



**Servants in Faith and Technology /  
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## Helping Hungry People Can Help Us, Too

*By Sarah Corson*

*SIFAT Co-founder*

A search on my cell phone tells me there are 281 million migrants in the world today. The situation presents life-threatening circumstances to the migrants themselves, as well as untold suffering and chaos to the people in the areas to which they go. SIFAT believes an answer to solving this problem is to work on the root causes, which start, not at our border, but long before in the homeland of the migrants. SIFAT hosts workshops and training practicums on community development and providing one's basic human needs. We have had a number of Central Americans attend a weekend training in their hometown and, afterward, tell us they had planned to cross our border to look for work, which was nonexistent where they lived. However, SIFAT's training gave them hope and ideas of how they could make a living in their own hometown. "We don't want to be migrants," they told us, "but when our families are hungry, we have to do something. Now you have taught us things we can use here at home. We have canceled our plan of migrating to the U.S. and are going to try your ideas to make a living at home."



*In 2022, Yurima took classes from trainer Oswaldo Páez at SIFAT's Central American Training Center in Costa Rica.*

Yurima is a Venezuelan Christian working with a needy community, where they had little land to grow food. She first came to study with SIFAT in 1994. She has started a community garden behind her church and has gotten her people interested in growing their own food. Later, the church bought a larger plot of land in an area called Villa Paraiso. It is near Yurima's home, but extends their outreach into this community of approximately 180 families.

Conditions continued to worsen in Venezuela through the years. They did not have resources to develop this new plot. Thousands of Venezuelans became migrants who struggled to walk the 2,000 miles across the Darien Straight in Panama through Central America and Mexico to seek work in the United States. Trying to find ways to help her people grow more food at home, Yurima came to another SIFAT session last summer, where she learned how to make organic fertilizers and pesticides, which would help grow more food. While she was studying, she continually received phone calls from Venezuela, asking if she was finding any help for their situation. When she assured them yes, and that she would soon be back, people in her town decided to wait before they left the country to see if they possibly could grow enough for their families to eat at home.

It happened. Yurima returned with good techniques for organic gardening that she had learned at the SIFAT training. SIFAT's Graduate Projects' Committee raised funds for seeds and tools to help them get started developing the new plot, to build a modest building to store their tools and to hold their worship services alongside this larger community garden in Villa Paraiso. Since food was scarce, they cooked big pots of soup from their harvested vegetables and offered the community free lunch each week. They even began to offer haircuts once a week at this garden plot. These services are not readily available during this chaotic time in their country.

Yurima and her church group built friendships with the community by visiting in their homes, and because of these

relationships, the people trusted them. Families opened their homes for worship services, and some became Christians. Yurima and her group were careful to let them know everyone was welcome in the garden. They did not have to become Christians to participate. God cares about everyone, and all were welcome. But quite a few chose to become Christians, and the others respected the Christian norms.

The community worked together, and today, they are able to feed their families both spiritually and physically and to stay in their own homes. Now, they sell enough vegetables to maintain their garden and community services without funds from SIFAT. This is an example of what we call a “hand up” instead of a “handout.” We believe that much could be done to help hungry people take care of their families at home instead of migrating to the States. As Jesus taught, we must love them as we love ourselves. We can show His love in practical ways beginning in their home communities instead of fighting them at our border.

Thank you for supporting SIFAT! Your donations help provide the invaluable training, like Yurima received, that is making a difference in communities struggling with poverty throughout the world. Thank you for giving a hand up to those who need it most.



*Yurima attended Worship on the Water on Lake Wedowee during a visit to SIFAT. Pictured l to r: executive director Tom Corson, Yurima and Rev. John Ed Mathison.*

*For more information about the Graduates Projects' Committee and how you can get involved, visit the International Projects page at [www.sifat.org](http://www.sifat.org).*

## Don't Miss These Summer Opportunities at SIFAT



### Serve in Ecuador

It is not too late to make plans to serve alongside our graduates in Ecuador. Whether you join an existing team this summer or start making plans to lead a team this fall or in 2025, you will not regret a mission trip to Quito. Step out of your comfort zone to be the hands and feet of Christ by providing VBS to an after-school children's program, begin construction on a new building for a church plant or provide medical care to those without access to a doctor. Check out the Ecuador page on our website or email [internationalteams@sifat.org](mailto:internationalteams@sifat.org) for more information.

### Learn & Serve Summer Experience

We still have spaces available for our weeklong summer experience. More than a summer camp, our L&S programming will explore *Better Are ...*, delving into what Jesus said to those who were broken and burdened in the Sermon on the Mount and how we can mirror love for those who are broken and burdened, while taking part in our classic SIFAT training concepts.

Recommended for grades 7-12, the cost is \$280 per person. You can see available dates and sign up at [www.sifat.org/learn-serve](http://www.sifat.org/learn-serve) (Click on Summer Experience on the left menu) or email [learnandserve@sifat.org](mailto:learnandserve@sifat.org).

### Introducing our L&S Family Weekend

You asked, and we listened! This year, we are offering a family weekend on June 13-15 for ages 8 and up. Enjoy our Summer Experience with your children, nieces, nephews or grandchildren. The cost is \$250 for two people, plus \$65 for each additional family member.