

Tseltal women build gender equity and autonomy in their homes



Women grow nutritious food

117 Tseltal women are growing vegetables and raising chickens ecologically to improve their families' nutrition. **At the beginning of the Project, just one-third of the participating women had some sort of vegetable garden at home.** They also learned about the nutritional values of food and new recipes to prepare them for maximum health.

Women create small businesses to earn and save money

10 groups of women have been building their local businesses. **Through microenterprises or kitchen businesses, women are earning their own money, for most of them, for the first time in their lives!** They sell surpluses from what they farm, including vegetables and eggs, in local markets.

They are baking and selling bread to sell in their communities. And some have opened small stores to sell food, household necessities and clothing they make.

These women faced considerable challenges around access to money. Their male partners often spent the money they earned, leaving their families without food, medicines, or basic supplies.



"In my community, only men have the right to leave home to work or study. Now I am learning that we women have the same rights. When we make bread with our women's group and sell it, I feel I am making my right to paid work a reality. Now I decide what to do with this money."

*Imelda Gutiérrez Gómez,
C'anha' community*

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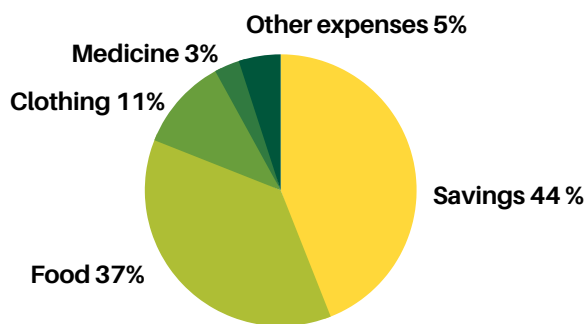


Women learn about their rights and build economic autonomy

At the Project's start, 87 women reported knowing nothing about their rights. After a year, the 117 women participating in the Project know they have the right to: be paid for their work, to live without violence in their families, to eat healthy foods, to participate in community meetings, to study, and to express themselves freely.

Women say that by **earning money through various initiatives, they are advancing their rights to paid work and to make decisions about how to spend the money they earn.** Some of the younger women have decided to return to school to continue their studies. They can pay for their expenses with what they earn through their microenterprises.

Over the course of a quarter, **the women earned \$2,950**, budgeting for the following purposes:



85 of the 117 women participate in 6 savings and credit cooperatives. During this past year, groups managed as little as \$50 and as much as \$1,500.

40 of the participating women say that **their lives have started to change over** the past year: They are less afraid. They are taking better care of their health. They feel more confident to deal with everyday challenges in their lives, which includes expressing their opinions to their partners.

"I have learned to grow vegetables. I go to the market and sell a part of my crop. I also save my earnings through the savings and credit cooperative. At last, I have the opportunity to earn income. Now I have my own money and I use it to buy pantry supplies for my home. My family is very happy when I come home with my bag of groceries."

Juana Mendez Cruz, El Suspiro community

