

Reaching the World During a Pandemic

Sarah Corson
SIFAT Co-founder

Letters from our international graduates sent during this pandemic tell the same story we are experiencing in our own country, though often much worse. Because people cannot go to work, food is scarce and people are suffering all over the world. What can SIFAT do to help in this time of food shortages?

We, too, are under orders to work from home. Can SIFAT still reach the hungry? In a number of cases, the answer is yes! We can communicate all over the world from our homes, and we are doing that daily. Because of our graduates' projects put in place before this crisis, food is being produced now in some of the most needed places.

To most of the world, food shortages are nothing new. Many have been living on only a dollar a day in Liberia for a long time. But the coronavirus makes it so much worse, because they cannot work now.

In Nigeria, two million have had to flee their homes because of terrorists since 2008. SIFAT graduate Raphael and his wife Helen have received grant money from SIFAT to buy eleven acres of farmland, which they divide up among refugee families, letting each use the land free for three years to grow food to eat and produce surplus to sell and save to buy their own piece of farmland.

Graduate Michael in Uganda leads a 50-member youth group in discipleship and in food production. With seed money from SIFAT, each youth received fruit trees that will provide food

into the future—avocados, mangos, oranges, guava, jackfruit, papaya. They also have vegetables and provide their families with cabbage, eggplants and tomatoes from their gardens.

Sam in Uganda received seed money for a project to dig a water well, so that there is now much-needed water for irrigation. With SIFAT's help, he worked with 100 families to teach them how to renew their soil with compost and grow their own food. They are producing food now during this time of need.



There are more than a million South Sudanese refugees in Uganda today and more in other countries. Bullen from South Sudan used SIFAT seed money to help his congregation in a Ugandan refugee camp to build a church with a huge garden around the building. The church is the center of their lives, where they receive spiritual and physical food.

Bruce in Zambia and Peter in Kenya who have both helped single mothers have their own goats to be able to feed their children and sell milk to buy other

food. Peter has a chicken project to enable 110 disabled people to be food-sufficient by growing chickens.

By starting a poultry plant for the community, SIFAT has helped Aina and Blossom in Nigeria to avert major starvation and despair in their village after herders burned their crops and killed many people.

There are more in our network of alumni across the world. When you helped SIFAT train these church and community leaders during the past 41 years, you have not only given food

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Medical Teams Support Quesimpuco

Sarah Corson
SIFAT Co-founder

An urgent call came to Benjo from Dr. Ruth Noemi Mamani in Quesimpuco, Bolivia. Because this is an isolated area, we had hope that the coronavirus would not reach this place, which Tom still calls “the end of the world.” But, a group of youth from Quesimpuco had gone to Chile and Argentina to find work. As the outbreak started, they rushed to get home, crossing the border illegally. They made it home, but could have potentially brought the virus with them. Dr. Ruth Noemi did not have gloves, masks or protective gear for the health workers helping her.

“Help us, Hermano!” she pled with Benjo. “We need masks and gloves!” In the United States, we do not have enough either and have no way of sending them now that Bolivia is closed. But SIFAT teams that have been going to Quesimpuco had left a supply. Benjo told her where they were stored, and the health workers now have protective gear.

Dr. Ruth Noemi asked Benjo to send their deepest thanks to the SIFAT team members who left the supplies. And now, like



Dr. Ruth Noemi will be able to protect herself while she cares for the people of the Quesimpuco area because of gloves, masks and other medical supplies left by SIFAT medical teams.

the rest of the world, Dr. Ruth Noemi is fighting the spread of coronavirus with all her strength. Pray for Dr. Ruth Noemi, her team and the remote villages as they try to keep the virus out of their communities. They are praying for us in the United States and thanking God for the medical teams that left supplies to combat this worldwide pandemic.

Reaching the World

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to the hungry. You have helped us create a network of village leaders taking the Love of God in practical ways to the lost and suffering in some of the harshest places on earth.

SIFAT staff cannot be in all these hard places of the world today; we are “locked down” in our homes. But our network of graduates are in multiple places, helping their own people with spiritual and physical food. SIFAT’s Graduates’ Project Committee has done a great job in raising seed money to help our graduates with sustainable projects. To all who have contributed to these projects, thank you! These leaders and their projects provide physical and spiritual food to thousands of people in a time like today when the people would be hungry had you not helped.

Kathy Bryson, our training director, is currently in Costa Rica. During our major 2019 training session, participants from Honduras and six other countries planted gardens using methods that SIFAT promotes. Because of the pandemic, we

cannot hold large trainings right now, but individuals from the community volunteer to help tend the gardens. They are sharing this food with local churches and with neighbors in need. Anner, the last intern from Honduras who had to leave early because of the coronavirus, left 1,200 plants growing, thinking they would be used in the upcoming training session. Although that session is postponed, these plants are growing and producing food.



Many people are eating today because of these and other projects started before and producing now. We are thankful for technology that keeps us connected to one another throughout the world. We try to keep up with our graduates, encourage them and pray with them. Even during this unprecedented time, SIFAT has approved and sent funds for new projects and are helping our graduates to keep helping their communities. More than ever, we are praying for each other to be strong in the Lord and face the future with faith and courage.

Meals and Medical Care for Ecuador

Peggy Walker
International Team Coordinator

As I sit at my computer to write with so many thoughts about all we are missing this year, I see the faces of the children in our projects in Ecuador. I can almost feel their hugs and hear their laughter. Many of you would be preparing for your long awaited trip to serve alongside these people we have come to think of as family. Some of you have gone to Ecuador with SIFAT many times, letting this mission trip replace your relaxing summer vacations. For others, this would have been your first opportunity to serve in this beautiful country. For all who were planning to go and those who were supporting your efforts, I know you are wondering how are they living through these difficult times, and thinking what can we do now? From e-mails with our staff and pastors with whom we serve, I want to share the reality of their situation and also give you a way we can still make a difference and provide hope.

I understand people are suffering here at home, and many do not know how they will rebuild their lives. But most of us have food to eat, and we can go to the hospital, even if we do not have insurance. We have stimulus checks, food banks and churches eager to help those in need. In Aida Leon, Villaflora and other poor areas in which we serve in Ecuador, they do not. Pastor Wilson and Anita and Pastor Rafael wrote that the families in their churches have no jobs, no food and certainly no medical care. These poor families depend upon sporadic work during the best of times, and many must take buses across town each day to find that work.

Quito is now under a complete lockdown and has been since March. There are no taxis or buses, and even private vehicles are only allowed on the street from 5

a.m. to 2 p.m. one day a week. In the communities where we work, there are no grocery deliveries or drive through pharmacies, and often no clean water to wash hands. They have no money, no food, no government help, and to most, it must seem as if they have no future.



Children in our projects in Ecuador normally receive nutritious meals at the churches.

With the country on lockdown because of COVID-19, our projects need your help to give pantry staples and cleaning supplies to those unable to work to provide for their families.

Through generous donations, SIFAT has just sent \$1,000 to each of our five main projects to help feed the children and their families. We hope to be able to send the same next week. But this reaches only a few. Anita tells me there are an average of six in most of their church families in Villaflora. For her to assemble a basket of food and sanitation products to last one week, it costs \$40. She knows how and where to get the most for the money she is given. We hope to continue helping in this way, but they also are saying so many are getting sick, and even dying in their homes, because of a lack of medical care.

SIFAT teams have provided medical

care for these very poor areas for many years. Our medical teams have brought much needed medication for the adults, Pap smears and exams for the women and children's vitamins to prevent malnutrition. It is a blessing for our teams to serve in all our projects, plus several other locations. Unfortunately, all 2020 teams have been canceled.

Dr. Roberto Contreras, our SIFAT Ecuador director, and his wife, Monica, have seen the despair and have envisioned a project to bring hope to these communities. They call it *SIFAT Doctor in Your House*.

We are fortunate that Dr. Roberto is a medical doctor. He has been watching what we are doing in the USA with teleconferencing our medical professionals and wants to do the same in Ecuador using WhatsApp. Our teams care for about 3,000 people every year. Dr. Roberto knows that these people are hurting and that he can diagnose most problems through video calls. SIFAT will provide whatever medicines are needed. He will begin right away with our five projects: Aida Leon, Villaflora, Calderon, Puengasi and Atucucho. But, we can only make this plan work with your support.

Dr. Roberto has negotiated with a large pharmacy chain in Quito to give a discount on medications. All will not need prescriptions, but for many of our patients, the cost will average about \$30. I hoped we could send medicines from the USA through Blessings International, but the taxes charged on any shipment would be prohibitive, plus it could be held up for weeks in customs. Buying in Ecuador is the only solution. This will mean many hours on the phone for Dr. Roberto every day. There will be costs, but it is the only way these

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people in great need will have access to medical care.

SIFAT teaches the ministry of presence, but how can we show this when we cannot be in Ecuador? Through Dr. Roberto and Monica, we have found a way! Our teams might not physically be in Ecuador, but the people we serve will know we have not forgotten about them. They will know they are in our prayers and in our hearts, and through this program, they will feel our love and, once again, have hope.

Please help SIFAT make this program a reality for so many with whom we serve in Ecuador. At a time like this with so many needs in so many places, each of us may wonder which need is best for me to support as I am able? SIFAT knows first-hand the people we will be helping in this case.

Please consider giving generously. A gift of \$30 will be gratefully received. If you can give more, please give more. This is a time to go the extra mile for our friends in Ecuador who have no way to help themselves and are suffering without any help from their government. Please designate your gift *SIFAT Doctor in Your House*. From one who has worked in these communities for many years, I know they will be praying for you, and the greatest blessing will be ours. Please do not hesitate. Send your donation today.



Importance of Family Gardens

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

Family gardens are more important than ever. There is nothing like a pandemic to make us realize how dependent we have become on going to the grocery store and leaving the growing to others—sometimes thousands of miles away. How wonderful it is to go right outside your door to your very own “kitchen garden” and harvest fresh, healthy produce for dinner! There is also a deep psychological aspect of being able to feed your own family.

One of the avid participants in SIFAT training these past several months was Matilde Gomez. She is the president of a group of 200 rural women in agriculture in northern Costa Rica. Many of them are single mothers and struggle to provide for their families. Together, they encourage one another and share practical ideas that can help. Matilde invited us to do additional workshops with some of her group in a neighboring town on child nutrition, organic fertilizers and clean water. She returned with three others for special training in fortifying local foods with homemade leaf powder full of iron and vitamin A, so vital for child nutrition. They returned to share this with others in their neighborhoods.

During this pandemic, when everyday life has disrupted most of these women’s small microenterprises, they are especially eager for additional plants to grow food for their families. Matilde is helping to distribute SIFAT plant seedlings for nutritious vegetables to these rural women. She is also helping SIFAT promote and distribute Amaranth, an under-utilized tropical



Matilde and her husband with SIFAT plant seedlings to distribute to a network of rural women for their family gardens to promote food security in this critical time.



Ruth Cusi, of Bolivia, learns to make organic fertilizer for her family garden during a training in Costa Rica.

plant with much potential both for the protein in the seeds used for grain and for the micronutrients in the young leaves.

Take a SHARE in SIFAT!

Be part of SIFAT all year! Our monthly commitments — the SHARE program — help us budget effectively. Sign up at www.sifat.org/donate or contact Marie Lanier, lanierm@sifat.org.

Plan for SIFAT's Future

Did you know that you can donate stocks or leave provisions for SIFAT in your will? Contact executive director Tom Corson, corsont@sifat.org, for more information.

Urban Gardens in Venezuela



SIFAT graduate Yurima has been teaching her community to build urban gardens during the economic hardships in Venezuela. These have become even more needed during the COVID-19 outbreak.

International Interns Serve in Costa Rica

Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

At SIFAT, we focus on meeting basic human needs. Not surprisingly, we like to start with food production and nutrition. We all need to eat to live and be healthy. Here in San Carlos, Costa Rica, we had been working since last April with the help of volunteers and interns from the National Agriculture University of Honduras to set up demonstration models of how a family can maximize small plots of land for food. In September, 10 Honduran agricultural interns worked three months here to further develop models to address food insecurity. These interns worked with SIFAT staff to offer practical workshops locally in how to make raised beds, control pests, make organic fertilizers, start compost, control erosion on hillsides and reclaim marginal land for food production.

The agricultural interns each did a senior project chosen for its potential to help marginalized families become more food secure. Besides developing the demonstration projects at our Central American Training Center, the interns helped with training and tours, and each wrote their projects to contribute to the hunger solutions for the Global South. These interns come from small farm families and have a keen sense of practicality. They made manuals on urban gardening in small spaces, reclaiming steep hillsides for food production and soil erosion prevention, promoting edible forests and more. We are excited to have these manuals in Spanish to share with other communities.

At the SIFAT Central American Training Center in Costa Rica, we have hosted trainings, international conferences, intensive workshops and tours to demonstrate several types of intensive raised garden beds, kitchen garden models, made



Kathy Bryson and her assistant Ruth from Bolivia join our 10 agricultural interns from Honduras, who created demonstration gardens and did senior projects at our Central American Training Center.

bio-char and several natural fertilizers, and built simple water catchment systems from recycled plastics to enhance growth in difficult conditions, promoted under-utilized plants with much potential, and together with UNED-CITEED planted more than 1,000 trees and plants to enrich soil. People came for training from Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela (refugees), Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica and a few from the USA.

Your support is needed now more than ever as we continue to develop projects and distribute seeds and seedlings to local families who have been hard hit losing jobs during this pandemic. They are highly motivated to have family gardens! While we are not having large training events currently, we continue working with neighbors and heads of households individually to promote food security locally.

Tippy-taps Clean Hands During COVID-19

Sarah Corson
SIFAT Co-founder

We all know how important handwashing is to prevent transmission of disease, including coronavirus. However, what do you do when water is so limited that you have to walk seven kilometers to bring back each liter to your house? And you are a mother with much daily work to do trying to keep the family going? How can you find the time and energy to make more long trips for additional water required for handwashing?

Thankfully, SIFAT found a simple appropriate technology used by many around the world to address hygiene and water scarcity. We promote these tippy-taps in our training sessions. Samuel of Petite Goave, Haiti, learned how to make this simple technology using an old plastic bottle, string or homemade rope, and a stick for a foot pedal. A small hole is made in the bottle to allow a stream of water to flow when the bottle is turned down by pressing on the foot pedal. This works amazingly well, limiting the total amount of water needed to get clean hands! They are very practical to install near the kitchen, latrines, schools, etc.

Recently with the coronavirus, Samuel has been very concerned about his community and those in surrounding communities with even less water access. He remembered the tippy-taps learned at SIFAT and started promoting them to encourage handwashing to prevent disease spread. That is the beauty of appropriate technology—it meets a felt local need, does not cost much and is sustainable locally. We thank God for Samuel's commitment to improving life for his fellow Haitians! We also thank each of you who helped to invest in Samuel and others community leaders like him whose scholarships you have made possible so they could get SIFAT training in community development and appropriate technologies. Thank you! Your investment in training for local leaders is working!



Tippy-taps are a simple appropriate technology to help clean hands when water is limited. SIFAT graduate Samuel is introducing these in Haiti to help prevent the spread of disease.

Matching Funds

Will your employer match your donation to SIFAT? Many companies do, and some even match donations of retirees or spouses of employees.

IRA Contributions

If you are required to take a disbursement from your IRA, you can donate a percentage or all of it directly to SIFAT. By donating to a nonprofit without receiving the disbursement, you do not pay taxes on the disbursement.

Questions or Need Help?

Contact Diana Cline, 256.396.2015
or accounting@sifat.org.

IRS Update

Did you know that part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act includes incentives for charitable giving? Talk with your tax advisor for more information and to see how the CARES Act may benefit you when you give in 2020.

Here are some highlights from this legislation:

- If you do not itemize, you can take a one-time deduction of up to \$300 for gifts made to SIFAT.
- The 60 percent adjusted gross income limitation is suspended, making cash contributions fully deductible.
- For corporations, the cap is increased from 10 percent of taxable income to 25 percent.

The SIFAT Village Store Remodeling Project



When storms damaged our roof beyond repair, we knew it was the right time to remodel the existing SIFAT Village Store building and add a climate controlled stockroom and handicap accessible bathrooms. We dream of this building becoming an official Welcome Center in the future when a new store is constructed. Until then, we are excited about re-branding The SIFAT Village Store and expanding our online store presence.

Stay Connected with SIFAT for our Latest News!

Visit our blog (sifat.org/blog) and follow SIFAT on Facebook ([/sifatbook](https://www.facebook.com/sifatbook)) or Twitter (@SIFATtweets) for updates between issues of the SIFAT Journal! Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter at www.sifat.org.

Are you moving? Don't forget to send us your updated contact information to info@sifat.org.

SIFAT Retreats Impact Participants

Collin Campbell
Campus Program Manager

As many have come to know, SIFAT's campus is a special place. It is a fertile soil for opportunity, whether those opportunities are of service to others, education or personal growth. Retreats on our campus are designed specifically to provide opportunities like this. Stories from participants affirm the importance of these experiences.

A recent participant and volunteer shares a reflection on her first time participating and volunteering for a week at SIFAT. Read Laura's story below:

"I came to SIFAT because I had never heard of an organization like it. Appropriate technology? A Global Village? An actual slum? Christians often talk about "going to nations," but many, myself included, have no idea what that practically looks like. It is easy to talk about statistics and geography, evangelism and team building. It is another thing to feel the tensions of a slum, walk in the house of another and taste the harsh realities of unequal food and resource distribution. The SIFAT retreat was a concise, intimate and meaningful way for people of all ages to do those things without leaving Lineville, Ala. Through this experience, global awareness becomes a reality. It is not presented as a guilt trip, but to show how much of the world population lives, how missionaries interact with those people and to inspire participants to be grateful, perhaps even enacting their own methods of practically loving a neighbor. During the retreat, I saw 7th graders—rambunctious as they might be—start listening to each other in team building. They were serving each other in the slum where there was little to begin with and discussing God's call to be servants in His creation."

We hope to make the mission of SIFAT as tangible and accessible as possible. We offer retreats for all ages and groups of all sizes that can be customized to fit your objectives. To learn more about what opportunities are available for you and your group, e-mail campbellc@sifat.org or visit www.sifat.org/learn-serve. We hope to see you at SIFAT soon!





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SIFAT's VISION: Bridging the First and Two-thirds Worlds to alleviate spiritual and physical poverty, encouraging people to develop their God-given potential.

SIFAT's MISSION: To share God's love through service, education and personal involvement with a needy world.

FROM THE DESK OF TOM CORSON

Recently, a friend shared of going to a conference featuring a famous storyteller. This friend is in marketing and wanted to improve his storytelling ability, since he knew this is the key to success. After eager anticipation, this famous man came on stage, said four words and walked off to a standing ovation. These words were referring to our global pandemic; they were "Home, Challenge and New Home." My understanding is we had become complacent in our homes, going to work, coming home, feeding the dog, mowing the grass, going to church, the normal. Suddenly, we were struck with the major challenge of COVID-19, which one day will hopefully be controlled, but today is wreaking havoc with our cultural, economical and personal lives. For many, this effectively is putting families and businesses in ruins. This pandemic is fast creating a global hunger crisis.

SIFAT's 2020 mission teams have been put on hold. Our Lineville Campus's events are closed for all our programming for the foreseeable future. The world as we know it is gone; there is no going Home. We need to build a New Home, and we are confident God has a plan. With your help, SIFAT continued to be relevant in the present crisis. Part of this plan is helping our graduates find this New

Home. Our training director in Costa Rica is working with a group of more than 200 women, providing plants and agricultural training in small groups, so that they can keep feeding their families. In Liberia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Uganda and a South Sudanese refugee camp, we have provided food for many children, who under lockdown had no access to it. In Haiti and Kenya, we continue to provide project resources that provide food for starving people. In Ecuador, our director, a medical doctor, is preparing to provide medical services for more than 3,000 children and adults who typically are attended by our medical teams. Our teams and supporters are stepping up to help aid in these medical efforts, as well as provide food for the neediest.

Although we face considerable uncertainty, SIFAT is striving to lead and continue to support our graduates, most of whom have no safety nets. Our motto of "Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways" keeps its relevancy! We are confident that God will lead us through this pandemic. We know that He is in control as we seek His direction in effectively serving the neediest during and after this storm.

Thank you for your prayers as we strive to do our part in making a difference by supporting our SIFAT graduates, their missions and the least of these.