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Tomato, Tom-ah-to – No Matter How You Say It, Greenhouse Project Increases Harvest and Family Income

Richmond, Va. – Dec. 4, 2008 – The Actively Engaged Mayan Women, or Mujeres Emprendedoras Mayas in the rural area of Tecpan, Guatemala, have accepted a mission.

Their mission – to improve food security and increase incomes for their families. At the same time they'll be improving the lives of their children.

The crop of choice – the tomato.

Their plan – implement the “Greenhouse Project,” a collaboration between Christian Children's Fund and the Family Parents Association of Kajih-Jel of Tecpan. The project is supported by Barnfonden, a member of ChildFund Alliance of which CCF also belongs.

Bypassing costly traditional greenhouse structures, CCF and Family Parents Association opted for an alternative method known as the “macro tunnel.”

“Macro tunnels” are like miniature, traditional greenhouses. Shallow dirt canals are dug into the soil to use as walkways and slopes between act as elevated planting beds. The tunnels are then covered with a tarp in the same dome-style fashion as larger greenhouses.

Not only are the tunnels more cost efficient in technique, but they yield a better harvest for tomatoes based on climate and weather conditions. Tomatoes are the crop of choice based on their high commercial demand and profitable selling price.

A technician has been hired by the project to conduct continuous training for the different women's groups on both an individual and collective basis. Topics center on plague management, sanitation and fertilization of the crops, technical management of the process and importance of women in society

Twelve different community groups in Guatemala will receive a greenhouse, allowing for a harvest of about 300 boxes of tomatoes every six months compared to the original proposal of 160 boxes every six months.



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Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is a global force for children, helping the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable survive and thrive in order to reach their full potential. Serving children since 1938, CCF works in 32 countries and assists approximately 15.2 million children and family members worldwide, regardless of race, creed or origin. CCF is a member of the ChildFund Alliance.

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The increased production will boost family income, which is expected to increase from \$450 to 565 per year. In addition, caregivers will be able to provide better resources within the home for their children's well-being.

Women in each of the communities directly participated in the formation of these groups, an achievement when one considers the gender inequity issues that women regularly face in this area. Family Parents Association already had started a process of community strengthening, working on other issue related to the well-being of families and children.

For now, tomato crops are progressing well in development, although high humidity has caused minor plagues; all of which have been controlled. It is estimated that a first harvest can be achieved by the greenhouse groups by the end December 2008.



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