

San Antonio Stoves for Health Close Out Summary

September 20, 2022



Initiative Purpose:

Traditionally, Mayans cook over unventilated open hearths in their one-room homes. This cooking method causes health problems such as respiratory illness, eye infection, and burns. A serious environmental consequence of this cooking method is deforestation; which is the permanent destruction of forests. The Onil stove is a vented, smoke-free, and energy-efficient stove using 70% less wood than open-hearth fires. It is developed and produced in Guatemala and costs approximately USD \$125. Open-hearth fires are a major source of global warming. When you replace an open-hearth fire with a clean-burning Onil stove, you remove 3.4 tonnes per year of CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Initiative Achievements:

1. 1,500 stoves have been installed since the project began in 2010.
2. Positive feedback from healthcare workers confirm that health has dramatically improved in the community since the initiative began.
3. In addition to improving the health of families, these stoves also have a major role in mitigating the effects of climate change.
4. Yearly inspection and parts replacement has been done until 2019

Purpose for Closure:

1. Lack of a field lead; person in the field to organize the project, or community members available for consultation and oversight
2. Lack of financial activity - no donations collected or no funding disbursed over 12 months
3. The main goals of the initiative have been met (San Antonio has enough stoves and some people are now switching to gas stoves)
4. Desire by Initiative Leads to concentrate resources on education and community development

Background to Closure

Several years ago, the project stopped installing new stoves, and concentrated on maintenance of existing stoves. The principle was that the recipients would pay 50% of replacement parts.

Other organizations began to distribute gas stoves in the mid 2010s.

Feb 2020: During a field visit to San Antonio Palopó in early 2020, our field lead made the following comments:

Wood stoves

- about 10% are not using them the efficient way, as the wood is too wet; however, as time goes on, people learn about the efficiency of the stoves, and are now trying to get replacement parts for the ones they removed – ‘poco a poco’
- Wood is getting more and more expensive – but it can be found for free if necessary
- If wood is wet, it creates a lot of smoke
- Those who have really tried both, seem to much prefer gas
- There are many who do not want gas and are not open to trying it, as they find it too dangerous, especially for kids
- The culture is to cook on wood, and that is hard to change – fear of change
- In some families, the younger generation like/want gas, but the older generation are against it and refuse to use it

Gas stoves

- gas is quick, and of course, no smoke – but the burner is quite small for making tortillas, so it can be time consuming to cook them if there is a large family
- There is more danger with gas if it is not used properly
- Mayan Families and Fonda Maya are actively distributing gas stoves

Conclusion

- Our field lead has a good understanding of the situation, having been involved with both wood and gas stove distribution and training for many years
- There is also a big need for open discussion among the different groups!

Subsequently, the group had many discussions about how to proceed.

- The provision of stoves is being done by multiple organizations, and activities are overlapping and confusing; cooperation between groups is not working
- Main field lead became increasingly unavailable
- The 2020 replacement program did not occur
- Feb 2021: In our Strategic Planning, we looked at refocusing our efforts on La Casita and Education, away for provision and maintenance of high efficiency wood stoves. There was general agreement that we would like to end the Stoves project in 2021.
- Sep 20, 2021: Decision: Close the Stoves initiative and transfer the funds to other initiatives
- Oct 2021: Remaining funds in the initiative were transferred, with donor permission, to the San Antonio Education and Community initiative, and the credit with Helps International was donated to them, for use in other stoves projects

Details of project:

Start Date: 2010

End Date: October 18, 2021

Total Donations: CAD 99,670.00

Total Funds Sent: CAD 99,670.00