



**ALDEA**<sup>™</sup>  
STRENGTHENING MAYAN COMMUNITIES SINCE 1967

# NEWSLETTER

## SPRING 2019



## New Masculinities Program Develops “Hombres Diferentes”

ALDEA and our sister organization in Guatemala, ABPD, are committed to continuous evaluation of our programs and growth in response to feedback from our partner communities. As we developed our 2018-2023 Joint Strategic Plan in the spring of 2018, women who had been through our empowerment training recommended that we create a corresponding program for men. One year later, thanks to the support of our donors and our partners at the Moritz Family Foundation, the New Masculinities pilot program is underway and already having an impact.

Seventy-five men from two of our partner communities in Tecpán, Chajalajya and Palima, are taking part in the initial program—a level of participation that far exceeds our original expectations. Through a process of reflection and self-evaluation, these men are learning about their own health and the nutrition of their children, respecting the rights of women in their communities, and how to be better parents and husbands. They also had the opportunity to add a technical component to the program and chose to pursue electrician training, so each of them will finish with a professional

*Continued on page 4*



**Dear Friends and Supporters,**

Since January, I've had the honor of serving a cause I've been passionate about for over a decade—supporting rural Mayan families in building healthier futures—as President of ALDEA's

Board of Directors. I first connected with ALDEA following my family's decision to adopt our son from Guatemala in 2003, and I joined the Board in 2008. I was initially drawn to this organization's vision for community empowerment and long-term sustainability, and I'm proud of how our work has evolved in recent years as we've learned together through experience and responded to the changing needs of our Mayan partners.

Right now, our commitment to locally led development and continued growth is taking us in exciting new directions. In response to community feedback during last year's strategic planning process, our partners at ABPD have successfully engaged men in a new pilot program designed to complement our women's empowerment work. They're focusing more on addressing domestic violence. And, they recently installed our first solar-powered potable water system! This newsletter contains more details about each of these programs, which are all made possible through the dedication of donors like you.

We have good news to share from the U.S. as well. We are working with Information Matrix, a television program hosted by film star Laurence Fishburne, on a short-form documentary about ALDEA that will air on Public Television stations nationwide along with a commercial piece on prime time networks. This is an amazing opportunity for us to raise awareness about issues in Guatemala and our approach to grassroots development.

On behalf of the board, I want to extend our deep gratitude to ALDEA's previous President Patricia

O'Connor and our recently departed Executive Director Jessica LaBumbard. Together, they led ALDEA for more than five years, and each played a critical role in building the strong, dynamic, effective organization we know today. We are fortunate to still benefit from Pat's membership on the ALDEA Board, as well as her thoughtful leadership as the new Board President of ABPD, our Guatemalan sister organization. We wish Jessica the best as she moves on to the next step in her career and are thankful that she plans to remain involved as an ALDEA supporter. And we're glad to have our remaining staff member, Arianne Peterson, filling in as Interim Executive Director so we can be intentional about hiring in a way that best enables us to meet our goals.

ALDEA's success is driven by the extraordinary generosity of our individual donors, and one of my goals is to provide more opportunities for you to connect with our leadership and with our work on the ground in Guatemala. I hope you'll keep in touch by joining our email list (sign up at the bottom right corner of our [ALDEAGuatemala.org](http://ALDEAGuatemala.org) home page) and following us on Facebook (@ALDEAGuatemala). I look forward to getting to know you better!

Best wishes,

Sonya M. Fultz, ALDEA Board President



Dear Friends of ALDEA and ABPD,

We have excellent news to share from Guatemala! In the 10 months since our fiscal year began, we have collaborated with 15 communities in Tecpán, Santa Apolonia, Patzún, and Comalapa to improve the health of families, reduce chronic malnutrition, and build peoples' capacity to lead their own development. Thanks to the support of our friends and donors, 1,743 families—more than 10,000 people—have taken part in our programs.

We're seeing positive results from new pilot programs arising from ALDEA and ABPD's 2018-2023 Joint Strategic Plan. On the recommendation of women participating in our empowerment trainings, we've started a corresponding program for men in two communities, and so far their involvement has exceeded our expectations. Already we're seeing leaders emerge from these groups whose vision is focused on respect and equity, and we look forward to the positive changes they will bring to their communities in the future.

Our new Strategic Plan also challenges us to better address domestic violence. Since increasing the focus on this issue in trainings with women, for the first time our staff members are referring reports of abuse to the appropriate services in Chimaltenango. We are proud of our staff for building this level of trust and providing confidential support and rigorous follow-up to those who need it.

Women serving as promoters help us collect data in their communities every two months, and the results show that our work together is making a difference. In the villages where we are in our first year of partnership, so far we have reduced the average rate of chronic malnutrition in children under two from 75 to 70 percent. In our second-year communities, rates have fallen from 65 to 49 percent. We have achieved these results together in part through successful nutrition efforts: 97 percent of babies under 6 months are exclusively breastfed; 100 percent of babies aged 6 to 23 months are transitioning from breastmilk to appropriate weaning foods; 95 percent of children are having their growth measured monthly, and 88 percent

of babies have not suffered diarrhea or are immediately treated.

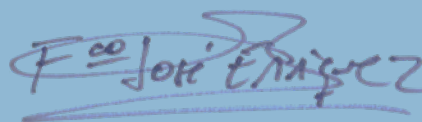
Women's participation in decision-making is also critical to improving nutrition. Where

in the past only 2 percent of women participating in our program were part of community committees, now 24 percent of them have their voices heard in these leadership roles.

I want to share another example of success that arose from an unexpected problem. Authorities closed the road to our partner community of Palamá for several weeks for repairs, and they began charging Q50 (approximately \$7) per vehicle to pass through. With three vehicles needing to go through several times a day to reach Palamá and other communities, the expense was beyond ABPD's planned budget. So the women's group in Palamá approached the authorities, asserting their right to learn and not miss any more training sessions. They negotiated an agreement for ABPD vehicles to be charged just once, and they raised funds to cover the fee themselves. This story showed that not only do these women value our programs, but they're prepared to solve future challenges as well.

Because of your generosity, every year families become healthier and communities become stronger in rural Chimaltenango. With your continued support, we will keep partnering with those most in need to build a brighter future in Guatemala.

Muchas gracias,



Paco Enríquez, ABPD Executive Director



certificate. Because many men have busy work schedules during the week, trainings take place on Saturdays.

Last fall, ABPD hired New Masculinities Technician Josué Maldonado to develop and implement the pilot program. He described the purpose of his work as “sensitizing men to the imposed stereotype of masculinity—which does not favor the welfare of the family or the development of women, violates women’s rights, and even more shockingly encourages the absence of responsible parenthood, violating the rights of children and affecting their current and future development.” He uses what he called a “dynamic, participatory, playful” approach to guide participants toward awareness and eventually behavior changes that benefit themselves, their families, and their communities.

Maldonado said that while he encountered some resistance to the programming at first, as time went on participants were able to leave their comfort zones, opening up as they took part in activities within a men-only space. “As the training progressed, participation increased, and there was a change of attitude, more confidence and discussion of the challenges they faced.”

Leonardo Lucas, a participant from Chajalajya, commented, “I liked learning about the dynam-



ics of responsible fatherhood and how we analyzed our past and the way we were raised. ... The trainings have changed the way I help at home—taught me to wash the dishes, to mop, to value the work of women, to improve as a father every day, and not to be macho but to remove that idea from my head.”

While men are participating in the New Masculinities training, women in these same communities are participating in our empowerment trainings—and the ABPD staff coordinate their work so that each group knows what new behavioral changes to

expect from the other as they go about their daily lives at home and in the community. Maldonado even had t-shirts made for men participating in his programs with the slogan “Hombres Diferentes” or “Different Men,” which he said have had the desired impact. “Their partners ask about the slogan and the participants have to explain why they’re ‘different men’—it definitely commits them to putting the ideas into practice.”

Bernabé Ajin from Chajalajya described this effect in his own home. “The last time I came to the house wearing the shirt, one of my daughters asked me the question, ‘Why different men?’ I tried to explain it in broad strokes, and we started to have a pleasant discussion with my family about the roles of men, women, and society, the old paradigms that have to shift to put new principles into practice. ... As a result, one of my children wants to learn more and so he is accompanying me to the trainings. We share some responsibilities at home and we don’t say that I am the head of the house. My wife and I communicate and we try to set a good example for our children.”

At the end of every New Masculinities session, participants help to evaluate the program, and their feedback along with the initial results will be used to help us expand this new element of our work to more partner communities in the future.



# Solar Pilot Project: Clean Energy Brings Clean Water to Homes

In February 2019 ALDEA, our sister organization ABPD, and our partners in the community of San Vicente, Tecpán finished installing our first-ever solar-powered potable water system. Twenty-one solar panels now power a pump that pipes clean spring water up to a large holding tank near the top of a mountain, where it is sanitized and dispersed by gravity to 88 households.

“Usually for a water project like this we would use a diesel pump, which generates air pollution by producing carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides. According to the World Health Organization these gases can give people lung cancer, so we decided to try an environmentally sustainable project free of gas emissions,” explained Julio Caté, ABPD’s Water Project Technician who oversaw construction of the system.

The solar panels bring other benefits to the community, as families do not have to pay the ongoing fuel and maintenance costs they would have had with a diesel pump. San Vicente resident Paula Ajtzaj said, “I am very happy that the system takes care of our environment and helps us reduce economic expenses.”



**Paula Ajtzaj turns on the new potable water faucet in her home.**

San Vicente’s solar-powered pump is a pilot project ALDEA and ABPD have

implemented after careful research, thanks to the generous support of our donors and Rotary



partners. So far it has been performing as expected, running for seven hours per day during the sunny months (September-April) and pumping more than 6,800 gallons of water daily. These numbers will be lower during the rainy winter months of May-August, but the system should still be adequate to meet the community’s needs. The panels are rated to last at least 15 years without maintenance, and ABPD staff can use monitoring software that will immediately alert them of any problems. If all continues to go well, we expect to install more systems like this in future partner communities.

Of course the greatest benefit of the San Vicente water system, like any other ALDEA/ABPD water system, is that it brings clean drinking water to families in their homes. Emilia Velásquez spoke about the impact of the project on her daily life: “I used to walk 55 minutes each trip to carry water back from the mountains, it was very difficult. Last year (2018) I turned 35 without access to clean drinking water. Now my life has changed. Instead of carrying



**Emilia Velásquez now washes clothes in her home instead of carrying them to the mountains.**

water, I currently use my time to run a small business raising and selling Creole chickens in my community, earning an income for my family.”

Eliodora Sirin Batz added, “The decrease of gastrointestinal diseases in children is evident.... Water is life, and so ALDEA/ABPD has given us all more life and health.”

## Tour Participants Give Back After “Glimpse of Guatemala”

Two groups totaling 31 participants from throughout the U.S. visited Guatemala during March and April 2019 for ALDEA’s annual “Glimpse of Guatemala” Tour, which was hosted this year by board members Wayne Gilbert and Bruce Robbins and local guide Fabiola Secaira. Their eight-day trips each included exploring colonial Antigua and experiencing a Lenten procession, walking the Mayan ruins of Iximché, and relaxing near volcano-ringed Lake Atitlán. Yet the highlight for many was their visit to ALDEA and ABPD’s partner communities in rural Chimaltenango.

Tour participant Ana Chowdhury reflected, “My favorite part was visiting the rural Mayan communities and learning first hand how these families have benefited greatly in their everyday lives from the resources provided by ALDEA/ABPD.”

Ron Sklar added, “Although I have made many trips to Guatemala, this was the first time I got off the highway and out of the city to view the challenge of existence in rural areas.”

The groups each visited three villages: Palamá, where programs are in their first year, Vista Hermosa, where our work together is nearly finished, and Panabajal, where we will start working soon.

Jill Ellis described her observations from the village visits: “The differences between the communities before and after [ALDEA/ABPD’s programs] were clear. Aside from what might be expected (clean faces, washed clothes, a well-maintained latrine, a kitchen without smoke, a baby goat) the most striking to me was the difference in the attitudes of the women. In Panabajal and Palamá



Participants experience the smoke of an indoor cooking fire in Palamá.

the women were shy, quiet, and hiding in the background. In Vista Hermosa, where they had nearly completed two years of partnership with ALDEA/ABPD, the women looked at us directly, spoke self-assuredly before a group of strangers, and showed pride in their homes. The health promoters smiled broadly and told us they were confident in their abilities to continue to care for the community. Their composure demonstrated a positive attitude and hope for the future.”

Inspired by their experience, participants in both tours decided to support the communities that had hosted them by donating to ALDEA. Together with their hosts, they committed a total of \$81,000 in support of rural Guatemalan families. Thanks to their generosity, ALDEA can now fund the sanitation projects—efficient stoves, gray water filters, and latrines—for 265 families in Panabajal.

*Since 1986, ALDEA Tours have provided hundreds of participants a unique opportunity to enjoy Guatemala’s many attractions while seeing our work in action. Former tour participants are among our most dedicated supporters, and we are grateful to the 2019 groups and to all who have continued to donate following their trips.*

**Registration for ALDEA’s March 6-14, 2020 “Glimpse of Guatemala” Tour is now open—visit [ALDEAGuatemala.org](http://ALDEAGuatemala.org) and click “Get Involved” to learn more.**

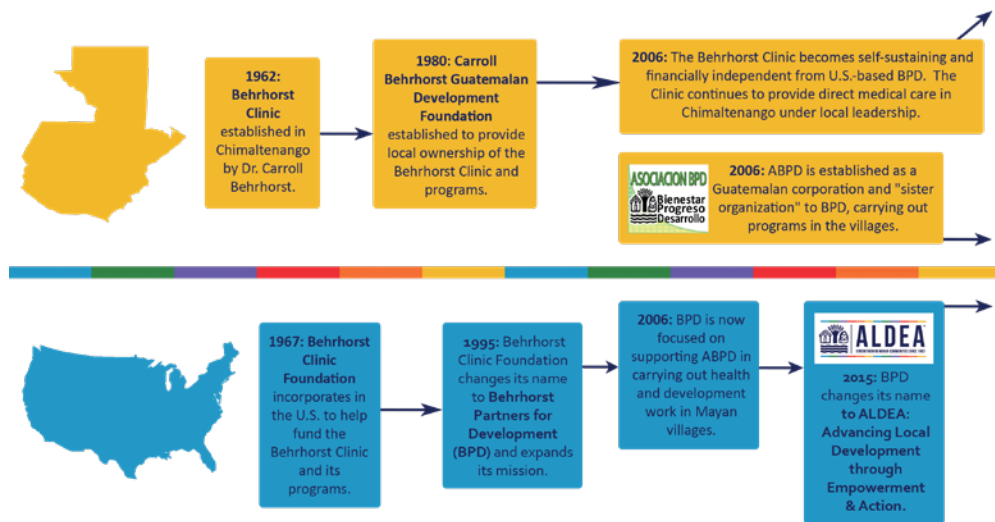


Jill Ellis gets a lesson on making tortillas.

## Our History: How did ALDEA and our sister organization in Guatemala, ABPD, evolve from our roots in the Behrhorst Clinic?

While ALDEA's vision of empowering rural Mayan communities to realize their rights to health and well-being has remained the same since our founding in 1967, our structure and partnerships have evolved significantly over the last 52 years. In response to frequently asked questions from our supporters, we'd like to share this graphic highlighting important points in our history.

The role of our U.S.-based organization has always been primarily to provide financial support for locally-led development work in Chimaltenango. In 2006, when the Behrhorst Clinic became financially independent, that support shifted to ABPD, a new sister organization in Guatemala dedicated to grassroots development in the Mayan villages



continuing to carry forward Dr. Behrhorst's vision. ALDEA has a strong partnership with ABPD that has been guided by a series of joint strategic plans focused on reducing chronic childhood malnutrition and building the capacity of communities to build healthier futures for themselves. Visit [ALDEAGuatemala.org](http://ALDEAGuatemala.org) to view our current strategic plan under "Our Work" and a more detailed timeline under "Who We Are" and "Our History."

The staff of our sister organization in Guatemala, Asociación BPD, works on the ground in Mayan villages, implementing our vital programs in their capacities as Executive Director, Administrator, Accountant, Field Supervisors (Program Support and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialists), Nutrition Educator, Family Planning and Home Visit Specialist, Social Worker, Water Specialist, Sanitation Technician, Agronomist, New Masculinities Technician, and Housekeeper.



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**Every gift makes a difference!** Here's the kind of impact\* your donation can have:

- **\$1,400** gives a family access to our **full integrated program**.
- **\$500** helps a family ward off illness and disease by supporting a clean **drinking water system, a gray water filter, and a sanitary latrine**.
- **\$250** helps buy a **dairy goat** (along with the vitamins and basic medicines it needs) so young children can benefit from its nutritious milk.
- **\$100** provides a **sanitary latrine** for a healthier home environment.
- **\$50** helps provide **empowerment training** for women and youth to become change agents and emerging leaders in their communities.

*\*Gifts made to ALDEA contribute to our entire mission, and we apply your donations where they are needed most to support our long-term goals. These estimates are approximate as prices and exchange rates are constantly changing.*



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