



OCIMA

Overseas and Continental Independent Mercy Association

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November 2022

Dear Friends of O.C.I.M.A.,

A heartfelt greeting to you all! And thank you for improving the lives of so many people in Ecuador and Guatemala through your generous donations to OCIMA.

We have many ongoing initiatives, which have all been impacted in some way by the pandemic and/or severe weather events. We have stayed the course and are now starting to see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. Summarized below are a few highlights of how your 2021 donations were utilized and what we hope to achieve in 2023 with your help.

In Ecuador: Recovery Efforts and Medical Care

On January 30, heavy rains caused the Quindigua River to overflow, resulting in enormous damage for 535 peasant and indigenous families (more than 2,500 people) of Guasaganda and Pucayacu (Canton la Maná, Province of Cotopaxi).

OCIMA joined a number of organizations to support recovery efforts, which included humanitarian aid (delivery of food, medicine and water to the most affected families), ongoing efforts to rebuild eight (8) suspension bridges and repair roads so people can travel to sell their products, the reconstruction of two aqueducts, and the continued presence of medical brigades in the most remote communities.

Separately, about 25% of the funds we sent to Ecuador were used to fund critical medical care for the poor in Southern Quito.

In Santa Rosa, Guatemala: Girls' Residence and Scholarships

OCIMA was responsible for the maintenance of the *Santa Catalina de Siena* residence (dormitory) and provided for the tuition, room and board, clothing, school supplies, and healthcare for the 17 girls who resided there during the 2022 school year.



*Sister Silvia & 3 Students
Dorms in the Background*

In addition, OCIMA supported the implementation of a new after-school program with classes in dance, music (vocalization and playing instruments), and the culinary arts. The goal of this program is to encourage the girls to express themselves in a healthy way, but also to help them find new interests and talents.

The impact of the pandemic is still felt, and OCIMA continues to help with special situations. For example, a single father requested daycare assistance for his three (3) boys so that he could work to put food on the table without having to worry about his children.

In Santa Elena, Petén, Guatemala: Clinic and Orphanage

The Clinic and Orphanage (*Casa Hogar*) are examples of “staying the course”. Although there is nothing new to report at these locations, they continue to operate and provide services in the area. For the poor, the Clinic is the only medical facility

within a few hours of their homes where they can receive affordable treatment – *gratis*, if necessary. The Clinic continues to serve 450 to 500 people each week. OCIMA continues to subsidize the cost of medicines and medical supplies. For both the Clinic and the Orphanage, OCIMA supports day-to-day operations. As a follow-up to our 2021 letter, the Sisters at the Orphanage had proposed a new program to improve the academic performance for students who were having difficulties with virtual learning; this project has been put on hold.



In San Benito, Petén, Guatemala: Daycare, Primary School, Adult Education

In our 2021 letter, we reported that the future of the facility in San Benito was unclear due to the impact of the pandemic on the local economy. We are pleased to note that the daycare center, primary school and sewing classes have all resumed. However, people are still not able to afford the daycare charges and/or tuition. As a result, the income from these activities is not sufficient for the facility to return to self-sustainability. In addition, building repairs are still required. We continue to monitor the situation.

In Morales, Izabal, Guatemala: Nutritional Center

As we have explained in prior newsletters, OCIMA provides “no strings attached” funding for the Center, which not only supports the purchase of food, medicines, Christmas gifts, the cost of lab tests and special medical needs for the children in the nutritional program, but it also allows the Center to help children in special situations who do not fit the criteria for assistance from other charitable organizations (e.g., a child who experiences a violent sexual assault, needs special medical attention, but is too old to receive assistance through another organization).



During 2022, the Nutritional Center monitored the nutritional health of 93 children between the ages of 0 and five years in Morales and six (6) of the surrounding villages. This is about 2/3 of the children they normally monitor, but flooding in the area, together with the effects of the pandemic, hinder the Sisters’ ability to provide personal attention and follow-up, which ultimately limited the number of children in the program. The Center continued to provide adult education on topics, such as personal hygiene, food care and preparation, how to take care of water,

eating healthy, and preventing respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases. Without this education, there is no hope of long-term change. This education and preparation affects the quality-of-care parents are able to provide to their children at the critical early stages of development.

As noted above, flooding in Morales and the surrounding villages has been an issue this year. The region’s soil is saturated from heavy rains, and each time it rains, the rivers overflow – causing a huge amount of damage. A portion of your donations was used to purchase extra food and supplies for 50 families who were badly impacted by the flooding. Families received care bags with sugar, coffee, beans, rice, pasta, soups, oats, salt, oil, flour, soap, detergent, toilet paper and chocolate.



Looking Forward into 2023

In 2023, OCIMA will continue to support all initiatives as described above, but we are eager to share a special request from the Nutritional Center. Be aware that we have incomplete information, but have decided to share this with you due to the urgency of the request.

This past June, the Sisters petitioned the city of Morales to grant them a piece of property to build a new facility(ies) to include: (1) convent building (they currently live on the second floor of the Nutritional Center); (2) a more adequate space for the nutritional center; and (3) most notably, a home for girls who are suffering from abandonment, sexual, physical or psychological abuse, or any type of violence. ***The city has since granted this***

request, but there is a deadline to use the land by the end of 2023.

This dream was inspired when a baby girl named Camila arrived at the Center in March of 2019. Four months old, six pounds and 19.5 inches long, she presented with severe malnutrition, dehydration, very serious skin problems, signs of abandonment and abuse, a girl who did not react to anything and without the strength to emit a sound. The Sisters were eventually awarded custody of Camila because there is no facility in the area to help such children.

CAMILA



*At 4 months, 6 lbs., 19.5 inches
March 2019*



Camila currently lives at the Nutritional Center, where she receives healthy meals, the medicines she needs, and above all, unconditional love from the Sisters. Despite all obstacles, Camila just celebrated her fourth birthday, she is completely healthy, full of hopes and with a joy that infects everyone. Wouldn't it be a blessing if more children could enjoy this level of care?!

The Sisters have not provided a business plan for this undertaking. And we have many questions. But if viable, it would be a sin to squander this opportunity. Please consider how you might help make this dream a reality. We will share information as it becomes available.

IN CLOSING

Maintaining the current level of support to each of our partners in Guatemala and Ecuador is challenging. But you have helped us meet this challenge each and every year. Please help us meet the expanding challenges we face for 2023. There are many good charities out there. Thank you for supporting OCIMA!

Larry Gatt
OCIMA Board of Directors &
& President

Marie C. Curreri
OCIMA Board of Directors &
Treasurer

Susan M. Hug
OCIMA Board of Directors

FINANCIAL REPORT — 2021

FUNDS AVAILABLE:

Donations:	\$ 154,548
• Received due to St. Irenaeus Lenten Project: \$39,455	
• Other donations: \$115,093	
2021 Endowment Fund Distribution:	8,459
Carryover from 2020:	72
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE:	<u><u>\$ 163,079</u></u>

PROJECT DISBURSEMENTS:

1. GSFEP (Ecuador)	\$ 20,000
2. School in Chapas, Santa Rosa	43,000
3. Nutritional Center in Morales	35,000
4. Clinic and Orphanage Santa Elena	50,000
5. Day Care Center in San Benito	14,000
TOTAL PROJECT DISBURSEMENTS:	<u><u>\$ 162,000</u></u>

EXPENSES:

1. P.O. box, postage & printing, bank & license fees	<u>\$ 1,050</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES:	<u>\$ 1,050¹</u>

TOTAL EXPENSES & DISBURSEMENTS: \$ 163,050

CARRYFORWARD TO 2022: \$ 29

¹ Total expenses were 0.64% of total funds available for 2021. In 2020, total expenses were 0.72% of total funds available.