

PANAJACHEL, Guatemala

Community Water Project in Peña Blanca

Goal: Indigenous Guatemalans, especially those residing in the rural highland villages, are detrimentally affected by a lack of access to clean water, manifest by the high precedence of water-borne disease as the leading cause of death in children under 5. The overall goal of this initiative is to collaborate with one local community to improve educational and health outcomes.

Objectives:

1. To address the high precedence of water borne disease as the leading cause of death for children under 5
2. To provide almost 1000 indigenous Mayas with long-term access to a freshwater source
3. To enable Mayan Families preschoolers and elementary students to succeed in their education
4. To empower the community to lead an initiative that results in improvements in their own health and well-being



Project description and activities: This brand-new initiative is a community led project, whereby indigenous community elders from the remote village of Peña Blanca identified a need and presented Mayan Families with a detailed proposal outlining beneficiaries and foreseen impact. Peña Blanca, a beautiful agricultural village in the highlands of Guatemala, is greatly affected by a lack of access to the resources needed to meet their basic needs. This village has received recent media attention via the film [Living on One Dollar](#) (available on netflix) and this has allowed Mayan Families to increase their impact in the area. In 2017, we will be building a new [Preschool Nutrition Center](#) there, which will also benefit from this water project. With the current water provisions the preschool would not be able to be connected to water. A lack of water in a town often is a barrier to us operating programs within them as the community is apprehensive that any new structures or operations would consume the town water supply. Therefore in other locations we have had to also install alternative methods for capturing water to overcome this problem.

- Phase 1: The community has completed phase one and this involved the construction and connection of the catchment box located by the water spring.
- Phase 2: Laying the piping to bring water down from the catchment box to the distribution tank just outside the town. Phase two is expected to be completed within two weeks and we only need to raise \$2529.
- Phase 3: Constructing this tank and then if able, families would contribute a small donation to have their properties connected to the distribution tank. This would be built with concrete and reinforced with iron. Its purpose is to store water and distribute according to demand. This is pending funding.

Impact: This project is expected to directly benefit around 1000 Maya indigenous people. Specifically, 763 indigenous community members in 150 households, 70+ new preschool children ages 3-5 and their teachers and also will provide water access to the middle school close-by that currently only receives water periodically.

Increasing water access has a multi-faceted impact, by improving health and education outcomes in children and also raising the economic capabilities of families. This project will benefit our preschoolers who are affected by the prevalence of waterborne illness and poor sanitation, often resulting in malnutrition challenges due to an inability to absorb nutrients and in turn, low educational outcomes. For other community members, fresh water will also raise their quality of life by improving socio-economic outcomes due to increased ability to participate in the workforce due to greater well-being and health.