

## SOLID EFFORTS TO REDUCE POVERTY IN



Photo: Fundación León xiii

**T**he Citizen Action Against Poverty initiative has just published a study indicating that one in two Mexicans (that is, 49%) cannot afford the basic food basket. The study poses the following question: How can Mexico, at the same time, be one of the 15 largest economies and have such a large portion of its population below the poverty line? How can generational poverty be stopped, putting an end to the vicious circle of marginalization, exclusion, and lack of opportunities?

Today I have the pleasure of talking to you about León XIII Foundation, which has proven to effectively contribute to breaking this cycle in communities of Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca, where people live on less than \$ 35 pesos a day (\$ 1.5 dollars). In order to generate a positive change, people are invited to be part of a group in which the following are simultaneously promoted:

1. Develop activities that generate income.
2. Improve housing including healthy and sustainable solutions.
3. Learn about saving money and create safe groups to manage members' savings and give loans to each other.

All of these are only feasible if accompanied by human and financial training.

In 2019, with a team of 45 people and 950 volunteers, the foundation managed to work with 16,400 people, who in total saved 55 million pesos, an average of \$ 3,350 pesos per person. 70% of the participants are women, whose perspective on life has changed after learning to save such an amount and invest it for the benefit of their family.

Rosa González is a Tzotzil artisan from Chenalhó, Chiapas. While she was happy with her craft, she did not feel like she had the ability to sell elsewhere and grow her profession. That is where the support of Fundación León XIII came in, "The Foundation helped us to unite the cooperative (of artisans) and supported us to enter new spaces to sell and to increase our revenues," explains Rosa.



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The interesting thing is that this model is not imposed, but rather built with the people. The ventures emerge and are strengthened in the savings group. People are the first interested in protecting their own savings and see the benefits of working collaboratively, hence their motto is "we all need everyone".

I want to highlight the products that the artisans weave and embroider, which are marketed through the Kitzin platform (<https://www.kitzin.com.mx/colecciones>). These are true works of art that dignify their culture. They are learning new skills, even business, to produce what the market demands. They used to sell their products in charity bazars, which have been canceled due to the pandemic. For this reason, today they are trying to think outside the box to find new ways to distribute and market their products. Thus, we must adopt this motto as well: "We all need everyone". Poverty must be reduced, so that, among other things, we can all aspire to live in harmony, security, and peace.

Examples like these inspire us and move us to ask ourselves: What are we doing to help reduce inequality and poverty in our country?

If you would like to purchase these handcrafts and products or contribute to this cause, feel free to contact Olivia Sánchez directly or visit the Kitzin website [olivia@fundacionleontrece.org](mailto:olivia@fundacionleontrece.org)

<https://www.fundacionleontrece.org/> <https://www.kitzin.com.mx/>

