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## SACRED VALLEY HEALTH

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*Education · Access · Empowerment*

### Interim Progress Report

**Organization Name:** Sacred Valley Health

**Program Name:** Advanced Nutrition Certification Program

**Grant Amount:** \$44,087.70

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#### **PROPOSED OUTCOMES**

Sacred Valley Health's (SVH) Advanced Nutrition Certification Program (ANCP) was designed to improve the nutritional status of children in high-altitude Andean communities while providing economic and leadership opportunities to women in these same communities. Growth and development surveys in our catchment area show that 42% of children are chronically malnourished by World Health Organization (WHO) standards. In the same population, 51% of children under five are anemic. We aim to decrease those numbers by disseminating targeted nutrition education via specialized Community Health Workers (CHWs). Because this is a long term outcome, in the short term, we expect to see an increase in community member interest and knowledge through educational encounters with ANCP CHWs. Thanks to the generous support of Dining for Women, we have been able to hire three of our existing CHWs to become *docentes* by participating in a train-the-trainer program. In turn, they are now training 10 additional women as Advanced Nutrition CHWs.

#### **FUNDING**

As of March 2019, there have been no changes to project funding since the submission of our original proposal.

#### **PROJECT SITUATION: STAFFING**

There have been no significant changes to organizational structure or project plans since designing the ANCP. However, a number of staff involved with project implementation have received promotions within the organization. Escolástica Castillo Obando was promoted from Program Manager to Director of Programs, and Berta Quin Ugarte was promoted from Project Coordinator to Program Manager. Additionally, two new staff positions have been added in our office. Curriculum development is now being overseen by the Curriculum Development Coordinator, Kasey Sumeriski, and our Community Educator, Miguel Huáman. These four individuals collectively supervise planning and implementation of all ANCP activities under the supervision of the Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, Beleny Reese.

#### **BENEFICIARIES**

The proposed number of women to be impacted both directly and indirectly by the ANCP has not changed since our original proposal. A total of 13 CHWs were recruited for ANCP Year 1, and we

hope to increase the number of participating CHWs in Year 2, for a total of 30 CHWs to be directly impacted. Our plan to provide all of our communities with at least one certified ANCP CHW has not changed since the original project proposal. In this way, we still aim to provide targeted nutrition education in each of the approximately 700 households of our catchment area.

### **CHALLENGES**

Creating a comprehensive, culturally relevant curriculum for a low-literacy population continues to be a challenge. We have found that evidence-based nutrition concepts are often not translated from English to Spanish to Quechua without difficulty. Hiring a graphic designer to redesign our image-based educational resources has helped bridge that gap. Project staff work closely with both our graphic designer and our CHWs to ensure that images used for resources are easily understood and relevant to the concept being conveyed. We continue to find that our train-the-trainer program is still the best way to transcend the language and culture barriers. We are seeing that as more low-literacy *docentes* gain a deeper understanding of key concepts, they are able to teach other low-literacy CHWs much more effectively than foreign or even highly literate local staff have been able to.

Another challenge is that, even with a curriculum focused on sources of proper nutrition, access to these nutrient-rich foods remains the biggest barrier to behavior change around nutrition practices. Access to a complete market selection can vary widely among our communities. Some of our most remote communities only receive food deliveries once a week by truck. Often these trucks are filled with processed goods and only a very limited selection of produce. For those community members that cannot afford to make regular trips to the larger markets in more urban towns, access to a variety of healthy foods is quite limited. *Docente* Juliana from the remote community of Challhuacocha, located approximately two hours by car from the nearest market, told us that her community requested that more fresh produce be brought on weekly market trucks in place of so many processed foods, and vendors complied, giving community members there more access to fresh fruits and vegetables. This is encouraging because while our education-focused program cannot directly provide access to nutritious food, we plan to look at ways ANCP CHWs can mobilize and empower their communities to generate change from within. We plan to incorporate this as a key component of the ANCP curriculum.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Our core program objectives remain the same as those outlined in our original project proposal and now include two additional objectives. Initial project objectives with details on progress at the one year mark of this program are listed below followed by our new objectives with the rationale for including them in the program.

#### ***Original Program Objectives***

- 1) *To hire eight Advanced Nutrition Docentes over the course of the two-year grant cycle and train them in leadership skills, adult learning techniques, and advanced nutrition education*** In Year 1 of programming, three *docentes* were hired. The cohort was slightly smaller than anticipated, thus one less *docente* was necessary. Because of the popularity of Year 1 of this program, however, we anticipate a larger group of CHWs will participate in Year 2. This will allow us to add an additional *docente*, ultimately meeting the goal of eight *docentes* over the course of the two-year program.
- 2) *To train and certify 30 Advanced Nutrition CHWs over the course of the two-year grant cycle*** – So far 13 CHWs have been recruited and trained in Year 1 of the program. Based on the amount of interest generated in the program and in the topic of nutrition in general, we anticipate a larger group in Year 2, as mentioned above, to meet the goal of training and certifying a total of 30 ANCP CHWs.

- 3) ***To increase community member knowledge about the benefits and implementation of good nutritional practices*** – Now that the first year CHWs are certified to begin home visits, community members in 8 of our 14 communities will learn about healthy nutrition practices for family members of all ages. Additionally, CHWs will be able to identify children at risk for malnutrition and growth and development issues and provide targeted education to parents about how to ameliorate the harmful effects of under/overnutrition.
- 4) ***To increase awareness about existing nutritional practices in communities that are beneficial and should be preserved*** – Early in the implementation of CHW training, program staff recognized a need to focus resources on effective presentation of educational materials (See *New Objective 1*). We realized that reinforcement of beneficial practices could be done using educational materials that CHWs can share with community members, and that activities such as agricultural workshops can be presented as a continuing education opportunity to supplement knowledge of sources of nutrients disseminated via CHWs. We are collaborating with local agricultural specialists to incorporate and recognize indigenous agricultural traditions and practices. This in turn will allow us to customize workshops to complement ANCP educational resources.
- 5) ***As a long-term outcome, SVH aims to decrease the number of children under 5 who are underweight, stunted, and/or anemic in the communities it serves*** – With the first cohort of CHWs certified to give targeted education to families of malnourished children, SVH is identifying high-risk community members and disseminating high-quality evidence-based education focused on preventing malnutrition in children under five throughout the communities. CHWs are trained to take height measurements as well as use Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) tapes distributed by UNICEF to track growth according to WHO standards. Families of children identified to be at risk for stunting or acute malnutrition receive targeted home visits from a CHW in their community. Additionally, education is provided via community presentations on good nutrition practices.
- 6) ***As a long-term outcome, this project will provide more opportunities for women to be promoted within the organization and ultimately, climb out of poverty*** – SVH has hired three Docentes for the program and plans to promote CHWs from the first year cohort to work as *docentes* in Year 2, thus providing additional opportunities for women in the program to gain leadership and economic opportunities. This not only allows them the chance to apply for other staff positions in the organization; it also provides skills they can take with them to future employment opportunities.

#### ***New Objectives:***

- 1) ***To hire a graphic designer to improve curricular resource presentation*** – Using the funds allocated for the agricultural workshop, as explained above, SVH was able to address a more proximate need of the program by contracting a graphic designer to develop the educational resources for the CHW binders, as we mentioned in our 6-month report to DFW. After seeing the success of a graphic redesign of our Women’s Health curriculum, project staff expressed the need to provide ANCP CHWs with the same high-quality resources to increase comprehension, and thus retention, of information.
- 2) ***Community Empowerment*** – As mentioned above, we plan to look at ways ANCP CHWs can mobilize and empower their communities to generate change from within. We plan to incorporate this as a key component of the ANCP curriculum.

#### **PROJECT TIMELINE**

We do not anticipate any difficulties in completing the project within the proposed timeline. While we delayed our start date for Year 1 of the program by three months (as we noted in our 6-month DFW progress report), all planned activities were completed within the one-year timeframe. Since

Year 1 activities were sufficiently paced, we plan to execute Year 2 in a similar timeframe, which will not exceed the two-year grant period.

#### **SPECIAL THANKS**

With the generous funding from Dining for Women, SVH is able to recruit women who are committed to improving the health and nutrition of their geographically and culturally isolated communities to provide nutrition education. In conversations with *docentes* and CHWs, the ANCP is consistently mentioned as the most popular and the most beneficial program they participate in at SVH. According to our CHWs, nutrition is one of the topics in which community members show the most interest. Sharing meals has long been a vital component of local custom, and community members take great pride in food that they grow and cook. We are excited to be able to offer a program that complements and enhances local traditions. The women who are part of the program have emphasized the importance of good nutrition throughout one's lifetime, with one of the *docentes* noting that it is "never too late to eat healthy". The ANCP has brought the picture of nutrition in the high-altitude communities of the Sacred Valley into greater focus, especially regarding specific barriers to accessing nutritious food. One of the most significant lessons to come from the ANCP is that a robust advocacy and empowerment component is vital to helping community members apply what they learn from CHWs. We are very grateful to Dining for Women for the opportunity to implement this very necessary program, and we look forward to continuing to advance and improve the ANCP in Year 2.