



**ALDEA™**  
STRENGTHENING MAYAN COMMUNITIES SINCE 1967

# NEWSLETTER SPRING 2018

Formerly Behrhorst Partners for Development

## Making the Path by Walking Together

*ALDEA, ABPD, & Local Communities Update Strategic Plan*

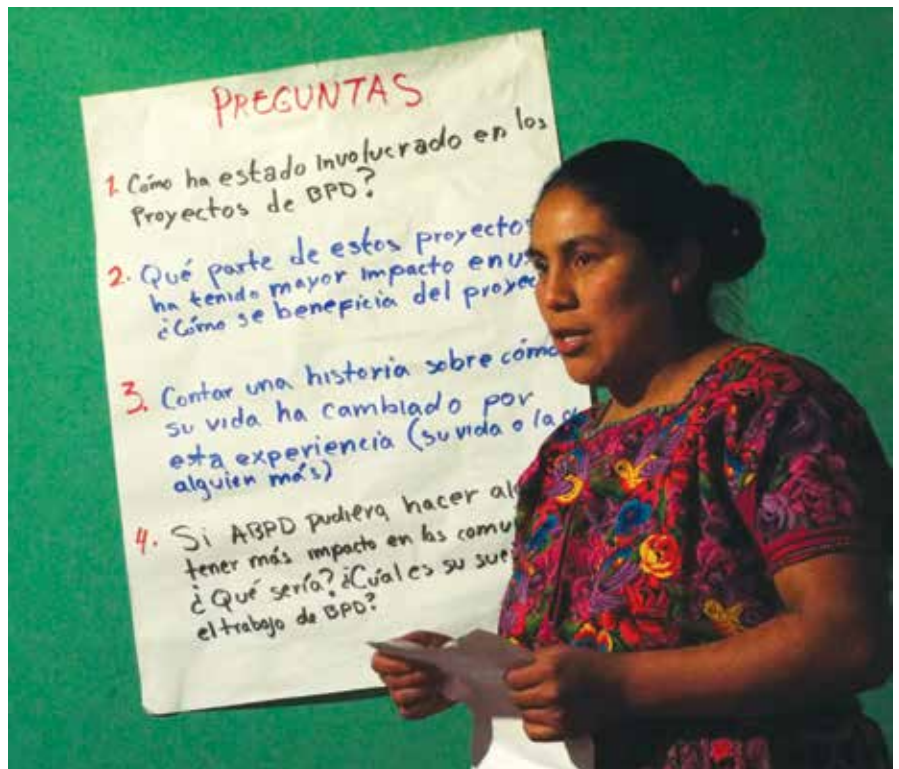
### MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The busy pace of activity we saw in 2017—as we finished celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, completed the Visionaries documentary and supported 19 communities in Guatemala—continues in 2018. Our big goal for the first half of the year is to update our strategic plan so we have a clear roadmap to take us forward.

In December, ALDEA and ABPD leaders met with our staff to discuss the results of our work to date and identify potential areas for improvement. We then met with community members from the two villages of Chiquex and Chipatá to listen to their experiences working with us.

This spring we continued our exploration of two key questions: **What works well, and what can we do better?** We used a valuation process called Appreciative Inquiry with our local staff and with two additional communities, Pachaj and Panatzán, to further explore our successes and how we can improve on them. As you can see from the photos we've included on page 5, this process required extensive small group work and larger group discussions.



**A community promotor from our partner village of Pachaj shares her small group's discussion with the larger group during an April strategic planning session.**

**We asked everyone to dream: If we could do anything together, what would that be?** In Panatzán, they told us their dream was to have a school. We asked: How would you make this dream a reality? After 20 minutes, they

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**Dear Friends of ALDEA and ABPD,**

As an extended family, ALDEA, ABPD, and our partner communities are engaged in a strategic planning process that will guide our work in the coming years. Our strategic plan builds on the strong foundation of the continuous monitoring and evaluation we have built into our programs. Our administrative and field staff are highly committed to improving the results of our work not just every six years, but from month to month.

ABPD has an ongoing monitoring and evaluation system that tells us what is working well and what needs improvement, so that we can respond right away. Our monitoring and evaluation specialist, José, visits all of our projects, speaks with the families and the local authorities, and observes the projects' functions to make recommendations to the staff and community members involved.

In addition, the women who serve as community promoters are trained to collect detailed information every two months on how we are progressing with agriculture, nutrition, and community empowerment. They have learned to use software called Epi Info to design surveys and quickly analyze the results. This not only gives ABPD important updates; through managing this data, these same promoters immediately know who in the community is making the most progress and who needs further support from them.

At a longer-term level, the ABPD staff completes a baseline study before beginning to work in each of the communities in order to establish goals for our two-year program and beyond. An in-depth evaluation, also using Epi Info, is completed by our staff every year to analyze how the different program components interact with each other and how they contribute to achieving our mission.



Twice per year, a committee including one member of the COCODE (existing Community Development Council) and one health promotor from each partner community meets and evaluates ABPD's work.

We also benefit from evaluation by our peers in the larger field of grassroots development. Two years ago ABPD welcomed the opportunity to undergo an expert external evaluation on logistical processes for NGOs where they studied all of our financial controls and level of transparency. In 2017, European experts in international development evaluated our performance in the office and in the field. Both evaluations yielded very positive results, and we readily implemented their recommendations.

Thanks to these systems, we have in-depth data on indicators such as how many women practice exclusive breast feeding with children under six months, how many family gardens are functioning, how many people make monthly payments to their water committee, how many families maintain a clean latrine, how many couples plan to space their children, or how many women are members of committees and know their rights. We also know when more qualitative results are achieved—like the successes of the two women interviewed on the next page.

Continuous evaluation allows ABPD and ALDEA to constantly improve the quality of our work, measure the impact we're having on our major objectives—such as reducing chronic childhood malnutrition—and focus even more on programs that are generating the best results.

**Your continued support enables us to carry out this very important work.**

Thanks to you, the quality and effectiveness of our program improves each year.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Paco Enriquez.

Paco Enriquez  
ABPD Executive Director

## Women Take on Leadership Roles Following ABPD/ALDEA Training

Carmen and Marta became community promoters last year, helping to implement our programs in their village of Cojulyá. Recognizing their leadership, their community then chose them to serve on the COCODE (Community Development Council). We asked each of them what it's like to serve in these positions, which have historically been held by men.

*Carmen Carolina Alemán Ovalle*



**What have you gained from the ABPD trainings?**

*I've learned to express myself well in public, to conduct myself without shame, and to be sure of myself as a woman. Also I have learned new cooking methods to feed my children better.*

**What motivated you to become a leader?**

*I wanted to show the men that women can do great things and improve the community. We know the problems from our homes and experiences, and the men don't address our true needs.*

**How has the work you are doing impacted your family?**

*My husband was very machista, but little by little he changed his way of seeing things and because of this I finished my studies. He also helps me a lot now that I am part of the COCODE.*

**What else do you want to achieve?**

*I want to implement a drainage project for my community, pave our main street, and continue studying to better myself.*

*Marta Leticia Oliva Natareno*



**What improvements have you achieved in your community since you started working with ABPD?**

*Our group of women has learned to improve our family's health, to have high self-esteem, and to assert our rights as people and especially as women.*

**What was it like for you to be named to the COCODE?**

*I was nominated and the whole community voted for me to be the Vice President. I was afraid, but I told myself I can do it because ABPD staff have taught us to value ourselves and that we are capable of making change. I thought, this is my opportunity to demonstrate that women can be leaders.*

**What advice would you give to other women who want to be leaders and improve their communities?**

*Accept the challenges, because we are capable and we don't have to be afraid to assume positions at the community level. Men aren't the only ones who can do this type of work, women can too.*



*From July 2017 through March 2018, we partnered with 16 communities to advance local development. We built capacity through training, including:*



**Empowerment:** 544 women, 130 youth, 96 local authorities



**Agriculture:** 687 women



**Family Planning:** 927 home visits by specialist



**Nutrition:** 723 women with 324 children under 5

*And we installed:*



6 completed water systems for 413 families, with 1 in progress



498 efficient stoves



340 vented latrines



217 gray water filters





presented their plan—one that did not require any support from ALDEA or ABPD. We were witnessing the actualization of our mission: *To improve the health and well-being of Mayan families in rural Guatemala through lasting, community-driven solutions.* In other words, after two years of our support, this group of empowered people knew how to prioritize and solve local problems.

We saw this in other moments, too. Young girls stood up and presented their ideas in front of everyone. Men and women worked together to assess their past experiences with our projects and to dream of what else is possible as they move forward. We have been honored to walk beside these communities, helping them organize themselves to improve infrastructure (water, latrines, stoves, and gray water filters) and reduce childhood malnutrition through home gardens and healthier diets. We were deeply moved to listen to how they plan to use their organizational skills and new knowledge on their continued path to organization and development.

The overwhelming message from our staff and our community partners during this process has been that **our programs are working well, so we should not change them; rather, we should intensify our approach in four areas:**

- Better integrate our work to reinforce the process of mobilization, rather than implement various components.
- Create a more structured process for youth involvement.

- Deepen our understanding of our work with women.
- Improve men’s engagement in community development.

Our updated strategic plan will guide our work for the next five years. Starting July 1, we will pilot new approaches that address the points above in two communities, who will be involved in helping us find the best way to accomplish these goals. Following the words of Spanish poet Antonio Machado, “...no hay camino, se hace camino al andar” (“there is no path, we make the path by walking”), we will walk with our partner communities and our staff on the ground to create the best path forward.

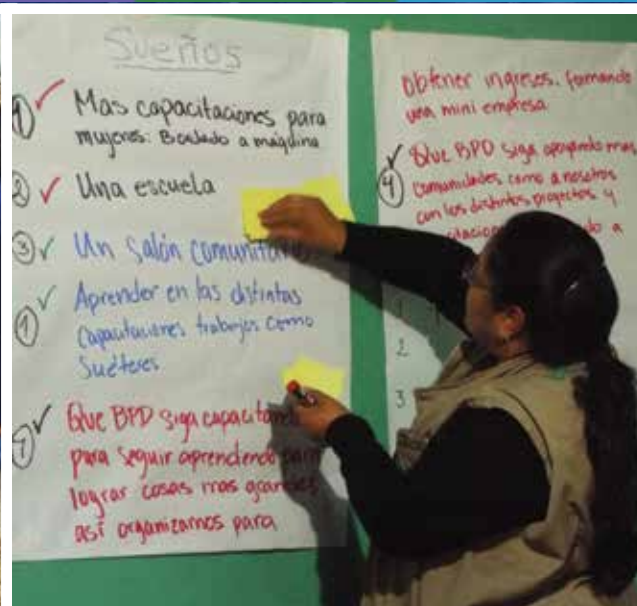
In many ways this process has confirmed the value of our programs. As we finish working with a community, there is a full water and sanitation system in place, fewer and fewer children are suffering from chronic malnutrition, women and youth are more engaged in civic life, and the communities are better prepared to face the impacts of climate change. Lives are changed in this process, and the cost to us is minimal.

**Please help us to make what is already good even better!** As a learning organization, we can only move forward with effective programs when we invest the time and energy it takes to ensure community members are intimately involved in guiding our work. To be able to do this, we rely heavily on your individual donations.

While the primary purpose of this newsletter is to update you on our work, it’s also our major fundraiser for the spring and summer. **We hope you’ll consider sending a gift in the enclosed envelope or donating online at [ALDEAGuatemala.org/donations!](http://ALDEAGuatemala.org/donations!)**

Thank you!

Jessica LaBumbard  
ALDEA Executive Director





# Donor Spotlight: Feed the Dream Helps to Support 33 Communities

By Patricia O'Connor, ALDEA Board President

For over 10 years, the Chicago-based non-profit Feed the Dream has generously supported our work to improve health and well-being in partnership with indigenous Guatemalans in the Department of Chimaltenango. Their donations, which total over \$1 million, have impacted 33 of our partner communities in the municipal districts of San Martín Jilotepeque, Patzún, Santa Apolonia, and Tecpán.

Thanks in part to Feed the Dream, we've seen these communities cut their rates of chronic childhood malnutrition by an average of 42 percent—from nearly 7 in 10 children affected down to 4 in 10. And because our programs focus on building capacity for long-term change, we expect these communities to be able to continue addressing their development challenges, improving their quality of life for generations to come.

Feed the Dream has played a direct role in changing the lives of these Mayan families. In the past 10 years, through the projects they've funded, 2,634 women and 1,987 children have benefitted from participation in our nutrition education programs, learning about the vital importance of breastfeeding,

proper weaning practices, and how to prepare appropriate and nutritious foods. Household gardens enable 2,292 families to grow their own produce and even provide some income from the extra harvest sold at local markets. Where access to animal proteins had been scarce, a delivery of 825 dairy goats has provided a reliable source of milk for young children—and 1,400 families now have at least one goat, since their offspring have been shared. Indoor cooking fires no longer cause respiratory illness in 125 households, because we have installed safe, efficient cook stoves that also dramatically reduce the amount of firewood women and children must collect.

On behalf of ALDEA, our Guatemalan sister organization ABPD, and our Mayan partners, I'd like to extend our heartfelt gratitude for the generosity, dedication, and leadership Feed the Dream and its donors have shared with us. We are especially grateful to founder Sandy Haggart for her tireless work to improve the lives of others, and for adopting ALDEA as a partner in her vision of "feeding the dream" in Guatemala. To borrow Sandy's expression that so nicely represents all those involved in this work: "Thank you, gracias, and matiox!"



*"My name is María Teodora Panzay.*

I am 30 years old and am the mother of four children with the youngest being 11 months old. I am from the community of Xeabaj. In the trainings I have learned how to prepare food with the vegetables available in the community, strategies so that our children eat the foods we prepare for them, and how to make tortas with greens that we harvest from our garden. We don't always have money to buy food, but we complete our meals with what we grow in the gardens. We used to buy goat milk once in a while before but it was very expensive. Now our goat produces milk that aids in the nutrition of the children."



*The Dr. Carroll Behrhorst Legacy Society honors those who partner in our work with indigenous communities in rural Guatemala through a gift in their wills or estate plans.*

**Make a difference for generations to come.**

To learn more, visit [aldeaguatemala.org/donate](http://aldeaguatemala.org/donate) or contact us at 313-205-4249 or [ALDEA@ALDEAGuatemala.org](mailto:ALDEA@ALDEAGuatemala.org).

## ***“It Takes a Village” documentary is now available!***

In 2017 ALDEA was selected from among hundreds of applicants as one of 12 organizations profiled in Season 22 of *The Visionaries*, a public television series. The resulting 27-minute documentary—“It Takes a Village”—will begin airing on public television stations throughout the U.S. this spring and is available for screening events. ***Learn more and watch the full film at [ALDEAGuatemala.org](http://ALDEAGuatemala.org)!***





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Newsletters are occasional publications of ALDEA, 1732 1st Avenue #26867, New York, NY 10128. ALDEA, together with our collaborators at the Asociación BPD (ABPD) in Guatemala, works in partnership with communities to improve their health and well-being. Our approach to partnership and community development is based on the principles espoused by Dr. Carroll Behrhorst in his work with the Mayan communities of Chimaltenango. ALDEA is a non-profit, 501(c) (3) organization, and contributions may be tax-deductible. Restricted contributions to ALDEA are forwarded directly to projects; unrestricted contributions are forwarded directly to projects except for the amount required to maintain the U.S. office. ALDEA is non-sectarian and non-political.

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