



Dear friends,

This year will not be forgotten. It seems like only yesterday that we heard on the news that a new virus was spreading throughout the World. Nobody imagined how difficult this year would be and everyone has been impacted in one way or another by the Covid-19 pandemic. If you lost a loved one, a family member or a friend, we hope you find strength and cherish every moment of your life.

In 2020, more than 22,000 Venezuelan refugees were resident in Guyana. This number is expected to increase by around 40% by the end of 2021. Many families were affected by the pandemic, losing their jobs, losing education opportunities for their children, being exposed to domestic violence and risking their lives to provide food for their families.

Voices GY responded to this crisis with a new, online modality for our programs. We have increased our educational support by almost 10 times in comparison with 2019. A total of 15 teachers were trained and specialized with ESL methodologies for migrants and refugees in Guyana. We have supported more than 150 refugees and migrants with English as a Second Language classes every week since early April. In addition to our education program, we have supported 10 small business projects in which Venezuelans and Guyanese returning from Venezuela were trained and supported with micro financing. This was the first program of its type in the country and a unique initiative in the Caribbean.

In May 2020, we started working with mental health support. A total of 10 psychologists were supporting this program, providing emotional containment and counselling to dozens of migrants in Guyana. On a case-by-case basis we also supported dozens of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants with health services in which some of them were able to receive specialized treatments and surgery in public hospitals, enrol their children in the school system, obtain legal advice regarding their visa situation, and have their cases referred to partner organizations to receive shelter and housing support.

A year ago, Guyana became an official oil producing nation. Almost 120,000 barrels of oil per day are produced in the Atlantic coast of the country. While this happened, much of the world has been burning. In Guyana alone, there were 483 fire spots including 114 in indigenous territories and 8 fire spots in protected areas. Furthermore, on the 12 of November 2020 more than 1,500 houses were damaged by the floods in urban and agricultural areas, and the main income of many families were also affected in the nearby zones.

Early in 2020, Voices GY began participating as an active member in the Caribbean Climate Network. During the first semester, we provided training to Caribbean organizations working in the areas of climate change and the Environment on accessing finance and fundraising. Our team was trained in the areas of climate change by the University of Oxford and we have started looking opportunities to provide support to local grassroots initiatives to tackle climate change from a strategic perspective. We hope to continue working during 2021 in the fight against climate change, building climate resilience, community resilience, a just transition and continuing to support community empowerment. Our small business program will contain a new section of sustainable businesses during 2021. In addition, we will only support initiatives that can prove their intention to diminish, reduce or tackle environmental damage and climate change.



We will continue working for a better Guyana in 2021. We hope next year will be a year of change, a better year for refugees and migrants and for communities affected by climate change and environmental damages. We will make sure 2021 is a year in which communities are heard, a year for the VOICES of Guyana to speak in unison for their collective rights.

Happy New Year!!!

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Voices GY team