

2019 Annual Report



LIMITLESS

H O R I Z O N S I X I L

Transforming a community through education



Dear friends and supporters,

As I made my way up to Chajul this month, along the winding mountainous roads that make up the Ixil region of Guatemala, I could not help but reflect back on all that Limitless Horizons Ixil has become over the past 15 years. When I made my first trip to the region in 2004, I could never have imagined what we would be able to achieve in partnership with this isolated community, nor the heartfelt support that we would be able to rally around the cause.

I am pleased to share with you an overview of our work in 2019, which would never have been possible without the help of dedicated supporters like you. Your help in 2019 allowed us to provide Chajul's youth and families with needed educational and socio-emotional support services that they would never have access to otherwise.

Today, I am glad that together, we have come so far. But, I am reminded of how much more we can do, if we continue to unite our networks to create opportunities for the indigenous youth, women, and families of Chajul.

With exciting new initiatives taking place in Chajul, we have hit the ground running in 2020. We are honored to share with you 2019's successes, and we look forward to keeping you informed on new projects and innovative solutions that will be coming to Chajul in the year ahead!

Yours in the mission,



Katie Morrow
Founder and Executive Director
Limitless Horizons Ixil





Limitless Horizons Ixil's Mission

is to create opportunities for the indigenous youth, women, and families of Chajul to develop the academic and professional skills needed to effect change in their lives and community.

“At Limitless Horizons Ixil, I have participated in enrichment classes, computer classes, and life skills workshops. I have learned that the more difficult something is, the more we have to confront it and be brave. I know that I will succeed in getting an advanced education and achieving my dreams because of the support of Limitless Horizons Ixil.”

— Teresa, 8th Grade Scholar



Youth Development Program



Our Youth Development Program supports ambitious youth with financial scholarships and full wraparound services to help them succeed. The program provides our scholars, two thirds of whom are girls, with intensive Spanish, math, computer, and English classes, along with professional development and socio-emotional support services.



**59 Middle and
High School
Scholars**



**95 Hours of
Computer
Classes**



**138 Hours of
Academic
Enrichment
Classes**



**113 Hours of
Psychology
Services**

Academic Enrichment Classes

Limitless Horizons Ixil provides weekly academic enrichment classes in the subjects our scholars find most challenging. Our scholars benefited from **90 hours of enrichment classes in math and English** and **95 hours of computer classes**, helping scholars gain skills and confidence to continue their studies and pursue demanding career paths.

Intensive Spanish Classes

In Ixil-speaking Chajul, scholars are exposed to little Spanish language development at home; in 2019 Limitless Horizons Ixil offered our scholars **48 hours of intensive Spanish classes**.

Dental and Oral Hygiene Services

40 scholars and family members received dental treatment from a Canadian dentist. We have also expanded our holistic services to provide **monthly oral hygiene workshops and services with a local dentist** for our library members and scholars.

Psychological Support

Our staff psychologist provided scholars and their family members with **113 hours of emotional and psychological support** through one-on-one counseling and group therapy sessions.

Fotovoz (Photo Voice)

A group of visiting high school students facilitated a photography project with our eighth grade scholars. All students took photos of daily life around Chajul, which were then **exhibited to an audience of 80 parents, teachers, and community members**.

Graduation Celebration

In November, we celebrated the **graduation of 13 middle school and 12 high school scholars** with a celebration which included traditional folk dancing, mother and daughter speeches, and a meal.

Creative Arts and Theater

16 of our middle, high school, and university scholars adapted a comic into a **play about gender-based violence, adolescent pregnancy, and women's rights** in a rural Guatemalan community. They performed the play *El Camino Colibrí* (The Hummingbird's Path) in Ixil and Spanish to parents, other scholars, and staff at the graduation ceremony.

Special Events

To honor scholars' academic achievements, we held **three good grades celebrations**, which included movies, meals, and motivational speeches. All scholars also joined us for two days of team building activities at a local recreation center.





In 2019, our scholars participated in **18 personal and social development workshops**, on a variety of topics including gender equality, mental health, resilience, healthy relationships, immigration, reproductive health, and social media.

As part of our commitment to providing wraparound services for Chajul's families, we also offered **12 hours of workshops** to scholars' parents. With an average of **80 participants**, the workshops covered topics such as teamwork, self-esteem, and immigration.

Scholar Spotlight: Cecilia

“When girls stay here and don’t leave to go to high school, they get pregnant. That’s what happens to us—pregnancy and marriage. I want to go to high school so that I can focus entirely on my studies and not let this traditional path be my future.” — Cecilia

Limitless Horizons Ixil is proud to support ambitious scholars, like Cecilia, who **have their sights set on going far in their education.**

Cecilia, who is currently in her last year of middle school, learned about Limitless Horizons Ixil’s Youth Development Program as an ambitious and enthusiastic sixth grader. From the moment she learned about the opportunity, she was eager to apply. Her mother, María, was initially not very supportive. María cares for her home and children, and weaves traditional blouses called *huipiles*, while her husband Juan earns less than a dollar a day doing odd jobs at a hardware store. María ultimately realized that supporting her daughter’s education would be a life-changing opportunity for Cecilia, and both she and Cecilia knew that **education was the only way out of an unwelcome future.**

María agrees that for Cecilia and her 16-year-old sister Susana, who is also studying in middle school, it is crucial that they do not get married at an early age. She wants them **to have all possible doors opened to them, both professionally and academically.** Cecilia is following the path of other Limitless Horizons Ixil graduates that came before her. Among our scholars, **84% of participants’ mothers had children before age 23, compared with 19% of our Youth Development Program graduates.**

This year, Cecilia will decide what she wants to study in high school. **With Limitless Horizons Ixil’s support, she is ready to open new doors and continue her journey towards a brighter future.**

“In my town, mothers always used to stay at home. Now mothers work really hard so that their children do not have to suffer as they did.” — Cecilia



Cecilia (left) with her mother, María, and sister, Susana.



Cecilia (right) with fellow Limitless Horizons Ixil scholars.

Saber Sin Límites (Limitless Knowledge) Community Library



In a community where nearly half of parents are illiterate and only 24% completed elementary school, additional learning and literacy support for Chajul's youth is essential.

The *Saber Sin Límites* Community Library is open to the whole community, providing homework support, academic enrichment classes, reading clubs, and weekly story hours to the **40-60 daily visitors**.

In 2019, library members participated in **78 story hours** and **Ixil-Spanish cultural story hours**, which engage youth in Ixil culture, often bringing in local elders to speak on specific themes.

Of those library members interviewed, **60% stay in the library for an average of 4 hours**. Over school vacation, they participated in chess, STEM activities, reading competitions, and adapted the book *Where the Wild Things Are* into a play.



9,622 books
4,470 original titles



476 active library members
316 new members in 2019



50 hours of
STEM classes

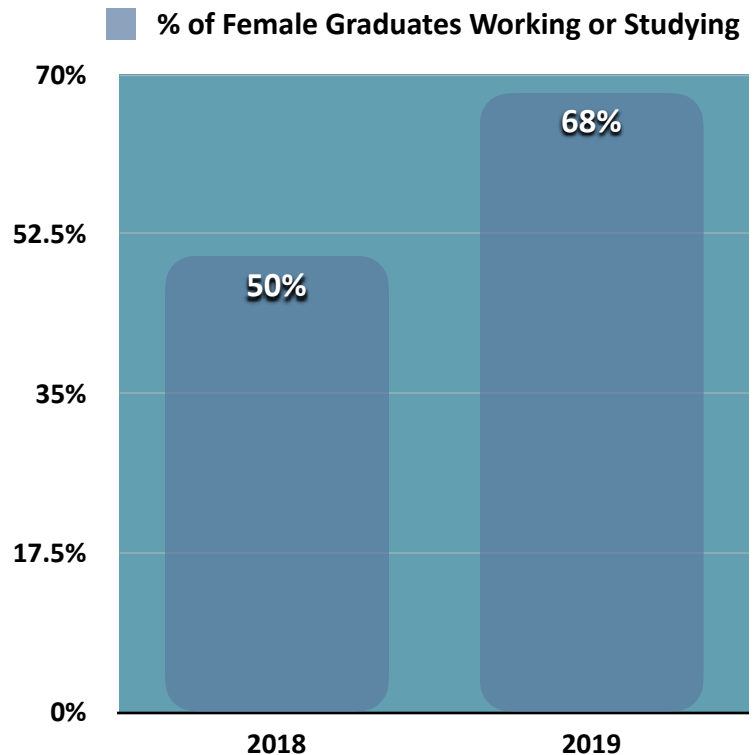
Emerging Leaders Program

Responding to the needs of our **62 Youth Development Program graduates**, we offer an **Emerging Leaders Program focused on professional and personal development** for alumni. We offer support in post-secondary transitions in the form of career counseling, university applications and scholarship guidance, skills development, and vocational training. We also organized **three events** throughout the year to bring graduates together and motivate them to continue their university studies.

Our Work to (L)earn initiative offered **300 hours of paid work to 33 alumni and scholars** in our library, artisan program, and community center.



In 2019, 68% of our female graduates were working or studying, up from 50% in 2018.



Emerging Leaders Fellowship

Five Youth Development Program alumnae were part of our Emerging Leaders Fellowship in 2019. Juana, Regina, Cristina, Teresa, and Diana each completed **20-25 hours of paid work per week** supporting the community library, the Artisan Program, and office and program administration. They also engaged in **56 hours of workshops** on topics such as **women's rights, nutrition, CV writing, critical thinking, and public speaking.**

In collaboration with other youth and women's groups in the Ixil Region, Limitless Horizons Ixil also offered our fellows **a six-month course with a local women's rights organization, La Defensoría de la Mujer.** After **30 hours of workshops,** they earned a certificate in conflict resolution strategies. They presented on mediation and gender violence to over 100 teachers, who will now bring these themes into their classrooms. In collaboration with *La Defensoría*, our fellows also **presented about women's rights live on a regional radio station, La Voz Nebaj.**

Additionally, in a collaborative initiative with a Nebaj-based community group, all five fellows took a vocational training course where they learned skills including using sewing machines and baking techniques.



Top Row L-R: Juana, Regina
Bottom Row L-R: Cristina, Teresa, Diana



“Visiting the Zacaleu Maya ruins was one of my favorite moments this year with Limitless Horizons Ixil. None of us had ever seen Maya ruins before, so going on an educational trip as part of our fellowship was something we will never forget.”

— Juana, Limitless Horizons Ixil Fellow

Artisan Program



25 women weavers were part of the Artisan Program in 2019, including 23 mothers of scholars and two Youth Development Program alumnae. Together, they created **1,107 products**, including scarves, shawls, ponchos, earrings, necklaces, and bracelets which were sold in Guatemala, as well as in the United States and Europe. This program helps provide **fair incomes** for the talented weavers of Chajul.



Community Engagement Trips



We hosted five community engagement trips throughout 2019, welcoming teachers, photographers, and women's groups to Chajul.

“Overall, my trip to Guatemala was much more than a vacation. It was a learning experience, a sharing of stories, an opening of the heart, a view into harsh realities; it was... sharing connection, laughter, and smiles.”

— Julie, Community Engagement Trip Participant, August 2019

Visitors had the opportunity to meet with scholars and families, prepare tortillas and the local delicacy *boxbol*, organize an arts celebration for our library members, hike through the surrounding mountains, and learn about the impacts of the 36-year civil war firsthand. **Meaningful service and exchange directly benefited Chajul's families**, who received fair wages for hosting the group's activities, while also learning about other cultures and ways of life.



Stay connected:



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Thank you from all of us at Limitless Horizons Ixil.

In 2019, we provided life-changing academic and professional opportunities for Chajul's youth and families. It would not have been possible without your support.

We are so grateful for your collaboration!