

Latin America Impact Reports

February 2024

Paraguay – 662674 – Rosa Virginia Shelter Reintegration of Girls Survivors of Trafficking (Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd – RGS, \$25,000)

Rosa Virginia Shelter (RVS), which provides residential shelter to female survivors, currently has 18 girls aged 15-20. The girls come from impoverished communities in Paraguay's interior and Asuncion's marginalized neighborhoods. The young women have a low level of education, often are teenage mothers, and have very few opportunities to acquire formal jobs. The women are vulnerable and at high risk of becoming victims of different forms of exploitation, violence, and human trafficking.

The girls who are released from the RVS return to their communities of origin without receiving further support from the government, which would contribute to a structural and long-lasting change. The sisters' project proposes implementing a reintegration program to facilitate a safe return to their families and effective reintegration into their community.

The project aims to support and monitor the reintegration of young women in a variety of ways:

- Providing access to training activities and support for income-generating initiatives
- Constructing support networks to implement the life projects of the girls effectively, including:
 - Home visits to each family.
 - Individualized identification of needs and opportunities.
 - Construction of individual life plans.
 - Mapping of opportunities in the girls' environment.
 - Supporting training activities.
 - Follow up with each girl to monitor progress.
 - Coordination with local institutions to support and monitor the girls and their families.
 - Psychological support strengthening family ties and providing tools for assertive relationships that are free of violence.
 - Intervening in family conflicts that affect the emotional stability of the girls.

Impact: 35 adult women and 27 young girls benefited from the program

The sisters shared the story of Jeni:

Before she was 18 years old, Jeni was sexually exploited and enslaved in a brothel in a city near her hometown. She was rescued by a village officer and sheltered in the Rosa Virginia Protection Center for nearly six months, receiving protection, medical and psychological care, and training workshops.

When she left RV, she was handed over to her unemployed mother, who lived in dangerous housing with a younger son and a disabled brother. Through the project, she was trained and certified as a beauty professional with hairdressing, makeup, manicure, and pedicure skills. Her dream is to have a beauty salon recognized in the community; now, she has acquired a small room with essential elements and can provide for herself and her family. The program continues to support her.

Jeni is more confident, feels recognized and dignified, and her family relationships have improved. She values the support and is willing to help other young women avoid her fate.



June 2023

Colombia - 638496 - Centro de Acogida y Capacitación la Esperanza Medellin (Oblate Sisters of the Most Holy Redeemer, \$25,000)

The "autonomous women" project serves women between the ages of 16 and 45 from the lowest socioeconomic level in and around Medellin. These women, many of whom have fled the oppression of Venezuela, cannot regularize their situation, and find themselves caught in cycles of prostitution. They cannot access healthcare, gain stable employment, or achieve suitable living situations. The sisters designed the project to give 80 women access to work by offering them training sessions in technical areas. The sisters would accompany and support the women during the training and provide additional services in setting up a suitable living situation after training.

Impact: 104 women were provided with a new life through the program.

The program offered comprehensive training to women in beauty and dressmaking. Through the accompaniment of the sisters, the women discovered their rights and value in the community. The sisters encouraged them to be agents of change in themselves and their families and contribute to social transformation.

Ana, 39 years old, is one example of a successful "graduate" of their program. With emotional bipolarity from age 15, Ana survived as a drug user and a street person for 12 years. Ana arrived at the Center in 2022, began a psychosocial accompaniment, was trained in dressmaking, received a kit, and began her business of making pajamas and cosmetic bags, and Christmas decorations. With what she was able to save as she sold her products, she was able to have her workshop and tools at home. Today as a leader, she participates in the Center's activities and visits other women in prostitution.



February 2023

Chile – 617395 – Bon Akey Shelter (Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd \$20,000)

The Bon Akey Shelter assists migrant women who are pregnant and/or have children under four, living in conditions of extreme poverty and high vulnerability. Because of their pregnancy or migratory status, these women cannot access employment, lack family support, have no home, and lack a healthy and nutritious diet. Many women are Haitian migrants who do not speak Spanish or Venezuelan and are between 20 and 35 years old.

The HFS grant would allow the sisters to provide a safe living space for the women and provide services for the residents and those women who come to the shelter daily from the neighboring areas to access services. The sisters offer food, medicine, and diapers for the children. When a woman arrives, the sisters perform a needs assessment and assist them in regularizing their

migratory status, registering at a health center, and providing workshops and training to help them acquire the skills to obtain employment.

Impact: 20 women and 30 children had a safe place to live; 200 women participated in the 70 training events.

The project made it possible to respond to pregnant women's urgent needs, empower them, and introduce them to support networks. After leaving the shelter, the women have new capacities and better understand their rights in Chilean society. The women often remain active in the networks, assisting other women in living with dignity.

Two participants of the project remained in the shelter for more than two years; when they found work and were able to leave the shelter, they decided to live together and support each other. Six months later, they continue to make their way into Chilean society.



October 2022

Peru—615521 – Prevention of Human Trafficking (Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd \$13,900)

Following the lead of their foundress, St. Mary Euphrasia, the Good Shepherd sisters believe that "one person is of more value than a world." The sisters designed a project to reduce the risks of girls, adolescents, women, and vulnerable individuals from being victims of trafficking or suffering the violation of their rights. The project activities include workshops for children, an awareness campaign, a two-day anti-trafficking training conference, and other events designed to sensitize the problem population.

Impact: 708 children and 544 adults benefited from the project, and 1,252 persons participated in training events and gatherings.

The sisters reported a positive change in their congregation and the local community due to the project. They write: "In the communities, parents have become aware that human trafficking is a reality and a latent danger in our country. In educational institutions, teachers and Principals have taken an interest in the issue, as it is a threat to children and teenagers, especially with the new ways of recruiting aggressors, which is why they have included the prevention of trafficking as part of their studies plan."

The monitor reported that participants "shared their favorable impressions on the benefit of the project; knowing about human trafficking, how the aggressors behave, the damage it causes to children and adolescents, and women; as well as, their enthusiasm, commitment to getting involved from their particular reality to prevent people and their communities."



June 2022

Honduras—621470 - San Francisco de Opalaca Pastoral Center (School Sisters of Notre Dame \$12,500)

We do not often feature an emergency grant in this report. I was touched by this grant report and wanted to share it with you.

In November 2020, hurricanes ETA and IOTA hit Honduras' northern coastal area, causing extensive flooding. The victims were lower middle class to very poor, and many lost their jobs during the pandemic, having no backup to see them through this crisis. The people needed food, clothing, medicine, personal hygiene items, heavy and light cleaning materials, mattresses, and bed clothing. The available shelters were inadequate, and many people took temporary refuge on the medians of the roads, hoping that they still had a home. Those who could return home found that the flooding had destroyed the water systems. In all of this, the pandemic threat remains a constant concern. In addition to providing aid to meet their immediate physical needs, the sisters wanted to accompany them in the overwhelming task of rebuilding their lives.

Impact: 6,300 persons received assistance

The sisters report: "In the beginning, the greatest challenge was getting to the people because of the high waters. Many times we had to go in a small motorboat to reach the communities most isolated and affected. With the gradual lowering of the water, clean-up was necessary for their health and well-being. The government was doing so little to help in this effort. Many people reached out, and working together made the task seem less hopeless."

"As we continue to meet with them, we can see that they are working hard to organize themselves better and speak out to defend their rights. At the minimum, they are not suffering from hunger and thirst; they can now focus on the rebuilding necessary for their communities. Many are involved with us in reaching out to institutions to try and acquire the needed materials for rebuilding the lost homes and repairing those that were damaged. They have found hope."

The sisters believe needs will be ongoing, and they continue to work with the communities to ensure that they receive what they need as they try to rebuild their lives.



February 2020

Guatemala—495967—Improvement for Cristo Obrero Educational Project —Amistad Misionera en Cristo Obrero, \$15,000

Cristo Obrero Integral Promotion Center was founded on August 2002. The main work is evangelization through integral promotion, together with the formation of lay communities in the different villages. As time passed, the sisters realized the many needs of the community." The Municipality of Iztapa is among the five municipalities of the Department of Escuintla most affected by malnutrition, abandoned elderly, few educational opportunities, and poor health services. The people work in fishing, agriculture, and the care and service of "chalets" that are on the seashore. The families are very poor and live in very poor conditions.

The sisters wanted these children to have the opportunity to grow up healthy and have a great education without constraints that prevent them from becoming good professionals and citizens. To this end, they asked for funding to feed the children and provide them with renovated school facilities and furniture.

Impact: 175 women and children

The sisters believed that providing their community with quality education would open doors for them now and in their future. The children were offered adequate and well-prepared food and experienced a comprehensive educational program with adequate materials. Additionally, the sisters accompanied mothers, teaching them everything related to the care and hygiene of children, preparation and handling of food, and early stimulation for the infants.

As the sisters administered the project during the year, they realized that they needed another classroom. A woman that visited the project was able to find other families interested in helping, and the sisters now have three new classrooms to continue their ministry to the children and women of the community.



October 2019

Argentina—447425—Claudine Thevenet Foundation—Religious of Jesus and Mary

The Religious of Jesus and Mary established the Claudine Thevenet Foundation to support their schools, their centers for children with disabilities, as well as their social-community centers. Because of the “macho” culture in the state of Corrientes, the sisters saw the need to support low income and disadvantaged women who suffer physical and psychological mistreatment by the male. Because this mistreatment also affects the children, sister proposed a development project to offer assistance to these women and children. The primary objective is to improve the women’s self-esteem and decision-making and instill the strength to carry on and provide a healthy, peaceful, and happy life for themselves and their children. The sisters asked for funds to cover the cost of materials, transportation, and consultations with professionals.

Impact: 56 women and countless children

Sister Maria Teresa was happy with the women as they increased their self-awareness, self-respect, and self-care. She and the professionals help them develop communication skills to work with their partners in defining clear limits and rules. They gradually acquired greater freedom in their way of living, relating, and raising their children. Some women started to evaluate the option of becoming economically independent to raise their children in a healthier and freer environment.

The biggest challenge sister faced was confronting the low self-esteem and extreme shyness of the woman. She also found it difficult to dismantle the dyad of poverty and paternalism that lives on in the state.



June 2019

Honduras—416290—Laboratory for English and Science—Hermana Franciscanas De La Inmaculada Concepcion

"The Holy Spirit" Institute was founded in 1983, in partnership with national and international entities, by the Hermanas Franciscanas in Comayagua. The school serves 450 students in the pre-basic, basic, diversified or media levels. As a Franciscan Catholic Institution, the center provides children, young people and adults a quality education with a moral value approach that promotes change in Honduran society.

The sisters requested funding to prepare an English and science laboratory as well as the equipment and materials needed to promote student learning. Through the science curriculum, the students will develop skills and cultivate habits that will promote a clean and healthy environment as well as habits that will alleviate health problems and diseases in the region. The school also hopes to prepare global citizens through the study of a foreign language.

Impact: 300 students served

Initially there was not much interest or motivation among the students, however as the materials and equipment were brought to the labs, the sisters observed in each one the joy of being able to learn and have fun in a pleasant atmosphere.

The interest of the students has been aroused. They choose to spend time at school rather than on the streets. The teachers believe that they have been able to take young people from diverse educational and social backgrounds and give them the skills and confidence to be active, innovative students and citizens.



February 2019

Peru—407930--Hospice of St. James—Congregation of Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word

Hospice of St. James Apostle located in Chimbote is currently the only hospice in all of Peru serving a population of approximately 600,000 persons. Beginning as a pilot program in 2002 with staff selected and trained in the concept of hospice care, the center now has in-patient capacity for 50 patients and 24-hour outpatient care. The majority of patients are elderly, live alone, have no have family to care for them or have nowhere to stay during their last phase of illness. Most patients are unable to pay for services. Hospice offers a death with dignity to all!

The sisters requested funding to cover the cost of transportation to visit patients, to purchase medical supplies, medicine and oxygen and to help with the maintenance and repair of the medical equipment.

Impact: 254 patients benefited from the in-patient and outpatient services.

The people of the area were responsive to the services and nursing assessments provided by the visiting team. The sisters and staff encountered many difficulties in their outpatient care, including a lack of hygiene in the poor villages and of persons who administer meds and care. The sisters collaborated with missionaries working in the area to deliver enhanced medical care. In addition, the sisters were able to put the people in contact with other governmental and NGO services offered. The sisters hope that, in the future, they may also provide the services of a doctor or nurse practitioner in their village visits allowing for more complete and holistic care of the patients. The sisters are confident that they were able to offer compassion and dignity to

the dying patients.



September 2018

Cuba—398894--Welcome to Life--Order of the Most Holy Savior of St. Bridget

Father Usera began the Life Center project in 1997 to help mothers with the formation and education of their children. The center functions on church property since the Cuban government does not allow private education. Many of the women are single mothers who do not receive assistance from the fathers of their children. The sisters care for the children while the mothers seek employment to sustain their families.

In a state-controlled environment like Cuba, it is possible to do this ministry only if the center seeks to complement the government in its social aid and is never in opposition to the government. The Cuban government recognized the work of the sisters by entrusting them with a beautiful colonial building for the center. Encouraged by this recognition, the sisters and staff work to elevate the program and believe that the center is a model, not only in Cuba, but also on an international level.

Impact: 280 children and their mothers

The sisters at the center believe that they accomplished their goals. In the past year, 150 children received instruction in crafts, piano, guitar and an additional 130 children, five years and older, received instruction in English. In Cuban society, moral values are almost lost. Providing education is the center's way of promoting values in order to restore a morality to this society.



June 2018

Nicaragua—389445--Strengthening of Technical Classes at Infant Jesus of Prague School: Carmelite Missionary Sisters

The Congregation of Carmelite Missionaries has conducted the Technical School of Infant Jesus of Prague, in the region of Chiquilistagua, Nicaragua since 1990. The priority of the school is to work with children and young people of low income and provide services supporting their integral development.

The school provides formal education from pre-school to high school and offers a regular educational program as well as technical classes in the afternoon. All students graduate with a high school diploma and approved technical courses accepted by the institutions and companies in Nicaragua. On Saturdays, the school offers English courses to members of the community.

This project has three primary components:

1. To expand and strengthen the technical component (accounting and computers) and the English courses. In Nicaragua, there are new opportunities for young people who have taken courses in English or computers. The school needed additional resources not only for the students but for the teachers as well.
2. To provide psychological therapy for the students and families. "We recognize that a healthy emotional state is necessary for the success of the students and for the families.

Also, we can provide our high school students with vocational orientation so that they can be clear on what are the abilities and skills they possess and what those that they could potentiate.”

3. To provide after school activities such as school band and sports, providing the students healthy options in their lives. When the students are involved in healthy activities, there is less danger of involving themselves in criminal activities.

Impact: 2500 students and parents served

“Our school is becoming a model because of the technical courses we offer. With the new resources, English teachers are more motivated and have more confidence in their teaching. Our English courses are giving our students the possibility of paying their way to college. The individual and group therapy and parenting workshops make our work more effective and integral. Strengthening the technology laboratory also provides a stronger computer program. The band and sports opportunities provide our youth the opportunity to live a healthier lifestyle and not get involved in other activities that can harm them.”



February 2018

Guatemala--339788--The Leadership of the Indigenous Women: Religious of the Ascension

Women in Guatemala continue to suffer from a chauvinistic and patriarchal system at all levels, from the family to civil and church organizations. The women are subject to domestic violence, sexual abuse and harassment, and wage discrimination within their communities. In the case of indigenous women, the situation is worse since they suffer discrimination because of their gender as well as for their indigenous identity. The Sisters work with the Maya Q'eqchi in the municipality of Sayaxché and San Luis in Petén, where the residents live in extreme poverty.

The Sisters requested funds to provide a two-year training course for the women. The program provides psychological, spiritual and social workshops. Having completed the training, the women are able to work with other women and members of the community to promote their growth and development.

The monitor noted that the women attend the program under extreme hardships. They travel on foot for miles and must bring their children with them. They continue to attend the classes because they hope to improve their lives through the program. She also noted the dedication of the Sisters to the women, and their desire to “stretch” in order to provide stronger experiences for the women. The monitor considers the project a success, and commends the efforts the Sisters make for the women in this rural area. The women are making a difference in their communities.

Impact: 28 leading women participated in the training program. As a result:

- They have strengthened their understanding of their dignity and rights, motivating them to participate actively in the life of their communities.
- The women have obtained tools to solve the problems that affect their lives and those of their families.
- The women leaders are trained and prepared psychologically and spiritually to promote and develop growth in other women.

