

Global Giving Projects - January 2013

Self Help International- Improving Water Quality in Rural Nicaragua

Summary

Indigent, hardworking farmers in southern Nicaragua want a better future for their children. Self-Help is working closely with hundreds of farmers to improve cultivation practices to increase yields by planting non-genetic Quality Protein Maize (QPM), containing double the digestible protein as regular corn. The benefits of more protein and other nutrients are apparent. However, poor water quality is compromising these efforts. An affordable solution to improve water quality impacts health and well-being of thousands of Nicaraguans, especially children.

What is the issue, problem, or challenge?

Training designed to improve quality of life for poor farm families in Nicaragua results in healthier bodies, minds, and increased income. However, persistent illnesses such as diarrhea have caused setbacks in our objective to improve their health and nutrition. Closer investigation in four communities indicated that more than 6,000 residents were drinking contaminated water from wells and springs. In order for families to benefit from improved diets, poor water quality must be tackled. Challenges include: affordable systems to clean water; and community members' acceptance and maintenance commitment.

How will this project solve this problem?

A simple, affordable and effective water chlorinator system alleviates illnesses caused from waterborne diseases. Made with PVC pipes, valves, screen filter, and inserted chlorine tablets, valves control water flow and the amount of chlorine disbursed. Ministry of Health employees and community water volunteers are trained and actively participate in the project. Community water volunteers learn how to install and maintain each system, and inform the community its benefits.

Potential Long Term Impact

Each water chlorinator system serves up to 1,000 depending upon water source. The cost to build each unit is \$135. One chlorine tablet (\$3) lasts 1-3 weeks, depending upon water pressure. Within three years, up to 10,000 people in four communities will receive cleaner water from twelve water chlorinator systems. Extensive training and follow-up by Self-Help staff secures proper maintenance. Residents learn about waterborne diseases and the benefits of quality drinking water. The community actively participates in maintenance, sharing expenses for chlorine tablets. Community accountability and responsibility promotes ownership and sustainability. Healthier citizens having better diets and water quality, are able to lead more productive lives in society.

Project Message

"Clean water complements better diets, building stronger, healthier minds and bodies."

-Merry Fredrick, Executive Director, Self-Help International

Funding Information

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