

Bericht von VAMOS ADELANTE

San Juan del Obispo, June 2020

Dear Verein Guatemala Board Members and Friends,

The first three months of the year we are always super busy as the school year starts in January, then a mountain of education material and books has to be purchased and handed out, visits to the different schools have to be made by our education promoters to see if there are problems and if the children really attend classes, and by the time it is March things remain active but with a certain routine.

In the beginning of March the first cases of COVID-19 were registered here and as mentioned before preventive steps were taken quickly and are still pretty tough: the first curfew from 16.00-4am was lifted and changed to 18.00-4am so that the waiting lines in banks, food stores etc. would hopefully become shorter as more time is available, moving from one country "departamento" to another is not possible and for two recent weekends we had total lockdown. Wearing face masks is mandatory, social distance is recommended, many businesses remain closed as are schools and no public transportation is available.

Our staff is mostly working home office making phone calls to affiliated families, talking to them about different alternatives how to make the student's homework available, repeat official hygiene recommendations, reminding them to wear a protective face mask when leaving the house, talking about social distance, about the COVID-19 symptoms-where to seek help, the curfew hours. We try to answer their doubts, possible questions and listen to their problems they are facing.

The promoters have also packed and distributed many food bags for the poorest families in the areas, are attending reduced hours, are helping students financially as they now have to do their homework and exams via the internet and are receiving reports from students as well as receipts/bills.

Some students worry that once normal class starts again that they will not be able to pass the exams as many do not own a television, much less a computer or a smartphone and can therefore not follow the government educational program three times a week. Due to social distance recommendations the students cannot go to a friend who has a TV, so most of them go to teachers living in the villages asking for lots of homework.

Good that we gave them the big bag of school material so they have enough right now! They mostly just need blank papers for doing their homework and that they receive from us.

Food prices have shot up in the villages, beans cost up to Q9 and more, corn is getting scares, rice and pasta are hard to get. Many have lost their jobs. Lucky are those who have a piece of land and who kept their corn and beans.

Vamos Adelante is just trying to purchase food again for the month of July consisting of corn flour, cooking oil, beans, different types of noodles, rice, sugar, milk and different porridges. This time we are concentrating more on the very basics. Getting these amounts is really difficult as it is partially

restricted -people think you want to make a profit by selling it but we are well known in the whole sale store and they are aware of that we will donate the food in remote and needy areas. We are still waiting for several products, it has now been several weeks . Nobody can tell us when these items will arrive as the production line seems to have trouble supplying the stores with big amounts.

The government has at this point donated two bags of food for each student up to 6th grade worth ~ Q60 . Also food boxes will be handed out to poor families but we do not know when they will arrive in Escuintla. Financial aid was also mentioned.

Not having any public transportation makes life even more difficult for people living in remote areas. Many could simply not continue to work as the busses from one moment to the next did not operate any longer and private transportation is much too expensive, others sleep where they work now ,not returning to their homes but at least keeping the job. The ones working in the capital or other towns outside the department of Escuintla were suddenly not able to get there any longer, often resulting in the loss of the job.

The Olla Nutricional-Food Kitchen in Ceylan is of course closed due to the COVID-19 restrictions issued by the government BUT we have been handing out the food directly to the participants instead so that they can prepare it at home. Erica has been helping us and she keeps the place clean so that no mice or rats will take over the kitchen. These rodents are especially bad during the rainy season. We have also been giving Erica a little financial incentive for her help.

Only 10 people can come per hour, they have to wait with 2m distance inbetween them-all this is indeed being supervised by the village committee.

As for the future construction of the houses in Lucernas-we and the carefully selected families as well as Construcasa had everything ready for your visit and then COVID-19 struck. Hopefully, when the new normality begins and the rains are over, we can start to negotiate with Construcasa again. Right now the COVID-19 infections are still increasing daily; once the peak has been reached and there are less, 4 phases will be introduced by the government, one after the other, each lasting 14 days according to plan.

Thank you.

Stay safe and healthy, the Vamos Adelante team wishes you.

Nina





