



natün

2025 ANNUAL & IMPACT REPORT

CLOSING THE 2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

From the Co-Executive Director of Sustainability

Reflecting on the past 5 years of Natün — from the start to the conclusion of our 2020–2025 Strategic Plan — the organisation has undergone significant transformation. The plan was developed in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we worked to simultaneously adapt our programming to meet urgent community needs while navigating severe operational constraints. Since then, the global context has evolved considerably, and Natün has evolved alongside it.

This transformation has come through completely flipping our model over the past 5 years: from one focused on short-term fixes, donor priorities, and “surface-level” work, to one prioritizing community leadership, Indigenous voices, and long-term systemic change. Our programs have not changed completely but have evolved — we continue with the holistic structure of Education, Nutrition & Health, and Economic Development. Through the expertise of local staff and deep



listening to communities, these programs have grown into more collaborative and impactful work that centres Maya culture, and applies strategic threads to address the underlying systemic barriers faced by communities in Sololá.

If I were to single out one defining achievement of the last 5 years, I would highlight the development and elevation of our Indigenous leadership team, culminating in the hiring of a Co-Executive Director who is Maya Kaqchikel and from Sololá. This structural change is not performative or tokenistic; it reflects a genuine investment in the leaders whose voices matter most, strengthening their capacities and ensuring decisions are locally led. This has, in turn, deepened community relationships and enabled more responsive, collaborative programs that build on local strengths and drive greater impact.

As we enter this new chapter, we reflect with both pride and realism — pride in how far we have come through the collective efforts of staff, communities, board members, donors, and implementing partners, and realism in recognising the persistent challenges and systemic barriers that communities in Sololá continue to face. There is still significant work ahead. We move forward grounded by the foundations of what we have built and guided by the wisdom, knowledge, and strengths of the Maya communities we partner with, ensuring that our path continues to be led by and alongside Indigenous leadership.



Elena Wason

Elena Wason
Co-Executive Director of Sustainability





IMPACT OVERVIEW & OUR APPROACH



NUTRITION & HEALTH

66% of 302 families with new vegetable gardens and poultry sell excess produce to increase monthly income

6 community demonstration gardens established to produce healthy food

101 children aged 0-3 treated for chronic and acute malnutrition

47 Comadronas (Maya Midwives) joined knowledge exchange sessions and strengthened collaboration with the Ministry of Health



EDUCATION

4 youth commissions formed with community advocacy plans presented to local authorities

95 students received tutoring to strengthen their academic skills and cultural participation

15 youth graduated Kaqchikel courses

93% of 192 scholarship students successfully passed their school year

82% of 31 preschool children significantly improved their learning and Kaqchikel skills



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

\$65,345

saved by women in Savings Groups across 14 communities

65%

of 35 new female-led businesses are creating employment opportunities for others in their communities

48%

of 170 Trade School graduates indicate that they generate new income due to technical training received in 2025

STRATEGIC THREADS



15

strategic partnerships formed with local institutions to strengthen impact and collaboration

7

community-level projects completed

56

female Promotoras (Indigenous women leaders) strengthened community leadership skills and did research projects on ancestral Maya knowledge

6

communities began strategic actions for the conservation of forests and natural water sources



NATÜN'S PATHWAY - FROM RESPONSE TO SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Natün began as a humanitarian network delivering emergency aid, and has since evolved into an organization focused on long-term, systemic change. Natün defined the core values of its 2020–2025 Strategic Plan:

- 1 Led by local Indigenous staff;
- 2 Oriented towards community-led solutions by listening to community voices;
- 3 Focused on long-term, holistic and sustainable programs.

Today, Natün is led by Indigenous leaders and works to advance the ethnodevelopment of Maya communities through systemic, community-driven change.

OUR APPROACH (2020-2025)

Natün's work has been grounded in three interconnected program areas:

EDUCATION

Strengthening and complementing educational systems to expand access to quality learning opportunities for all ages. This includes early childhood education, primary-level tutoring, and youth skills development initiatives.

NUTRITION & HEALTH

Expanding access to culturally relevant nutrition and healthcare services, reducing child malnutrition, and improving quality of life for vulnerable populations in rural communities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Promoting sustainable livelihoods by advancing professional growth, strengthening local knowledge and techniques, and increasing income-generating opportunities for families and communities.

While these pillars have guided the strategy, Natün's model was tested by the global pandemic. In response, the organization rapidly adapted—leveraging community networks to deliver emergency support while maintaining a long-term vision.



OUR APPROACH (2020-2025)

During this period, Natün not only addressed urgent needs but also piloted and refined programmatic approaches that would shape its impact in the years that followed.



2020

4345 Food packages were delivered in communities as a direct response to the pandemic

1378 Students supported through our Scholarship Program

51 Artisans and sewers provided with income through masks and product orders

2021

1004 Food packages were delivered to families at risk of malnutrition

43 educational workshops for parents on home-learning skills

40 students receiving 1:1 tutoring sessions

2022

200 family gardens established

42 Maya Midwives and 30 Community Health Promoters from the region trained to strengthen their knowledge and skills so they better serve their

97% success rate among 775 scholarship students

2023

103 students graduated from sewing and embroidery trade schools

137 participants engaged in tutoring learning communities

208 young people participated in workshops on critical topics such as local development, leadership, irregular migration, and Maya art

65% of 102 children identified with malnutrition showed a normal nutritional status after 6 months of nutritional support

2024

92% of children diagnosed with acute malnutrition recovered, representing 115 healthy children

30 Maya midwives expanded their expertise, with 85% demonstrating increased capacity

286 Women entrepreneurs increased monthly income by average of \$52

153 Women collectively saved \$29,701 in 8 savings groups

83% Academic success rate among 278 Scholarship recipients

In 2025, Natün transitioned to a co-leadership model, integrating an Indigenous Executive Director from partner communities. Today, an eight-member leadership team—majority Indigenous women—guides the organization's strategy and growth.

This shift strengthens accountability to communities and positions Natün to deepen its impact in the years ahead.



VOICES FROM OUR TEAM

Insights from the team that worked through the
2020-2025 Strategic Plan

“ Sustainable processes require time, active listening, and respect for local knowledge.

Taking different opinions into account strengthens results and allows for the construction of more inclusive and appropriate proposals.

Each project was designed not to impose ideas but to support community leadership, respond to family needs, and strengthen their capacities. ”

- Isabel Julajuj,
Education Program



“ The plan strengthened my perception of social and community work, allowing me to understand the importance of preventive education, case follow-up, and institutional coordination. It motivated me to work in a more organized way, with a results-oriented approach and a stronger commitment to the population, recognizing that small actions can generate significant changes in child health. ”

Teresa Panjoj, Nutrition
& Health Program



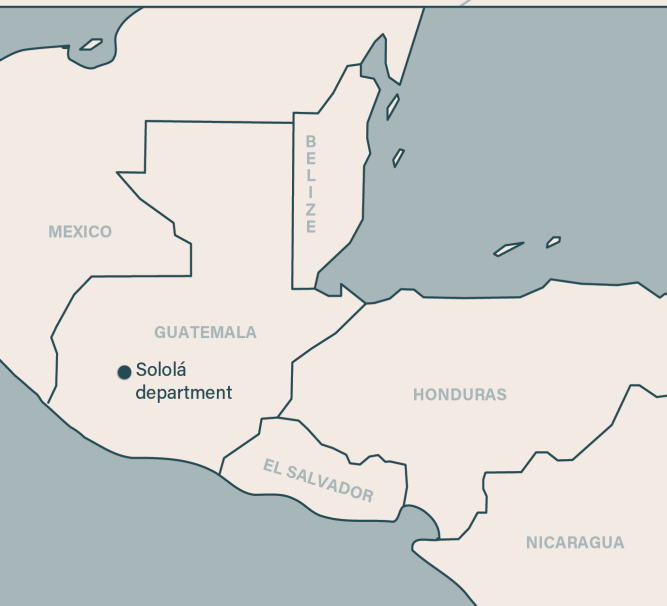
“ The plan defined direction, goals, and long-term actions that fostered team cohesion, transforming the vision into real results. The application of values and principles guided actions, decisions, and the culture defined the organization’s identity, aligned between staff and the communities. ”

- Brenda Perez, Strategic
Threads Department



“ I am most proud that, in recent years, the programs have expanded their reach within the communities where we work, and that efforts have also been made to incorporate environmental care at the same time. Moreover, Natün took a major step in moving away from being 100% assistance-based and began promoting community involvement that enabled them to improve their living conditions. ”

- Shouny Xingo, Operations
Department



2314 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

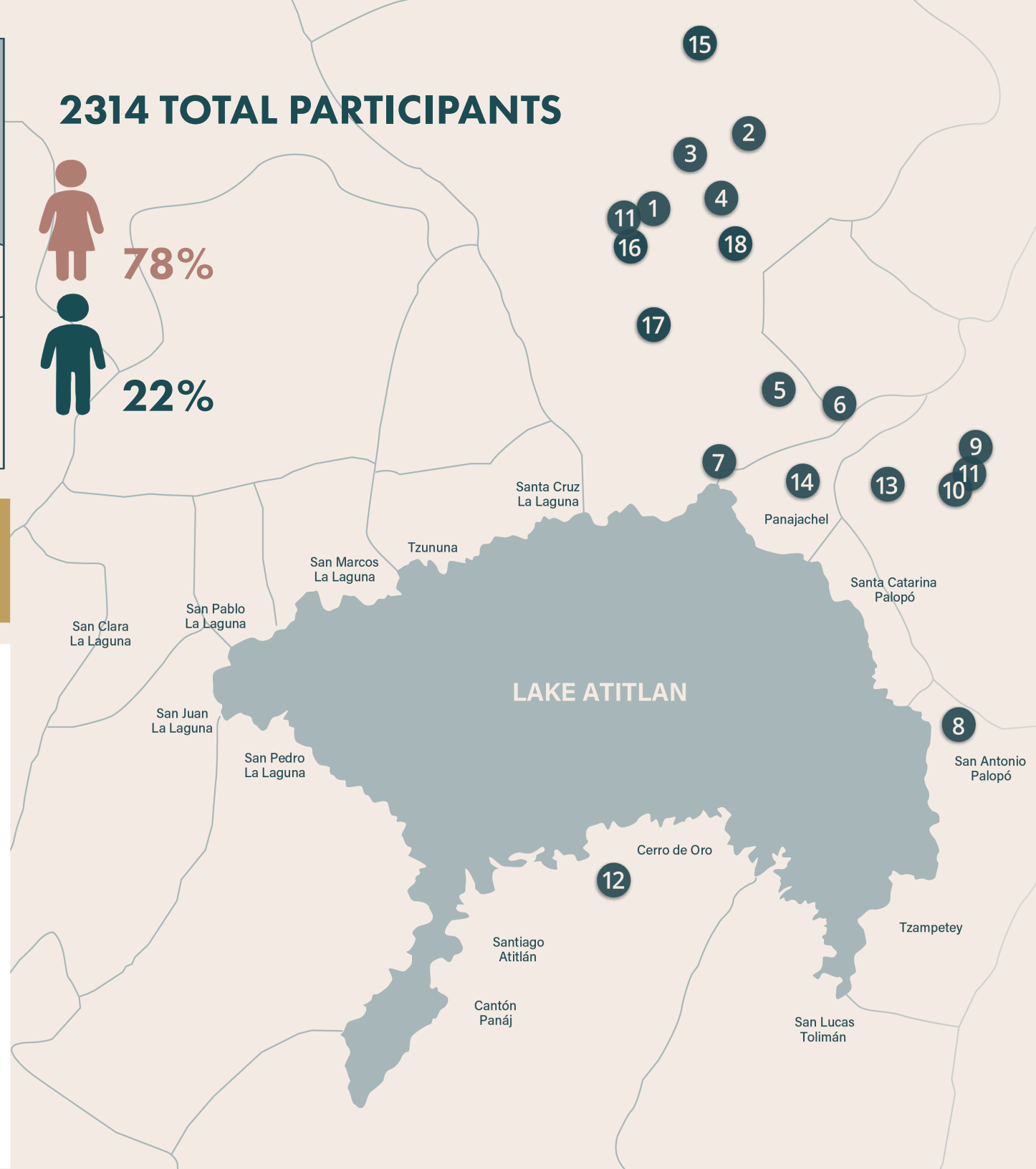


78%



22%

Geographic Reach and Partner Communities



ID	COMMUNITY
1	Kayalá
2	Vasconcelos Xajaxac
3	Cooperativa el Tablón
4	Santa María el Tablón
5	Peña Blanca
6	Tierra Linda
7	San Jorge La Laguna
8	San Antonio Palopó
9	Panimatzalam
10	Tucaché
11	Barranco el Tablón
12	Chucumuc
13	San Andres
14	Panajachel

ID	COMMUNITY
15	Progreso Xajaxac
16	Yaxón Neboyá
17	Pancá
18	Maya Kaqchikel

San Clara La Laguna, San Pablo La Laguna, San Marcos La Laguna, Tzununa, Santa Cruz La Laguna, Panajachel, Santa Catarina Palopó, San Antonio Palopó, San Juan La Laguna, San Pedro La Laguna, Cerro de Oro, Santiago Atitlán, Cantón Panáj, Tzampetey, San Lucas Tolimán



PROGRAM IMPACT IN 2025: NUTRITION & HEALTH



66%

of families with new vegetable gardens and poultry sell excess produce to increase monthly income



100%

of the 8 children enrolled in acute malnutrition treatment in 2025 recovered to normal nutritional status



50%

of Comadronas (Maya midwives) report applying at least two new skills acquired in exchange sessions during their women's care practices

FROM VISION TO IMPACT:

HEAR FROM ILKA SALOJ, DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION & HEALTH

Over the years, the Nutrition & Health program has evolved into distinct components that lead to measurable family-level change. During COVID-19, we maintained essential health and nutrition services by shifting to food assistance and launching “Creciendo Sano” (our Malnutrition Prevention Initiative) to identify and treat chronic and acute malnutrition, including severe anemia, through medical and nutritional follow-up.

Building on this response, we strengthened our Maternal Health efforts by strategically expanding our work with Comadronas (Maya midwives); trusted community members who carry generational knowledge of women’s health, prenatal care, and childbirth. We grew this network from 9 to more than 40 midwives, significantly broadening community coverage. In 2022, the family agriculture component was born, progressing from basic food hand outs to families to the implementation of family vegetable gardens with home egg- and meat-producing poultry as well as community level school gardens, engaging teachers and children.

At the center of this work are Community Promotoras (Indigenous women leaders) and Comadronas, whose increased leadership abilities and their active participation in knowledge exchange sessions has supported the promotion of culturally relevant primary care services in rural Indigenous communities.

We are most proud of the shift toward an integrated approach, moving away from direct food assistance to strengthening capacities in health, nutrition, and family agriculture. These actions and achievements have been strengthened through strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Health, the Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security, and the Ministry of Agriculture. Through formal agreements, these collaborations have enabled case referrals, technical support, and the joint implementation of initiatives that have expanded the program’s impact across communities.



Ilka Saloj

Ilka Saloj
Director of Nutrition & Health





IMPACT IN ACTION



Reyna Maribel joined the Creciendo Sano program (Malnutrition Prevention Program) at Natün at 1 year and 11 months old. Although her weight-for-height was within a normal range, she presented a moderate growth delay (height-for-age).

Throughout 2024–2025, she received comprehensive care, including regular growth monitoring, medical consultations, medications, and vitamin supplementation, while her mother participated in health and nutrition training.

With consistent support and improved hygiene practices at home, Reyna’s growth showed significant progress, moving from a moderate delay to a normal range.

Today, Reyna’s progress reflects what is possible when early intervention, integrated care, and family engagement come together—demonstrating a clear pathway toward



PROGRAM IMPACT IN 2025: EDUCATION



95

students received tutoring to strengthen their academic skills and cultural participation



4

youth commissions formed with community advocacy plans presented to local authorities



82%

of preschool children significantly improved their learning and Kaqchikel skills

FROM VISION TO IMPACT: HEAR FROM ALFONZO CUXIL, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Between 2019 and 2025, the Education program expanded access to formal education and strengthened academic pathways for children and youth. During this period, 1,326 students across primary, middle, secondary, and university levels accessed education through financial support, 58% of whom were women.

Parental involvement has been a critical driver of these outcomes—from supporting children’s nutrition and early development in preschool to monitoring academic progress—reinforcing the link between family engagement and educational success.

The program is now evolving toward a more holistic model with a more strategic youth leadership development with structured training in leadership, teamwork, assertive communication, and civic engagement to strengthen community-driven development. The enhancement to the Preschool Nutrition Center curriculum with emphasis in early math, reading skills, and critical thinking skills. Partnerships with the public sector—specifically the Ministry of Education—have been strengthened through close, operational collaboration with school and institute principals and teaching staff. This includes the exchange of training plans, student referrals, and joint evaluation of results, positioning Natün as a trusted partner in the teaching and learning process.

Together, these efforts position the program to deliver more sustained and community-rooted impact.



Alfonzo Cuxil

Alfonzo Cuxil
Director of Education





IMPACT IN ACTION



Pedro, from San Andrés Semetabaj, started participating with Natün at the age of 4 and now is part of the Youth Leadership component of the Education program. Over the years, he has steadily built knowledge and experiences through his continued engagement.

A more visible transformation began during his participation in the youth leadership workshops. At the outset, Pedro was a reserved adolescent who faced challenges in socializing, with shyness shaping much of how he engaged with others. Through sustained participation, his confidence grew, and he became more comfortable interacting with peers and engaging in group spaces.

This shift has been reflected in his active participation and emerging leadership across program activities. Pedro's experience illustrates how long-term engagement, combined with targeted leadership opportunities, can strengthen confidence, social skills, and the ability to step into leadership roles.



PROGRAM IMPACT IN 2025: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



\$65,345

saved by Indigenous women in Savings Groups across 14 communities



81%

of Trade School graduates report saving a minimum of \$133 through using new skills to make traditional Maya clothing for herself and her family and, 48% of Trade School graduates indicate that they generate new income due to technical training received in 2025



65%

of new female-led businesses are creating employment opportunities for others in their communities

FROM VISION TO IMPACT:

HEAR FROM ELMY HERNANDEZ, DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Over the years, the program has generated measurable gains in women's economic autonomy and personal capacities. Nearly half of participants now produce goods for both household use and sale, while more than 45% report increased income. Financial behaviors have also improved, with more women saving consistently and in larger amounts, this is a reflection of stronger financial planning and resilience.

These outcomes were achieved despite initial barriers presented by participants, in their majority Indigenous women, including low income, limited access to technical education, and low confidence in their own leadership and entrepreneurial abilities. Through a comprehensive approach combining technical training, mentorship, savings groups, and peer exchange, the program strengthened both practical skills and self-confidence, enabling women to initiate and sustain income-generating activities while creating networks of support within participants.

One of the transformations that generates the greatest sense of pride is the shift in women's self-perception. They have moved from being primarily recipients of support to becoming active agents of change—entrepreneurs, income generators, and, in some cases, community leaders. This shift extends beyond the individual, influencing their families where they now contribute meaningfully to expenses related to education, food, and health; and their communities by contributing to local economies through the production and sale of products.

Strategic partnerships, including with the Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible (IEPADES, Institute for Education for Sustainable Development) and the Ministry of Education, have further expanded access to training, microcredit, and support networks, reinforcing the program's sustainability and long-term impact.



Elmy Hernandez

Elmy Hernandez

Director of Economic Development





IMPACT IN ACTION



Gladys's story reflects a clear trajectory of personal growth driven by opportunity and sustained support. Through Natün's Economic Development Program, she has participated over the past three years in training on hand embroidery, savings groups, entrepreneurship, and business advisory services—strengthening her organizational and management skills while opening new pathways, including her first leadership role.

This year, Gladys took on an active role in the parent committee at her daughter's school. Despite being the youngest member, she was elected treasurer, a responsibility she carries out with dedication. This milestone has strengthened her confidence, leadership, and communication skills, while deepening her connection to her community.

Today, Gladys contributes actively to both her household and community, encouraging other women with a simple message: "Never doubt your abilities." Her experience illustrates how access to skills, support, and opportunity can foster leadership and lasting personal transformation.



PROGRAM IMPACT IN 2025: STRATEGIC THREADS



Environment

6 communities began strategic actions for the conservation of forests and natural water sources



Partnerships for Systemic Change

15 strategic partnerships formed with local institutions to strengthen impact and collaboration



Leadership & Advocacy

56 female Promotoras strengthened community leadership skills and did research projects on ancestral Maya knowledge

FROM VISION TO IMPACT:

HEAR FROM JUAN CUMES, STRATEGIC THREADS MANAGER

The Strategic Threads Department serves as a connective system that weaves together Natün's programs and cross-cutting priorities, strengthening how each contributes to community-level impact. Rather than operating as separate initiatives, the threads function as an integrated approach—linking actions within and across programs to ensure that processes are coherent, responsive, and grounded in community realities.

This approach builds on the foundation of community alliances, which initially guided the department's work. Through sustained coordination and two-way communication with community leadership, programs have been promoted and shaped from within communities. Over time, this foundation expanded to more intentionally integrate the organization's Strategic Threads including: Environment, Leadership & Advocacy, and Partnerships for Systemic Change, each advancing activities both through their own participant groups and in articulation with program components. While these threads existed previously, this period marked a shift toward more deliberate and coordinated implementation across all areas.

Operating in contexts where community leadership rotates every two years has required adaptive strategies. The team has aligned engagement with leaders' availability, maintained regular communication on active programs and participant groups, and participated consistently in community assemblies. These efforts have strengthened trust, deepened relationships, and sustained collaboration despite leadership transitions.



Across the Strategic Threads, this integrated approach has contributed to tangible results. In Environment, collaboration with community leadership structures such as COCODEs (Community Development Councils) and water committees has strengthened local stewardship of biodiversity and increased awareness of environmental practices. In Leadership & Advocacy, Indigenous women have developed capacities in research, policy, and advocacy, advancing both community initiatives and the revitalization of cultural practices. In Partnerships for Systemic Change, coordination with government, non-governmental, and community actors has supported more aligned and effective efforts toward ethnodevelopment.

Looking ahead, Natün will continue to strengthen the Strategic Threads as a cohesive system that advances its long-term vision. This includes deepening work across all six Strategic Threads: Cultural Relevance, Leadership & Advocacy, Partnerships for Systemic Change, Indigenous Rights, Gender Equity, and Environment, ensuring that each contributes to a shared objective: cultivating the wellbeing of Indigenous communities as a basis for connecting programs, institutional and community actions, for long-term progress.



Juan Cumes

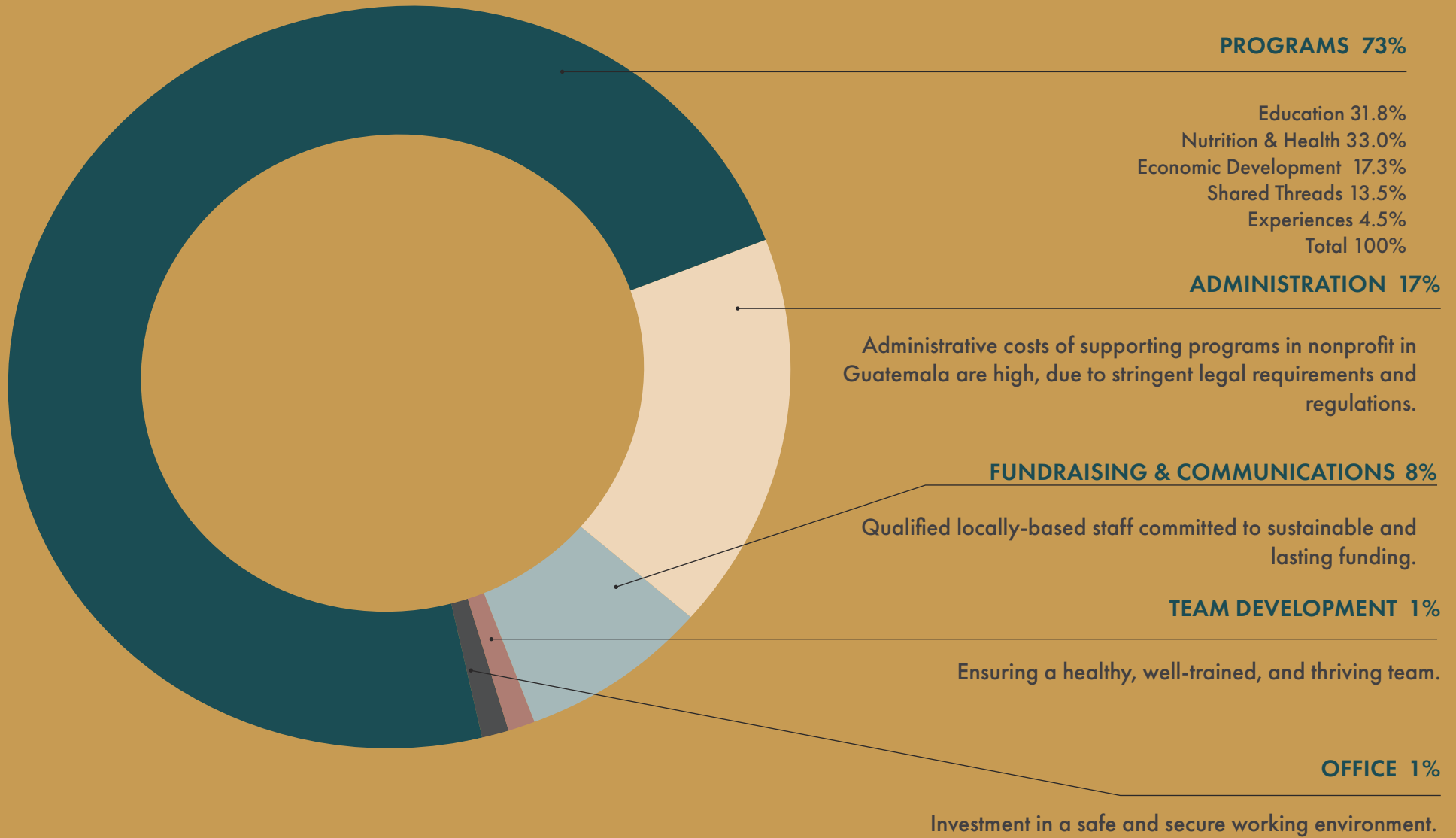
Juan Cumes
Strategic Threads Manager





2025 KEY METRICS

KEY METRICS | Expenditure By Category



TOTAL EXPENDITURE: \$861,408

KEY METRICS | INCOME SOURCES

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

40%

FOUNDATIONS

27.8%

MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS

11.4%

INSTITUTIONAL GIFTS

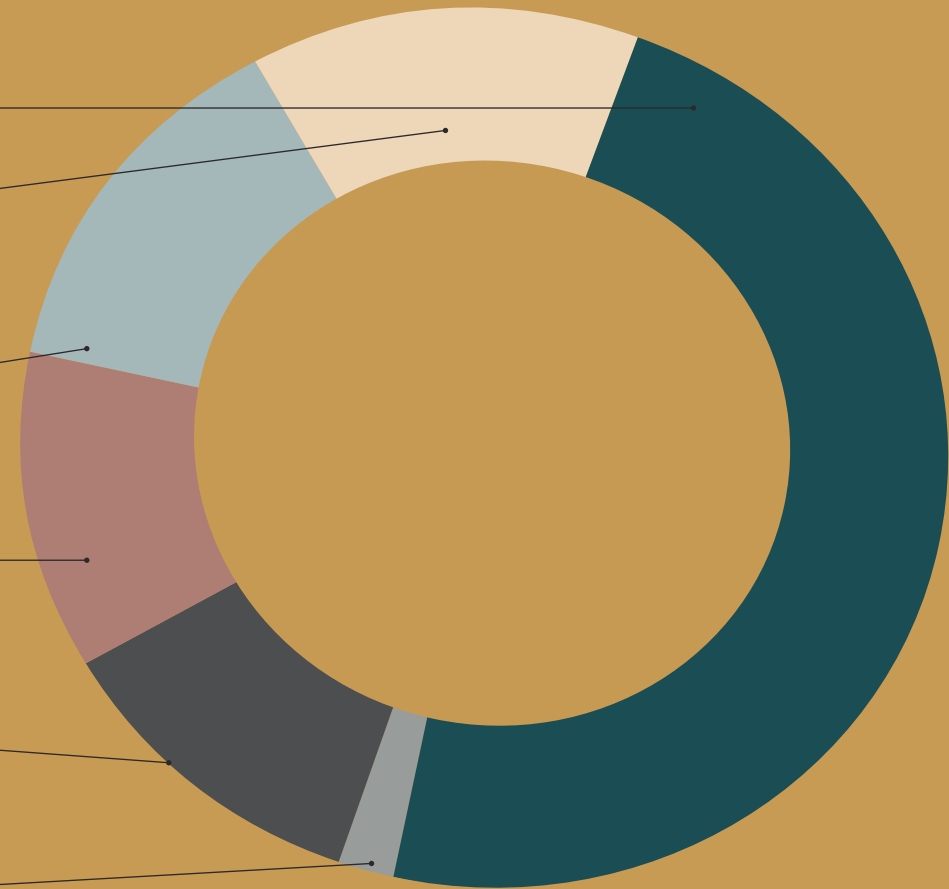
9.8%

ROTARY CLUBS

9.4%

EARNED INCOME

1.6%



TOTAL INCOME: \$894,945

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Under our core value of transparency, our income sources and spending priorities have evolved to consistently prioritize program work meaning the activities conducted directly with communities over internal costs. The graph below illustrates Natün's commitment to directing funds to the programs that engage most closely with program participants. To ensure full compliance with Guatemalan laws, regulations, and NGO policies, Natün maintains a skilled administrative team and robust software systems that safeguard legal and regulatory adherence. Natün's funding model has diversified through partnerships with universities, Rotary clubs, family foundations, and other institutions. By deepening and expanding its impact over time, Natün has received an increasing number of grants.



In Mercedes Alvarado's words, Natün's Director of Operations & Finance, "Natün has demonstrated strong ownership and adaptability. The result is a stable, trained team that reinforces the organization's operational integrity".



**A JOURNEY TOWARDS A NEW CHAPTER:
REFLECTIONS FROM CO-EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS**

Joining Natün during the final stage of the 2020–2025 Strategic Plan was a deeply meaningful experience. I arrived at a moment of transition, when the organization was not only closing a cycle but also reflecting on the lessons learned alongside communities and envisioning a new path forward.

During this process, one of the most significant changes I observed was the strengthening of community participation and leadership, especially among Maya women, adolescents, and young people. Seeing women lose their fear, organize, care for their own and their families' health, strengthen their economic autonomy, and participate in community-level spaces, as well as the growth of youth leadership and the renewed appreciation of ancestral knowledge, it all reflects important progress toward sustainable transformation driven by the communities themselves.

It was also inspiring to observe advances in key areas such as education, nutrition and health, and economic development, demonstrating the impact of coordinated work among communities, partners, and donors.

This closing process also revealed an important lesson: the transformation we promote within communities requires continuing to strengthen leadership from within. Natün has invested in a team made up of people from the very communities with which we collaborate, strengthening diverse, multidisciplinary Indigenous leadership across the organization's different levels, in alignment with our institutional vision.

In my role as Co-Executive Director of Programs, this closure represented an opportunity to learn, identify key lessons, and contribute to the development of the new Strategic Plan, which reaffirms our commitment to Indigenous autonomy for a dignified life and to strengthening Indigenous agency at local, regional, and national levels.

Closing this cycle has been a time of reflection and gratitude, but also the beginning of a new path, with the conviction that the model of ethnodevelopment arises from the communities themselves, from their identity, knowledge, and capacity to decide their own future.



Ana Cumatz

Ana Cumatz
Co-Executive Director of Programs



OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

THANK YOU

We extend our appreciation to both our Guatemalan and U.S. Boards of Directors for their governance and unwavering ommitment to our work, and to our community of supporters whose partnership made our work possible in 2025, which includes:

Adaptation Fund - UNDP AFCIA

Dorothea H Ross Foundation

Honnold Foundation

Indianapolis Rotary Club

Ironton Rotary Club

Kansas State University

Light a Single Candle

Light My Fire

Mercer Island Rotary

Moritz Family Foundation

Mundo Renovado / World Renew

Optimist

Paso Por Paso

Patrick J. and Kathleen D. McCurdy
Family Foundation

Prospera Latina

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Santa Barbara Rotary Club

The Ohio State University

The Ward Foundation

Tri-Village Rotary Club

Upper Arlington Rotary Club

Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation

We also gratefully acknowledge the thousands of individual donors and volunteers whose consistent trust and support sustains our programs and operations throughout the year.



THANK YOU

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JOIN US

There are many ways to support this work and deepen your connection to Natün's purpose:

- Make a recurring donation to provide sustained, reliable funding
- Share our work with your networks to expand awareness and reach
- Connect us with partners, resources, and opportunities that strengthen our impact
- Visit Guatemala and experience our work firsthand—our **Experience Trips** are immersive journeys that connect you directly with the communities and initiatives you support.

You can also join our growing network of *Natün Ambassadors*—a community of individuals committed to advancing Natün's mission and walking in solidarity with Maya communities.

Together, we can continue building a future where Maya communities around Lake Atitlán are vibrant, self-sufficient, and thriving on their own



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