



PRIMEROS PASOS Annual Report 2022





OUR MISSION

To improve the quality of life of rural communities in the Palajunoj Valley in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala through the implementation of integrated health education projects, and by offering access to medical, dental, and nutritional services with highly qualified professionals.

ABOUT PRIMEROS PASOS

Primeros Pasos is a non-profit organization founded in 2002 by Dr. Brent Savoie. The organization is currently managed by 8 Guatemalan women in charge of providing medical, dental, and nutritional health care through comprehensive programs developed and implemented to provide a better quality of life to the 10 rural communities of the Palajunoj Valley in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

Primeros Pasos originally began as a children's clinic with the mission to serve the students of the 10 primary schools in the Valley. However, the general population in the area remained without a good source of medical care. In 2005, with more funding and volunteers, Primeros Pasos began seeing patients at its facility, including out-of-school children and adults. On average, Primeros Pasos serves more than 4,500 patients a year, providing reliable and affordable medical, dental and nutritional services.

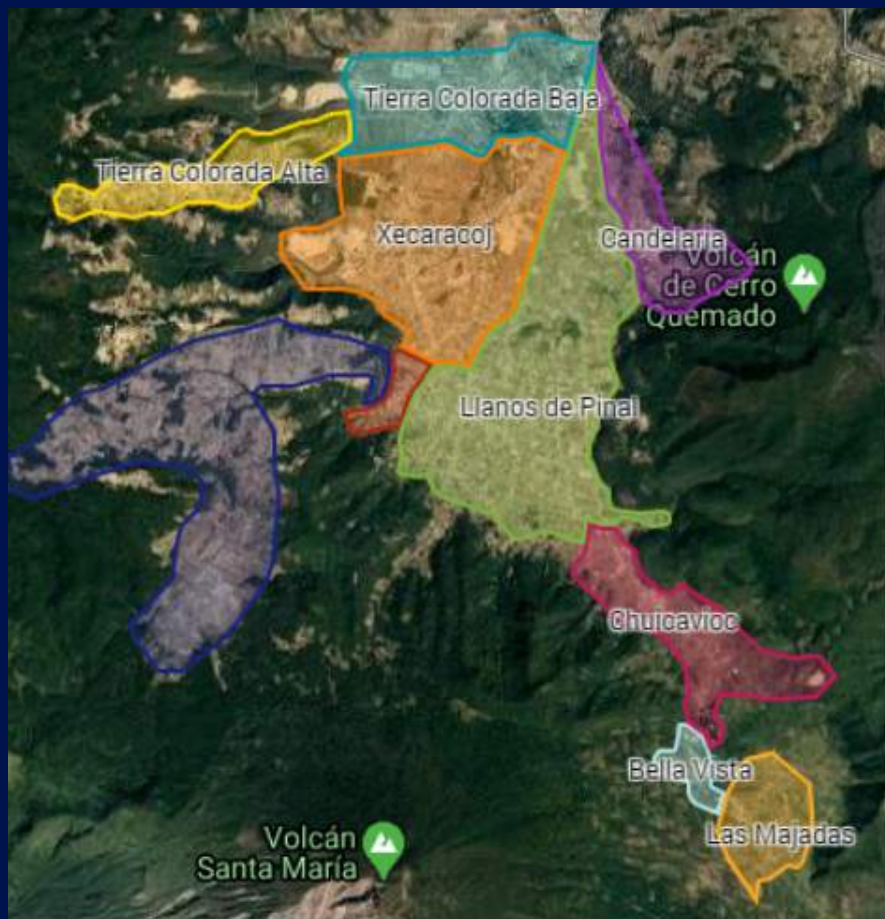


EL VALLE PALAJUNOJ

The Palajunoj Valley is inhabited by 25,000 people who consider themselves indigenous. It is one of the areas identified as having the highest levels of poverty and extreme poverty in the Quetzaltenango department. 95% of the inhabitants of the Palajunoj Valley are indigenous Mayan speakers of K'iche' and Mam. In some areas of the Valley, there are no good roads, no electricity, and access to potable water is very scarce. The communities also face many issues with the exploitation of natural resources by mining companies that extract materials from the mountains surrounding the Valley. Despite being 10 minutes from the Historic Center of Xela, the rural communities of the Palajunoj Valley remain without access to basic services and live in close vicinity of the municipal dump.

The effects of living in close proximity to the dump are evident in the Chuicaracoj community, which has been living on the land that serves as the municipal dump for the last 25 years. According to data from the Environmental Services office of the municipality, 240 tons of garbage are collected daily by the sanitation service in the different urban areas of the municipality. For more than a decade, the garbage was left at the site untreated, or occasionally set on fire, which released many toxic chemicals into the air.

The people of Chuicaracoj are constantly advocating to authorities to find another place to use as a garbage dump, because the bad odor and unhealthy environmental conditions cause gastrointestinal and respiratory illnesses to those living in the surrounding area.



DEAR FAMILY:

I am pleased to inform you the year 2022 has been a time of positive changes for the institution, after two years of dealing with very strong challenges as a result of the pandemic that affected the whole world, we can finally find more peace and continue to be stronger to take care of the health of the communities of the Palajunoj Valley.

Our house was overjoyed with the visit of 23 volunteers; they were able to learn about health in our communities. They were able to transmit their love, their service and happiness to the families through their learning experience; they strengthened the hope in all the people of our communities.

The support, dedication and attention of CUNOC's external physicians also allowed us to meet the objectives of each project and provide health services to the patients who visited the clinic and to those who received care in our mobile clinics and school clinics.

Next, I have the honor and joy to present to all of you the results that were achieved with the invaluable effort of each project director and different areas of the institution, allowing us to provide quality care full of love to each patient and beneficiary of our projects for another year.

None of this would have been possible without the support of our volunteers, former volunteers, allies, members of our board of directors, but above all thanks to the trust of our beloved users.

I can only thank infinitely all the people who once again this year joined the noble cause of Primeros Pasos.



Licda. Scarlet Samayoa
General Director



2022 STATISTICS

3,225 patients served.

392 tooth extractions.

996 dental exams provided.

31 women received Reproductive Health services.

33 PAP smears performed, all with normal results.

83 patients received wart treatment, of which 95% showed significant recovery.

04 mobile clinics in which 592 patients attended and received medication free of charge.

05 communities received direct and integral attention through our Community Outreach program.

“This year's experience (2022) has been good, because sometimes as moms we need to learn many things, there are new things we learned and there are things we already knew but we have been improving. I thank Primeros Pasos for giving us this support, for me it has been good, some of the talks we already know but we don't put everything into practice, but now with this year of workshops I understand new and different things that have made me better.”

*Angelica Salcalxot
Xepache Community*

Angelica joined the Community Outreach project in 2022 with her daughter Ashly, who at the time was four months old and had a diagnosis of severe growth delays and low weight-for-age. At the end of the project, Ashly was one year and one month old with a healthy weight-for-age and moderate growth delays. Ashly will continue to receive treatment through the project in 2023 until she achieves a healthy nutritional status.





PROJECTS

DEVELOPMENT AND
RESULTS

During 2022, Primeros Pasos continued to increase its efforts to provide accessible health and education services to the communities of the Palajunoj Valley of Quetzaltenango.

We remained committed to our mission of improving the quality of life in rural communities through low-cost preventative health care and health education. We are pleased to announce that in 2022, Primeros Pasos continued its success in delivering medical, dental and nutritional programs at our clinic, which remains the primary source of affordable and quality health care in the Valley.

The Community Outreach Program continued to make progress in reducing malnutrition and improving healthcare outcomes for Valley beneficiaries through preventative health education on hygiene, nutrition, and self-esteem, among other themes.

Our organization's involvement in improving the nutritional status of those in the Valley reflects our desire to improve health outcomes in a sustainable manner. We aim to improve the nutritional habits of mothers so that they can pass this information on to future generations and better equip their children and grandchildren to reach their full potential.

Through our Service Learning Program, Primeros Pasos also serves as a health education center for Guatemalan and foreign medical students, hosting medical students from the University of San Carlos CUNOC and visiting professional students from several foreign countries. Students learn valuable lessons about providing primary care in resource-limited settings, and the mix of students creates a unique environment for educational exchange. Primeros Pasos is committed to a culture of collaboration and empowerment, ensuring that our work is based on the participation of the local schools and communities we serve, our university partners, local government agencies, and other NGOs.





MEDICAL PROJECT

During the 2022 year, 1,392 patients were treated in the clinic. Of these patients, 48.35% were women, 24.78% men, 16.24% girls, and 10.63% boys. The community that received the most services was Llanos del Pinal, followed by Xecaracoj.

The most common diagnoses during the year were diabetes mellitus in adults and upper respiratory infections (URI) in children.

Twenty-five patients received wart freezing treatments, of which 75% had a full recovery after 3 or 4 sessions. These patients also received a combination of medication, topical cream application, and follow-up consultations.

In the area of reproductive health, 301 women received medical check-ups, prenatal care, family planning education, and access to contraceptive methods. A total of 67 PAP smears were performed, 100% with normal results.

PATIENTS SERVED	301	
Prenatal Care	70	23,26%
PAP Smear	67	22,26%
Cystitis	41	13,62%
Urinary tract infection (UTI)	37	12,29%
Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)	37	12,29%
Bacterial Vaginosis	16	5,32%
Contraceptive implant removal	15	4,98%
Intrauterine Device (IUD) removal	14	4,65%
Postpartum Care	2	0,66%
Intrauterine Device (IUD) insertion	2	0,66%

Of the 37 patients who received PAP smears, 17 were free PAP smears conducted by our OB/GYN volunteer Dr. Lucia Cazzato from Italy, in November 2022.

23 beneficiaries of the Community Outreach Program received free preventive and curative care through our Medical program.

SEBACEOUS CYST CASE IN COLLABORATION WITH DR. FRANCIA.

Our medical and dental teams had another successful collaboration to support the welfare of our clients! This time, it was for a patient diagnosed with a 3 mm sebaceous cyst located on the left side of the upper lip due to severe acne. Dr. Laura performed the intervention in the dental clinic, where she had access to the most adequate equipment and tools for the procedure. Dr. Francia assisted her throughout the whole process, and finished the procedure with a 2-stitch suture. Four months later the patient returned with a slightly larger cyst, so the same intervention was performed again.



At the end of the procedure, the patient was recommended to treat her acne with a dermatologist to prevent recurring issues.



DENTAL PROJECT

During the 2022 year, 996 patients were served. Of these patients, 53% were women, 19% men, 14% girls, and 14% boys. The community that received the most services was Llanos del Pinal, followed by Xecaracoj. A total of 2,090 treatments were provided.

TREATMENTS FOR ADULTS			14596	TREATMENTS FOR CHILDREN			594
Dental Exam	711	48%	Dental Exam	285	48%		
Exodontias (Tooth Extractions)	251	17%	Exodontias (Tooth Extractions)	141	24%		
Amalgam Polishing	132	9%	Amalgam Fillings	58	10%		
Amalgam Fillings	132	9%	Amalgam Polishing	58	10%		
Resin-Based Composites	107	7%	Application of Oxide, Zinc, and Eugenol Paste	23	4%		
Application of Oxide, Zinc, and Eugenol Paste	71	5%	Resin-Based Composites	11	2%		
Tartar Removal	37	2%	Pit and Fissure Sealant	9	2%		
Wisdom Teeth Removal	33	2%	Fluoride Applications	4	1%		
Pit and Fissure Sealant	19	1%	Teeth Cleaning	4	1%		
Teeth Cleaning and Fluoride Application	3	0%	Pulpotomy	1	0%		

In spite of the difficulties that the pandemic continued to present, the patients were satisfactorily attended to.

Recurrent patients who were satisfied with the service provided, returned to consult us again. We have also incorporated new patients who, through recommendations, are familiar with our services.



Our dental team is the best in the Valley, for which the Primeros Pasos family is very proud and congratulates especially our dear Dr. Francia who in this 2022 celebrated 8 years of work with the organization.
CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU VERY MUCH

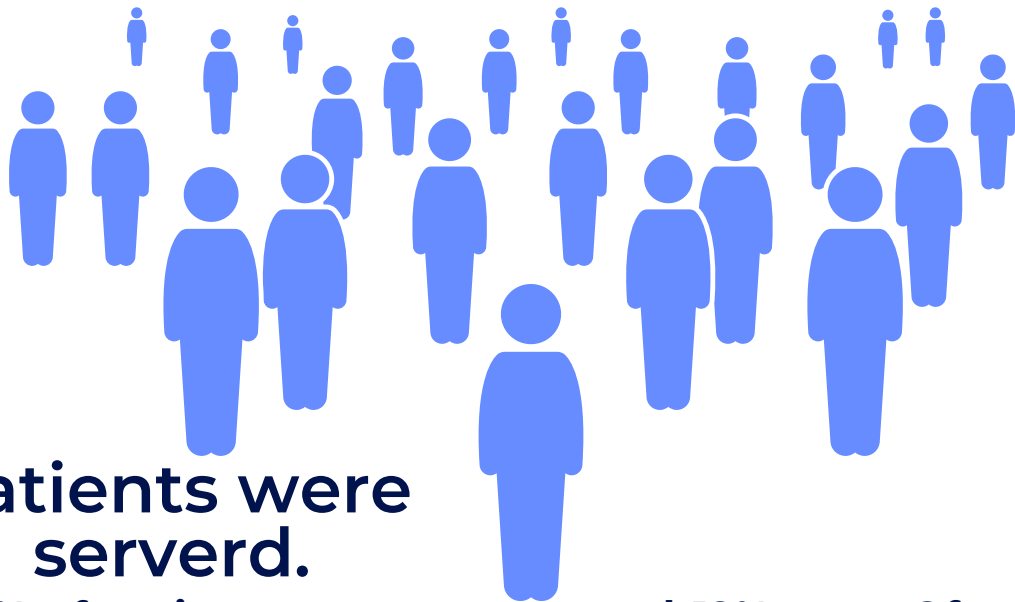


**NUTRITION
PROJECT**

During the
2022 year

161

patients were
serverd.



Of the adults served, 81% of patients were women and 19% men. Of the children served, 57% were girls and 43% boys. The community that received the most services was Llanos del Pinal, followed by Xecaracoj.

The most common diagnoses
during the year were **OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY** in adults
STUNTED GROWTH in children.

Stunting, also known as chronic malnutrition, is the condition in which children are much smaller in height than expected for their age. This condition affects children's overall development, health, and well-being. Children who experience stunting are at a higher risk for diseases and reduced productive capacity as adults.

Stunting has been a generational problem in the country and much of the adult population is of short stature. Due to this prevalence, many people consider it normal to be short, making the problem of stunting invisible. In conclusion, stunting is a real and important problem for thousands of Guatemalan children, which negatively affects both their present and future.



One of the most notorious problems within this issue is that the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance provides zinc supplements to children under 2 years of age to improve their height. However, they do not implement proper data tracking and follow-up procedures to ensure the zinc supplements are producing the desired effects.

Licda. Diana de Leon Soto
Nutritional Program Director
Primeros Pasos





COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT

The Community Outreach Project focuses on addressing the nutritional needs of residents in the following communities of the Palajunoj Valley: Las Majadas, Bella Vista, Chuicavioc, Candelaria, Llanos del Pinal, Xecaracoj, Xepache, Chuicaracoj, Tierra Colorada Alta and Tierra Colorada Baja.

In order to choose the communities that need to be prioritized each year, the following aspects are taken into account: distance, specific needs of each community, and availability of the mothers to participate in the project activities.

The targeted intervention groups are: mothers of children under 5 years of age who have either low weight for age, moderate or severe acute malnutrition without complications, or are overweight or obese; and pregnant women. To identify those who qualified to enter the program, the project director Diana de Leon Soto visited each community, and traveled house to house informing mothers about the project and its benefits, as well as taking the weight and height of children under 5 years of age and pregnant women

In 2022, the project started with 179 beneficiaries: 86 mothers, 86 children under 5 years old, and 7 pregnant women. All beneficiaries were from the communities of Llanos del Pinal, Xecaracoj, Chuicavioc, Tierra Colorada Alta, Majadas, and Xepache. The predominant nutritional status of the 7 pregnant women was obese and overweight. However, by the end of the project, all women had successful labor and deliveries, and their nutritional status was under control.

CURRENT NUTRITIONAL STATUS: WEIGHT-FOR-HEIGHT Children under 5 years old	PRE	POST
Obese	0%	0%
Overweight	0%	0%
Normal	98%	100%
Moderate acute malnutrition	1%	0%
Severe acute malnutrition	1%	0%

CURRENT NUTRITIONAL STATUS: WEIGHT-FOR-AGE Children under 5 years old	PRE	POST
Normal	56%	82%
Moderately underweight	40%	13%
Severely underweight	5%	5%

CURRENT NUTRITIONAL STATUS: HEIGHT-FOR-AGE Children under 5 years old	PRE	POST
Normal	0%	51%
Moderate growth stunting	78%	30%
Severe growth stunting	22%	19%





In 2022, Ms. Diana visited more than

150

houses in the 5 communities to identify the eligible beneficiaries.



Two times during the year, in March and October, we distributed family gardens to beneficiary mothers who have an area suitable for planting seedlings, including onions, lettuce, tomatoes, cilantro, spinach, cabbage, beets, among others. The mothers received an introductory lesson on planting, garden maintenance, and harvesting techniques. The Primeros Pasos team checked on the gardens twice a month until harvest. This year, a total of 89 gardens were planted.



One of the program benefits was that participating mothers and children received bags of non-perishable food 2 times this year, as a way to supplement their healthy diet. This year, 169 bags were delivered. Seventy five additional bags were provided as an incentive and reward for the mothers who were most engaged in the program.

Seventeen lectures were given to mothers in the five beneficiary communities on hygiene and food handling, malnutrition, its causes and consequences, personal hygiene, self-esteem and child stimulation, oral and dental hygiene, 12 essential vitamins and the cycle of domestic violence. There have been 1036 attendances by the beneficiary mothers.



Five cooking workshops were held, focused on healthy recipes utilizing available local resources, such as the food provided in the family gardens and food bags. All workshops included the written recipe, as well as a step-by-step instruction guide. The recipes included: Costa Rican ceviche, broccoli cream soup, broccoli stem salad, cauliflower puree, and pasta with a cream cheese and tomato sauce. There were 384 attendances by beneficiary mothers.





Six workshops were held, focused on healthy recipes using available resources such as family gardens and food bags. The workshops included a written recipe and a practice of the recipe. The recipes were: Costa Rican ceviche, broccoli cream and broccoli stem salad, cauliflower puree, pasta with cream cheese and tomato. There were 384 attendances of the beneficiary mothers.

MOBILE CLINICS

Two mobile clinics were held during the year targeting the most distant communities of the Palajunoj Valley.

April- This mobile clinic was able to bring these communities preventative and curative dental, medical and nutritional services, as well as free medications. This was possible thanks to the wonderful and invaluable support and donation from the Rotary Club of San Diego "Sweetwater".



August - Two mobile clinic days were held at the school in Tierra Colorada Baja, where medical and dental care were provided for all students of the school. The services provided free of charge included: preventative and curative check-ups, dental check-ups and extractions, application of fluoride, and the delivery of medication. Over 100 children between 4 and 12 years old benefited from these mobile clinics. This was possible thanks to Lotus Outreach, who in July provided us with a grant to continue running the community outreach project for a year.

October 16 World Food Day

Informative material was provided to beneficiary mothers regarding the importance of good nutrition and a video was made to share on all of our digital platforms. All this with the collaboration of our volunteer from Iowa University Anne Scherrman.



World Breastfeeding Week August 1 to 7

During this week, different activities were carried out to promote the importance of breastfeeding.



LEARNING SERVICES



Through our service learning project, volunteers have the opportunity to develop both professionally and personally through activities that allow them to learn firsthand the challenges that our communities face and the work that Primeros Pasos does to improve their quality of life. During 2022, we had a total of 23 volunteers visit us from Vanderbilt, Arizona, Chicago, Wisconsin, Manchester, and Cambridge Universities. The minimum commitment for volunteers is 4 weeks and we had several volunteers stay with us for up to 6 months. The activity schedule for our volunteers is Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm.

While we always look for ways our volunteers can develop in their field of expertise, it is also of vital importance for Primeros Pasos that our volunteers have a well-rounded experience by participating in other general activities including:

-Talks for mothers who are beneficiaries of the Community Outreach project. Volunteers support in the development of a topic to be taught to the groups and prepare related materials to be distributed.



-Workshops for beneficiary mothers of the Community Outreach project. Volunteers support the planning and execution of the workshops, including developing visual materials and presenting the workshop.

-While some volunteers deliver the talks and workshops, other volunteers use that time to support with childcare. These volunteers provide the children with coloring material related to the theme of the day, so that both mothers and little ones have a connection with the theme provided.

-Volunteers also support with mobile clinics, medical clinics, gardens, food bag deliveries, and any other activity that takes place at the time of their visit.

They are also asked to work on a specific issue that they have identified based on the needs of the communities and/or the clinic.

-Interested volunteers also have opportunities to support in creating material and content for our social media, reports and newsletters, grants, international and local fundraising.

Although some projects may seem small, our volunteers are helping to keep the clinic running, therefore keeping healthcare accessible to the people of the Palajunoj Valley.

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During 2022, we also had visits from two organizations that always support us by sharing information about our projects and activities with their volunteers.

SOMOS HERMANOS INC

The goal of their immersion program is to reduce barriers to quality health care by increasing the number of bilingual and culturally competent health care and social service providers in the United States and Canada.



OPERATION GROUNDSWELL

OG's goal is to find ways to contribute positively to local initiatives while thinking critically about international development. They believe that projects are much more likely to succeed if they are carried out in partnership with the community



They cultivate relationships with grassroots organizations, community leaders and local governments. Their program doesn't simply place a volunteer on a project they know little about. Instead, they take a learning-based approach. They combine an educational program with collaborative community service so that travelers can explore local history, context, and challenges while contributing to local solutions.

PARTNERSHIPS

For the past few years, our program was heavily affected by the pandemic, which reduced our available resources and put the development of our projects in constant danger. Fortunately, thanks to a strong Primeros Pasos team, our recurring donors, and volunteers who were able to participate remotely (and in-person when allowed), we were able to keep our doors open and carry out our projects. Although we were not able to operate our projects at 100% capacity, we were able to meet our goals.

This year we would like to welcome three partnerships that are, in one way or another, related and connected to our values, mission, and vision. We are grateful for the trust and support placed in us and we hope that our partnerships will continue well into the future.

LOTUS OUTREACH

Their mission is to empower vulnerable women and children living in poverty. With branches in seven countries and local NGO partners in India and Cambodia, they are a global community that believes empowerment is at the heart of sustainable change.



lotus outreach
INTERNATIONAL



UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Their mission is to fulfill the purpose of working together to expand human potential, explore new horizons and enrich life for all, while continuously improving the way they educate and innovate to lead the development of problem solvers capable of meeting their greatest challenges.

UTATLAN SCHOOL

Founded in 1990, their mission is to offer quality Spanish classes and an unparalleled cultural experience to students in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. They offer excellence in the study of Spanish, as well as a fantastic variety of cultural and fun activities each week. Whether you are a complete beginner, just need extra practice, or are an advanced student, they offer high quality immersion Spanish, with individual classes tailored to student needs, and a great school atmosphere.



INTERNATIONAL FUNDRAISING

Throughout the year, we ran 4 international fundraising campaigns through our Classy and Facebook platforms. Using our fundraising plan and available electronic resources, we were able to reach more than 2,300 donors who did not hesitate to contribute to our campaigns. We thank them wholeheartedly for their unconditional support.

The campaigns were: Mother's Day in May, our 20th Anniversary in October, Giving Tuesday in November, and Health for the Holidays in December. These campaigns allowed us to raise a total of Q 70,299.39.

LOCAL FUNDRAISING

We held three fundraising events at Kasa Kiwi: the first one on February 14th for Valentine's Day, the second one on July 4th for the Independence Day of the United States, and the third one for Halloween on October 31st. Due to a power outage at Kasa Kiwi on July 4th, we were unable to host the fundraising event, even though we had successfully organized logistics, marketing, and event set-up. These fundraising events allowed us to raise Q1880.00 in total.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM MOTHERS' GRADUATION CEREMONY

At the end of the year, the Nutritional Recovery Program holds a graduation ceremony to thank all the mothers and their children for their participation in the program. We honor their interest in improving the quality of life for them and their families, and recognize the knowledge and helpful practices they learned during all the activities carried out within the program. During this ceremony we also teach our final cooking workshop, and the healthy recipe is then distributed to all the guests. This year, we were joined by 200 mothers, children and pregnant mothers who were beneficiaries of the program in 2022. To close this ceremony, we give them a diploma which certifies them as "Healthy Mothers".



ANNIVERSARY

We celebrated 20 years of service to the 10 communities of the Palajunoj Valley with the visit of our founder, Dr. Brent Savoie. Both the clinic team and the beneficiary mothers were able to thank him for his initiative in the creation of the organization.



ROGER THUROW VISIT

In December, we had a visit from Roger Thurow and his lovely wife Anne, who came to follow-up on the lives and development of the mothers who were involved in the research for his latest book, THE FIRST THOUSAND DAYS: A CRUCIAL MOMENT FOR MOTHERS AND CHILDREN AND THE WORLD. This book was an important part of the 1000 days movement, which is a response to the recent devastating food crises and new research on the economic and social costs of hunger and child stunting. In this inspiring, sometimes heartbreaking book, Roger Thurow takes us inside the lives of rural Quetzaltenango families, as well as families from three other rural areas of the world including Uganda, India and rural Chicago.

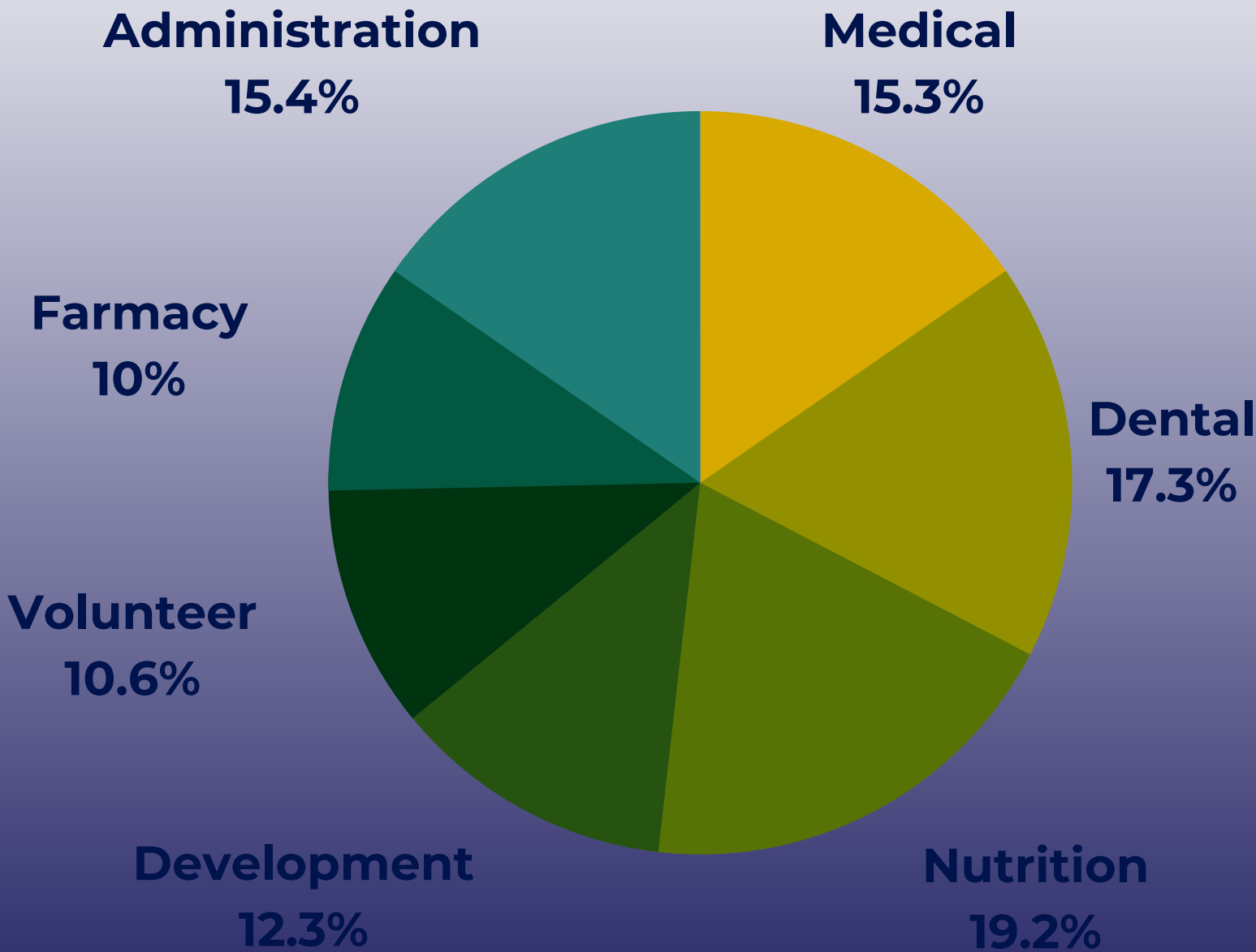


Roger is an American writer and journalist, and former foreign correspondent for the Wall Street Journal. He has been a Senior Fellow on global agriculture and food policy at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs since 2010. He is known for his writing about the politics of world hunger.



OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

\$72,823.19



OUR TEAM



Right to left:

MARÍA JOSÉ CHAJON

Director of Development, Partnerships, and Volunteer Coordinator.

LICDA. DIANA DE LEÓN SOTO

Nutrition Project Director.

DRA. LAURA SIGUENZA

Medical Project Director.

LICDA. SCARLET SAMAYOA

General Director.

LICDA. GUADALUPE IXCOT

Financial Coordinator.

FLORY MEJÍA

Intendance Manager.

MARTA ISTAZUY

Dental Asistant

DRA. FRANCIA ANGEL

Dental Project Director