



**Name of Funded Organization:** The Equilibrium Fund (now The Maya Nut Institute)

Website: [www.theequilibriumfund.org](http://www.theequilibriumfund.org)

### **Featured Program in June 2009**

**Mission:** to alleviate poverty, malnutrition and deforestation by teaching rural and indigenous women about the nutrition, uses, processing and propagation of Maya Nut (*Brosimum alicastrum*).

**DFW Project and area of focus:** Healthy Kids, Healthy Forests, Maya Nut school lunch program for Guatemala

**Target Population and number of beneficiaries:** 2,000 children and 500 rural and indigenous women.

**Amount of DFW donation:** \$17,790

Website: <http://www.theequilibriumfund.org>

### **Brief Project Description**

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**Healthy Kids, Healthy Forests** The immediate goal of Healthy Kids, Healthy Forests Program is to serve Maya Nut lunches in the poorest Guatemalan schools as a replacement for the unhealthy and often toxic corn and soy-based snacks currently provided in these schools. We also establish Maya Nut tree nurseries in each participating school with the goal of reforesting 3000 trees for each school.

All Maya Nut School Lunch products are produced by Guatemalan women's cooperatives, thereby providing dignified jobs and steady income for rural women, as well as opportunities to learn valuable skills such as accounting, planning, organization, and nutrition and business management.

The Maya Nut School Lunch program ensures that all benefits (social, economic, and environmental) accrue directly to the participating communities. This serves to revitalize rural economies, stimulate cultural pride and restore the rainforests that provide ecosystem services and habitat for biodiversity.



### Overall Project Status:

#### Narrative Progress Report.

##### **1. *Project achievements and progress during the report period.***

**Funds donated by DFW were used to implement Healthy Kids, Healthy Forests (HKHF), a Maya Nut School Lunch program in the Petén region of Guatemala in 2009. We were able to feed 2,000 children from 22 schools for the entire school year. 11 schools were able to plant a sum total of 35,000 trees in Maya Nut “food forests” for future food production and protection of soil and watersheds. As an indirect result of HKHF an additional 115,000 Maya Nut trees were planted by local ranchers who had learned of the value of Maya Nut for cattle fodder from the Ministry of Agriculture field staff who were producing the tree seedlings for HKHF.**



**HKHF was the first program in the region's history to successfully integrate various stakeholders and partners, including community leaders and directors of schools, Ministries of Education, Health and Agriculture, National Fund for Agriculture, NGOs (ProPeten, ACOFOP, Rainforest Alliance, The Equilibrium Fund, Defenders of Nature) and the local women's Maya Nut producers cooperative, Alimentos Nutri-Naturales.**

We are extremely proud to have achieved this landmark collaboration because the region where we were working (Petén, Northern Guatemala) has a long history of lack of teamwork and mistrust among government agencies, NGOs and communities. **HKHF was the first time the Ministries of Education, Health and Agriculture had ever collaborated on a project together.**

To ensure transparency and improve communication we prepared a series of documents and contracts for different partners and stakeholders. These are included in Annex 1-10. These documents are now serving as templates for other HKHF programs in Mexico, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

We were able to produce a digital map of where we have trained communities, not just in Guatemala, but throughout the region.





We were able to create a team of 3 Maya Nut trainers who trained the women in the communities about the Maya Nut, including the recommended recipes for the school lunches. These trainers are now being contracted by other NGO's to do Maya Nut trainings in communities outside the scope of the project.

**We trained more than 500 rural and indigenous women about the harvesting, processing, nutrition, recipes and propagation of Maya Nut for food, income and reforestation.**



We were able to create a template for HKHF which is currently being used in Nicaragua, Mexico and El Salvador and which we hope to implement in Haiti in 2011.

The Ministry of Agriculture is currently implementing a Maya Nut ice-cream school snack program in response to demand from rural schools for Maya Nut products for children.

**2. Details of the activities/events that have contributed to the project success.**

- 600 rural and indigenous women, 22 rural school directors, 7 Ministry of Health staff and 5 Ministry of Agriculture field staff were trained in the processing, nutrition, recipes and propagation of Maya Nut.
- 4 large and well-funded NGOs (ProPeten, Rainforest Alliance, ACOFOP, Defenders of Nature) were indoctrinated in the methodology HKHF uses to achieve universal rural development goals (poverty reduction, nutrition and health, environmental sustainability).
- A competent team of Maya Nut trainers has formed and is now working independently on a contract basis with other NGO's (including UNEP (United Nations Environment Program) and government ministries to train new communities about the Maya Nut.
- 2,000 children and their families are now cognizant of the importance of the Maya Nut tree for biodiversity, soil and water protection, as well as its importance for food and income for rural communities.
- The mayors and governors of 11 departments in northern Guatemala are now aware of the potential of the Maya Nut to provide food, income and ecosystem services.
- The mayors and governors of 11 departments in northern Guatemala are interested in reforesting their communal lands with Maya Nut.
- We were able to obtain baseline anthropometric data from 2 sample schools. This will facilitate long-term monitoring of these communities for health impacts related to the Maya Nut "food forests" they have established.

**3. List of the key challenges and problems encountered that have affected the progress of the project.**

- Because collaboration and teamwork are not part of the culture in Guatemala, it was very difficult to foster trust and transparency among the stakeholders and the program did not continue into 2010, though some of the stakeholders may resuscitate it in 2011. To resolve this, we continued to communicate with all stakeholders even after the end of the project in an effort to keep communication channels open.
- Because rural school board members were extremely envious of the women members of the Maya Nut producer cooperative (Alimentos Nutri-Naturales), we were unable to persuade them to allocate the Q1/child/day quota provided by the government to purchase the school lunches. This greatly reduced the amount of schools we could include in the program, thereby reducing our overall intended impact. We have adapted the program to work only in communities that have Maya Nut trees so that the community members themselves can produce the Maya Nut for the lunches and sell it to the schools. (We are not implementing HKHF right now, but when we get another chance, we will do it this way)

- ☑ People in this part of Guatemala do not have a culture of reforesting degraded land. This is why only 50% of the schools planted Maya Nut “food forests”. *Considering this fact, we are satisfied with the reforestation we were able to achieve. The Ministry of Agriculture has commented that they have had many requests for Maya Nut trees for reforestation since the program ended.*
- ☑ We had problems with staff at the beginning of the program and had to hire a new program director after 3 months. *We hired a new program director.*
- ☑ 2009-10 was a drought year. Seedling mortality in the reforested areas has been high. *We are working with Rainforest Alliance and the Ministry of Agriculture to count the number of dead seedlings and replant them in August 2010.*
- ☑ 2009 was an election year, so the Ministers of Education, Health and Agriculture all changed and we had a very difficult time setting up meetings with the new ministers. This had a major negative effect on the reforestation most of all, but also with the continuity of the program into 2010. *We continue to involve these ministries in our correspondence and meetings to educate them about HKHF.*

**4. *The actions took to resolve the problems are listed above in blue.***

**5. *What are the indicators you use to monitor success?***

Our indicators are the following:

- ☑ Number of women trained about Maya Nut
- ☑ Number of children fed/educated about Maya Nut
- ☑ Number of partner NGOs and other organizations (governmental, etc.) educated about Maya Nut and HKHF
- ☑ Number of trees planted

**6. *Is the project on track with the planned activities and expected outcome?***

Yes. We are disappointed in the lack of continuity in 2010, but there are signs among the stakeholders that they are motivated to continue the program in 2011. In some ways we are disappointed that only 50% of the participating schools were able to establish Maya Nut “food forests”. On the other hand, we had 5 schools that were not part of HKHF who established Maya Nut forests based simply on hearsay and the availability of Maya Nut trees and technical assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture.



**7. Is the project a new initiative or an on-going program?**

The project is a new initiative that is turning into an on-going program. Though there has not been any continuity in Guatemala, our other programs in Mexico, El Salvador and Nicaragua are implementing HKHF now.

**8. Please provide a timetable (separate page) with a budget line that specifies the following:**

- a. i) Our Input (What is invested); ii) Output: What has or is being done (training, skill development, technical assistance, loan, etc...and iii) Outcome/impacts (i.e. increased earning, improved health, increased role in decision making within the household and community, etc...**

<b>HKHF</b>	<b>Budget (with DFW support)</b>	<b>Output (all women)</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Trainings for Women about Maya Nut	\$10,000	500 women	Improved health and food security for at least 500 families
Meetings with Stakeholders	\$500	28 stakeholder groups learn to work together	Groundwork established for future collaborative projects to improve community wellbeing
250,000 Maya Nut seedlings produced	\$50,000	Availability of trees for reforestation	Ministry of Agriculture is now fully competent to manage production of large quantities of Maya Nut seedlings for reforestation
School Lunch products produced and delivered by women's Maya Nut enterprise	\$36,000	Jobs and income for at least 100 families	Families learn to produce Maya Nut products and to value Maya Nut forests for the income they produce. Improved sustainability of women's Maya Nut business.
School Lunches	\$27,000	Healthy	Improved child health and

provided for 2000 children for one year		children	performance in school
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**b. Please provide information on the number of women/girls who have directly and indirectly benefited from DFW's support. Are the women utilizing the skills and the knowledge gained from the program? Have their lives changed as a result to their participation? How?**

500 women learned about Maya Nut at the HKHF trainings. 40% of the women participating in the trainings were learning about Maya Nut for the first time and 47% of these women ate Maya Nut for the first time at our trainings. These women are now better equipped to feed their children and to protect the rainforests.

**c. What are the main highlights and accomplishments as a result to DFW's support?**

The main highlights of the DFW support are that the funds enabled us to conduct more training for more women as part of HKHF. We were able to hire more qualified staff because we had adequate funds for the rest of the project, thanks to DFW support. The reforestation was much more successful because we were able to provide more assistance to the communities (technical assistance and logistics) to ensure the reforestation was done correctly from the start.

**d. As a result of the project, have you expanded your network, solicited funds, collaborated with other groups, increased your resources? Please specify**

This is the most exciting result of the project and the support from DFW was instrumental in this. We were able to form the first consortium of NGOs, Private enterprise and Government ministries working together on a project in the Peten, Guatemala. While the impact of this work was not immediately apparent, there is evidence (meetings, email communication, information sharing) happening now among the stakeholders that indicates there is more trust and more interest in working together than before. I expect these stakeholders to be implementing HKHF (or a similar project involving Maya Nut and the schools) within the next 6-12 months.

**e. What are the planned activities/next steps in the future?**

We plan to continue expanding HKHF to new regions of Guatemala and new countries in the upcoming years. We are working on a project for Haiti and also for Peru. We hope that DFW can continue to support this important work for the children and for the forests!

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