
TUIK RUCH LEW/HELPING THE EARTH



2018: Positive Impact Report

A Letter from the President of the Board of Directors

At Tuik Ruch Lew/Helping the Earth's December meeting of the Board of Directors, I was elected to serve as President. I consider it an honor to work to implement our shared dream: a Tzutujil Maya community free of the blue wood smoke from open cooking fires which covers the towns each morning and evening and women and children with clear eyes and lungs from cooking without smoke in their kitchens; families with extra money in their pockets to spend on a nutritious diet and the education of their children; human excrement considered a precious resource as toilets are connected to biogas digesters providing fertilizer for crops and methane gas for cooking – two stoves, side by side, with the energy-efficient wood stove relegated to the ritual use of making tortillas and maintaining the Maya cosmic connection with a fire in the hearth; and where Lake Atitlan is once again the ancient volcanic cauldron filled with sparkling, crystalline waters -- still considered the umbilicus of the world by the Tzutujil people.

2018 was a year of conscious contraction -- of trimming our budget to fit the donations we received from generous individuals in the temporary absence of institutional funders, while carefully considering expenditures. Although we installed 27 new ONIL stoves, our focus was upon maintaining the over 2000 stoves already enrolled in our project. We believe that maintaining the existing stoves as energy -efficient, tree-saving units, is just as important as installing new stoves. The amazing level of demand by satisfied ONIL stove owners for our help in repairing and installing replacement parts for their cherished stoves, confirmed the success of our adaptation program. Our staff voluntarily cut their hours to half-time and volunteered extra time when more of their help was needed. We received our first Princeton in Latin America (PiLA) Fellow who has dedicated himself to grant applications as well as developing a program of digital data collection, which will assist Tuik Ruch Lew (TRL) in verifying the positive effect of our work.

Our Board of Directors has changed as well, with the planned withdrawal of founders, Cameron and Isabel , who also are employees of the organization. In their places, we welcomed two active Tzutujil members who bring a high level of new skills to our organization. With Maria, our new Vice-president's experience in community micro-savings programs, we plan to develop our own financial literacy program to help our stove owners learn to save money – a practice not part of the Tzutujil culture. This training dovetails into TRL's objectives of always moving towards program sustainability by enabling our stove owners to save money for their stove replacement parts.

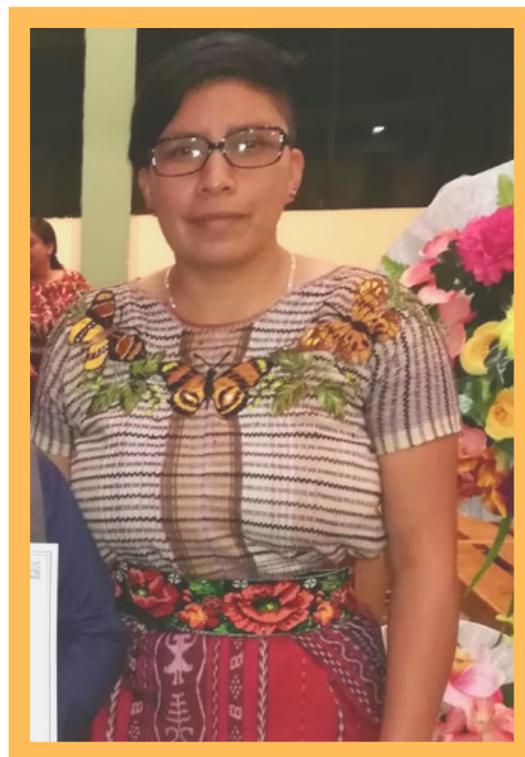
While this year has been one of tightening our belts, we have succeeded in closing the year with a nest egg to begin 2019 and the optimism, based upon the demonstrated rate of success of our stove program and our volunteers' and visitors' positive reactions to the work that we do, to believe that we will achieve our funding goals for 2019, which will allow us to install at least 120 new stoves. We thank all of you who have been following our progress and who have supported us with your generous donations.



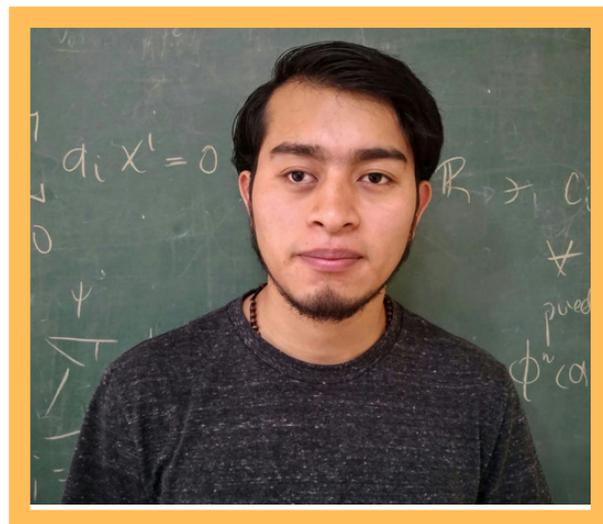
Welcome Maria and Gaspar!

With the start of a New Year TRL is excited to announce recent additions to our Guatemalan Board of Directors -- we welcome the participation of Maria Sosof Sosof and Gaspar Yataz Pop!

Maria, an ONIL stove user and Tzutujil woman, began her career in early education in Santiago Atitlan. She has been recognized both regionally and internationally for her work with the community, first as a Youth Representative to an international conference held in Nicaragua on Racism and HIV/AIDS. Maria subsequently represented the Office of Tzutujil Women's Affairs when she traveled to Norway as part of a cultural exchange between Guatemala and Norway. Maria has a strong commitment to the community. Most recently, Maria has been working as a counselor in a community program of micro-savings, in which she has earned the trust and respect of the women of Santiago Atitlan.



Gaspar, also Tzutujil Maya of Santiago Atitlan, brings a skill set to TRL that until now, has been supplemented through international partnerships. He comes to TRL with a BA in Mathematics, BS in Science, Bachelors of Science and Letters, and Technical Qualifications in Agroforestry. His research and presentations focus on simulation and mathematical modeling of the physical-chemical parameters of Lake Atitlan. Gaspar presented his findings at the II International Symposium on Continental Waters of the Americas. He has also conducted research on Stochastic Models for the Water Transparency Forecast of Lake Atitlán which he presented to the regional environmental authority AMSCLAE.



Welcome to the TRL team!



A Year in Review

Not without challenges, 2018 was also a year of intense growth. TRL began by applying to a new standardized system to develop the world's first sustainable development credit, modeled after the success of the carbon credit system and carbon marketplace. We welcomed new staff members and volunteers, we collaborated with other NGOs and private organizations. With the help and support of our colleagues and staff we have implemented new monitoring and evaluation plans, put in place stronger infrastructure to ensure the success of our projects and their aims (and pleasantly discovered we have an over 87% success rate with stove adoption). Most importantly we began the long process of grant applications and found a fiscal sponsor to give our small project credibility with a global audience. These successes, while seemingly small, would not have been possible without the tireless dedication of our staff and supporters. We appreciate the lengths you have gone to ensure this project's success, specifically our paid staff who voluntarily reduced their hours to ensure we stay financially solvent.



(c) David Reanda



(c) TRL photo



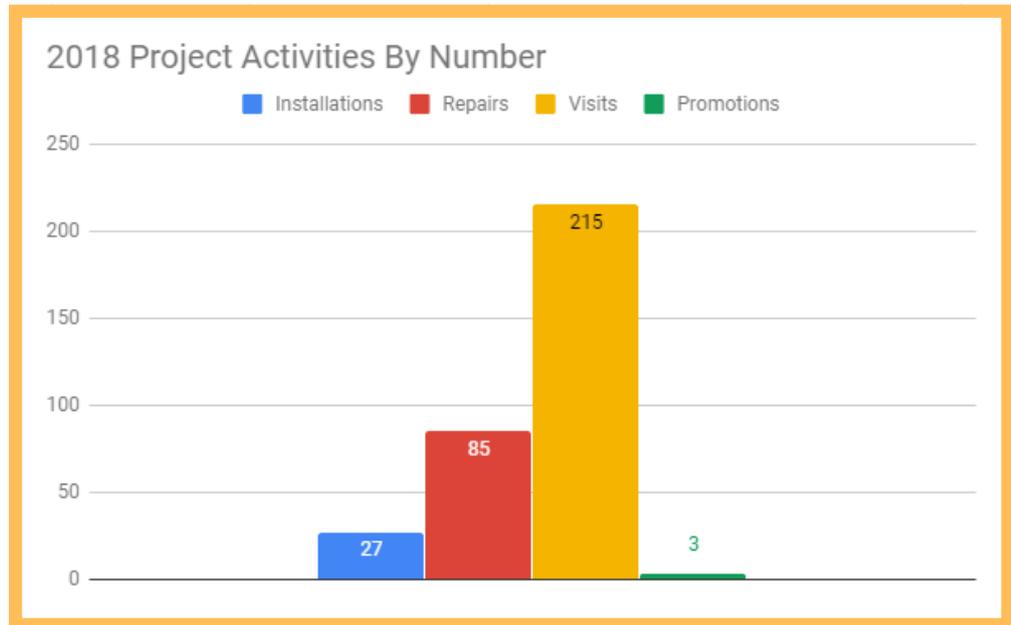
(c) Judith Haden



(c) TRL photo

2018: A SNAPSHOT

2018 was a year marked by the limitations of fiscally conservative policies. However, TRL staff worked harder than ever to make the most of limited funds. The goal was clear -- continue to maintain stoves and perform as many maintenance and repair visits as possible. With staff reductions and part-time hours, reductions in visits and installations were expected. TRL is happy to report that only 5 fewer repairs were completed in FY 2018 compared to FY 2017.



This year TRL staff completed 215 visits averaging about 19 per month. While we want that number to be higher in years to come it marks only a slight drop from last year given the reduction in working hours. The 85 repairs completed represent an increased demand for ONIL stove maintenance meaning families not only see the value of their stoves but are willing to invest in them to keep them operating efficiently. With long-term adoption of the technology -TRL's ultimate goal - increased maintenance requests are a good indication of a changing trend.

TRL's limited funds allowed us to install only 27 stoves in FY 2018.

85

REPAIRS

This figure is an overall positive indicating families willing to pay for repairs, which means long-term successful adoption and value recognized.

27

INSTALLATIONS

A far cry from our previous best rates of installations, which reached up to 53 stoves a month, fewer installations were a product of financial imitations. TRL looks to get back on track in 2019!

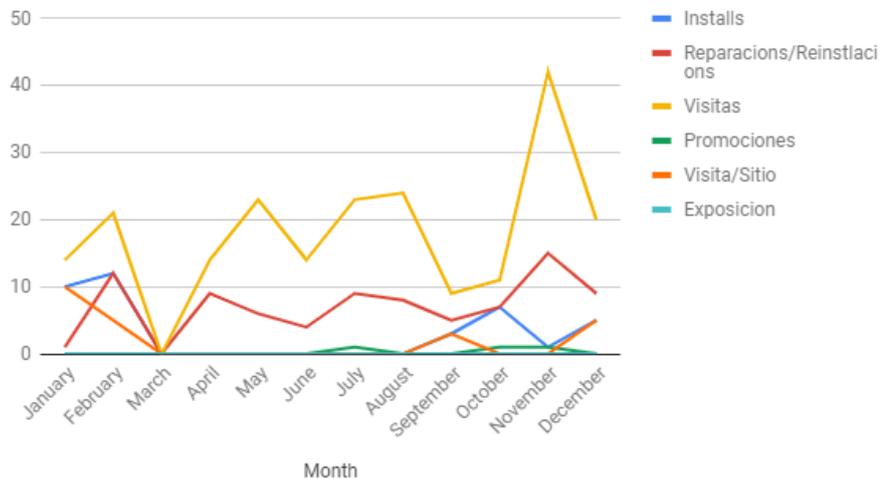
215

VISITS

Despite only working part-time and working only 11 months, TRL staff completed visits at nearly the same rate as the year before.

2018: A Tale of Two Halves

2018 Activities By Month



JULY

WELCOME PILA FELLOW

In July of 2018 TRL welcomed their first Princeton in Latin America fellow as part of a long term, board approved, strategic planning initiative. TRL's fellow has initiated digitization of the data collection process. Our fellow has fortified our organizational structure enabling TRL to seek out and obtain institutional support.

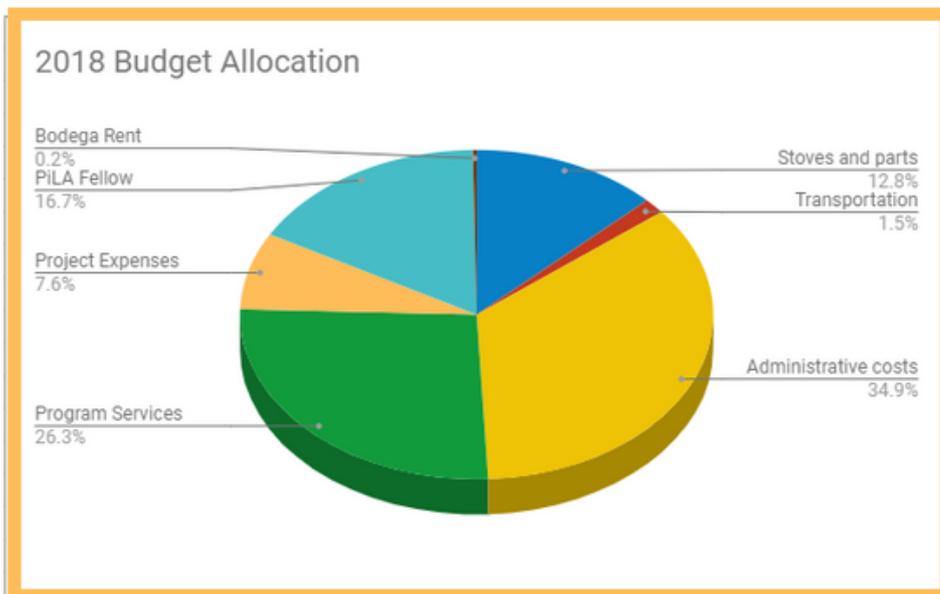


On a monthly basis TRL was busy with the activities of the stove project. One exception was the month of March when TRL decided to cease work due to financial strictures. This sacrifice allowed TRL to remain solvent through the year and prepare for incoming staff.

In July, TRL welcomed the first ever PiLA fellow, Elijah Umek, adding a low-cost staff member with experience in both nonprofit work and living in Latin America, and fluency in English and Spanish. TRL's fellow has been hard at work applying for grants and other opportunities (such as SD VISTA). He is also strengthening the infrastructure of our programs, engaging in long-term planning, and ensuring program success through the implementation of a data-driven monitoring and analysis plan.

The belt-tightening done in the first half of the year allowed TRL to bounce back in the second half of the year. TRL was able to purchase and install almost all the stoves we had at our disposal. This resulted in an uptick in work done the last 6 months of the year.

2018: Budgetary Considerations



51.6%

OPERATIONS

This percentage represents the administrative costs associated with the functioning of the program, as well as our PiLA fellow. These expenditures are essential to keeping TRL's foundation strong, as well as continuing to develop for the future.

41%

DIRECT SERVICE COSTS

The total of the purchase, transport, and installation costs of the ONIL stove project accounted for 41% of our budget. Costs associated include the salary of the Technology Adaptation Specialist, transportation to and from home visits, and the cost of a part-time installer.

In 2009 GuideStar, a nonprofit evaluation website, released a publication detailing the "overhead myth" and what has become termed as "nonprofit starvation". This rebuke of traditional nonprofit financial practices, called for an **increase**, not a decrease, in overhead funding for the nonprofit sector. The reasoning was simple; in order to achieve the lofty goals set for our communities and those we serve, we can not skimp on the support structure for our programs. As Dan Pallota, founder of AIDSRides, says in his TED talk "what would make more sense: go out and find the most innovative researcher in the world and give her \$350,000 for research, or give her fundraising department the \$350,000 to multiply that into \$194 million?" The lesson is clear: in order to reap big rewards, nonprofits need all the tools necessary at their disposal.

TRL believes that investing in our organization will pay dividends to both our clients and our programs within the next year. In 2018 we brought in a PiLA fellow at \$410/mn. As the reasoning goes; we could invest \$410/mn in 4 stoves, or we could invest it in the opportunity to raise the funds necessary to provide 400 stoves impacting over 2,000 people in our community. The choice for us was simple.

Read more about the overhead myth here:
<http://overheadmyth.com/>

See Dan Pallota's TED Talk here:
https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pallotta_the_way_we_think_about_charity_is_dead_wrong?language=en#t-824329



(c) Tamara Winter

To Our Supporters...

As always we would like to end this year's report with a special thank you to all who have helped TRL both this year and in years past. We are constantly inspired by the positivity and passion our supporters bring whether it be a short message sent via our website, a donation, or a visit to beautiful Santiago Atitlan. Your energy is what keeps us going and solidifies our dedication to the ONIL stove project and beyond.

Our deepest gratitude to each and every person involved with Tuik Ruch Lew/Helping the Earth. We are incredibly excited for 2019 and all that comes in this new year. New challenges, new successes, and new experiences to learn and grow and deliver services to this unique Tzutujil community we call "home."



(TRL administrative staff meeting, Feb. 2019)

Thank you!