



**Dear Friend of Yspaniola,**

2020 has been a difficult year for all of us. The pandemic has affected our physical and emotional wellbeing in myriad ways, and has also thrown the systemic inequality in our world into sharp relief. The undeniably devastating impact of these inequities during the pandemic and the ongoing international movement for racial justice call on us all to take concrete action to fight systemic racism and the other inequities that are endemic to our social systems. After a year that has been challenging for everyone, but unquestionably much more challenging for some than for others, we owe it to each other to keep up the fight.

At Yspaniola, the pandemic upended our funding structure. Without experiential and service-learning trips, which have provided up to 25% of our funding in the past, we had to call on our supporters in ways we hadn't before so that we could provide ongoing support to the families and students of Batey Libertad. Your commitment to our work and to the community during this time—combined with the incredible dedication and creativity of our staff—allowed us to adapt our programs to meet acute needs while continuing to support our students to gain the skills they need to be successful.

As a teacher, I know that the question of how schools should adapt to the pandemic is exceedingly difficult. In many ways, there are no good answers. However, I have stood in awe of the flexibility and innovation demonstrated by the Yspaniola team's response to

the challenges of this year. I hope you will read on to learn more about the ways in which our staff were able to see this moment as an opportunity to build stronger relationships with students, families, and the community as a whole.

We are always so appreciative of your support, but this year we are especially grateful. Your monetary contributions and participation in our COVID food relief appeal in May allowed us to provide greatly needed support to families with no formal safety net who struggled when much of the economy shut down. As our precarious funding situation and community food insecurity have continued into the fall and winter, your ongoing generosity has made it possible for us to pay our staff and provide healthy food to our students each day, along with additional weekly food provision to families.

In a year more challenging than any in recent memory, your commitment to our work allowed us to continue to move forward toward our vision of a more inclusive Dominican Republic, where all individuals have access to quality education and full citizenship. Thank you!



**Cory Anne Fox**  
Yspaniola  
Board of Directors



**October '19** Yspaniola kicked off the school year serving 166 students in our Preschool, Learning Center and the Batey Libertad Public School. Average class attendance was high, at 82%. We trained 14 student mentors to support children learning to read and write one-on-one.

**February '20** Valley Presbyterian Church took part in a Service and Learning trip to build connections in the community and install hand-washing sinks and a water tank in our preschool park.

**April & May '20** We launched an urgent fundraising appeal and delivered community assistance. We stimulated the local economy by distributing food tickets exchangeable at local stores.

**July '20** With no summer camp or trips, we found significant challenges to generating income. A severe financial outlook prompted us to make painful cuts to staff and programs. Meanwhile, Rosalinda was awarded \$10,000 by the Canada Fund to carry out her women's economic empowerment project.

**September '20** Yspaniola started the academic year with 12 staff, rather than 18. We rolled out a series of socially-distanced educational models, including small-group literacy classes and "Learn from Home" competitions, and welcomed new University Scholar, Fedrina.

**December '19** Julio, our Operations Director, delivered a 6-week course for local youth on how to design community programs. As a result, Yspaniola Scholar Rosalinda wrote her own project proposal for women's empowerment in the batey.

**March '20** The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to end our school year early. Many parents found themselves with no work and no savings; the situation for many students was critical.

**June '20** We enacted a second phase of COVID-19 community assistance and surveyed households to better understand their needs. The data we collected shows that the community has grown from 208 households in our 2016 census, to at least 308 in summer 2020.

**August '20** Our new international fellow, Zach, began his year with Yspaniola. Our back to school campaign raised \$3,074 for COVID-safe education. The Dominican Ministry of Education announced a fully virtual school year.

# Year in Review

Rosalinda (second from right) with Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana, after delivering a workshop



We are proud to have a visionary leader for women's rights like Rosalinda as an Yspaniola University Scholar. Rosa has spent this year working alongside the Canadian embassy to develop programming to empower women in Batey Libertad. Reflecting on workshops delivered by Yspaniola's Operations Director, Rosa says, *"Julio's lessons helped me a lot to develop my own project."* She applied this training towards educating women on financial literacy and how to gain financial independence. Rosa says, *"I want the women of Batey Libertad to create their own company. This would be a great step for them- to be able to employ themselves and reinvest in the community. These opportunities don't come to us; we need to make them happen."*

Arisleidy, a budding reader

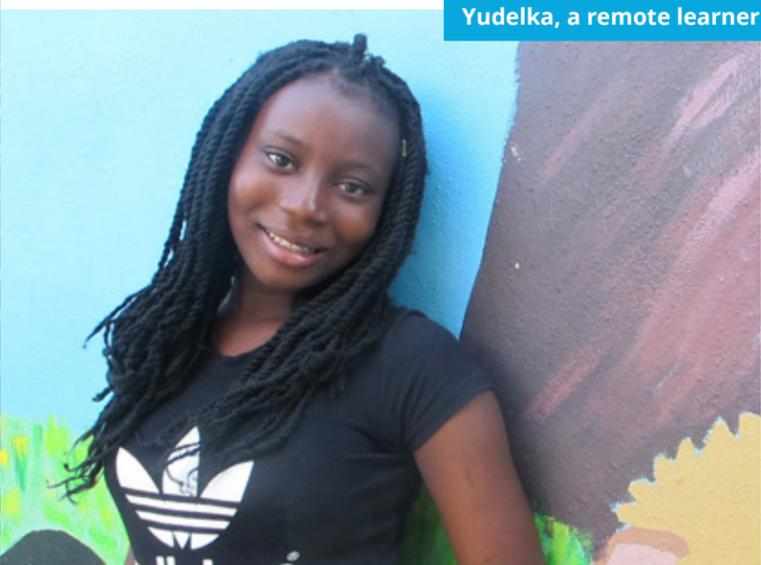


**Arisleidy**, aged 7, is on the cusp of becoming literate. Her progression would have halted abruptly if we had not implemented our small-group, socially-distant, COVID-informed literacy classes. Meeting with her teacher Mayra four times a week, Arisleidy enjoys personalized support. Reflecting on these past months of learning, Arisleidy says: *"Before, I did not know how to read, but Mayra and Yspaniola have helped me to read."*

Yspaniola team, November 2020



Yudelka, a remote learner



**Yudelka**, aged 13, has been involved in Yspaniola's programming since she can remember. She recently won first prize in one of our "Learn at Home" competitions, aimed at encouraging students' enthusiasm for learning while we can't offer classes to everyone. Yudelka says: *"I hope that the pandemic ends really soon, because I want to get back to school and hug my friends and teachers. But for now, we have to stay at home and social distance. I'm going to keep taking part in the Yspaniola competitions, because I would love to win a mini-speaker!"*

# Community Leaders Drive Yspaniola

Julio welcomes Fedrina, our new University Scholar

Yspaniola appreciates the importance of local voices and agency within our leadership structure. After three years as Yspaniola's Operations Director, this summer Julio Louis was awarded a prestigious Chevening Scholarship to pursue a Master's degree in Business Strategy and Entrepreneurship at the University of Cardiff, UK.

Julio's dedication to learning led him to become one of our first University Scholars, graduating in 2014. During his directorship at Yspaniola, he excelled at guiding current University Scholars and developing Yspaniola from a community-informed perspective.

With Julio's departure, Mirian Rodríguez, our Administrative Manager, has taken over the leadership of our University Scholarship Program. A talented leader also born and raised in Batey Libertad, Mirian is excited to invest in our scholars' computer literacy, thematic writing, and individual academic performance.



Yohanna teaches preschool students

## A Year of At-Home Learning

In August, the Ministry of Education declared a year of virtual learning. Students throughout Dominican Republic have been instructed to fill out workbooks and take classes through television, internet, or radio from home.

The Dominican government is calling on parents to support their children's learning. Few parents in the batey, however, are able to provide spaces conducive to learning, access to televisions and internet, or literacy training when they themselves are not literate.

The dramatic educational inequity emerging from this academic school year highlights the importance of Yspaniola's programming. We are committed to doing all that we can to support student learning and see a fully literate Batey Libertad.



Students wait in line for class



Mayra teaches phonetics

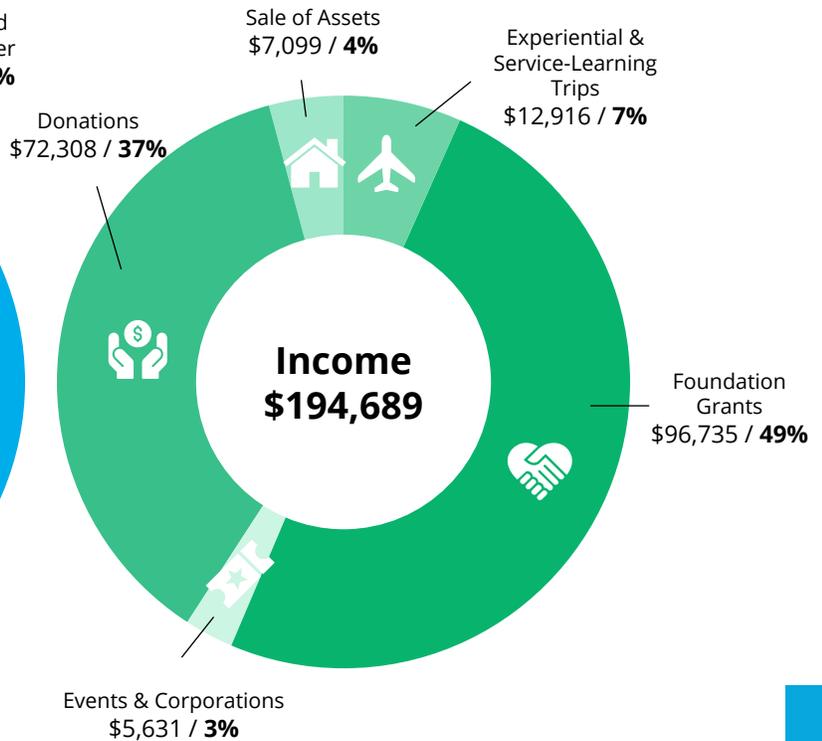
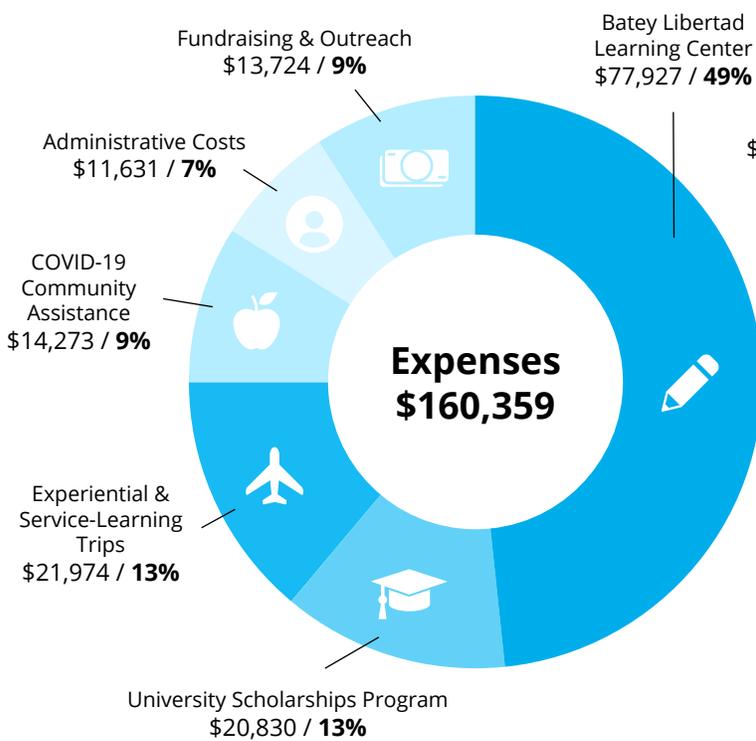


Yudithe washes her hands



# Financials

For the fiscal year:  
October 1st, 2019 - September 30, 2020



Yspaniola experienced significant financial challenges this year. Regular supporters may notice a drop in both our income and expenses. The COVID-19 crisis has greatly impacted our income, especially as we are unable to host experiential and service-learning trips in the community, and for this reason we continue operating at reduced capacity.

We are deeply grateful for the many loyal donors who have been by our side and showed your belief in our work for many years. Additionally, the many generous gifts to our two COVID-19 appeals this year enabled us to keep staff on payroll and to create COVID-safe classrooms for students in Batey Libertad this fall. Without you, our work would truly not be possible: thank you!

## Holiday Match Campaign

Our annual festive fundraiser will take place from December 26th, 2020 - January 2nd, 2021. We hope that you will make a gift to help sustain our education programs in 2021!

Checks payable to "Yspaniola" can be mailed to our new address:

**Yspaniola Inc. c/o Cynthia So-Armah**  
**33 Seaverns Ave.**  
**Jamaica Plain, MA 02130**

**The Yspaniola Circle  
(\$10,000+)**

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Jeffrey and Bridget Wirth  
John Hertzner  
Kenille Baumgardner  
Tracy Griffin  
Vincent Granata



***Thank you for making our work possible,  
during this most difficult of years!***

**The Batey Libertad Circle  
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**The Esperanza Circle  
(\$50 - \$199)**

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**Special Thanks to:**

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