

CasaSito Annual Report 2020

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Dear CasaSito Friends,

While 2020 was a year of changes and challenges, it also was a year of lessons learned, of more self-love, consciousness, gratitude, patience, creativity, reflection, empathy and solidarity.

Despite all the hardship, the CasaSito team is optimistic that the uncertainty and anxiety of 2020 will be replaced with happiness, enthusiasm and new positive developments in 2021.

Silke Wahl

President of the Board of Directors



Guatemala 2020 at a Glance

In January, Guatemala swore in the conservative politician and former surgeon and prison chief, Alejandro Giammattei as new president, replacing President Jimmy Morales.



On March 13, Guatemala confirmed its first positive case of COVID-19 and the new elected President declared a state of public emergency. Guatemala's economy has been affected severely by the layoffs and the closure of non-essential businesses, including the informal sector that sustains the majority of the population. Home confinement caused more than 4 million children and youth to be out of school.

At the end of October, when Guatemala slowly started to recover from the impact of the pandemic, Hurricane Eta and Iota hit northern and eastern Guatemala causing landslides and widespread flash flooding, destroying homes, schools, health infrastructure, bridges and roads. Over 1.2 million people were affected and many had to evacuate to shelters due to swollen rivers, leaving behind the little they had.



Our Youth Development Program during COVID-19

2020 was a year of challenges and readjustments. The COVID-19 pandemic took us all by surprise. However, this did not stop us from doing a great job. Although the restrictions enforced by the pandemic led to working from home during 90% of the year, CasaSito's staff in both regions grew as an even more united team. Good communication and teamwork were the key to finding the best



strategy to adapt our programs. Knowing the reality of our scholars, we quickly recognized that we would encounter various obstacles such as weak or no internet access, no digital devices other than perhaps one cellphone per family and financial issues. CasaSito found strength working hand in hand with its cooperative network of donors finding the best way to support its scholars and their families, providing them with internet packages, vouchers for food and medicine, monetary deposits and mental health and psychological accompaniment via phone calls that made them feel safe and supported during these difficult months.

Meet the Youth Development Program (YDP) Scholars

In 2020, we supported 107 scholars in total.

We had more scholars than in the previous year and started our pilot Teacher Development Program in Sacatepéquez area with 11 teachers from public and private schools.



Ethnicity

Indigenous (55)

Ladino (52)

NOTE: This is based on how scholars choose to identify themselves

Grade

Middle School (37)

High School (50)

University (20)

Geographic Area

Rural (21)

Semi-rural (28)

Urban (58)

Gender

Women (59)

Men (48)

Program Snapshots of 2020

1. We supported 107 scholars, 11 teachers and their families, in 3 districts of Guatemala – Sacatepéquez, Alta Verapaz and Quiché
2. We impacted 40 communities
3. We had a 100 % retention rate
4. 94% of scholars achieved the grade point average goal (75%)
5. We had 38 graduates (11 middle school, 26 high school, and 1 university)
6. 11 of our graduates from High School will continue their studies in University in 2021
7. One of our ex University scholars and current theater club coordinator graduated as a doctor
8. 3 of our ex scholars became our club coordinators: Math, Art and Theater
9. We provided 10 extracurricular activities
10. We hosted 18 personal youth development workshops and 10 for parents
11. 1,422 hours spent on monitoring



The extracurricular activities

In 2020, we adapted the execution of our extracurricular activities to a virtual modality. Although the implementation was often challenging under the new conditions, we are satisfied with the outcome. The activities offered in 2020 were: Art, Reading, Debate, English, Math, Music, Sports, Creative Writing, Theater of the Oppressed, Vocational Guidance and Mentoring.



We are very proud and happy that this year, all seven High School students who participated in the Math Club in Sacatepéquez won the demanding Math entrance examination of the University of San Carlos, Guatemala.



CasaSito English Club Sacatepéquez 2020: [Video English Club Graduation 2020](#)

CasSito Art Club Alta Verapaz 2020: [Video Art Club 2020](#)

Attitudinal Evaluation

In October and November, CasaSito carried out an attitudinal evaluation with 20 scholars from Sacatepéquez that focused on the qualitative part of the program. The following indicators were measured: Improvement in the expression of feelings and a positive change in attitude and behavior, identification of problems and finding a solution, responsibility, respect and a feeling of relevance.

* For further information, you can find the full report as an Annex.

Comprehensive accompaniment



Psychosocial Support:

For CasaSito, the process of individual and family support was of vital importance. Monthly monitoring was provided through phone and video calls, emails and messaging through WhatsApp, allowing us to provide remote support without losing the closeness with each scholar and their family.

Psychological Support:

Face-to-face psychological care was continued by tele-therapy. In 2020, CasaSito offered individual therapy to 23 people, investing an annual total of 406 hours. The problems tackled were: Relationship problems between parents and children, conflicting relationships between spouses, anxiety disorder, depressive anxiety disorder, unresolved grief, destructive impulse control disorder and problems related to unemployment.



“Mi camino de CasaSito a la Universidad del Valle”

- My path from CasaSito to the University del Valle (translated version)

My name is Luis Pablo Gustavo Carranza Vásquez and I was a scholarship student at CasaSito Association between 2016 and 2020. Throughout this time, I was able to live many new experiences and obtain skills that have served me and will continue to serve me in the future. The first years with CasaSito were a bit difficult for me, since I was not used to attending so many extracurricular activities. As time passed by, I was gaining a new perspective and realized that everything I was doing would benefit me in many ways.

When I entered ninth grade of (high school), my life changed completely. It was a radical change for me and some people did not support me in that change, however, CasaSito and my family always helped me and motivated me to keep on studying and to do my best in order to look for new opportunities. 2020 was my last year in high school and I graduated my course of Computer Electronics. At the beginning of the year, CasaSito mentioned that the Foundation Juan Bautista Gutiérrez awards University scholarships and I became interested. I prepared and sent all the papers required for the application, took exams and interviews going through various phases of the application process. My family and I were so happy when I received a positive response that a full scholarship to study Engineering in Electronics at the Universidad del Valle had been awarded to me.



I am conscious that various factors influenced this positive outcome but personally I am so grateful that CasaSito helped me during all these years as a scholarship student to develop new skills that served me throughout the application process. I learned how to write essays and conduct interviews. I participated in several clubs such as debate club where I was able to develop the ability to express myself better, English club, mentoring activities, as well as all the workshops and volunteering that I did, which helped me to improve not only in an academic aspect, but also in a personal and social way. I am convinced that thanks to CasaSito I was able to face many issues in the best way and I hope that I can continue to give the best of me during the coming phases of my career, that I will be a good professional and a good person. I look forward to helping CasaSito and more young people to fulfill their dreams in the future.

CasaSito scholarship holder is Pablo Gustavo Carranza Vásquez

Teacher Development Program



Teacher Training in Alta Verapaz and La Primavera del Ixcán, Quiché:

In January, 36 educational bags that contained teaching materials for daily use during classes were delivered to teachers from La Primavera del Ixcán. Due to a lack of digital devices, internet access and electricity in the rural communities of Alta Verapaz and Quiché, the official program for teachers could not be executed as planned.

Training Scholarships in Debating Technique:

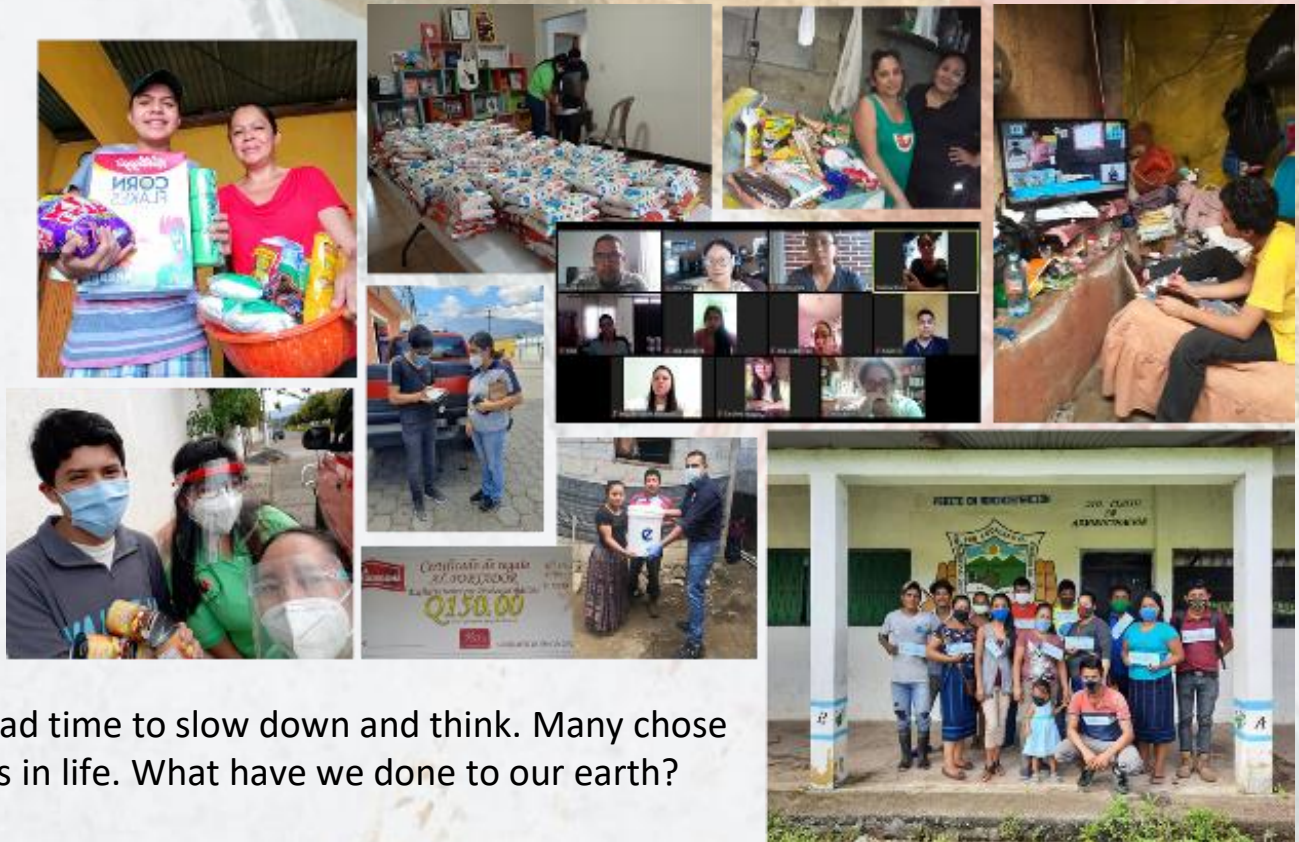
In 2020, 11 teachers from public and private schools received a scholarship with the aim to learn techniques in debating. Due to the pandemic, the operational part of the program had to be postponed to February 2021. Instead, the teachers attended an introduction to debate techniques and participated in various circles of emotional and mental care virtually, that helped them to manage stress and their feelings in a better way. Despite the complex and challenging circumstances, it was possible to create ties of friendship and familiarity among the teachers and the team.



CasaSito's Emergency Fund

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The world turned upside down by an invisible enemy. Some lost their families, and many lost their jobs and stability they had worked so hard to establish. It was a very sad and painful time. But there were also some positive sides. For a couple of months, the air was purer, the rivers and sea were cleaner. We could hear the birds singing again, the animals were free to enjoy the environment that we took away from them.



And those who were more fortunate had time to slow down and think. Many chose to reflect on the new and real priorities in life. What have we done to our earth? How can we heal the damage?

At CasaSito, we are among the fortunate that have received a lot of support from our donors and friends. Together, we have been able to offer financial assistance, psychological support and internet access to all of our students and their families. We were also able to keep all our staff with their normal salaries, and we supported some NGOs, centers and communities with food, masks, cleaning supplies and salaries that the government failed to pay.

In 2020, the CasaSito family took care of each other and has become more united than ever. Here we proudly present you the [CasaSito Family 2020](#)

Hurricanes ETA y IOTA

COVID 19 was not the only emergency that Guatemala had to overcome in 2020. In November, when the coronavirus situation became more under control and the economy started to recover little by little, the northern and eastern part of Guatemala were hit hard by very destructive Hurricanes ETA y IOTA back to back.

The heavy rain flooded homes and towns. Landslides buried many and rivers washed away farmlands. Thousands took refuge in the shelters and many of them are still waiting for the government housing project to start. But due to the terrible condition in the shelters, a lot of them decided to move back to their damaged home or moved into their already poor relatives' homes.

Fortunately, none of the CasaSito family was affected badly, but as a part of the Alta Verapaz community, CasaSito participated actively in hurricane relief actions. And one more time, our donors, friends and ex-volunteers did not abandon us, they sent in donations before we even asked for them. The local communities both in Alta Verapaz and Sacatepéquez joined CasaSito to assist the affected families. We delivered medicines, food, and more importantly, HOPE!



[Video Emergency Relief Part 1](#)



[Video Emergency Relief Part 2](#)

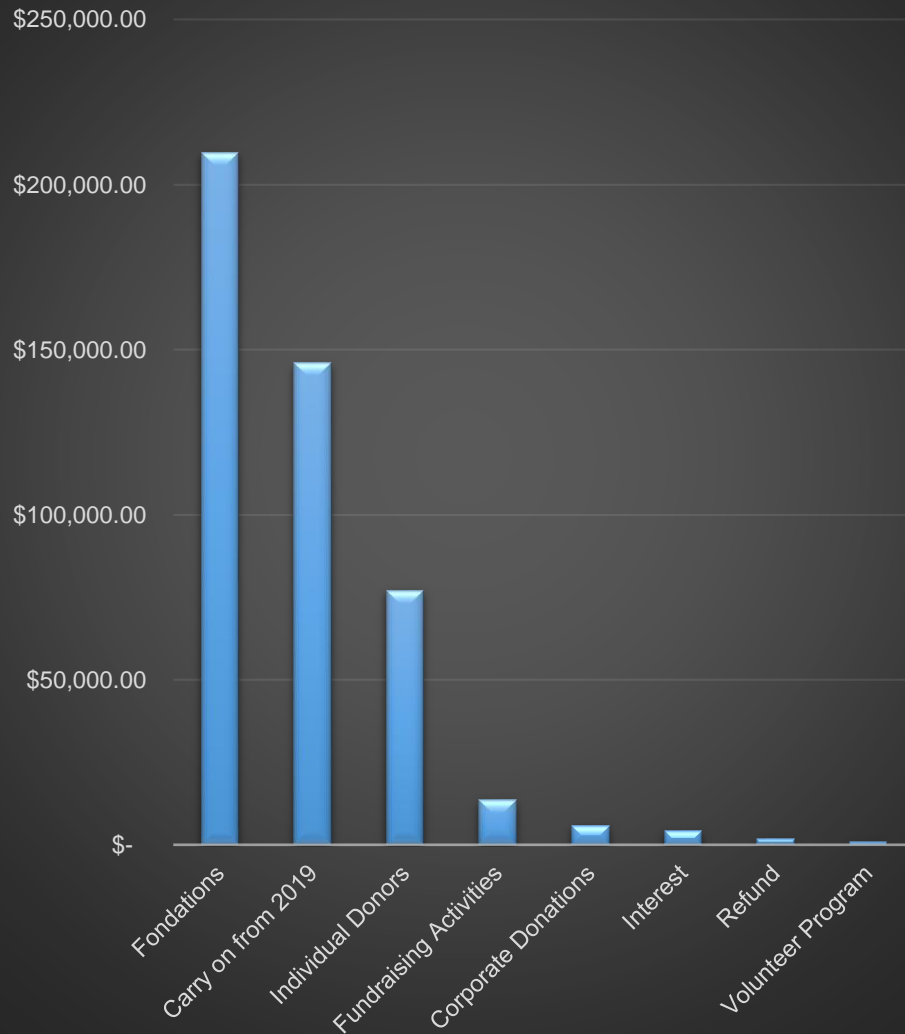


[Video CasaSito Emergency Relief 2020](#)

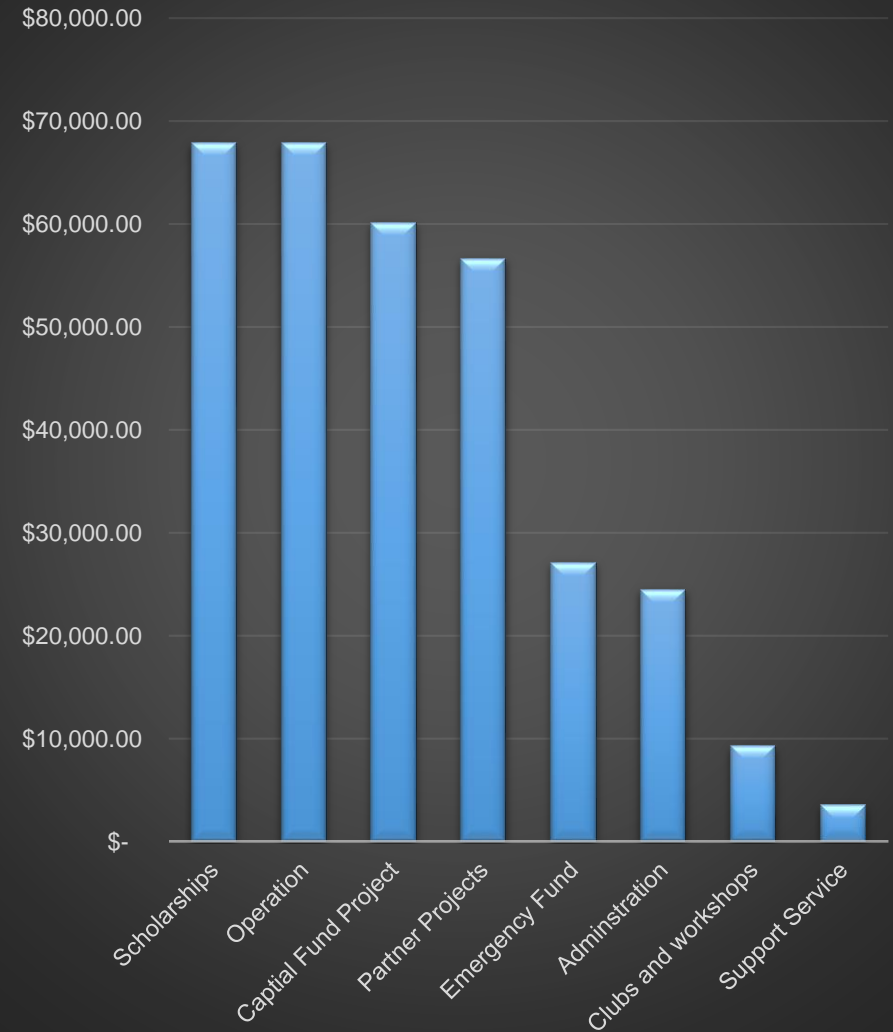
After receiving the food supply, an elderly woman gave us a heartwarming good bye, saying thank you to CasaSito, not for what we bought as donations, but for our presence, for being there when they needed us and when many had already forgotten them. CasaSito will go back in April 2021 to continue our relief action, the "Seeds Project."

Financial Summary 2020

CasaSito USA & Guatemala Total Funds, 2020 : \$458,848



CasaSito USA & Guatemala Total Expenses 2020 : \$317,197



Scholarships, Services Support, Clubs & Workshops: \$80,720



Sacatepéquez: 45 Scholars

- 13 Middle School
- 22 High School
- 10 University
- 11 Teachers
- Psychological support
- Workshops for scholars and parents
- 6 extracurricular activities: Art, English, Debate, Math, Creative Writing and Theater of the Oppressed

Alta Verapaz: 55 Scholars

- 24 Middle School
- 23 High School
- 8 University
- Psychological support
- Workshops for scholars and parents
- 6 extracurricular activities: Art, English, Debate, Sports, Reading and Math club

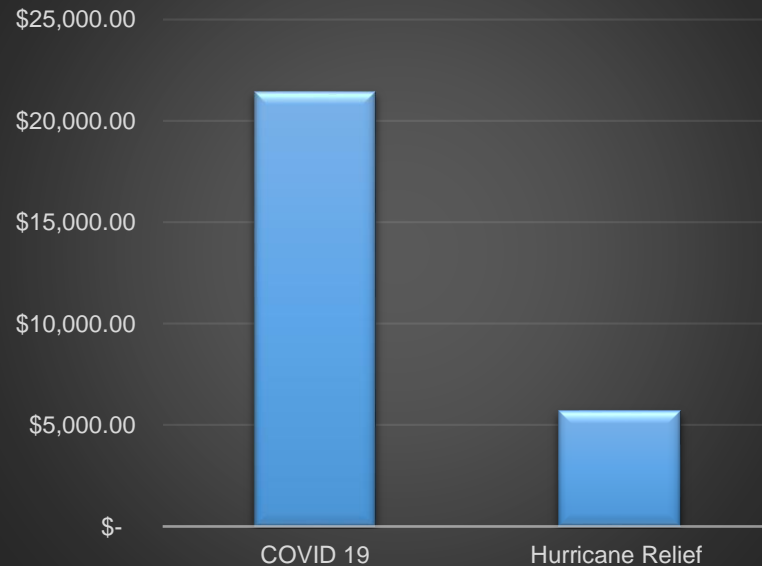
La Primavera del Ixcán: 7 Scholars

- 5 High School
- 2 University
- Music club

COVID 19: our support went to all the scholars and their families, CasaSito staff, partner associations, education centers and collection center.

Hurricane Relief: our support went to shelters and affected communities in the San Cristobal AV and Teleman areas.

Emergency Fund: \$27,125



Meet the 2020 CasaSito Team



2020 CasaSito Office Sacatepéquez

Lourdes González , Regional Director
Miriam Valle, YDP Director
Cristina Rivera, TDP Coordinator
Silke Wahl, Development Consultant
Carolina Aragon, Office Assistant and Accountant
Wilma Corina González, Maintenance



2020 CasaSito Office Alta Verapaz y Quiché

José Marcos de la Cruz, Regional Director
Fernanda Heinemann, YDP Director
Ana Gaddy Estelí Caal Mus, Assistant YDP
Kevin Omar Sis, Work Scholar
Leticia Corzantes, Maintenance



2020 Board of Directors, Guatemala

Silke Wahl, President
Paula Castellanos, Vice President
Alice Lee So Fong, Treasurer
Manuela Rosales, Secretary
Desirée Iturbide, Active member



2020 Board of Directors, USA

Greg Schwendinger, President (Co-founder)
Alice So Fong Lee, Director (Co-founder)
Eric Behrs, Secretary

My experience as a volunteer at CasaSito

I finally arrived in Guatemala. It is Thursday, October 1, 2020. I am among the first international travelers to arrive in the country after Guatemala closed its borders completely for five months. I was anxious to start a new project in a foreign country. Between 2016-2018, I served as a high school physics teacher in Mozambique through the Peace Corps. Immediately after, I went to the Dominican Republic as a Spanish literacy professor. But I was evacuated in March of 2020 due to COVID-19. Seven months later, I am heading to Guatemala to collaborate with CasaSito as an English Professor.

Unfortunately, on my way to Guatemala, while in Florida for two days, I got infected with COVID-19. I was already in a planned quarantine in Guatemala, so my exposure to the community was minimal. The first eight days in the country, the symptoms were mild and I mostly thought it was food poisoning and effects of the change in weather. By the ninth day, I got a strong fever and began a slight but worrying cough. We informed the Public Health authorities of San Cristobal, and they immediately made a home visit, conducted a COVID-19 test, and within an hour I received the news that I was positive. It was very impressive how quickly this small rural health unit reacted and produced results.

At this point, I notified José from CasaSito that my situation had begun to worsen. From the beginning, the staff from CasaSito was very welcoming and supportive, but above all very attentive to my health. So, when I notified them that I had worrisome COVID-19 symptoms, they immediately began to reach out to their contacts in Guatemala's health services as well as their personal contacts, some of them were doctors and nurses who provided support and advice.

From the beginning, CasaSito's staff in San Cristobal kept the staff in Antigua informed, and both founders Alice and Greg kept daily communication with me and informed my family in the US. It was very reassuring to have this level of support. It made the whole experience not feel solitary, as I had a support network who was doing everything at their end to make sure I was given the best possible care and treatment available.

Once I was diagnosed with COVID-19, I was asked by local authorities to stay at home and monitor my situation. By day ten, I had difficulty breathing and a strong fever. The rural ambulance arrived and transferred me all the way to the provincial capital of Cobán to receive medical care. Without any delay, I was accepted at the Regional Hospital of Coban, a hospital that is part of the country's public health system.

What I saw was admirable and beyond my expectations for a public health care system in Guatemala. Upon arrival at the hospital, they had in place strict COVID-19 safety measures and hygiene protocols. They had an isolated area where they received COVID-19 patients. Distancing was maintained the whole time.

There was a person who applied a disinfectant on you upon arrival. That same person, when you got accepted and transferred to your medical ward, followed you the whole way to the ward disinfecting the entire route you had traveled in. Once you were assigned to a room, you stayed in place. There were two medical staff on each shift that literally watched over you 24 hours a day. The medical staff wore heavy Personal Protective Equipment. In terms of capacity, there were four rooms in my ward. My room had six beds, but only two were in use. There were two other rooms with only one patient each. So, they were not as overburdened as I thought they would be. There was another ward for those with more severe symptoms who required more intensive care.

I have to really praise the professionalism of the medical staff at the public hospital. The medical staff at Coban was very attentive, welcoming, and supportive. They conducted regular checkups, almost at every hour during every 24-hour cycle. I was immediately put on oxygen and given medication for my fever and to strengthen my lungs. By the first night, I was already feeling better. Their strategy seemed simple: *Address all symptoms that they could so that your body could just focus on fighting COVID-19.* They gave me an injection to bring my fever down. They gave me antibiotics. They gave me steroids to boost my strength. They gave me insulin to address the high levels of sugar in my body. They gave me vitamins. They gave me several treatments to reduce the inflammation in my lungs and to help my lungs recover quickly. They monitored my vitals, took blood samples, and gave me the appropriate medication at the appropriate times dutifully and timely throughout the day and night. I cannot express how professional this public medical staff was. The medical care and attention I received was excellent. Within three days, I was off the oxygen and on to full recovery. They had done their job, and they had done it well. I went through no suffering, and they made me feel protected and look out for. I can say they offered the same level of care for the other two patients in that ward with me. The whole time, all three of us were in stable condition, and never did our condition worsen. The hygiene standards were high. They changed the bed sheets regularly and allowed us to change our clothes and take baths regularly. Our room was cleaned and disinfected twice a day.

We were given four meals a day. They were very healthy meals that consisted of the essentials: carbohydrates, proteins, fruits and vegetables. My favorite where the homemade tortillas with rice and chicken paired with a cucumber salad and plantains, served with a hot tea.

Once I was released from the hospital, the CasaSito staff was waiting for me in Cobán to take me back to San Cristobal. They had already made arrangements for me to receive meal deliveries while quarantining at home so that I would not have to leave the house.

When I was back in my house in San Cristobal, I received follow-up calls from the founders Alice and Greg. And I was pleased that they had continued to keep my family in the US updated on my condition.

I wished I had not gone through this experience, but I consider myself fortunate to have received the support of CasaSito through the entire experience. I feel so blessed and protected here in Guatemala because of them, and I am very excited to continue my service here in the country once I recover. They showed me what this organization is really capable of doing for one of its own, and how much they value their volunteers.

By the way, what I saw at the hospital was the same I had already seen in the rest of the country from the first day that I arrived. Guatemala is at a level much more advanced than the United States in terms of COVID-19 safety protocols. They enforce social distancing everywhere. All wear masks. Temperatures are taken at even the smallest convenience store, which they themselves have distancing enforced and have plexiglass at counters as a safety measure. Everywhere you go as a customer, alcohol-based disinfectant is applied to hands to everyone entering a business or government establishment. I never saw this level of precaution in the United States.



Arturo Alvarez

California Licensed Attorney, 2010

U.S. Peace Corps, Mozambique 2016-2018

U.S. Peace Corps, Dominican Republic 2019-2020

Challenges and Goals 2021

2020 was an unpredictable year that has taken us all by surprise. It has left us many lessons learned which will undoubtedly strengthen us and help us to more easily adapt our daily work, social and family life in the future. CasaSito had to adapt all its programs virtually, and we are extremely grateful for having the resources to be able to do so. The skills and experiences that we acquired this year have helped us to establish a flexible operating plan for 2021 that meets the training needs of the scholars and that allows us to continue working with responsibility and quality.

Although we assume that 2021 will continue to be an atypical year, we are committed to achieving our goals with effort and dedication.

- Continue offering communication, empathy, respect, and good care to our scholars and their families.
- Coordinate, execute and evaluate extracurricular activities and maintain effective communication with our coordinators.
- Accompany our families via monthly monitoring through family visits, emails, and phone and video calls.
- Fully implement our Teacher Development Program that will culminate with a final presentation of all participating schools.
- Support our families' economy through a pilot program that will offer 15 scholarships for technical courses to the parents of our scholars.
- Implement a course on human sexuality education for parents and adolescents.

Donors, volunteers, and friends

