



505 W. St. Thomas More Way
Spokane, WA 99208

FAMILY-TO-FAMILY NEWSLETTER

CONSTRUCTION COURSE | TRADITIONAL WEAVING | HEALTH & HYGIENE

Construction Collaboration

Driven by the perspective that each person and family deserves a decent place to live, Family-to-Family, a nonprofit organization, aims to help families in the Pasaquijuyup village of Santa Catarina Ixtabucán, Sololá, build houses that consist of three rooms: a living room and two bedrooms, with minimum measurements of six meters wide by eight meters long. (Statement from page three of a detailed Technical Assistance Report submitted on March 11, 2023, by INTECAP Civil Engineer and Technical Consultant Moisés Eduardo Tucux Cuá.)



Family-to-Family has long collaborated with INTECAP to provide technical training in many areas, but just this year we offered an exciting new option in housing construction. Professional engineers from INTECAP made regular visits to Pasaquijuyup, a community located an hour and a half along a mountainous dirt road, to accompany, guide, support and follow-up with FTF program participants as they learned to build safe, suitable homes.



The project began with a consultation and tour of each construction site. A basic masonry tool kit was delivered to participants and land preparation began. The layout of lines were verified square, the quality of the foundation materials and mortar checked, substrates and tie columns assembled, walls erected, plumb lines positioned, substrates and tie columns cast and uncovered, and roofs constructed. Electrical, sanitary, and hydraulic services were installed and finishes (along with some corrections) followed.



Impressively, twenty-five homes were built in the course of five months and fifteen FTF participants were trained in construction. We plan to employ the newly trained masons in the future since each family in the program has the opportunity to build a new home or improve their existing home. Given that 22.7% of Guatemalans have inadequate housing (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, “Guatemala Country Briefing”, October 2022), the need for safe housing severely continues.



This successful collaboration was primarily made possible by a single large donation and the dedicated efforts of our local staff. Gratitude overfills our hearts as we witness the transformative effects of this generous gift.



Backstrap Weaving

Backstrap weaving is a skill that has been passed on through generations of Mayan women. The tradition, according to Mayan mythology, began when the goddess Ixchel taught the art of weaving to the first woman.

Family-to-Family regularly offers backstrap weaving courses in the communities we serve. Most recently, 19 women learned the craft in a course taught by FTF participant, Maria. At right, a woman in the class warps her thread in preparation for the loom.



The loom is mobile, strapped behind the weaver's back and connected by rope to a tree or post at the other end. Another course participant is pictured with her work in progress on the left.

Many FTF program members, past and present, weave at home and sell their creations in the community or back to the organization to earn income.

Juana, who also completed the advanced sewing course, recounted working from 9 to 4 every day for one month to create the exquisite 17-inch-by-63-inch runner which is pictured, in part, on the right.



Weavings are often beautiful representations of one's culture, history, philosophy, and artistry. Given the importance of typical clothing in cultural identity and the increasing price of traditional garments, this year's Christmas gift to families included a bag of threads of various colors (distribution photo below).



Health, Hygiene, and Environmental Sanitation

“To impart knowledge about health and sanitation is of vital importance to FTF because it informs, motivates, and makes changes in the attitudes of individuals and groups, improving the quality of life of involved families who also act as examples and agents of change in the community.”

— Adela Tambriz, FTF Regional Manager



Talks on health, hygiene, and sanitation are a long-standing part of Family-to-Family (one such recent meeting is pictured above) and renewed environmental health efforts related to wastewater and reforestation are underway. Collaborating with community leaders and schools, we are working to expand forest cover to stimulate the microclimates necessary for infiltration of water into soil, thus retaining the water resource in the upper part of the municipality of Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán.

About Family-to-Family: Family-to-Family was founded in 1985 as an economic development program in the Guatemalan Highlands. Its primary mission is to provide income-producing skills training and resources to families and communities working to rise from poverty and become self-sufficient. For further information about the Family-to-Family program or to view previous newsletters, please visit our website www.familytofamilyguatemala.com. You may also email us at ffguatemala@gmail.com or call us at (509) 593-8204. This newsletter was written by local director Julianne Sachs.