

Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de las Víctimas de la Violencia
en las Verapaces Maya Achi

ADIVIMA

2018 Scholarship Program Annual Report January - December 2018

Scholarship Program for rural youth survivors of the grave violations of human rights in the Baja Verapaz department (province), Guatemala

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Introduction

This report gives information about the most relevant activities that were completed with the youth scholarship program during the 2018 school year, with the goal of improving the academic performance during their formation.

Since the beginning ADIVIMA's scholarship program has benefitted young women and men from the families of survivors of the grave violations of human rights during the genocide of the Maya Achi people and the construction of the Chixoy hydroelectric dam. To optimize the scholarship program we have designed a selection process for the applicants that starts with the annual announcement for applicants, the receipt of applications, a preselection process followed by home visits before the final selection of recipients based on the information collected through this process.

The scholarship program also includes a tutor who is responsible for monitoring the progress and participation of the scholarship recipients in their schools. The staff person also provides direct tutoring and reinforcement for the learning process for the scholarship students. Finally the tutor is responsible for planning support programs in order to prevent low levels of success.

During the 2018 academic year ADIVIMA granted scholarships to students at both the middle and high school level to a total of 58 students from different communities in areas of Rabinal & Cubulco (Baja Verapaz) and Chicamán (Quiche).

History

La Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de las Víctimas de la Violencia en las Verapaces Maya Achi (ADIVIMA) [The Association for the Total Development of the Maya Achi Victims in the Verapaces, Guatemala), a non-profit organization, was founded on April 24, 1994 as a foundation and community association. It was created by Maya Achi men and women who were survivors of the grave violations of human rights and acts of genocide committed against them during the internal armed conflict and those affected by the construction of the Chixoy hydroelectric dam. It includes the entire population of Maya Achi, Pocom, and Q'eqchi people, and the mestizos in the departments/provinces of Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz and Quiche.

We focus our efforts on finding the truth about what occurred during the violence, seeking after criminal justice with regards to those who perpetrated the violence, reparations for the harm that was caused, the recovery of historical memory in our communities, the reinforcement of our identity as a people, and the wholesale development of the survivors and their families so that we may have the opportunity to reconstruct our lives and the fabric of our community.

In 2007 the scholarship program was started with the financial support of our collaborators in the Unitarian Universalist churches in the United States, Jefferson Unitarian (Golden, Colorado) and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington (Virginia). We recognize the efforts of the committees which annually collect the funds that support Maya Achi youth in the scholarship program. The program has benefitted young men and women of scarce resources and we have been able to change the lives of 56 youth, including 31 young women and 25 young men. They have earned academic credentials in the following fields: accounting, business administration, elementary and early childhood education, letters and sciences, computing, general education for adults who did not complete school (GED), and office work. With these degrees young people have a better opportunity to obtain dignified jobs, to be accredited with a title to apply for jobs, and some of them have also gone on to study at the university level.

For these youth the scholarship program has been and will be a great opportunity to improve their living conditions and academic formation, with the hope that the economic support will continue for other families and through this strategy we will reverse the poor level of education in our communities.

The support mechanism that ADIVIMA uses has been functional in orientation. It gives the opportunities to the scholarship recipients to choose a career and study in the schools that they want to study in. This greatly helps the students prepare for work after graduation because they choose the profession that they want to work in. Our work as an institution is to orient them to professions and degrees that are available in our area, closest to their community.

Narative Report on the 2018 Scholarship Program

This year we received 50 applications from student to participate in the program. Thirty five students applied for help attending 7th grade, 10 applicants sought assistance for 8th and 9th grade, and 5 youth applied for help attending high school programs. This year the program leaders prioritized applications for incoming 7th grade students. The selection committee developed a pre-selection process that took into account selection criteria, followed by a home visit to meet the family and evaluate their socio-economic conditions, their agreement with the student's decision, and collect information that allowed us to select the 11 incoming students. This was all done prior to an assembly about the scholarship program for the families to learn more about the way the scholarship program works.

In 2018 ADIVIMA offered 11 new scholarships to students at the 7th grade levels and continued supporting 47 students already in the program. The beneficiaries are all families of the grave human rights violations of the Maya Achi people, and these families were affected by and are victims of the human rights violations associated with the construction of the Chixoy hydroelectric dam.

Middle School

7th Grade: 11 students received scholarships, 9 girls and 2 boys, aged 12 & 13.

8th Grade: 13 students continued, 9 girls and 4 boys, aged 13 & 14.

9th Grade: 11 students continued, 8 girls and 3 boys, aged 14 & 15. One boy quit the program for unknown reasons.

High School

10th Grade: 12 students continued, 9 girls and 4 boys, aged 15 & 16. Two girls quit the program in March.

11th Grade: 8 students continued, all girls, aged 15 & 16. Unfortunately one girl quite without giving a reason.

12th Grade: 3 students continued, 1 girl and 2 boys, aged 16 to 19. One boy quit without giving a reason.

Our efforts focus on the communities that were struck most significantly during the internal armed conflict and the communities whose human rights were violated during the construction of the Chixoy hydroelectric dam. They include

From the Rabinal region

Chichupac

El Saúce

Xesiguán

Plan de Sánchez

Pacux

Pachiuca

La Ceiba

Pichec

Pichec Sacacho

Panacal

Pacacja

Patixlam

San Rafael

Rio Negro

From the Cubulco region

Colonia Naranjo

Chirramos

And from the Quiche province

One young woman from Pajales.

The students from Cubulco and Quiche were affected by the Chixoy Dam construction and in both cases the families live in extreme poverty.

In addition, ADIVIMA is working to build understanding of the grave human rights violations against the Maya Achi people in future professionals, so that in the future they can help assure that these atrocities do not occur again. We also hope for the students to become leaders in their communities that promote the respect of human rights and contribute to the reconstruction projects through political involvement related to the Chixoy case.

General Assemblies

First Assembly

On February 4th, 2018 we held the first assembly to coincide with the start of the school year. As part of the gathering, we reviewed the history of the growth of the scholarship program, the objectives of the program, how we finance the program, including the fundraising efforts of the members of Jefferson Unitarian Church and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington to benefit the young people in the scholarship program. We also took advantage of the gathering to talk to the new scholarship recipients about the challenges we faced in selecting the new recipients because we had received so many applicants. We then told them that if they were selected they should assume a strong commitment from ADIVIMA to them, and take advantage of the opportunities through the scholarship program, as we assured them of the commitment of ADIVIMA, Jefferson Unitarian Church and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington to support them with the resources needed to finish their studies. However, we also reminded them that they should take responsibility to put forth the effort in their studies in order to achieve their goals.

After the end of the presentation of the 11 new scholarship recipients that are now part of the scholarship family we gave them all a warm welcome.

We then took time to talk with the parents and the scholarship recipients about the requirements set forth at the beginning of the scholarship program and the things that they should do to keep the scholarship. The scholarship recipient should pass all their classes for the grade they are in. The payments are made by the presentation of the report card showing the student is taking the classes laid out by the Education Department, so the students need to present their report card to ADIVIMA at the end of each unit. They also need to participate in the activities organized through the Museum of Community Memory and contribute to the social activities in our community.

Through the induction process the new beneficiaries received information about the rules for using the payments to the schools, the purchase of school supplies and uniforms,

transportation, typing, computers, tuition and other supplies the students needs for their studies for the grades they are in. We also spoke with the parents to make sure they understand that they are responsible for some of the costs for their sons and daughters, most especially making sure they are fed.

Finally we explained to them that the scholarship program is structured to give 75% of the support to young women and 25% to young men in order to help the young women stand out in their education, professional and social ambitions and improve their living conditions. We closed by giving out the financial advances on the first portion of the school year.

Second Assembly

The 24th of June we held the second general assembly with the parents in order to share the performance results of the scholarship recipients at the different grade levels. We also talked about the help provided through the tutoring, the achievements of the students and the challenges that had been identified.

With the active participation of the parents and the students we showed a PowerPoint presentation about the accompaniment process and how we monitor the development for each of the scholarship recipients. Underneath the weakness we found there was a lower level of performance in some students. According to an analysis by our tutor, the largest part of the difficulties come from the scarce explanations by the professors in each of the subjects studied in class. In these cases, teachers are not providing enough time to resolve the students questions/challenges. When we found these problems we notified the parents and recommended to them that they speak with the teachers or principals to ask for more attention to their students. Another factor that contributed to the lower level of progress is the low level of preparation that some students received in their earlier school years, nor could they count on sufficient learning materials, like community libraries. Many students families are also struggling financially, and their parents may have low levels of literacy, all of which limit the ability of the scholarship recipients to be prepared for their studies.

We talked with the parents that before the unidentified weaknesses, the scholarship program tutor prioritized his attention on the recipients with lower levels of academic development in order to work with and reinforce their foundational knowledge for academic success. That process of companionship took place through personalized attention in order to resolve specific problems. The result is that during this process we've seen improvements for various students and they have improved their performance level.

Third Assembly

On December 2nd we had the last assembly the school year with the goal of sharing our analysis of the achievements and difficulties we faced during 2018 due to the commitment and efforts by ADIVIMA, students and their parents. The assembly started with a welcome to the participants, followed by sharing with the parents the results of the partnership with the students that increased the knowledge level of the program participants. Of the 58 students in the program in 2018, 48 successfully completed their studies and advanced to the next grade. Six had to take a remedial program with the help of the tutor, and then successfully finished their grade. Unfortunately, three young women failed, two in 7th grade and one in 9th grade. While the families had demonstrably supported the students economically and encouraged them to spend the necessary time on classwork, they were unable to help with school assignments. ADIVIMA worked to make sure that the students had their scholarship funds in a timely fashion for the school year as soon as they presented their report cards, per the program requirements, and also made available the tutor for general and specialized help for the challenges they faced during the whole year.

Visits from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington & Jefferson Unitarian Church

In February of 2018 we received a visiting delegation from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington in order to share the work of ADIVIMA, the reality of the lives of the scholarship students, show the schools our students attend. Among the activities held during the visit, we hosted a meeting to introduce the delegation to our staff, mission, vision and the organizational structure. Each program leader shared about their work with the communities we serve.

Legal - We work to companion the survivor families of the acts of genocide and grave human rights violations committed during the internal armed conflicts in Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz & Quiche through the judicial process. These survivors act as complainants in the search for legal justice and reparations, while also working to bring to justice the leaders of these acts, including those who provided material support or the intellectual justification/orders, who are being brought before both Guatemalan courts and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Historical Memory/Preservation - This team is in charge of the recovery and sharing of the historical memories of the Maya Achi people through spaces for reflection, analysis, review, and consciousness raising about the grave human rights violations and the acts of genocide that were committed against our people.

Cultural Identity - This team works to recover and strengthen our memory about ancestral knowledge that was almost lost because of the acts of genocide in the Maya Achi communities of Cubulco, Rabinal and San Miguel Chicaj. We work to help form and strengthen Maya Achi identity in our youth through workshops on our history and cultural identity.

Financial Claims - We provide accompaniment, strategy, legal counsel, political and technical advice to the 33 communities that survived the grave human rights violations during the construction of the Chixoy Hydroelectric Dam in order to claim their rights to access justice through a program of public political engagement and the reparations plan in this matter.

Scholarship program - This program works to companion and support the young people in our community by providing school scholarships that make possible the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for success in the personal, family, community and socio-political lives of the populations affected by the grave human rights violations.

We also had visits to the homes of scholarship students to help our partners understand the lives and living conditions of the students. They visited the homes of Jose Alfredo Tecu Ruiz, from the community of Ceiba, as well as Jennifer Senayda Briseida Raxcaco Guanche and Yosselin Rodriguez, who live in Pichec Sacacho.

There was an opportunity for intercultural exchange between the scholarship students and the travelers. We started with introductions, then held a Mayan invocation, led by a Mayan spiritual guide. Next the students shared traditional songs and dances from Rabinal. The travelers presented a Unitarian Universalist service, including the lighting the chalice, the symbol of their faith, music, the hymn "Come, Come, Whoever You Are" in Spanish, a short reflection and meditation.

In July we also hosted the second visit from Jefferson Unitarian Church led by Lisa Bickford, with six members of the church. We shared with them many of the same things as the delegation from Arlington, including the presentation on the work of ADIVIMA, visits to the homes of three scholarship students, in Panacal, Ceiba, & Pichec Sacacho, an intercultural exchange with the students, who shared some of what they know about their identity as Maya Achi people, and a visit to Rio Negro where they heard from witnesses of the grave human rights violations that occurred during the Chixoy dam construction. They also heard about not having good methods of communication, roads, medicine or basic infrastructure.

Monitoring and Tutoring-

The monitoring process we have in place for the schools and scholarship students Homelife allows us to determine what academic challenges our young people are facing during their

studies. After analyzing the situation, we develop a personalized plan to help them strengthen their skills, especially in the areas of math, communication, and language (Spanish, Achi & English). We've seen the biggest challenges with first year students (7th graders) because of low knowledge acquisition during their elementary school years, which leads to difficulties for them in both middle and high school, most especially in math.

During the 2018 school year we have regular monitoring visits to the schools to determine the academic performance of each of the scholarship students. We spoke with both the teachers and principals at each school about the following -

The participation and involvement of the scholarship students in group work

The level of attendance and understanding in the classroom

Their behavior in class and their relationships with other students

The level of responsibility that they are taking for the quality and timeliness of their homework

The respect given to the teachers and administrators at the school

Students knowledge about academic sanctions imposed by the school

The students participation in the activities organized by the school

The qualities and abilities that the students have, as well as their academic interests

The appropriate use of their notebooks and other school supplies

Areas or topics that have been identified as learning challenges for the students

Through the monitoring process we have identified a few problem areas for students learning and retention. They include, inadequate teaching methods by the teachers, families who lack the economic foundation and academic preparation to help their students, a lack of community resources (libraries, bookstores, internet) to help the students study and learn on their own or transfer to other schools to study the career they want and making it hard to adapt to a change to a new school.

Among the high school students, we worked with the following students - Maynor Alexander Pangan Raxcaco, German Rokael Ic Enriquez, Rolando Lorenzo, Gomez Juarez, Julio Cesar Valey Sical, Gleisly Lisbeth Miculax Vargas, Imelda Yadira Cahuec Osorio, Lucia Ramos Chen, Melisa Elizabet Tecu, Shenly Aracely Cojom Ismalej, and Yosselyn Noemi Cahuec in order to help them with accounting and English classes.

During the second monitoring period we reviewed with the teachers the progress the students were making with their work, attendance, respectful behavior, and participation. Our support generated an 80% improvement in many aspects of their formation. These results were possible because of the support of the parents, and the support of the tutor who provided them with the strategies, tools and help needed to improve their performance level.

Achievements of the Tutoring Program

Our tutoring process uses a personalized strategy to build didactic methods that facilitate learning, principally with the students who have difficulty understanding instructions given in Spanish. Some of our scholarship recipients are from communities that primarily speak Achi, which can lead to difficulties understanding all of the content and materials presented in class.

For the math tutoring program we reinforce the basic mathematical operations, as well as algebra, with first year students by developing games and using the resources available in the community, like bottle caps, small rocks, corn, beans and rice to have a better comprehension of arithmetic concepts like addition, subtraction and fractions.

The language and communications tutoring focuses on reading comprehension, ways to improve spelling, and handwriting exercises. The tutor organizes work groups and helps the students with workbooks that have writing exercises, as well as community history, legends and fables in order to build a habit of reading.

In physics we helped the students understand the formulas by building hydraulic models with homemade resources.

For the development of methods, techniques and activities, we prioritize attention in the following ways-

Personalized attention

Forming groups by grade level and home community

Home visits by the tutor for students who live in the closest communities

Reinforcement and tutoring happened for 40 students this year in the following communities-

Chichupac -3

Xesiguan - 4

Pacux - 7

Pichec Sacacho - 4

Pichec - 3

Ceiba - 6

Panacal - 5

Plan de Sanchez - 2

Concul -1

Sauce - 1

Nimacabaj (en Rabinal) - 3

Colonia el Naranjo - 1

Chirramos (en Cubulco) - 1

The support process includes the following-

Twice weekly meetings, as individuals or in groups.

In order to unify the work, we take into account the failed courses, the number of scholarship students, the grade level of the students, and the school where they are studying.

We then work on activities based on the topics seen in class, incorporating new exercises and practice activities to increase comprehension.

The activities are developed according to the plan of studies so as to not confuse the students by using technologies like computers to watch video tutorials in math, communication and language arts.

It's worth noting that these activities, developed and used prior to the students exams has been fundamental in allowing 25 scholarship students to pass classes they did not pass during the first evaluation period.

Middle School Graduates -

In 2018 seven young women and two young men in the scholarship program satisfactorily completed middle school. They include

(From Chichupac)

Alida Mariela Garcia Chen

Brenda Maricela Valey Juarez

Alvaro Antonio Sic Manuel

(From Ceiba)

Miriam Lorena Ojom Lajuj

Luis Angel Manuel Tecu

(From Pichec Sacacho)

Yosselin Yessenia Rodriguez Toj

(From Panacal)

Beberly Ileana Sical Guanche

Claudia Magalii Ivoy Sucup

(From Pajales Quiche)

Vianney Elizabet Lopez Mendoza

Their families were all proud that they achieved this important step in their academic formation, having overcome many difficulties to acquire new knowledge.

High School Graduates -

In 2018 two high school students in the program graduated, one young man and one young woman.

(From Ceiba)

Allan Alexander Manuel Iboy

(From Plan de Sanchez)

Santa Rosario Manuel Ixpata.

Both finished studies in accounting programs.

These scholarship students were able to celebrate the happy occasion with their families, having finished the formation process and giving thanks for the vital support to achieve their dreams that they received.

Lessons Learned -

Among the 2018 graduates, the leadership and sensitivity of Miss Santa Rosario Manuel Ixpata and young Allan Alexander Manuel Iboy was evident. Their awareness of ADIVIMA's work was demonstrated in their requests that their schools allow them to carry out their internships in the ADIVIMA work areas. They applied the knowledge that they acquired during their academic training in the accounting department, showing interest, punctuality, knowledge and responsibility in carrying out the activities assigned to them by the general accountant.

The struggles of Allan Manuel Iboy stand out in the scholarship program. He has succeeded in spite of the great difficulties that have faced him and his family over the years. He lost his mother at the age of 4. Later the scholarship provided extra support to Allan when his parents died in 2017, along with his grandparents who had been in charge of supporting his studies. He did not allow these losses to cause him to abandon his studies or do poor quality work. With much humility, he overcame these obstacles and achieved his goal, graduating with an accounting degree, all of which is just one example of the struggles our scholarship recipients face.

The intercultural exchange between the scholarship recipients and the delegations from both Arlington and Jefferson Unitarian churches has also been fundamental. They provide an opportunity for the students to share their own knowledge and identity, as well as getting to know something of the culture of another country, which helps to motivate them to continue struggling to strengthen their communities and improve the conditions of their lives and families.

The tutoring and the support provided to the students through methods, techniques and practice work are designed to allow the tutor to help the students increase their learning comprehension, improve the quality of the work they turn in, their study techniques and comprehension, all of which leads to improving the grades they earn.

The ongoing commitment of those who support the scholarship program have greatly contributed to the success of the young women and men in the program, and they are achieving their goals of being professionals as adults.

Through this program we have delivered to the community two new professionals, who surely would not have been able to take on these careers without the economic support provided to

them. Today they have in their hands the tools to improve the conditions of their lives. With the credentials they have earned, they now have access to much better job opportunities than they would have had without them.

Challenges We Faced -

Five high school students have stopped participating in the scholarship program this year. Two finished middle school, but found the distance from their home communities to the regional center too great to continue to high school, one moved to take a job, and two dropped out without giving a reason why. Three young students also struggled. One will be repeating her grade in 2019, one dropped out due to significant family struggles, and the other has left school entirely without giving a reason.

Photo Appendix



Students participating in the tutoring program



Visits to the schools to check on the learning conditions

The 2018 Graduates



Allan Alexander Manuel Iboy at graduation, with his certificate in accounting.



Santa Rosario Manuel Ixpata at graduation with her certificate in accounting.



This year's scholarship program recipients