

A Community We Support: Nuevo Cimatario



In September 2018, a new Feed the Hungry school kitchen opened in Nuevo Cimatario, a community on the San Miguel de Allende municipal government's list of rural populations in greatest need. It is 65 kilometers from the Feed the Hungry Center. We now provide breakfast and lunch to 41 children in elementary school and 20 children in preschool; a total of at least 120 hot meals daily.

This community of 285 inhabitants in 72 homes is 65 km from the FTH center; one of our farthest delivery locations. None of the homes have piped water into the house. Fewer than 2% of the homes have an indoor bathroom and only half have a refrigerator. The average level of schooling of the adults is 4 years, and 17% are illiterate (2010 INEGI Census*).

Condition of the Children

Soon after opening the school kitchen, our nutritionists conducted a baseline assessment of the students' height, weight, and muscle mass. They found that 35% of the children were underweight, with 12% moderately to severely underweight. Signs of nutritional deficiencies were evident: white patches on arms and faces, dry skin, brittle nails, discolored and dry hair, short stature for their age, and decayed teeth.

These deficiencies are related to the lack of vitamins and is primarily due to how far away they are from stores where they can get a variety of vegetables, fruits, and other foods necessary for development. A main diet of tortillas may soothe the appetite, but does not satisfy the nutritional needs of children.



Safe, Clean Places to Learn and Dine

FTH had outfitted a building, provided by the State of Guanajuato, to serve as the school kitchen and dining room. However, it was too small for all of the elementary students to be seated at mealtime, so the majority of them had to take their meals outside, exposed to grime and weather.

On opening day, it was wonderful to see the children enjoying their hot, balanced meals. But when we toured the grounds we saw 14 very young children attending preschool in a cold, dark outbuilding—built with adobe and asbestos 80 years ago.

Architect Rafael Franco, who offers his professional expertise to our organization (completely pro-bono) pledged to donate materials and construction for a new kitchen/dining room so that the current kitchen could be repurposed as the preschool classroom.



There are no stores in the area that sell construction supplies, so access to building materials, especially gravel and concrete, was a very challenging aspect of the construction process. However, with tenacity, ingenuity, and the assistance of the parents, a new kitchen/dining room opened on December 5. We were grateful for Mr. Franco's support and quick action to create a healthier, happier environment for learning and for dining —especially before the onset of winter. [Watch the video.](#)



Nutrition Report - September 2018

FTH staff nutritionist Irving E. Ayala Zúñiga conducted a baseline survey of the students' height, weight, and body fat measurements, to track their progress and the success of the meals program.

Cooking classes and nutrition workshops for the mothers have been well-attended and received. The mothers are now actively involved in instilling the importance of a balanced meal to their children. Physical activity is also encouraged.

Condition	Percentage
Obese	4%
Overweight	16%
Normal	45%
Light Underweight	23%
Moderate Underweight	9%
Severe Underweight	4%



Underweight Children

23% light underweight
13% moderate to severe underweight

By measuring this community, we find that even if malnutrition is not found in the more serious stages, we could find nutritional deficiencies related to a diet lacking in vegetables and fruits. Among the main deficiencies are spots on arms and faces, dry skin, brittle nails, discolored and dry hair, short stature for age, and decayed teeth.

These deficiencies are related to the lack of vitamins A, C, and some of group B, this is due to how far away they are from cities where the people can easily find more varied vegetables and fruits, in addition to other foods necessary for a correct diet.

Many of the children who are of normal weight show signs of poor nutrition. This is because of the habit of eating a large number of tortillas to soothe the appetite, but this does not fully cover their nutritional needs. Nutrient deficiencies are prevalent.

Overweight Children

20% obese and overweight

The cases of overweight and obesity are mainly related to the amount of tortillas they are given throughout the day, and the consumption of soft drinks, which is a continual problem in the communities. The consumption of cola and sweet processed foods are strongly related to the increase in weight of children of school age. These products are much easier to obtain than fresh food, because these companies focus on selling their products everywhere.

The high weight in children does not prevent them of being poor nutrition; on the contrary, in these cases there is also a marked lack of nutrients due to a diet high in calories and low in vitamins and minerals. This leads to serious chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and elevation of lipids in the blood.

General Observation

In this community, the mothers are very interested and participatory in the nutrition program for their children. We have seen a good acceptance of vegetables that are incorporated in their school menu. It is important to continue to work diligently to gradually eliminate bad eating habits.

We are committed to supporting this community for as long as it is necessary and to improve the lives of these children and their families in any way possible.

** Population statistics source: 2010 INEGI Census (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática)*