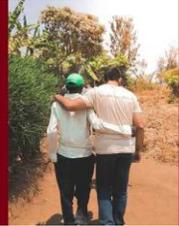




*A Catalyst for Development:  
Where Communities Take the Lead*

Growth  
Resources  
Action  
Community  
Empowerment



# GRACE Cares 2020 Annual Report



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## Letter from the Executive Director GRACE Cares 2020

*GRACE Cares' mission is to partner with local heroes and communities on small-scale community development projects that make a difference by empowering people to improve their lives. We do this with respect to local cultures and traditions. This is accomplished by helping to build healthy, educated, just, peaceful, and productive communities. GRACE Cares provides expertise, funding, and support for health, education, peace and social justice, cultural preservation, and economic development projects.*

**Growth:** Despite the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, we have nevertheless seen all of our programs expand their vision of what they want for their communities.

- **B4 Peace** was active with two major projects (*Agent Orange: Do Not Forget Me* and *Do Not Forget Me: Yes, I Can*) that highlight the horrors of war and the specific damage left by Agent Orange in the context of the Vietnam War.
- **Community Finance Guatemala (CFG)** shifted their focus in 2020 to COVID resilience. They launched an information campaign on WhatsApp, developed new initiatives to help with food security, distributed more than 750 seed packets for gardening, donated 1,500 chickens to 226 families, and supported Sunshine Tienda's employment of 41 women.
- **Kali to Kali** worked with their local partner SEDI Rwanda in initiating the Education Development Initiative (new uniforms, new learning materials, paid school meals, construction of school gardens) and assisting in COVID relief projects, particularly in Cyaruzinge and Masoro.
- The **Lucknow Project** provided economic aid to an updated group of 25 women (head of households) who are supporting themselves or their families. They have also hired a field worker who visits these families 4-8 times per month and distributes funds for them to pay for their monthly food rations. There are over 90 total individuals including children and adults who are benefiting from this initiative.
- The **Munali Youth Empowerment Program (MYEP)** conducted several awareness-raising activities on the importance of reading and preserving books in the Chongwe and Lusaka Districts of Zambia.
- **Project Hearts** managed to successfully train nine women in their Community Health Leadership program, hosted 70 people for well-being workshops, had 35 people receive tele-therapy, constructed 1 house while painting 7 others, and had 67 water tanks installed.
- And finally in Kenya, the **Watha Project** successfully completed the drilling work and installation of wells in three Watha villages (Garsemuke Village, Bombi Village and Katana-Hakaye Village).

**Resources:** These communities depend on financial support. We have been encouraging our programs to delve into their own fundraising and social media. This can be a challenge for some of our programs with limited resources. That is why we depend on our donors who continue to sustain our current programs and provide the impetus for new programs in 2021.

**Action:** This year we have become more active on social media—check out our Facebook Page! We also made a conscious effort to spread the word about our projects and our goals. In 2021, we are looking for additional board members to help provide fresh insight in this rapidly changing world. GRACE Cares has also taken on new leadership staff which will provide us more focus and expand our programs.

**Community:** Every project we collaborate with has local heroes who are passionate about strengthening their communities. These heroes work with their communities at a grassroots level to determine community priorities, ranging from providing sustainable agricultural programs and water systems to education, social services, and health care. The commitment of these heroes has illustrated what can be accomplished to make their communities a better place.

**Empowerment:** 2020 was the year of resilience, strength, and empowerment. In the United States, where dramatic political and social transformations took place, B4 Peace has made the silent voices heard. And internationally, Project Hearts is empowering women in Baitoa, traditionally a male dominant society, and Kali to Kali as well as MYEP are empowering women and children in Rwanda and Zambia. All of our programs were inspired from these global changes and it is easily reflected in the growth of all of our projects.

With gratitude,

Lamia Lahrech, PhD

Executive Director, GRACE Cares



# B4 Peace

**Background:** GRACE Cares believes it is important to promote the arts and education projects that develop individual and community awareness on the importance of peacebuilding. By doing so, they join citizens across the globe to reflect on decisions that impact the lives of vulnerable people. We promote an agenda that respects the rights and responsibilities of humans: the right to be free and to live peacefully and to learn how to build peace within individuals, families, and communities.

**Activities:** In 2020, B4 Peace was active with two major projects- *Agent Orange: Do Not Forget Me* and *Do Not Forget Me: Yes, I Can*. The *Agent Orange* chemical warfare program left enormous environmental damage and caused significant health problems for the people of Vietnam. Presently, there are still over 2 million individuals suffering from Agent Orange Syndrome (AOS) in Vietnam and the USA. While many American veterans receive compensation from the US government for AOS, the Vietnamese victims do not receive compensation. The project's goal is to increase knowledge and action regarding the ongoing damage caused by the US military's chemical defoliant Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. The Agent Orange educational video (<https://youtu.be/Mizi0f3hyzY>) by Namaya was presented at the *Veterans for Peace National Conference* in August 2020.



Namaya said, "This project is part of our projects on the impact of war and militarism in society. In particular, with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vietnam war, I had undertaken a two-month art/writing residency called '[Journey to Forgiveness in Vietnam](#).' We will return to Vietnam in 2021 to continue this project."

B4 Peace was also active in supporting the *Do Not Forget: Yes, I Can* project. The art and parallel social advocacy campaign are designed to raise awareness of the extent of the damage and inspire critical thinking, dialogue, and concrete action addressing the social impact of the chemical warfare program. In sharing the lingering effects of Agent Orange with the US and international public, B4 Peace hopes to promote peace and advocate for continued support for victims. An integral part of the project is "Yes, I can: Yes, we can" to highlight individuals' courageous work with AOS, their families, and organizations. The project has been endorsed by *Veterans for Peace* and is collaborating with other groups in the US, Vietnam, and around the world.



**Future:** A sculpture created by Namaya will be installed at the *War Remnants Museum* in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in 2021. The sculpture uses (simulated) orange barrels with portraits of those affected and conveys the devastating and lingering effects of the Vietnam War. The names of the corporations responsible (Monsanto, DuPont, etc.) are emblazoned on the barrels. Namaya and the B4 Peace team will partner with the *War Remnants Museum* in Vietnam, volunteers, and local artists in Vietnam to implement the project. Plans are underway to display the sculpture in the US and virtually.

B4 Peace is also in discussions with the city of Gulfport, Florida to create an installation of *Agent Orange: Do Not Forget Me* at their Veterans Park by October 2021. It will consist of several elements:



- Agent Orange Barrels Project
- Tree of Memory and Forgiveness: With plain shipping cards and the yellow ribbons attached to the oak tree.
- Vietnam Generation: The poem displayed on large 6' x 3' boards





# Community Finance Guatemala

**Background:** Thousands of indigenous Kakchiquel Maya households throughout the Chimaltenango department (~counties) of Guatemala live with constant financial uncertainty and instability, which greatly diminishes their overall quality of life. Community Finance Guatemala (CFG) is dedicated to reversing this situation by supporting indigenous Guatemalan women with the necessary knowledge and tools to empower themselves to organize their own financial systems. Project founder Andrew Becker arrived in Guatemala in 2013 to consult for a local social business, Soluciones Comunitarias, which is dedicated to offering innovative services to alleviate many of the challenges faced by the indigenous populations throughout the country. By working directly with their local team and having countless individual and group discussions with constituents, Andrew designed what is now the CFG project. While Andrew was able to support and train a few savings groups on his own, CFG really didn't take off until in 2016 when he found two incredible local heroes of Comalapa, Doña Maria Sotz and Wilfred Son (now the director), to take over the training of the groups themselves. This dynamic duo has since taken over management of the project locally and has grown it to become more successful than Andrew could have ever imagined.



**Activities:** This year we shifted gears in March to focus on COVID resilience. Here are our most significant activities and accomplishments:

- We launched a COVID prevention information campaign through WhatsApp.
- We developed a new initiative to help with food security: we supported more than 280 families in starting gardens to cultivate nutritious and culturally-appropriate foods. Our team distributed more than 750 seed packets of radish, chard, spinach, and mustard, and sent how-to videos on how to start and care for the gardens.



- To further improve family nutrition and economic resilience, we donated 1,500 chickens to 226 families. The chickens provide protein (eggs and meat) that families can use to eat or sell.



- In 2019, we started an artisan initiative to weave bands for Guatemalan-made hats to sell through a retail partnership with Texas-based Sunshine Tienda. This budding partnership came just in time to support our weavers through the economic impact of the COVID crisis. Through consistent orders for more hats (which have been one of Sunshine Tienda's all-time best-selling products), we've been able to generate consistent employment for 41 women. During weeks when some of the women's husbands were not able to find work, these talented and industrious women were able to help feed their families.



- In the last four years, Community Finance Guatemala has helped 32 families receive decent homes by coordinating with housing projects working in the region.
- All savings and solidarity group operations were initially suspended in March due to the pandemic. In the last months, we have helped 13 of our groups restart their activities with physical distancing and other protocols in place to protect members' health. The rest of the groups are planning to reactivate in January and February of 2021.

**Future:** Our plans this year are to continue to deepen and broaden our ways of supporting current groups, and to expand into a new region of Guatemala.



# Kali to Kali

**Background:** Kali to Kali operates in Rwanda and aims to provide sustained education and wellness efforts in areas of need. These efforts are done by supporting local education systems and schools, providing access to clean water, addressing hygiene issues, and providing access to proper nutrition. Over the years, Kali to Kali has established long-term relationships with organizations overseas to ensure that sustainability can be continued. In addition, local workers are used to support and stimulate local economies.



**Activities:** In 2020 we directly worked with our local partner SEDI Rwanda in initiating three projects. The first project we initiated in early 2020 was the Education Development Initiative where we paid for nursery school admission fees, new school uniforms, new

class materials for teachers and students to use, construction of school vegetable gardens, and paid meals for the students. Since COVID-19 struck, we have been assisting with COVID Relief projects. We have completed two COVID Relief projects where we provided materials for hygiene and sanitation, food, and supplies that villagers needed. We have been helping the Cyaruzinge and Masoro communities in particular with populations of approximately 300 and 220 respectively.

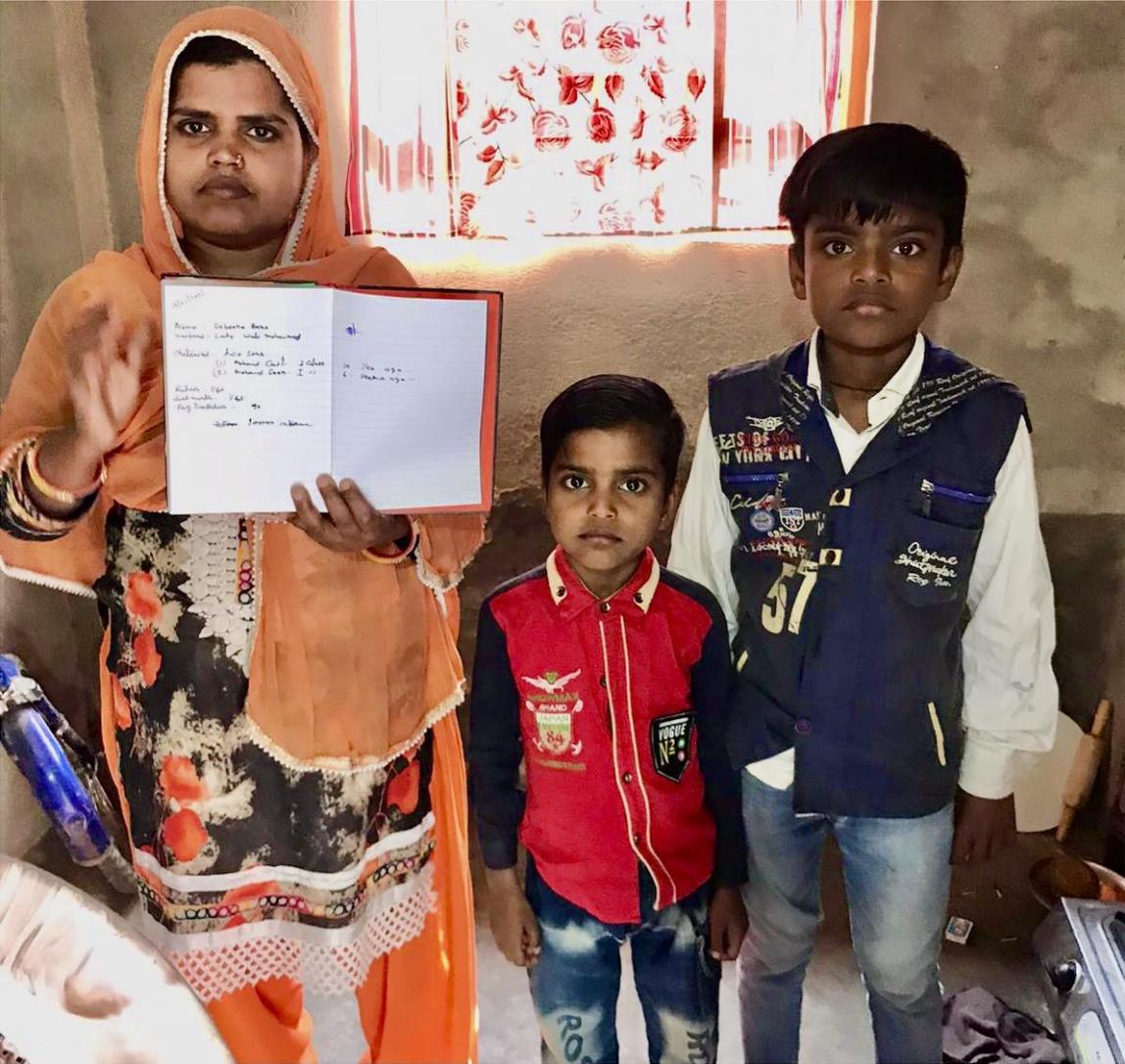


**Future:** For 2021, we will be assisting COVID Relief projects and hopefully building off the Education Development projects to see how we can provide more (e.g., new materials, learning programs) to teachers and students so they can achieve their full teacher and student potential. We will also continue to build water wells and food gardens to support the ongoing needs of local communities.



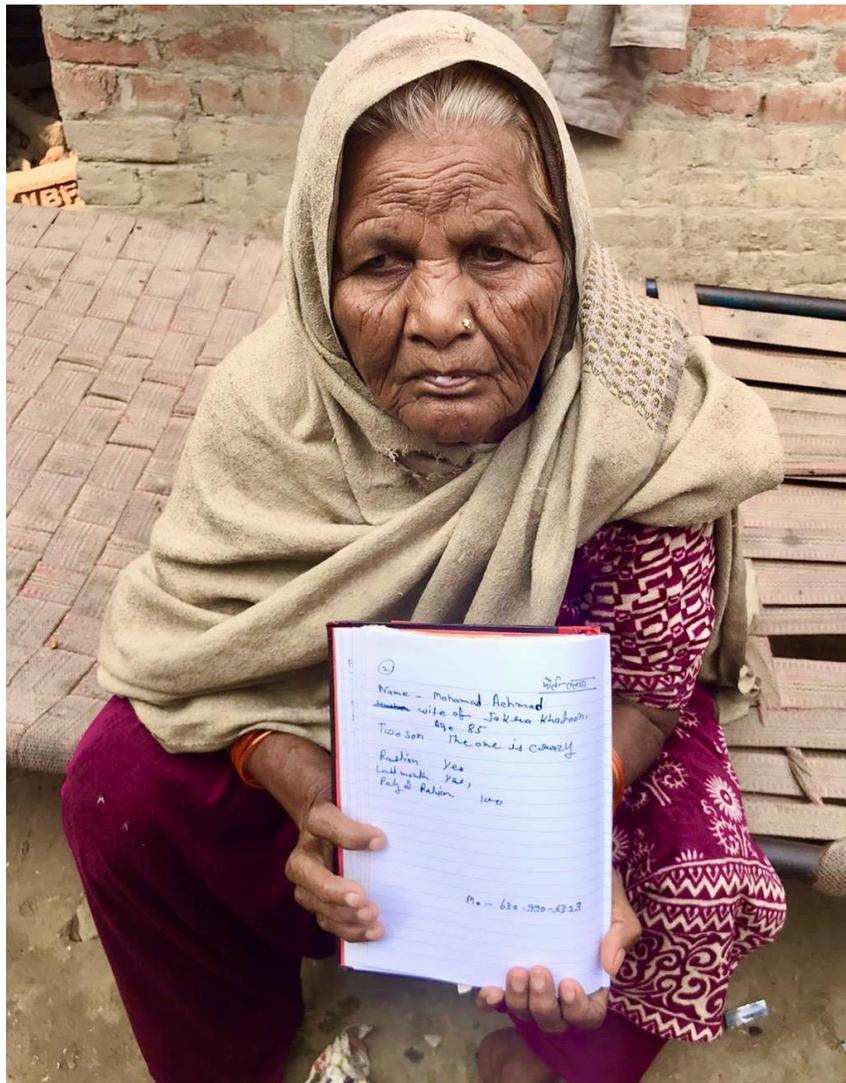
# Lucknow Project

**Background:** In 2008, Nazeela Nasseri, a U.S citizen of Indian descent decided to take action after recognizing the need for basic education and healthcare through a visit with her maternal grandfather to the Amethi region. Soon after, she began travelling to India during the summer to teach English in the school for girls in Amethi. The Lucknow Project was eventually established to introduce an Intensive English Program in the region’s schools. Nazeela’s sister, Afshan Nasseri, is now the director of the Lucknow Project.



**Activities:** In 2020, the Lucknow Project provided economic aid to an updated group of 25 women (head of households) who are supporting themselves or their families. The money provided monthly enables these women to buy a month of food ration for their families. Prior to the start of our program, these women would not have enough money to buy the monthly ration and would have to save money for two or three months to get one month of food ration. This would mean that their families would be short on food consistently. We have hired a fieldworker who visits these families 4-8 times per month and distributes funds for them to pay for their monthly food rations. There are over 90 total individuals including children and adults who are benefiting from this initiative.

We also provided economic support for community activities such as deaths and marriages and continue to provide clothing for over 100 children in our schools for everyday wear and also sweaters for winter. This enables these children to have the basic necessities for attending class and for keeping warm.



**Future:** The future plans are to continue to build this program in a systematic manner. We will build family profiles to keep a record highlighting each family's unique needs and will raise money via GoFundMe, Zoom fundraising, etc. For our community support initiative, we are continuing to provide support for burial, cremation, marriage, and medical needs. We have supported 10 such events. Currently we do not have any funds to provide this support. Given India's current catastrophic situation, people are being hit from all sides by the Coronavirus. They need help with their businesses, as well as with costs of healthcare.

For our education initiative, we're currently developing a critical thinking curriculum for the 3 schools we work with. Our overall goal is to create a curriculum which facilitates conversation, opinion crafting, and wider thinking about the world. We hope that during our next in-person trip, we'll be able to implement this new curriculum with a batch of students. Our total reach at this time is 600 students and 50 teachers.



## Munali Youth Empowerment Program

**Background:** Founded in 2008, Munali Youth Empowerment Program (MYEP) is a grassroots community-based organization dedicated to improving early childhood education, maternal health and child care, human welfare and opportunities for children, youth and their families in Chongwe District of Zambia. MYEP's overall goals are to provide early childhood education and lifelong learning opportunities for children, youth, and their families. MYEP also strives to offer educational advancement opportunities for teen mothers and young fathers and to ensure that no one in Chief Kasengo's village goes hungry. Current programs include mobile book activities, health education programs and clinics, cultural activities, and leadership programs.



**Activities:** MYEP has conducted several awareness activities on the importance of reading and preserving books in Chongwe and Lusaka Districts of Zambia. Chongwe is the primary area where MYEP has been working for the past 3 years. MYEP has targeted school children and provided

them with short stories and picture books. Picture books have been used with children under the age of 5 who are unable to read but can appreciate the pictures. This has led to their early interest in books and reading.



Zambia has four seasons, a rainy season from October to March, spring from March to June, winter from June to August, and summer from September to October. MYEP did not install book booths/box libraries due to the rainy season but did manage to get the funding for 10 booths. MYEP acquired bikes that they used for outreach and mobile book distribution in the community. MYEP reached out to 30 households and worked with 100-150 children.

MYEP identified a 9-year-old girl named Mavis Phiri. Mavis's family has benefited a lot from the book mobile project because Mavis enjoys reading for pleasure and she has been involved in school with the nutrition program.



**Future:** MYEP's future plans for 2021 and beyond are to install 100 book booths/box libraries in Chongwe and Kasupe areas, reach out to 350 children, and build a Resource Center in Chongwe. MYEP is canvassing the local area for 10 volunteers who can help with the mobile book distribution project. The founder of MYEP, Blessed Ngoma, is going to visit Zambia in July and plans to coordinate with elementary schools in the selected areas.



# Project Hearts

**Background:** Baitoa is a rural municipality located in the north of the Dominican Republic with a population of approximately 15,000 people. Due to its lack of infrastructure and social services, Baitoa suffers from problems like access to quality education and health care, sanitary forms of waste disposal, clean water supply, and employment opportunities.

Prior to being officially recognized as a Dominican NGO in 2011, Project Hearts existed informally in the personal service of founder Rubén Ottenwalder. Since 2011, Project Hearts has been refining its mission to ensure we are working in such a way as to truly empower our communities. For this reason, we are focused on addressing critical needs that fall into three primary categories: health, economic development, and education.

Project Hearts believes everyone deserves to live with dignity, so we are working to exchange the cycle of poverty that exists in Baitoa for a cycle of empowerment. Rather than limiting what resources the poor have access to, we are using our privilege to lift up others by offering them the wisdom and tools that will allow them to alter the future, for themselves and their descendants to come.



**Activities:** We were able to accomplish the following in 2020:

- W.A.S.H. (Water Access, Sanitation, and Hygiene):
  - 7 water filters and 67 tanks were distributed, benefitting more than 225 people with affordable access to clean, consistent water
  - 40 children participated in interactive W.A.S.H. workshops, teaching them how to stay healthy via proper sanitation and hygiene
  - 8 hand-washing stations were donated to various stores and medical facilities throughout Baitoa in response to COVID-19 and in partnership with another W.A.S.H. organization



- Community Learning:
  - 9 women graduated as Community Health Leaders, and 10 more commenced the 2020 iteration of the course
  - Leaders conducted educational workshops in their communities, covering topics like mental health, nutrition, hygiene, and COVID-19
  - 44 educational videos on a variety of topics were recorded by our staff and shared with our social networks - even reaching someone in Peru!
- Social Impact:
  - 1 woman opened a restaurant to support her family
  - 1 house was constructed for a mother of three with nowhere to live
  - More than 350 bags of food were distributed to 37 families in response to the COVID-19 outbreak
- Holistic Well-being:
  - More than 70 people attended well-being workshops

- 35 adults, 4 children and youth, and 17 couples and families received therapy
- 25 physically ill and 18 grieving individuals were comforted during their times of need



**Future:** Next year we hope to continue the work that already has a proven impact on Baitoa while we expand our focus to other needs that we believe are urgent:

- Menstrual health education for teenage girls
- Sex education for all youth, with the goal of preventing unwanted pregnancies
- Mental health education for community groups and personal counseling services for individuals and families
- Construction of at least two more houses for vulnerable families





# Watha Project

**Background:** The Uzima Community Development Project supports the well-being and development of the Watha people in the Galana region of Kenya through development programs in education, healthcare, water access, and human rights training. The Wathas primarily inhabit four villages within the Kisiki sub-region with a majority living in Garisemuke Village in the Galana area. Most Wathas earn a living through farming, hunting, or charcoal burning. In addition to natural disasters and cyclical climate events like droughts, the Wathas have encountered the following developmental problems that have had adverse effects on their daily lives:

- **Access to clean water:** As a marginalized community, the Watha have historically confronted difficulties in securing access to their own clean water supply. In addition to the history of discrimination, the Watha have had to deal with frequent crocodile attacks which have made the acquisition of water even more difficult.
- **Poor infrastructure:** The Galana region is considered an undeveloped area with poor or under-paved roads that become impassable during the rainy season. Many residents live in simple huts with thatched roofs and mud floors and walls. As with the differential access to water, the lack of infrastructure in the Watha community seems to be an endemic problem.
- **Healthcare:** The nearest dispensary is located in the town of Bombi, a 4-5 km walk for many residents. Beyond the distance, the dispensary lacks adequate health facilities, equipment, and medications with only one on-call nurse. Mobile health services run by the county government of Kilifi have only been available on a sporadic basis, and the majority of people have had to rely on traditional herbal medications without proper access to medical care.
- **Food security:** The Galana community depends heavily on subsistence farming and charcoal burning with very little opportunity for livestock husbandry. However, since the region tends to be very arid and susceptible to floodwaters, it is very difficult to raise crops consistently. The problems are exacerbated by the rate of deforestation to produce charcoal.
- **Education:** The level of illiteracy is much higher within the Watha community compared to other neighboring communities. The residents not only suffer from a lack of resources (e.g., schools, teachers) but also face economic pressures that compel families to keep children at home.



**Activities:** In 2020, the drilling work and installation of wells in three Watha villages (Garsemuke Village, Bombi Village and Katana-Hakaye Village) was completed successfully. There was full community participation for the entirety of the well projects, and we are also conducting WASH Trainings in all villages to improve water access, sanitation, and hygiene.

Villages with wells	Population	WASH Trainings	Conclusion
1. Garsemuke	1,117	4	Safe drinking water
2. Bombi	467	3	Water tested slightly salty and not safe for human consumption
3. Katana-Hakeye	286	2	Water tested slightly salty and not safe for human consumption

The Watha community of Garsemuke Village can now access safe drinking water and enjoy improved hygiene, whereas previously the community would be susceptible to crocodile attacks and water-related diseases from the river. The well serves a population est. of 1,117 people with 248 households in Garsemuke village.



The second and third wells serve populations of 467 and 286 people respectively. Although the water in their wells is not safe for human consumption, they can still use the water for bathing and cooking. The overall project goal is to improve health and sanitation conditions and mitigate the fate of crocodile attacks for the Watha community in five villages.



A committee consisting of both men and women was formed in the three villages to oversee the wells. The committees are tasked to manage and educate the villagers to prevent improper usage of the water by overseeing day-to-day operations and setting policies to ensure all members make

contributions to their groups in order to defray future maintenance costs. The committees will be reporting to the villagers during the meetings on the progress of the wells and potential problems arising from the community. They will also continue to educate the community on the benefits of the water system and work closely with community health workers to explain proper water use, sanitation, and personal hygiene.

**Future:** In addition to the maintenance and upkeep of the existing wells, we plan on building two new wells which will lead to improved health and sanitation conditions for a total of five Watha communities. We also plan to desalinate the two existing wells with slightly salty water.



# Financial Statement

In 2020, GRACE Cares had a total operating budget of \$105,253.20 received from donations. We gratefully received \$46,746.16 in individual donations, \$5,408.32 in corporate donations, and fundraising and major donations received equaling \$53,098.72. Our total expenditures in 2020 were \$77,855.00.

We are proud to say that \$98,519.95 of our income is allotted for programs. Due to Covid-19, many of our programs were placed on hold. Funds received for these programs are being distributed as the programs begin to open. 93.6% of our income has or will go directly to our projects. The balance of the remaining expenditures \$6,733.25 went to administrative, management, and contract costs.

Our detailed financial review is available upon request at [info@gracecares.org](mailto:info@gracecares.org).



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Doreen Suubi, BA, Program Assistant

# **Interns and Volunteers**

Daryl Caggiano, BA, Fundraising Volunteer

Celia Davis, General Intern

Michael Lifschutz, MA, General Grant Research Intern

Elizabeth Nyamupachitu, MA, B4 Peace Grant Writing Intern

Liz Parant, BA, Community Finance Guatemala Grant Writing Intern

Alisha Procter, MA, Grant Writer Intern

Doreen Suubi, BA, Watha Grant Writing Intern

# Donors

We are grateful for the generosity of our 2020 donors and volunteers as well as our *Corporate, Organization, Foundation and Matching Donors*

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