



*Loving Arms*  
*brazos amorosos*



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## INFORMATION PACKAGE

Brazos Amorosos/Loving Arms

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### **WHO WE ARE**

Loving Arms is a Canadian Charitable Organization with a vision to transform the lives of families in Guatemalan villages.

Founded in 2005, Loving Arms was incorporated in 2007 and became a Canadian Registered Charity in 2008 (registration no. 83310 4359 RR0001). Asociacion Brazos Amorosos is now registered as a Non-Governmental Organization in Guatemala (registration no. 5116011523342).

### **WHERE WE WORK**

Guatemala, a Central American country south of Mexico, is distinguished by its steep volcanoes, vast rainforests and ancient Mayan sites. The capital, Guatemala City, is home to the stately National Palace of Culture, institutions such as the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, and the lively Zona Viva nightlife area. Antigua, west of the capital, contains cobblestoned streets and preserved Spanish colonial buildings. Guatemala is roughly the same size as Newfoundland, but with a population that is almost thirty times larger. Poverty in Guatemala is both widespread and severe. Approximately 75 percent of the population is estimated to live below the poverty line which is defined as having an income that is insufficient to purchase a basic basket of goods and services. <sup>World</sup>

Bank 2013

Loving Arms works in the municipality of Parramos in the region of Chimaltenango, about an hour and a half southwest of Guatemala City.

Our work began in this municipality in the village of Parramos, and has expanded to a number of other villages within the Municipality. In 2013 Loving Arms purchased a facility, now called the Centre of Hope. It is here that we will endeavor to deliver skills and trades training, workshops and conferences to enable people to start their own businesses or gain the confidence and skills to obtain gainful employment.

## **OUR VISION**

Our vision is to improve the quality of the lives of Guatemalan families by addressing their short-term needs and working towards long-term solutions aimed at making the people self-reliant. To realize this vision, we are guided by two key principles which work in tandem:

- To provide income generating opportunities designed to enable self-sufficiency
- To provide programs to help meet the basic necessities of life while also giving hope for an improved future.

## **WHAT WE DO**

Both our short and long-term principles have projects structured to deliver services in five program areas:

- **Education**
- **Health**
- **Child and Family Sponsorship**
- **Construction of houses, schools and community centres**
- **Income-generating community projects**

## **Education Program**

Community leaders have identified education as one of their priorities, and Loving Arms' Education Program not only provides the young with opportunities to learn but also supports adult literacy and teacher workshops. It is important to emphasize the importance of education to the older generation so they will encourage the young people to value education and to continue their education.

Despite primary education being compulsory and provided free by the government, the mean average years of schooling in 2011 was 4.1 years per student.<sup>[3]</sup> 25.5% of Guatemala's population are illiterate, with illiteracy rates up to more than 60% in the indigenous population Wikipedia 2015-09-23

Based on a Needs Assessment and to maximize the usage of the Centre of Hope, Loving Arms applied to the Guatemalan Ministry of Education and will be opening a school (Christian School of Hope) in January 2016.

The School will begin with 20 students in Pre-Kindergarten and 20 students in Kindergarten. By January 2016, the Government of Guatemala expects that our grade one classroom will be ready for occupancy. There is room for three classrooms within the walls of the existing building. New washrooms will have to be constructed, because it is customary in Guatemala for the washrooms to be in stand-alone buildings.

As part of the 10 year Strategic Plan of Loving Arms, another building must be constructed in order to house the entire school of pre-kindergarten to grade 12. This building will have 6 classrooms. Elementary classes (pre-6) will be held in the morning and 7-12 in the Afternoon. Teachers' lounges/offices, Principal's office, Secretary's office, a small health clinic and kitchen facilities for food programs will also be included. As the school grows the outside space will also be developed for recreation, sports and conferences.

## **Sponsor a child for school**

Aside from the construction of the school, securing a sponsor for each child attending the Christian School of Hope is the primary project in our education program. The costs of running the school will be in part covered by these funds, with other monies coming from fundraising, grant proposals and donations.

### Child and Adult English classes

The Christian School of Hope will have a volunteer English as a Second Language teacher. This person will give additional English classes to people from the outlying villages. These weekly classes will be held at the Centre of Hope.

### Additional Projects

The following projects in our Education Program will be available as funded by donors:

- Adopt-A-Classroom in the local village school
- Teachers' Workshops
- Stay-In-School provides mandatory school supplies to village school students
- Adult Literacy and Training Programs
- Scholarships (Students in this project will continue only as long as they are sponsored)
- Reading and Children's Workshops

## **Health Program**

The projects in this program are designed to address current health problems and to promote preventive health measures. Families are assessed on an at-risk basis and assigned to the appropriate project. Qualified health care professionals (from Guatemala and visiting volunteers from Canada) run the dental and medical clinics.

All of the following projects are subject to available funds.

- Water Filters
  - Installing water filters thus reducing 95% of bacteria and parasites in water
  - Complementing the program run by Mission Impact of Guatemala
  - Reducing cases of gastrointestinal diseases
  - Promoting good hygiene
  - Helping over 120 families so far
- Latrines (2011 pilot project)
  - Testing an eco-sanitation system to recycle human waste to manure; further design work required
- Stove Project
  - Installing energy-efficient stoves
  - Reducing respiratory and eye ailments due to smoke of unvented stoves
  - Reducing stress on the environment by using less wood
  - Increasing quality of life of women and their families
  - Helping over 300 families so far

- Women's Workshops

- Providing information and materials to women on reproductive health, nutrition, hygiene and spiritual growth
- Conducting workshops by qualified volunteers in areas of interest to the local women

- Soup Kitchens

- Partnering with the Ontario Christian Gleaners who donate dehydrated vegetable soup mix
- Providing nutritious lunches to help balance the diets of the children and elders

### **Sponsorship Program**

The **chronic undernutrition** rate for children under 5 is 49.8 percent, the highest in the region and the fourth highest in the world. Guatemala is one of the 36 countries which account for 90 percent of stunting in the world. Chronic undernutrition in indigenous areas is 69.5 percent. <sup>World Food Programme 2015</sup> This program, although greatly needed, will only continue for the people currently in the program.

- Child Sponsorship

- Providing a monthly food package for the child's family
- Providing school shoes and supplies, medical and dental visits, Christmas and birthday gifts

Sponsoring over 200 children from the villages of Parramos, Parrojas, Paraxaj, Chitaburuy, La Hermite and Corrales.

- Elder Sponsorship
  - Providing monthly food packages to severely impoverished elders.

### **Construction Program**

- Build-A-Home (This program takes place only at the request of a team or when funding is specifically designated.)
  - Construction of houses with cement floors and sturdier walls and better roofs. To date we have constructed 30 homes.
  - Provides better shelter and a longer lasting home
  - Helps the family's self-esteem and out-look on life
- Adopt-A-Home (This program takes place only at the request of a team or when funding is specifically designated.)
  - Provides much-needed household items such as beds, mattresses, bedding and blankets, pots, pans, dishes, hygiene items, cleaning items, table and chairs, brooms and shovels. To date Loving Arms has provided furniture to 30 families.
  - Improves hygiene and living conditions
  - Gives hope for a better future

### **Income-Generating Program**

Because 75% of Guatemala's rural population lives below the poverty line, Loving Arms promotes income-generating opportunities by encouraging people to start small businesses with the expectation of achieving long-term economic stability and self-sufficiency.



The income-generating initiatives of Loving Arms include co-operatives in individual villages and also initiatives that link multiple villages.

Projects in the Income-generating Program are:

- Women's Co-Operatives

Women from the villages approached Loving Arms with ideas of ways an income. These women organized themselves into groups or co-ops complete with rules, roles and responsibilities. Loving Arms tries to obtain funding for these projects through proposal writing, fundraising and donations. Loving Arms will help to market some items from each co-op.

- 1) Name: Grupo de Parrojas Brazos Amorosos /" Parrojas Group-Loving Arms"

Type of Co-op: Weaving

Number of women involved: 16

Village: Parrojas

Product: traditional woven material that can be incorporated into the items made by the sewing groups or sold to buyers like Melanie Fontaine. Melanie creates one-of-a-kind hats for her company Meversible, in Canada.

- 2) Name: "Mano Amorosa" Paraxaj/ Sewing Group "Loving Hand" Paraxaj

Type of Co-op: Sewing

Number of women involved: 6

Village: Paraxaj

Product: yoga bag, change purse, satchel, small purse, coffee bag

- 3) Name: Mujeres Mejorando con Fe /” Women Improving with Faith”  
Type of Co-op: Crocheting  
Number of women involved: 6  
Village: Parramos  
Product: Bag
- 4) Name: Grupo de Repostería Fe y Esperanza/ Baking group “Faith and hope”  
Type of Co-op: Baking and Cooking  
Number of women involved: 6  
Village: Parramos  
Product: cookies, cakes, pizza
- 5) Name Virtuous Women Shaday”  
Type of Co-op: sewing  
Number of women involved: 8  
Village: Chitaburuy  
Product: accent cushion covers, quilt
- 6) Name “Manos Creativas”/ “Creative Hands”  
Type of Co-op: Crafts  
Number of women involved: 10  
Village: Parramos  
Products: Greeting cards

- Agricultural Project

In the past Loving Arms has provided funding to teach people all the aspects of raising crops from preparing the soil to selling the crops. We provided families with garden plots where they could grow produce to both consume and sell. However, the families no longer wish to do this. Currently we only have our greenhouse co-op in operation.

- 1) Green Houses: In 2011 Loving Arms built green houses and started to form Women's Co Operatives from the mountain villages. The green houses benefit over 40 families. The agreement is that when the crops are harvested the families use some of the crop to improve their diets and sell the rest, sharing the profits. Monies are kept to continue the project by themselves and to provide items to keep their children at school. Families have shown responsibility and great effort to make their project succeed. Currently there are five greenhouses in the cooperative called Grupo de tomate "Semilla de Amor"/ Tomato Group "Seed of Love". Each greenhouse is owned and operated by 8 women.

- Animal Project

Loving Arms provided funding to teach families of this project how to care for, raise, breed and market either the livestock or the products from the animals and birds. Currently only dairy cows are being raised. The pigs and poultry projects were pilot projects which did not continue. The Milkmaid Cooperative San Jose Parrojas (Cooperativa Lechera San José Parrojas) currently is a dairy cooperative with 20 members.

Milk is their main product that is consumed and also sold. This past year the co-op members have also learned to make cheese, which they use and sell. Yogurt is another product that will be for sale soon.

- Temporary Work in Canada

Loving Arms is working with a Quebec company (FERME), and two organizations in Guatemala (Amigo Laboral:Asistencia para la MIGracion y Orientacion Laboral; and ComuGuate) to find employment in Canada through the Temporary Foreign Workers Program. Loving Arms assists this processes by finding willing qualified workers and helping them through the process by getting them to appointments such as medical and police checks and even getting training for the men if necessary.

Since October 2013, 189 men and women have been involved in this program. As of October 2015 there are 15 workers currently in Canada. These people will now be able to support their families, send their children to school, buy better food and overall enjoy a much higher standard of living. Loving Arms has instituted a pay-it-forward program for these men to help Loving Arms help others to do the same.

## **HOW WE MEASURE OUR WORK**

To assess the impact of our work, we use the following key indicators which are tracked for all the programs: Improved health and nutrition; community and multi-community unity with a common goal and vision; increased income and a positive economic impact; increased school attendance, increased higher education and increased church attendance.

## **President and Founder**

Linda Coghlin

## **Loving Arms' Board of Directors**

Chair — Jim Theaker  
Vice-Chair — Ron Shantz  
Directors — Stephen Coghlin; David Machry  
Secretary — Sharon Regan  
Treasurer — Catherine Berry  
Audit Readiness — Ruvani Shauble

## **Advisory Board**

Accounting — Mike Veitch      Legal — Norm Keith  
Bookkeeper — Sandy Reesor      International Development— Jim Carrie  
Finance and Charities Directorate — Stephen Jones

## **Loving Arms' Committees and Leads (Canada)**

(Loving Arms has over 50 volunteers serving on Committees or helping support the organization in a variety of ways.)

Communications/Marketing, Lead – Della Redwood

- Proof Reader- Diane Wile-Brumm
- Marketing—TBD
- Newsletter Journalist —
- Presentations/BLOG/Facebook - Calvin Kwong/Meghan Coghlin
- Website — Lance White / Erika Biteznik

Fundraising – Lori Konst/Andrea Machry

Governance – Ray Mahoney, Linda Coghlin, Roger Mailhot

Education — Amy Rose

Inventory — Barbara Danbrook/Steve Silva

Sponsorship – Alejandra Yoc/Kelsey Huggins