



Seeds for a Future
Creating Better Lives - Today!



Testimonials for the Seeds for a Future Program by Participants and University Faculty

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Since 2009, Seeds for a Future has successfully integrated its self-reliance Program in rural Guatemala. The Program is established in ten states and nineteen communities, with more coming on board.

In this document, Program participants relate their experiences, followed by comments from University Faculty whose students integrate with the Program for their supervised field projects.

Program Participants in the Chocolá Agrarian Community, San Pablo Jocopilas:



"I no longer have to buy hierba mora, chipilín, chard, bleado, moringa [*various nutritious greens*], jalapeño pepper, bell peppers, onion, Jamaica and other things because I have them at my house. The garden plants help us a lot. When there's extra, we share it with my family or sell it. With the animals, when we want to eat a duck or a chicken, I catch it and cook it, the rest I sell, and this helps us to continue buying. If one accepts the ideas Seeds for a Future shares with us, we don't need anyone to give us money." - *Bernarda Natareno*

“From the training we have received, we have adopted new ways of preparing food and beverages using plants from our gardens, for example, smoothies of Chaya, cucumber or carrot which are good sources of nutrition for health.” - *Maria Eugenia Charar Ajqui*



The family garden helps in our household economy. The greens that we grow on the patio of the house are organic because they do not have poison that is bought in the farm store; the fertilizer that is applied to the plants comes from our compost heap and manure of animals from the corrals. Seeds for a Future is teaching us to work to benefit ourselves and to save money. The money that I had to spend before, I have used to buy chickens. This is an investment because sometimes we eat them, and sometimes we sell them."

Silvia Tulul

Program Participants in El Esfuerzo, San Felipe Retalhuleu:



“Semillas Para El Futuro has brought a project that benefits the community. In our homes we now have vegetables for the family to eat. I tell other women of the community to participate because the benefit is for us, that we do not expect them to bring us things away to give away. We will organize ourselves and get tomato seeds to diversify our crops, and with the training, we are learning how to raise seedlings.

With the backyard farm we have more meat to eat and also that we can sell. This generates an income that helps us in the education of our children or other things that we can use at home.”

- *Patricia Magdalena Cifuentes*



“Seed for a Future helps us to take advantage of the spaces we have around our house. They have taught us to plant chard, blackberry, and flor amarilla that we did not think would grow here because of the weather, but now we are eating those greens. Besides we do not need fertilizer that they sell in the agricultural store, but we can make fertilizer ourselves by using our organic household waste and putting it in the compost.” - *Rosa María López*

Program Participants in Lolemi, San Pablo Jocopilas:



“When I was not in the project, I had chickens, but they got stolen or I did not take advantage of the eggs. Now I keep an eye on them in the pens, and I take advantage of the eggs to eat or for hatching and have more chickens coming up. Before, I had to pay a taxi to go to the market to buy greens, now I have them right at my door. The project has helped a lot, and I'm glad to be part of the backyard farm project.” - *Lilian Raquel Hernández*



“To grow food to eat, you have to sweat, but it's worth it. When you come to my house and see the chard, you're surprised that I can harvest my own food. I'm very happy because this is helping me a lot with feeding my family.” - *Lilian Raxuleu*

Program Participants in Pacamaché, Santa Catarina Ixtahuacan:



“When they teach us how to work, we all win. Since I started with the project, I am taking advantage of the opportunities that my family has to eat and live well. Animals and plants decorate my house and at the same time, feed me. I do not have to go to the market to spend time and money because I have what I need in my garden.” - *Alba Carrillo*



“In the educational sessions, we learn about the nutrition that is in the things we eat. When they visit the house, the extensionists clarify any doubts, and when they have the cooking practices, we learn to prepare the foods that we have in the garden in various ways. We have learned a lot that will always serve us.” - *Socorro del Chan*



“The project has helped me to have enough greens and to nourish my family well, to eat fresh foods free of fertilizers because they are produced with organic fertilizer, to take advantage of the available spaces that we have around the house, making them productive. The project also teaches us -- from the preparation of the soil up to harvest. What we have leftover we can sell and have money to buy corn or rice.” - *Rut Ajqui*

“From the training we have received, we have adopted new ways of preparing food and beverages using plants from our gardens, for example, smoothies of Chaya, cucumber or carrot which are good sources of nutrition for health.” - *Maria Eugenia Charar Ajqui*

Program Participants in Piedrecitas, San Pablo Jocopilas:



“In the time that I have been participating in the Seeds for a Future project, it has given me a lot of satisfaction. I have planted and harvested plants that I thought would not grow in these areas. I have chickens that have served me to eat and sell when I need to.” -*Paula Osorio*



“Having a garden, fruit trees and raising animals have complimented my family's diet and nutrition; the spaces that are now full of food before were full of garbage. The training that has been given to me to be better every day has helped me a lot. This I have taught my family because at first only I took care of things, but when they realized how important the plants and animals were for us, my family started to help me.” - *Rosenda Cumar*



“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 and 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.” - *Antonia Marleni Perez Pumar*



“When things are done from the heart, they work. Seeds for Future workers are very kind, they have patience to teach us. I have learned to garden, feed my animals and keep them in pens. I will continue, so I have more food to eat.” - *Antonia Adelina Graves*

Program Participants in Santo Tomás La Unión, Suchitepéquez:



“The Seeds for a Future Program is an aid for my family. I do not have to go to the market to buy herbs that I do not know how they have grown them. What I have in my house is organic because I fertilize it with (compost from) household waste. Of my animals I can eat whenever I want, but I know I should buy more of them so that I always have some and never run out of anything. As the land is not so good; we organize with my children to go and bring dirt from another place, so we can harvest the nutritious greens.” - *Mirna Yaque Gómez*

“The patio of our house was full of banana stalks, garbage and other things that we did not use and did not produce anything. With the training that Semillas Para El Futuro has given us, we have learned to take advantage of the spaces, in order to (grow food to) eat.

“Through savings, we improved the kitchen with a water filter so that our family does not get sick by taking water from the faucet. This saves money and the time that is lost by boiling the water, as well as damaging the environment. With oyster mushrooms we have eaten and sold to neighbors, that generates an income to buy other things and have the range of things we eat.



“In the patio now there is blackberry, chipilín, flor amarillo, chard, bleado, quilete, chaya, watercress, green bean, chile pepper, jalapeño pepper, cilantro, celery, tomato, güisquil, ginger, cucumber, and in the fruit trees we have strawberry, blackberry, passion fruit, rambutan, mangosteen, pineapple, tangerine, lemon, banana, platano. There is also maxan leaf, among other things that we eat every day.



“We like the project very much because it does not give things, but it teaches us. In our pens we have broiler chickens, laying chickens, rabbits, ducks, and pigeons. The training has taught us the importance of consuming animal and vegetable food. The fish tank and our snails are a great help. We are working hard as a family because the benefit is for all of us and everyone is assigned their tasks, even our 4- year-old child. The

project has taught us to work and value what we can do for ourselves.” - *Maribel Macario y Esvin Tzunun*

Observations from Faculty at Centro Universitario de Sur Occidente, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala

In Guatemala, university students in several disciplines must complete a supervised field project, called an EPS or PPS, depending on the length, in order to graduate. Since 2010, Seeds for a Future has hosted more than 30 EPS and PPS students in the fields of Tropical Agronomy, Environmental Management, Social Work, and Agricultural Extension.

Working closely with our extensionists and participant families, students gain practical experience that complements their classroom education. Equally important, their research projects provide new information and methods that Seeds of the Future can apply to enhance the success of participating families.

Supervising professors from cooperating universities have expressed their strong satisfaction with their students' achievements while embedded with Seeds for a Future.

Observations:

Agricultural Engineer Clarissa Rodríguez, PPS Student Supervisor, Centro Universitario de Sur Occidente, CUNSUROC, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala:

“Within the process that University of San Carlos uses to determine where PPS and EPS students will be stationed, it has been very rewarding that Seeds for a Future receives students, as the training they provide implicitly includes the concept of community. When the students go to a community and immerse themselves in it, as they do with Seeds for a Future, what they learn is much more significant and results in the students having a better vision of what they will confront in their future careers. Furthermore, the knowledge they gain about the crops that are used, from a Food Security perspective, and other practices such as composting, gives the students a broader and better learning experience.”

Agricultural Engineer Nicolás Barrios, Supervisor of the Agricultural Extension course for students in the eighth semester of the Agronomía Tropical (Tropical Agronomy), Centro Universitario de Sur Occidente, CUNSUROC, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala:

“As you know, the Agricultural Extension course must empower students who are about to finish their studies with extensive expertise and allow them to understand the work that an extensionist carries out in rural communities. An important element of carrying out a practicum is the amount of direct contact one has with the community's people, to understand their problems, and to see for oneself the difficulties and the solutions available to further improve the community. In this regard, being part of an organization such as Seeds for a Future, which features the concepts of Livestock and Agricultural Extension, and Family Agriculture in its programs, the students learn how to relate to the families. They learn that in the work they will later do as professionals, they must first understand the people's problems and later, present the necessary options and steps to solve those problems and bring well-being to the community.

Furthermore, Seeds for a Future —where the basics of Agricultural Extension are well known— also gives students the opportunity to put to work what they have learned in their course work, such as Soil Fertility, Soil Conservation, Composting and Organic Fertilizer, as well as horticulture and fruticulture, and to have experience in how to undertake the work they will perform in the field.

What is very important, is that the students learn in a most direct way, as shown by the work of Seeds for a Future , that their work must be performed in an integrated manner, and cognizant of the local environment.”

Agricultural Engineer Vinicio Tello, Dean of the Centro Universitario de Sur Occidente, CUNSUROC, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala:

“I have received many positive comments from the supervising professors about the work of Seeds for a Future’s and the way they have cooperated with the University; it has been very satisfactory to observe the students learn and develop.

This relationship dates back several years and is very valuable to the University especially for improving and increasing the knowledge of the students, as it is the University’s duty to certify professionals with an ingrained sense of duty, communication, a positive attitude, and the ability to undertake, as professionals, the work of their career in the community – this is the value that we see in the relationship that exists between Seeds and ourselves. We are very pleased with this relationship and will continue for years to come, sending more students to develop, as they work with Seeds for a Future, the necessary practical skills.

Not only does Seeds for a Future help in Agriculture, but also in Environmental Management, Social Work, and this year, the Food and Nutrition faculty also sent students to Seeds for a Future. Both the University and Seeds for a Future have seen some of their goals reflected in the production of high quality food – this is basic to the search for the best method to achieve Food Security in both rural and urban communities.

Furthermore, the information covered in Seeds for a Future’s book, A Manual for Development, is key for us as those in charge of a university campus such as CUNSUROC. We must understand clearly that by integrating everyone’s activities, we can achieve true development within all rural communities reached by the University.”

Industrial Engineer Silvia Guzmán, coordinator of the Food and Nutrition Career, Centro Universitario de Sur Occidente, CUNSUROC, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala:

After many visits with a group of students in Food and Nutrition at CUNSUROC to become acquainted with the nutritious greens planted and harvested in the communities where Seeds for a Future works, and to determine which are the best options to present to the people in these communities based on their nutritional aspects, Engineer Guzmán noted:

“Knowing the work Seeds for a Future undertakes regarding food security is important in order to have students develop a series of alternatives. For the University, it is important to know first-hand the community’s food culture; this has led the University to have a better concept of the best alternatives to employ using the greens, and to offer better knowledge of the nutrients they contain (in addition to the different forms of consumption). All of this can be seen in the work Seeds for a Future’s extensionists have done with the participating families.

Also, among the areas of focus in Seeds for a Future’s integrated approach is cacao cultivation. This is a highly promising crop due to the market it offers, and it is included in the concept of parcel diversification along with other crops such as lemon, ginger, rambutan, avocados, etc. that Seeds grows in their demonstration centers. This gives the Food and Nutrition faculty the option to work with more crops, to develop different nutritional options for the different communities and as well, support Seeds for a Future’s work in rural areas.”

Agricultural Engineer Benjamín Gómez, Supervisor of PPS Students in Environmental Management, Centro Universitario de Sur Occidente, CUNSUROC, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala:

“It has been very beneficial for the student's individual development to insert themselves into a community such as Chocolá (a community representative of the municipality of San Pablo Jocopilas); it allows students to acquire a better understanding about the communities’ environmental problems.

Part of the work has been the importance Seeds for a Future has given to environmental management, and proof of this importance is the establishment of an ecological latrine based on PET (plastic) containers. This project provides several alternatives: the option to recycle PET containers in order to keep them from polluting the streets, the option to build the latrines or to build divisions inside homes (especially in the Casa-Granja, or Backyard Farm, Program where household conditions are an important component), and the option to grow a variety of greens in discarded containers in cases where the home has little yard space for a garden.

Another part of Seeds for a Future’s work is related to fertilizer systems, where they teach that waste produced from one activity (such as manure produced from chickens or rabbits) becomes a useful product for other things such as an organic composting system.

For the Environmental Management career, it is very important that students take part in practicums, which is the reason why we are interested that in the next few years even more students can experience the same practical opportunities; this will make them better and will encourage them to take into account the economic aspects that are present in Seeds for a Future’s work, including the resources available found in each of the households.”

Bachelor in Social Work Luis Carlos Muñoz, Coordinator of the Social Work Career of Centro Universitario de Sur Occidente, CUNSUROC, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala:

“For Social Work, it is important to consider multiple factors for the families -- to integrate productive activities, nutritional activities, and social aspects, as a means to address community development. In the Social Work career, if students can work within the communities, and if they can count on help from organizations like Seeds for a Future, they have an opportunity to understand social cohesion as affinity and relationships which strengthen collective responsibility – part of the principles which Semillas para el Futuro fosters as a community-focused organization. This strengthens Social Work theories as well as indigenous knowledge, including respect for diversity.

CUNSUROC—and more specifically the Social Work career—has found in Seeds for a Future the perfect ally that allows students to carry out a practicum that is truly representative and allows people and structures to come together and confront problems and create well-being. The Social Work career must be aware of the current world situation, highlighting social justice and human rights on a national and regional level, which is truly a part of Seeds for a Future’s mission and the best way to approach rural development.”

**To learn more about the Seeds for a Future Program, contact us at
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