



A Brief Update on the Pandemic in Guatemala

Dear Progresa Donors and Supporters,

We send you a big hug from Guatemala and our sincerest wishes that you are well in these very challenging times.

The CoVid-19 situation has arrived shifting the routine of the entire world. Things have changed for everyone. We have become obligated to modify our study activities, our work, and our interpersonal relationships. Guatemala has not been an exception in this world crisis; nor have our students or our families. As we reported in our special newsletter sent to you in the middle of March, the first positive case of the virus in Guatemala was identified on the 13th of March. Since that date until May 11th, the government has identified 1114 positive cases: six hundred seventy-nine (61 %) of which live in the departments of Guatemala, Sacatepéquez and Chimaltenango i.e. the central area of the country and Guatemala City.

According to the Guatemalan president, Alejandro Giammattei, our country has approximately 64 cases per million inhabitants which is seen as positive. This number is low compared to Mexico which has 170 cases per million inhabitants, and the figure is still increasing. What is certain is that the impact of the pandemic has had major consequences for the economy of the country. According to some estimates, more than 70 % of the Guatemalan population's income is derived from the informal economy, i.e. day jobs, work that does not include the basic benefits of formal employment, small scale sale of produce, hand-made weavings and other small family businesses. With implementation of social-distancing policies which meant closure of street markets, suspension of all types of public transportation, closures of some towns and departments of the country and other similar actions, almost all sources of income were taken from Guatemalans. It is sad to see that large businesses, e.g. supermarkets and producers of foodstuffs on an industrial level, are the only ones who can transport and sell their products.

After almost two months under stringent regulations, the government seems to want to soften the social-distancing measures in order to begin a recovery of the economy. Many suggest that the government should not decrease restrictions at all because they themselves have stated that we are entering the critical point in the pandemic.

Opponents say that the government is being pressured to do this by the more powerful economic sector and it is not really for the poor people of the country. It is very clear that upon diminishing restrictions, the risk is extremely high that the number of those who are contagious will increase uncontrollably. Also there is a reality expressed by a phrase that has become popular among Guatemalans, "I either put myself at risk that the virus kills me or for sure hunger will kill me". And that is how it has been articulated by some economic analysts. Social distancing is a luxury that the poor sectors of society can not give themselves because they live day to day and there are no systems of protection in place for them.

In the final analysis, this pandemic has come to demonstrate that the poorest countries and societies are those that suffer most from the effects of whatever phenomenon or crisis. Nevertheless, Guatemalan society, and especially we, its First Peoples have for centuries developed a culture of resisting. And we are convinced, that once again, we will go forth, and we will come out ahead.

What is Progesa doing during the pandemic?

After canceling all in-person activity with our employees and students we implemented various activities with the objective of accompanying and supporting our students during this crisis. This is a summary of the most significant actions taken during the last few weeks.

1. Weekly activities of togetherness and motivation

The arrival of the virus in Guatemala had a major impact on everyone. Actual presence in classes in real time was immediately suspended at all levels, as was public transportation. This required that our students return to their communities at once and that they not leave them without significant notice and preparation. At least three were left unable to return to their communities, "trapped and alone" for several weeks in cities. So we decided it would be important to make our scholarship recipients feel that they were not alone, that they belong to community which cares about them, sees them, listens to them and values them for who they are. Therefore, at the end of March we organized three weekly activities so these young adults might feel accompanied and motivated.

***Motivation Mondays:** We know our students love photos especially "selfies" so what could be better than to start the week asking them to share a photo or an image. Each week we asked for a specific theme reflecting happiness, hope, showing loved ones, self-care, love, etc. See some pictures of our activities in the right column.

****Connection on Wednesdays:** Every Wednesday we've organized a live activity or conversation around varying topics via Zoom or Facebook. One of the important successes we have achieved through these workshops has been that the students themselves facilitate the conversation. We've now had six workshops organized around topics such as health, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc. We've also had a "virtual party" during which we listened to live music performed by two students, told jokes, etc.

*****Fridays of Inspiration:** To finish up the week we asked them to share something that inspires them or helps to keep them going in these challenging times, e.g. the title of some book they would recommend, a saying, a song, what they like, their interests. And this has given good inspirational and motivational resources to the community.

2. Quarterly Virtual Workshops

As part of our work program we had scheduled four quarterly workshops during the year including the annual conference. We presented the first in January, the second was the annual conference scheduled for April which we could not have. But in its place we offered a virtual workshop on anxiety and stress management. Additionally, we offered another, lead by a doctor, a former student during which he explained in detail what Corona Virus is, its symptoms, precautions and ways to prevent it. The final two workshops will also be held virtually, and if necessary, we will continue to focus on these themes.



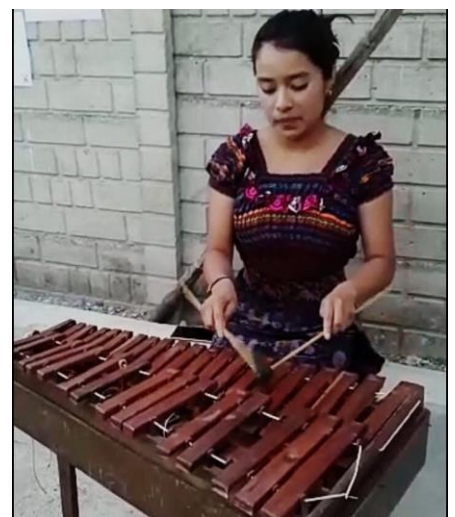
Efrain singing during our virtual party.



Nora, and her mom after mother's day



Dolores showing us her main inspiration: her daughter



Yoscelin sharing one of her hobbies: playing the marimba.

3. Additional assistance for the poorest families

A plan was proposed to the board of directors to economically support those students' families who are most affected by this crisis. It was approved immediately. We did a socioeconomic study to determine which families are suffering most, taking into account as priorities: those whose economic resources were directly affected by government restrictions, whether they were dependent on the informal economy or because they'd lost their jobs; those with little or no foodstuffs in reserve; or where there is a family member who is chronically ill. We found that 38 out of the 86 families we support were in serious economic situations.

So, some additional help for these families was approved for a period of at least two months or for as long as the crisis lasts in the country. We continue to evaluate the economic situation of our scholarship recipients monthly and will add or subtract to this list based on families' needs. If you would like to support us in this extra effort you can send a donation to Redwood Forest Friends Meeting designating it for the special emergency CoVid19 fund in Guatemala by including an additional note so stating. All of our families benefiting from this assistance have been very appreciative. Here are some photos of them with some of what they could purchase with this help.



Some of the families showing the food and other products they bought with the additional support received from our program.

4. Major emotional support during the monthly interviews

We have reformulated our monthly interviews with students so that they provide important emotional support to our scholarship recipients. Since the beginning of this year we planned for this challenge. Our first step was to change the name "monthly interview" to "monthly companionship sessions". This change in direction would move us from merely learning about and noting students' academic progress to allowing us to accompany them through this time, listen to them and make them feel that they have friends who are concerned about them. It has demanded more time for the students, but we believe that we've arrived at a place where the program needs to be a fully supportive one for our students.



5. The next step: support for the communities

The students, themselves, asked us what they could do to help their communities during this crisis? A few days ago we met with some students with strong leadership skills to discuss ideas about how to support their communities without risking their own safety. This was a way of coming up with proposals more democratically, directly from the students. These will be the options from which each will be able to choose, which ever can best be adapted to their situation:

1. Create campaigns to prevent CoVid19 y raise consciousness around problems related to the pandemic.
2. Making of and instruction re: production of face masks.
3. Offer tutoring to primary and secondary level students in their communities.

Certainly, every crisis can add an opportunity to reinvent oneself, to be more creative, to be better. In these last weeks we have achieved knowing our students better and getting closer to them in spite of not being able to physically see them. It is a beautiful experience to see that with each encounter they use the phrase "Progresia family" more, and to see that they are feeling that we truly are a family.

Meeting some of our new students

The following are examples of Progresa students. Relating their stories is always very moving and motivating for us as it reminds us of the reason for Progresa to exist. Get to know some of them, and also be inspired by their stories, dreams and achievements.

Juana Ofelia Cocom

She began her studies in social work this year. She is 26 years old, a little older than most of our students, because the financial situation of her family has not allowed her to study. She is the oldest of three children and currently lives with her mother and a younger sister. The second brother is already married and does not live with them. Juana's father died a few years ago and that is why Juana is now the main generator of income from her home through employment in a small accounting office. Her mother makes fabrics that she later sells, but she doesn't earn much from this. For these reasons, Juana stopped studying for eight years because it was necessary for her to work to help her mother.



Left to right: Juana, her mother and sister.

Juana already has many characteristics of a social worker. She participates as a volunteer in a community organization called Sololteca that works to publicize the rights of indigenous children, youth and women in Nahualá. Her dream is to work in organizations that help women in her community manage productive projects and that help them become financially independent. Furthermore, she is quite helpful and has very good personal relationships, which we believe will be very useful to her as a social worker. Juana receives \$ 800 a year from our program, but we would like to find a sponsor who could provide \$ 1000 a year, to allow Juana to devote more time to her studies.

Alvaro Rudy Franklin Ixchich Can,

He is a young man of 20 years who lives in a village of San Juan Chamelco in Alta Verapaz. He is the oldest of 7. This year he begins his agronomy career at the San Carlos University in Cobán. The next oldest brother is 19 and has only been able to finish



primary school. The younger children have not finished primary school. His life has been difficult because his biological father abandoned him, his mother and brother when they were very young. Some years later his mother remarried and had 5 more children. Alvaro has had to work from a very young age to help support the family. His stepfather has a very humble job loading packages at the bus terminal and planting corn and beans. His mother makes and sells tortillas in his town and sometimes sells atol at the town market.

Despite overwhelming challenges, Alvaro has always liked reading and learning about new things. He loves to read about poetry, history, art, and politics, yet his greatest passion is agricultural science. For years he has been concerned about the deterioration of the environment and has always wanted to study agronomy. He lives in an area that is rich in natural resources, but is owned by very few people. In the few months that Alvaro has been with us, we have seen his natural curiosity and great interest in learning a little about everything. He is a very simple boy, but with a lot of energy and positivity, which gives him great potential. In order not to incur a debt, Alvaro has requested a very small amount and maintains very low expenses. However, we want to find a sponsor who can support him with at least \$ 1000 a year to facilitate his studies covering his daily transportation, food and study materials.

María Isabel Saloj, is a young woman of just 18 years and this year she began her studies in criminology. She lives in the Chuiquel community in Sololá. She is the third of 4 children and the first to finish high school and enter college. Her two older sisters only finished primary school and are dedicated to working to help the family. Her father works as a taxi driver, but unfortunately suffers from alcoholism and has had a couple of accidents that have left the family in debt and generally with little income. Her mother is a weaver and farmer, and she sells some produce that she grows on a very small scale. Together they manage to raise money to cover only the most basic needs of the family.

María was able to finish high school thanks to the support of other scholarship projects and her great interest in studying. Last year she finished high school and began researching what career she might study at university. She decided to study a career in criminology as she has always been very interested in supporting the justice system. In her investigation, she found that there are very few professionals in this field and no indigenous women. She knows that the profession is quite demanding, but she is determined to graduate and contribute so that indigenous people have a greater participation in the justice system and defense of their rights.



Progresha has agreed to provide her with \$ 1,100 a year and her family is to cover the remainder. If there is a person or group able to donate \$ 1,300 for the year, it would greatly help their family.



Our exbecarios (former students) share with us what they are doing.

Aurrelio Rodríguez Sajché studied middle school teaching from 2014 to 2018. Those of you who met him in one of the Teaching English workshops know that he is also a talented artist. Aurelio taught a variety of classes in his community and also taught Kachiquel at a school in Antigua but he never landed a full time government teaching position which means he earned very little. In addition to his various jobs he also maintained his own family farming plot which is probably why he was recruited by a Canadian company called Nature Fresh to work in Canada on a two year contract. He is there now with a work visa and though we are sure he is missing his family we hope it will provide him with new opportunities to improve his life.



Herberth Stuart Bob Coc was in the program from 2016 to 2018 studying medicine. He is currently working in the district hospital of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas in general medicine doing shifts providing support and consultation to patients in the hospital. In January Herberth participated in our first meeting with the new students. He talked about his own experience and encouraged them to move forward. When Herberth was asked about Progresha and the impact it had on his life, he replied, *“I am deeply grateful not only for the financial support provided during my time as a student, but also for worrying about me and making me a better person”*.



Elsa Ophelia Yojero Espán was in the program during the years 2013 to 2018 studying Pedagogy and Educational Administration. She is currently working in an educational center at the secondary level in the rural area of San José Poaquil. During the pandemic she is supporting her students virtually. Elsa writes us: Progresá is a word that fills my heart with great joy and a lot of hope. It helped me to achieve my goals a few years ago. My inspiration was, is, and always will be the quality of education in my country and in my community”.



Domingo Ixquiactap Perechú was in the program from 2013 to 2017 studying Pedagogy and Educational Administration. He is now working as a teacher at a secondary school. This year he was given the opportunity to be the senior Seminar advisor and works online with his students. Domingo is also supporting his community by implementing some internal prevention standards with the general population.



18 new graduates!

It is a joy to share that in 2019 we had 18 graduates, or they are very close to graduating. Of these 15 are at the university level and 3 at the secondary level. Thank you for making it possible for these 18 people to have now more tools to develop together with their families and communities. This is the list of our graduates:

University level:

Midwifery: Apolonia López, Izabela Jacinto Ramos, Juana Gómez and María Baltazar.

Nursing: Brenda Brito, Piana Pérez and Meyli Cecilia Matom.

Physiotherapy: Laura Pixcar.

Secondary teaching: Daniel Hernández and Hermelinda Miguel.

BS in Education: Sandra Sirín.

Systems engineering: Elizabeth Guadalupe Ruiz and Pedro

Bocel; **Civil engineering:** José Pérez **Agronomy:** Martín Morales

Secondary level:

Pre-primary teaching: Jonathan Icó and Martín Joj; **Agriculture:** Edgar Choc.

The Teaching English Work-tour, Dec. 1st. – Dec. 9th. 2020

We keep our fingers crossed that this crisis will be overcome by next December, so that we can hold our Teaching English Experience as planned, but the security of our volunteers and students are first. For that reason, we are holding the decision until August, when our board will make a final decision about having or canceling our work tour this year. We will communicate with those of you who have already signed when we make the decision. We are working on a “plan B” if we need to cancel, so please be aware of any communication regarding this. Thanks for being part of such a life touching experience!

Many thanks for your faithful support!

All of us recognize that it is your contribution that makes all this work possible. We need your help to continue bringing a choice into the lives of poor Guatemalans. Remember, all donations are tax deductible!

All donations are made out to: **Redwood Forest Friends Meeting**. Please remember to write in your memo section: “Guatemala Scholarship Program” and mail it to:

Redwood Forest Friends Meeting
Att: Guatemala Scholarship Program
P.O. Box 1831, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

The Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program – PROGRESA

Web: www.guatemalafriends.org Email: progresas3@gmail.com Facebook: [Progresas Quakers](https://www.facebook.com/ProgresasQuakers)

STUDENT ROSTER 2020 - PROGRESA

UNIVERSITY LEVEL (77 students)					
Major/ Names			Age	Language	
Major/ Names			Age	Language	
<i>Agronomy</i>					
7	Elizabeth Noemí Ajanel López	21	K'iche'		
2	Hilton Antonio Xicay Morales	21	Kaqchikel		
3	Jacobo Roderico López de León	27	Spanish		
4	Juan José Luis Toyon Tum	30	Mam		
5	Karen Esther Quib Bol	22	Q'eqchi'		
6	Marta Lidia López Hernández	25	Awakateko		
7	Simeón Cosigua Saloj	27	Kaqchikel		
8	Antonio Carrillo Puac	30	K'iche'		
9	Rosa Amalia Vásquez González	23	Achi		
10	Tomas Cristobal Us Us	26	K'iche'		
11	Alvaro Rudy Franklin Ichich Car	20	Q'eqchi'		
<i>Social work</i>					
7	Magdalena Toma y Toma	30	Ixil		
2	Consuelo Carrillo Sánchez	31	Ixil		
3	José Luis Ramiro Tay Morales	54	Kaqchikel		
4	Juana Ofelia Cocom Tzoc	27	K'iche'		
5	Julia Nicolasa Santiago Pérez	29	Ixil		
6	Nora Verónica Sabán Car	23	Kaqchikel		
7	Pamela Macedonia Toledo Felipe	21	Sacapulteko		
8	Sara Leticia Socón Morales	26	Kaqchikel		
9	Yessenia Sales Morales	25	Mam		
<i>Medicine</i>					
7	Brenda Leticia Saloj Palax	21	Kaqchikel		
2	Cristian Isaí Monterroso de León	19	Spanish		
3	Daril Zulyvan Ovalle Rodríguez	19	Spanish		
4	Emerson David Vivar Valdéz	23	Spanish		
5	Juan Pablo Tecún Bolon	25	Spanish		
6	Leslye Elizabeth Cárcamo España	19	Spanish		
7	Yóscelin Fabiola Hernández D.	26	Poptí		
<i>Nursing</i>					
7	Brenda Marisol Ismalej Osorio	22	Achi		
2	Concepción Damián Chicajau	24	Tz'utujil		
3	Juan Alex Humberto Jor Xol	21	Q'eqchi'		
4	Piana Imelda Pérez Brito	26	Ixil		
5	Luisa Florinda Tzunux Joj	23	K'iche'		
6	Nelson Ernesto Sam Caal	19	Q'eqchi'		
7	Rut Noemí Román Tahuico	19	Achi		
<i>B.S. in Education</i>					
7	Vilma Leticia Chón Tul	30	Q'eqchi'		
2	Santos Simeona Pu Castro	26	K'iche'		
3	Zulmy Vanessa González Canah	22	Mestiza		
4	Ana María López Colaj	34	Kaqchikel		
5	María Teresa Joj Lux	29	K'iche'		
6	Maydy Rosemary Hernández S.	25	Kaqchikel		
<i>Math and physics</i>					
7	Alonzo Magnolio Aguilar R.	31	Q'anjob'al		
2	Delfina Tojil Cumatz Par	27	Kaqchikel		
3	Efraín Mendoza Pablo	25	Mam		
4	Fidel Alexander Lúe Són	25	Kaqchikel		
5	Orfany Odilí Salazar Velíz	22	Spanish		
<i>Psychology</i>					
7	Alejandra Beatriz Gómez Guzm	27	Ixil		
2	Mildre Mabeli De León Cano	26	Spanish		
3	Vilma del Rosario Mayén	25	Spanish		
4	Yuri Nicolasa Coché Pablo	23	Tz'utujil		
<i>Law</i>					
7	Jhony Estuardo Otzoy Sajbocho	23	Kaqchikel		
2	Brenda Yuliza Jocholá Boch	24	Kaqchikel		
3	Edgar Francisco Cop Santay	25	K'iche'		
<i>Audit</i>					
7	Irma Elizabeth Tuyuc Salazar	25	Kaqchikel		
2	María Elisa Tziná Sapalú	22	Tz'utujil		
<i>Systems engineering</i>					
7	Henry Jiménez López	30	Mam		
2	José Alberto González García	20	Spanish		
<i>Sociolinguistics</i>					
7	Dolores Ical Jóm	25	Poqomchi'		
2	Bebertin Paola Aju Upun	20	Kaqchikel		
<i>Secondary teaching</i>					
7	Dina Patricia Parabal Morales	29	Kaqchikel		
2	José Tzib Tut	32	Q'eqchi'		
<i>Music teaching</i>					
7	Wilmer Aram Ajú	27	K'iche'		
2	Yoselin Yesenia Larias Larios	20	K'iche'		
<i>Industrial psychology</i>					
7	Gloria Noemí Quel López	20	Spanish		
2	Lesly Patricia Valle Hernández	24	Spanish		
<i>Psychology</i>					
7	Griselda Elizabeth Sol Cajbón	36	Kaqchikel		
<i>Political sciences</i>					
7	Osman E. Alarcón Berganza	25	Spanish		
<i>Physiotherapy</i>					
7	Elida Gabriela Teletor Jiménez	19	Achi		
<i>Physical education</i>					
7	Oswaldo Humler Choc	29	Q'eqchi'		
<i>Zootechnics</i>					
7	Adilene Analí Mérida González	26	Mam		
<i>Special education</i>					
7	Manuela Wendy Ramirez Cotiy	29	K'iche'		

UNIVERSITY LEVEL									
Major/ Names			Age	Language	Major/ Names			Age	Language
<i>Sociology</i>					<i>Business administration</i>				
1	Ana Lucrecia Popol Estrada	26	Kaqchikel	1	Juana Janeth Ramírez Pablo	21	Tzotujil		
<i>Elementary teaching</i>					<i>Arts</i>				
1	Juan Nix Morales	21	K'iche'	1	Arnulfo Juan José Guillén Flor	25	Spanish		
<i>Criminology</i>					<i>Anthropology</i>				
1	María Isabel Saloj Raxic	18	Kaqchikel	1	Jairo Andreé Lemus Marchorro	22	Poqomam		
<i>Chemistry and pharmacy</i>									
1	Kevyn Francisco Sánchez	28	Spanish						
SECONDARY LEVEL (10 students)									
<i>Pre-primary teaching</i>					<i>Agriculture</i>				
1	Alba Azucena Chitic Guarcas	22	Kaqchikel	1	Eddy Gabriel Car Chocoj	17	Kaqchikel		
2	Margarita S. López García	21	Kaqchikel	2	Evelyn Yesenia Méndez Díaz	16	Mam		
3	Glenda Esmeralda Patzan V.	18	Kaqchikel	<i>Bookkeeping</i>					
4	Glenda Marisol Marroquín P.	17	Español	1	Aura Gricelda Granados Jacobo	18	español		
5	Irma Marisol Joj Cac	17	K'iche'	<i>Electronics</i>					
<i>Secondary diploma</i>					1	Carlos Daniel Caal Asig	19	Q'echi'	
1	Jasmin Mishel López García	18	Kaqchikel						

Thanks to your support, this year, our program is providing scholarships to 87 students from different areas of the country. The following table shows the summary of our students according to their level of studies and gender.

	Women	Men	Totals by Level:	
Secondary	8	2	10	11%
University	48	29	77	89%
Totals by Gender:	56	31	87	100%

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You can receive our newsletters by email and see all our pictures in full color. At the same time, you will be helping our program to save the cost of printing and postage and to be more friendly with the environment. You just need to send us an email from your address to: progres3@gmail.com asking to be included in our email list.