



Servants in Faith and Technology /  
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## Serving Breakfast in Atucucho

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Slowly, our car creeps up a steep mountain, scraping speed breakers while we reminisce about our first visits to Atucucho, a neighborhood in Quito, Ecuador, where SIFAT has been serving for more than 20 years. As we arrive at our destination, a nondescript concrete building among a row of buildings in various stages of construction, we see a line of people winding down the next hill. Dr. Roberto Contreras, Tom Corson, Peggy Walker and I climb out of the car to choruses of *Buenos Dias!* as

we make our way to the door. We are quickly wrapped up in the arms of Ledy Sanchez, a SIFAT graduate and the driving force behind SIFAT's work in this area.

Ledy guides us into a bustling kitchen, full of ladies cutting vegetables and stirring gigantic, steaming pots. Smiles are abundant, and the smells are vibrant with a breakfast drink in one pot with cinnamon and anise and the beginnings of chicken soup in another. These women prepare meals for about 400 children and 80 elderly every day. Ledy tells us she starts baking fresh bread every morning at 4 a.m. But we do not have time to keep exploring this kitchen, lifting lids and chatting with the ladies, because that line of people needs their breakfast.

We are ushered into a doorway, where we move a table to make a makeshift walkup window. Peggy and I serve steaming cups of *morocho*, a traditional milk drink with corn and spices, and fresh bread. As we start thinking that the line is dwindling, and we are finishing, more people arrive. As Ledy refills our pot of morocho, we realize we are just starting. Instead of passing a cup to each person, we are now receiving some type of container: a pitcher, an old plastic container, a tea kettle, a pot

with a lid and carrying handle or maybe even a boiler. As each person steps up, Ledy tells us how many people need to be fed from this container. Of course, when she knows they need extra because of the lack of food in their homes, she tells us to give them a *yapa*, a little gift. That means one to two more ladles of morocho and some extra smiles. We run out of bread before we run out of customers, so we give out more yapas. Morocho gets spilled over our hands and down the containers, but no one complains or is frustrated with our inefficiency. Instead, they thank us and laugh with us.



**SIFAT graduate Ledy serves Atucucho,  
Quito, Ecuador**

As we finish serving breakfast, Ledy explains more about the people we just met. She tells us that at the beginning of the pandemic, her ladies went door to door carrying heavy containers to take breakfast to these elderly people. Many are unable to walk the steep terrain where they live, while others were terrified to leave their homes for fear of getting sick. The cost to deliver meals became too much, so Ledy found neighbors and relatives to come to the kitchen to take the food back to those who need it. When the lockdowns lifted, she urged those who are physically able to come themselves. However, they do not just receive breakfast. First, she has them meet at a field behind Little Seeds of God, the daycare center SIFAT teams built many years ago. They walk 20 laps,

so that they get much needed exercise, as well as the socialization they lacked while confined in their homes. After their exercise, they eat breakfast. Many sit together on the sidewalk and chat.

This is Ledy's daily schedule, and she was so joyful during our visit. She talked about completing her degree in early childhood

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education recently, which was a dream of hers. Although she has been leading daycare centers that receive high government ratings, she wanted the formal education that could help her do even more for these people that she loves deeply. She nonchalantly spoke of different programs that are offered in Atucucho because of her tenacity and work. As she shared the latest news, she was weaving in her hopes and dreams for future programs. However, my mind kept returning to baking bread for at least 80 people every morning. That would be enough, yet Ledy keeps finding opportunities to pour into Atucucho. It is not the same neighborhood Tom and Peggy encountered on their first visit in 2000, nor is it the same one that I saw for the first time in 2007. Instead, we see an area slowly climbing out of poverty, in part because of Ledy's leadership and determination.

Ledy cannot do all of this on her own. She has a team of women working alongside her in the kitchen, and she also has the love and encouragement of former mission team members and SIFAT supporters. Because of our SIFAT family, *SIFAT Doctor in your House* and *The Golden Bread* provided medicines and funding for food during the pandemic and continues today. Although we see improvements in Atucucho, the truth is that this area is still in deep poverty and the people who call this area home are struggling to survive. After two years of lockdowns and economic hardship caused by the pandemic, they were just starting to see hope again. But a national strike led by the major indigenous association shut Ecuador down for 18 days. Food, gas and medical supplies could not be delivered, and demonstrations became violent as this group of people insisted the government meet a list of 10 demands or remove



the president. This political unrest further damaged Ecuador's fragile economy. While we thought these two programs were winding down, Dr. Roberto shares that, instead, the needs are growing throughout the city.

Please continue to pray for Ledy and SIFAT graduates like her that are *Sharing God's Love in Practical Ways* throughout the world, often in conditions and situations that we do not fully understand. Your generous and sacrificial gifts to SIFAT allow us to reach the least of these and truly do make a difference in the lives of the poor. We witnessed this firsthand on our morning in Atucucho. It is more than just a cup of morocho and a roll; it is love in action and taking care of our neighbors, even those who live a continent away. In the words of the sweet people we served, *Dios le pague/God will repay you!*

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