Guatemala: Church partners with Swiss Foundation to offer tailoring business workshop

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June 13, 2012 - Guatemala City, Guatemala....Guatemala Union/IAD Staff

Thanks to a partnership between the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Guatemala and the Swiss foundation Advent Stiftung, 30 needy students in Guatemala City will soon begin their own tailoring business to help support their families. The students, mostly women, range in age from 20 to 60. They enrolled last month during a special ceremony to launch the first group of business entrepreneurs in Guatemala City, Guatemala.

The students are receiving training and certification from Guatemala's Technical and Training Institute (INTECAP) so they can learn to sew and support their families, said Gustavo Menendez, communication director for the church in Guatemala and coordinator of the project, called "Viva Mejor", or "Live Better".

"The Adventist Church and the Advent Stiftung Foundation believe that there is nothing more dignifying than earning a living with an honest business," said Menendez. He said the project has already facilitated the donation of tools to more than 500 families in Guatemala, worth more than $71,000.00, during the last three years.

"You are the first generation of tailors to be benefitted by this program," Menendez said to the students. "You will not only receive a sewing machine, but you will learn to sew clothing professionally and make it into a business to better your lives."

Mariela Ramirez, age 25, is thankful to be part of the sewing training workshop. She sells juices to support her mother and her 15-year old disabled brother who requires special care every day. Ramirez must travel about 120 kilometers round trip each day of the workshop, which is held three days a week.

"I feel so excited and thankful for this Viva Mejor [project], because it gives me the opportunity to work in my own house, and take care of my mother and my little brother," said Ramirez. "All the sacrifice that we do is compensated with everything that we learn to earn a living and thus live better."

To receive the sewing machine, Ramirez and the rest of the 29 beneficiaries will have to complete 188 hours of training by INTECAP, before they are certified and received their diploma in August.

Participants complete approximately 12 hours of training every week in a special room in the church's headquarter office, said Menendez. Already, the 30 students have learned to sow skirts and blouses and will continue making children's clothing and more, said Menendez.

According to Menendez, similar training such as welding, cooking, hair-dressing, and more, is scheduled to take place in the coming months and years.

According to Menendez, the Adventist Church and Advent Stiftung Foundation invested some
Two students study their notes on how to measure and draw out clothes patterns before they begin to work a sewing machine. The classes were part of a three-month project to help needy families start their own tailoring business in Guatemala City, Guatemala.

The Advent Stiftung Foundation is a non-religious organization which has spent more than 30 years in Central and South America running social projects together with the Adventist Church through the Viva Mejor program.

$9,000 to benefit the initial 30 students.