



LIMITLESS

HORIZONS IXIL

Transforming a community through education



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

Dear friends,

I am delighted to share some of Limitless Horizons Ixil's many remarkable achievements of 2023. **Colegio Horizontes proudly welcomed our second class**, expanding the student body to 49 7th and 8th graders. Witnessing the academic and critical thinking strides that these students have already made has been truly inspiring, and quite frankly, far beyond our already high expectations. Each one of their stories reaffirms our work's profound impact on the lives of students like Roselia, whose journey is beautifully portrayed in [our new video](#) released in November. Our students' significant progress is a testament to the dedication of our educators and mentors and the transformative power of the girl-focused holistic education we offer.



After successfully opening our middle school in 2022, **2023 was a pivotal year for refinement, strategic planning, and expanding our education team.** We hired four new teachers and one new mentor, and continued to invest heavily in teacher training and team building. We expanded our prep class curriculum for students entering middle school and began laying the groundwork for our high school, responding to the clear demand for advanced education in Chajul. This year, to lay the foundation for our next phase of growth with our first class of high schoolers due to start in January 2025, we kicked off our efforts to obtain Ministry of Education approvals, establish partnerships, and begin developing comprehensive curricula.

Beyond *Colegio Horizontes*, **our Saber Sin Límites (Limitless Knowledge) Community Library experienced its most successful year since the pandemic.** We welcomed over 500 children and youth who our charismatic librarians worked with in reading, literacy and STEM classes, and cultural activities, fostering a love for learning outside the classroom.

Chajul continues to see rising demand for skilled professionals across sectors such as government, medicine, banking, and law, and our Emerging Leaders Program is supporting our graduates to be ready for and apply to these jobs. We're proud to report that **our graduates are increasingly top candidates for these professional positions**, a testament to the quality of their education and the vital role Limitless Horizons Ixil plays in preparing desperately needed, well-prepared community professionals as well as dissuading migration to the US by offering local opportunities.

As we look to the future, although there is much work ahead with the high school build and expansion, we are filled with inspiration by our students' progress, their unquenchable thirst for learning, and the emboldened community change makers they are already turning into. **The future looks bright!**

The whole Limitless Horizons Ixil team and I are so grateful for your support, which has been instrumental in our achievements thus far. I know you'll enjoy some of the highlights featured in this report—especially Linncy's story (page 7) and the impact our programming has had in the lives of our emerging leaders (page 12). **Thank you again, and we are thrilled to continue on this journey of community growth and empowerment together.**

With deep appreciation,

Katie Morrow

Katie Morrow

Founder & Executive Director

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

Colegio Horizontes

Launched in 2022, the *Colegio Horizontes* middle school brings Maya Ixil girls and a small group of boy allies an empowering, high-quality, and holistic full-day education. The school also provides psychosocial support through our mentorship program and combats malnutrition by serving two healthy meals a day.



Chajul has one of the worst middle school graduation rates in the country: only 11% of youth graduate from middle school, in stark contrast to the national average of 33% and the state of El Quiché's average of 19%.

Half of Chajul's population over age 15 cannot read. Most middle schoolers in Chajul read at a second grade level, do not touch a book until they start school, and do not have access to academic support outside their four-hour school day.



Community Library

Chajul's first and only public library inspires lifelong learning and literacy with 10,000+ books; math, science, and English classes; homework help; computers; radio story hour for the whole community; school vacation programming; and more.

Emerging Leaders

Our team provides professional development workshops, career mentorship, work experience fellowships, and some college scholarships for youth who have participated in our programming, developing a pipeline of young professionals to grow the local economy.



In Chajul, less than 6% of adults are formally employed and less than 1% of youth graduate from college.



COLEGIO HORIZONTES

In Chajul, where only 11% of students graduate from middle school, the 49 students in 7th and 8th grades at *Colegio Horizontes* are making huge strides to beat these odds:



99%

attended daily



90%

feel they have agency over their futures



96%

passed their final exams

“

Only through education can we make a positive impact and transform the lives of our students, their families, and their community.

- Odilia Cedillo, *Colegio Horizontes* Director





49 students, 2/3 girls, all indigenous

In addition to a full day of high-quality classes, **students receive two nutritious meals each school day—over 400 meals per student in 2023!** These meals are vital to our students' classroom success, particularly because of the rampant food insecurity that disproportionately impacts rural indigenous communities like Chajul where **child malnutrition rates reach 70–80%**.



Students have access to highly trained teachers, engaging materials, and two meals a day



As our school continues to grow, we hired four new teachers in 2023. Because most Guatemalan teachers learn to teach in a rote memorization style, ***Colegio Horizontes* teachers participate in six months of intensive training before they begin teaching to “unlearn” this methodology. *Colegio Horizontes* puts students at the center of their learning to foster critical thinking skills and interactively reinforce academic concepts.**

We also provided ongoing support for our entire teaching staff throughout the year and **weekly professional development sessions** addressing topics such as student engagement, problem-based learning, and classroom management.



ABRIENDO HORIZONTES

With 21 sessions from August to December, our *Abriendo Horizontes* (Expanding Horizons) prep program academically prepared rising 7th graders and acclimated them to the school culture and eight-hour days at *Colegio Horizontes*, a huge shift for students who have only ever experienced the traditional Guatemalan four-hour school day. Implementing learnings from 2022, **we refined the *Abriendo Horizontes* curriculum in 2023**, adapting it to incoming students’ needs and learning levels to provide them with the necessary tools and skills to be successful in 7th grade. Additionally, **we clarified our *Colegio Horizontes* requirements** to streamline the student recruitment process and ensure student and family commitment and success.



26
rising 7th graders

100%
Maya Ixil

17
female students

42 hours
of prep classes



MENTORSHIP

At the core of *Colegio Horizontes* is student and family accompaniment through mentorship. Our mentorship team works tirelessly to provide the social and emotional support our students need to succeed in their education and prepare for their futures.

In 2023, students had two mentorship classes per week and our three mentors visited each student’s home at least four times per year. During home visits, mentors led activities with families and had conversations with parents about how their children were doing both at school and at home.

Parents also attended four parent workshops at *Colegio Horizontes* in 2023. Topics covered included healthy communication, the family’s role in their children’s education, healthy nutrition and hygiene habits, gender roles, and sexual and reproductive health. **Parents are remarkably engaged in these sessions, with an average attendance of 98%.**

Through our mentorship support in 2023, **90% of students showed social-emotional growth, demonstrating attitudes of resilience and agency over their futures.**

STUDENT

SPOTLIGHT

**Mentorship set Linncy up
to shine both personally
and academically**

As a child, Linncy was always an excellent, highly motivated student but when she started middle school her feelings started to get in the way of her school work. As she transitioned into her teen years and began to feel the strong emotions that come with adolescence, combined with challenges at home, everything just felt harder than normal, even at school.

Why was she struggling so much and what could she do to work through this? Linncy and her *Colegio Horizontes* mentor Marina worked together to find the answer to this question and the solution.

During 2023, Linncy was experiencing substantial hardships at home—her father struggled with alcoholism and her mother was bedridden from illness for nearly half the year. As a result, Linncy had to take on significant household responsibilities, far beyond her 13 years of age, and she felt overwhelmed. During the course of her mother’s illness, when not at school, Linncy cared for her two younger brothers, helped them with their homework, and cooked and cleaned their one-room home, made of wood panels and a packed-dirt floor.

In the small town of Chajul where therapy is practically unheard of and often stigmatized, all *Colegio Horizontes* students and their families are assigned a mentor who provides social-emotional support for each student throughout their school years.

At the start of 7th grade, Linncy began meeting with her mentor Marina who immediately noticed that

Linncy was having difficulties with group work as she was easily frustrated and would get overwhelmed when things didn’t turn out how she wanted. To ensure that these issues wouldn’t negatively impact Linncy’s grades, Marina immediately started working to identify the root of the problem as part of their regularly scheduled one-on-one mentorship sessions and home mentorship sessions with Linncy and her parents. Marina soon realized that everything Linncy was going through at home was affecting her at school, so she created a plan to give Linncy the necessary tools to address it all head-on.

“***Despite all the hardships Linncy experienced at home throughout the year, her grades never faltered ... she truly exemplifies resilience.***

- Marina Caba Xinic, Mentor



Linncy in science class

Because of *Colegio Horizontes'* holistic approach to education, Linncy was not reprimanded in class, but was instead met with support and understanding from trained teachers and a mentorship team who worked together to ensure she was able to manage her stress and frustration in constructive ways. This approach ensured that *Colegio Horizontes* remained a safe space for Linncy to learn and thrive.

During Marina's regular sessions with Linncy and her family, she worked with them to improve their communication skills, which she immediately saw reflected in Linncy's interactions with her classmates and teachers at school.



Linncy with mentor Marina

Home mentorship session with Linncy and her parents

Colegio Horizontes' community-level support plays a critical role in creating a stable foundation for learning by equipping students with coping strategies, fostering resilience, and improving their overall well-being, enabling them to focus better on their studies.

By the end of the year, Linncy's attitude and outlook had significantly changed, she only needed to meet with her mentor monthly instead of weekly, and she felt that she was starting to understand her emotions: "Compared to my other schools, at *Colegio Horizontes* I am also learning about myself: what I'm good at, and how to manage my thoughts and emotions so I can concentrate on my studies." We're so proud to have supported Linncy to make these strides and excited to see her continued growth at *Colegio Horizontes*.





In 2023, our [award-winning library](#) surpassed 500 members for the first time and boasted astounding retention, with twice as many library cards renewed compared to 2022. 90% of library users reported being extremely satisfied with the library and its programming, which was also reflected in the growth of our reading club, increasing by 50% from 60 members in 2022 to 90 in 2023.

514

Library members,
90% of whom are
extremely satisfied with
library programming

“

Passing our goal of 500 members for the first time is proof that we are making a greater impact on families and in the community.

- David Imul, Community Library Director

2x

as many library
card renewals
than 2022

For the first time this year, the Limitless Knowledge Community Library teamed up with two local public elementary schools to provide English classes with the library’s English teacher and emerging leader Baltazar, who studied English on a scholarship in the U.S. This partnership combined with the library’s expanded social media presence and ongoing word of mouth are all factors our Community Library Director David attributes to the library’s increased membership.



90 sessions

of reading club, a 50% increase in the number of sessions over 2022, plus a 100% increase in attendance.

41 hours

of radio programming, a 37% increase over 2022.

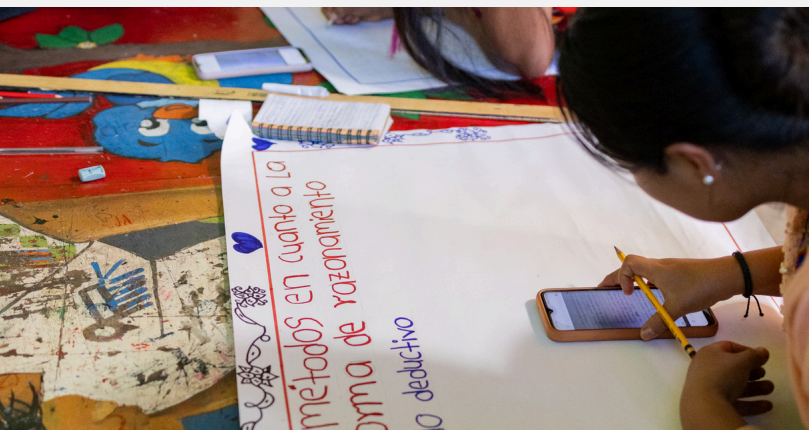


121 hours

of math, science, English, and language arts classes.

74 hours

of story hour for children without access to books at home or school.



346 hours

of homework help for students who otherwise have nowhere to do homework and no access to academic support outside the classroom.

EMERGING

LEADERS



Through 2023 we have had

71
female



100



29
male

high school graduates

While our alumni are well positioned for local professional jobs and are the most prepared to succeed in college among Chajul's high school graduates, they still need extra support in their transitions when they enter higher education or the workforce.

Creating a sense of community among emerging leaders is an important way we build their professional confidence through peer-to-peer motivation. In 2023, we held three meetings with our emerging leaders so they could build relationships with each other, hear about their peers' experiences applying for jobs or college scholarships, share their challenges, and inspire one another.

In 2023, we provided three graduates with job experience in our office and library through our competitive 14-month fellowship program. Not only did they receive critical hands-on work experience that will make them highly sought after in the job market, but we also enhanced their learning and experience by providing 22 hours of professional development to build resilience and confidence, improve communication skills, and encourage civic engagement.

Additionally, we provided competitive college scholarships to six emerging leaders and four Limitless Horizons Ixil staff members, and helped two emerging leaders apply for scholarships to attend EARTH University in Costa Rica.

Capacity-building workshop



EMERGING LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Maria Bop

Distance from the university, lack of electricity in her community, and motherhood couldn't stand in the way of emerging leader Maria Bop who earned her college degree in 2023 from San Carlos University in Nebaj in the field of intercultural bilingual preschool education.

Her next goal? To make an impact on the local educational landscape! Maria is currently teaching preschool children in a remote village near Chajul while continuing her university studies focusing on pedagogy and educational administration.



Higher Education



..... **42%**

of emerging leaders attended college

... a feat that less than 1% of Chajul's population has achieved.



..... **90%**

of emerging leaders with at least one semester of college education are employed in the formal economy

... compared to just 5.6% of households in Chajul with a member formally employed.

Employment & Careers



..... **58%**

of emerging leaders are working, studying, or both

... while the other 42% do informal work such as tending to their crops or traditional backstrap weaving.



..... **36%**

of emerging leaders have a formal job with a professional salary

... and most of these receive benefits like two annual bonuses, a retirement plan, and access to privatized health care.

Family & Parenthood



..... **78%**

of female emerging leaders waited to get married and have kids until they were at least 23 years old*

... compared to just 16% of their mothers who waited until that age.

**Nearly all of our emerging leaders say they are implementing family planning and discussing with their partners how many children they intend to have.*

EMERGING LEADERS

TRAILBLAZING IN THE WORKFORCE

Karina Anay Asicona

Karina graduated from high school in 2014 and earned a college degree in secondary education with a scholarship from Limitless Horizons Ixil. While in college, she landed her first professional job as a secretary for a local cooperative bank, where she was then promoted to the accounting team. Now, she is going back to college with a scholarship from her employer, pursuing a degree in auditing.

Mati Batz Teliz

Mati graduated from high school in 2017 and became one of the first women from Chajul to earn a college degree in science. Now, Mati is a lab technician at a local community hospital, dedicated to maintaining her community healthy by providing essential diagnostic tests for doctors. Mati is setting a strong example that women can work toward STEM positions and that these professional roles are no longer reserved only for men.

Elicia Sanchez Asicona

Elicia graduated high school in 2011 and became one of the first women from Chajul to earn a university degree in math and physics. She is now a teacher at a local public middle school, providing her students with exciting STEM lessons and setting an example for many enthusiastic girls who haven't always been encouraged to actively participate in these subjects.

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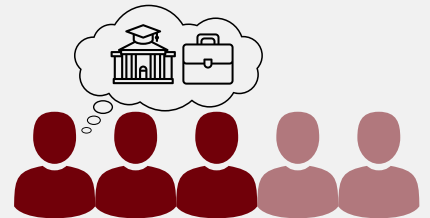
The Emerging Leaders Program is supporting young women in Chajul to break gender barriers in their community and secure professional positions where women were historically underrepresented.

- Zuliana López, Limitless Horizons Ixil Assistant Director



5 of 5 Youth Development Program scholars in their final year of high school graduated.

3 of 5 graduates already had plans in place to attend university and/or begin formal jobs in the new year.



While we are phasing out our Youth Development Program (YDP) as we integrate our holistic support model into *Colegio Horizontes*, we were proud to provide scholarships, supplies, and wraparound support to the five students who reached their high school graduation in 2023.

2024 will be the program's final year as we support our two remaining students to finish their high school studies. We are thrilled to have seen our scholars thrive on their way to completing their high school educations.

“
The Youth Development Program prepared us for a better life, both personally and academically, so we can succeed as professionals.

- Adelaida Laynez, 2023 Youth Development Program Graduate



Rendering of the new

high school building

HIGH SCHOOL EXPANSION

In a region where just 4% of the population graduates from high school, the success of the first two years of *Colegio Horizontes* has reinforced our passion and commitment to launching a full-day, girl-centered high school that will serve up to 50 high schoolers each year. **2023 was a critical year for high school planning and leveling the land for construction.** In addition, we kicked off our high school expansion campaign and fundraised over half of our total project goal!

For this build, we renewed successful partnerships we began when launching *Colegio Horizontes*' middle school. Building Goodness Foundation is expertly overseeing construction and Design Develop LLC generously donated their time to create the high school's architectural designs and building plans. After approval of the designs and the initial site survey, we began grading and preparing the land in November. Construction begins in January 2024.

Additionally, with funding from the Honnold Foundation, we installed 12 more solar panels (for a total of 28). Our solar panel system will now provide enough energy for the full middle and high school.

***Colegio Horizontes*' high school will include the Ixil region's first high school science lab, new classrooms, and mentorship and community spaces.** This new high school will prepare students to reach their highest potential and use their voice and agency to be civic leaders and advocates for change through an academic environment that is empowering, physically and emotionally safe, and specifically designed for girls.



High school

building site



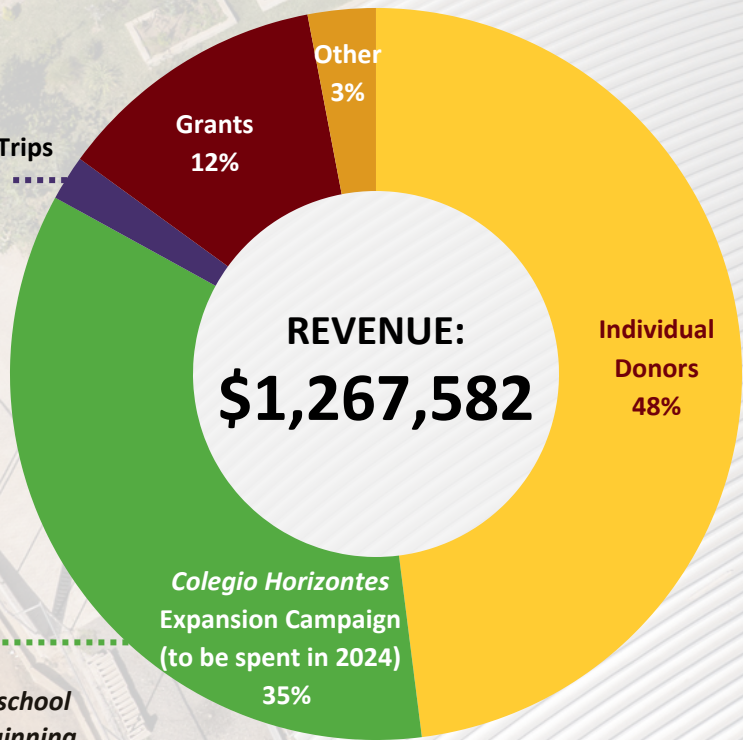
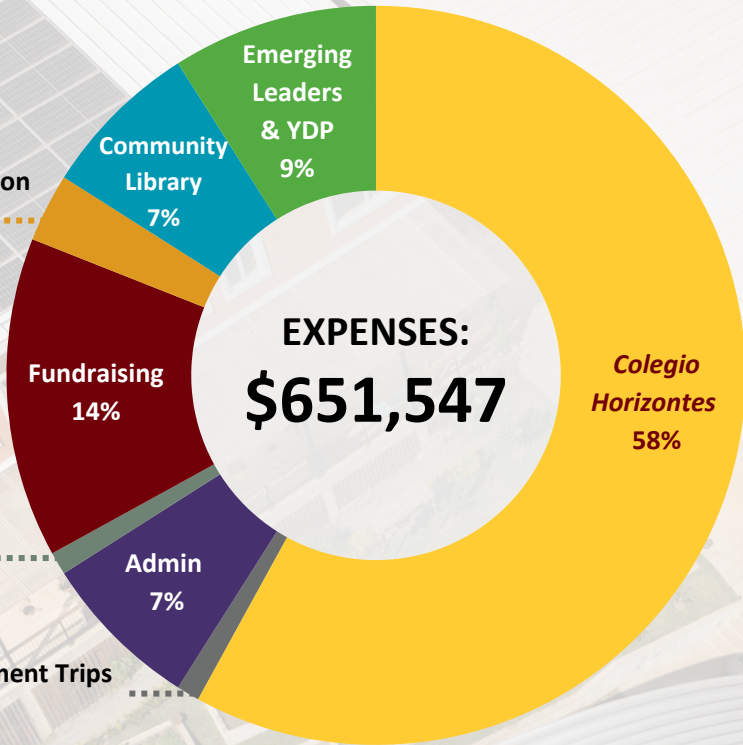
Grading the land



Installing

solar panels

2023 FINANCIALS



Raised for high school construction beginning January 2024

Limitless Horizons Ixil is a U.S.–registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit with tax ID #26-4296182. Our growing organization prides itself on financial transparency and accountability to our donors.



THANK

YOU

... to the **576 individuals and foundations** around the world who made contributions to support our work.

... to the **130 recurring donors** who gave a consistent monthly or annual gift.

... to the **180 new donors** who joined our diverse and generous community of supporters.

... to the **many volunteers, teachers, coaches, photographers, board members, and other supporters** who gave their time and talents to our mission.





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Visit www.limitlesshorizonsixil.org
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