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SNAPSHOT

Affordable Home Improvements Create Healthier Conditions

Thanks to USAID-ACCESO activities, hundreds of rural Hondurans are seeing better health conditions thanks to low-cost, simple home improvements.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Maria Lopez and her husband stand in their restored kitchen. María says she has already noticed improvements in her health. The family is now providing their son Elvin with a healthier home.

“I feel happy with the upgraded floors and walls. They are easier to clean and I don’t get sick.”

— *María Lopez*

Telling Our Story

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Improved health depends on more than just a well-balanced and nutritious diet; household sanitation levels play an important role in determining overall health. USAID-ACCESO enhances beneficiaries’ quality of life through a comprehensive approach that integrates agricultural production practices, training in value addition and market access, and improved nutrition and health practices. Under the nutrition component, the project promotes low-cost and environmentally-friendly household improvements.

USAID-ACCESO is currently working in 2,500 rural communities in western Honduras where the vast majority of poor households are constructed of adobe (material made from mud, wood, and dung), use traditional stoves to prepare food, and do not have access to clean drinking water. Adobe walls and dirt floors pose a health threat to occupants, especially to young children, since they are not easy to clean and can harbor mice, gnats, ticks, fleas, and other disease-carrying parasites.

Project specialists began introducing affordable solutions – concrete floors, eco-stoves, and water filtration systems – to reduce the incidence of preventable disease. To date, 64 families (384 people) have made at least one of these home improvements.

Cement floors and whitewashed walls are easily cleaned and serve as a barrier against pests, dust, and dirt. Studies have found that replacing dirt floors with cement floors significantly improves the health of young children. Eco-stoves direct the smoke outside the home, reducing the incidence of respiratory disease.

Access to clean water is often a struggle for many rural families. To address this problem, clients learn to install a basic water pump that delivers water directly to the home via an inexpensive pipe system on demand. The system also directs dirty water safely outside the home.

María Ernestina Lopez, of Ocotepeque, learned of USAID-ACCESO’s home improvement activities after attending project food preparation trainings. With the help of technicians, she and her husband installed cement-based floors and walls, an eco-stove, and a water filtration system.

Before the improvements were made, Lopez had chronic illnesses associated with her living conditions. “Every eight days I would stamp down the mud in the walls and floors...and I would always get a fever,” she said. “[Now] I feel happy with the upgraded floors and walls. They are easier to clean and I don’t get sick.”

With support from USAID-ACCESO, the Lopez family also planted a family plot with nutritious fruits and vegetables. They plan to attend future project workshops and help their neighbors implement project-supported practices.

The project expects to improve household conditions for 2,000 families, benefiting more than 12,000 people in 237 communities demonstrating the highest levels of poverty and malnutrition.