STRATEGIC PLAN
2020-2025
MAYAN FAMILIES
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Mayan Families has undertaken an intensive strategic planning process, having put in place the building blocks necessary and restructuring under a new administration over the course of a year. We are very proud to present to our donors, supporters and community the long-term vision and direction of the organization and the steps that we will take to get there. We are grateful for your partnership as we evolve and deepen our work in Guatemala and look forward to many years of doing great work together.

The strategic planning process was undertaken with the following key principles:

- **Centering Mayan leadership** - led by our indigenous staff, in both the direction of the programmatic work and leadership at the organizational level.
- **Collaboration** - staff, Board, donors and community came together to incorporate a mixture of perspectives, expertise, communities and stakeholders.
- **Community-focused** - every step had community voices at its core to ensure that all the work we are doing and the long-term vision are based on community strengths, needs, and self-identified goals.

We present this plan as visionary, forward-looking and truly community-centered. We look forward to carrying out this work alongside our community and supporters: together every step of the way.
Also known as the Land of Eternal Spring, Guatemala, with a population of approximately 18 million, is a country praised for its wealth of natural landscapes, flora, fauna and its diverse, welcoming people. Amidst the beauty, the country has been painfully taxed with the consequences of a 36-year civil war characterized by a high level of violence, genocide and human rights violations directed, principally, towards the Indigenous population. Over many years and many dictatorships, the living conditions of the Mayan people have deteriorated significantly.

Since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, the country continues to struggle with inequity, poverty and some of the highest malnutrition rates in the world. As a result of discrimination against the Indigenous intersected by the violence of warfare, many families were forced to flee to remote territory, wherein public services were either insufficient or non-existent. Hence, Indigenous communities are severely and systemically under-sourced. Despite the implementation of some government programs and laws to recognize and support the Mayan people, the Indigenous population of 11 million (according to indigenous groups), equivalent to around 60% of the total population, continue to suffer from deeply unequal access to health, education, and economic development opportunities.

Its painful history notwithstanding, Guatemala is immensely blessed by the cultural strength, knowledge and resilience of the Maya: a jeweled weave enriching both country and community. Mayan Families works by elevating and centering that same cultural strength and knowledge. Our work is community-led, mirrored within the organization in staff composition and our leadership team, and externally, with our community partners. By complementing the resources and knowledge already existing in rural communities, we create a lasting impact in which the main actors are the communities.

We focus on providing programs which address the critical development opportunities catalyzed by increased access to quality education, building economic opportunities, and reducing malnutrition, all the while enhancing community leadership and collaboration.
OVERALL STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Vision
Mayan communities in the Lake Atitlán region of Guatemala are strong, vibrant and self-sufficient.

Mission
Advancing education, nutrition & health and economic development through community-led initiatives which build on existing resources and knowledge.

Goals
Communities have:
- Increased access to quality education
- Reduced rates of malnutrition
- Improved economic well-being

Organizational Responsibility
Community Responsibility

Working in collaboration with community underpins all of our work.
HOW WILL WE GO ABOUT THIS?

In order to achieve our mission and objectives and move towards our vision, we have designed programs and interventions all of which:

- Promote Mayan traditions, culture and language, using ancestral techniques and knowledge.
- Focus on developing expertise and capacity in specific themes and objectives, based on community needs and strengths.
- Center community benefit, promoting independence, self-sufficiency and internal solutions.
- Seek to make the most of and fully utilize the organization’s existing resources - infrastructure, staff, funding - and existing skills and resources in communities.
- Interconnect our three pillars of work, strengthening one another to achieve a truly holistic development.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

- **Cooperation** – We work as a kind, effective and supportive team in collaboration with our communities.
- **Integrity** – We act honestly and ethically, thereby earning the trust and confidence of both communities and supporters.
- **Transparency** – Our processes and use of resources are reasonable, justified and clearly communicated.
- **Respect** – We treat all people kindly and fairly, with dignity and empathy.
- **Humility** – We recognize our role as facilitators, centering and valuing local expertise. We evolve based on constant learning and self-improvement.
- **Accountability** – We thoughtfully and responsibly manage our resources to ensure both efficient use and intentional impact.
- **Reciprocity** – We believe in dignified, equitable relationships with our community, fostering agency, active participation and service to others.

Our values are at the core of everything we do. We believe that all of our work is necessarily and infinitely strengthened by being:

1. Led by local Indigenous staff.
2. Oriented towards community-led solutions by listening to community voices.
3. Focused on long-term, holistic and sustainable programs.
PROGRAMMATIC PLANS

EDUCATION

Our Education programs aim to complement and strengthen the educational systems around Lake Atitlán to provide increased quality educational opportunities to students of all ages.

**Preschool Nutrition Centers**
Provide quality early education in rural communities, promoting bilingual education through learning Spanish while preserving and valuing Mayan languages, and preventing and treating malnutrition in children under 5 years of age.

**Community Learning Program**
Provides face-to-face tutoring to students who are struggling, which involves training and support from older students, encouraging leadership development and community participation.

**Scholarship Program**
Provides support to students who lack the resources necessary to complete their studies and offers better opportunities of access a quality education.
**EDUCATION OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

**Short term**
(in the next year)

- Establish alliances with educational centers and local authorities in order to promote high quality learning.
- Support students who are struggling in core courses, focusing on under-resourced communities.
- Strengthen the quality and impact of Preschool Centers in communities without access to early education.
- Send direct transfers of supporting funds to students in primary and secondary levels, with the condition that they undertake Community Service, stay in school and keep up their grades (with tutoring support if needed).

**Medium term**
(1-3 years)

- Foster critical thinking and responsibility with students through secondary school levels in the Scholarship Program, teaching the value of access to education and the commitment that is needed to succeed.
- Workshops for parents, which encourage educating students to build critical thinking and responsibility.
- Build the proactive participation of older students as mentors to younger children in their community.
- Community Service, a component of the Scholarship Program, where students build their leadership and create reciprocity, giving back their time, knowledge and talent to their communities.

**Long term**
(3-5 years)

- Guarantee educational quality with cultural relevance, transforming the educational community into leaders who have the tools to promote comprehensive development and improve the quality of life of their communities.
- Work with young people to encourage a culture of mutual and collective support, and support them to become agents of change in their communities.
- Ongoing relationships with educational centers, guaranteeing a mutual exchange of ideas and developing strong educational systems, with direct support to primary schools.
- Transform Mayan Families’ facilities within the communities into Centers for Community Development, to serve as hubs for positive interactions, workshops, services and information.
Our Nutrition & Health programs generate access to nutritional and medical services with cultural relevance, reducing the impact of child malnutrition and improving the quality of life of vulnerable populations in the rural communities around Lake Atitlán.

**Community Health Program**
Strengthens local governance systems to create access and availability to vital community services, working in the areas of water and sanitation, affordable food, nutrition education and support for the elderly.

**Medical Care Program**
Provides preventative and culturally appropriate medical care to pregnant women, children under 5 years of age and the elderly, through mobile health & nutrition clinics, sexual and reproductive health, and promoting traditional Mayan medicine at the community level.

**Malnutrition Prevention Program**
Seeks to reduce the risk of chronic malnutrition through health services and comprehensive nutritional education, treatment of child malnutrition, and pre- and post-natal care.
NUTRITION & HEALTH OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

**Short term (in the next year)**
- Raise awareness about the problems of malnutrition and women’s health in order to increase preventative measures.
- **Offer preventative medical, nutritional and personal development opportunities to the elderly population.**
- **Alliance with Mayan health practitioners to strengthen health care offered in communities.**
- **Culturally-relevant health services and sex education for women and young people in rural areas.**
- **Early detection of child malnutrition, through partnerships at the community and institutional level.**
- **Food distribution to alleviate hunger, in response to the health and economic emergency of COVID-19.**

**Medium term (1-3 years)**
- **Empower communities on the importance of behavior change and acceptance of preventative health.**
- **Holistic medical care for babies and mothers, pre- and post-pregnancy period.**
- **Facilitate community management of access to safe water.**
- **Generate access and availability of food at the community level, through the culturally-relevant use of family gardens and provision of food support to vulnerable families.**
- **Comprehensive medical and nutritional service, which integrates traditional Mayan medicine into nutrition and health practices.**
- **Community nutrition training for the prevention of child malnutrition in rural areas.**

**Long term (3-5 years)**
- **Promote community leadership of nutrition and health issues to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable families and communities.**
- **Holistic maternal health service where gynecology, pediatrics and nutrition services are offered through mobile clinics in the communities, coordinated through relevant institutional partnerships.**
- **Comprehensive health service which promotes the active participation of Mayan health practitioners in the community medical system.**
- **Access to clean and safe water through the implementation of community water purification systems.**
Our Economic Development programs aim to advance professional and economic growth, promote local knowledge and techniques and increase opportunities for income-generation for families and communities.

Artisan Program works directly with artisans to cultivate markets for their products and to improve their management and sales skills, with an end goal of building sustainable income.

Trade Schools offers vocational training, such as carpentry, sewing and welding, that is relevant to the needs of the communities, helping students to discover and enhance their talent and creativity to turn it into income-generating skills.
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

**Short term (in the next year)**
- Strengthen existing knowledge and promote the use of artisanal, ancestral and cultural techniques in the communities around Lake Atitlán.
- Community assessment of existing skills, knowledge, and courses which community members need and want.
- Development of technical training courses, using the community assessment as a base.
- Training workshops to teach business skills, including finance, economic planning, administration, small business start-up, design and marketing.
- Expand markets for products, including new and improved designs, made by graduates of our Trade School program and artisan partners.

**Medium term (1-3 years)**
- Support artisans and students to search independently for national and international markets.
- Design new products in conjunction with artisans, to include their ideas according to their culture, knowledge, and abilities.
- Establish teaching models and educational content in line with emerging needs and technologies.
- Work with artisans and graduated students to identify markets and develop sales relationships.

**Long term (3-5 years)**
- Promote economic independence within communities to improve the quality of life for families around Lake Atitlán.
- Provide start-up financing for small businesses to students who have graduated from our business training program.
- Broaden our reach of artisan partners in order to diversify creative capacities and offer more varied products using regional differences in techniques and designs.
- Cultivate alliances with other organizations locally, regionally and internationally, for a mutual exchange of knowledge, and to promote products made by our artisans and graduated students.

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Our 8 ingredients of success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community-led resources</th>
<th>Decentralization of services</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>There are systemic reasons why long-term issues continue to arise in our communities, but at their base, Mayan communities are resourceful, entrepreneurial and full of potential. We believe that our work should be entirely community-led.</td>
<td>We are proud of and strengthened by our staff team who come from and live in the communities where we work, and we have existing buildings and partnerships in many of our communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>We will</strong> support in identifying and harnessing community resources for the implementation of our programs, including skills of community members and leaders, infrastructure, knowledge, techniques and tools fully based in Mayan culture and traditions.</td>
<td><strong>We will</strong> spread out our operations from our base in Panajachel, to reflect the diversity and geographic dispersion of our staff and community members, drawing upon the strong resources available in the community and ensuring our work is truly community-centered.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Defining our target population</th>
<th>Partnerships</th>
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<td>It is important to focus our resources where they are most needed and wanted in order to have the greatest impact, and our decisions are based on community evaluation.</td>
<td>One of our core beliefs is that listening to multiple, diverse voices and working collaboratively strengthens our work and impact infinitely. We are committed to developing strong partnerships, both locally and internationally.</td>
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<td><strong>We will</strong> continue to conduct a full socio-economic analysis and community assessment within our communities in order to refine who receives our support, based on community knowledge and data and in conjunction with community leadership.</td>
<td><strong>We will</strong> actively collaborate with, listen to and partner with community members, community leadership, local authorities, NGOs and organizations, government agencies, funders and donors, and any other positive partnerships which share our values and will help to advance our community mission.</td>
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How will we achieve these goals?

Staff, Board and Collaborators
The work we do is only possible because of our local, experienced and talented staff team with the knowledgeable oversight of our Board of Directors, and the invaluable contribution of volunteers and community members.

We will continue to build an innovative indigenous-led team, which has strong professional ethics, is multidisciplinary, well-trained, rooted in cultural relevance, has deep knowledge of our communities, is kind and collaborative, and has the resources necessary to carry out our mission.

Impact evaluation
We believe that we should work with humility and openness, always learning and adjusting our work based on both external feedback and internal self-reflection.

We will conduct regular and meaningful monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of our work, to ensure that we not only measure impact but are taking feedback to heart and continually realigning our work based on new knowledge and information.

Sustainable funding
Our programmatic plan depends on diversifying and deepening our funding base, to create sustainable sources of funding and ensure we can truly achieve the impact we strive for.

We will invest efficiently in our fundraising, to gain multi-year grants, build relationships with groups and foundations, and grow our unrestricted funding to give us more flexibility and agility to be responsive to evolving priorities.

Operational effectiveness
In order to uphold and successfully carry out our ambitious strategic plan, we must continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations, finances and fundraising efforts.

We will work to optimize our administrative processes, lower our operational costs, continue to focus on transparent and accountable finances and processes, strengthen management oversight and accountability, and prioritize strong and efficient systems.
We are proud of our evolution and direction as an organization, and we hope that you will walk with us to achieve our mission and vision in the Lake Atitlán region of Guatemala. Through these strategies, Mayan Families will continue to support individual students and families with love and care, as we also deepen our community reach and focus on long-term systemic changes to reduce poverty and malnutrition and increase access to quality education for all children in the communities where we work.

Mayan Families acknowledges the invaluable efforts of our beneficiaries & families, donors, partner organizations, community leadership, Board of Directors and staff, all of whom make it possible for our work to continue, evolve, and create lasting impact. We could not be more grateful for your support!
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