



2020 a year of great challenges, learnings and achievements.

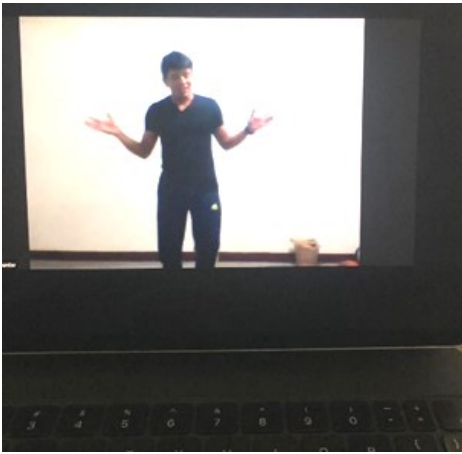
This year has been one of the most challenging years for Guatemala and for the entire world. The arrival of the pandemic in our country came to show in a clearer way the great inequalities we suffer. According to estimates by ECLAC, which is the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, by the end of 2020, extreme poverty in Guatemala will increase to 21.8% and poverty to 59.9% of the Guatemalan population. This means that 8 out of 10 Guatemalans live in poverty or extreme poverty. The pandemic has exacerbated the plight of Guatemalans in many ways. The real challenge continues to be the unequal distribution of resources, the abuse of power, and the corruption in the political and governing system. In addition to all this, in November, the northeastern part of the country was severely hit by storms Eta and Iota, which flooded entire communities, causing the loss of crops and property and the death of people due to landslides.

But, the intention of this article is not to depress you by enumerating the series of catastrophes and problems in Guatemala, but rather to tell you that despite all this we continue to move forward. Progresa achieved much more this year than in other years. In the midst of all the difficult tests we have faced this year, we have once again seen the effort, courage, creativity, and desire of our students to move forward. We are grateful for the continued support, friendship, and affection from all of you, our donors and supporters. This has made it possible for the many projects and actions we were able to provide for our students. Following is a small summary of the main achievements made in this year 2020 thanks to your help:

- ◆ We supported 87 students: 77 in university and 10 in high school.
- ◆ We got 12 students to graduate or at least be very close to graduation.
- ◆ We strengthened our relationship with our students, enabling us to provide them with emotional and academic support throughout the year. Several students suffered a lot of stress and anxiety due to the economic situation, changes in their studies, isolation, death of a relative, etc.



Ramiro Tay in his professional practice as a Social Worker. Ramiro is one of the 12 graduates of the program.



Oswaldo Humler in his virtual workshop on exercises to alleviate stress.



Chisec is the community of Nelson Sam and was one of the communities affected by the passage of the ETA and IOTA storm

- ◆ We improved our training program and provided 33 virtual workshops on topics such as emotional support, health care, agro-ecological practices, art, history, politics, education, etc. Most of these workshops were taught by the students themselves, which gave them the opportunity to show their knowledge and increase their self-confidence. Additionally, we had some alumni and international guests who also shared important topics with the students. In previous years we only provided 4 workshops during the year which were in-person.
- ◆ We granted additional allowances for the purchase of food to 38 families among our students that were strongly affected by the pandemic. Some of them required assistance for 7 months and others for less time as their economic situation improved.
- ◆ We supported more than 80 communities in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic through community service performed by our students who provided materials and taught neighbors how to make masks. Also, they carried out prevention campaigns in different Mayan languages and gave tutorials to children whose teachers could not reach their communities to continue the teaching process.
- ◆ In November, we provided financial support to 8 communities affected by storms Eta and Iota. The money was passed on to students living in or near those communities, who took it upon themselves to distribute aid in the way that the communities actually needed; in some cases, it was to buy food, and in others to help those who lost their home. In one case, it helped women buy typical (used) clothing for women; many organizations send clothes, but almost no one thinks about the women who are not used to dressing differently from the traditional way.

Clearly, this year brought very tough challenges, but it also reminded us that difficulties are an opportunity to try harder and improve. Progresa has strengthened its presence and impact in the lives of our students and their communities.

LOOKING FORWARD, WITH A STEP OF FAITH, INTO 2021

For 2021 we want to continue working with the same impetus and faith. Because the pandemic adversely affected several other scholarship projects in Guatemala this year, we received many more applicants than usual. Therefore, we have decided to increase the number of students to 100 in 2021. We know it is a big challenge, but we trust your continued support will allow us to meet this need. We want to express our sincere gratitude to each of you, and hope that you will be able to support our work in the coming year as well.

I would like you to hear directly from our students about their experiences this year. We asked the following question, and these are some of their answers:

What has been the most valuable support you received from PROGRESA this year?



"Apart from the economic contribution that is essential to survive, I consider it very valuable the attention they gave us individually and collectively. It made us feel important, part of a group, growing and training together. It strengthened ties of

friendship". --**Ana Lucrecia Popol, sociology**

"Progresa has helped me to be a person capable of continuing to fight, capable of bringing positive change in my family and community. I had the opportunity to meet and help people by doing my community service. Without a doubt, the financial support has been fundamental because without the help of Progresa I could not move forward. Progresa has always been a light in my life saying: 'You can do it'". -



--**Consuelo Carrillo Sánchez, Social work**

"Progresa from the beginning had plans to face the challenge of the pandemic: it was so beneficial for me to have weekly activities with new topics to learn. Some of them caught more of my attention, but all were free. I think this was important because now most courses are not free. and having them in Progresa with such ease was the best. Another very valuable support for me was the workshop on how to handle anxiety and stress since difficult situations arise when being at home with the family. For me, Progresa is not only an organization but a family that cares about my well-being in all areas". --**Evelyn Yesenia Mendez Diaz,**



agronomy (high school level)

"The comprehension, financial support and learning opportunities are very valuable contributions to me because they help me to grow as a professional and understand that there are many ways in which I can help others. The economic contribution has been a savior for my family and in an emotional sense it feels good to know that there are people who support you, encourage you, and share visions with you. This is what I feel by being part of our Progresa community". --**Nelson Ernesto Sam Caál, Professional Nursing**



"The most valuable support was the accompaniment: emotional and financial. This year all the activities that were carried out were very valuable since the Wednesday workshops helped me personally and also being able to share with the different colleagues". --**Yoselin Yesenia Larías**



Larías, Music teaching.

"The most valuable thing for me was the understanding and accessibility with the academic calendar, since this year there were many uncertainties and irregularities regarding the management of courses and their validity, but Progresa was unconditional with the support provided both financially and morally". --**Yóscelin Fabiola Hernández Delgado, Medicine**



Yóscelin Fabiola Hernández Delgado, Medicine

Our Virtual Teaching English course.

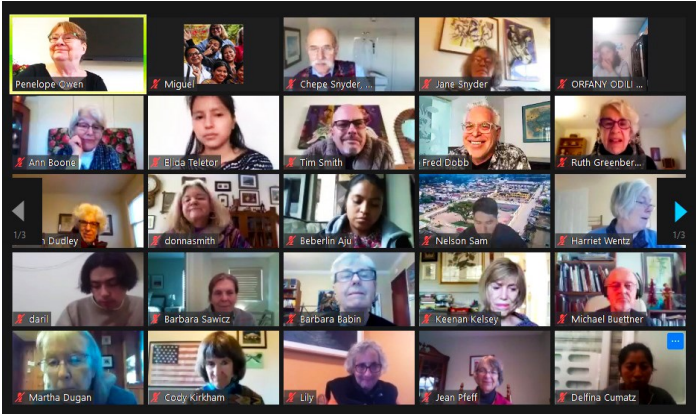
The pandemic forced us to cancel our Teaching English course that would have taken place this December in La Antigua Guatemala. However, thanks to the enthusiasm and strong efforts of the curriculum team, an online version of our program was developed – and renamed Virtual Teaching English. There was a lot of nervousness and doubts along the way, but the start day finally arrived, and for five days we had the participation of 24 tutors and 29 students. Our initial nervousness gradually passed, and we witnessed again that when there is love and will, everything is possible. Our program was again a space for learning and partnership between tutors and students. Of course, we miss the personal connection very much, but despite everything we can say that it was a success!

Here is what one of our tutors, who also gave us a lot of support in the technological part of this course, wrote about her time with us.



My First (Virtual) Experience Teaching English in Guatemala,

by Barbara Babin



Some of our teachers and students during the week of the Virtual English Teaching.

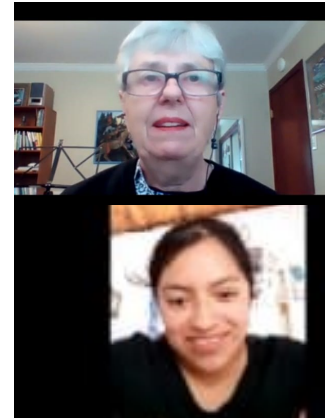
COVID-19 and Zoom are responsible for my being able to participate in the 2020 Virtual Teaching English Week (VTE). Initially, I was just going to help a friend introduce the teachers to the Zoom platform that they would be using. However, as I began meeting people and hearing how the week would unfold, I fell in love with the possibility and asked Miguel Costop, Progresa's executive director, if there was room for another teacher.

Once I was accepted, the pace picked up. We trained, gathered resources, practiced with Zoom, and then the moment arrived when we met our students. What a joy! I thought I had been paired with the brightest, most industrious, and charming student (and indeed she is all of those), but, by graduation, I realized that all of the students and teachers had developed equally warm relationships and that an enormous amount of learning had taken place. After five days of intensive sessions with the whole-group and in small breakout rooms, some students and teachers have planned to stay connected and may even continue to meet virtually every week or two.

For years I have admired Progresa and the indefatigable work of everyone involved. Participation in a scholarship project in El Salvador has given me a profound appreciation for the role of such projects in bringing hope, educational access, and ultimately economic opportunity to students from rural areas and indigenous populations.

Students who graduate from university and technical programs bring their skills and knowledge back to their local communities, thereby contributing to improved conditions in those communities. This week the students shared their service projects which are already having a positive impact. My student, for example, is studying animal husbandry and is teaching people how to inoculate their animals against parasites and disease.

I am delighted to have been part of this year's Virtual Teaching English week. It has been a bright light in a time when it can be challenging to reach out and connect with others, especially those who are a half a world away. I am truly grateful to the organizers and to the students for this opportunity, and hope to join in person in 2021.



Barbara and Analí during the week of the VET.

Once again, thank you so much for helping us make this work possible. We need your valuable support to continue this effort in 2021 and bring hope and opportunity to Guatemalans in need.

You can make your checks out to: **Redwood Forest Friends Meeting**. Please write Guatemala in the Memo section of your check and mail to:

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Attn: Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program.
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