakes.
- d. As the physical aspects of the family’s Casa-Granja take shape, the Team’s weekly visits begin to more strongly emphasize nutrition: what it is, what it does, what plants supply which type of nutrition, how to use nutritious foods in daily meals, how better nutrition will help their children and other family members. Hygiene in food preparation and the kitchen, and basic family first-aid are also covered, as well as management of household waste via composting, recycling, repurposing or appropriate disposal.
- e. The home mentoring and coaching visits are supplemented with monthly group meetings in the home of a participating family or at our Community Learning Center. Casa-Granja families are encouraged to visit our Demonstration Centers, and Field Day events are periodically held at these locations to give participating families an opportunity to see additional Backyard Farm options they could adopt. These group and neighborhood activities are designed to assist in fostering attitudes of cooperation and working toward the common goal of better nutrition for themselves and their neighbors.
- f. For a family to develop a complete and productive Backyard Farm and become confident in their ability to continue and expand their success, often takes from 9 to 12 months, in part because they need to experience the impact of various seasons. During this time, Field Team visits continue, but the amount of time spent with experienced families is reduced so that Team members can spend the needed time with new families.

- g. Visits to the experienced families during the final phase of participation focus on encouraging families to share their knowledge, skills and experience with family members and neighbors. By this time, they are experienced and knowledgeable enough to mentor for others, to become advocates within their community so that others will be encouraged to take advantage of the benefits of a Backyard Farm.

The program plan described above reveals another important distinguishing feature of the work of Seeds/Semillas: “**accompaniment.**” The goal of enabling families to create and maintain their own food security and improved nutrition requires that families and individuals have a chance to gain self-confidence and embed their new skills and knowledge. They must come to feel confident in their ability to solve the problems that nature may present them, and confident that even though they may experience an occasional failure, overall, they will succeed. (Other NGO and government programs which do not have strong accompaniment protocols experience low “continuation rates” – that is, few families continue their gardens. In contrast, continuation rates for Seeds/Semillas families exceeds 80 percent.)

Achieving self-confidence is very important for overcoming a powerful cultural barrier in rural Guatemala – people can be very fearful of failure and cautious about committing to new ideas because they risk making their family situation worse. And previous experience with failed programs also affects their attitude.

Changing human behavior is not a simple task. We believe that the best way to accomplish this is with regular coaching and mentoring, conducted in an atmosphere of friendship and respect and the exchange of ideas – accompaniment.

- B. **Improving Household Income:** The Backyard Farm produces improvements in family income by reducing the amount that must be spent in the market, and from the sale of any excess production of animal or vegetable foods. Some families may decide to raise chickens, eggs, mushrooms or other produce specifically for sale.

However, the greatest improvement in family cash flow is likely to come from changes in the agricultural activities that are largely the province of the household’s men. In this region, the traditional and most “beloved” crop is coffee, but the altitude is too low to grow the type of coffee demanded by the modern market. Classified as “soft”, local coffee fetches a very low price per kilo. Moreover, coffee gives a harvest just once a year. Thus, while local farmers are very attached to the crop that was grown by their fathers and grandfathers, they struggle with inadequate cash flow to sustain their families. Seeds/Semillas provides farmers with ideas, demonstration farms and coaching in the following areas:

- a. Crop diversification: We urge farmers to consider cacao (the source of chocolate) as an alternative crop. It is native to the area, requires approximately the same amount of land and effort as coffee, but gives a crop twice a year and has 2 or 3 times the sale value, even before any added-value processing. Over 8,000 cacao trees, many of these grown via our classes in germination techniques, have been planted by area farmers and are now mature enough to produce cash crops.

Intercropping is also encouraged, with a diverse array of other species, including native fruits (e.g., avocado, banana, Maya nut, jocote marañon, guanábana, guayaba, papaya, petataxte), and high-value native and non-native species such

as citrus, teak, cedro, mahogany and palo blanco, which not only provide the necessary shade environment for coffee or cacao, but produce food or can be harvested for firewood or high-value lumber. Local farmers have planted more than 5,000 “firewood” tree seedlings donated by Seeds/Semillas. These trees help reduce cutting of native trees important to the environment. We have also collected or grown 5,000 young nut, local fruit and native hardwood lumber trees for distribution at no or low cost to farmers.

- b. We offer farmers both classroom and field learning sessions in:
 - i. managing their soil,
 - ii. understanding nutrient requirements of various crops,
 - iii. how to create and use organic and environmentally friendly fertilizers and pest control
 - iv. learning to understand the makeup of commercial fertilizers and when/how to apply them,
 - v. the importance of pruning and best pruning practices for best results
 - vi. harvesting and storage best practices, especially for crops less familiar to the farmers than coffee.
 - c. Micro-business coaching and assistance is offered both to families who wish to take advantage of their excess Backyard Farm production and to farmers, to help them achieve the best income results from their cash crops. Coaching includes:
 - i. Local market assessment to help them select crops that will do well in the local market.
 - ii. Ideas for adding post-harvest value to their crops to enhance financial return.
 - iii. Fostering cooperative organizations for more effective purchasing of supplies and for better marketing of their products.
- C. **Enhanced Learning Opportunities:** All the activities of Seeds/Semillas are imbued with the value of learning as the fundamental driver for individuals, families and communities to develop and succeed. In a country which has been plagued by a generally poor-quality education system, especially in rural areas, separate approaches are needed for different age groups.
- a. Most adult men in the region have attended school only through the sixth grade (less for women) and that education was of diminished effect due to its poor quality, and to the lack of value placed on it within peer groups, in terms of its relevance to daily life. Nevertheless, many adults, especially women, reveal a powerful interest in learning, especially knowledge that is deemed useful to their daily life and tasks. We provide this type of practical learning in small group meetings, but we have also found that adult men and women learn more successfully by observing and doing. This is what makes our coaching and mentoring tasks so vital, and why our Demonstration Centers are so important.
 - b. The classroom, however, is a viable alternative for school-age children and youth who are either still experiencing, or very recently experienced, learning in a classroom setting. During the 2018 school year, more than 90 sixth-grade students, selected by their local schools for capability and interest, attended weekly classes free of charge in our Riester Computer Lab. These classes focus

on learning to use a computer and common software programs, and how to create reports, presentations, letters, etc. In addition, the students are coached in how to conduct research for regular school tasks via the RACHEL System, an enormous electronic library of Spanish-language educational materials suitable for all ages.

- c. The program for sixth graders includes Reading Comprehension classes, which are necessary to bolster their skills beyond what they gain in the local schools. Some students also volunteer for participation in a Chess Club where, as they enjoy the game, they learn strategic thinking, planning, and similar skills.
- d. A high school has been organized by a group of local teachers so that students interested in continuing their education may do so without the need to travel daily to a distant town. The high school meets in borrowed facilities but does not have computers. The teachers have arranged to give their weekly computer-based classes to their 30+ students at our Riestler Computer Lab. Many of these students also come to the lab outside of their class time, to use the computers for other school tasks, and to conduct research via the RACHEL System.
- e. In addition to the job-related training our Field Team members receive, they also receive classes on computer use and have access to the RACHEL System for whatever learning purposes interest them.
- f. Other than when regular classes are being offered, the computers and RACHEL System are available to anyone in the community who wishes to use them.
- g. The staff of Seeds/Semillas has produced a number of resource and “how to” books. Electronic versions of these have been uploaded for local access via the RACHEL System, and currently maintain printed copies in our Learning Center.

In 2017 Semillas Project Manager Armando Astorga and the Field Team completed two detailed and fully-illustrated publications on our methods and strategies as applied in specific environmental and cultural conditions. The 600+ page guide to integrated development, **Libro de Desarrollo**, records the approach and activities of Semillas in implementing our complete integrated development program. Every member of the Team contributed to this book, even those for whom writing about their work and experiences was an unfamiliar assignment. The **Libro de Desarrollo** is designed to serve as a detailed resource for other organizations that would like to implement such a program in their own area. Several sections of the Development book were used to create a field manual specifically for the Nutrition Gardens and Backyard Farm concepts, the **Libro de los Huertos y Casa Granja**. A complete list of Seeds/Semillas books and manuals is available in the Links section of this proposal.

D. Encouraging Leadership: In the early years of Seeds/Semillas activity in the Chocolá area, we contracted with Guatemalan graduate students and others to provide classes in leadership. These were not as successful as hoped. It was difficult for people struggling to provide for themselves and their families to find time to attend even a short series of regularly scheduled classes. And there was often somewhat of a disconnect between the more theoretical approach of the classroom leaders and the great interest among members of the community in the practical details of how their local government should or

could work. In addition, many of the adults did not seem comfortable in a classroom setting.

In light of these experiences, it was decided to approach the issue of leadership in a different way. One way is by providing opportunities for observing leadership, cooperation and working toward common goals. Our Director and Field Team members model the values of respect, gender equality, cooperation, religious and political neutrality and knowledge sharing, as they interact with each other and with participants and other community members.

Further, during both home visits and group sessions, participants are stimulated to participate in problem identification, solution design, implementing those solutions and assuming leadership roles through team efforts. Experimentation and learning from mistakes are encouraged. Especially for adults who may have limited classroom learning experience, “learn by doing” and practical experience are vital in helping them gain the confidence and skills needed to lead others into their own action activities and work to identify and share common goals.

In 2019, exchange visits are planned so that our participants will have the opportunity to interact with their peers from community groups which have successfully organized, in other areas, for common goals.

III. Strengthening Communities

While not listed as a “main focus” of our work, we believe that strengthened communities is already a natural outcome of our integrated program. Communities are built as people acquire the technical skills needed for success, identify opportunities for their own future, and learn to work together. Individuals and families experience the realization that supporting each other to build a better life means a better life for all. The key to this process is education, not necessarily in a formal sense, but *learning*: learning skills that will last a lifetime; practical, learning-by-doing education that helps people gain the confidence and skills needed to lead others to start their own self-help activities and to work toward common goals.

The unincorporated agricultural community of Chocoma where we first began offering skills, training and coaching to rural Guatemala families is in the municipality of San Pablo Jocopilas. Our office and Learning Center are there, and we have participating families in 10 villages within the same municipality. We also work with families in 5 more distant villages of Santo Tomás la Unión, in Caserío El Esfuerzo of San Felipe, Retalhuleu, and Aldea Tzampoj of Solola. Each village has access to at least one Demonstration Center, many at the homes of our most dedicated and successful families.

Although working directly with families remains our primary activity, below are other activities where, as a result of requests from individuals and groups who have become acquainted with our program, our Field Team provides guidance and direction.

1. An exciting new avenue of work opened for us this past spring at Mis Años Dorados (My Golden Years), a day center for the elderly in the nearby town of Samayac, where we helped install a Nutrition Garden on the grounds. The elderly guests are thrilled to engage in the productive activity of caring for gardens that

contribute to the nutrition of meals at the center – often the only meals they may have all day – and the staff has been trained in using the nutritious produce. In the coming months, we hope to help them install coops for raising poultry for eggs and meat.

This center is part of a government initiative and many such centers exist throughout Guatemala. If budgetary restraints can be overcome, the centers represent an opportunity for our Food Security and Nutrition focus to reach a new population, and one which will also benefit from the satisfaction of having a productive activity.

2. After learning of our work, and visiting our Community Learning Center in Chocolá, managers of Finca Buena Vista in San Felipe, Retalhuleu, requested our guidance in establishing a Nutrition Garden for the students of the Finca's grade school. A Some of our Team members visit weekly to help the students and their teachers maintain a successful garden. The garden produce regularly adds nutrition to school lunches.
3. In several nearby towns, the Municipal Office for Women's Affairs has requested our assistance to help them develop programs on nutrition, hygiene and women's health.
4. With guidance from the Seeds/Semillas Team, three restaurant/event centers in Mazatenango, Quezaltenango and San Bernardino now support Demonstration Centers. In addition to producing organically grown food for their kitchens, they provide opportunities for visitors and potential supporters to learn about Seeds/Semillas and our successful Casa-Granja concept.
5. Our Project Manager and Team members are frequently invited to make presentations on the work of Seeds/Semillas to municipalities; chambers of commerce; conferences of leaders in Food Security and Nutrition; Agronomists; colleges of Agriculture, Food/Nutrition, and Social Work at local universities, and other interested groups.

IV. Results and Effectiveness

Malnutrition and Food Insecurity have plagued Central America for generations and contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty, out of which it is very difficult to emerge. USAID estimates that nearly 80 million dollars (USD) per year are deployed in addressing malnutrition in Guatemala alone, but the high rate of malnutrition among Guatemalan children and their mothers has scarcely budged in decades.

Every child that suffers from lack of sufficient nutrients is stunted, both in size and brain development. The consequences last a lifetime and are carried forward both genetically and behaviorally to subsequent generations. This individual tragedy, when allowed to exist in great numbers, creates hardship and dysfunction on a national scale.

Many programs address malnutrition with hand-out strategies, which may help in short-term crises, but do not teach people in need anything about how to address food security and nutritional needs themselves. Seeds/Semillas uses strategies that are practical, low-cost and replicable from family-to-family, and which can break apart the atmosphere of dependency.

According to our agronomist and cultural advisors, the strategies we have developed can be applied throughout Latin America and other countries, if appropriate attention is given to cultural, environmental and social factors.

Including current participants, over 1400 families have benefitted from the Seeds/Semillas program. This means that our program has helped improve the nutrition and food security of approximately 10,780 individuals (based on average family size of 7.7).

Although it is easy to observe and record anecdotal evidence of positive results among the families, Seeds/Semillas is one of the first “family garden” projects to have **scientific documentation of its positive effects on health and physiology**. The highly respected *Nutrition Institute for Central America and Panama* (INCAP) conducted an independent **three-year scientific study of our methods and strategies** (2014-17). INCAP provided technical support for the nutrition training, and INCAP staff conducted all health assessments, which included regular measurement of body growth and blood hemoglobin levels. Funded by the *Nestlé Foundation of Switzerland*, this research project clearly substantiates improved nutritional status for newborn and toddler children during the critical 1000 Days Window resulting from their mothers participating in a well-designed and well-implemented “nutrition garden” program. INCAP’s final report has yet to be published, but the following quotes have been extracted from the preliminary report:

“At follow up and final (health) assessments, it was observed that as a result of the support provided at the household level in terms of home gardens and education activities, there was a significant consumption of the food promoted by the study. These foods were promoted because they were rich sources of nutrients, especially protein and minerals, such as iron. A reported average consumption between 8-9 times week in mothers and children in both clusters is very significant and may explain in part the improvements in hemoglobin and iron status in mothers and children at the end of the study in both clusters.”

“...the results can be compared with national rates from a recent nutrition survey. At baseline, the rates of anemia in study children were lower than national rates of children of 6-12 months of age, at about 70% (ENSMI 2014-15); however, at the end, the study children showed much lower rates (<5% in both clusters) than the rates of anemia reported for children between 24 -36 months of age, at 27%, compared to an overall rate of anemia in children <5 years at the national level of 32.4%, and for Suchitepéquez, 37.7%.”

“The baseline rates of anemia in study women were 17.3% and 14.3% for SPJ and STU, respectively; which were comparable with national rates at 13.6% and for Suchitepequez, at 17% (ENSMI, 2014-15). However, at the end of the study, the rates of anemia in participating women decreased to 7.5% and 0%, for SPJ and STU, respectively.”

“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.”

Equally important evidence of the success of the Seeds/Semillas program may be seen in the results of a survey conducted in January 2018 among participants in the INCAP/Nestlé study, one year after the field work ended and our coaching activities with those families were concluded. While the analysis is still in progress, the most important findings are that:

- 80 percent of the participating families still maintain a nutrition garden,
- economic benefits resulting from the home nutrition gardens are continuing,
- the rate of illnesses for mothers and children has dropped significantly, and
- even families which did not still have a garden reported very high usage of the selected nutritious plants in their daily diets.

Reflecting the integrated nature of the Seeds/Semillas program, participating small holder farm families have improved their agricultural practices and thus their yield and income through crop diversification, and have planted over 8,000 native cacao trees, and more than 10,000 other productive native tree species, including those that produce fruit, nuts or firewood (which also reduces the amount of native forest being cut for wood burning stoves).

Another significant result we hope for and expect, but which may not be seen for many years, is that young people who now see little or no future for themselves in their home town may see things differently. Being able to establish a family and ensure their children sufficient food and nutrition, and to see a path to a stable economic future on their own farming parcel may help to reduce immigration, help reduce the number of young people who are at risk of human trafficking and increase the number of young people who are able to envision a successful future for themselves among family and friends in a town they love.

V. The Future

Seeds for a Future has established, through structured research and by direct observation, that our approach and methods produce positive results for participating families, in health and nutrition measures, in family income, and in a vital sense of accomplishment and the ability to see themselves as agents of positive change for their family's future. Building on this success, we will continue to expand the program's impact via outreach, training and our manuals, to help more families better feed themselves, enjoy greater food security and raise healthy children.

As we look forward, our primary goal is to ensure program sustainability and share the lessons of this model program. As Seeds/Semillas has worked to design education and training programs that are efficacious both culturally and practically, a core underlying principle has been the concept of coaching and accompaniment of participants – helping embed new skills, and helping people achieve the confidence they need to make their own decisions with the knowledge they have gained.

It is vital that participants come to rely on themselves and become agents of positive change for themselves and their communities. What is more, field experience shows that they are eager to do so. Over the next two years we seek to test, evaluate and fine-tune strategies which help families continue their new practices, and share them with family members and neighbors.

VI. A Few Last Thoughts

A few words about our Team: We feel great satisfaction with the success of the Seeds/Semillas program that has been formed over 10 years of experimentation and fine-tuning. We are also enormously proud of our Field Team. We are very fortunate to have connected with our Project Manager, Ing. Armando Astorga, whose strength of heart and unlimited willingness to teach has produced a Team with equal heart, devotion to their community, and a wonderful ability to absorb, process and build on the training Armando has provided. It has been a joy to watch each member develop and grow in skill and confidence under Armando's mentoring; to see once shy and practically wordless young people now confidently presenting their knowledge and skills to groups of avid listeners. In addition to the core group which has been a part of the entire process, we have had the opportunity to share our ideas, information, concepts and principles with a large number of other men and women from the villages. If nothing further happens with our program, we will be satisfied to have helped create an amazing community resource of leadership, commitment and knowledge.

And a few words about participants, especially the women, who are often the most marginalized and have the least education in the rural communities. Comments such as the one below, make any effort worthwhile:

“Semillas Para El Futuro has been a hope for my life -- my baby was dying, his hair was falling out. They helped me with a blood test, they taught me what to give him to eat and how to prepare it. Now, thank God my baby is walking and smiling. The best thing is that together with my daughters he is learning to plant food.”

VI. Links

[Quotes from Program Participants](#)

[Photo gallery](#)

[Semillas Books and How-to Manuals](#)

[Seeds for a Future website](#)

[Facebook page: Seeds for a Future](#)

[Facebook page: Semillas Team in Guatemala](#)

[Resumés of Key Staff and Founders](#)