Executive Summary

During this reporting period THP-Mexico completed 103 key program activities with 1,338 participants (72% women). Collaboration with other NGOs has resulted in increased opportunity for community partners and further national and international recognition of THP-Mexico’s approach to grassroots development.

During the last half of 2012, THP-Mexico worked with 21,380 grassroots partners across 22 communities of nine municipalities in three states:

- Mazateca region in the state of Oaxaca
- Highlands Region of the state of Chiapas
- Rural communities in one municipality in the state of Zacatecas

Additionally, in 2013 THP-Mexico will be mobilizing a new cluster of communities in the State of San Luis Potosí with the support of a multi-year partnership with HSBC.

In Oaxaca, THP has established relationships with three NGO partners that will be responsible of the implementation of projects prioritized by the communities during the participatory rural assessments (PRAs): access to clean water throughout the year, improved housing and food sovereignty. Additionally, through determination and targeted advocacy efforts, partners from the community of Genova in Nuevo Progreso overcame local corruption and institutional obstacles that had delayed the installation of electricity in their community.

In Chiapas, community partners received training from the National Institute for Cooperatives Development and formalized a partnership with the Binational Net to begin to commercialize their products in New York. Two members of the cooperative came for the first time to Mexico City to promote their products in the annual fair of CEMEFI (the Mexican Center for Philanthropy).

In San Luis Potosí, the first meetings with strategic partners were held to expand programs in the region. During these initial meetings community assemblies were organized to introduce THP’s work and methodology.
In Zacatecas, THP staff visited all projects to monitor progress. Partners from the poultry farm received consultant advice from an expert roundtable in Mexico City, where they explained obstacles they face as entrepreneurs. As a result of these consolations, the members of the poultry farm along with a multidisciplinary team of volunteer experts revised current plans for the farm which include expanding and introducing a sustainable eco-farm with additional produce and animals.

During this period, THP-Mexico also joined several advocacy campaigns such as Contrapeso and the Alianza por la Salud Alimentaria (obesity and nutritional health campaigns) which aim to counter obesity and malnutrition with funds generated through increased taxes on soft drinks and junk food. THP-Mexico also participated in advocacy meetings with the President of the Food Self-Sufficiency Committee in the Senate Chamber. Increased advocacy efforts and participation in high-level campaigns this reporting period brings THP-Mexico closer self-sufficiency, not just at the field level, but at an institutional level as well.

**Accomplishments**

**First Inter-Regional Meeting 2012:** The Hunger Project-Mexico organized the first inter-community meeting, where our partners from Zacatecas, Oaxaca and Chiapas converged in one place to exchange experiences and knowledge. Six of our community partners from Zacatecas traveled a long journey to Mexico City, where they met with the national staff as well as Betsy Deisroth, VP of Advancement in New York, and Scanda Cepeda Scanda, President of THP-Mexico’s Local Board. Zacatecas partners had never traveled such distances from their communities. The climate and vegetation was completely different from their land, which is generally arid. For most female partners from Chiapas it was the first time they had ever left their communities without the company of their husbands or relatives.

The meeting focused on THP partners and how they are all inter-connected by the goals of ending hunger and poverty. It included investors, board members, national and international staff and community partners from three different regions.
Chiapas partners presented on their achievements in remodeling their cooperative with an improved design and marketing of new products as well as how THP they have gained confidence in themselves as indigenous women.

Zacatecas partners shared experiences about their income-generating projects and inspired others with stories of how they have learned to adapt to change and overcome new challenges.

Sierra Mazateca (Oaxaca) partners spoke of the work they’ve done with THP organize and train catalysts who have since formed partnerships with strategic organizations to manage water and housing projects.

Oaxaca

Planning and Operation of the Community Mobilization Program: Partner communities in la Mazateca region worked closely with THP staff to implement strategies and project planned for the second half of the year. Catalysts from different communities came together to share their experiences and discuss their role in the process of social transformation. As part of the catalyst training, participants learned new skills in research and program monitoring. A participatory baseline template was designed to help identify the number of families in each community as well as additional demographic information such as the number of people per household and their involvement with THP status (active partners, frequent associates, not partners).

Education: As part of an alliance with three alumni from TEC de Monterrey (University of Systems and Technology of Monterrey), THP catalysts delivered school supplies for kids with the commitment to implement additional projects for schools in the region.

Water: One of the priorities identified by the communities in the PRA conducted in 2011 was access to clean water throughout the year. In early 2012, the communities did participatory videos in order to speak out about their vision and invite different technical and financial partners to join the project. Rick MacKenney, director of Water for Humans¹, traveled to the communities to explore partnership possibilities in terms of sanitation and rain harvesting in the zone. Rick visited THP’s four partner communities, and community partners shared their visions about clean water, current habits and consumption practices as well as the challenges they face during dry seasons, often waiting two hours to access water. Water for Humans has developed a prototype for collecting rain water, an ecological stove and a dry latrine. The project pilot will begin in January of 2013, and THP expects to complete 84 integral water and sanitation systems in Oaxaca by the end of 2013.

Housing: Another of the priorities identified by the communities was having decent homes enabling them to live safely and healthy. The organization, Ayúdame que yo También Soy Mexicano (ATM²), visited San José Tenango to analyze work with community partners. Long distances and complex paths represent some of the challenges in terms of constructions and

¹ Water for Humans is a non-profit enterprise working to bring reliable sanitation and clean drinking water to communities world wide [http://waterforhumans.org/](http://waterforhumans.org/)
² Ayúdame que yo también soy mexicano is an organization dedicated to develop sustainable systems of self-constructed housing and social development in marginalized communities in Mexico.
home improvement. A budget and project proposal has been completed and THP and ATM will collectively look for funding for this project in 2013.

**Food Sovereignty:** During this reporting period THP celebrated the 1st Inter-Community Meeting on gender, nutrition and food sovereignty. The three-day workshop was facilitated by Raul Medina, a permaculture specialist from the organization Happy Soil. Partners discussed themes on the relationship between men and women as well as land and agricultural techniques appropriate for the area (composting, terracing, and use of organic seeds). Thanks to this training, our partners and associates have acquired more tools to improve their planting techniques and reflected on the fundamental role of women in agriculture and on the relationship between nutrition and food sovereignty as cornerstones of development and empowerment.

**Zacatecas**

**Income-generating projects:** Members of the poultry farm "Las Esperanzas," with the support of THP and a group of technical experts, collectively rethought its project to transform it from a poultry farm into an integrated farm in order to overcome obstacles presented by the poultry industry in recent years such as avian flu and extreme drought in the region which had devastated their stock. In coordination with two veterinarians, a consultant and project designer, a project evaluator, and a member of CREA (organization focused on low-income women entrepreneurs), the members generated an outline for a sustainable and profitable cycle of production: growing vegetables, using the grass to feed goats, and using the excrement as fertilizer of the soil to produce worms to feed the poultry again.

THP-Mexico is proud to announce that Zacatecas has achieved self-sufficient mobilization. For the last two years, THP has been working with the communities remotely due to insecurity and high levels of violence in the region, making regular visits from THP staff impossible. However, through the Inter-regional meeting, catalysts from half of the Zacatecas partner villages were in attendance and demonstrated that THP’s model has been successful as they are empowered leaders who have achieved, along with their communities and authorities, several successful projects to overcome poverty.

**Chiapas**

**Income-generating project (evaluation and training):** Partners from the Cooperative in Chiapas accomplished the project "Weaving Dreams, Creating Income" funded by FUNDEMEX with the primary goals of strengthening leadership and increasing incomes.
A summative evaluation was conducted in August where partners identified changes in their lives over the past six months. Each of the committees presented their achievements and obstacles. The results of the evaluation indicate progress on the way they perceive themselves and their future: increase in self-esteem at the personal level, abilities to achieve goals collectively and better relationships with their partners. The most important personal achievements in empowerment mentioned by partners include: *We are more confident in ourselves; Now I have voice; I saw what was possible; I am not afraid anymore; Women also can do things, and our partners support us*

Along with personal achievements, the project generated changes in key indicators of the income-generating project:

- Remodeling of the store, improved spaces for store display
- Developed a market study that allowed them to know what kind of designs the market prefers.
- Trainings in new designs, packaging and branding
- Contract signed for the development of the website of the cooperative and the barcode system, which allows for an updated inventory and greater control of income and expenses.
- Agreement with the Binational Network Nui Matat Napawika, who accompanied them to market their products in Mexico and in the United States. Commercialization for first time of their products to New York.

After doing the summative evaluation of the project, members of the cooperative participated in the Cooperative and Leadership Workshop taught by IMDECOOP (Mexican Institute of Cooperative Development), where they were able to observe the functioning of other cooperatives in Mexico and the world. They identified the need to capitalize their cooperative and generate an official document certifying their membership to the group. They also identified the possibilities of creating an alternative income project, such as a yarn store, where all members can buy material at better prices and reinvest earnings in cooperative projects as a social or educational funds or savings bank system.

As a final activity, our partners received the visit of the area of social responsibility from TOKS, a restaurant franchise that was contacted through FUNDEMEX. TOKS extended an invitation for working together, and asked our partners to design a proposal for participating in a competition to sell their products to TOKS.
San Luis Potosí

An analysis of geo-spatial clusters was performed to select the municipalities’ expansion in San Luis Potosi. Using indicators such as the level of marginalization, poverty levels, percentage of population and indigenous language speakers, THP identified the municipality of Tampamolón Corona as the most suitable to begin our work in the area. The initial phases included the presentation of THP’s methodology with the municipal authorities and community representatives. In December, through community assemblies, an agreement to begin activities in 2013 was finalized.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Communication: Language is one of the challenges we face when working in communities where the majority of the population are native speakers of languages other than Spanish, including our regional coordinators. We learned that we must be efficient in communicating because translation involves time and energy. And we also learned that language is not just words, but body and emotional communication.

Working with allies: Access to communities is often difficult and requires a healthy physical condition to face the roads and climate of the region. By working with partners and allies from other organizations, we have found difficulties for causing excessive physical efforts from partners that are not used to walking long distances. We learned that our allies and partners should have as much information as possible before visiting communities.

Working with government: The challenge faced by our partners in Genova was really timely and emotionally consuming. We have to overcome several information gaps and deal with the problems derived from the lack of communication and internet in the region. We need to have the information from the communities as quickly as possible, but sometimes this is impossible, because of the rain or the poor infrastructure making it harder to accelerate our communications with government officers.

Partner Story: A Community Profile

Community Partners of (Genova, Nuevo Progreso, Oaxaca).

The community of Genova, Nuevo Progreso is composed of 43 families and is located in the municipality of San José Tenango. It is a highly marginalized community, with extremely difficult access (two hours walk in the mountains from “El sitio,” the last point with vehicular access) and lacks almost all basic services such as sewage, education, access to health care, electricity, etc.
Since 2010, the community has been working with THP, participating in VCAs and Community Action meetings and planning. During the VCAs, Genova prioritized electricity as the main goal for their community and a committee was formed to manage the project. The project began in 2012 with an initiative to install solar panels, but for bureaucratic reasons the project could not be carried as planned. This did not stop the community and they continued to seek solutions for the adoption of the electricity in the area.

In August of this year, the local government announced the approval of the electricity project, using traditional lampposts. But the condition under which the project was approved was that the community members needed to transport 54 lampposts from “El sitio” to the community (two hours approximately walking in extreme and steep paths).

The community did not think twice and with the hope of seeing their community out of darkness began to carry the lampposts on their backs: It took eight hours for 30 men to carry one lamppost, all the men who worked were volunteers from the community working, without receiving any pay.

Halfway through the process, with 18 lampposts standing and another 36 still waiting, the community realized that the job was much more demanding and exhausting than they had imagined. Some community members were injured and others were physically exhausted. At this point, they asked for the advice of the national office and together we gave support to the process to ensure that community members exercised their rights and had the appropriate tools and knowledge to make informed decisions.

THP contacted the Energy Ministry in Mexico and reconstructed the responsibility map of this project. Collectively with the community we demanded accountability of the people in charge of the project and for the budget assigned to this.

By December of this year, our partners reached a new deal with local authorities and the contractors to receive economic compensation for their work transporting the light posts, as well as technical assistance to carry the remaining posts to the community. Undoubtedly, our community partners are now are more skilled than ever to face new challenges, negotiate and manage new projects.

Members of the community of Genova are an example of organization and perseverance and in The Hunger Project, we are proud of their work, not only of the physical but the organizational one to reach its vision of having an enlightened community.
Country By Numbers: Mexico

21,380 Total Participants 
(Q3-Q4 2012)

- Chiapas: 84%
- Oaxaca: 11%
- Zacatecas: 5%

Range of Program Activities

- Village Development Campaigns
- Animator Training
- Community Mobilization

Village Development Campaigns: Empowering Rural Women

Reporting Period

- Q1-Q2 2011
- Q3-Q4 2011
- Q1-Q2 2012
- Q3-Q4 2012

Chiapas
Oaxaca
Zacatecas

21,380 Total Participants (Q3-Q4 2012)
Partnerships Advocacy & Alliances

Premios Compartir: The Hunger Project-Mexico is very pleased to announce that we were a 2012 finalists in the category of Community Development of the “Premios Compartir,” a prestigious foundation award given to outstanding community development promoters since 1988.

4th Worldwide meeting of Human Values: Under the direction of Maria Cristina Gonzalez P., this conference was held for the fourth year in Monterrey, Mexico. Lorena Vázquez and Betsy Deisroth opened the second day, sharing the global and local work of The Hunger Project.

Partnerships

ATM- part of REDESCOM: ATM is a nonprofit organization focused on housing and social cohesion. During this semester ATM visited the communities in la Mazateca to analyze possibilities in terms of housing improvement. http://www.atm.org.mx/

Water for Humans: An organization with technical expertise on water collecting systems working in partnership with THP and communities in Oaxaca http://waterforhumans.org/

Happy Soil: A nonprofit organization with technical expertise in permaculture partnering with THP and communities in Oaxaca to improve sustainable agriculture practices.

Q3-Q4 2012 Priorities

Community Mobilization (Oaxaca)
- Implementation of the water pilot project
- Follow-up meetings with ATM for the housing prototype
- Strategic meetings with local governments to foster water and housing projects

Animators (Oaxaca & Chiapas)
- Trainings for animators (follow-up and program management)

1,000 Days
- Workshops on 1,000 days strategy
- Follow up of the local construction of terraces
- Local diagnostic of maternal and newborn feeding habits
- Local diagnostic in food sovereignty
- Contextualization of the 1,000 days strategy to the cultural framework in Chiapas

Income Generation (Chiapas)
- Follow-up meetings with the representatives of the Cooperative
- Training sessions and follow-up meetings with members of the cooperative

• Hire a new staff member focused on empowering income-generating projects in all the communities where our cooperative partners are from.

Municipal Government
• Strategic meetings with local authorities
• Diagnostic of the local system of authorities (CMDRS) and follow-up of the local elections to be celebrated in July
• Strategic round tables with local authorities

Youth Citizenship
• Alliance with local high-schools in Oaxaca to include their students as local volunteers for the survey evaluation

Communication and Outreach
• Implementation of the internal communication strategy
• Public relations with new media partners

Effective program implementation
• Design of psycho-pedagogic materials for the regions
• Food sovereignty workshop for the team

M&E and Investigation, Documentation and Systematization
• Mid-term evaluation survey in Oaxaca (design and implementation)
• Brief document of hunger in Mexico
• Cabinet research of 1,000 days strategy and visit to the communities for field research