



seres

ANNUAL REPORT
2020



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Dear friends,

We finished 2019 compelled to continue innovating and creating news to build on our work, to connect and to define formulas for success.

Without a question, 2020 was a year that entirely disrupted the reality and normality with which for all humanity was developing.

To return to the “new normal” – that is still revealing itself to us all - it invited us to reinvent ourselves on all levels, as an ecosystem.

Facing and coping with a global pandemic revealed that many of these global dynamics have a hyper-localized impact. We saw this impact in many of the communities where we work, where inequality and access to resources had already been a challenge. Yet many of these communities brought together collective tools of organization, common well-being, and solidarity that enabled them to cope with this crisis.

As events unfolded, we were aware of the reality that the pandemic was producing a new order in the world, and therefore invited us to create a new harmonious order as an ecosystem. Pausing, observing, reflecting, and acting led us to reinvent ourselves internally. Amid the chaos of a global pandemic, SERES found a “new rhythm”.

During this time we have been able to: analyze different scenarios; adjust priorities; strengthen our fundraising strategy; and along the way, design and implement an 100% online program. Without question, SERES as an ecosystem, had to reinvent itself in order to keep the mission progressing.

We learned to navigate and draw with the new colors that this new reality invited us to embrace, which allowed us to continue our programs and training spaces in Guatemala and El Salvador. During 2020, we led 4 community congresses, 4 online programs known as ‘Youth Leading the Transformation’, reaching 203 new beneficiaries, 1,038 participants of activities in our Community Centers - coneXpacios - and to hold our first virtual summit of young people from Guatemala and El Salvador.

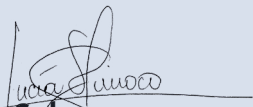
Finca La Resiliencia supported 25 families in El Rodeo Escuintla with the planting of plots that produced 25,000 kilograms of corn, 1,000 kilograms of beans, and sweet potatoes. La Finca developed and implemented other spaces such as the exotic fruit community plots, a beekeeping program, and the exciting construction of our learning center.

Now... the question is: Where we are going next?

We will continue to integrate transformation, reinvention, and resilience as the key pillars of our youth movement. This includes the opening of a new Community Center - coneXpacio - in Suchitoto El Salvador, the sustainability proposal for our community centers, and the launching of our new youth camp in Finca La Resiliencia.

We are and will continue to work in progress to keep supporting young people from vulnerable communities in Central America.




Lucia Solorzano,
Director of Programs & Operations



THIS IS series

Our mission is to cultivate and catalyze youth leaders to build more just and sustainable communities in Guatemala and El Salvador.

Young people can become influential and impactful leaders. By providing them with resources, skills, and support services, we encourage active engagement towards improving health and educational outcomes, reducing inequality, and spurring economic growth – all while building resilience and protecting our ecosystems.

Together, they form a movement of leaders who drive sustainability and democracy: involved in decision making, addressing social challenges, and creating new solutions. They are changing the future of their communities.

We support emerging leaders and change-makers through three cross-cutting areas:

- Through **leadership training** to help youth address the root causes of injustice, inequality and unsustainability.
- In **community centers** to provide young people with services, resources and opportunities for positive engagement around the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.
- With **eco-social ventures**, incubating and growing promising locally-led social and environmental businesses





Since March 2020 the world was impacted by COVID19, many countries closed their borders and implemented mobility restrictions, trying to reduce infections in their population.

In Central America, the contrast was very obvious, El Salvador being one of the countries in the region that first closed its borders and taking more drastic measures to curb contagion. On the other hand, Nicaragua stood out for being one of the countries in the region with the fewest measures to face the coronavirus; and Guatemala with a historically deficient health system with a low number of beds and health personnel.

In Guatemala and El Salvador, the countries where we are present as an organization, mobility restrictions were established during the first months of COVID19, greatly limiting the local economy. In response, they provided social assistance packages to meet the basic needs of the population. In El Salvador, they guaranteed the provision of public services (drinking water, electricity, among others) and in Guatemala the family bond dedicated to people most economically affected by the pandemic was granted, receiving approximately \$300.

Both governments opened new temporary hospitals in different parts of the country. However, in Guatemala, due to the lack of medical personnel and constant problems with service payments, medical care in these centers has not been able to respond to the necessary demand, limiting the population to

approach private health centers for care. Access to COVID tests has been restricted in the national health system for people with symptoms, which has impacted the number of cases reported. As of December 31, 2020, Guatemala reported 136,892 positive cases, almost three times what El Salvador has reported (46,515). The age group most affected in both countries have been people between 20-39 years of age, for El Salvador representing 41% of the infected population and for Guatemala representing 50% of the infected population. Young people have been affected for being the economically active population, having few opportunities to limit their daily activities.

The effects that the pandemic has had in the region so far have been reflected in a greater forced displacement by Central American citizens to Mexico and the United States due to the economic impact on the poorest and most vulnerable people.

In addition, in the Guatemalan population, given the constant doubts about how the COVID aid funds were being executed, citizen demonstrations have arisen to demand the resignation of the President, as demands for transparency on the use of public funds.

As in many parts of the world, the pandemic exacerbated the inequities that already existed, affecting the most vulnerable communities once again. There is still a long way to go before COVID is not a risk for our countries and we are still waiting for the possibilities of having access to the vaccine.



HOW DID WE REINVENT SERES?

As our world shifted before our eyes, the SERES staff saw the importance to react and learn as we went.

Immediate needs

Protocols

A COVID19 committee was created, led by our staff, and focused on the internal and external processes needed to react during the pandemic. We established a protocol that allowed us to know how to act in the different scenarios reacting to the spread of the virus in the communities where we work.

We also established different communication channels to stay in touch with the staff and the youth network. And we made an in depth analysis of the impact of the crisis on our finances. We had to postpone in-person programs, and moved to one-to-one follow-ups with the youth through the telephone, where we supported by providing tools of emotional intelligence, and critical thinking abilities to manage information.

Well-being

The search for well-being is essential and it fell under the responsibility of each member of the team and SERES as an ecosystem. We transitioned from working in an awesome space, all together, to the now well-known home office format.

Before the pandemic, we already had this practice, once a week you worked from home, but the situation changed everything. With it came its own challenges, because it is fair to say, we were not 100% prepared for it. After the weeks passed all of us started to feel blocked and many challenges surfaced and we questioned ourselves: How can we take care of ourselves, at a personal and team level? How do we maintain interaction? How do we find support? Is our response aligned to these changes and needs?





Team support

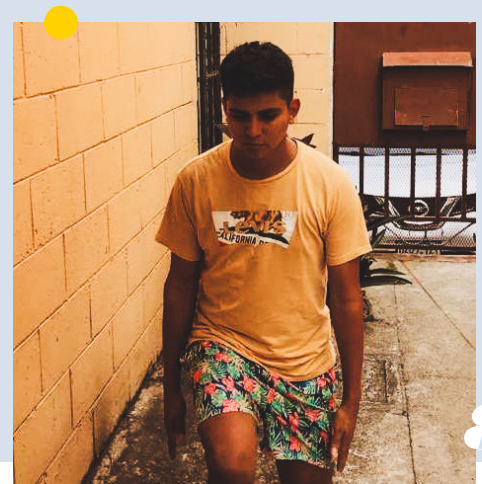
Mental health and self-care

Uncertainty in the midst of the crisis led us to explore our panic zones, through our alliances, we invested time and actively engaged with mental health processes. It was a personal discovery for each of us, and we began to practice how to feed and nurture ourselves and initiated new habits for our own self-care like attending circles of care, 1:1 conversations, mental health days.

Connection spaces

Leveraging the connectivity offered by different digital platforms, we create intentional spaces to share as a team. We had a Monday raffle where you will get the name of a team member to have a one-on-one call. The purpose was to listen, take the pulse, hear thoughts, feelings and give support to each other. We also had Training Wednesdays, half an hour facilitated by one of our team members to share new ideas, thoughts and discussions on one new topic each week. We discuss migration, evolution, finances, crisis, the future based on interesting podcasts, readings, TEDx, and other resources. It was an awesome time to connect, learn and grow with the team.

Thursdays were all about challenges! A member of the team selected an activity and all of the team had to do it. We shared childhood memories, we exercised, we shared jokes and many more activities that connected the team and made us laugh and enjoy. We also had small feedback groups, to offer peer to peer feedback and evaluate our progress, and goals that we have set for ourselves at a personal and professional level.





THE WORK OF SERES

How is SERES work relevant in the midst of this uncertainty?

This question led us to revisit our purpose as an ecosystem. This opened up many new possibilities for the entire team to explore ideas and different processes from how we were cultivating and catalyzing the leadership of the youth.

Our facilitators started self-training processes to facilitate and mentor our youth network through digital platforms. Our fellows (youth who graduated from our programs) transformed the physical community centers - coneXpacios - into a virtual youth movement.

“I received feedback from my colleagues, and this helped me to grow as a leader, as a student, and as a son. To be able to support the youth in the development of leadership skills has been the most relevant part for me.”

Kessler Mijangos.

“I felt supported and included through the WhatsApp group. We adapted all our processes with the youth according to the context and I have loved facilitating workshops about family orchards and finances.”

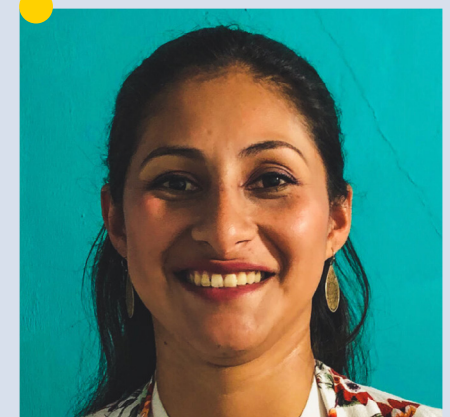
Flor Morales

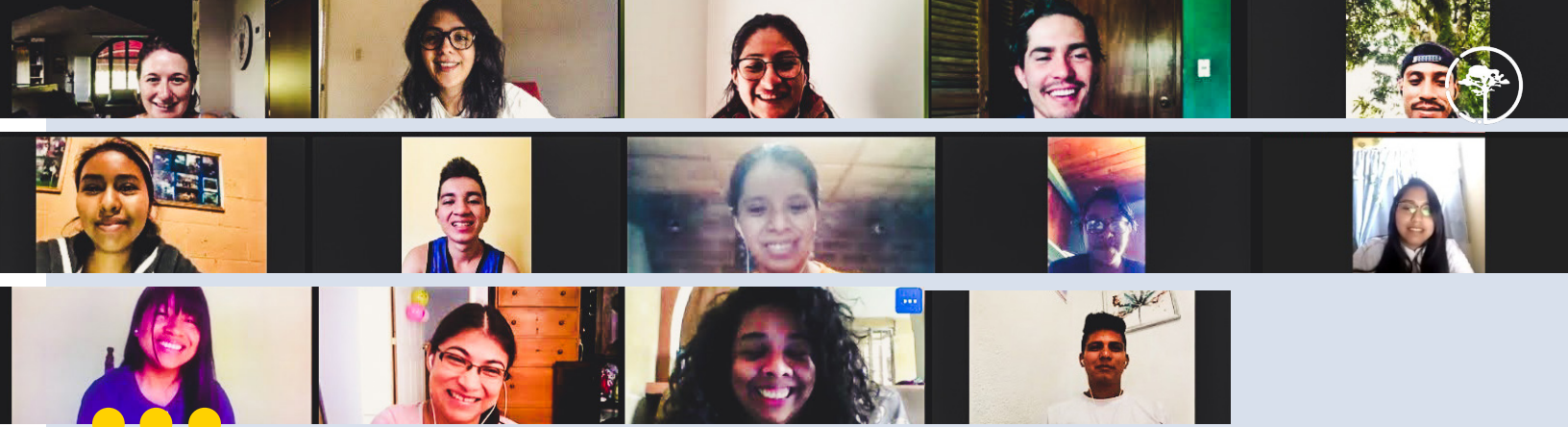
“I grew in my self-management and leading my roles in the best way. I could not have created this muscle of resilience, without the support of SERES, I felt accompanied and that it is okay to be vulnerable.”

Dora Pérez

“I was able to observe how the work of SERES continues to be relevant, how young leaders after years of participating in the network, developing their skills had come a crucial moment to put them into practice. They were the ones who were leading, and creating resilience opportunities in their communities.”

Sara Hurtarte





A 180° CHANGE

From this perspective, we had to think outside the box! As an organization, we rely on private donations and grants awarded by foundations and organizations that believe in local leadership.

This is why our team works on an annual fundraising strategy that involves different activities and events to connect and engage with potential donors who want to join our cause. Normally these events take place around the world. Therefore our strategy had to take a 180-degree turn.

The pandemic forced us to pivot our plan so we could fundraise from home. It was an amazing opportunity to create our virtual events to connect with our donors outside of Guatemala and El Salvador.

We lead virtual tours through our different projects allowing donors to hear stories from the youth themselves and the impact they are having in their local communities. This allowed us to engage donors with our cause.

We also leverage our networks to connect with foundations and organizations around the world with whom we share the same purpose: local leadership. This has allowed us to cultivate relationships with potential donors and foundations that can fund our long-term mission. What a tremendous responsibility!

That is why we practice transparency through monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual reports as part of the accountability we have with our SERES Champions. This has allowed us to generate trust and is reflected in the commitment and loyalty that donors have in donating to our cause.

The conscious and intelligent management of resources during an atypical year led us to have conversations, where we could prioritize expenses according to the context, where we found ourselves.

As a result, we implemented the “quarterly expenses prioritization”, a practice where each area reviews, confirms or modifies expenses according to the needs they have.

This practice allowed us to be flexible and readjust expenses in the programmatic area - activities, events - and in our general operations - office rent, internet, telephone - to support in the best way we can.

As part of being conscious about resources and best practices, we had to face a very controversial topic within organizations... wages!

In 2020 we were impacted by the economic crisis derived by the pandemic. Therefore we had challenging but safe and transparent conversations with the team regarding wages and how we could maximize our resources over time.

During a quarter the team decided to rescind a percentage of their wage as a form of saving and support the organization for the following months.

This is why we decided to create a task force that can analyze policies, processes, best practices and establish criteria around wages that will help us to support everyone and honor the commitment, work, and expertise each member brings.



OUTREACH & IMPACT

Being able to successfully design and run our leadership methodologies and in person programs, held us in our comfort zone. With the pandemic and restrictions getting tougher we began to navigate between our panic zones.

Until someone starts asking those questions that we are avoiding so much...

Now what? What do we do? What should we do to better support our youth network?

These questions came from the perspective of our service to the youth. The innovation part was born the moment we lost our fear, and we dared to create and bet on something new and unknown.

From this moment, we began to change our programmatic strategies:

Virtual follow-ups

Our follow-ups began to be through calls and video conferences because of the need to stay connected. Likewise, we realized the need that young people had to express their feelings about the situation which included personal, family, and community challenges that were happening at that time.

Virtual activities

We kept listening to the youth needs and changed the in person activities for virtual spaces. We continue catalyzing the leadership of young people, by providing key tools to develop sustainable practices in their communities .

Radical collaboration

Who do we continue our collaboration with? That question led to many conversations with our allies, and it is there where we found new ways of collaboration. For example, ABPD - a Guatemalan

nonprofit - had the mission to keep the youth networking moving. Through this mindset, we were able to launch our first online program called “Young Leading the Transformation” that fosters a culture of sustainability awareness through collaboration and shared leadership.

We also collaborated with SerNiña - a Guatemalan nonprofit - to develop training spaces for our young people in support for children/adolescents, and led our 1st Virtual Youth Summit - Weaving Voices of Guatemala and El Salvador.

Finally, it was amazing to unleash the knowledge that the SERES Ambassadors (youth who graduated from our programs) have. Many of them facilitated training spaces that benefited other young people within the network.

Juan Alvarado (better known as JuanCho) is one of the awesome leaders from San Juan Comalapa. He led sessions with the youth from Escuintla and shared his leadership experience within his community, his challenges, and celebrations.

2020 was the year of learning. As a team, it invited us to pause, observe, ask and innovate with ideas that keep supporting our youth, who we feel closer than ever.



programmatic summary

83

programs led

197

direct beneficiaries

1,038

participants in our Community Centers

65

action plans

2,657

indirect beneficiaries



#RESILIENCESTORIES

What did the youth achieve despite adversity?



During Covid one of the problems that I identified was unemployment. Many people haven't been able to provide. Another thing is the insecurity in the community, many of us are affected by violence, either in our home or in the surroundings of our neighborhood. The lack of education has been an issue where many people don't have the resources to study online, so they decide not to study. Last but not least human losses... many people don't respect measures and restrictions.

Evelyn, La Dignidad, Escuintla | [Play video](#)



2020 has been a year of adversity where I have gone through a lot of difficulties but despite that, I have found the way forward where I have had the vision to take on the challenges. Because of Covid-19 one of the biggest problems that have arisen in our community has been the lack of job opportunities. It has been a very hard process, many people have been looking out for opportunities and ways of making a living, but through it all, we have been blessed, always.

Noé, La Dignidad, Escuintla | [Play video](#)



Last year's biggest challenge was testing positive for Covid19 and keeping my family safe, especially my daughter. One of the most difficult things was being sick and isolated from my family. Yet during those challenging times, I felt the support of the youth network who were constantly checking on me and how the situation was evolving.

Ana María, Chalatenango, El Salvador | [Play video](#)



The impact of the pandemic taught us that we are vulnerable but that we can also reinvent ourselves. The main challenge was the vulnerability we have in health systems, we know that they have improved but are not completely adapted to unexpected situations. Although the biggest challenge was education, we manage to finish the school year, however the internet connectivity represented a big challenge for children and the youth. There is so much left to do.

César, Suchitoto, El Salvador | [Play video](#)



FINANCIALS*

REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT

	FY 2019	FY 2020
Foundation Grants	\$119,813	\$48,807
SERES Global Grants	-	\$112,799
Individual Contributions	\$5,504	\$294
Fee-for-service	\$2,964	\$1,626
Other Income (interests)	\$684	\$179
	\$128,965	\$163,705

EXPENSES

	FY 2019	FY 2020
Training Programs (Central America)	\$132,052	\$94,033
Trainin Programs (International)	\$220	-
Leadership Center/Pathways	\$47,511	\$45,926
Grants	-	\$2,202
Operating Costs	\$18,654	\$5,318
Development	\$16,878	\$8,360
Management & General	\$26,809	\$24,235
	\$242,124	\$187,947

Net assets at beginning of year	\$229,868	\$75,906
Grant Reimbursement**	-\$40,803	-
Net assets at end of year	\$75,906	\$52,337

*For Guatemalan-based operations for fiscal year ending December 31, 2020.

**Funds from Inter-American Foundation (IAF) collaborative grant managed by Asociación SERES until February 2019 and were transferred to another organization as part of the agreement for their management.



LEADERSHIP & STAFF

Staff

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Co-Executive Director

Sara Hurtarte

Co-Executive Director

Lucia Solorzano

Director of Programs and Operations

Antonio Sánchez

Program Coordinator, El Salvador

Liza Ponce

Communications and Development Officer

Dora Pérez

Finance Officer

Victor Mora

Project Manager

Glenda Xulu

Guatemala Program Associate

Marco Antonio Méndez

Land Manager

Tranquilino Ramos

Land Manager

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Sherry Miller -

President Seres Global

Adjunct Professor, Framingham University

Fredy Sitavi -

President Asociación SERES

Communications Officer, Pop No'j

Elizabeth Machic - Officer

Vice - President Asociación SERES

Guatemalan Youth Activist

Kathy Ruhf - Secretary

Executive Director, Land for Good

Gary Teale- Treasurer

Finance Director, Sassón (Grupo Alza)

Alia Whitney - Officer

Executive Director, Freedom FWD

Jacob Carter - Officer

Doctoral Student, Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts

Elizabeth Pellecer - Officer

Graduate Research Assistant, University of Maine

Corrina Grace - Officer

SERES Co-Founder and Senior Advisor

Brenda Morales

Guatemalan Youth-Elect Representative

Roxana Zumba

El Salvador Youth-Elect Representative

Juan Jose Alvarado

Guatemalan Youth-Elect Representative



THANK YOU!

We would like to thank our partners and SERES Champions for standing with us, trusting and investing in our work. You have helped us strengthen the local youth leadership movement to build more just and sustainable communities in Central America.

Partners

- ALDEA /ABPD
- Connected
- Dan & Jeanne Scott Family Foundation
- Embassy of Taiwan in Guatemala
- Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women
- Global Peace Initiative of Women
- Guatemalan Families Association
- Impact Marathon Series
- Leopold Bachmann Stiftung
- Move92
- Partners Asia
- Plataforma Global El Salvador
- REISA
- SerNiña
- Soroptimist Club
- Unbound
- UNESCO

Corporate partners

- La Bótica Verde (GT)

Volunteers & champions

- CECI - Elisa Kilbourne
- Booking.com - Booking Cares Program

SERES Giving Circle

Our awesome individual givers who have supported us throughout the year. We are grateful for your generosity!

If you want to support us and be part of the SERES family and the creation of long-term impact, we are looking for you!

We believe in trust-based relationships, the power of listening and collaboration. We are in this together!



Make a gift today here www.givingloop.org/seres or send it to **SERES -1804 S Viewcrest Ln Spokane Valley, WA 99212, USA.**

If you are a foundation please get in touch with us so we can talk about how we can create impact together at development@seres.org



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