

FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY **GUATEMALA**



CAREGIVER CAPABILITIES

FH Guatemala's core platform for improving caregiver capabilities is the care group model. A Care Group is a group of 10-15 community volunteers (usually women) who regularly meet together with FH staff for training. Each volunteer then shares these lessons with 10-15 of their neighbors at least once a month. There are currently **234 Care Groups with 2,084 mother volunteers** operating in Guatemala. Care Group modules promote behavior change in all areas of the Nurturing Care Framework to produce positive early childhood development outcomes.

Good Health

Care Group modules focusing on health emphasize:

- Essential Care for Mothers and Newborns
- Household Management of Childhood Illnesses
- Essential Hygiene Actions

Adequate Nutrition

Care Group modules focusing on nutrition emphasize:

- Essential nutrition actions for mothers and children under five years old, including breastfeeding, complementary feeding, and practices that promote nutrition for pregnant and nursing mothers.

- Recipe books which promote both healthy cooking and hygienic practices during meal preparation in rural households with children under five years old.

Responsive Caregiving

Reading and Responding to Your Baby Care Group modules focus on responsive infant feeding and behavior cues to improve responsive breastfeeding and complementary feeding. In collaboration with the Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute, FH developed key messages, created educational materials, and trained staff on how to support caregivers in identifying infant behavior cues and responding in a loving manner.

Security and Safety

Care Group modules emphasize security and safety through positive parenting, as well as awareness and reduction of toxic stress. FH trains caregivers on how to identify sources of toxic stress, decrease and mitigate toxic stress, and work to change social norms around domestic violence and other underlying causes of trauma and toxic stress.

Early Learning

Care Groups facilitate participatory learning in early stimulation practices and improving the home learning environment. Modules include practical activities for caregivers to implement for everyday learning with their children, for playing with their children, and encouraging caregivers to enroll their children in preschool.

Caregivers are taught, with a hands-on approach, how to lovingly respond to their small children. Interactive “make and play” and “reading” days

promote positive interactions, relationship building, and cognitive learning through age-appropriate books and homemade toys.

EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

FH’s community-based interventions work cross-sectorally to improve early childhood development outcomes in all areas of the Nurturing Care Framework.

Faith-Based Community Agents

FH collaborates with faith-based institutions, churches, community leadership, and community groups to promote optimal child development. Working through or in collaboration with churches increases community coverage, while increasing impact.

School Readiness Centers

FH Guatemala supports 158 school-readiness circles (“Círculos de Aprestamiento Escolar”) in three regions for children in the year prior to entry in primary school. These circles are run by volunteers in preschools and focus on developing early literacy skills, motor skills, and socio-emotional skills through games, reading books, and other activities.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

FH supports various WASH components in the community, with goals of: reducing exposure to disease, conflict, and poverty; reducing malnutrition; and building a safe environment where children can thrive. FH works with schools to develop WASH Action Plans and curricula that can be used to foster behavior change amongst children and



their immediate influencers. FH uses community-led interventions such as Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) to engage entire communities and involve them in their sanitation process as they move toward sanitation improvements.

Toxic Stress

Exposure to trauma and toxic stress without appropriate caregiver support hinders healthy child development. FH works with community leaders to identify sources of toxic stress, decrease and mitigate toxic stress, and change social norms in the community around domestic abuse and other underlying causes of trauma and toxic stress. FH also promotes the creation of safe play spaces in the community to protect children from injuries and promote loving child-caregiver interactions.

Food Security and Livelihoods

FH implements nutrition-sensitive agriculture programs, training groups of farmers on how to plant various vegetables and about the nutritional value of each of these vegetables, to benefit children at risk of malnutrition. The objective is to reduce chronic malnutrition in communities by providing food of high nutritional value through regular training to beneficiaries and promoters.

Family Gardens

Through this strategy, FH seeks to provide sources of nutritious food and generate income for vulnerable households in the communities in which we work. Families with children under the age of five set up a family garden in their homes where they plant crops such as radishes, beets, carrots,

chard, and coriander. The use of organic fertilizers is also implemented.

Culinary Practices

Groups of caregivers gather to cook together, where recipes are prepared with the high-nutritional value vegetables grown in the family gardens. Caregivers are also trained on the importance of these foods and how they can prepare them for their family.

Savings Groups

Savings groups consist of 15 to 20 women with a homogeneous socio-economic profile. The most vulnerable in the community are identified using participatory tools and are invited to join the group. Mothers use savings and collective lending as instruments of empowerment to improve their quality of life and also of their family.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

FH Guatemala is raising awareness about social-emotional learning with community members who interact with young children, including healthcare facility workers and pre-school teachers. FH is also piloting a project with Sesame Workshop: “¡Listos a Jugar!” (“Ready to Play”). Sesame friends model healthy habits like staying active and eating plenty of fruits and vegetables.

With stunting as a high-risk factor for children in Guatemala, FH strengthens Ministry of

Health (MoH) systems through monthly Growth Monitoring and Promotion sessions where caregivers of children 0-5 years receive nutrition, hygiene, early stimulation counseling, and vaccinations – in addition to monitoring their child’s physical growth and development.

SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Successes:

- From 2014 to 2020, stunting has been reduced by 4% in FH communities. This achievement was an effort between multisectorial interventions such as behavior change in health and nutrition through care groups, improved livelihoods through family gardens, cooking practices and self-management groups, and strengthening actions with community leadership and caregiver education.
- Another success was the contextualization of materials for care groups. Program staff added complementary material in education and health such as short books in maternal languages, hygiene kits to children under two years old, and reusable and clean materials to create toys.

Challenges:

- Migration of entire families or primary caregiver to other areas inside and outside of Guatemala.
- Keeping volunteer mothers motivated through the life of the project can be difficult.