

# Building the Future: One Year of Microloans in Coatepec

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March 2009



Before and after: Ground for new hopes in Mexico

In Coatepec, Mexico, many families live on less than \$10 USD a day. In late 2007, owing to the vision of Irwin and Marge Gruverman of Newton, Massachusetts, a small microlending program began. They had learned of Coatepec through Professor Helen Alcalá, founding director of the Lasell College Mexico Shoulder to Shoulder service-learning program. The fund has so far helped families pay medical bills, build structurally-sound homes and invest in small business.

These small projects have had a tremendous impact on the lives of the recipients.

## Meeting Urgent Needs

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### Shelter

Juana and Roberto Colorado now live in their own home. "Without this loan this would not have been possible for many, many years. I am amazed how people who don't know us gave us an opportunity like this," says Roberto.



Until now, this family of five had lived with several other relatives in a house of only two rooms. Now they have three rooms of their own. They borrowed \$500 USD, repaid it, and borrowed \$1900 USD more. The loans allowed for a bathroom and strong roof as well. Plastic protects the space where Roberto hopes one day to place a recycled window.

## Health and Business

Loans are not always used for building. Matilde Luna borrowed \$50 USD to buy medicine for a serious illness, and Bertha Colorado Yoval borrowed \$50 USD to care for her sick daughter. Thanks to these emergency medical loans, they could pay for treatment. Others have borrowed for business: Antonio Garcia used \$100 USD to acquire a driver's license. Abel Valencia invested \$100 USD in a clothing business. Fifty dollars enabled Ana Maria Hernandez to prepare and vend fresh Mexican snacks. Microlending supports the ingenuity and skill of entrepreneurs who face challenging circumstances.

## Sanitation

Meager wages and the cost of living combined to keep José Luiz and Carmen Veliz living in a shack like the one pictured at the top of the newsletter. They never thought that they would be in a position to build a home with strong walls and roof, let alone a bathroom with indoor plumbing. The new home gives the family the comfort of a dry, stable home with a cement floor and running water.



## Repayment in Hard Times



“El Proyecto Gruverman has completely changed our lives. We could not have done this without the flexibility to borrow and repay in small amounts” – José Luiz Veliz

The Veliz family are steadily paying back the \$1400 USD for their home. They hope to be eligible to take out another to add a room for their children. However, the current economic crisis has slowed their plans. The husband used to work two shifts at the Coca-Cola plant, but he and others have been cut back to one. This has increased his struggle to support his family. He would like to express his gratitude to the Gruvermans and the local funding committee. Microlending has given a deserving family a home they are proud of.

## The Future

The success of the lending program is evident. The first loans have changed lives and improved health. The regular repayment and commitment of these families has strengthened the program. Most exciting, as funds are returned, more families benefit. Fund manager Maria del Refugio López Cruz is optimistic about the future but realizes the challenges. “Now we are limited. I hope that more funding becomes available so we can help more families.”