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Thanks to the generous funding from the Million Dollar Round Table Foundation (MDRT), Seed Programs International (SPI) was able to support the following six garden projects, which benefited schools and children’s homes in Honduras, Guatemala, Haiti, and Zimbabwe:

- In Zimbabwe, SPI provided seeds for school gardens. Food harvested from the gardens enhanced the students' diets. Surpluses from the garden were reinvested into the school. This project was completed in 2021.
- In El Progreso, Honduras, SPI is supporting two greenhouse projects. The two projects will provide the children and youth with an agricultural education and fresh vegetables. The project at the COPPROME Children’s Home is delayed due to back-to-back hurricanes that put the children into temporary housing. The project at the Pro-Niño Children’s Home is ongoing and will be completed by the end of 2021.
- In Haiti, supported the expansion of school garden programs in three communities. These school gardens help supplement and sustain school meal programs. This was completed in 2021 and directly benefited 619 school-aged children and ten adults.
- In Guatemala, SPI supported school garden education. The Guatemalan government requires that schools have teaching gardens and curriculum, but these six schools were unable to fulfill this requirement. In spite of school closures due to Covid-19, the communities persevered with the gardens. Program organizers worked with teachers, students, and their families to plant the teaching gardens. These gardens will continue as part of the curriculum when schools reopen.
- In Tela, Honduras, SPI is providing Aldeas Infantiles SOS, a children’s home, with resources like seeds and a way to learn how to grow healthy food in their vegetable garden. This vegetable garden also serves as a demonstration garden for other SOS children’s homes throughout Honduras. This project was delayed by Covid-19 and two back-to-back hurricanes and is still ongoing in 2021.

All six projects had to be adapted to face problems related to the Covid pandemic, natural disasters, and the resulting economic problems.

We are profoundly grateful for your support. Thank you for believing, as we do, that vegetable gardening can help alleviate food insecurity, improve health, and generate income. I’m grateful to share some of the accomplishments with you. Thank you for making this work possible.
With COVID-19 restrictions and schools being closed in these countries, our in-country partners had to push back their timeline from the original plans or change the delivery of the program. All three projects in Honduras couldn’t start until this year because of the back-to-back hurricanes in December.

Read on to learn more about the progress of the gardening projects funded by the MDRT grant.
SPI, in partnership with MATTER and Love for Africa, implemented a vegetable growing program to address critical nutrition problems in the Hwange National Park area of rural western Zimbabwe. In this area, developing children aged 3-13 often survive on one meal of nutrient-poor corn mush per day. Our vegetable-growing program provided nutrient-dense produce to supplement this diet with important vitamins and minerals. Beyond the improvements in nutrition, selling surplus produce provided an economic boost to residents and learned farming techniques helped build sustainability into the project.

The Main Camp Primary School serves the families of people working at the Main Camp of Hwange National Park as well as surrounding villages. About 140 students attend the school. These children (who are at a critical developmental age) do not receive adequate nutrition. Teaching staff contend with large, mixed-grade classrooms and low pay because of the depressed economy of the area.

High teacher turnover makes building fruitful teacher-student relationships challenging. Since 2020, our vegetable-growing program at the Main Camp Primary School has improved nutrition for students, learning opportunities at the school, and economic opportunities in the area.

SPI provided thousands of seeds for nutritious vegetables (such as kale and spinach) along with facilitating local expertise to help establish the gardens. The vegetable garden provides critical vitamins and minerals.

Additionally, surplus produce is sold to nearby safari lodges in the park. This revenue provides additional funds for teacher salaries and other necessities at Main Camp Primary School.

Progress
Successes
The garden was completed in 2020. This program successfully increased the availability of nutritious food to the school and surrounding community and provided additional economic benefits to the area.

The same results will be replicated with other schools in the next three years, providing communities with the tools and training to grow nutritionally dense food to feed families and improve health outcomes throughout Zimbabwe.

Growing around Hwange National Park can be a struggle. Hwange, Zimbabwe’s largest national park, comprises dry lake beds, hot scrub areas, and watering holes that serve as gathering places for wildlife. The dry climate and poor soil require developing and learning techniques to maximize yields. This provides an educational opportunity for the community and surrounding region:

“These kids were eating one meal of sadza (corn mush) a day, with no (vegetable) relish. To have these vegetables at the school is an absolute game changer.”

_Blessing Munyenyiwa, Love for Africa CEO._

**Food production** – Gardens provide students access to fresh produce to supplement their primary diet of corn meal. Vitamins and minerals from the produce provide more complete nutrition for the students.

**Teacher and youth engagement** – Teachers and students trained in conservation agriculture practices by establishing the nutrition garden.

**Training program** – Garden manager silent Kaseke helped establish the garden and train the students.
Vermiculture program – Poor soil in Hwange requires fertilizer to increase production. Hundreds of pounds of food waste are being buried in pits near luxury safari lodges in the park. Main Camp Primary School uses the waste for a worm farm that converts the food waste into vermicompost.

Economic connections to safari lodges – Many luxury safari lodges in Hwange focus on sustainability and environmentally friendly practices. By working with Main Camp Primary School, the lodges can provide their guests with a direct link to these practices. By working with the lodge, Main Camp Primary School raised additional funds.

Partnerships with the public and government sector – SPI worked in collaboration with MATTER and Love for Africa Foundation. MATTER and Love for Africa Foundation worked with the Main Camp Primary School and the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.
“The kids are excited about this because they get to learn a lot in the process. They get to know notorious weeds that compete with our vegetables for nutrients, and also get to know about different pests that have the potential to destroy our crops if left uncontrolled.”

Silent Kaseske, garden manager

“The school is extremely grateful for the viable seeds from SPI. Good seeds are difficult to come by in Zimbabwe, and these seeds are much better than anything we could get here. The children are getting the very best nutritional value from them and learning in the process.”

Purity Charisma, headmistress of Main Camp Primary School
Project Summary

One in four children in Honduras faces chronic malnutrition with more than half of children in the poorest areas facing malnutrition. Variability of the climate in Honduras, along with political unrest, disease outbreaks, and earthquakes, puts crops at risk. In turn, this can cause spikes in food prices that leave the most vulnerable Hondurans without adequate nutrition. The situation is particularly dire for children without proper families.

SPI partnered with Food for the Poor U.S. and Asociacion CEPUDO Honduras to build a mega-tunnel greenhouses at Pro Nino and COPPROME children’s homes in El Progreso, Honduras.
Successes

The project at Pro Nino Home has progressed well, and the children will begin harvesting vegetables soon.

Land preparation – Agricultural experts identified a suitable location for the greenhouse. The children helped clear the land and prepare it for greenhouse construction.

Soil preparation – The children helped clean and prepare the soil inside the greenhouse. The soil was treated with a chemical designed to kill microscopic parasitic worms that can harm crops in the area. The built raised garden beds to protect crops from flooding.

Greenhouse construction – The greenhouse was constructed, along with a disinfection cabin at the entrance to the greenhouse to lower the chances of diseases infecting the plants.

Training – The local experts shared an overview of vegetable production with the children. This training will continue as the project develops.
Children at the Pro Nino home have successfully set up and seeded the garden. The project will complete the following steps during the coming months:

**Next steps**

- **Irrigation system** – The children will help install an irrigation system for the greenhouse to ensure steady water supply. Climate change has made rainfall less predictable in the region.

- **Seed germination** – Now that the greenhouse is set up, they will begin germinating seeds to transfer to the greenhouse soil beds.

- **Harvest** – Once the plants have grown, the local trainers will train the children in harvesting techniques and take advantage of the newly available fresh produce.

**Challenges**

**The COPPROME Children’s Home Greenhouse Project:** The project at this location has been delayed because of devastating weather conditions which temporarily caused the home to be closed and the children to be relocated. Hurricanes Eta and Iota struck the area less than two weeks apart. This caused severe flooding in the lower part of the town of El Progreso. Large swaths of staple crops were destroyed, leading to food shortages. Floodwaters reached the roof of Pro Niño Home and the resident children were evacuated. Because of the damage and the reduced personnel capacity of the area, we are delaying the project until basic services return.

Children are staying in nearby rentals waiting for a safe return. Residents are maintaining good spirits and are excited about starting with the garden when they are able to move back in.

We expect the project to proceed on a delayed schedule once residents can return as this coalition has successfully implemented more than 20 gardening projects in Honduran children’s homes.
SPI partnered with FEED the Children Haiti to set up gardens at schools in Dufresney, on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. FEED the Children Haiti works with communities around Dufresney in numerous ways, including helping to provide meals for children at schools. This area is economically depressed and many residents have trouble providing food. Often, this meal provided by FEED the Children will be the only meal a child eats in a day—and the children will frequently bring back some of the meal for their families. Most of this food is bulk beans and rice, which do not provide complete nutrition.

This project successfully concluded this year. The gardens are now operated by three schools: Coatalem de Dufresney, Ecole Mixte Freres Petits, and St-Rock Community. These gardens now provide supplemental nutrition for 619 school-age children and 10 adults. In addition to providing a nutritional supplement to the schools, students participated directly in the creation of the gardens. They learned sustainable gardening techniques that will give them some self-sufficiency for improving food security at home. Further, as broader community learned more about the gardens, many community members began to participate in the gardening, and some set up their own gardens.
Successes

This School Garden Project has enabled students to receive hands-on learning on how to grow their own food. Many of the students have shared the information with their friends and family members to replicate the learning throughout the community for real-life applicability.

Education – Agricultural experts shared techniques with the students and the broader community for setting up vegetable gardens. This work allowed the broader community to adapt the techniques to their own home gardens.

Securing land – Land was secured for the gardens through donations from the school and the community.

Land preparation – Students learned how to prepare the land to provide the best environments for vegetable growth and helped prepare the land for the gardens.

“The inhabitants of the area are happy to know the crops that can be grown in the area. There are many who ask for information regarding the creation of a garden.”

Saint-Juste Froancois, agronomy student working on the project

“The whole community benefits from it in the sense that people discover other economic activities.”

Junel Dorsica, head of Pere Coatalem school
Challenges

Strong tropical weather caused delays in securing supplies. Because of the weather and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the schools did not receive SPI seeds on time. The schools were able to procure leftover seeds from other projects, which allowed the schools to complete the planting on time.

The leftover seeds did not flourish, so the agricultural experts conducted additional trainings to help the community make the most of the seeds. With additional training, the community was able to seed the gardens before the rainy season.

Now that the community has received the SPI seeds, members of the community will be able to use the seeds next season.
SPI partnered with FEED the Children Guatemala to set up gardens, urban gardens, and water capture systems at four primary schools in Guatemala. This project provides additional access to food for the schools and communities. Students have also learned basic agriculture, and teachers have connected this work to school curriculums.

Lack of available land in the schools meant that we used urban farming techniques such as vertical gardens at some of the schools. These gardens allowed us to maximize production even when little land was available. A changing climate in Guatemala has also made access to water important. SPI and FEED helped the schools construct water capture systems that provide reliable access to water.

This project has impacted 500 children at four primary schools in the Guatemalan communities of Los Chorritos, El Bejucal, El Hatio, and Chuacorral. Additionally, we worked with the community to set up volunteer groups who will care for the garden outside of the school year to ensure the gardens benefit students year round.
Successes

The project was initially delayed because of tropical weather and COVID-19. However, while schools were closed, we were able to work with teachers and agricultural experts to develop curriculum. Having the curriculum ready allowed us to quickly get the project on track when schools reopened.

**Garden planning** – Experts developed unique gardens tailored to the specifics of each school. For instance, in schools with little available space we implemented vertical gardens instead of more traditional gardens.

**Training and curriculum development** – Local agricultural experts trained the teachers and PTA members on the implementation of the gardens. The experts worked with teachers at the four schools to develop appropriate curricula for the students.

**Land preparation** – Students tilled and cleaned soils in preparation for planting. Where necessary, they constructed vertical gardens.

**Planting and germination** – Students and teachers learned how to plant seeds and germinate the seeds into a viable seedling.
URBAN-STYLE GARDENS FOR RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

SPI and FEED the Children Guatemala
Los Chorritos, El Bejucal, and Chuacorral, Guatemala

Construction of rainwater capture systems – Four rainwater capture systems were installed to ensure adequate irrigation during times of unpredictable water availability.

Garden maintenance training – Students learned about irrigation, weeding, and other maintenance techniques to keep the garden healthy.

Harvesting – Students learned how to harvest the crops and learned ways to use the various vegetables.

Support committees – Outside the school year, students would not be in the schools to care for the gardens. The communities identified members to help maintain the gardens during breaks in the school year.

Challenges

After initial delays, the community worked to get the project on track. Unfortunately, Guatemala is in the midst of a second COVID-19 outbreak, so some of the gardening and learning activities have been put on hold.

During the work, SPI and FEED also learned that one of the schools that needed a water capture system was having one installed during a remodel. We were able to use project materials to install a system on a different school.
SPI has partnered with Aldeas Infantiles SOS Honduras to create a pilot gardening program at the SOS Children’s Village in Tela, Honduras. Aldeas Infantiles SOS Honduras sets up SOS Children’s Villages to help children, adolescents, and young adults separated from their families. The facilities provide alternative care for the children based on individual needs. The Tela location supports 48 children with 13 caregivers. Hondurans live at a 60 percent poverty rate with 23 percent of children facing malnutrition. Fruits and vegetables from this gardening project will provide critical vitamins and minerals for the meals at the SOS Children’s Village. The education and training provided by our partners in Honduras will also equip the children with valuable skills in sustainable farming.

As Honduras is part of Central America’s “Dry Corridor,” erratic weather results in food insecurity because of problems with crops. This village has no garden, so it is reliant on other areas for its food security. Working with the Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment, this project will seek expertise to incorporate sustainable techniques to lessen the chance of food insecurity caused by weather variance.
Successes

The project is progressing well despite problems caused by tropical storms and COVID-19. After a delayed start, the project has made good progress and the village has completed its first harvest.

**Garden design** – Experts have helped design and layout the garden for the village.

**Training programs** – The experts have trained residents in fertilization, irrigation, and planting techniques. This is ongoing and will continue until the garden is at production.

**Land and soil preparation** – After learning about working the land and fertilizing from the local consultants, the children have cleared the land and fertilized it for planting. The village has also created a schedule to maintain the land and fertilization.

**Irrigation** – The home set up an irrigation system and has completed an irrigation schedule.
Planting – Seedlings have been planted in the nursery and the garden.

Pest Control – Experts identified a white fly infestation and taught the village how to combat the insects, saving the crop.

Harvest – The villagers have completed the first harvest and are able to take advantage of the newly available produce.

Next steps

The project is running smoothly and villagers plan to continue its success. Residents of the children’s village are planning crops and readying the gardens for the next planting. Crops should go in by the end of August.
Challenges
Tropical weather delayed the project during the first month because the village was not able to secure materials or agricultural experts. This delayed the project initially, but quick work after the area recovered kept the project on track.

As the project developed, it was difficult to convene villagers for trainings and work. The villagers were able to move trainings to Saturday’s to ensure large groups could benefit. Creating schedules helped keep the project’s labor on track.

A white fly infestation threatened the entire melon crop. However, the agricultural experts were able to guide the village in treating the infestation and saving the bulk of the crop. While this incurred greater expense than planned, saving the crop meant weeks of work was saved.

The project also ended up with surplus seeds. Aldeas Infantiles SOS was able to put the seeds to work in in Choluteca, Tegucigalpa, and Santa Rosa, distributing the seeds to local families and civil society organizations.
Summary of Project Expenses: See the table below. If further information is desired, please do not hesitate to ask. We are happy to provide additional details or documentation.

PROJECT EXPENSES 2020-2021
Thank you so very much to Million Dollar Round Table Foundation for your generous funding to support this project! We look forward to working with you on this and other projects in the future.