



## SUMMARY OF ATZIN PROGRAMS TLAMACAZAPA, MEXICO 2010-2011.



### HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Midwives and primary care. This is one of Atzin's first health programs. Midwives continue to offer a full range of maternal health services – prenatal, postnatal, delivery, emergency transport accompaniment, and newborn follow-up. An average of 25-28 women attend prenatal care with midwives at any one time. Midwives participated in an eight day continuing education on-site in 2011.
- Home births are decreasing because more women are giving birth in Taxco hospital. Worrisome trends include more bottle-fed babies, all born in hospital, and high numbers of caesarean sections.
- Saturday health clinic. Atzin continues with a primary care clinic each Saturday with help from one health promoter.
- Dental clinic. Atzin set up the first dental program and clinic in the village in 2007 in response to the horrific state of people's teeth. The clinic offers basic dental services free to children twelve years and under and at a subsidized rate to adults and is now also able to provide crowns and prostheses at very reasonable prices with a payment plan. The team also does preventative oral health teaching in all of the schools, classroom by classroom, and gives referral slips to all children requiring attention.
- Special needs. 132 children and adults are registered and receiving various types of attention and support, on the basis of disability, malnutrition, extenuating family circumstances and/or single parenthood. Support includes distribution of food supplements and medications; early childhood educational stimulation; friendly home visits, accompaniment to hospital and medical appointments, and weekly nutritious cooking demonstrations.
- Cataract operations. In 2010, Atzin accompanied and transported six patients from Tlama to the World Cataract Foundation facility in Ometepe, a 10-12 hour drive away, where they received cataract operations. (Many more need cataract operations, but few who are brave enough to make the long journey).

### EDUCATION

- Scholarships. Atzin administers thirty scholarships, 28 females and 2 males, 13-33 years of age. Twenty-one of the thirty are in junior high school in Tlamacazapa and nine women are studying outside of the village.
- Atzin has 132 children in its education program, taught by 12 educators, all young village women. The children fall into two categories: children who have never attended formal school or dropped out very early, and in the afternoon, children who are failing their grade level and need tutoring to stay in school. The educators meet each Saturday for tutor training and upgrading. Participating children receive a simple, nutritious snack upon arriving at the Atzin program.

- 
- **Women's Literacy.** Atzin conducted a house-to-house census in 2005, finding that 64% of women over 15 years old were illiterate. In May 2008, two educators started teaching two 1.5 hour classes per day with an average of four-six women per class, three days per week. By August 2011, 124 women were participating in the literacy classes, with seven educators giving a total of 12 literacy classes per week. A new alphabet teaching tool suitable for rural women has been designed and pilot tested.
  - Participating women were often discouraged by their slowness to learn and by continuous negative pressure to stop attending from family and peers, resulting in irregular attendance for many. Atzin is working hard to assess this program, including finding funds to establish an adjacent daycare to encourage women with young children to attend.

## ENVIRONMENT, WATER AND SANITATION

- **Economy of Water Study.** A University of British Columbia masters student (and former Atzin intern and volunteer), Christina Wenman, gathered data on the economy of water in Tlamacazapa for her thesis. Christina's research found that the poor pay much more for less water, much of it non-potable. Non-potable water remains a serious issue for the poor in Tlamacazapa.
- From 2001 to 2009 Atzin built 60 dry toilets with rainwater catchment tanks. All but one is functioning and, on average is being used daily by 10-12 family members. All units were constructed with local village labour, with strong participation and financial contribution by the family. Then the government quickly built 500+ dry toilets at no charge to the families. The government dry toilets were of inferior design (no rainwater catchment; no diversion of urine; most of these are now being used for storage). Unfortunately, this badly-executed government project caused Atzin to suspend the construction of dry toilets in 2010-2011.
- Since 2000, Atzin has built dry toilets and/or water catchment tanks at two primary schools and one kindergarten as well as one at the Atzin Centre. All are in use and functioning well.
- **Solar lights.** Atzin is testing a simple solar light package as a possible replacement for standard electricity hookups and light bulbs, and gathering data about the feasibility of solar lighting in village houses.

## MICROENTERPRISE: INCOME GENERATION

- **Rocket Stoves:** In 2010, with financial assistance from Mission Mexico (Alberta), Atzin purchased and imported 1,535 woodburning "rocket stoves" from StoveTec (now called EcoZoom) of Oregon, USA. The stove design has an internal chimney which directs air through the burning wood and helps the mixing of gases and flame above the burning wood, thereby using half the wood of a three-rock fire and emitting half the smoke. More than 575 stoves are now in use in Tlamacazapa and in other villages in Guerrero and elsewhere.

- Promoter Store. The promoter store sells useful, inexpensive household items, and acts as a retail outlet for the sewers. Atzin is searching for a business administration expert volunteer to lead a much-needed overhaul of the operation of the store.
- Zoyatl Weavers Cooperative. Arte Siwame buys the members' baskets on Saturdays, paying the weavers cash in hand. Thirty women are very active in this group. The basket quality is now excellent and uses only natural palm (in colours natural, brown and greens), an important advance for health of women (the former synthetic dyes were toxic). There is potential for increased sales through the Arte Siwame website (now in draft form), as well as other opportunities for marketing such as SERRV, the second largest catalogue of arts and crafts in the USA.
- Sewing Workshop. Three quilt makers work on a flexible basis, sewing when stock drops and when they have time. Their work continues to improve in quality; the difficulty is marketing. In late 2009, an additional excellent seamstress joined the workshop and began sewing primary and kindergarten school uniforms (sold in the promoter store). Unfortunately, in mid 2011 the new state government contracted with large companies to sew school uniforms and distributed them free to all primary school students. This affected the sewers' market, so the workshop switched to producing market bags, made from donated end-of-roll durable material. Initial sales are encouraging.
- Hairstyling: Six young village women took an introductory course for hair styling in late 2009, with two continuing as on-the-job apprentices during 2010.
- In 2010 Atzin set up Arte Siwame (meaning "women's art"), as an independent Mexican business with one part-time staff member for the purpose of selling and exporting items made mostly in Guerrero.

## ORGANIZATIONAL

- Photo exhibition. This exhibition "TLAMACAZAPA Weavers of Life: Its People, their Work and their Struggle" opened in a small gallery in Cuernavaca in October 2010 and has since traveled to Taxco and Acapulco. The exhibition is comprised of 36 framed photos with 50 natural baskets by numerous weavers, a reproduction of a typical furnished palm house, and interactive weaving workshops. The exhibition will travel next to other venues in Cuernavaca, Chilpancingo and Mexico City.
- In 2011, Atzin produced KOKONEMEH: A Reading and Activity Book for Young People in English. A resource for children's education, the book illustrates daily life for children in Tlamacazapa, incorporating ideas about children's rights, personal development, the environment and social change.
- In 2010, Atzin produced the 14 minute DVD "TLAMACAZAPA", English and Spanish. The DVD is being used at the university level in Canada and Mexico as a case study in undergraduate and graduate classes on community development and social justice.
- New design for website [www.atzin.org](http://www.atzin.org) (2010). First draft design of website for Arte Siwame (2011), with photographs of sale items.

- 
- Volunteers & staff. Atzin operates with a combination of Mexican staff and volunteers from Canada, USA and other countries. Your donations help pay for our Mexican staff and some expenses of the international volunteers. Atzin had a total of 11 volunteers and 9 staff (four fulltime and five part-time) as well as 64 promoters in Tlamacazapa during 2011. The volunteers themselves pay most of their own costs, plus donate their time.
  - Since 1999, a total of 41 individuals have served as fulltime volunteers for between four months and 2.5 years. Many have returned several times. Many others have volunteered as short stay “technical experts” and visited onsite for a few days to a few weeks.
  - Atzin obtained charitable status in three countries, in USA (2008), and in Canada and Mexico (2009). (Atzin means sacred or venerable water in Nahuatl, the language of the people of Tlamacazapa) .
  - In 2008, Atzin assisted nine village women to legally form a civil association Yotlakat Non Siwatl (YNS) (meaning “a woman reborn”). It is the first organization of women in the history of Tlamacazapa and is now Atzin’s local partner in Tlama. The members meet regularly and are learning to use agendas, participate in the meetings, make action plans, and take minutes.
  - YNS has purchased land for construction of a wellness centre. This action will also (eventually) establish women’s right to land.
  - Numerous repairs and improvements were made to the Atzin Centre in Tlama, including improved conditions for the outdoor school; conversion of rough storage room into a classroom; installation of additional water catchment tanks; restructuring and improvement of outdoor washing sink and grease trap; construction of hand washing station, toothbrush holders for school children, installation of a concrete block floor on the patio of the Atzin Centre. Roof repairs done on the Tlama and Cuernavaca buildings.
  - \*While not a program per se, Atzin spends considerable effort assisting individuals to obtain necessary legal papers in order to have a legal identity as well as obtaining health insurance.

## CONCLUSION

- Atzin makes a dollar go a long way!
- The wide range of programs and activities described here show how Atzin has responded to the challenges of Tlamacazapa. Many generous individuals and organizations have made it possible for us to do this work.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!**

Please visit

**[www.atzin.org](http://www.atzin.org)**