


# COVID-19 RESPONSE: ON THE GROUND


This past year has altered the world in previously unimaginable ways, and the most intense impacts were suffered by those marginalized by poverty. As long-term ministers of presence in our communities, we were positioned to respond in unique ways. Thanks to your generosity towards the COVID-19 Community Support Fund, we were able to form contextualized, emergent practices for hopeful action amid crisis.



**Advocacy & Organizing**

**BANGKOK**  
**EAST L.A.**  
**NORTH AFRICA**  
**PHILADELPHIA**  
**POMONA**  
**SAN ANTONIO**  
**SAN JOSÉ**  
**SOUTH L.A.**  
**VANCOUVER**


Our team in Vancouver interviewed nearly 140 neighbors on the effects of COVID-19 and racial violence in their neighborhood, and used the findings to form strategies for community organizing and ministry.



**Spiritual & Pastoral Care**

**ALL SITES**


Our staff, partners, and community members engaged in intercessory prayer, pastoral counseling, spiritual formation, and trainings related to hopeful action, joy, and resiliency.



**Food Distribution & Assistance**

**BANGKOK**  
**TEGUCIGALPA**  
**JOHANNESBURG**  
**MANAGUA**  
**MANILA**  
**MEXICO CITY**  
**POMONA**  
**SAN ANTONIO**  
**SAN JOSÉ**  
**VANCOUVER**


Our team in Bangkok launched a soup kitchen which was replicated in 39 different communities, serving over 13,000 meals.



**Rent Assistance**

**OAKLAND**  
**POMONA**  
**SAN ANTONIO**  
**SAN JOSÉ**


Shalom Iglesia, a Servant Partners church partner in San José, gave away \$100,000 in rental assistance to families in need.



**Financial Assistance**

**EAST L.A.**  
**SAN JOSÉ**  
**SOUTH L.A.**  
**POMONA**


Church of the Redeemer, a Servant Partners church partner in South Los Angeles, gave away \$236,000 to local families in need for food, rent, medical supplies, etc.



**PPE Distribution**

**TEGUCIGALPA**  
**MIDDLE EAST**  
**NORTH AFRICA**  
**PHILADELPHIA**  
**SOUTH ASIA**

Our team in North Africa partnered with local sewers to sew, train others, and distribute 3,300 medical grade masks to healthcare workers, elderly neighbors, and prisoners.

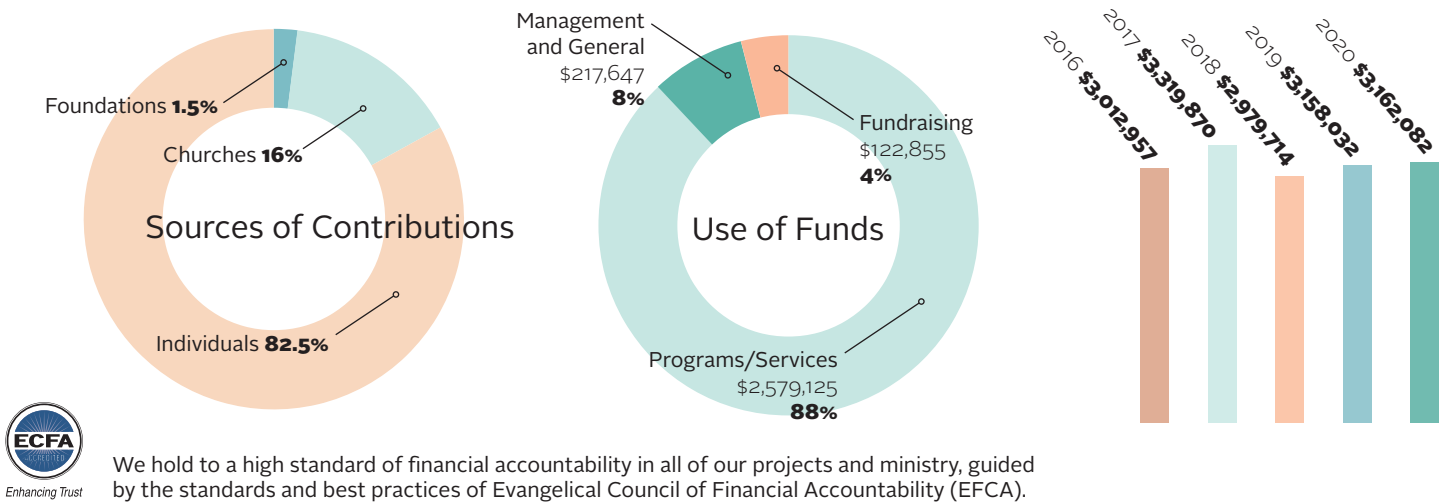


**Health Safety Awareness & Education**

**MIDDLE EAST**  
**SOUTH ASIA**

In South Asia, house church leaders communicated each version of government-issued safety protocols to nearly 2,500 in their communities through drama, drawings, and songs.

## 2020 FINANCES



## VISION 2030

Learn about our ten-year vision to build, strengthen, and bridge God's movement in urban poor communities around the world at [servantpartners.org/vision2030](https://servantpartners.org/vision2030).



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Transforming Communities with the Urban Poor

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This past year has been immensely challenging. Many of us have struggled to maintain hope in the midst of economic hardship, systemic racism, and a deadly pandemic. Poor, marginalized communities have suffered the worst. Hope for change seems to be continually dashed upon the rocks of intransigence. But some of our discouragement may be due to our misunderstanding of hope.



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Theologian Jürgen Moltman makes a distinction between hope and optimism. Optimism, he argues, is that sense of positivity we feel when things are trending in a good direction. It is based upon what we can reasonably and humanly accomplish considering the past and present. For example, we may be optimistic that if we can get enough vaccines out in the world, we can turn this pandemic around. However, hope is different than optimism. Hope rests on something beyond ourselves. It necessitates a faith that God can and will act to set all things right, things that are beyond our capacity to make happen. This does not mean that we should not work for the transformation of the world. That is precisely why Servant Partners exists. It simply means that the best of our human efforts to eliminate poverty, or racial injustice, or systemic inequality will always fall short without the divine intervention of the Lord. If we settle for optimism, we will always face discouragement. What we need right now is hope rooted in God. In this annual report, we share stories of hope from cities around the world, where Jesus' Kingdom is breaking into desperate circumstances and bringing renewal. Thank you for joining Servant Partners on our journey of hope in the midst of poverty.

With gratitude,  
Derek and Lisa Engdahl  
General Directors







## WOMEN TRANSFORMED BY HOPE

Women Lead Thousands With Eternal Hope

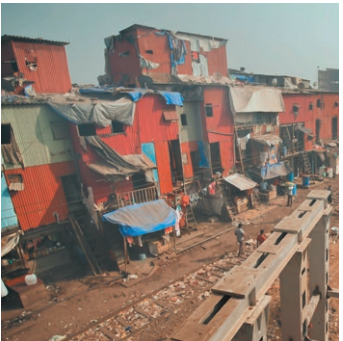
### SOUTH ASIA

As the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns tore through South Asia, affluent residents hibernated while migrant workers and poor residents suffered worsening poverty, hunger, and joblessness outside. Amid these depressing conditions, one community found itself blooming with hope.

“From years of cultivating a strong network of spiritual, social, and economic support, our community was positioned well to withstand the pandemic,” said Jeremy Habakkuk, Servant Partners strategy coordinator for South Asia.

The Servant Partners ministry partner in South Asia—better described as a movement—now has 160 house churches and 118 microfinancing groups. Led by local women, these churches and varied project ministries are visibly

transforming nearly 100 communities throughout their city. During the pandemic, the women established 40 new house churches, coordinated food, mask, and domestic product distribution to 7,500 people, and provided medical assistance to 2,000



seniors, pregnant women, and infants. Last month, they launched a Community Health and Evangelism program, a grassroots initiative training and equipping local women as primary health care workers

to address COVID-19 and poverty related health issues.

The movement began in 2013, when Jeremy partnered with South Asian leaders Vikram\* and Kavita\* in developing a holistic ministry to empower women in urban poor Muslim settlements in their their city. The women participated in storytelling and literacy classes, where many heard the stories of Jesus and came to faith. They started *jamaats* and *satsangs*, house churches where Muslim and Hindu women worship in their own cultural expressions. To date, they have seen 2,000 new believers and 2,500 literacy graduates.

The women also formed microfinancing groups, where they learned to save, open bank accounts, and start small businesses. These groups have helped them overcome corruption and misinformation to gain nearly 80,000 government benefits. This jumpstarted significant economic activity in their communities and offered a crucial financial lifeline during the pandemic.

“The problems that these women endure are multifaceted: poor sanitation and hygiene, hunger, domestic and communal violence, broken families, joblessness, loneliness, and much more,” Jeremy said. “But these women have also formed spaces where they are loved, educated, and in solidarity with one another in addressing their challenges. Most importantly, they have found hope for their futures and families—a hope that they never had before.”

When Salwa\*, a Muslim mother of three, heard the Gospel of Mark, she insisted on being baptized. After her baptism, Salwa’s Muslim in-laws intensely interrogated and accused her. Unsure of how to respond, Salwa prayed and received an answer. She told them, “I have sanitized my whole body and soul from sin—a more dangerous virus than COVID-19, because it takes away our eternal life.” Overcome with intrigue, Salwa’s family became interested in God’s story.

Like Salwa, many women in the community are being transformed by Jesus’ hope and boldly extending this hope to their families, neighbors, and communities. They are spiritual pioneers, generous advocates, and key leaders in a movement of hope—not only to overcome COVID-19—but for eternal life.

## FED WITH LOVE

A Meal Program Satisfies Hunger and Hearts

### MANAGUA, NICARAGUA

During a tutoring session, Servant Partners staff Beauty Ndoro noticed that Dominic’s\* sister was missing.

“Where is she?” she asked Dominic.

“She’s napping. She’s usually sleepy in the afternoons, after we have coffee.”

“What else did you all eat today?” Beauty asked.

“Nothing.”

Dominic’s situation is not uncommon in Managua,

Nicaragua, where many live in extreme poverty. Between civil unrest, economic decline, and joblessness stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, families have fallen further into food insecurity. As parents forage for work, children are left to look over their siblings and homes—and their diet and education suffers.

Beauty and Philip Ndoro moved from Mexico City to Managua in 2015 and partnered with local leaders in starting a tutoring program, along with other ministries, to serve children in the neighborhood. After learning how children were affected by chronic food insecurity, they began including meals into the program. But when the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing needs, Beauty, Philip, and the team posed a larger question: can we implement the meal program on a communitywide scale?



With funds from Servant Partners’ COVID-19 Community Support Fund, they opened the program to all the children in the community. Since July, they feed up to 100 children each weekday. In December, they added the program on Sundays, so

children attending Bible classes could leave with full hearts and bellies.

“Even with all that is happening, these children have the love of Christ in them,” Beauty said. “They enjoy learning about his stories and presence in their lives. And they smile with such delight when they get their plates, join the line, and wait for their food. To them, it is an expression of love.”

The whole community has been encouraged by this expression of love. Many are struck by the generosity of strangers who have given towards the fund. Some have responded by joining the team in serving the children.

Yelena\* is one such volunteer. Last year, she joined the team as a cook for the meal program. When the staff gave the local leaders a food basket as a thank-you gift in December, Yelena was overwhelmed. “I didn’t have anything for Christmas; this gift is going to go a long way for my family,” she said. Yelena’s four children were overjoyed when their mother arrived with the food basket.

“Yelena is one of many mothers in our community who find hope and peace knowing that their children are being fed every afternoon,” Beauty said. “They are understanding more of God’s love, expressed tangibly in this difficult season.”

While the team only planned to host the meal program for six months, the need has persisted. They have also distributed food bags to



“They are understanding more of God’s love, expressed tangibly in this difficult season.”

senior citizens, along with medical aid and masks. Now, they are praying, planning, and implementing new strategies to sustain the program in future months.

“More than simply feeding our children, this program has become a light in our community,” Beauty reflected. “God has helped us to find hope in hopeless situations.”

## FINDING JESUS AT THE CLINIC

Jobless Neighbors Experience Miracles Through Prayer

### SAN JOSÉ, CALIFORNIA

Immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic touched California, San José became a flashpoint for infections. Servant Partners

staff Jairo and Lourdes Sarmiento felt the economic and health impacts ripple through their low-income, immigrant neighborhood.

“Our community lives to work,” Lourdes said. “Without jobs, they suffer.”

In November 2018, Jairo and Lourdes met for prayer with Angela and Brett, friends from a local church. God gave them a vision for a medical clinic offering holistic healing through medical care, spiritual care, cultural care, and financial aid to neighbors. With divine provision, they launched Healing Grove Health Center just as the pandemic began, where Jairo and Lourdes offered pastoral care as known and trusted leaders in the neighborhood. They also initiated a prayer hotline for community members to call with any prayer requests and needs.

Since its start in March, Healing Grove has prevented 820 families from becoming homeless through rental assistance, provided nearly 40,000 grocery boxes to

families facing hunger, and given away \$6 million in financial aid. Shalom Iglesia, the Servant Partners church partner that Jairo and Lourdes pastor, has also sacrificially given away nearly \$100,000 in rental assistance to community members in San José.

Lourdes routinely helps neighbors with applying for financial aid at the clinic, ending each application by offering a time of prayer for them and their needs. For many in desperation, these prayer times have opened opportunities to encounter God’s peace. When residents receive the aid they applied for, Lourdes reminds them, “This is how Jesus loves you.”

María\* was one neighbor who applied for financial aid. She and her husband both lost their jobs and were struggling to provide for their five children. Lourdes helped María finish her application and offered her prayer. Previously, María did not want anything to do with God, but her recent situation left her desperate; she prayed with Lourdes and trusted in God. A few days

later, María learned that she would be receiving more than \$11,000 in financial aid and broke down in tears.

“For María, it was more about trusting in God than it was about the money,” Lourdes reflected. “When someone stole her purse a few weeks after, she approached me for prayer, believing that God was the one who would give her peace. She did all the things one typically does after losing their purse—reporting it, calling the bank, and visiting the DMV—but most importantly, she came to a place where she knew she could meet with God. That is a miracle.”

Like María, people often arrive at the clinic without hope. Some simply call the prayer hotline longing to be heard, and are met with prayer, encouragement, and hope. Though Healing Grove has given away millions in financial aid, neighbors are receiving something much more meaningful: Jesus. Through Jairo and Lourdes’ ministry at the clinic, 25 people have received Jesus and four have found themselves reconciling with God.

“It is a historic time to share the good news about salvation to a world in crisis,” Jairo reflected. Jairo, Lourdes, and their whole family recently had COVID-19 and believe it has enabled them to better understand how to care for others. “In the midst of joy for those receiving Christ and grief from the passing of loved ones, we are able to faithfully fulfill the mission that God has called us to.”



While applying for financial aid, neighbors experience God’s peace through prayer



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\*Names changed for security and privacy reasons.