



constru CASA



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description 2010

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1. Introduction

1.1. Constru Casa

Constru Casa is a non-profit organization offering basic housing to families living in extreme poverty. Constru Casa always works in collaboration with local social partner organizations to identify families of exceptional need, and to offer additional help to families in the areas of health care and education.

Constru Casa offers selected families a three room house built of concrete blocks, with a corrugated iron roof and a concrete floor, including a toilet and a shower. Recipient families participate in both the construction of their home and through a financial contribution of typically $\frac{1}{4}$ of the cost of their house, paid interest free over four years. Constru Casa, in cooperation with the social partner organizations accompanies and follows up with the families over four years to ensure a sustainable and eventually life-changing impact of the house on a family.

Constru Casa also supports its strategic partners and individual families with a variety of support programs in the areas of health care, education and social work. These include supporting small scale health care and educational projects, paying teacher salaries, offering improved stoves and water filters to beneficiary families, and carrying out maintenance of houses. Additionally, Constru Casa supports its social partner organizations in community development and construction, consulting and executing building projects that benefit the communities.

A Constru Casa house, together with the provision of additional support programs, improves living conditions and enables better physical and mental health, as well as improved family, work and social life for the entire family.

1.2. Housing Needs and Poverty in Guatemala

Poverty

Guatemala is among the poorest countries of the Americas with more than half of the population living in poverty. Particularly acute is the problem of inadequate housing. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE) 35.8% of the population lives in poverty (less than USD2 per person per day), and 15.2% in extreme poverty (less than USD1 per person per day). The United Nations identifies the Guatemala Human Development Index as the second lowest in all of the Americas, second only to Haiti. Guatemala's poverty is rooted in many social, economic and political factors, manifest in high illiteracy rates, poor health and often extremely inadequate housing. The income of many Guatemalans only allows a day-to-day existence, with just enough money for the basic necessities of life. For a large part of the population, health conditions are poor and living conditions dreadful.

Shortage of Houses

According to a report from the COHRE (Centre On Housing Rights and Evictions) in 2003, more than half of the population of Guatemala lives in unsuitable 'houses' and the overall shortage was approximately 1.5 million houses. This data is consistent with the results of research the Guatemalan government published in 2005.

Stan: Loss of Houses

In addition to this earlier housing shortage, hurricane Stan caused a lot of damage to the country in October 2005 and made a large number – figures of up to 12,000 have been

cited – of people house- and homeless. In the area of housing, Guatemala still has not fully recovered.

1.3. Constru Casa’s History and Milestones

Constru Casa is an initiative of Carolien van Heerde (see Appendix 1). In March 2004, she started with the design and organization of Constru Casa and constructed the very first houses together with a local daycare center for extremely poor families. In 2005 her initiative gained momentum, the quality of the services of Constru Casa improved, and progress was made to transform Constru Casa into a financially healthy and stable organization. In the same year Constru Casa constructed a total of 64 houses in cooperation with different social organizations. Constru Casa set up partnerships with different social organizations working in education, health care and community committees. Since November 2005, Constru Casa is an officially registered foundation in Guatemala: Asociación Constru Casa. The board of the foundation consists of Guatemalan, as well as some Dutch members.

Table 1: Number of houses built by Constru Casa

Year	New house	New house with bathroom	Improvement of existing houses	TOTAL
2004	24			24
2005	64			64
2006	68	3	3	74
2007	2	54	5	61
2008		65	10	75
2009		43		43
2010		75*		75*

* budgeted

In late 2006 the design of the house was changed to include a bathroom and a shower. Since 2005 we are offering improved stoves to our families and in 2006 we started offering the first water filters.

Almost all the donations Constru Casa received from 2004 until 2007 came from Dutch foundations focusing their work onto Carolien van Heerde and Constru Casa. The first partner was “Leven in Guatemala” (“Living in Guatemala”) which was set to support Constru Casa’s housing project, but also raised some funds for different construction projects for health care and education. Since 2005 many individual donors and companies have been sending their donations to “Guatemala en Construcción”, a foundation set up by friends of Constru Casa in Holland. This group of individuals and companies have been growing since then and the “Guatemala en Construcción” Foundation is now Constru Casa’s biggest supporting foundation. Since 2007 we are also receiving donations from local Guatemalan companies and foundations of doors and cement for the construction of our houses.

In 2007, Constru Casa was registered at the Congressional District Programs (CDP) 501(c)(3), an American public charity that financially supports projects all over the world. This was a big step for Constru Casa as, through CDP, donations from the US are now tax-deductible and traceable.

In 2008 two civil engineers carried out a study to improve the technical design of the houses we build. They made a list of suggested improvements on the design and

execution of the houses to improve the living conditions of the families and to reduce the costs of the houses. We implemented some of their recommendations, and are currently working with a better foundation system, and have a design available for different separation walls and ceiling system, and additionally we have installed water catchment systems to several houses.

In March 2009 the completion of the construction of the 300th Constru Casa house was celebrated in the presence of the Dutch ambassador, representatives of our social partner organizations, donors, the construction workers, as well as supporters and friends. Due to declining donations and the global economic and financial crisis, Constru Casa built fewer houses in 2009 than in the years before. However, in 2009 we also have started to intensify our efforts in fundraising, engaging 'Ambassadors' working abroad to generate donations, and bringing supporters and groups of volunteers to work with Constru Casa, mainly from the US. These efforts are starting to show first results, and in 2010 we expect to reach the level of 2008 again, building around 80 houses.

Constru Casa has always worked in cooperation with social partner organizations, and still does to this day. Every year we evaluate the partnerships we have with these different organizations, and intensify or sever relationships. Over the years Constru Casa has also improved its follow-up program provided to families after they receive their new house. More intensive contact and content better tailored to families living in extreme poverty means that families now receive better care and accompaniment in order to take even more advantage of their new home.

Additionally, in 2010, an in-depth evaluation of Constru Casa was carried out by an independent researcher to find out more about the long-term effects and benefits of Constru Casa houses. The study found that Constru Casa houses have allowed families to significantly increase their wellbeing over a one to five year period. Since receiving their house, either the economic situation, health or mental wellbeing of families had improved, or in the case of over two thirds of families, improvements occurred in all three areas. In chapter 3.2. *Benefits to Beneficiary Families and Society* the results of this study are related and it is laid out how the work of Constru Casa benefits society more generally.

2. Mission, Vision and Target Group

2.1. Mission

Constru Casa's mission is to improve the quality of life of the poorest families in Guatemala by providing housing and offering support programs. Additionally, Constru Casa carries out other construction projects for the benefit of communities.

We strive to accomplish our mission through:

- The construction of sustainable houses for poor families.
- Cooperation with strategic partners in the areas of housing, health care, education, and social work, as well as community development.
- Providing post-construction services including family new-home orientation and instruction, maintenance and a four year long follow-up program.
- Offering additional support to strategic partners and individual families in the areas of health care, education and social work.
- Consulting, supervision and execution of community construction projects.

2.2. Vision

Constru Casa is a social non-profit housing organization. We aim to be recognized for our professionalism, for our dynamic contribution and for the quality of the projects we develop for the benefit of the poor Guatemalan population. Our integrated approach is not only based on offering a sustainable house to a poor family, but also on stimulating more development in social and economic areas. We regard a good relationship with our strategic partners as crucial, as they enable us to give more efficient and complete help to each family and its specific needs, before, during and after the construction of their house. We see ourselves as a positively growing, sustainable organization with a cooperative spirit taking into account all housing-related projects in Guatemala.

2.3. Target Group

Constru Casa's target group is families who live below the poverty line or have income levels pertaining to extreme poverty. The target group's family income is below the minimum salary, mostly around GTQ500 to GTQ1,500 (USD65–180, EUR50–150) per month. These families currently live in bad circumstances but by participating in their respective social organizations they have shown and proven their willingness and initiative to improve their living conditions and situation.

3. Strategic Alliances and Societal Benefits

3.1. Strategic Alliances

Constru Casa cooperates with a number of local social organizations in Guatemala. These organizations work in the areas of health care, education and community development; they are daycare centers, schools, clinics or community committees (for a full list see *Appendix 3 - Overview of Social Partner Organizations of Constru Casa*). Constru Casa cooperates with these organizations primarily in the areas of housing, but also supports them in health care, education, and social work. Additionally, Constru Casa carries out community development and construction projects in cooperation with these social organizations.

The cooperation with local social partner organizations is what makes Constru Casa unique and is the core and most important aspect of Constru Casa's development model. The missions of Constru Casa and its partner organizations complement each other and lead to mutually reinforcing positive outcomes for the beneficiary families. This is particularly evident in the area of housing: the impact of a new house is significantly enhanced if a family already receives support from a social organization helping to improve the family members' lives. Constru Casa's goal is that the new house and the health care, educational or social work provided reinforce each other and give the decisive impulse to lift a family out of poverty and onto the path to a better future.

In the area of housing, Constru Casa always selects beneficiary families in co-operation with these local partner organizations. For these organizations, housing and construction work is not part of their main objectives. Constru Casa complements their mission by offering simple houses to the persons affiliated who live under dreadful conditions. For four years after the construction of the house, Constru Casa accompanies the family in cooperation with the social partner organization in order to ensure a sustainable impact of the house (for more on accompaniment and follow-up, see the section *4.2.3. Social Work*). Constru Casa thus not only constructs a house for a needy family, but changes their whole lives for the better.

In the areas of health care and education, Constru Casa provides support to organizations in terms of financing health care programs and educational needs such as teacher salaries. Support to individual families is provided if the partner organization is not able to respond adequately to the family's needs.

The social partner organizations cooperate with Constru Casa in the following ways:

Housing

- Promotion and explanation of Constru Casa.
- Coaching social workers with respect to contact with the families.
- First contact with and selection of the families.
- Accompanying and following up with the families before, during and after the construction.
- Helping Constru Casa communicate with the families.
- Helping the families with the legal proceedings of their land (if necessary).
- Collecting family contributions.

Health Care and Education

- Implement Constru Casa financed programs in health care and education.
- Helping Constru Casa implement its water filters and improved stoves program.
- Organize health related programs and help to individual families.

- Employ, monitor and evaluate Constru Casa financed teachers and in special cases give out individual scholarships.

See section 4.2. *Support Programs* for more details on how we work with our social partner organizations.

3.2. Benefits for Beneficiary Families and Society

Constru Casa creates benefits for social organizations, individual families and for the Guatemalan society at large. In summary, Constru Casa improves families' living conditions as a whole, improving their physical health, economic situation, mental wellbeing and self esteem, as well as educational opportunities, ultimately improving their whole family life. Constru Casa also benefits local markets and industry, as well as the labor market, by buying materials locally and employing local labor. Additionally, Constru Casa funded health care and educational programs benefit both social organizations and individual families directly.

These effects have been affirmed by an in-depth evaluation of Constru Casa, carried out by an independent researcher in April 2010, entitled *"Building Better Lives in Guatemala: An Evaluation of the Long-term Effects of Constru Casa Housing"*. Results of this study inform the effects discussed below.

Improving physical health, economic situation, educational opportunities, family life and self-esteem

A newly constructed Constru Casa house offers families additional space and greater safety, as well as improved hygiene, fewer diseases and overall better health. These effects also enable better economic performance of parents, and better educational opportunities for children, leading to a heightened self-esteem and an improved family life.

A Constru Casa house can be easily cleaned and ventilated, creating a healthy environment and resulting in less disease for all family members, but especially children. These effects are enhanced by an improved stove and a water filter, also provided by Constru Casa (see section 4.2.1. *Health Care*). As the house is cleaner and the children are less sick, the position of the woman in the family improves. Additionally, as in Guatemala women often work in their houses, their workplace is also improved, advancing the woman's social position and self esteem. With less time spent cleaning, many women can pursue gainful economic activities in their spare time, often also using the Constru Casa house as a basis for sales, or one room as a workshop or secure storage place.

As there is more space available than before, family life is improved. One of the most frequent comments by beneficiary families is how they enjoy the additional space and how much easier life is, now that the parents and children have separate bedrooms. The children's educational performance also directly benefits from the new house, as they are able to quietly carry out their homework in an appropriate space. The children of these families are more likely to graduate from secondary education and advance to higher education.

As the house protects the inhabitants against draught, water and vermin, the family is able to lead a life in more stability – not losing their productivity to a rainstorm sweeping away their floor, for example. Reduced worrying about such unforeseen impacts also benefits them psychologically. Also, many families for the first time are able to obtain durable goods, since the Constru Casa house provides the security for those objects not to be stolen.

Lastly, the repayment mechanism of Constru Casa develops the family's ability to contribute to a common goal and work together. The family learns how to budget and to

think about expenditure and saving. This results in greater financial awareness and greater self-esteem and ultimately helps the family break the cycle of poverty.

Increase in employment

Constru Casa also generates employment for the local population and stimulates the local market. Constru Casa always constructs houses in co-operation with local companies and employees: we work with local construction workers and their helpers, and materials are bought at the local market in the communities. The family members who help in the construction often are trained by the masons and develop a new skill set that generates income for them as they will be able to work as masons' helpers after they finished helping to build their own house. Additionally, construction workers and their helpers are educated to become independent constructors.

Environmental aspects

Constru Casa constructs with locally available materials. The houses are built of a concrete floor, concrete blocks and a corrugated iron roof. Sand, gravel and block are abundantly available in Guatemala and cement and corrugated iron are made locally. An alternative option, to construct with wood, is not only more expensive, but also not advisable because of the huge deforestation problem in Guatemala. In remote areas, materials are bought within a maximum distance of a two hours drive. Because the houses are constructed in groups, materials for a number of houses can be bought at the same time, limiting the costs and environmental impacts of transport.

Overall, Constru Casa contributes to lifting families out of poverty, to give these families' children the chance to a better future, and thus little by little helps to build a Guatemalan society of responsible and self-sustainable persons.

4. Housing, Support Programs and Community Development

4.1. Housing

Constru Casa offers selected families a three room house constructed of concrete blocks, a corrugated iron roof and a concrete floor. The families can choose between different types of houses, varying in size and design (see *Appendix 4 – Drawings and Plans of Constru Casa Houses*). The family members choose which type of house suits their needs best. The families need to prove that the land on which they live is theirs. If this is impossible, Constru Casa will look for other ways to help the family, as described below in section 4.1.4. *Improvements*. For the construction of the house and the monthly contributions of the family a contract is signed. Then a date to start building the house will be decided.

Table 2: Conditions of Contract Constru Casa – Family

Contract Constru Casa – family
■ Before the construction starts, the family deposits their land title with Constru Casa.
■ At least one of the family members helps with the construction of the house.
■ During a period of four years, the family pays a monthly contribution, the amount depending on the financial situation of the individual family.
■ After these four years, the family is not allowed to sell the house during two more years.

4.1.1. Current Living Situation of Families

Constru Casa builds for families who live in houses made of organic materials such as adobe (a kind of dried loam) and corn stalks, garbage materials (cardboard and plastic) and corrugated iron or wood. The floors of these houses are most often bare earth. This earth regularly changes into mud due to heavy rainfall and poor drainage. Often the house consists of only one room in which people live, sleep and cook on an open fire. Additionally, dogs, chickens and ducks live in and around the house causing health issues. Toilets and facilities for washing are generally located outside the house. Children have difficulties studying due to the lack of adequate space. Often, the circumstances are unsafe because houses are built at unsuitable sites and with inadequate materials. Such living conditions are a threat to the health, economic and educational opportunities and family development of such families in Guatemala.

The families Constru Casa serves have their own piece of land, but do not have the economic means to build a suitable house for themselves.

4.1.2. Selection of Families

Together with the management and a social worker or contact person of the social partner organization, families are selected who will be considered for a house. These families are visited to examine their current living situation and to determine whether they qualify for a Constru Casa house. A socio-economic study of the family is carried out to examine income, social circumstances, stability and level of self-reliance, and ultimately to determine whether a new house will be an extra stimulus to improve their living conditions. There are no criteria with respect to the makeup of the family (e.g. separated parents, age or number of children) – only the living conditions and fulfillment of the selection criteria are examined.

Table 3: Selection Criteria of Families

Selection Criteria	
■	The family is affiliated with a social partner organization of Constru Casa and actively participates in it.
■	The family lives in extreme poverty, that is the family-income is around GTQ500-GTQ1,500 (USD65–180, EUR50-150) per month.
■	The living conditions of the family are bad and can be improved considerably with a newly constructed house.
■	The family is not living in or renting a house built of block.
■	There is objective evidence that the family shows real interest in improving their living conditions and will be responsible maintaining their house and making their payments.
■	The family agrees to take care of the house, and to keep it clean and in order.
■	The family has its own piece of land where a Constru Casa house can be built.

After being selected, introductory talks are held with small groups of 5 to 10 families. In these talks, the families are prepared extensively for the obligation and responsibility they will accept by getting a new Constru Casa house. Together with the social partner organization, a fair monthly contribution to the cost of the house is determined, taking into account the family-income. This contribution almost always is $\frac{1}{4}$ of the cost of the house, or GTQ150 (USD20, EUR15) per month over four years. Before the construction process can start, there is a legal procedure and a contract signed between the member of the family who legally owns the land and Constru Casa.

4.1.3. Construction

The houses offered to beneficiary families consist of three rooms with a toilet (or latrine) and a shower. The house is built of concrete blocks, has a concrete floor, a roof of corrugated iron and outside doors and windows of metal (with glazing). Depending on the particularities of the plot of land, or on the local area requirements (rural area or very hot climates for instance) alternative designs can be built. The design is also flexible regarding the position of the (standard) 2 doors and 3 windows, which are decided with the family on site the day the construction is started. The house design is based on a building method which is suitable in areas that are at risk from earthquakes. In the walls there is vertical and horizontal rebar and concrete as well as metal reinforcing in U-blocks and holes. The floors have a smooth finish in order to make the cleaning easier. For safety reasons, metal rails are installed in front of the windows. The houses are ventilated and, on the outside, the concrete blocks are treated to prevent moisture in the house.

The construction of a Constru Casa house takes approximately 2 weeks. The houses are built by an experienced team of Guatemalan construction workers, consisting of two masons and one helper. They are assisted by at least one family member for the whole duration of the construction. To Constru Casa it is very important that a family member helps in the construction to increase the feeling of ownership the family has for their new

home. Often volunteers are involved in the construction of a home (for more on volunteers, please see section 6.2.2. *Volunteers and Groups*.) The construction process is led by a Project Manager of Constru Casa, who monitors the quality of the construction.

See *Appendix 4 - Drawings and Plans of Constru Casa Houses* for plans and drawings of the different types of houses.

4.1.4. Improvements

If a family does not have their own plot of land, and thus not qualifies for the building of a complete house, but still lives in bad conditions, Constru Casa will look for other solutions to help the family with their housing. Alternatives can be offered that fit the family's needs such as constructing a new floor, a wall, a bathroom, a one room corrugated iron house or a dismountable (portable) house. In cooperation with the social worker of the partner organization a fair contribution to be paid by the family is determined.

4.1.5. Maintenance

For the four years that families are paying their contribution to their house, Constru Casa carries out maintenance work on the houses. This work does not include maintenance made necessary by carelessness or misuse of the house. Constru Casa tries to limit maintenance work to a minimum in order to strengthen the family's sense of responsibility and ownership of their house. Only reparations that the family is unable to do themselves are carried out by Constru Casa.

Constru Casa also carries out a four year long follow-up plan to make sure that the house has a sustainable impact on the family. Please see section 4.2.3. *Social Work*, for more information on the follow-up plan.

4.2. Support Programs

Constru Casa offers additional support to both individual beneficiary families and to social partner organizations. These support programs are primarily designed to maximize the benefit of having a new house for a family, but also to support social partner organizations in areas where they need help, and to support individual families in cases that the social organizations are unable to cover these families' needs. Constru Casa's support programs cover three areas: health care, education and social work. With these support programs, Constru Casa does not intend to become an educational or health care organization. However, we believe that in some cases it is necessary to offer support in those areas in order to stimulate families more or to help a social partner organization in need.

4.2.1. Health Care

Constru Casa believes that health problems can be an important obstacle to development, and therefore offers health care support related to housing, but also to social partner organizations. These programs help to create a better living environment for the families and to improve their physical health.

Water filters

Unsafe drinking water accounts for a large part of health problems in Guatemala, especially amongst poorer segments of the population. Constru Casa offers water filters in co-operation with the Guatemalan Association for the Family in the Americas (Asociación Guatemalteca para la Familia de Las Américas), a Guatemalan

organization. The water filters are simple, and consist of a ceramic bowl which is filled with water taken from the tap or any other source. Slowly, the water drips through the filtering ceramic, and is caught in a bucket made of different materials, plastic being the most economical. Extensive research has been carried out regarding the quality of drinking water in Guatemala, and this filter has proven to be very efficient and economical in producing high-quality drinking water.

The families are asked to pay a once-only contribution of GTQ100 (USD13, EUR10) for the water filter, which has a total cost of GTQ275 (USD35, EUR27). In cooperation with the social partner organizations, the replacement of the filtering unit, which needs to be changed once a year, is organized.

Improved Stoves

Constru Casa offers a cooking stove with each house. The stove is easy to build and to dismantle and can thus be easily moved. It consists of eleven blocks and 3 metal plates (the cooking surface), and a flue to remove the smoke through the roof.

In Guatemala, most poor families cook on an open fire, which is very unhealthy (lung problems) and dangerous (burns). The cooking stove ensures that smoke is removed through the roof and contains the fire in a safe place. Importantly, the stove is very energy efficient, and uses 70% less wood than an open fire. Therefore, the stove benefits the families financially, as they have to buy less wood, and in terms of time usage, as they spend less time to find wood themselves. Importantly also, the environment is benefited as the use of less wood results in less deforestation. Upon the delivery of the stove, the family is trained how to use it and to change its old habits.

The families are asked to pay a once-only contribution of GTQ200 (USD25, EUR20) to the stove, which is a third of the total cost of around GTQ600 (USD78, EUR60).

In offering improved stoves and water filters, Constru Casa co-operates with other organizations in Guatemala who specialize in these services. The products are self-financed through the families' monthly payments for their house. The contribution per family is around 1/3 of the total price of each item. In addition, Constru Casa always tries to find specific sponsors for the different products.

Support to Social Partner Organizations

Support to social partner projects in the area of health care is provided by financing health-related programs, such as nutritional initiatives, an emergency fund, or health education programs. Social partner organizations normally approach Constru Casa with special needs or initiatives, and apply for support. Constru Casa then evaluates their application internally and decides whether or not to support the program. The guidelines are always a direct and measurable benefit to the organizations' clients.

Support to Individual Beneficiary Families

If the social partner organizations are not in a position to help an individual family with their special health needs, support can be provided by Constru Casa in the form of payments for medicine, operations, personal health equipment such as a wheel chair, or other medical treatment to family members. This support is only provided in exceptional cases, and always in cooperation with the social partner organization.

4.2.2. Education

Constru Casa believes that without education, development is very difficult, if not impossible to attain. With the new Constru Casa house children of beneficiary families in many cases for the first time in their lives have their own private space to do their homework. Recent research has affirmed that educational performance improves significantly with the provision of a Constru Casa house, and that the children of these

families are more likely to graduate from secondary education and advance to higher education. However, in some specific cases, additional support in education is necessary, both to social partner organizations and to beneficiary families. Support provided to a social organization often benefits an entire community.

This educational support is provided in the form of financing teacher salaries, to reduce class sizes or to guarantee uninterrupted education when a social partner organization finds itself in financial difficulty. Constru Casa might also support certain educational projects with school utensils, or equipment such as blackboards, tables and chairs, or a computer, if these organizations lack the financial resources to adequately equip themselves to fulfill their mission.

Additionally, Constru Casa supports a small number of children through scholarships. In the future we would like to focus our support on paying teacher salaries, as we believe that this investment is more effective and benefits a greater number of children.

4.2.3. Social Work

Constru Casa believes that for sustainable development, social work and an adequate follow-up to the construction of a home is needed. Therefore, for four years after the construction of a house, Constru Casa accompanies and follows up with families in cooperation with its social partner organizations. Constru Casa believes it is necessary that families receive adequate training, learn how to make the best use of their new house, and understand how to employ it to really change their lives. Accordingly, the social partner organizations carry out workshops four times per year with their group of beneficiary families following a comprehensive guidebook Constru Casa has developed. This guidebook gives detailed instructions on how to carry out these workshops, which include group discussions, exchange of experiences, and role-play, among other tools. Important topics discussed include the families' changed living conditions, hygiene and health issues, family planning, difficulties in adjustment, and special circumstances and general improvements, but also financial planning and responsibility. Through these workshops, the families are motivated to keep their houses in a good state and to develop their own lives in a positive manner.

Also, every year a group of families will visit each other in order to see the others' houses, exchange experiences, and learn from each other. For Constru Casa this activity provides valuable information to improve their services and fulfill its mission.

4.3. Community Development and Construction

Constru Casa supports its social partner organizations also in community development and construction. These constructions are buildings with a social or communal function, especially in the areas of health care and education, such as school buildings, libraries, day care centers, community centers, clinics and orphanages, benefitting the whole community. See *Appendix 2 – List of Community Development Construction Projects* for a list of the buildings Constru Casa has carried out so far.

The services we offer range from initial consulting and needs assessment to the designing of buildings, supervision of construction, to overall management of projects. This includes administration and time-scheduling, design and elaboration of plans, financial management and budget control, execution and supervision of the construction, as well as quality control and reporting to donors.

The financing and fundraising for these projects is the responsibility of the social partner organizations. Constru Casa charges a minimal amount for its services, which is used to cover overhead costs of Constru Casa.

5. Organization

5.1. Asociación Constru Casa

In March 2004 Constru Casa started the construction of the very first houses. As an organization Constru Casa received donations from partner foundations in Holland. Since November 2005, Constru Casa is officially registered in Guatemala as a foundation under the name of: “Asociación Constru Casa”. The Board consists of a president, a vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer and members.

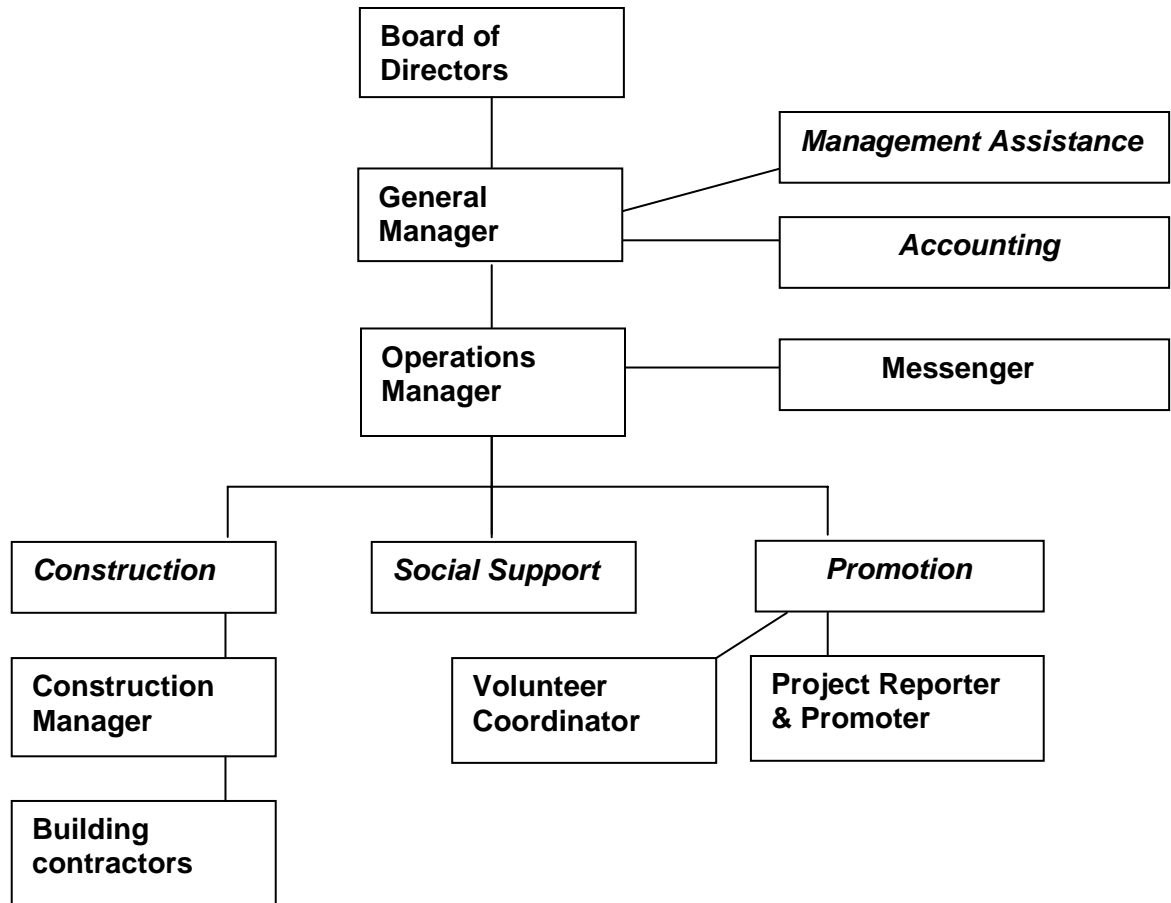
Constru Casa counts on the invaluable support of its two partner foundations “Stichting Constru Casa” (formerly known as Guatemala en Construcción) in the Netherlands, and Constru Casa USA in the United States of America. These partner foundations represent “Asociación Constru Casa” abroad and were set up in their respective countries to look for support and to raise funds for “Asociación Constru Casa” in Guatemala. They have their own boards of directors and are separate legal entities. Please see section 6.2.1. *Promotion and Fundraising* for more information of both partner foundations.

5.2. Board of Directors

The board of the Foundation Constru Casa consists of the following members, chosen for a period of two years, from November 2007: The Board assembles at least four times a year.

Carolina van Heerde	President
Leonel López	Vice President
Manon Derks	Secretary
Rudy Arrecis	Treasurer
Christopher Morales	First General Member
Edwin Duarte	Second General Member
Harald Westrik	Third General Member

5.3. Organizational Chart



5.4. Management and Administration

The administration of Construa Casa is made up of the following persons:

Name	Responsibilities
General Manager <i>Carolien van Heerde</i>	General management (human resources, information, organization, budgeting and finance, administration) promotion and fundraising.
Operations Manager <i>Stefan Ege</i>	Operational management, coordination of building activities, promotion, fundraising, contacts with social partner organizations, staff supervision.
Project manager <i>Ranferí Vásquez</i>	Architectural aspects, engineering, project administration.
Management assistant <i>Sofía García</i>	General management support, social projects and contacts.

Volunteer Coordinator <i>Karen Barnett</i>	Coordination of individual and group volunteers, promotional activities, tours.
Project Reporter & Promoter <i>Bryan Kirkup</i>	Drafting of donor reports and promotional materials.
General partner <i>Geovani Zuñiga</i>	Collection of families' monthly payment, general jobs.

6. Budget and Funding

Constru Casa is a not-for-profit organization, whose financing depends almost entirely on donations. The total budget of Constru Casa in 2009 was GTQ1.373.190 (USD171,648, EUR137,319), with a percentage of 94% spent on program activities, keeping administration costs to an absolute minimum. The largest part of the budget is spent on housing provision GTQ825.632 (USD103,204, EUR82,563), while GTQ20.518 (USD2564, EUR2051) was spent on programs for water filters and maintenance. Separate from the housing related programs Constru Casa was supporting different educational and health care programs for a total amount of GTQ144,180 (USD18,022, EUR14.418). Funding is obtained from a variety of sources: geographically the largest donor base is in the Netherlands, with Constru Casa Holland providing a substantial amount of funding, both from individual donors as from foundations. Increasingly important is support coming from the United States, both from a growing individual donor base in Nebraska, as from an increasing number of volunteer groups coming from all over the United States.

6.1. Budget and Expenses

The budget of Constru Casa consists of houses, support programs, and community construction as program costs, as well as salaries, and overhead costs.

6.1.1. Housing

The total labor and material cost of the basic three room house is USD3,500 on average (+/-5%). Of this amount, 60% is used for construction materials and 40% goes toward the payment of labor. Constru Casa's 2010 budget provides for the construction of at least 75 houses.

6.1.2. Support Programs

For support programs in 2010 the following items are budgeted: improved stoves, water filters, maintenance, improvements, follow-up plan for families, health care (emergency fund, operations, medicine), education (teacher salaries, school utensils, and scholarships), and help for individual families in any form.

6.1.3 Community Development and Construction

For 2010, the construction of a community building (for health care programs and community activities), a workshop center, different centers for 'early training programs', a daycare center and educational centers are planned. The funds for these projects come from foundations in Holland (community building and workshop center) and from the different partner organizations in Guatemala themselves. The total amount budgeted for 2010 for these kinds of construction is GTQ838.752 (USD194,844, EUR83,875). Without these funds being available, Constru Casa will not be involved in the construction, management or supervision of such projects.

6.2. Funding and Fundraising

Funding for Constru Casa comes from a variety of sources and geographic locations. Funds are raised from individuals, funds, foundations, and companies, as well as in the form of in-kind donations in Guatemala. The primary donor base is in Holland, while the United States is of increasing importance as well.

6.2.1. Promotion and Fundraising

Constru Casa is fortunate to be able to count on various entities and individuals to help with promotion and fundraising in Holland, the United States, and Guatemala. Promotion

and fundraising is immensely important for Constru Casa, since the organization is almost entirely dependent on donations.

The Netherlands

Two Dutch partner organizations, “Stichting Constru Casa” and “Stichting Leven in Guatemala” are raising funds for Constru Casa by recruiting individual donors, private funds, subsidies and sponsors.

Foundation “Guatemala en Construcción”

Dutch “Stichting Constru Casa”, recruits mainly private donors and sponsors. Funds are raised by means of private donations, fundraising events and information campaigns (for example through arranging a benefit concert).

Foundation “Leven in Guatemala”

Dutch “Stichting Leven in Guatemala” is a long-term collaborator and cooperates with Constru Casa by raising funds through housing associations, business relations, clients/renters and employees of the Housing Association Laurentius in Breda, The Netherlands. In the past, the foundation applied for private funds and sponsors, but currently all contributions come directly from the abovementioned contacts of the Housing Association.

United States

Congressional District Program

Since the end of 2007, Constru Casa has been affiliated with the Congressional District Programs (CDP) 501(c)(3) Public Charity in the US. Through this co-operation, all the donations that Constru Casa receives in the US are tax deductible and all donations are traceable. For 2010, Constru Casa is further expanding a fundraising network in the US to promote its projects in the best possible way.

Guatemala

A small part of the total funds of Constru Casa comes from Guatemala itself, by means of the beneficiary families’ monthly contributions and – sporadically – through individual donations. Additionally, Constru Casa works together with local industry to secure donations of building materials, such as cement, iron, doors and other materials.

6.2.2. Volunteers and Groups

Constru Casa places volunteers to help on almost all of its building projects. Working on a building site in Guatemala proves to be a special and unique experience for volunteers, mainly in working together with the local construction workers and the families for whom the houses are built.

The volunteers assist the helpers and work together with the construction workers. Volunteers dig out ground, carry building materials, mix concrete and cement, help with the foundation reinforcement, assist with the laying of stones, and do preparation work for the masons.

Lately, Constru Casa has begun to promote volunteering also as a means of fundraising. Short-term volunteers are encouraged to fundraise for a part of the cost of the house they will be working on before coming to Guatemala. A more targeted approach is being made at finding qualified long-term volunteers. Additionally, a program has been initiated to co-operate with US universities. Constru Casa is setting up fully organized service-trips to Guatemala at a fixed cost. No administration fees are charged for organizing these trips, but a donation is required, generally for the cost of one house. This donation will directly go to the house the students/volunteers will build.

6.2.3. Contribution of Families

The families contribute to their new house in various ways: financially through a monthly contribution over four years, and with labor helping in the construction and preparing their plot of land. The families pay a contribution of 25% of the total cost of the construction of their house (around USD875 total). The amount of the contribution depends on the financial situation of the individual family and the type of house, and is determined in consultation with the social worker of the social partner organization. The families pay their contribution monthly during a period of four years, a procedure formulated and agreed upon in the contract signed between the family and Constru Casa. Most families pay about USD20 per month for the basic three room house. In addition to the financial contribution, one or two members of the family help with the construction of the house, and they prepare the plot of land for the house to be built: they also contribute labor.

The families' payments are used to pay for special Constru Casa programs, such as improved stoves, water filters, and latrines. A part is also used to pay for office overhead costs.

7. Contact

For more information and current updates, please visit our website:
www.construcasa.org

Post and walk-in address:
Asociación Construcción Casa
4a Avenida Norte # 22 'A'
Antigua, Guatemala
Tel/Fax (00502) 7832 2369
contacto@construcasa.org

Partner Foundation The Netherlands (also for sending tax-deductible donations):
Stichting Construcción Casa
Heiweg 235
6533 PC Nijmegen
Tel (0031) – (0)24 377 2071
info@stichtingguatemala.nl

Partner Foundation United States (also for sending tax-deductible donations):
Asociación Construcción Casa USA
23 Folklore Ct.
The Woodlands, Tx. 77389
United States of America
Construcción Casa is a Congressional District Program, registered as a 501(c)(3) in Virginia

Appendix 1 – Founder Carolien van Heerde

Carolien is a structural engineer and worked in the Netherlands for the *Nationale Woningraad* and for various housing corporations. Then, for five years, she was employed by the Dutch Railways as a project manager and consultant regarding upkeep of buildings and housing policy.

Since 2001, she has lived in Antigua, Guatemala. In Guatemala, up until now she has worked in various construction projects. In 2003, she founded her own company, Delta Proyectos, S.A, carrying out various construction projects (consultancy and coaching) on a profit making basis.

In the beginning of 2004, she started Constru Casa and runs it successfully to this day. Before that, Carolien continuously devoted herself, in the area of construction as well as other areas, to the poorest people of Guatemala. This is an activity that she continues, aside from running Constru Casa, coordinating many other activities, such as paying salaries for teachers, helping with the education of children, health care and others.

Appendix 2 – List of Community Development Construction Projects

- Construction of a school and a clinic for Camino Seguro.
- Different housing construction projects before the start of Constru Casa.
- Construction, improvements and extensions of different daycare centers of Hogares Comunitarios (program of SOSEP).
- Construction of a daycare center for Ami-go, Barcenas, Guatemala.
- Construction of a bakery for Asociación de Mujeres in Chocantariy, Totonicapán.
- Construction of an orphanage and different other projects for Semillas de Amor in Parramos.
- Construction of a boarding school for agricultural training in Xix, Quiché.
- Construction of different CEO's: Centro Educativo y Orientación (early care / training), Sacatepéquez.
- Construction of a daycare center for Caras Alegres, Quetzaltenango.
- Construction of an education-centre for the local community in Santa Cruz.
- Construction of a daycare center and a library in Chocantariy, Totonicapán.
- Construction of a Telesecundaria School in Samox San Lucas, Alta Verapaz in cooperation with CasaSito Association.

Appendix 3 – Overview of Social Partner Organizations of Constru Casa

Name of social partner organization	Description
SOSEP	The government's social program, coordinated by the wife of the president of Guatemala.
Hogares Comunitarios [Community Homes]	Government program (part of SOSEP) for child care (0-7 years).
Foundation El Buen Samaritano [The Good Samaritan]	Organization offering child care and education to deprived children (1-18 years) in Jocotenango, department of Sacatapéquez.
Bendición de Dios [Blessing from God]	A primary school in Alotenango, department of Sacatapéquez.
Familias de Esperanza / <i>Common Hope</i> [Families of Hope]	Non profit organization (NGO), founded in 1986 by the American Heubsch family, providing health care, education, housing and personal development of poor Guatemalan children, their families and local communities.
Committee of the community Chocantariy	Mainly dedicated to weaving, located near Momostenago, in the department of Totonicapán.
Guatemaltecas de Corazón [Guatemalans at Heart]	Women's committee in Santo Domingo Xenacoj, department of Sacatapéquez. Work in the areas of baking, weaving, cooking, nutrition, handicrafts, and provide supplies.
The Aids-clinic and hospice San José	The Aids-clinic is situated in San Lucas, department of Sacatapéquez, but treats people from all over Guatemala.
11 de agosto [11 th of August]	New community in Magdalena Milpas Altas, in the department of Sacatapéquez, founded after the hurricane Mitch stormed over Honduras and Guatemala in 1997.
Foundation Transiciones [Transitions]	Foundation from Guatemala for people with physical disabilities, working in the areas of education and health care.
Asociación Santiaguíto	Women's committee in Santiago Zamora, department of Sacatapéquez, maily dedicated to weaving and traditional handicrafts.
Corazón de los Niños [Heart of the Children]	Organization for education and health programs for families in the neighborhood of San Pedro las Huertas, department of Sacatapéquez. (Member of Christian Children's Foundation)
Kubin Junan	Primary school and social project in San Antonio Aguas Calientes, department of Sacatapéquez (Member of Christian Children's Foundation)

Las Flores [The Flowers]	Social project supporting families living in extreme poverty, emphasis is on educating the mothers; in San Miguel Dueñas, department of Sacatapéquez (Member of Christian Children's Foundation).
Asociación Multi	Foundation of the Union Fragua for the employees of Wal Mart and Paiz supermarkets.
Jardín de Amor [Garden of Love]	Daycare center in Santa Maria de Jesus, focusing on education, health care and food to elevate the living standards of the population.
Semillas de Esperanza y Amor [Seeds of Hope and Love]	Social organization in San Mateo Milpas Altas, motivating young mothers and their children to take part in education (less analphabetism, learning of languages, both national and foreign).
CasaSito	CasaSito has a scholarship program, an infrastructure fund and an emergency fund dedicated to mainly rural indigenous communities. Additionally, they run a volunteer house in Antigua Guatemala.
BDP	Supports families with the aim of improving their living standards through education and income generating programs; in Chimaltenango.
Carroll Behrhorst	Foundation offering preventive and curative health care; also tries to promote integral self-management of communities; in Chimaltenango.
Caras Alegres [Happy Faces]	Supports women and children living on the poverty line with education and activities generating a positive attitude; in Quetzaltenango.
Las Pampas	Cooperation with Father Juan, catholic priest from the Netherlands in Las Pampas, Escuintla. The community was affected by Hurricane Stan in 2005.
Xix, APRODEFI	Boarding school in the Ixil area, for 130 students in primary and secondary school, specialized in agricultural training.

