



# HORIZONTES

## SIN LÍMITES IXIL

*Transformando una comunidad a través de la educación*



**6 Months  
of Pandemic  
Response**



**LIMITLESS**  
HORIZONS IXIL

*Transforming a community through education*

Dear friends,

This midyear update looks a little different than years past, as it focuses on our pandemic response efforts. 2020 changed all of our lives, and at Limitless Horizons Ixil, we have also had to shift our programming to best address the needs of our scholars, families, and community. **On September 15, Guatemala celebrated its 199th Independence Day, but this year, it also marked six months since pandemic restrictions began in Guatemala.** Within days of reporting its first case of COVID-19 in March, schools shut, borders closed, and strict lockdowns began with daily curfews and no public transportation.

The Limitless Horizons Ixil team knew from day one the reality for our families and community, and the vulnerabilities that the pandemic and strict lockdowns would exacerbate.

- **93% of Chajul's Maya Ixil population live in poverty, and 41% in extreme poverty.**
- **75% of the families we work with have unreliable or no water supply at home.**
- **Most scholars can only access the internet on a cell phone, and data is often cost prohibitive.**

Witnessing the increased challenges our community is facing due to the global pandemic, Limitless Horizons Ixil **quickly adapted our programming to meet the current reality. The pandemic has only increased our determination to nurture a culture of learning and literacy in Chajul** at a time when it is more at risk than ever.

We hope you enjoy seeing more about the strategies our team is using to provide our youth, scholars, families, and entire community with emergency relief and ongoing educational support over the past six months. **Thank you to all of our supporters and friends who have joined us as we strive to minimize the pandemic's exacerbation of disparities** in our community and around the world.

With gratitude,

*Katie Morrow*

Katie Morrow

Co-Founder & Executive Director



# Meet Teresa:

Youth Development Program Alumna | 2019 Emerging Leaders Fellow | University Scholarship Recipient

Like for all of us, 2020 has not gone according to plan for Teresa. A Limitless Horizons Ixil university scholarship recipient, former [Emerging Leaders](#) fellow, and Youth Development Program alumna, Teresa has spent the past **six months adapting to a new lifestyle of studying and working from home**. In her second year of college studying business administration, Teresa was accustomed to leaving her house in Chajul at 4 AM on Saturday mornings to arrive in Quiché in time for her 8 AM in-person classes. She would return home at 9 PM after a full day of classes. Now, **Teresa balances her virtual coursework with teaching online English classes to Limitless Horizons Ixil middle and high school scholars, and helping to care for her six younger siblings.**

Guatemala has spent much of the **past six months under strict lockdown orders, including evening curfews, travel bans, and orders to not leave home some Sundays**. For Teresa, it has been an adjustment as she spends so much more time with her family. Each day, they all eat breakfast together before **Teresa connects online for virtual classes.**



***“When the president first instated lockdown orders, we were alarmed. We weren’t used to staying at home all day long... but we’ve stayed very united as a family and it’s been good for us spending time together in a way that we never have before.”***



For Teresa, and most of Limitless Horizons Ixil’s scholars, the **biggest challenge has been dealing with poor internet**. She often misses important class content and struggles to turn in assignments on time due to the unreliable connection. **Teresa has not let these challenges stop her**. She is determined to continue studying, sharing that **without the financial scholarship and support she receives from Limitless Horizons Ixil, she would struggle to continue her studies.**

Teresa shared:

***“I never thought that I would have classes like this. If [the pandemic] hadn’t happened, I would not have learned how to navigate computer programs in this way.”***

Teresa’s family has expressed their gratitude for Limitless Horizons Ixil’s support during these trying times; including food baskets, phone check-ins, safety information, increased financial support for Teresa’s studies, and radio Story Hours for her younger siblings. As Teresa teaches virtual English classes each week, **she has become an important role model for Chajul’s scholars in their efforts to persist and overcome enormous barriers** caused by the pandemic.

# Response Programming: 6-Month Update

## Academic Enrichment Classes

**70%** of Youth Development Program scholars are not receiving virtual (or any) classes from their schools

To fill the void left by schools, we are providing all **39 scholars** in our [Youth Development Program](#) with weekly academic enrichment classes in math, Spanish, and English. When they began in June, we extended their reach to high schoolers, ensuring that **26 more youth** have access to weekly educational programming during this time.

We are also providing middle, high school, and university scholars with data for their phones, to make it possible to attend these lessons and their school classes. To ensure scholars understand how to use this new technology, we are providing **weekly online technology classes** for scholars focused on navigating the internet on smartphones, using new software, and accessing information online. One-on-one support is also available as needed.

## Food Baskets & Masks

With the majority of families **not receiving government support**, and many having seen reductions in remittances sent by relatives working in the US, **we are responding to immediate needs with monthly food and hygiene baskets** for all our families. These ensure that families have access to healthy dietary staples, including eggs, beans, tomatoes, and potatoes, as well as hygiene products such as detergent, bleach, and soap. When Guatemala mandated masks in public spaces, all families and staff also received reusable cloth face masks.

**75%** of the families we work with report not having enough money to buy food for a healthy diet since lockdowns began



**65%** of Youth Development Program scholars reported that studying from home was their biggest challenge since lockdown began.



**228** baskets distributed

**264** masks distributed

## Community Radio Storybook Readings, Distanced Book Lending, & Book Clubs

**28** storybooks read in Spanish and Ixil on local radio

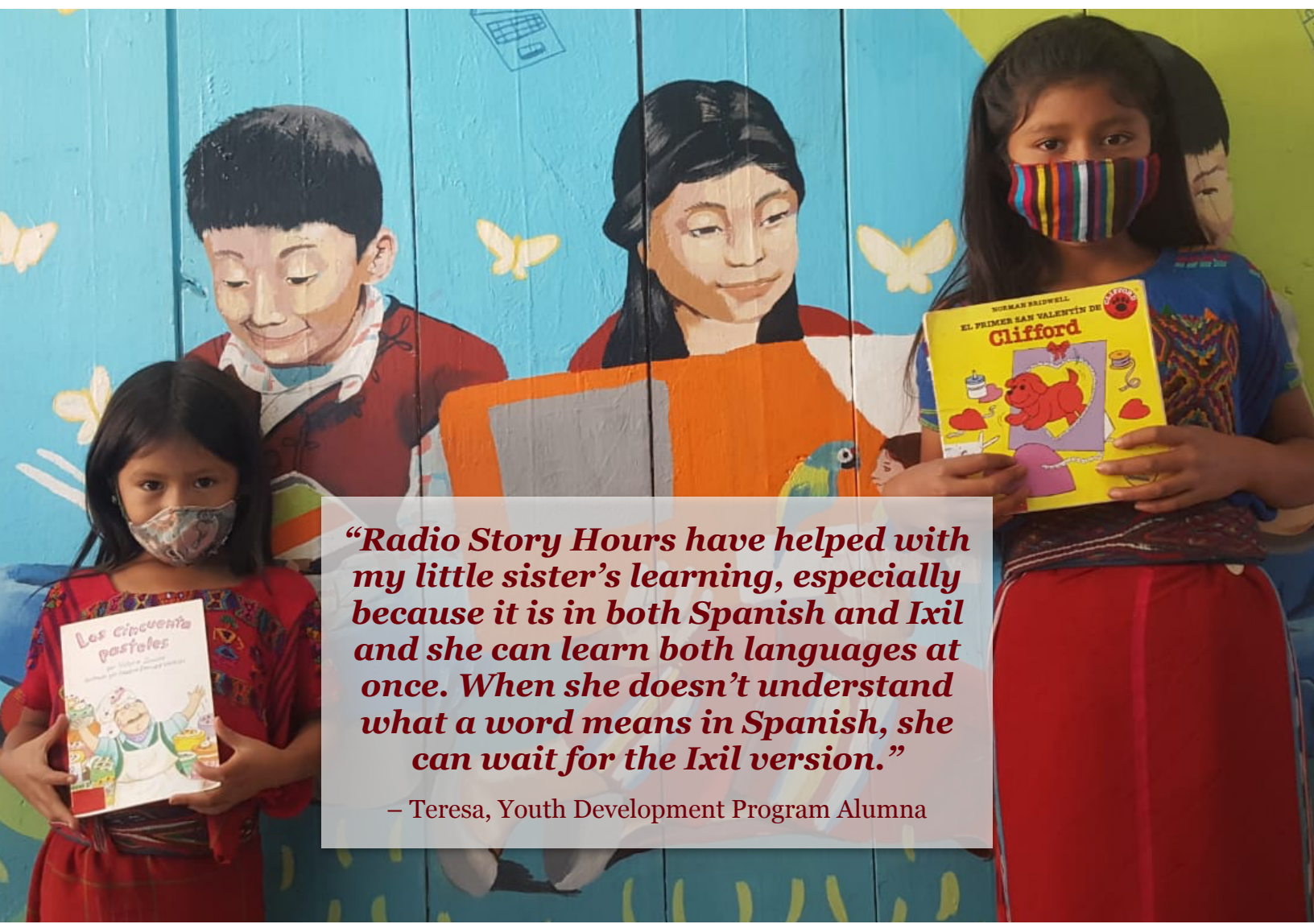
**3** chapter books read in virtual book clubs with middle and high schoolers

**Weekly** socially distanced book lending

Since April, librarians David and Olga have adapted Story Hour to broadcast **twice weekly bilingual Spanish-Ixil radio readings**. These have expanded our reach from our typical library members to many more children and families in **Chajul and surrounding villages (population 48,000)**. Our librarians have incorporated important lessons, special broadcasts on environmental and women's rights to honor Earth Day and Mother's Day. With **very few learning opportunities available for youth**, these broadcasts allow the entire community to continue engaging in literacy programming throughout the pandemic. [Listen to radio Story Hour here!](#)

Since July, invitations for **weekly opportunities to check out library books, safely and socially distanced**, have been announced during storybook broadcasts. In a community where **most homes do not have a single book**, and **more than three quarters of adults never completed elementary school**, book lending enables Chajul's youth to continue reading despite being out of school.

To keep our middle and high school scholars engaged in reading, our librarians have also started **virtual book clubs over WhatsApp** for various levels of readers!



***“Radio Story Hours have helped with my little sister’s learning, especially because it is in both Spanish and Ixil and she can learn both languages at once. When she doesn’t understand what a word means in Spanish, she can wait for the Ixil version.”***

*– Teresa, Youth Development Program Alumna*

## Workshops

To continue learning about critical, timely topics, Youth Development Program scholars have joined **3 online workshops**:

1. **Financial planning**, including information on budgeting, managing personal finances, and analyzing the economic impact of COVID-19 at local and international levels
2. **Gender equality**, focusing on women's rights, girls' access to education, and local resources for women experiencing violence in Chajul
3. **Persevering in the face of adversity**, led by the local health clinic's psychologist.



***“I really liked the workshop on perseverance in the face of adversity. I learned the keys to being a successful person and how not to let myself get defeated by the current reality.”***

– Marlena, 12<sup>th</sup> grade scholar

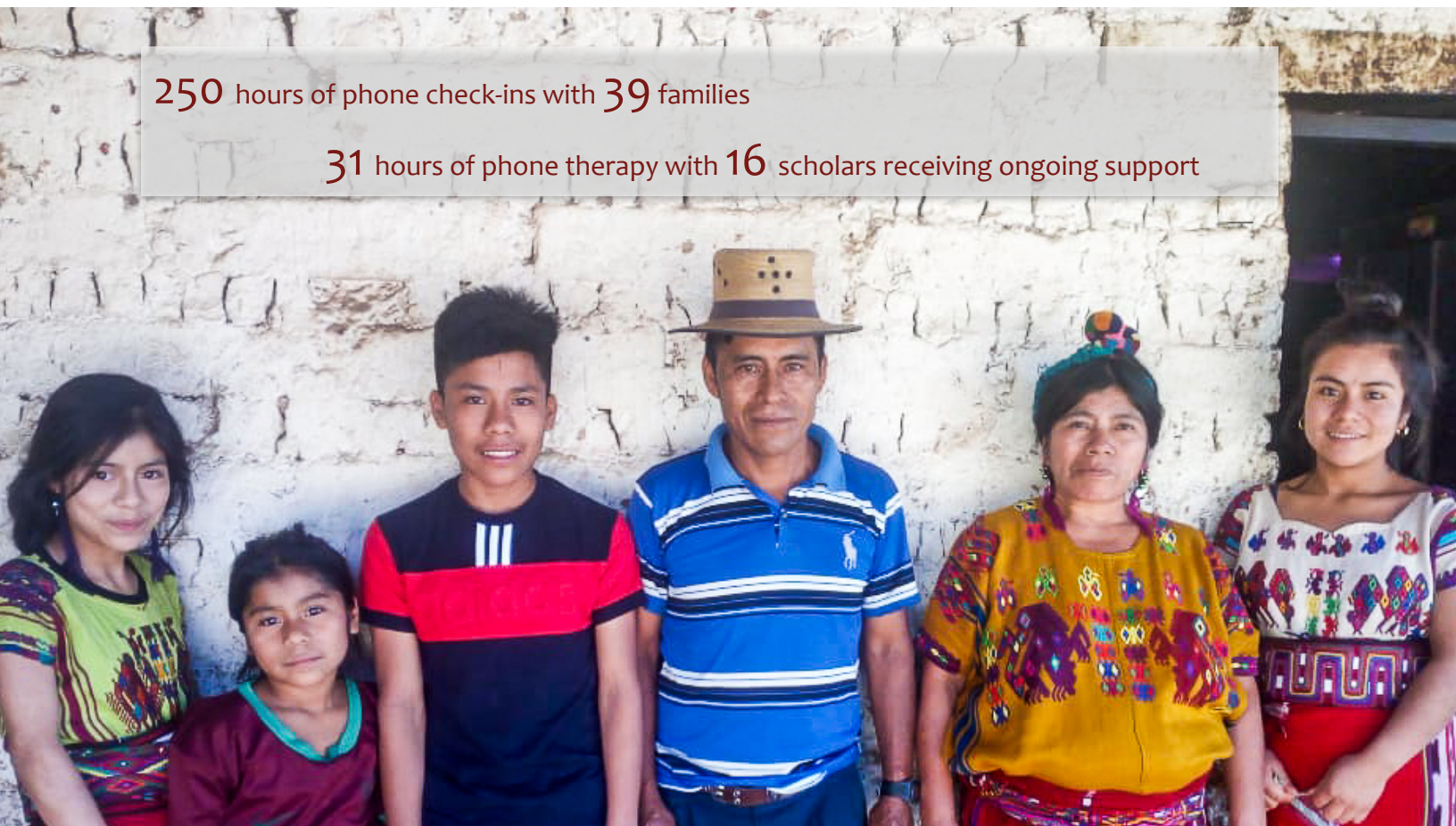
## Social-Emotional Support & Check-Ins

Our psychologist has checked in with each scholar in our Youth Development Program and provided **individual phone therapy** to those in need of further support.

Our team has also **called all families weekly to discuss their mental and physical health, find out how scholars are doing, and inquire about any specific needs and concerns**. During check-in calls, our team also shares any new updates on COVID-19 or new restrictions in place in Guatemala. These services have been crucial to our **Ixil-speaking families, as many do not understand enough Spanish** to understand the presidential broadcasts or news.

**250** hours of phone check-ins with **39** families

**31** hours of phone therapy with **16** scholars receiving ongoing support



## Ixil-Language Health & Safety Videos

The majority of Chajul's population are monolingual Ixil speakers with limited access to information about COVID-19 and crucial prevention methods. In rural indigenous communities, illiteracy rates are high, and national or international news is often unavailable in one's own language.

Responding to this reality, we collaborated with the MAIA Impact School and the Maya Health Alliance to create videos on prevention strategies. Our video series, [Recommendations in the Maya Ixil Language to Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus](#), includes advice on hand-washing, social distancing, disinfecting food, and shopping at local markets. These videos have been shared on local television, social media, and broadcasted on local radio in order to reach the entire Ixil Region and Ixil migrant workers in other parts of Guatemala. We are in the process of making additional videos on recognizing COVID-19 symptoms, quarantining effectively, and using the prevention measures when going to the market or using public transport.



*“The Ixil videos are a huge help for our entire community because it brings people information in the language that they understand best. On the news, the president only speaks in Spanish, but people don't really grasp the information; it's better when it's in Ixil. I hope that Limitless Horizons Ixil continues to make videos to motivate people to take steps to prevent the virus.”* – Miranda, Youth Development Program alumna



10th grade scholar Osman and his dad Antonio pick up their monthly food basket.



Librarians Olga and David record a storybook for the local radio.

[Save the Children reports](#) that **9.7 million children worldwide might never return to school after COVID-19**. This is a time of immense challenge for young learners across the globe, which is why it is all the more **vital to provide the world's most vulnerable youth with distance-learning opportunities**.

Thank you for supporting Limitless Horizons Ixil's COVID-19 response work. Together we can ensure that the community of Chajul can access vital services throughout and beyond the pandemic.



**Stay connected!**

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