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Meeting Immediate Needs in Ecuador

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When we first heard of COVID-19, we optimistically believed that our international mission teams would be postponed for a few months, and we would reorganize before too long to serve alongside our SIFAT graduates. As we realized the severity of this novel virus and its ability to spread, we were forced to make difficult decisions to protect our team members, staff, translators and the communities in which we serve. Here in the United States now, our daily lives are being minimally impacted by the virus. We may be required to wear a mask or need to self quarantine after a known exposure. Great strides have been made in treatment, and free vaccines are available for those who choose to have them. No, the pandemic is not over for us, but we have many resources available.



A mother receives rice for her family.

But this is not the case for our friends in Ecuador. On April 23, a new month-long order went into effect that includes a weekend curfew from 8 p.m. on Friday night until 5 a.m. Monday morning, as well as a nightly curfew during the week for the same times. Driving between provinces is restricted, working from home is encouraged and excessive fines continue to be imposed for those not wearing masks in public, attending large gatherings and breaking curfew.

SIFAT Ecuador director Dr. Roberto Contreras and his wife Monica are leading our efforts with *SIFAT Doctor in your House* and *The Golden Bread*. More than just medicines and food, these programs give the local churches with whom we work a vehicle for outreach to provide hope and encouragement to their members and neighborhoods. Of course, physical needs are being met, but while making deliveries, the church leadership also prays with these families, listens to their needs and offers support. They are being the hands and feet of Jesus by *Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways*.

In their latest email with updates, Dr. Roberto and Monica asked that you continue to pray for the dire situation in Ecuador. They are in the third wave of COVID-19, and the public health system has collapsed. About 1,500 new cases are being diagnosed daily, and around 400 people are waiting for ICU beds. Only 1 percent of the population has received two doses of the vaccine, and another 1 percent has received one dose. Because he does not work in the public health system, Dr. Roberto does not yet qualify to receive one of the limited vaccines.

We wish we had room to share a profile of each person we help, because they all have touching stories. This month, we wanted to share a few examples of those receiving medication and healthcare from Dr. Roberto.

Nicolas, age 10

Nicolas lives in Puengasí with his mother, who is a single parent. Even at his young age, Nicolas knows what it means to fight for his life. After being diagnosed with COVID-19, he was hospitalized for two months. He survived, thankfully, but still has many complications: low weight, malnutrition, dermatitis, skin allergies, stomach pains and diarrhea. *SIFAT Doctor in your House* is providing all the medicines he needs for one month, as the public hospital system cannot provide them now.

Blanca, age 75

Blanca and her husband were small farmers in Machachi. They survived by harvesting vegetables that they planted on their small piece of land. But suddenly, Blanca's 80-year-old husband died from COVID-19. Blanca is insulin dependent because of diabetes and also has hypertension. Blanca has four cows, and she plans to sell them one by one to buy medicine. Meanwhile, *SIFAT Doctor in your House* has given her the medicines she needs for one month.

Esperanza, age 14

When Esperanza was 9 years old, she accidentally fell from the second floor of a building, fracturing her skull. She has 87 percent intellectual dysfunction, cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Esperanza lives in El Beaterio, where SIFAT Ecuador has begun a partnership with World Vision. She lives with her mother, who receives \$50 from the government as a monthly bonus for disabled people. But

\$50 is not enough to buy food, much less medicine!

Esperanza's mother sells candy on the streets to try to provide for them. Because of her extreme case and not having any other support, SIFAT has been helping Esperanza since 2020, most recently by giving her a one month supply of her four daily medications.

Cayambe Project

Pastor Tuquerres leads the Cayambe Project, where SIFAT teams helped build a large facility for the church's afterschool program and provided community medical clinics for many years. In this community, 30 elderly indigenous needed help to buy their medications. We extended our 15 percent pharmacy discount to help Pastor Tuquerres stretch the donations he received from local businesses to purchase the needed medications.

Keep *SIFAT Doctor in your House* / *The Golden Bread* Continuing through 2021!

Each month, it costs more than \$12,000 for each project and its extensions to buy food to distribute and for Dr. Roberto to purchase the vitamins, antibiotics and other medications needed.

We still need your help! With your support, we can serve our project sites, even when we are unable to travel! Please designate your gift *SIFAT Doctor in your House*.

