



# ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2018

**ACTIVITIES 2018 | RESULTS 2018 | GOALS 2019**

## RESULTS 2018

### Project: Xula Palm Artisan Craft

#### Santa Maria Ixcatlan, Oaxaca

- Completion of largest ever single sale of Xula products to a client: 1600 various palm products to Hotel Ritz Carlton in Baja California, bringing in \$500,000 MXN to the community.
- Income increased by 500% per family (25 people in total) due to securing new clients.
- Xula group members selected two potential community projects they want to sponsor with their savings.



## ACTIVITIES 2018

This past year Tejiendo Alianzas focused on testing new programs and community development models to catalyze local innovation and project incubation. We explored multi-organizational collaborations to design and run activities, as well as building capacity among local project members to further assume the helm of their work. As a result, Tejiendo Alianzas grew more consolidated and flexed its arms.

## University Connections

In short, Tejiendo Alianzas proved that its student program, *University Connections*, delivers on its promise to co-create solutions for micro-businesses

**Project: Xuchil Products  
Mesquite flour and other  
natural products**

**Suchilquitongo, Oaxaca**

- Branding complete and trademark registered.
- Engineers from the University of Texas in Austin successfully constructed and tested two solar dryers with community members, applying the data gathered by students on mesquite pod drying and milling at the Instituto Politécnico Nacional CIIDIR Oaxaca. Drying times were reduced from 6 to 2 hours per cycle.
- New clients: 5 natural food stores and 3 restaurantes in Oaxaca; 1 bakery in Mexico City
- 5 new product prototypes: beer, butter, jelly, icecream, and a flavoring extract.



*Mesquite butter*

with residents of rural communities. Engineers from the University of Texas, participating in UT's [Program with Underserved Communities](#) (PUC), applied the data from the research conducted by students at the [Instituto Politécnico Nacional CIIDIR Oaxaca](#) in the design and construction of two solar dryers, working countless hours with community members of the Xuchil Products project. As a result, drying times for mesquite beans were reduced from 6 to 2 hours per cycle. This first year of working with UT engineers represents the first phase of a three-year collaboration that focuses on improving the productive capacity of the local group's production of mesquite flour and other derivative products. You can check out the [PUC blog](#) to see the day-to-day action from 2018.



*Members of Xuchil and students from UT working together.*





*Above: The inauguration ceremony of the solar dryers constructed by UT students and members of Xuchil. Below: The finished solar dryers.*



In the Fall of 2018, Tejiendo Alianzas began working actively in San Dionisio Ocotepc with the [Ndavaa Shoe and Sandal business](#) to make internal decision-making and production more efficient, and begin setting the stage for exportation to the United States. We partnered for a second straight year with the University of Texas MBA + Leadership Program, this round linking graduate students to Ndavaa to create a go-to-market and sales strategy for entering the Texas market. Their work culminated in a trip to Oaxaca to meet the family, present their findings and recommendations, and answer questions. Consequently, the Ndavaa group has begun standardizing a “classic” collection of products, refining their online sales strategy, and has started the process for acquiring fair trade certification.



*Above: Students from the UT MBA+ program and members of Ndavaa following the presentation of a go-to-market strategy for the business to enter the US market.*

## THINK IMPACT

We are very happy to announce a new partnership with [Think Impact](#), a certified B Corporation, to bring social entrepreneurship to life through experiential education. Through their curriculum, The Innovator, students work directly with rural community residents on social innovation and entrepreneurship projects. Through this collaboration, Tejiendo Alianzas will channel students to our communities in Oaxaca starting in June 2019.

## Community Development: Appropriated Technologies and Local Innovation

### Zapotalito, Oaxaca

- Co-facilitated a week-long workshop with 4 Oaxacan organizations and in collaboration with MIT's D-Lab, the MIT Enterprise Forum Mexico, and IODEMC.
- 24 residents created 5 functional prototypes of low-cost technologies that can potentially create employment and resolve local challenges: a bicycle-powered water pump, a bicycle-powered food mill, two pedal boats, and a coconut peeler.



*Above: Zapotalito residents participated in activities to improve construction skills before designing and building their own prototypes.*

## Exploring Partnerships for a Greater Collective Impact

In collaboration with the [MIT Enterprise Forum México](#), the [Oaxaca Entrepreneur Institute](#) (IODEMC), and [D-Lab](#) (of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), we formed a team of Oaxacan organizations with the purpose of exploring new methodologies to generate greater social and economic impact in the state of Oaxaca.



Our first foray as a group (#F6HC) involved creating a workshop for students of the [University of the Sierra Sul](#) (UNSI). Participants, who were already developing ideas for small scale projects in the region, considered the concept of fair trade and empathizing with actors in the value chain of their future businesses.

The second collaboration with members of F6HC involved the epic set-up and co-facilitation of MIT's D-Lab workshops in the community Zapotalito, on the Oaxacan coast. After several days of activities that

improved manual skills among residents to build various low-cost technologies using local resources, participants turned their focus toward tackling local challenges through creating their own technologies. The results exceeded all of our expectations, with two functional prototypes of bicycle-based paddle boats, a bici-powered mill for corn and other foods, a bici-water pump, and a structure for quickly breaking coconut shells. In 2019, we will provide six months of follow-up activities in the community to work with the various groups to put their projects on solid footing.



*Left: Local residents fine-tune their second prototype of a bicycle-based mill for corn and many other kinds of food, which will come in use during the frequent power outages.*



*Left: Zapotalito residents with their nearly finished first prototype of a paddle boat for traveling from one side of the lagoon to the other, saving money spent on gas and protecting the ecosystem.*

## Towards greater local autonomy and growth in community businesses

Our two flagship community projects, Xuchil Products and Xula Palm, experienced a tremendous year in terms of sales, infrastructure development, and capacity building.

### *Xuchil Products*



We began 2018 with a series of workshops on strategic planning and participatory leadership skill building, establishing healthy and efficient practices in communication and creating consensus among group members. Since then, the team has shown more initiative in managing and expanding sales in Oaxaca City, as well as taking over the baking of the cookies that are flying off the shelves. Accordingly, this required training in not only product preparation and packaging, but marketing and networking, telling the Xuchil story to new clients, customer service, and accounting. As a result, sales have expanded to 5 stores in Oaxaca and 3 restaurants. The group also learned how to make a speed pitch to potential funders, later applying these skills during two different occasions. Fingers crossed!



*Left: An ice-breaker activity during the strategic planning workshops. Right: Aligning needs, hopes, and actionable steps during the same workshop.*

Tejiendo Alianzas improved the infrastructure in the workspace significantly this year to make production more efficient. First, the lower floor was enclosed to store raw material, then we constructed a staircase to the roof where Xuchil dries raw materials, building a protective wall around the perimeter to prevent accidents. We are already seeing significantly reduced drying periods for mesquite beans with the solar dryers designed and assembled by Texas engineers and project members!

Moreover, in 2018, we developed various prototypes of new items that we are currently testing with chefs, bakers, general consumers of natural and gourmet foods and stores where Xuchil products are currently offered. Among these are mesquite butter, beer (in collaboration with the local microbrewery Utopia), ice cream, jelly, and an extract for flavoring. The feedback so far has been overwhelming positive.



*Left: Our first experiment of mesquite infused mango ice-cream was hands-down a success. Right: With a local microbrewery, we created a mesquite pale ale that might soon end up for sale in Oaxaca.*

The members of Xuchil and Tejiendo Alianzas have a big year planned. To start off, in early May, Xuchil will participate with other Suchilquitongo residents in workshops co-facilitated by Tejiendo Alianzas and the Oaxacan collective of NGOs, F6HC, to create low-cost technologies using local resources, creatively solving challenges facing the community, in addition to developing new potential business opportunities. As in Zapotalito, the MIT



Enterprise Forum and IOEMC will fund the activities, while MIT's D-Lab guides the methodology with the vast array of engineering makers in their network. Thematically the workshops will focus on how to increase productivity in the countryside, but as always the participants will steer the capacity building and actual designs as they best relate to their needs and desires. Inevitably, Xuchil's participation will result in technologies that benefit them as a community business and as Suchilquitongo residents.

Then in late May, Tejiendo Alianzas and Xuchil will lead our second year of partnering with University of Texas engineers to tackle design challenges related to the production of mesquite flour. After a first year that resulted in more efficiently dried mesquite beans, this year's goal will lead to improved drying capacity and raw material storage equipment.



*Above: Our 2019 team of engineering and social work students from the University of Texas at Austin, arriving in May to expand mesquite bean drying capacity along with members of the Xuchil Products community business in Suchilquitongo.*

Our partnership with Think Impact officially takes off in early June with the first group of students in Suchilquitongo who will build upon this incredible wave of innovation started in May. They will be in close contact with Xuchil as well as other local groups, first learning

about the community before working with residents to create yet more solutions and opportunities or fine-tuning those that already exist.

If you are interested in purchasing Xuchil products, please visit our [Xuchil](#) online store and learn more about Xuchil's work on their [facebook](#) and [instagram](#) pages. At [Tejiendo Alianzas AC](#), we also accept donations to support our work with Xuchil and other projects in Santiago Suchilquitongo.



*Above: Mesquite Flour, 250 g. presentation*

### *Xula Palm*



We are very proud of the work we and Xula have accomplished together. In 2018, sales soared and savings increased, bringing in \$500,000 MXN to the community and raising monthly income from \$700 MXN per family to \$3000 MXN per artisan. This greater access to disposable income led to the purchase of housewares, such as

refrigerators, and the upscaling of homes through fixing roofs and finishing incomplete rooms. Due to greater visibility online through their new website and presence in social media, many have learned of the quality of their work. As a result, more and more collaborators, clients, and other organizations seeking to support the group have contacted Xula and Tejiendo Alianzas.

These achievements were made possible through four years of hard work together--starting with a community plan, collaborative design creation with students in the Oaxifornia program, and constant training and workshops in various topics, such as refining designs, calculating costs of production,



*Above: Jesus Valdivia Bautista, artisan of Xula Palm, Santa Maria Ixcatlán.*

accounting practices, production planning and coordination, brand development and trademark registration, maintaining client relationships, website and catalogue design, and of course, connections to markets. Xula's milestone year was made possible through various partnerships and funders, such as the ORB Foundation, Alfredo Harp Helú Oaxaca Foundation, and the Oaxifornia Project, who set the stage in the early years with the future directors of Tejiendo Alianzas, Richard Hanson and Sarahi Garcia.

Our focus in 2019 will remain on increasing sales, diversifying sales channels, streamlining production and project management through capacity building, while planning to co-fundraise with Xula to support additional projects in the community.

If you are interested in purchasing Xula products, please visit the [Xula Palma](#) website to download the catalogue or the [Xula Palma Artesanal](#) facebook page. And don't forget to check out the [Xula](#) instagram page as well! At [Tejiendo Alianzas AC](#), we also accept donations to support our work with Xula and other projects in Santa Maria Ixcatlan.



*Above: Members of the Xula Palm community business in Santa Maria Ixcatlan, along with Richard Hanson and Sarahi Garcia, General Director and Community Projects Director of Tejiendo Alianzas.*



### Plans for 2019

In addition to expanding our University Connections program, co-facilitating D-Lab workshops, and further advancing the Xuchil and Xula community businesses, and the Ndavaa family business, we will very soon finish the last details of formalizing Tejiendo Alianzas. We are already a registered charity that can receive both national and international donations and have finished our branding, but we haven't quite finished our official website, which is in the works.

Until then, you can find us on our [facebook](#) and [instagram](#) pages, and by contacting us at: [info.talianzas@gmail.com](mailto:info.talianzas@gmail.com).

**2019 is going to be incredible! Get involved!**

### Contributing to Tejiendo Alianzas

If you would like to support our work in the form of a **donation**, we can accept them through two channels:

1. Via our [Paypal account](#) (also accessible through our [facebook](#) page)
2. A direct transfer to our Tejiendo Alianzas bank account in Mexico:

### TEJIENDO ALIANZAS A.C.

Bank: BANCO MERCANTIL DEL NORTE, S.A "BANORTE"

Account number: 1001261809

CLABE: 072610010012618092

Branch: 3503

Swift code: MENOMXMT

If you are looking for a real-world experience in applying your knowledge to make a difference in rural Oaxacan communities as an **intern** for Tejiendo Alianzas, please email us at: [info.talianzas@gmail.com](mailto:info.talianzas@gmail.com)