



SNAPSHOT

Moving Entire Communities Forward

An example of the success of the project’s integrated approach, Belén Manazapa sees improvements in overall health and sanitation, as well as agricultural production.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Residents of Belén Manazapa, at the recent inauguration of a nutrition training center, take steps to improve their community’s health and agriculture productivity.

“I feel motivated by seeing children improve.”

Francisca Gómez—health volunteer

USAID-ACCESO employs a comprehensive development approach that integrates numerous components – including health and nutrition, production, natural resource management, and business and finance skills – to increase clients’ quality of life, stimulate economic activity, and improve food security. A testament to the effectiveness of this approach can be found in the small, remote community of Belén Manazapa in Intibucá.

The community of 450 people is situated high in the mountains, accessible only via steep dirt roads. Without access to electricity or water, and lacking municipal authorities to advocate on their behalf, the residents of Belén Manazapa were struggling to stay healthy and productive.

USAID-ACCESO began working in the community in March 2012 in the area of health and nutrition. Specialists trained mothers of young children in the preparation of fortified tortillas and healthy meals using potatoes, rice, and readily-available vegetables. Community participation was immediate and promising.

“Today things are different,” said Francisca Gómez, a local volunteer helping promote the healthy practices she learned from project trainings. Since the project began working in Belén Manazapa, 75 percent of the children under 2 who were severely malnourished have moved out of the bottom third percentile of weight. “I feel motivated by seeing children improve,” Gómez said.

Inspired by the success of the nutrition trainings, project production specialists began working with smallholder farmers. Thirty-five potato producers received training in improved soil preparation, drip irrigation system installation, proper fertilization practices, and the use of production logs to manage costs. Before working with USAID-ACCESO, the farmers were averaging 15 quintals of potato per 0.70 hectares; with the adoption of good agricultural practices, the yields have initially increased to 28 quintals.

“There is an increase of almost 100 percent,” exclaimed Gregorio García, a local producer and president of the community board. As more farmers have seen the quick improvements in yields, the number of smallholders participating in project trainings and activities has already increased to 42.

The high adoption rate of residents and their dedication to making positive changes is garnering far-flung attention. The community has hosted representatives from USAID and other international development organizations, in addition to numerous Honduran government officials.

The community is also making large-scale investments in its future, recently inaugurating an irrigation system and a nutrition training center. The irrigation system has the capacity to provide water to 25 hectares and, with the nutrition center, will benefit all 70 families of Belén Manazapa. Later this year, with help from project specialists, residents plan to install the community’s first water system to compliment the eco-stoves and basic water filtration systems that many have now installed in their homes.

Model communities such as this one serve as inspiration for similar communities around western Honduras. USAID-ACCESO is currently working in 129 municipalities, 1,113 villages, and 2,600 small communities known as *caseríos* in some of the poorest areas in the country.