

Organization Name

Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC)

Program Title

Women Leaders for Agroecology and Conservation, with Produce Value Adding Toward Financial Self-Sufficiency

Grant Amount **\$38,606**

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Note: Guatemala has no national postal service.

2. Outcome Goals for Program

Outcome Goals: 1) Enrich and enlarge WALC for 458 Q'eqchi' Maya young women and 2) improve program infrastructure by providing solar energy to learning center and dormitory and equipping the kitchen cooking and processing facility.

CCFC's Women in Agroecology Leadership Training (WALC, formerly CALT) program, is a 25-day hands-on educational workshop for young Q'eqchi' Maya women from remote, mountain villages that border the cloud forests of Guatemala's central highlands. Villages targeted by the WALC program are statistically among the most at-risk villages in the country, with high rates of maternal and child mortality, chronic malnutrition and poverty. These villages also have the greatest environmental impact on neighboring cloud forests. Slash and burn subsistence farming provokes not only deforestation and environmental degradation but also contributes to malnutrition and poverty. WALC is a leadership training program, equipping young women to become leaders in environmental advocacy, conservation biology and agroecology.

- The goal of the DFW funded project was to enrich the educational experience over two years of WALC. DFW funds sponsored 170 Q'eqchi' Maya young women as they participated in the WALC program, a 25 day leadership training program. Funds also provided a study stipend for each girl to continue studying in the next school year.

- A secondary goal of the grant was to provide solar panels for power to the education center and dormitories for WALC participants, and to buy kitchen equipment for a processing center, where the young women create value-added products, such as jams and candles from locally grown plants.

What is the WALC curriculum?

CCFC's WALC (Women in Agroecology Leadership Training) workshop in outline:

WALC consists of three core classes and six ability classes.

Core classes are taught every day:

- * Conservation Biology with a focus on birds, streams and habitats
- * Agroecology
- * Life Project:

Ability classes are each received four times by each student during the 25 day workshop

- * Gardening and heirloom crop propagation
- * Agroecology (practicum)
- * Reforestation and tree propagation
- * Baking
- * Production
- * Gray water reclamation
- * "Pura Vida" rock climbing, low ropes, and outdoor adventure
- * Birding

What makes WALC a truly life transforming 25 workshop begins in the "Life Project" class which meets daily for 90 minutes plus a 30 minute "buenos días" every morning, calibrated with the daily themes of of the class Life Project. This course invites students to respond to a series of four questions: "Where am I? Who am I? What are my goals (both long term and short term)? and How will I achieve my goals?" These four questions correspond to four relationship questions: What is my relationship with myself? others? my environment? my future? Students are invited to bolster their self-esteem and self-confidence while developing their sense of personal vocation. Life Project invites students to care for their bodies as well as their environment. Starting with dental hygiene and moving outward in concentric circles to include nutrition, reproductive health / family planning, water, soil and forest conservation.

The goal of WALC is to equip young women for leadership in environmental advocacy to become agents of change and catalysts in the struggle against poverty and malnutrition.

3. Project Accomplishments

This project accomplished exactly what was proposed from the outset, and more! As a direct result of the DFW grant, over a 2 year period, an additional 170 Q'eqchi Maya young women were able to participate in 25 days of leadership training at CCFC's center. Funding provided by DFW also enriched and improved the WALC experience for all of the 458 program participants over the two years of this project. As a direct result of funding provided by DFW,

young women were equipped as leaders, environmental advocates, pioneers in agroecology, agents of positive change in their home villages.

By participating in WALC each student earned a stipend to offset the cost of their formal education for the following year.

- Because of the support of DFW, in 2015 and 2016, CCFC was able to significantly expand its existing program to transform lives of Maya young women, by offering an entire 2nd session of leadership training and scholarships each year over the two years of funding.
- WALC in the Village leveraged the young women's new knowledge of agroecology, to introduce heirloom crops into small-holder plots in their home villages, improving the family's livelihood as well as improving their nutrition.
- The drop out rate after completing sixth grade, for Q'eqchi' Maya young women in this demographic, is 75%. For those who participate in the WALC program, this rate plummets to less than 5%.

Stated Objective, Including Any Changes in Objectives

- Objective 1: Enrich, improve and enlarge WALC over two years. Equip 170 young women leaders (85 per year) through participation in WALC program.

With DFW funding 85 young women in the WALC program each of the 2 years, total participation increased significantly.

- **from?** to 219 participants in 2015 and 239 participants in 2016.

- Objective 2: WALC in Village - Agroecology in Action.

When young women return to their villages after participating in the WALC program, they become leaders in agroecology. They take home starter plants of heirloom crops, along with a business plan they have made for planting and harvesting them in their small-holder family plots. This shifts the current emphasis on slash-and-burn monoculture, to the cultivation of more diverse crops, which also have increased economic value. Improving agriculture not only improves the livelihood of an impoverished family, it also helps to protect the forests.

This agroecology knowledge is transferred into the villages as required by the WALC program: participants pass the knowledge they have gained to peer groups in their village and provide help in setting up these additional farm plots throughout the village. Each WALC graduate submits the names of **three** young women they have partnered with.

The young women, who participated in WALC through funding provided by DFW, can impact thousands of families living in small villages on the edge of the cloud forest. Agroforestry is seeded throughout these remote villages, with the added benefit of sparing cloud forest from the expanding corn monoculture.

- Objective 3: Young women will continue in school/postpone first pregnancy.

As stated above, young women who participate in the WALC program continue in school at a much higher rate than the average, thus postponing marriage and first pregnancies. This shows that many Maya young women have a strong desire to continue their education; they simply need help to find that way forward.

- Objective 4: WALC will be economically self sufficient through economic development, value adding and production of cloud forest products.

Income generated for WALC through production and sales of fruit jam, **chocolate**, candles, and coffee.

totalled \$_____ over the 2 year period. While this income has not proven to be sufficient to support WALC in its entirety, it is an important step forward toward economic sufficiency of the program. (RTC: please insert these \$ amounts.)

4. Challenges Faced with this Project/How Challenges were Addressed

-The number of young women who want to participate in the WALC program greatly exceeds the funding we have. These young women are motivated to continue their education, under extremely difficult circumstances: subsistence living in small remote mountain villages, with malnutrition and scarce healthcare.

Unfortunately, this past Fall, CCFC was not able to offer a second session, due to lack of funding. This reduction in program reach came at a time when demand for the WALC program had significantly increased. Due to young women's awareness of the impact WALC is having on the lives of those around them, many more have been applying than CCFC is able to accept. Capacity exists to expand the program, to offer more Q'eqchi' Maya young women the opportunity to transform their lives.

-Another challenge is to increase direct access to markets and customers for the products produced in our onsite kitchen. Increased sales of these value-added products directly increases funding for young women to participate in WALC. Thanks to DFW funding, the processing center is now equipped with production equipment, so that production can be increased. We now need to match that production increase with reliable retail marketing partners.

5. Name any differences in your org than that presented in approved proposal

- The name of the 25-day leadership training and scholarship program has been changed to more clearly describe the objectives of the program. The original name, **CALT**, stood for Conservation and Agroecology Leadership Training. It has now been changed to **WALC**, Women in Agroecology Leadership for Conservation, to reinforce the emphasis on achieving change through women.

The content of the program remains the same.

6. Most Important Lessons Learned

- Demand of young women to participate in WALC is great. CCFC has expanded geographical reach in Cloud Forest of Central Highlands of Guatemala, to include more villages, from original 67 mountain villages, to 110.

- Achieving self sufficiency of WALC financially, to be a self-funding program, continues to be a long-term goal. With new production processing kitchen equipment, steady progress is being made toward achieving this goal.
- We have learned how important our process of continuous improvement is to the WALC program.

After each session, WALC teachers and staff meet for a day to reflect on what went well and what aspects of the program could be improved. These changes are then incorporated into the next session of WALC. WALC is a program that is in a state of constant evaluation and improvement.

7. Changes within CCFC as a Result of this Project

- CCFC is responding to success of WALC by hiring additional staff and providing additional education support to these staff members, by including support for university studies. As direct result of DFW funding of the 2015 and 2016 programs, CCFC is hiring 5 additional full time staff in 2018, all of whom are young women who have participated in WALC. This work opportunity with CCFC will provide numerous benefits: as full time employees the young women receive salary as well as university fees paid. An important additional benefit is that these new full time staffers provide a living example to young women starting out in WALC of opportunities that they can claim for their future.
 - The expectation that WALC could become economically self-sufficient in 2 years, through the sale of value-added products, turned out to be unrealistic. The program continues to be funded primarily through grants and individual donations.
- CCFC has placed new focus on its fund-raising efforts this past year, expanding its reach to include social media and e-cards to our large contact list of friends who have volunteered on site over the years as well as to birding groups and universities who have conducted field work on site.
- (young women who participated in this program: Yr 1 - participants. Yr 2 and onwards- peer leaders/teachers
 - 35% young women return the following year.

8. Unexpected Outcomes and Benefits

The Dining for Women grant has generated a bountiful basket of unexpected benefits:

- Young women who have participated in WALC program are now choosing to continue on into university studies: six in January, 2016, eight in January, 2017, and ten in January, 2018.

This desire for continued education on the college level has now become a welcome trend among participants in our WALC program, a population that otherwise would have stopped studying after 6th grade primary.

-Several WALC participants have gone on to work for WINGS, a Guatemalan reproductive health NGO, that focuses on family planning in Maya villages. Wings hired these young women to act as 'promoters' or representatives of Wings in their home communities.

-Other young women participants have worked with CCFC and medical professionals to conduct a health survey of 450 mothers in remote Q'echi' Maya villages. Their work has provided important documentation of the alarming rates of infant mortality, illiteracy, malnutrition in these communities.

-Our new fundraising initiative, which focuses on the WALC program empowering Maya young women to be in control of their own futures with the opportunity to pursue education, is being met with a good response. This donor response to issues of empowerment and education of Q'eqchi Maya young women mirrors the renewed focus on rights of women and young women in the USA, as decades of widespread sexual assaults on women have become widely known.

9. Any change in strategy as result of experience.

How will you address these challenges in the future? We have experienced a great increase in demand for opportunity to participate in the WALC program. As more young women advance in life from their education in WALC, they provide examples and testimony inspiring neighbors to desire to participate.

- We experience the need for expanding WALC. The 2 years that DFW funded the program, there we held 2 sessions.
- In 2017, on the other hand, only had 125 participants in one session. Change of strategy: line up funding to support 2 sessions again next year.
- With the increased number of participants, we need to increase time dedicated to community follow up visits for continued education in themes studied in the WALC program and inspection of the
- We need to gear up our agroecology parcels to produce more food for an increased student population and to provide sufficient practice area for hands on agroecology experience during future workshops.

10. Lives Touched, Directly and Indirectly by the Program.

Directly: Dining for Women grant has **directly** touched the lives of 458 students all of whom received an intensive, life-transforming 25 day workshop. Of those 458 students, 170 young women over the 2 years of DFW funding were sponsored directly by DFW, 85 young women in 2016 and another 85 young women in 2017. CCFC infrastructural improvements paid for by this DFW grant also directly improved the educational experience of 960 sixth grade *Kids and Birds* students annually of whom approximately 50% were girls. Thus, over the past 2 years, 960 girls benefited directly from improvements in the kitchen equipment and solar power. All of them were encouraged to study beyond primary school and learned about their option to participate in WALC program.

Directly: 170 stipends were awarded at a cost of \$140 each. Recipients of these stipends continued in school the year following their WALC workshop. CCFC used \$10 per sponsorship to subsidize each DFW sponsored students for their 25 days WALC workshop this includes 3 meals and two snacks per day. Obviously, CCFC highly subsidizes each sponsorship to cover all costs of the 25 day program. CCFC is proud of this highly efficient use of its financial resources. WALC is a program with high impact at a low budget.

Indirectly: As well as improving the program for DFW supported students, the Dining for Women grant also provided an important benefit to all other students in WALC program, by sponsoring learned speakers, such as representatives of WINGS of Guatemala, who were on site for a week, leading workshops on reproductive health and family planning. Other guest teachers addressed self-esteem issues, life planning project, agroforestry, cloud forest ecology, biodiversity conservation, and the importance of caring for healthy environment that will provide ecosystem services to their families as well as

Indirectly: The Dining for Women grant had a broad reach through WALC in the Village program, as a result of the multiplier effect in the program: Each WALC participant engages her own family as well as her peers as partners in planting traditional heirloom crops in their small-holder plots in their own village.

Extending the reach of WALC through **WALC in Village: the multiplier effect**

Over the two years of DFW funding, WALC had 458 participants. Each student has been required to both plant an agroforestry parcel for their family and pass on to their family ideas and skills acquired in their WALC workshop. With an average family size of seven, this multiplier effect (adjusted for returning students) = 3,096 of whom approximately 1,737 are women and girls.

The WALC multiplier effect also happens with WALC's peer mentoring. Each WALC student is required to identify four peer "followers" or "Seguidores." Adjusted for returning students, the peer seguidores requirement adds another 6,192 women and girls to the over all reach of WALC (taking four as the average number of women and girls per family). This brings the total WALC multiplier effect reach to 7,929 women and girls. In some villages "WALC in the Village" events were held with another overall attendance of over 100 women and girls.

In summary over the last two years CCFC's DFW grant touched the lives of over 10,200 girls and women.

11. Measurements Used to Monitor Success

Scholarship Checks: CCFC receives documentation from each school showing that a girl from the WALC program is enrolled as a full-time student and has achieved passing grades throughout the school year. Payments for their schooling are only given to the young women as the school year ends, assuring completion of the school year. Awards ceremonies are held each year, where the young women are formally presented their stipends, with their professors, school directors and proud families in attendance.

Agroforestry Plots: CCFC staff visit Maya villages to check on the agroecology plots. In 2018, geography students from Mary Washington University (Fredericksburg, VA) will be visiting the

sites, to create GIS maps of the agroforestry parcel sites, for ongoing monitoring of parcels by satellite images for the gain in forestry cover.

12. WALC is ongoing program: Future **plans and expected results**, including projected timeframe.

WALC program is ongoing, with continuous improvement to the content of the program every year.

The immediate goal is to offer 2 WALC sessions a year, to meet the demand of young women wanting to attend.

Another important goal is to expand the reach of WALC geographically, to the more remote villages, where isolation and need is greatest. “Lean forward” to villages where need is highest.

13. Detailed List of all expenses incurred within the grant cycle that have been paid for with DFW grant.

WALC Stipends		170	\$140	\$23,800
WALC sponsorships		170	\$10.00	\$1,700.00
WALC enrichment				\$2,572.00
WALC in the Village				\$4,000.00
Infrastructure Improvements	solar energy systems			\$1,534.00
	kitchen / processing center			\$5,000.00
Grand Total				\$38,606.00

Project expenses can be grouped under the following rubrics: Enlarge, Enrich, Improve.

Enlarge: 66% of the total funds received for this project from DFW were used to enlarge WALC’s participation. Over the two years CCFC was able to invite 170 more participants increasing its WALC enrollment by 37% as a direct result of the funding from DFW. Eighty-five participants per year for two years (= 170) received educational stipends earned through their participation in the 25 day workshop. Cash value per stipend \$140. DFW subsidized each participants participation in the 25 day workshop with \$10. CCFC spent \$1,000 for outreach and recruiting allowing CCFC to invite program participants from more remote villages thus geographically extending the reach of our work.

Enrich: \$572 was used to enrich the educational experience in each session by brining in visiting resource people. CCFC invited motivational speakers, reproductive health promoters, agroecologists and many others. \$1,000 was used for transportation for WALC participants increasing accessibility to the program for the participants coming from the most at-risk villages.

Improve: the DFW grant also provided \$6,534 to improve infrastructure such as solar energy to provide light to the dormitories.

Audit-friendly spending: CCFC was founded on the principles of transparency and accountability. A total of 61% (\$23,800) of the total project budget was spent incentivizing WALC and continuation in school through educational scholarships, stipends earned by each WALC participant. These funds went out as checks made out to the stipend recipient. CCFC maintains a checking account exclusively for educational scholarships and all checks extended from this account go out payable to the beneficiary. Expenses listed under the rubrics enrich and improve are accountable through receipts.

14. DFW grant: assist your org in obtaining other funding, partnerships, public recognition? The DFW logo is proudly displayed on the CCFC website.

Our organization has discovered commonality of donor connections through the DFW grant:

- DFW supporters who were also CCFC supporters of WALC program
- CCFC supporters who have now become aware of DFW and have become contributors to your program.

CCFC now enjoys partnership with premier bird conservation group, American Bird Conservancy (ABC) which is adding our WALC in the Village focus on agroforestry plots on small-holder farms in Q'eqchi' Maya villages to its Birdscapes program. This reflects a broadening of emphasis in the environmental community to include the well-being and livelihoods of indigenous peoples as part of solutions to preserving ecosystems. Community Cloud Forest Conservation's Dining For Women grant fits perfectly with this broadening of emphasis.

Closing Statement

In 2018, CCFC celebrates its 10th anniversary of providing leadership training and educational opportunities to Q'eqchi Maya young women while protecting the cloud forest ecology of the central highlands of Guatemala. We are proud that Dining For Women has been a part of this important work, impacting lives of vulnerable young women living on the edge subsistence and dreaming of a better life. We look forward to continuing to partner with DFW in the future.