



Photo Credit: José Ramírez

IMPACT NEWSLETTER

Fall 2021: Adapting and Expanding

As October winds down, our academic year comes to a close. This year, we remained optimistic, as we expanded into 9th grade and made great progress in our efforts to build a new middle school, the Innovative Learning Center, by raising funds for the bricks-and-mortar. Yet, the challenges of life during the pandemic have been a strain and we see fatigue among our staff, students, and hard-working families.

Together, ***with your help and support***, we have made significant strides in meeting the urgent needs of our community since the pandemic began. However, we are seeing the importance of face-to-face interactions in ensuring our students' success and safety and it is our top priority moving forward. While we have been approved for reopening by the Ministry of Education, and will return to school in the new year using a hybrid learning model, we have a lot of work ahead. We must invest in new technology, infrastructure, supplies, teachers and social workers, among other things.

Read on for more information on how we have adapted as a global community, our plans for expansion, and what you can do to help continue our mission of ending the cycle of poverty through education, despite the challenges and long road ahead.

Our Impact During the Pandemic

Food and Grocery Distributions

Throughout the last year and half, we made the commitment to our students and families to support their everyday needs. This decision was based on the principle that children cannot focus on learning if their basic needs are not being met.

With the closure of the dump in early 2020, many of our families were without a steady income and needed extra support. To help them through the tough times we provided bi-weekly food, hygiene supplies, and supplemental gift cards to their nearest grocery store. While the dump did eventually reopen, we decided to continue disbursements to ensure that the nutritional needs of our students were met during the school closure.



In 2021 alone, we have distributed approximately **7,425** food bags to help over **300** families deal with food insecurity during the school closure.

Homework Packets and Teacher Support

While our teachers have not seen their students in-person for many months, they are dedicated to keeping them on track. This includes innovative lesson plans that students can complete at home and return for grading in the bi-weekly distributions. Our teachers have developed *Professional Learning Communities* with one another as well, where more experienced teachers serve as mentors and share best practices for newer staff. *Teacher Leaders* were also selected in various subjects and each week create video tutorials that are shared with families via WhatsApp to help explain more advanced homework assignments. *Parent Leaders* within the community help to share these resources with those families that have limited access to the internet or trouble understanding or carrying out assigned work.

1 in 3 residents in the garbage dump community have never attended school and most parents' education doesn't exceed 4th grade. This can make it particularly difficult for some students to complete assigned homework without the direct support of a teacher.

exhaustion. Some of our students are responsible for the care of their siblings, while others have taken on a job to help support their family, in addition to school work. Many of our parents have begun expressing frustrations with difficulty in homework assignments and the lack of a safe space for their kids while they are at work. Our staff are also sharing their exhaustion with the constant pivoting needed to educate remotely in a place where students lack access to technology and resources. The stresses of the pandemic are beginning to take their toll, making an efficient and well-planned return to campus even more pressing.



Clasificación en Centro
Hanley Denning



Calificación en Casa



Despite the great creativity of our teaching staff and commitment of the families over the last year and half, we are beginning to see burn-out and

and the Path Forward

Increased Social Services

Our social services team has been the bedrock of our community throughout this crisis. The team consists of 3 social workers, 4 psychologists, 1 health educator, 1 nurse, and 1 doctor. They provide 2 week rotational check-ins on 320 families; including physical, mental, and emotional support. They also created a phone tree with local Parent Leaders from our community, to make sure that families who don't have access to the internet or phones were getting the same support and outreach. They coordinate tele-prescriptions at local pharmacies for families, an innovation we will continue to use moving forward. Students and parents can also receive tele-psychology services and one-on-one health counseling and education.



*Our social workers:
José Caracín - supports 80 families in Oportunidades (left), Verónica Gómez - supports 115 families in Colegio (middle), and Hellen Osorio - supports 125 families in Jardín (right).*

We have been approved by the Ministry of Education to have our students back on campus in January, depending on COVID cases and community vaccination rates. It will have been almost two years since we have seen them consistently face-to-face. We anticipate that many students will be returning to us with greater emotional and behavioral challenges than the last time we saw them.

In preparation for returning to school, we will have each student back on campus for one day over a week-long period in November. In order to make the most of that time, our teaching staff and social services team will be fully engaged during that week. We will be looking at cases of neglect, abuse, malnutrition, mental health and behavioral issues, and many other concerns. The team will need to create an approach and plan for each of these students and families for the coming months. No doubt these challenges will mean budgeting additional resources to hire and train supporting staff in this area.



Throughout the pandemic, Safe Passage worked with the REDES community coalition to deliver 39 water trucks containing 3,000 gallons each. This partnership represented 20 entities including nonprofits, NGOs, public institutions, and 8 neighborhoods throughout Zone 3. The water shortage in the community has been another unexpected result of the COVID crisis. While this issue has been present in the past, it was exacerbated by limited access, poor infrastructure, and lack of resources due to the pandemic. In addition to consumption and cooking, the increased need for sanitizing and hand-washing has been another stress on the system.

Sanitation, Storage, and Social Distancing

To expedite our opening and meet heightened safety protocols from the Ministry of Education, we have been working on adapting the spaces on our campus. Construction has already been completed within the Jardín and Colegio buildings to repurpose a warehouse and cafeteria spaces into socially distanced classrooms. In addition, new sinks and sanitation stations are required throughout the buildings. We are continuing to work to address the need for refrigeration and storage space for necessary in-kind donations from local donors. While these operational realities of the pandemic may seem less urgent and emotionally-charged, these issues directly impact the health and safety of our students and teachers.





Vaccine Clinic

Photo Credit: José Ramírez

While many areas of the world saw relief through the summer months and hope in the form of high vaccination rates, Guatemala is still very much feeling the ravaging impact of the pandemic. We were honored to be able to partner with the Ministry of Public Health and the Social Assistance of Guatemala in hosting a vaccine clinic on our campus in September. 648 individuals were vaccinated in one day, which was significantly more than we anticipated. We only closed our doors because we ran out of doses in the early evening! Due to this tremendous success, we are working on hosting more clinics in the coming months and are hopeful that when supplies are available, we will be able to vaccinate some of our age-appropriate students.

In Guatemala, only 16.27 persons are fully vaccinated per 100 of the population vs. 61.6 in the U.S.

**Source: World Health Organization as of 10-25-21*



New Middle School

One of our long-term goals as an organization was to get our students through 9th grade, as it marks a critical point in their education where the odds of their academic success and graduation increases exponentially. With only about 37% of the population in Guatemala reaching high school, middle school is truly a cornerstone in the lives of our students. Pre-pandemic, we had already begun to run out of room to house our upper grade levels, an issue that has only increased with the need for social distancing. Thanks

to some very generous donors, we recently met our funding goal to begin construction on this new middle school. However, we still have a long way to go in supporting the people and programs that will bring the *Innovative Learning Center* to life. To find out how you can make a gift, take a virtual tour or to simply learn more visit: www.safepassage.org/innovative-learning-center.

Looking Towards the Future

While we are not sure exactly what 2022 will bring, we do now know that we will be opening our doors in some fashion, likely in a hybrid model. We have already been given the green light by the Ministry of Education to host students on campus in order to assess their needs for the upcoming school year. We also know that our current pandemic solutions will need to continue through the fall and early winter and that preparations for returning to the classroom will look very different from previous years. Along with all of our normal preparations for reopening, we will need to address the performance deficits, as well as social-emotional, nutritional, and health needs that have grown exponentially over nearly two years of government mandated closure.

Thank you for being a part of this journey and allowing us to remain strong, despite many challenges. With your help and partnership, we can continue on our mission to end the cycle of poverty through education, for the students of the Guatemala City garbage dump community.

Carrying on Hanley's Legacy

Amidst the challenges of the last year and a half, we have kept our roots and values in the forefront of all decision making. We have remained committed to providing students and their families with the basic necessities of food, water, and supplies, as well as supporting their health, safety, and personal needs. It is our hope that by doing this, we can eventually return to our community of learning and focus on education, growth, and improvement.



*We will remain both patient and persistent like our late founder, Hanley Denning, no matter what obstacles we face. In her words, **"What is passion without a vision and the willingness to stand behind that vision and implement that vision with everything you have?"***

Your support makes our efforts in Guatemala possible - thank you for caring about the children!

*Sincerely,
Hanley Denning
Funding Director*



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EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITY**



WAYS TO GIVE | Help build paths to hope, education, and opportunity.

ONE-TIME GIFT - Making a contribution takes only minutes, but the impact lasts a lifetime. Your gift will not only support our ongoing vital programs but also help us to expand our services and provide a safe environment for our staff and students. Please call us or visit www.safepassage.org/donate to make a gift by credit card or PayPal; U.S. checks are also accepted in our Maine office (address below).

RECURRING - Education takes sustained support and your routine gift helps us plan our programs for the future. Just sign up once and your gifts, made on a recurring basis of your choosing, will help us maintain stability and more accurately budget for our programs, especially in these uncertain times. Visit www.safepassage.org/recurring-giving to learn more.

SPONSOR - As a student sponsor, you can provide much needed financial support and encouragement for a child's education. You will be assigned an individual student, but your gift will also help ensure that every Safe Passage student has access to all of our services. Learn more and sign up to sponsor today at www.safepassage.org/sponsor-a-student.

DOUBLE THE IMPACT - Does your employer match charitable contributions? If so, you may be able to amplify your personal giving and make double the impact in the lives of Safe Passage students. You can check with your employer directly or visit our donation page at www.safepassage.org/donate to see if your company offers employer matching.

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