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SIFAT Doctor in your House Helps in Ecuador

By Peggy Walker

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There are times when our SIFAT mission teams must switch from development to relief. The current pandemic, more than ever before, is that time. International travel was halted; teams were forced to postpone trips. We were all told we would be safer at home. The reality of this condition made us all feel more vulnerable than ever before. Along with this reality, the need to serve was ever present, but the question was how? SIFAT found a way in Ecuador with our *SIFAT Doctor in your House* program.

As the coronavirus ravished the five poor communities in which we work in Quito, SIFAT staff wondered what we could do to help from so far away without an organized program. It is our good fortune, however, to have Dr. Roberto Contreras, a medical doctor, as our SIFAT director in Ecuador. He and his wife, Monica, came up with *SIFAT Doctor in your House*, which allowed us to serve and meet the needs of these people with whom we have worked alongside for many years and have come to think of as family.

Dr. Roberto knew that if we could raise funding, he could

teleconference with those needing medical attention and supply the medicines they would need for one month. He would take a different project each week, talk with the most critical cases and make sure the children and expectant mothers had vitamins that are so necessary during this time when little food is available.



Because of the support of our SIFAT Doctor in your House program, a youth in the Aida Leon church receives rice for his family from Pastor Wilson in Quito, Ecuador.

There were no government programs in Ecuador to help the people in these poor communities, and with work being nonexistent because Quito was in complete lockdown, many people were sick and some were starving. *SIFAT Doctor in your House* was desperately needed.

With the help of SIFAT donors, the program has been a tremendous success!

Pastors in the churches with which we work were trying to provide food to the neediest with their meager resources. Once we were able to help, they wanted to maximize the number of people they could reach in their community. They decided the best way to do this was to give 25-pound bags of rice to many families. This does not sound like much, but the people had no food. This rice would be filling and keep a family of six alive for two weeks, while the pastors tried to find places to buy discarded vegetables and other things to supplement the diet.

In Atucucho, the poorest area of Quito, where SIFAT teams have worked for 20 years, SIFAT graduate and community leader Ledy Sanchez realized the greatest need was for the elderly. This poor community is filled with elderly, often alone and homeless.

As Dr. Roberto so poignantly stated:

“We thought that we could not have tears in our eyes after seeing the poverty for so many years, but after knowing the situation of the elderly in Atucucho ... we are in tears ... even Ledy is in tears, too.”

Because these elderly people had no one to care for them, Ledy decided to use the help from SIFAT to start the *Golden Bread* program to provide a hot breakfast to 80 elderly people five days a week, praying that God will provide the funds to continue blessing these truly needy people. *SIFAT Doctor* will also give vitamins to these precious elderly by using medicines leftover from our 2019 SIFAT medical teams.

Through your gifts, SIFAT is now able to do so much by providing food, a doctor and medicines for the families of the more than 2,000 desperately poor children with whom we have been working. In the three months since we started *SIFAT Doctor in your House*, more than 9,000 people have been served in our five main Quito projects and their five extensions. We must continue to provide this help!

We cannot always quantify the benefits people receive from all our projects. Monica, however, is a wonderful record keeper and recently the following report.

SIFAT Doctor in your House

We provided medical virtual and physical visits, and medicines, to around 1000 patients:

- 200 virtual medical visits and 200 medical prescriptions. We provide medicine for 30 days for each one of the 200 people, who are mostly suffering from chronic illnesses (diabetes, hypertension, psychological illness, gynecological treatments, epilepsy, etc.)
- 400 children checked. We also gave them anti-



Dr. Roberto Contreras, director of SIFAT Ecuador, is using a cell phone app to see patients who normally are treated by SIFAT medical teams. Most of these patients have chronic conditions and are in desperate need of life-saving medications.

parasitic treatment, vitamins for one month and medical certificates for their schools.

- 100 prenatal patients checked. We gave them prenatal vitamins.
- 300 adults and elderly people checked. We also gave them vitamins for one month.

The Golden Bread (food for all projects)

- We have given rice for one month to 1,600 families. That is 8,000 people considering an average of 5 people per family.
- We are giving a daily breakfast from Monday to Friday to 80 elderly people in Atucucho. That is for 14 weeks since May 14.

The economic situation of the families of our projects are worse day by day. They were poor before the pandemic, but now they are in extreme poverty. Many have become beggars.

Because of the economical situation, the families of our projects go to the streets to sell fruits, vegetables or food. But they just find COVID-19 virus. In the last weeks, the municipality has collected 150 corpses in the streets of Quito: mainly on the streets of Guamaní, Puengasí and Downtown Quito. Those 150 people were just people looking for a way to survive, but they just fell dead in the



Pastor Rafael visits church members and families from the after-school project from Villaflora and their extensions. SIFAT Doctor in your House empowers the local churches with whom SIFAT works in Ecuador to help their communities being impacted by the pandemic.



A mother in Puengasi receives rice, a staple in the Ecuadorian diet. SIFAT's five main project sites and five of their extensions are benefitting from the support of SIFAT donors during this time of great need when so many have lost their jobs and would not eat without help from the churches.

streets. They are not rebels or people who do not want to follow the rules or law; no, they are just fathers or mothers looking for some way for their children survival.

The health system in Quito is still collapsed with COVID-19 virus. So sadly, medical doctors have to decide who is hospitalized and who comes back to their home waiting for ... death ... this is provoking our medical doctors to be totally stressed. They take the Hippocratic Oath to save lives, but "they are choosing who lives and who do not." Patients with other pathologists cannot get medical attention or medicines at the public hospitals.

We must keep this program alive! You have generously provided \$70,000 of the \$100,000 needed to continue these programs through December, when we all pray a vaccine will be developed. We need your prayers and

your help as we still have a long way to go. Please pass this on to your churches and friends to help us continue to raise funds, to allow us to show God's love in these communities even when we cannot be with them in person.

I read that the lack of hope will quickly destroy the human spirit. We cannot let that happen. Through *SIFAT Doctor in your House*, we can provide the hope so needed to these people that we cherish in all our projects in Ecuador. Please send your gifts of hope by check or online to SIFAT and designate *SIFAT Doctor in your House*.

To read our previous (and future!) updates about SIFAT Doctor in your House, visit www.sifat.org/tag/sifat-doctor-in-your-house.