



Community members set the forms for the construction of the distribution tank for the potable water system in Panicuy.

DETERMINATION PAVES THE WAY TO CLEAN WATER IN PANICUY

By Shea Bronson-Doherty,
ALDEA Operations & Communications Director

For many years, families in the community of Panicuy in Chimaltenango, Guatemala, have faced health risks from contaminated water sources and spent countless hours collecting unsafe water to use for their daily drinking, cooking, and hygiene needs. Now, through a partnership with ALDEA, ABPD, the local municipality, and an international team of Rotarians, Panicuy is on the brink of a

transformative milestone in its journey to build a potable water system. With the distribution tank almost finished and plumbing installation set to begin soon, the dream that the community has been working toward since our partnership began in 2022 is becoming a reality.

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DETERMINATION PAVES THE WAY TO CLEAN WATER IN PANICUY

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This spring-fed potable water system is designed to pump an impressive 12,500 gallons of water per day to 46 households, providing clean water to over 300 individuals. To distribute the water, 19,500 feet of pipe will be installed (with community members providing the majority of the labor), connecting households directly to the water supply.

Our Rotary partners have provided vital funding and support throughout the Panicuy water project's development. For nearly 20 years, ABPD, ALDEA, and Rotary have collaborated on various initiatives aimed at improving access to clean water and enhancing community health, with Rotarians raising over \$3 million in project funding. This long-standing partnership has been instrumental in supporting communities as they overcome obstacles and ensure their needs are met. Our joint efforts exemplify the power of collaboration in addressing complex challenges—an essential part of developing sustainable solutions.

As the project moves towards completion, it not only promises the immediate benefit of clean water access but also lays the groundwork for broader economic development. With access to potable water, families can shift their focus from time-consuming water collection to productive activities such as education and income-generating work. This change is poised to improve health,



The Panicuy water system will make use of fresh spring water, which is treated and pumped to a holding tank, then fed by gravity to households.

increase productivity, and build resilience within the community, ultimately empowering residents to take charge of their own development.

The efforts in Panicuy demonstrate the remarkable potential of communities as agents of change, showcasing their resilience and determination in advocating for clean water. This project serves as a powerful example for other rural areas, illustrating that with unity and purpose, transformative change is possible. The people of Panicuy's efforts can inspire other communities to mobilize their resources, fostering a culture of collaboration and empowerment that paves the way for a healthier, more sustainable future.

GRAY WATER FILTERS: A SIMPLE SOLUTION WITH A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

By Shea Bronson-Doherty, ALDEA Operations & Communications Director

Poor sanitation remains a pervasive issue in Guatemala, significantly impacting public health and quality of life. According to the [World Health Organization](#), nearly 15% of all deaths in Guatemala are due to diarrheal diseases, largely attributed to inadequate sanitation and unsafe drinking water. Dengue fever, a mosquito-borne viral infection, is intrinsically linked to poor sanitation conditions, as the proliferation of mosquitoes is exacerbated by stagnant water and improper waste disposal. Guatemala experienced over [65,000 cases of dengue in 2023](#) alone, marking one of the highest incidence rates in Latin America. This data underscores the urgent need for effective sanitation solutions to mitigate the health risks faced by rural communities.

Gray water filters are an important component of ALDEA and our Guatemalan partner organization ABPD's development program that, along with other water and sanitation infrastructure, help mitigate the impacts of these pressing public health challenges. Gray water filters are designed to treat and safely dispose of wastewater from household

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INTRODUCING MARIO ARAGÓN: INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ABPD

By Shea Bronson-Doherty, ALDEA Operations & Communications Director

We are pleased to introduce Mario Aragón as the new Interim Executive Director of ABPD, ALDEA's partner organization in Guatemala. Mario took over this leadership role from Norma Baján, who left ABPD in July to pursue another opportunity to help organize Guatemala's nonprofit sector ([read our September update on the transition](#)).

Mario is a member of ABPD's General Assembly who has stepped in to serve until a more permanent hire takes place. With over 40 years of experience in rural development and a deep commitment to supporting the underserved, Mario is well-prepared to help lead ABPD and ALDEA into our next chapter. To learn more about Mario and his vision for ABPD, we invited him to share his insights in the interview below.

Q: Can you share a brief overview of your professional background and how it has prepared you for the role of Interim Executive Director?

A: I am an agronomist with a master's degree in water resources, hydrology, and irrigation. Over the past 40 years, I've worked primarily in rural development, notably with USAID in Guatemala. My experience includes managing programs that enhance the quality of life in rural communities, focusing on food security, nutrition, and business development. In recent years, I've consulted for mining companies, leading local economic development initiatives while ensuring harmonious relationships with surrounding communities. My background equips me to bring a clear, objective perspective to ABPD, facilitating project optimization

and addressing operational challenges effectively.

Q: What are your main objectives during your time in this position?

A: My main goals are to enhance ABPD's internal and external sustainability and ensure positive social impact for the families and communities we serve. Internally, this involves operational efficiency in both administration and projects. Externally, I aim to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system that clearly demonstrates the benefits of our projects to donors, thus supporting our fundraising efforts. Our next strategic plan will outline the actions necessary to achieve these goals.

Q: What attracted you to our organization, and what excites you about the work we do?

A: I am passionate about multicultural work and helping underserved communities, especially the Maya populations, who have a strong familial bond and great potential for self-development when provided with the right tools and support.

Q: What message would you like to convey to our donors and supporters during this transition?

A: ALDEA has over sixty years of experience supporting Maya communities in Guatemala, and ABPD has played an essential role in those efforts since 2006. Given the public sector's shortcomings in health, education, and income generation, we must unite to enhance our impact. We have a legacy to uphold, and I invite



everyone to collaborate towards a common goal of assistance and support to extend [ALDEA founder] Dr. Behrhorst's invaluable work.

Q: Which aspects of our organization's culture and values do you consider most important?

A: The commitment to social sensitivity and community support is crucial. Our focus on water and sanitation systems is foundational. Strengthening these elements, while considering the incorporation of new strategies, will help us foster resilience and sustainability in the families we serve.

GRAY WATER FILTERS

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activities such as bathing, laundry, and dishwashing, which otherwise contribute to environmental contamination and increase the spread of diseases like dengue. By integrating these filters into families' sanitation systems, we ensure a safer and more hygienic environment, significantly reducing the incidence of mosquito- and water-borne diseases and improving overall health outcomes.

The operational mechanics of our gray water filters are both innovative and efficient. They utilize a multi-stage treatment process that begins with the removal of large particles and debris through a sedimentation chamber and grease trap. Families take responsibility for regular cleaning of this surface-level part of the filter and properly disposing of its contents. Following this, the water undergoes treatment as it passes through a filtration medium extending 10 to 15 feet underground that removes finer contaminants and pathogens, rendering the water safe for disposal. This process not only ensures the effective removal of harmful substances but also significantly reduces the environmental footprint of wastewater discharge. Families contribute to the construction of these systems by digging the hole and installing filtration components, which can provide a sense of ownership and involvement in their community's health. Through this simple and efficient technology, ALDEA and ABPD foster healthier, more resilient communities.

GRAND CANYON TREK RAISES FUNDS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

By Paul Chan, M.D., ALDEA Board Member

My connection to ALDEA began in 1991 when I traveled to Guatemala to work with [ALDEA Founder] Dr. Carroll Behrhorst. Doc's innovative approach to health care focused on training local villagers to serve as health promoters, enabling them to diagnose and treat common ailments within their communities. During my time there, I contributed by supporting health initiatives and working directly with families to understand their needs. This experience opened my eyes to the incredible potential within communities when they are equipped with the right tools and knowledge, reinforcing my belief that sustainable change comes from within.

In 2010, I started the Grand Canyon hike, a trek through one of the United States' most iconic natural treasures, to

challenge myself physically while raising awareness for the causes I care about. The Grand Canyon, with its breathtaking vistas and rugged terrain, offers a unique backdrop for reflection and connection. Each year I do the hike, I'm reminded of my time spent in places like Guatemala, where I witnessed the power of community-led health initiatives. I am deeply inspired by the tenacity and courage of those I met – individuals who, with limited resources, transformed their communities through knowledge and collaboration.

This year, I am thrilled to announce that ALDEA Board President Lily Thompson, ABPD (ALDEA's partner organization in Guatemala) Board President Jonathan Maupin, and ALDEA Young Professionals Council member Megan Powell will participate in the hike.

Paul Chan (center, green jacket), Jonathan Maupin (center, red hat), and other participants pose at the rim during the 2023 Grand Canyon hike.



Their passion for creating lasting change aligns perfectly with the purpose of our journey. Together, they aim to raise \$20,000 to support 12 families through ALDEA's three-year integrated development program, which provides essential resources for nutrition, food security, sanitation and hygiene, and local leadership, building families' capacity to create a better future for themselves and their communities.

The motivations of these three participants highlight their deep commitment to ALDEA's values of sustainable development and community empowerment. Megan's journey began when she was just 14 and made a visit to Guatemala, where she witnessed the harsh realities of malnutrition and became determined to ensure every child has access to essential resources. Lily, inspired by her encounters with water insecurity, seeks to raise awareness about the struggles faced by rural communities. Jonathan honors the legacy of his grandfather, ALDEA founder Dr. Carroll Behrhorst, by advocating for community-driven initiatives. Their stories not only embody the spirit of the hike but also inspire others to support lasting change for Guatemalan families. (Learn more by visiting our [blog](#).)

This hike represents more than just the beautiful landscape; it's a testament to ALDEA and ABPD's shared commitment to sustainable development and community empowerment. Like the health promoters I worked alongside, we foster dignity and respect among those we serve, supporting programs that offer innovative solutions to hunger and health, allowing individuals to become agents of change in their communities.

Join us in making a difference - help us reach our \$20,000 goal by the end of October! Just scan the QR code below with your phone's camera to donate online. You can also use the enclosed envelope to mail a check (please include "Grand Canyon" in the memo).



Your gift will have an impact!*

- **\$1,600** can support a family through our full, three-year integrated development program.
- **\$1,000** can provide clean drinking water, a gray water filter, a sanitary latrine, and a vented, efficient cookstove to help a household stay healthy.
- **\$300** can buy a dairy goat (along with the vitamins, basic medicines, and shelter it needs) so young children can benefit from its nutritious milk.
- **\$100** can support nutrition training sessions addressing topics like breastfeeding, appropriate weaning foods, food safety, and recipes made with fresh garden produce.
- **\$50** can 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.



Dr. Carroll Behrhorst
LEGACY SOCIETY

Make a difference for generations to come by including ALDEA in your will or estate plan.

To learn more, visit ALDEAGuatemala.org and click "Get Involved," or contact Executive Director Arianne Peterson at arianne@ALDEAGuatemala.org.

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