



FINAL REPORT #25-03

First 15 of 60 Composting Latrines

Josue Church, Metalio, El Salvador



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INITIATIVE BACKGROUND

In Metalio, a rural community in Sonsonate, El Salvador, most of the 15 families this initiative served lacked an adequate latrine, leaving them without a sanitary place to relieve themselves or a safe way to keep waste away from where they lived. That constant exposure has led to recurring gastrointestinal illness, which strain family health and finances while keeping children out of school.

The coastal setting added a second concern. Metalio sits near the shore, where a shallow water table and nearby water bodies meant a buried pit latrine could contaminate the very water families depend on. A workable solution had to give each household a safe place of its own and keep waste out of the ground water. Composting latrines did both: each dry unit is an enclosed, sanitary bathroom that breaks waste down above ground and routes it through a filtration box, so nothing seeps into the coastal water table.

The need came to light through a community diagnostic carried out with wide participation from residents. Josue Church, at that point just beginning to build ties with Metalio, took part, and the assessment became one of its first real points of contact with the families nearby. Residents' input steered the work toward the households that needed a latrine most: 15 composting latrines for 15 families, reaching roughly 75 people, with the build also meant to grow the community's capacity to organize alongside its church.

IMPLEMENTATION

ENLACE designed the latrines and set out what each partner would supply, and the church and community formed a working group to organize logistics, materials, and labor. Construction ran in two stages over the fall of 2025.

The first stage began on Monday, August 25, 2025. A visiting team from Redemption Church worked that week alongside local church members and beneficiary families, completing the first two latrines by Thursday the 28th. Seven more were finished by September 3. The second stage which included the remaining eight units, began on Wednesday, October 29. It was carried out by the community itself which included a local mason, beneficiary households and members from the community development association. The final latrine was completed on Friday, November 21.



Materials and labor came from across the partnership. Beneficiary families supplied much of the building material, provided all the water, hauled supplies, and contributed labor. Josue Church furnished the concrete block and gravel, and ENLACE provided the core fixtures such as the toilet seat-and-slab sets and their lids, along with sand, channel sheeting, and skilled labor. Cement was the one shortfall: the mayor's office delivered 90 bags but not the rest the final units needed. The community development association covered the difference from an earlier project's reserve.





EVALUATION & CELEBRATION

Josue Church leaders, the community development association, and the beneficiary families met on December 2, 2025 to review the work. All 15 households that had gone without a latrine now had one built to a safe, sanitary standard.

The clearest result was better health, and it came two ways. Each family now has its own enclosed bathroom, a sanitary place it did not have before. And the composting design treats and contains waste that had been left exposed, so it no longer contaminates the ground families live on or the coastal water nearby. Together those changes removed the conditions that had made gastrointestinal illness routine in Metalio, for roughly 75 residents.

The initiative also gave Josue Church an early, substantial role in Metalio. Having only recently begun connecting with the community, the church grew into a coordinating partner alongside families and local leaders, which strengthened its relationship with all the residents of Metalio.

The work left skills behind as well. Beneficiaries and volunteers learned the masonry for ENLACE's block composting design; households were trained to use and maintain their latrines; and the church and community gained experience managing local funds. All these skills will help make future projects successful.

MARGARITA DEL CARMEN'S STORY

Margarita del Carmen de Martínez is 30 years old and lives with her husband, Francisco, and their three daughters. Francisco works as a miller and earns most of the household's income. For years, one thing they could not afford on their own was a latrine. The family relied on a neighbor's, several houses down the road. Every trip meant leaving home to meet a basic need, and it carried a steady health risk in a house with young children. The lack of a private, safe space of their own weighed on Margarita most when it came to her three daughters.

The local church saw their need. Its pastor and community leaders identified the household and encouraged Margarita and Francisco to take part. They coordinated the work alongside ENLACE. The family gave what they could in return. From the start, they put in their own resources and labor. Francisco worked as a mason on the construction, while Margarita and their daughters helped by carrying water and materials to the site. Neighbors lent a hand to move supplies as well. By the time it was finished, the latrine standing beside their home had been built in large part by their own hands.



The change was immediate, and it reached well past convenience. The family gained a sanitary space of their own, and with it a sense of safety they had not had before. "Now we feel relieved, because we finally have a private space of our own," Margarita said.

A quieter change came with it. As the church stayed close through the work, the family grew closer to its leaders and members. Their hope for the future grew alongside that bond. "We hope for a better life, and to improve our situation," she said. Her pastor praised the steady commitment the family showed throughout the project. Their example, he noted, has encouraged other families to join the work the church continues to lead.

Project Outcomes:



15 Composting Latrines Built

The project built 15 composting latrines for 15 households, directly benefiting approximately 75 residents in Metalio. Each family now has a safely constructed latrine where before they had none. The dry, chamber-based design keeps waste contained and breaks it down above ground, suited to a coastal site where a buried pit would pose a risk.



Reduced Contamination in a Water-Sensitive Area

Human-waste handling across the sector was brought under control, ending a steady source of contamination and illness. In a coastal community where waste had been reaching nearby water, this lowered a real public-health risk. Day-to-day sanitation and safety improved for the families the project reached.



Strengthened Church–Community Collaboration

The effort deepened relationships among the church, community leaders, the beneficiary families, the mayor's office, and the visiting Redemption Church team.



New Technical Skills & Greater Capacity

Families and church members learned masonry through the hands-on construction of a latrine. Beneficiary households were also trained in how to use and maintain composting latrines. Together these skills give the community the ability to keep the units working over the long term. The church and community gained direct experience organizing the work, managing local resources, and raising funds.