2018 marked Highland Support Project’s biggest year!!

I always take time to reflect, about the life-journey that my family and I have passed through. Born and raised in Tejutla, San Marcos, in the Western Highlands of Guatemala. We descended from slaves, my family struggling to maintain our health and well-being in a poverty-stricken community it was never an easy journey, to say the least. Our lives were transformed when nuns from Belgium arrived to foster liberation through education and empowerment. My parents' determination and perseverance to create a better life for our family ingrained in me the importance of ensuring that every woman, regardless of the circumstances they are, should break cycles of dependency and have more opportunities to give to their families and communities a better future.

I’ll continue my life’s work to ensure that our women have that access to opportunities - and in turn, carry on my parent’s legacy. In the following review, you’ll find the details of the incredible impact that our collective community, helped us create over the course of 2018. But it’s just the beginning. We currently have projects in the communities benefitting more than 500 kids and women from our programs. Programs that are constantly evolving!

In service,

Guadalupe Ramírez
IMPACT

What we do everyday isn’t for us, it is for them, for all the women, kids and communities that always inspire us. We need to start doing more for others; the things we do for only ourselves will disappear when we are gone, but the things we do for others will remain as our legacy.
There are many challenges that women are facing but it is important for us to join hands and stand together for equality, whether they’re women in Guatemala or in any part of the world!

Guadalupe Ramirez
All Highland Support Project Guatemalan initiatives work in conjunction with its sister organization, Asociación de Mujeres del Altiplano (AMA), located in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

AMA works in our partner Highland communities to establish local Women’s Circles, which provide participants with a network of mutual support and a forum for sharing dreams, fears and collaborating on solutions.

AMA facilitates technical and educational training on topics that range from civic participation, entrepreneurship, self-esteem, nutrition, Maya cultural identity and community resilience.

AMA also utilizes the circle infrastructure to foster local leadership and entrepreneurs. As Circle members identify potential local leaders, AMA provides them with specific training to develop into this role. Additionally, AMA has various skill building projects—such as Pixin and Q’anil—which help develop and find markets for local artisans. These projects help women access and build formal and niche markets.

Following active women’s circle engagement for three months, a woman becomes eligible to receive a Clean-Air Stove. These stoves are built by HSP service-learning partners and channel thick smoke out of homes and decrease the respiratory issues that are prevalent among families that cook with open pit fires. Because these stoves are more fuel-efficient, women spend less time collecting firewood and cooking and therefore have more time for active participation within their communities. Through increased participation, women experience an elevated self-worth and can see themselves as leaders.

**Women Circles**

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Clean-Air Stove Building

Stoves built by HSP service-learning partners channel the thick smoke from cooking fires out of the unventilated brick dwellings via a new chimney installed with each stove. The size of the stove is large enough that its stovetop can fit many items at once, making it ideal to be able to provide for large rural families and warm their space. In addition, the stoves are significantly more fuel-efficient, thus decreasing the amount of money women must spend on cooking fuel. Because the stoves consume much less wood than the open pit fires previously used, they decrease the amount of deforestation regionally. Additionally, for every stove built by volunteers, 10 trees are planted in the neighboring forests.

Mayan Art Program (MAP)

The Mayan Arts Program (MAP) is a collaboration between the Highland Support Project (HSP), The Association of Highland Women (AMA), and the International Maya League. MAP connects rural indigenous communities of Guatemala with resources to promote creative and critical thinking skills through a curriculum that respects local culture and history. MAP provides an ambulatory arts education program, teacher training workshops, infrastructure improvements, curriculum enhancement, and community organizing to encourage creativity, adaptability, and the ability to seek alternatives and exercise agency in personal and civic life.
Traditional Midwifery

As rural providers, midwives can fill a large gap in the medical system, but the majority of midwives in the region are over 53 years old and nearing retirement. There is great need for healthcare providers in rural areas. There is a stark difference in access to health care between rural communities and urban centers in Guatemala. Although maternal and infant mortality statistics have improved dramatically in the last decade in large part to government investment in nutrition and maternal health services, maternal health is still a situation of national urgency due to difficulties providing services and care in rural communities.

Pixan

House of Design Pixan is a fair trade textile workshop in the western Highlands of Guatemala. Pixan, meaning “spirit” in the Maya language of K’iche, is an association of indigenous artisan weavers, expert in the ancient techniques of back-strap and pedal loom weaving and embroidery, and an initiative of AMA (Highland Support Project’s organizational partner).

Pixan operates according to fair trade principles in the most authentic and traditional sense of the term: It enables professional direct trade relationships to flourish between talented Highland artisans and individuals and businesses around the world.
IN 2018, 1438 LIVES WERE DIRECTLY IMPACTED AND 7478 INDIRECTLY IMPACTED BY HSP AND IT’S PARTNER PROGRAMS.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Women received trainings in different subjects once a month in 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Computer lab built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>550</td>
<td>Children trained in different subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Clean-air stoves built in Santa Catarina and San Juan Ostuncalco in 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>School retaining walls built in 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Laptops delivered in Xeabaj Institute thanks to the generosity of our donors!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>School kitchens built in Lagunas Cuaches, Bella Vista and Twi’Ninwitz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My name is Manuela, I’m 32 years old and I’m studying at Xeabaj high school. It is not very common to find women of my age endeavoring to enroll in school. I’m very excited about the opportunity to be empowered to improve my life, the lives of my family and community.

It’s been hard for me to get money to pay for my education and that was the main reason why I stopped studying for the last ten years but I’m back and I’ll give the best of me to graduate from high school because all I want is a better future for my community.

All the people need to have access to education without any discrimination and the government should be responsible to provide all the facilities and economic assistance because all the education should be free.

Unfortunately, the Guatemalan government does not provide help to rural schools, the budget is not enough to cover teachers salaries much less adequate textbooks or supplies.

According to articles 71 to 81 of the Political Constitution of The Republic of Guatemala, education is a right and is an obligation.
3 HEALTH CAMPAIGNS DURING THE YEAR, 120 WOMEN WERE BENEFITED

500 TREES PLANTED IN THE COMMUNITIES THAT WE SUPPORT

2 NEW LATHER MACHINES FOR PIXAN’S WORKSHOP, ONE TO SEW AND OTHER TO SEAL.

5 NEW PEDAL LOOMS WERE DELIVERED IN SANTA CATARINA IXTAHUACAN AND SAN JUAN OSTUNCALCO IN

2 DIFFERENT FAIRS ATTENDED TO PROMOTE PIXAN’S PRODUCTS

23% OF THE SALES INCREASED BETWEEN 2017 AND 2018

2 NEW INDUSTRIAL SEWING MACHINES FOR PIXAN’S WORKSHOP
We are greatful for all our donors and volunteers who support our projects!
Since the establishment of the service trip program in 1994, we have hosted between 300 and 500 volunteers each year. These volunteers, many of them from North America, have broadened their understanding of poverty including their causes and remedies and partaken in rich, often transformative, cross-cultural exchanges.

Our Preventative Health program provided two diabetes workshops attended by 78 women, one medicinal plant workshop attended by 20 participants and 8 midwifery training courses attended by 28 women.

Pixan introduced their cushion collection in Copenhagen Design Show and the New World Crafts fair. We also delivered 5 new pedal looms in San Juan Ostuncalco and Santa Catarina Ixtahuacan as well as provided training to 30 women. Two new industrial sewing machines, one leather, and one sealing machine were bought for Pixan’s workshop. All of our team received training for two days from Deloitte which included Business Chemistry, Structure of Competence, How to Build Relationships and Growth Mindsets. All the training helped us to improve our competences.
A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR
Organizational Partners!