

Mexico 2015 Outcome Evaluations in Chiapas, Oaxaca and San Luis Potosí



About The Hunger Project



The Hunger Project is a global, non-profit, strategic organization committed to the sustainable end of world hunger. The Hunger Project's vision is a world where every woman, man and child leads a healthy, fulfilling life of self-reliance and dignity. The Hunger Project's mission is to end hunger and poverty by pioneering sustainable, grassroots, women-centered strategies and advocating for their widespread adoption in countries throughout the world.

The Hunger Project's programs across Africa, South Asia and Latin America are based on an innovative, holistic approach that empowers women and men living in rural villages to become the agents of their own development and make sustainable progress in overcoming hunger and poverty. While adapted to meet local challenges and opportunities wherever they work, all its programs have at their foundation three essential pillars:

- Mobilizing entire communities for self-reliant action
- Empowering women as key change agents
- Forging effective partnerships with local government

One of the first activities when working with a new community is a Vision, Commitment and Action Workshop, which serves as the foundation of The Hunger Project's work, inspiring individuals to move from "I can't" to "I can" to "We can." Through participation in trainings, people set a vision for their communities, and then lay out the actions they will take to achieve that vision.

The Hunger Project in Mexico



The Hunger Project has been working in Mexico since 1983, and is now playing a leadership role in transforming the current situation for rural communities in Mexico. The Hunger Project-Mexico is pioneering comprehensive, bottom-up, women-centered strategies for rural progress in four states in Mexico — Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, Chiapas and Oaxaca. In these four states, The Hunger Project reaches over 22,000 people in 11 municipalities and 42 communities.

The Hunger Project’s experience in Mexico has demonstrated that the most effective and lasting route to sustainable development and ending hunger is through the will, commitment and capacity of people who stand to gain the most when hunger ends: the hungry people themselves.

Through a phased approach, The Hunger Project -Mexico starts by mobilizing villages and communities through capacity building and Vision, Commitment and Action (VCA) workshops. Both at the community and family level, partners create their own vision for the future, commit to achieving it, and outline the actions that are needed to succeed. Visions established across the four states in which The Hunger Project works have included family food security, adequate sanitation, safe cookstoves and water access. Visions are then achieved by participating in leadership and skills trainings, coordinating among the community, and working with dynamic volunteer “catalysts,” who are members of the community that foster community progress. The Hunger Project-Mexico catalysts and community members partner with local

government agencies and other non-governmental organizations to share resources, collaborate and ensure effective implementation of visions.

Regions

The three evaluations were conducted in three of the four states in which The Hunger Project works in Mexico: Chiapas, Oaxaca and San Luis Potosí.

Chiapas

In 1982, the cooperative J’Pas Joloviletik was formed as part of a project of the National Indigenous Institute (now the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples). It consists of 240 women from 6 municipalities in Chiapas, all of whom were textile artisans and native Tzotzil speakers. In 2008, The Hunger Project and J’Pas Joloviletik started collaborating, and in 2013 The Hunger Project began working directly with the communities in Chiapas.



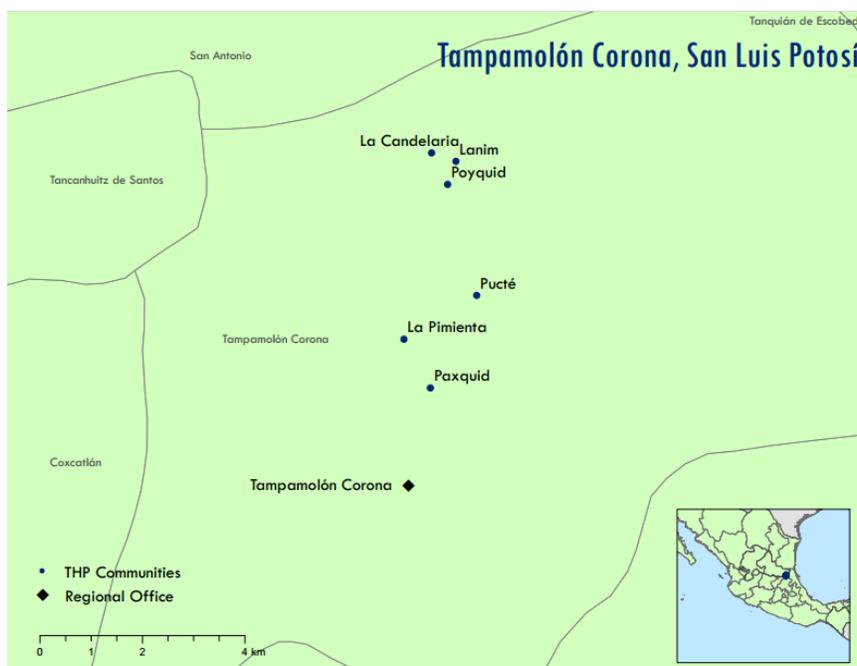
Oaxaca



In 2010, a pilot project was initiated in the San José Tenango community, jointly with the Ministry of Social Development’s Program to Assist Priority Zones. This pilot project, Strengthening the Capacity of Rural Indigenous People for the Authorship of Integral and Sustainable Community Development with a Regional Focus, had the purpose of generating evidence that investing in strengthening and building social capital brings higher impact sustainable development.

San Luis Potosí

Since 2012, The Hunger Project -Mexico has been working with six communities in the municipality of Tampamolón Corona, San Luis Potosí. Even though San Luis Potosí is the state in which The Hunger Project-Mexico most recently began its work, it has been very active since its opening.



Programs and Goals

The evaluations focused on The Hunger Project-Mexico's seven key goal areas at the time of the survey¹:

Program	Goal
1. Mobilization for Self-Reliant Action	Women and men in poor communities transform the underlying mindset that perpetuates poverty.
2. Catalysts for Ending Hunger	Ensure sustainability and ownership of development through community leaders (Catalysts) who are committed to ending hunger in their communities.
3. Sustainable Community Economic Empowerment	Develop production, administration and marketing capacities to launch successful and sustainable businesses.
4. Women's Leadership Program	Unleash political leadership of women as key agents of community transformation and sustainable development.
5. Empowerment for Proper Nutrition	Break the cycle of child malnutrition, focusing on the first 1,000 days.
6. Strengthening of Municipal Governments	Strengthen the functionality and legitimacy of local authorities and municipal governments.

¹ In the reflection on the evaluations, these goal areas have been adjusted and are slightly different at the time of writing.

7. Participatory Local Democracy

Facilitate effective partnership between citizens and municipal governments through the implementation of participatory democracy mechanisms.



Evaluation

Overview

To examine the effects of The Hunger Project's intervention in Mexico, three evaluations were conducted in 2015. The purpose was to measure the programs' progress in three states (Oaxaca, Chiapas and San Luis Potosí), and adjust future interventions accordingly.

Methodology

The three evaluations followed a mixed methodology, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, so that data could be obtained and analyzed through different perspectives.

Tablets were used for surveys, as well as to record interviews and focus group discussions. Following The Hunger Project's community-based approach, interviewers were members from the same communities, with at least a high school degree, and were native speakers of Tzotzil (Chiapas), Mazateco (Oaxaca) or Tenek (San Luis Potosí). They spoke Spanish as a second-language and had an understanding of digital technologies. Interviewers received a 2-3-day training and, before starting the data collection, participated in pilot evaluations in each of the three states.

Sampling

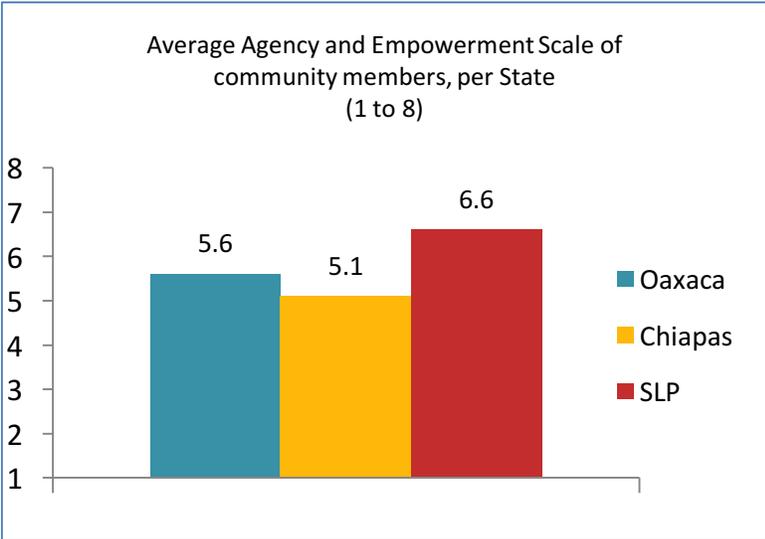
State	# of Households Surveyed	# Focus Group Discussions	# Key Informant Interviews	Details
Oaxaca <i>Municipality:</i> San Luis Tenango 4 communities	85	8	16	Community partners, or <i>socios</i> , that had been active with The Hunger Project between 2010-2014 were targeted. Participants for focus groups and interviews were randomly selected from active <i>socios</i> .
San Luis Potosi <i>Municipality:</i> Tampamolón Corona 6 communities	154	6	12	Surveyed all households in 6 communities where The Hunger Project works. The response rate was 73%, with the other 27% was not available or declined participation.
Chiapas <i>Cooperative</i> <i>J'Pas Joloviletik</i> <i>Municipalities:</i> Aldama, Chamula, Larráinzar, Zinacantán	78	0	10	Surveyed <i>socios</i> from four of six municipalities.

As part of the pilot of outcome evaluations in The Hunger Project-Mexico, different methodologies were used in each state to explore the most appropriate strategy. In the pilot evaluation in Oaxaca, community partners, or *socios*, who had been active with The Hunger Project between 2010 and 2014 were the target of the evaluation survey. In Chiapas, 78 cooperative members from four municipalities were surveyed. Finally, in San Luis Potosí, all households in the localities where The Hunger Project works were the subjects of the household evaluation. For the purpose of this report, all three evaluation results will be discussed together.

Results

Goal 1: Mobilization into Self-Reliant Action.

The main purpose of The Hunger Project’s program is to transform mental structures to break the poverty cycle. This is done through the strengthening of a community’s capacity to take collective action and to plan and execute development projects.



To measure what The Hunger Project’s partners think of their own capacity and individual power, an Agency and Empowerment Scale was used. This scale, developed by Mexican social psychologists, ranges from one (min) to 8 (max) and measures a person’s agency, understood as his or her capacity and control over their own life and his or her influence on others to act on common goals.

Results show that The Hunger Project -Mexico’s partners have a medium-level agency. Partners show low

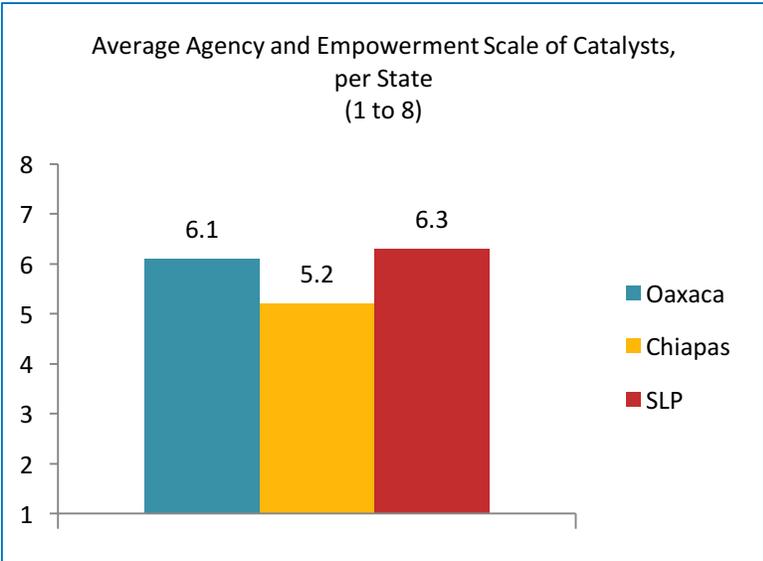
dependency on other people and institutions, while they still show the need for support from others to take personal actions and to take on projects. It also shows a belief that they don’t have control over certain aspects of their life given luck or religion, and that some barriers like fear or shame, though low, are still persistent. These aspects represent an area of opportunity for The Hunger Project, as there is still a chance to help individuals within communities improve the different areas that encompass agency and empowerment.

Additional to the Agency and Empowerment Scale, partners were also asked their perception on their leaders. In all the states, the majority of respondents consider that their leaders are successful in solving the problems faced by the community, though there is an important variation between Oaxaca (90.9%), and Chiapas (64.8%) and San Luis Potosí (70.5%). Through in-depth interviews, it was revealed that leaders are usually local authorities, elderly members of the community, party representatives and council members. In Oaxaca, The Hunger Project Catalysts were also considered leaders within their community.

Goal 2: Catalyst for Ending Hunger.

Catalysts are community members trained by The Hunger Project to become leaders that mobilize their communities into investing time and resources on projects that aim to end hunger in their community. Catalysts are strengthened in their leadership, planning and implementation capacities.

Using the Agency and Empowerment Scale, Catalysts in Oaxaca and San Luis Potosí obtained, on average, more than 6 points, while Catalysts in Chiapas obtained 5.2, since the Chiapas Catalyst program was set up fairly recently. Interviews with Catalysts also revealed that, in general, they are committed to achieving



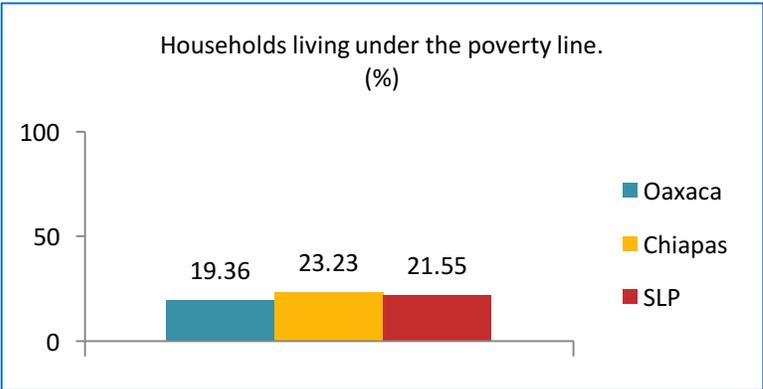
change, but are discouraged by the opportunity cost of participating in The Hunger Project projects, as it prevents them from carrying out other income generating activities.

Catalysts also report that changing mind sets of older members of their community has proven to be challenging, and that these mind sets usually lead to resignation. This creates a constant tension between partners and catalysts, that is aggravated by Catalysts’ faster-access to resources, especially in Oaxaca and San Luis Potosí.

Goal 3: Sustainable Community Economic Empowerment

Through this goal, The Hunger Project seeks to build solidarity economies in rural communities that generate productive projects beneficial for all. For this economic model to become sustainable over time, productive and administrative skills are enhanced and economic opportunities generated.

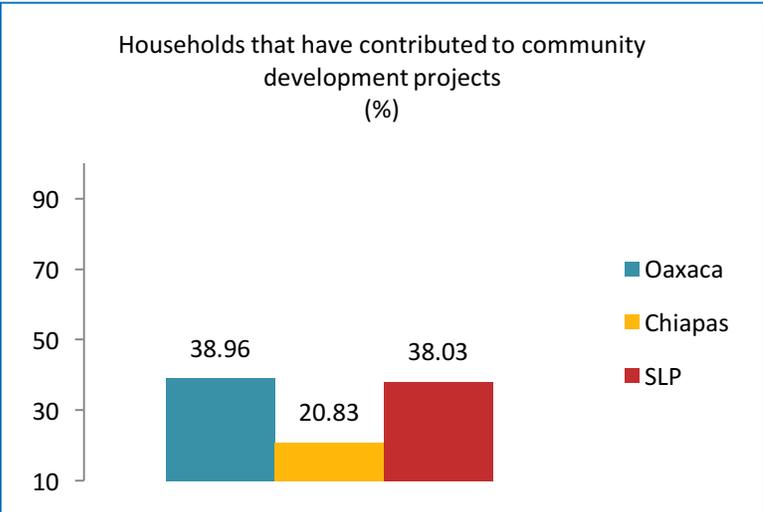
In Chiapas, there are still 23.2% of households living under the poverty line (considered as having 2.50 dollars or less per day). In San Luis Potosí and Oaxaca, 21.6% and 19.4%, respectively, are still living under the poverty line. Moreover, approximately 4% of households in Oaxaca and San Luis Potosí, and 5% of households in Chiapas, are living under 1.25 dollars per day. On the other hand, surveyed households have access to less than half of the basic rural basket, understood as the 25 goods and services that are essential to meet basic needs at household level. In Chiapas, households have access to only 28.6% of the products integrating the basket, while in San Luis Potosí and Oaxaca they have access to 41.8% and 44.8%, respectively.



On the other hand, surveyed households have access to less than half of the basic rural basket, understood as the 25 goods and services that are essential to meet basic needs at household level. In Chiapas, households have access to only 28.6% of the products integrating the basket, while in San Luis Potosí and Oaxaca they have access to 41.8% and 44.8%, respectively.

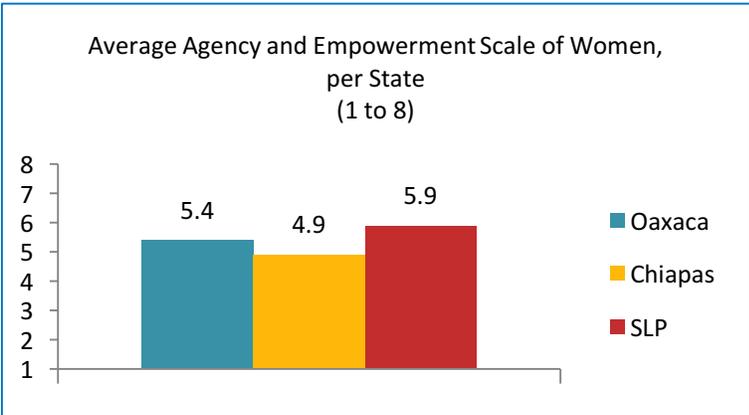
Agriculture continues to be the main income generating activity in three states. Less than 3% of households surveyed in Oaxaca and San Luis Potosí have non-agricultural businesses. In Chiapas, though there is a higher proportion of surveyed households with non-agricultural businesses (23%), the proportion is still relatively low.

In line with The Hunger Project’s community-based strategy, the evaluations gathered information of partner’s investment in community development projects. Almost 39% of households in Oaxaca, 21% in Chiapas and over 38% in San Luis Potosí have contributed to community development projects. Partners were also asked about their knowledge on solidarity economies and their principles, since The Hunger Project seeks to promote economic activities that prioritize social and community objectives. In Oaxaca, 34.6% of households reported to have knowledge on solidarity economies, while only 3.4% of households in San Luis Potosí and none of the households in Chiapas reported to know what solidarity economy is. Since The Hunger Project’s program has not started yet, this reveals that there is no previous knowledge on this type of economy and helps shape future training and capacity building programs.



Goal 4: Women’s Leadership Program.

The Hunger Project seeks to increase women’s leadership and capacity as agents of change in their communities. This program aims to increase women’s decision-making power both inside and outside of their household. It seeks to increase their capacity to carry out community development projects and to achieve gender equality by getting all members of their community to recognize women as agents of change.



Results show that, in the three states, women have an Agency and Empowerment Scale lower than the rest of the community, since they recognize that they have less opportunities than men. An internalization of their roles as homemakers, wives and mothers also limits their possibilities to act, as they have trouble envisioning themselves as anything else.

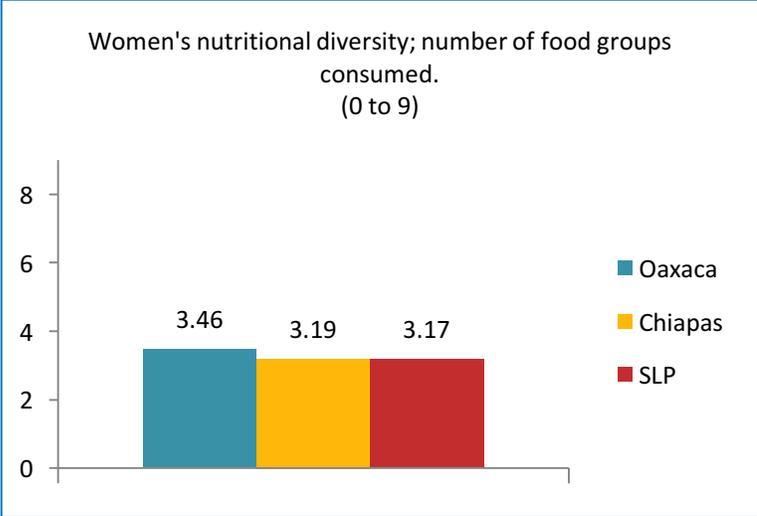
To measure women’s decision-making power within their community, the evaluations collected information on the percentage of women participating or leading community committees. In San Luis Potosí, 19.4% of women surveyed participated and 16% held a leadership position in community committees. Though Oaxaca showed a slightly higher participation percentage (20.7%), only 5.4% of women held a leadership position. Chiapas showed the lowest results, with 18.6% of women participating in community committees and only 4.3% holding leadership positions.

Data on women’s participation with the government to create community development plans was also collected. Oaxaca showed the highest proportion, as 18.92% of women have taken part in these plans, while 7.63% and 2.90% in San Luis Potosí and Chiapas, respectively. In the interviews, women revealed their interest in participating in projects to improve their communities, but they believe they do not have the capacity to do so. This is consistent with the results of the Agency and Empowerment Scale.

Goal 5: Empowerment for Proper Nutrition.

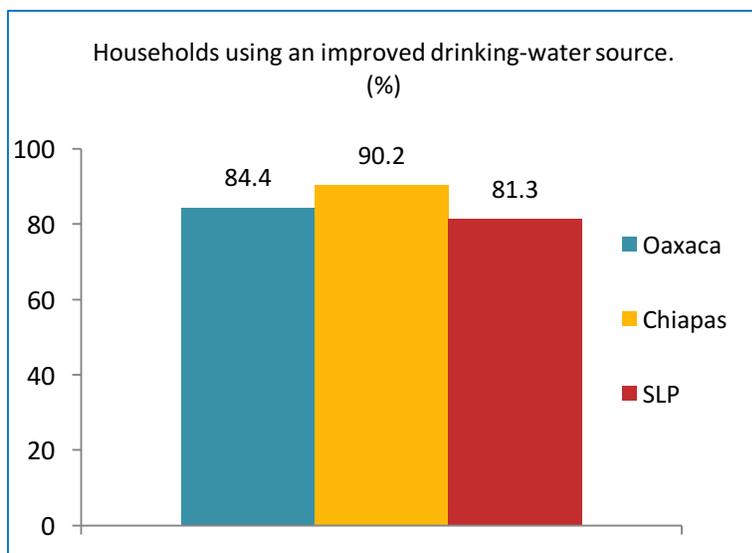
Through this goal, The Hunger Project seeks to achieve food and water security, increase local agricultural production and to improve nutritional practices, especially those of women.

Within a household, women’s nutrition is usually the most marginalized. For this reason, when women in the household are well nourished, it can be assumed that the rest of the household is also receiving an adequate nutrition. Women in reproductive age were asked how diverse the food they consume is, out of 9 food groups. In average, women reported consuming food from less than 4 food groups, with cereals, legumes and sugars representing the most consumed ones.



Food Groups	
Most Consumed	Least Consumed
Cereals	Roots and tubers
Legumes, nuts and seeds	Dark green vegetables
Honey and sugars	Vitamin A rich foods
	Fruits
	Meats
	Fish and shellfish

Knowledge on essential nutritional practices, such as breastfeeding, iron, vitamin A and iodine intake, among others, was also measured. 77.55% of respondents in San Luis Potosí knew about these practices, while 42.47% in Oaxaca and 34.25% in Chiapas did. During the interviews, partners showed more familiarity with women’s nutritional practices, and iodine and vitamin A intake.



Regarding WASH practices, 90.2% of surveyed households in Chiapas, 84.4% in Oaxaca and 81.3% in San Luis Potosí, reported using an improved drinking-water source. For these evaluations, "improved water" is either water extracted from a tap, well, borehole or protected spring/well, or collected rainwater. Through the interviews and focus group discussions in Oaxaca, partners expressed that the improved drinking-water community project was a great success, as collection time was reduced from 2-4 hours, to only minutes.

The survey results also show that 69% of surveyed households in Chiapas, 62.3% of households in Oaxaca and 80% of households in San Luis Potosí, are using an improved sanitation facility. For these evaluations, a basic sanitation facility includes pit latrines with a slab, pour/flush systems, ventilated improved pit latrines, composting toilets, septic tank/sewer systems, and cistern toilets. Despite this, interviews revealed that communities do not consider their sanitation facilities as adequate nor decent, as they are very rudimentary and hard to clean. Women also reported feeling a loss of intimacy and insecurity in such facilities.

Goal 6: Strengthening of Municipal Governments.

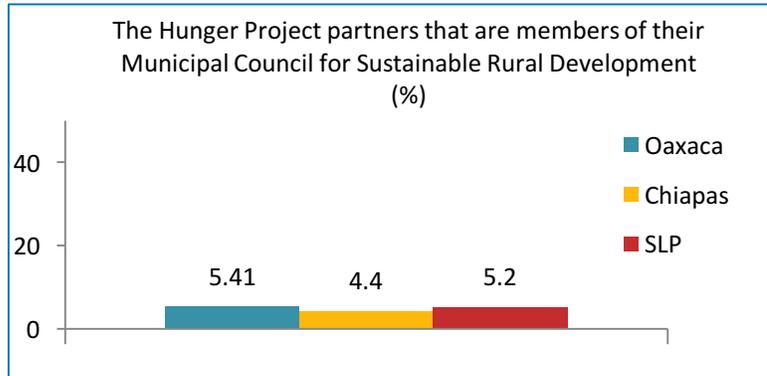
The Hunger Project believes that local governments are key to an adequate community development. Through this program, The Hunger Project seeks to develop favorable political environments, improve civil servant's knowledge on local participatory democracy, as well as to help form alliances between indigenous and local authorities. Though this program involves both communities and civil servants, only the community-perspective was measured.

When asked if they had been consulted by municipal governments to for a diversity of actions, only 4% in Chiapas, 26% in Oaxaca and 12.3% in San Luis Potosí answered positively. This indicated the need to increase future work with municipal authorities.

Goal 7: Participatory Local Democracy.

This program seeks to increase citizens' knowledge on their rights, and to build catalysts' capacity to improve local participatory democracy and to develop favorable political environments for an effective local governance.

During the interviews, partners said there is a strong divide between communities and local authorities, caused, mostly, by two factors: 1) corruption and dismissal of the communities' needs and best interests, and 2) they perceive it would be hard for them to have the possibility to become a public servant. Only 4.4% of partners in Chiapas, 5.4% in Oaxaca and 5.2% in San Luis Potosí form part of the Municipal Council for Sustainable Rural Development.



In addition, The Hunger Project found that partners do not receive much information from political parties on their plans and goals. Voting seems to be based on affiliations, camaraderie and family ties, as only 29.7% of households surveyed in Chiapas, 31.5% in Oaxaca and 67.1% in San Luis Potosí said that they receive information on candidates' or parties' platforms before elections are held.

Conclusions



Follow-up Actions

Based on these findings, The Hunger Project identified some key needs in its programming.

1. Based on these findings, The Hunger Project-Mexico identified the necessity to revise its program model to focus on Gender-Focused Community-Led Development, which focuses on the power and capacity of communities to take charge of their own development.
2. There was a need to revise social development policies and explore other actions to achieve change at municipal level to enhance programming on Sustainable Community Economic Empowerment.
3. To improve programming in women's leadership, The Hunger Project-Mexico focused on strengthening women's circles. These circles have allowed women to increase their level of trust within the home and their communities by giving them confidence to insert themselves in spaces where they previously did not feel confident enough to do so. Specifically, The Hunger Project-Mexico sought to strengthen the circles internally, in order to generate sisterhoods among the members and enhance their impact.
4. When assessing progress on Goal 1: Mobilizing into Self-Reliance Action, The Hunger Project-Mexico has also continued to seek technical alliances to strengthen their partners' abilities and skills, always keeping a constant dialogue to better understand the challenges and possible improvements, as well as areas of opportunity to implement new projects derived from communities' vision.

In the years following the outcome evaluations, The Hunger Project-Mexico performed a two-year reflection and discussion of their work to incorporate the learnings into their programmatic structure. The program's theory of change and overall structure were reviewed, and a framework to guide communities towards self-reliance was developed. In this framework, self-reliance is defined as resilient and organized communities that have a shared vision, transformative leadership, and equality, as evidenced by improved quality of life, an active citizenry, and a vibrant solidarity economy. The Hunger Project-Mexico will continue refining and working towards this framework, taking into account the lessons learned through this evaluation.