



HHI IMPACT REPORT  
\* 2 \* 0 \* 2 \* 3 \*



**HEALTH HORIZONS  
INTERNATIONAL**

---

# Executive Director's Report

## *November 2023*

*A collaborative effort presented by the HHI team:*

Dr. Eliezer Lappots-Abreu, JD HON. | *Executive Director*

Ing. Laura Massiel Castillo G. | *M&E Director*

Lic. Johanny Perez | *Program Director*

Lic. Erbania Rivas | *Financial & Operations Director*

Dra. Rosina Paulino | *Chronic Care Program Coordinator*

Elisa Ruben | *CHW Program Coordinator*

Catherine Balbuena | *SyF Program Coordinator*

Sihara Perez | *Referral Coordinator*

Dariel Balbuena | *Social Media Assistant*

Scarler Siriaco | *Community Development Assistant*

Estefany Reyes | *Educational Programs Assistant*



# MI LUCHA

Nací en medio del malestar político en una favela venezolana llamada Petare, llena de crimen y violencia; donde muchachos como yo tenían dos rutas: La calle o la muerte. Mis padres, inmigrantes dominicano-brasileños, decidieron mudarse a Puerto Rico para darnos a mi hermana y a mí una mejor oportunidad en la vida. Desde los 15 años desarrollé una pasión imparable por brindar oportunidades de desarrollo a jóvenes como yo en comunidades vulnerables y que pudieran convertirse en agentes de cambio social.

Durante más de una década he implementado proyectos que identificaron, capacitaron y desarrollaron a más de 2000 jóvenes para convertirlos en líderes en educación para la salud, prevención de ENT y gestión integral; quienes no solo contribuyen a la provisión de servicios de atención primaria sino que también dan forma a las políticas públicas relacionadas con la accesibilidad de los servicios y sistemas de salud en los países en desarrollo con un enfoque en inmigrantes, mujeres y niños... pero nada ha sido más gratificante que liderar una organización increíble como lo es Health Horizons International.

Este año ha sido una reflexión para mí como líder y la dirección en la que quiero encaminar a nuestra institución en medio de tantos disturbios socioeconómicos, políticos y culturales que enfrenta mi país; que a la misma vez se cimientan en eventos globales que continúan alejando a millas de personas de vivir una vida sana, feliz, plena, y con las herramientas para vivir con dignidad y respeto. Me remonté a los años donde era apenas un joven de quince años con el deseo de cambiar el mundo, y lo hice. Ahora me esfuerzo cada día por continuar inspirando a jóvenes como yo que no solamente se preocupan, sino también que se ocupan. Jóvenes que retan las predisposiciones de la edad, las nociones de la madurez, las nociones del profesionalismo; y es en la cara de los jóvenes donde veo futuras generaciones de trabajadores de la salud, hacedores de políticas públicas, gobernantes y tomadores de decisiones que darán carácter a un mundo justo, equitativo y saludable.



**HEALTH HORIZONS  
INTERNATIONAL**

Por muchos años fui negado una silla en la mesa, pero entendí que mi propósito era mucho mas grande que sentarme en el mismo lugar a hacer las mismas cosas y cometer los mismos errores. Yo tenía que crear mi propia mesa, y sentar junto a mí a todas esas personas quienes también alguna vez se han quedado paradas mientras se discute sobre sus derechos y se toman decisiones sobre su bienestar sin consultarles.

Este reporte es un resumen de los logros que mi equipo y yo hemos alcanzado en un año lleno de retos y oportunidades; pero que inspirados por los acontecimientos y la presión de visibilizar nuestras vicisitudes hemos conseguido implementar cambios sistemáticos que garantizaran una Republica Dominicana libre de discrimen y violencia sistemática, políticas inclusivas que respondan las necesidades reales de la comunidad sin dejar nadie atrás; y a la vez continuamos respondiendo a los problemas de salud que tenemos de frente.

Este mensaje es en mi lengua materna, pero no hay manera de traducir lo orgulloso que nos sentimos de nuestro trabajo.

Siempre firme,

Dr. Eliezer Lappots Abreu, J.D MPH PhD Hon

Presidente | Director Ejecutivo

Health Horizons International Foundation



# OUR STORY

After volunteering on several medical service trips to the north coast of the Dominican Republic, the founders of Health Horizons International (HHI) realized that improving health over the long term in communities facing poverty, lack of health care access, and limited socioeconomic opportunity would require a different approach and perspective. The origins of HHI were inspired by the belief that listening to the community and collaboratively building on existing strengths were essential for sustainable impact. The mission of HHI was and remains the empowerment of local leaders, improving the delivery of primary care and the public health.

Incorporated in 2009, HHI is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) and it is officially registered as an NGO with the Dominican government. That year, co-founders Laura McNulty and Angi Kang moved to the Dominican Republic for a year and were instrumental in bringing the local organization into being. Laura became our first Executive Director. Back in Connecticut, other co-founders such as Craig Czarsty, M.D. and Brad Wilkinson, M.D. (the first Board Chair and Vice Chair respectively) worked to build the financial stability of the organization.

Empowering local leaders began with Laura and Angi working with community leaders and health officials to identify and train the first group of Community Health Workers who would in turn volunteer to serve their own communities. As non-communicable diseases were beginning to overtake infectious diseases as the leading causes of death worldwide, a chronic care program was created in association with the Ministry of Public Health to address such conditions as hypertension, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and epilepsy. Early public health efforts centered on clean water and sanitation in the communities we serve. Our programs and reach have greatly expanded over the past decade as we attempt to promote public health and access to primary care as accessible and affordable rights in communities of social, economic and political vulnerability in the Dominican Republic. We have counted many talented, dedicated, and visionary staff, interns, Board members, donors, partners, and volunteers as members of the HHI team, who together have made our impact possible.

We are continually rethinking our operations from the perspectives of development and international cooperation, human rights, social justice and access to basic needs such as education and sustainable housing. In short, we are examining the social determinants of health and how we can best address them.



# OUR SUCCESS

- We are certified by the Dominican Ministry of Public Health and the National Health Service as a licensed Family Medicine Center, which allow us to deliver health care services including education, prevention and direct clinical services
- We are the 1<sup>st</sup> and only institution in the Dominican Republic certified by the International Diabetes Federation as a “Centre of Excellence in Diabetes Care”
- Our care goes beyond medicine. We have built a sustainable structure that takes in accountability the social determinants of health and bring maintainable solutions to any gap that might impede a person’s opportunity of living a dignified, healthy and happy life.
- Although chronic care remains a vital focus withing our programs, we’ve amplified our offers with OBGYN services, cancer screening and prevention, vaccination programs, specialized community clinics and more.
- We evaluate impact at the individual, community, regional, and national levels through a scaled and rigorous M&E systems that has been scaled as a national standard by the Ministry of Public Health







## HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES, ONE WOMAN AT A TIME

The Women's Movement Pilot Project is the first initiative in the Dominican Republic where Community Health and Chronic Care is addressed with a gender focus. The Health Promoters carry out a series of activities at a clinical-educational-community level such as 1) educating the target population about the importance of adopting healthy habits to minimize the risk factors that lead to the development of chronic diseases; 2) form support groups to promote healthy lifestyles and changes in high-risk behavior; and 3) provide primary care services such as screening, medication, home visits, chronic care, referral and support to medical specialists, vaccination, follow-up, among others.

During this reporting period we continued offering our OBGYN clinical services catered to vulnerable women, but also played a huge role on bringing awareness to the ignored challenges women are continuing facing in regards cervical cancer education, prevention and integral management. However, redirecting our path towards advocating and elevating women's voices have resulted into instrumental achievements on accessibility for underserved individuals.





# BREAST CANCER IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES



- The WHO registered more than 2.2 million cases in 2020, of which it highlights that the majority come from low- and middle-income countries. Worldwide, nearly 685,000 women died as a result of the disease and it is estimated that around one in 12 women will suffer from breast cancer throughout her life.
- As for the Americas region, it accounted for almost a quarter of new breast cancer cases in 2020, according to the Pan American Health Organization. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the proportion of women affected by the disease before the age of 50 corresponds to 32%, a figure that exceeds the 19% in North America.





Health Horizons  
International

**BREAST CANCER**

**DISPROPORTIONALLY**

**AFFECTS**

**IMPOVERISHED**

**WOMEN OF COLOR**



# Our impact this year

Movimiento Mujeres | Women's Health Program



99% of referred women for sonographies realized



338 women's health consultation realized



100% of referred women for Community Mental Health Program enrolled to counseling and support services



Quality medicine obtained and sponsored by the National Health Insurance and Ministry of Public Health



10 Women's health clinic realized, reaching over 338 women and girls



5 Education and training for health promoters focused on women's health services;  
12 women-led awareness workshop for beneficiaries



CANCER DOESN'T CARE  
ABOUT YOUR NATIONALITY.  
NEITHER SHOULD WE.

IN OCTOBER OF 2023,  
HEALTH HORIZONS  
INTERNATIONAL MANAGED  
TO RECOGNIZE THE RIGHT  
TO MAMMOGRAPHY  
SERVICES FOR  
DOCUMENTED AND  
UNDOCUMENTED  
IMMIGRANT WOMEN  
BEFORE THE NATIONAL  
HEALTH SERVICE AND THE  
DOMINICAN MINISTRY OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH. NOW,  
IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN  
OUR REGION HAVE ACCESS  
TO FREE MAMMOGRAPHY  
SERVICES AT PUBLIC HEALTH  
INSTITUTIONS.





# CARE BEYOND MEDICINE

Chronic diseases have acquired great importance in primary care due to the increase in their prevalence and the difficulties observed in their control. The complex problem requires a multidimensional solution that affects the behavior of patients, the attitude of health workers and changes in the organization of the health system.

Our Chronic Care Program is our oldest program, and for almost 20 years we've led the national efforts on providing sustainable and tangible responses to the rise on NCDs in the Dominican Republic:

Since 2022, we are certified by the Dominican Ministry of Public Health and the National Health Service as a licensed Family Medicine Center, which allow us to deliver health care services including education, prevention and direct clinical services

In 2021, We became the 1st and only institution in the Dominican Republic certified by the International Diabetes Federation as a "Centre of Excellence in Diabetes Care"

Our care goes beyond medicine. We have built a sustainable structure that takes in accountability the social determinants of health and bring maintainable solutions to any gap that might impede a person's opportunity of living a dignified, healthy and happy life.



# Our impact this year

Leading primary health care delivery for almost 20 years!



950 family medicine consultations provided



22+ communities impacted through our clinical services



715 referral cases to specialists provided



3 medical service trips executed with physicians and medical volunteers from around the world!



23 community health workers identified and trained to deliver care in rural communities



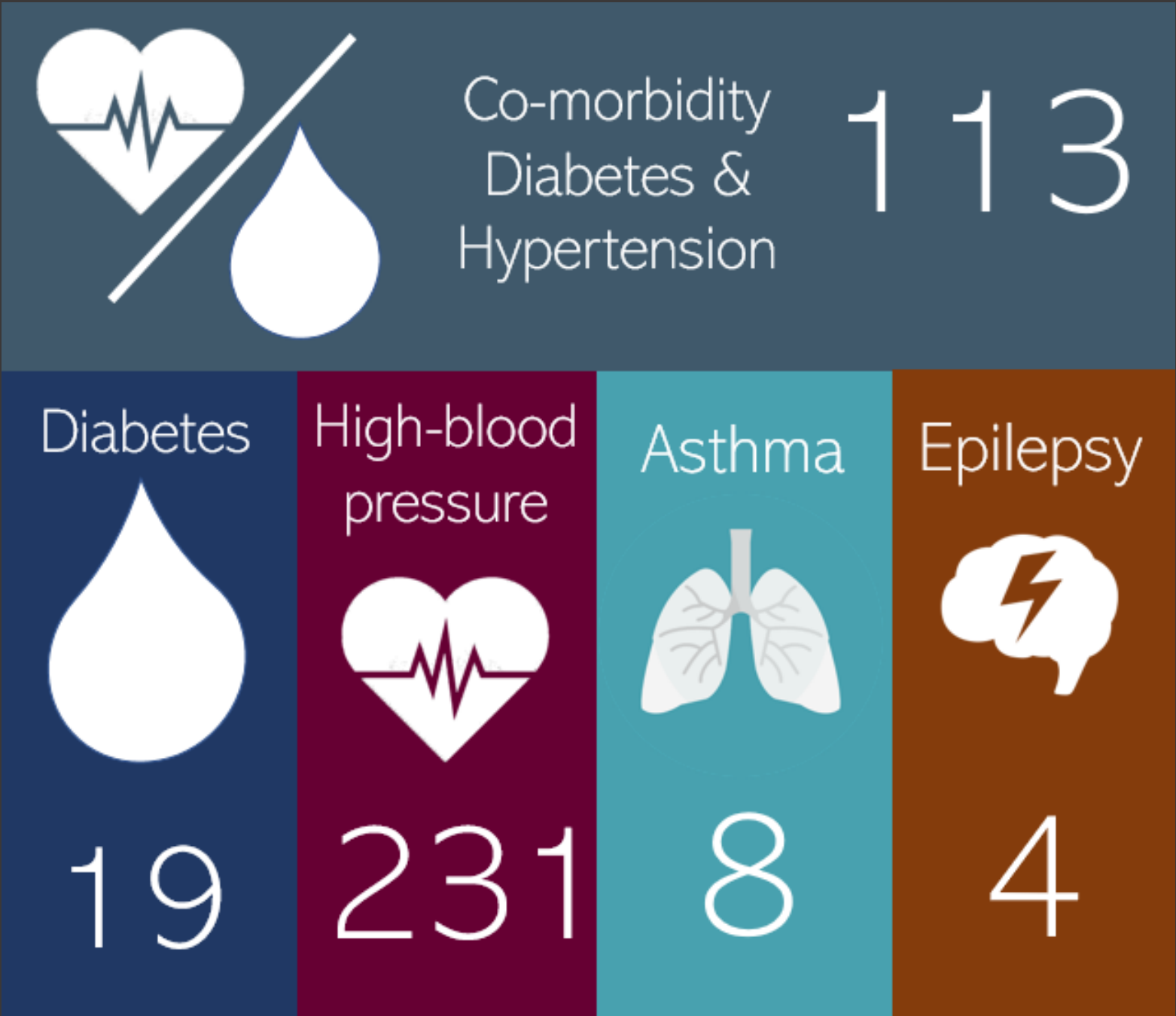
Over 500+ Quality, affordable medication provided every year



## Our impact this year

### UNDERSTANDING OUR PATIENTS' HEALTH PROFILE

In our type 2 diabetic patients, various cardiovascular risk factors - dyslipidemia, hypertension and obesity - occur simultaneously, which increase cardiovascular risk, with the association with obesity leading to greater health expenditure. In its initial stage it does not produce symptoms and when detected late and not treated properly it causes serious health complications such as heart attack, blindness, kidney failure, amputation of the lower extremities and premature death. This table shows the classification of patients seen this year during medical service trips and their condition; which help us carter our program to respond to their current needs.





## Our impact this year

Ensuring complementary services are included within our programmatic offer

A laboratory test (also called a clinical analysis) is a key procedure in many health care visits. To perform it, a sample of urine, blood or another substance is taken from the patient's body, and it is subjected to a series of tests to determine the level of certain indicators.

In general, clinical tests are part of a routine check-up. For example, through a laboratory test, a patient can know exactly the level of iron, cholesterol, bilirubin, glucose and many other types of elements present in his or her blood.

Although this seems simple and accessible, for some rural communities to have access to services such as reliable laboratories and imaging, the delivery of medications and transportation to health centers it's impossible. This table shows the number of complimentary services provided to patients during the three medical service trips carried this year.



38

Sonographies, X-rays  
and other images



472

Hemogram, urinalysis &  
other labs



578

Transportation services  
for patients



652

Monthly medication  
kits prepared





**Health Horizons  
International**

Our mobile clinic provides essential medical care to patients who cannot easily access medical services in their local community. They are usually run by our Family Physician, nurses, bioanalyst, and our CHWs; and offer a variety of services, such as electrodermal exams, medical advice, health education, and vaccinations.

Additionally, our mobile clinic can help patients with chronic illnesses find support they may not be able to access in their local community. It also provide a vital service for low-income families who would otherwise struggle to pay for health care. Dr Rosina, our local Family Physician, conducts blood exams and evaluations during home visits to remote patients.





Health Horizons  
International

Mobile health clinics offer patients with reduced mobility access to quality healthcare services. Clinics may be located in a patient's home or transported to remote areas where patients may not have easy access to other medical care. The clinic is designed to be accessible to all those in need, regardless of location or income.

















TABLE 2: MEDICAL SERVICE TRIPS REFERRAL CASES MADE IN 2023 LINKED BY MEDICAL SPECIALTIES (PER CASE)



Table 2 shows the referral cases linked by specialties in medical operations during January, May and September 2023. It can be seen that the highest number or percentage among the linked cases is for radiology, this is divided into x-rays, sonograms and mammograms.

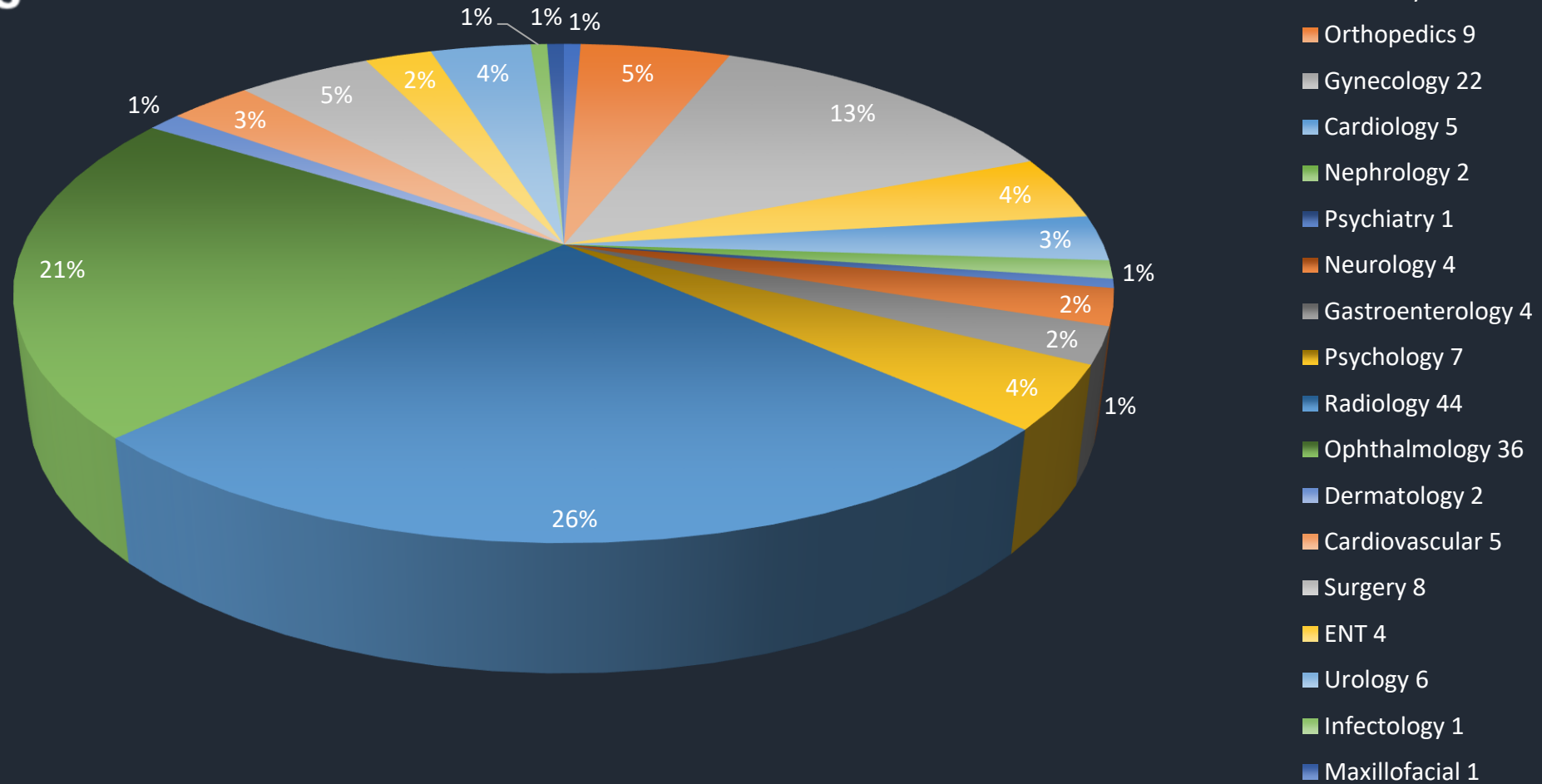


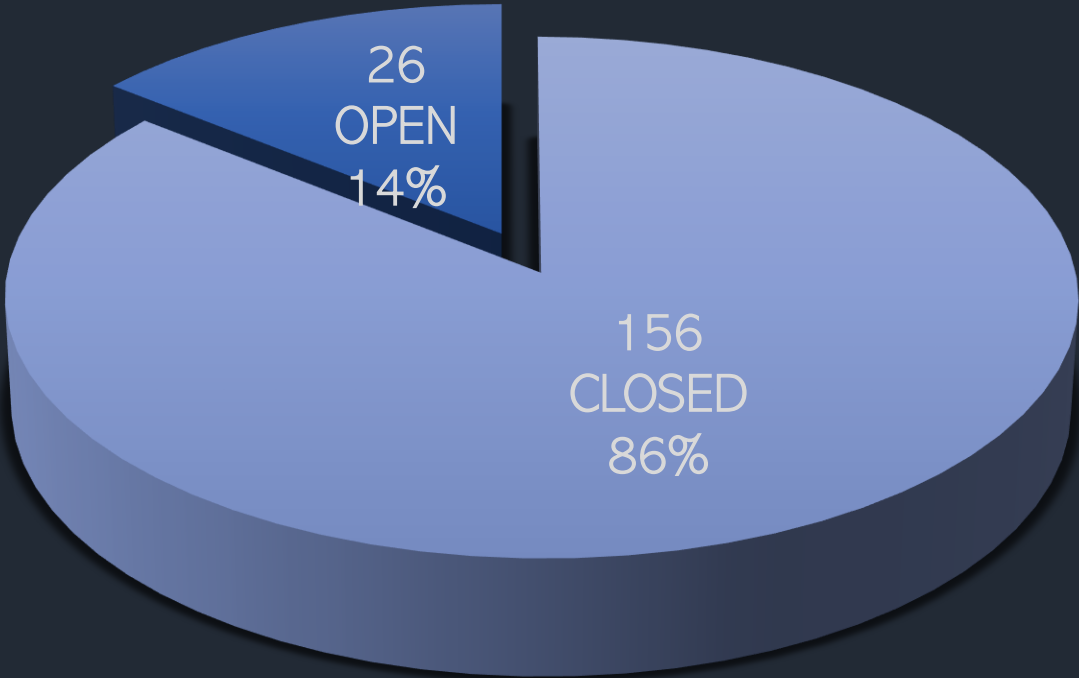


TABLE 1: CASES OF REFERRALS FOR MEDICAL OPERATIONS EXECUTED IN 2023 (PER CASE)



# Health Horizons International

Table 1 shows the distribution of referral cases compiled in the medical operations carried out in January, May and September. It can be seen that, to date, 86% of the cases have been satisfactorily closed by linking with specialists from the public health network. 14% of open cases are waiting for their appointment, and these cases will be closed on November 30, 2023.



■ CLOSED ■ OPEN

## DENTAL HEALTH CLINICS



Oral health is considered a critical aspect of general health because its alterations represent a high weight within the general burden of the disease, since a bidirectional relationship has been demonstrated with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, COPD and inflammatory morbidities. For the past two years, HHI has collaborated with local organizations to provide free dental services to people in the community including consultations, medication, surgery and referrals for over 120+ individuals every year!



## EYE HEALTH CLINICS

Sight provides 80% of the information we receive from the environment but, above all, it connects us with the world, with what we love. Having correct visual health is essential for learning, working, traveling and driving, as well as developing socially. For the second year, we continue to provide visual health services that include free vision exams and medications, specialized consultations, cataract surgery, corrective surgeries, frames, and low-cost eyeglasses. With each impacted patient, we contribute to closing the gap between visual health services and people in rural areas who cannot access them due to geographic and economic barriers.









# HHI provides free cataracts surgery for underserved individuals



The Dominican Republic, a country with a population of almost ten million people, must perform 30,000 cataract operations a year to reduce its rates of preventable and curable blindness, but it only performs 12,000.

This figure is much lower than that recommended by the World Health Organization of three thousand surgeries per year for every million inhabitants, adding that cataracts or lens opacity is the main cause of reversible blindness and is responsible for 33 percent of visual impairment in the country and in the world.

Through our partnership with local institutions, we now provide free cataracts surgeries for underserved individuals

Cost per surgery (both eyes) in the Dominican Republic – 192,046 RD

Cost for 10 patients selected every year-  
1,920,459 RD

Approximate cost for surgery every year:  
\$35,556.58 USD

Cost for HHI: 0.00

# NORMALIZING THE CONVERSATION ON MENTAL HEALTH

Last year the Dominican Republic had a rate of 7.22 suicides per one hundred thousand inhabitants, alarming figures and, what is worse, above the average of Latin American countries—in relation to the size of the Republic—with an increase of 12.1% and 13 percent. In relation to 2018 and 2019. In 2019, 4.5 suicides were recorded per one hundred thousand inhabitants. For this year those numbers have continued to increase. In fact, more than 77% of global suicides occurred in low- and middle-income countries in 2019.

Experiencing conflict, discrimination, disasters, violence, abuse or loss, and a sense of isolation are strongly associated with suicidal behavior. Suicide rates are also high among vulnerable groups who experience discrimination, such as refugees and migrants; indigenous people; LGBT+ people and incarcerated people; as well as other focus groups such as people residing in rural areas.

Our **COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM** is shifting the narrative around mental health access in rural Dominican Republic.

- Ensure access to clinical and community psychology service provision, ensuring high-quality, cost-effective care to over 600 people within focus groups in rural communities.
- Prepare educational material and provide technical assistance to community residents to acquire knowledge about the importance of knowing their mental health, mental health disorders, symptoms of said disorders, and resources available for said needs.
- Raise awareness among the population about the impact of mental health on almost all aspects of daily life, including physical health, as well as increasing the risk of developing conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and other diseases.
- Identify and empower local leaders who can be assumed as community mental health workers with training and preparation in primary care services aimed at the education, prevention and comprehensive management of mental health disorders.





# A JOURNEY TOWARDS COLLECTIVE HEALING



I don't know about you, but when I hear "2020," it takes me back to a pretty scary time. It's no wonder: the pandemic significantly contributed to the decline of mental health all over the world.

That was the year we founded our Community Mental Health Program in response to the absence of mental health services for people living in remote rural communities. At first, we used community centers as mobile mental health clinics but struggled against social stigma. Little by little, we began to normalize conversations about grief, violence, anxiety, and depression.

Two years later, our program is now one of the most comprehensive rural mental health initiatives in the country:

- Clinical psychologists provide quality accessible and affordable services.
- Collaborative agreements with psychology and psychiatry units provide medications and further support.
- An internship program with the most prestigious university in the country, UASD, trains graduate students in our comprehensive approach to mental health and noncommunicable diseases.
- More than 200 people have received education, therapy, or attended workshops on mental health.



# Our impact this year

Improving access to mental health services



20 campaigns on mental health awareness conducted in vulnerable communities



10+ caregivers workshops conducted to provide mental health support for family and friends of people living with NCDs



94% of individuals referred for counseling and mental support enrolled



5 workshops on preventing substance abuse realized



5 workshops on local schools on suicide prevention, bullying and violence prevention



Bilateral agreements with national institutions to provide 24/7 support for victims of domestic violence

# Resilience is a woman

## *The successful story of Miss Eva Lidia*



Eva Lidia German Vásquez, affectionately called “Tuta,” was born and raised in the community of Severet, Villa Montellano, where she still lives with her family. In an interview, she told us about her life and the events leading up to her enrollment in HHI's Community Mental Health Program.

Tuta had a good childhood and always got along well with her family. She lived with her mother and stepfather in a ravine next to a constantly overflowing river. At age 14, she got married and was forced to leave school in the 4th grade. She has since become the mother of four children.



When she learned that two of her children have Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, she was overcome with anxiety and depression. “I always felt lost and hopeless, yet, I pulled strength from my guts and forced myself out of my situation. I tried to keep my head above the water, but it felt impossible.”

Tuta was enrolled in our Chronic Care Program in 2017 to receive mental health therapies but the path to wellness was challenging because of the geographical and socioeconomic challenges imposed by the distance and her lack of documentation.





In 2021, Tuta experienced tragedy when her son Victor, the youngest with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, passed away in her arms as a result of his condition. This triggered Tuta's mental health to once again deteriorate. At every visit with HHI's physicians, Tuta expressed her low will to live and the struggle of all the negative thoughts in her head. Finally in 2022, we could enroll her in our new Community Mental Health Program to access the resources she needed.

After receiving therapy from our psychologist, Johanny Perez, the change in Tuta's spirit was both noticeable and tangible. Tuta says that through therapy she learned that life is very beautiful. "I learned about the importance of self-love, letting go of the feeling of guilt and forgiving myself for the things I cannot control. I learned that if you don't love yourself you won't be able to give that sincere love for your family."





Thanks to our intervention, she not only overcame mental health challenges, but she was motivated to return to school and continue her education. She is now in the seventh grade. Counseling has helped her envision the future beyond her graduation. She says that now, "I want to live and want to fight for my children and my husband. Sometimes when things get hard, I remember everything I learned during therapy. I can hear Miss Johanny's voice guiding me. I thought people went to the psychologist because they're crazy...but no. Sometimes we just need direction to return to our paths."

Tuta is now an advocate for mental health and is able to connect others in her community with HHI's services. There are so many others who can benefit from therapy. Now, HHI can help them access it.



## HHI CONTINUES TO LEAD DIABETES EDUCATION AND PREVENTION AT LOCAL SCHOOLS



During this period we had the opportunity to continue scaling our initiatives within the KiDS Program, which has been implemented thanks to our collaboration agreements with the International Diabetes Federation.

KiDS is a diabetes education program in the school environment, which aims to improve understanding and knowledge of diabetes in school, eliminate stigma, and promote healthy lifestyle habits to prevent type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents.

During these workshops, a total of 9 schools were impacted for a total of 538 students, 42 parents and 24 teachers.



# HOW ARE WE IMPROVING HEALTH IN LOCAL SCHOOLS?



We strengthen multilateral agreements around primary health care to create joint agendas with the Ministry of Education for the promotion of physical and mental health in over 40+ schools in the North Coast of the Dominican Republic



We train over 120+ teachers to scale their comprehension on health education with a focus on nutrition and mental health and how they can ingrain it and translate it into their daily classroom activities



We teach nutrition workshops focused on the prevention of chronic diseases, the promotion of healthy eating and the eradication of high-risk behaviors through healthy cooking classes using products from community gardens



From a holistic approach, we implement educational sections focused on nutrition, physical activity, mental health, climate change, and sustainable agriculture; training them from an early age to develop awareness about their health



We train parents and legal guardians regarding health education and prevention through interactive groups where topics are taught that are later reinforced at home.





# LET'S TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH IN DOMINICAN SCHOOLS

In terms of mental health support for children and adolescents, 16% of primary and secondary schools have a part-time or full-time professional, and few schools (between 1-20%) have school-based activities to promote mental health support, mental health and preventing mental disorders

For the past two years, we have advocated to strengthen agreements between the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Health, to ensure the progressive appointment of mental health professionals in public primary and secondary schools. In parallel, train teachers and APS workers to jointly develop actions to promote health and prevent mental and behavioral disorders in schools.

In addition to advocacy, we have implemented workshops for both teachers and parents where we address topics such as emotional management, depression in children/youth/adolescents, sexual health, violence, substance abuse, suicide, depression, among others, providing tools to handle cases that may arise in the classrooms and how to deal with them.



TECNICAS DE COMUNICACION  
Escuchar al alumno y  
al profesor  
Dar un mensaje  
Respetar a los demás  
Compartir con todos  
Trabaja la buena en el grupo  
Respetamos la diversidad  
Damos fe  
Hacemos planes  
Cuidamos el medio ambiente siempre  
Cuidamos el planeta

Jueves 21 de Septiembre

422000

**"Educatando para La Paz"**  
con Escuelas 2023-2024

Co. JM. E. I.  
B. D. CC. L.  
S. O. P. G.  
V. W. X.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49
50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69
70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79
80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99

Jueves 21 de Septiembre 2023

**EL MIEDO**

A group of children are seated in a classroom, facing the teacher. They are wearing white shirts. The children are looking towards the teacher and the posters on the wall.

Equipment on a desk in the foreground, including a printer, a laptop, and headphones.





# Our impact this year

Sano y Feliz | Health education and disease prevention



12 support groups created to teach participants of the importance of healthy eating habits impacting 150 beneficiaries



14 physical activities and Zumba classes realized



9 schools impacted through the KiDs program



Over 2 vaccination events held to close the gap of immunization in rural communities



Over 4 educational materials created centered on health education, noncommunicable disease prevention and more



538+ students impacted through diabetes & disease prevention educational workshops at local schools





Health Horizons  
International

**HEALTHIER PARENTS**

**HEALTHIER SCHOOLS**

**HEALTHIER TEACHERS**

**HEALTHIER STUDENTS**

**HEALTHIER ENVIROMENTS**

**HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES**

**HEALTHIER.**





# FOR YOUNG PEOPLE BY YOUNG PEOPLE

Our Community Health Workers are people committed to the health of the population. Through their work, they help us to have new healthy habits, both physically and mentally, so they are a fundamental part of our environment as they help us improve our lifestyle. life.

In the communities they help people have access to necessary services, they train the population on health issues and how they can care for themselves and prevent diseases. They also detect if there are people with chronic health problems, family violence, or any problem that affects their health and well-being and provide them with guidance, support and accompaniment.

In addition to supporting and helping people, health promoters collaborate to ensure that the environments where we live are healthy and safe, starting with the home, workplaces, schools and common places such as markets. All this through the promotion of healthy lifestyles such as healthy eating, physical activity, hygiene and cleanliness, among others.



# COLLECTIVE ACTIONS THAT SHAPE A YOUNG GENERATION OF HEALTH WORKERS



## INSPIRATION IS ASPIRATION



During this year our promoters had the opportunity to work with municipal authorities to establish actions that promote people's health and with other sectors such as the Ministry of Education and health authorities to carry out joint actions; obtaining internship and internship opportunities with these institutions.

In addition, our health promoters plan actions to see what situations determine that a community and people cannot be healthy, for example that there is no drinking water or that there are no safe spaces to carry out physical activities. In this sense, they work hand in hand with the Department of Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Control to make a diagnosis of what is happening, they prioritize the issues and with that information they create participation networks so that everyone, from the people to the authorities build a healthy community.

# QUE VIVA LA JUVENTUD



This year, through our 10,000 USD grant from AstraZeneca, Health Horizons International Foundation identified, educated and trained over 45 young health workers to promote the adoption of healthy lifestyles and behavior change through community-based health education and community support groups. More than 500 young individuals living in vulnerable, rural and underserved communities in the Dominican Republic with a high prevalence in diabetes, HTA, other NCDs were impacted by our initiatives.

This program inspired and empowered individuals to become part of the Community Youth Council, the first platform in the Dominican Republic where young people are part of the decision-making process and participate in the prevention and control of NCDs in their communities. With the support from the Dominican Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of the Youth, we have scale a regional youth network to promote and maintain the meaningful participation of the youth population in the mitigation of risk factors associated with NCDs, as well as serving as advocates and ambassadors of supportive and collaborative efforts of the National Public Health Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals centered in reducing by one-third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being



# HUNGER IS NOT AN ISSUE OF CHARITY. IT IS AN ISSUE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Law No. 589-16, which establishes the National Food and Nutrition Security System, constitutes a step forward for the inclusion of broad sectors of the population in food and nutrition matters. However, food insecurity for people living in communities facing extreme poverty in the Dominican Republic continues to climb aggressively. It is estimated that, in 2030, hunger will affect 67 million people in the region, a figure that does not take into account the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic.





# A HEALTHY OUTSIDE STARTS WITH THE INSIDE.

Our program consists of the implementation of community gardens located in the rural area of Puerto Plata in order to educate and empower community leaders with knowledge and practices around sustainable and participatory agriculture models;

We create community circles for the education and promotion of food sovereignty through traditional practices and contemporary applications that respond to the health, typographic, geological, socioeconomic, political, and cultural context of the residents.

Our aim is to increase access to spaces and production methods, minimizing the gap of hunger and malnutrition that amplify the risk factors related to chronic diseases 4) Promote self-management through cooperativism between community leaders and local actors for the exercise of a constructed dialogue; and 5) Scale up and replicate local cooperation and development models through education, defense, promotion and advocacy of the right to food in vulnerable communities in the Dominican Republic.

we contribute to capacity building by ensuring that families have access to production methods and learn how to include harvested products in nutritious and healthy meals.





# Our impact this year

Community Development &  
Environmental initiatives



2 community gardens  
developed to cultivate organic  
produces



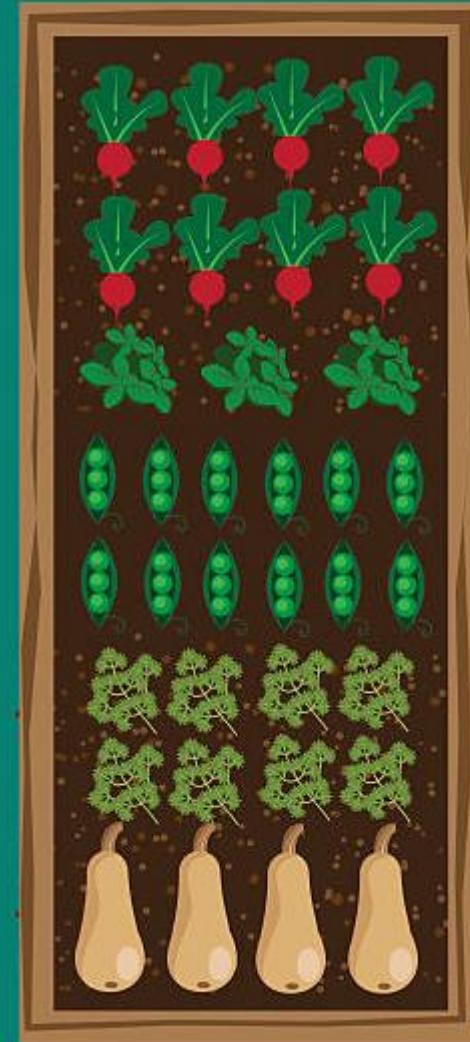
22 graduates from the  
sustainable gardening program



2 water filters installed in 2 communities  
to combat water-borne diseases



5 decacharrization activities realized to  
minimize the development of mosquito  
borne diseases in our communities







# CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

Climate change, together with other natural and human-made health stressors, influences human health and disease in numerous ways.

The health effects of these disruptions include increased respiratory and cardiovascular disease, injuries and premature deaths related to extreme weather events, changes in the prevalence and geographical distribution of food- and water-borne illnesses and other infectious diseases, and threats to mental health.

As part of our planning for 2024-2030 we will be integrating climate change as one of the determinants of health and providing sustainable solutions within our programs.





# OUR FIGHT AGAINST VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

Our team has continued to scale up the regional fumigation and waste disposal days in over 16 of the communities intervened, as a prevention against outbreaks of dengue and other vector-borne diseases.

The recent dengue outbreak in the Dominican Republic has so far left 16 dead and 15,606 infections. Our institution, in collaboration with the Provincial Health Directorate and the National Health Service, is responsible for directing educational efforts to the population to minimize standing water deposits and eradicate the spread of mosquitoes.



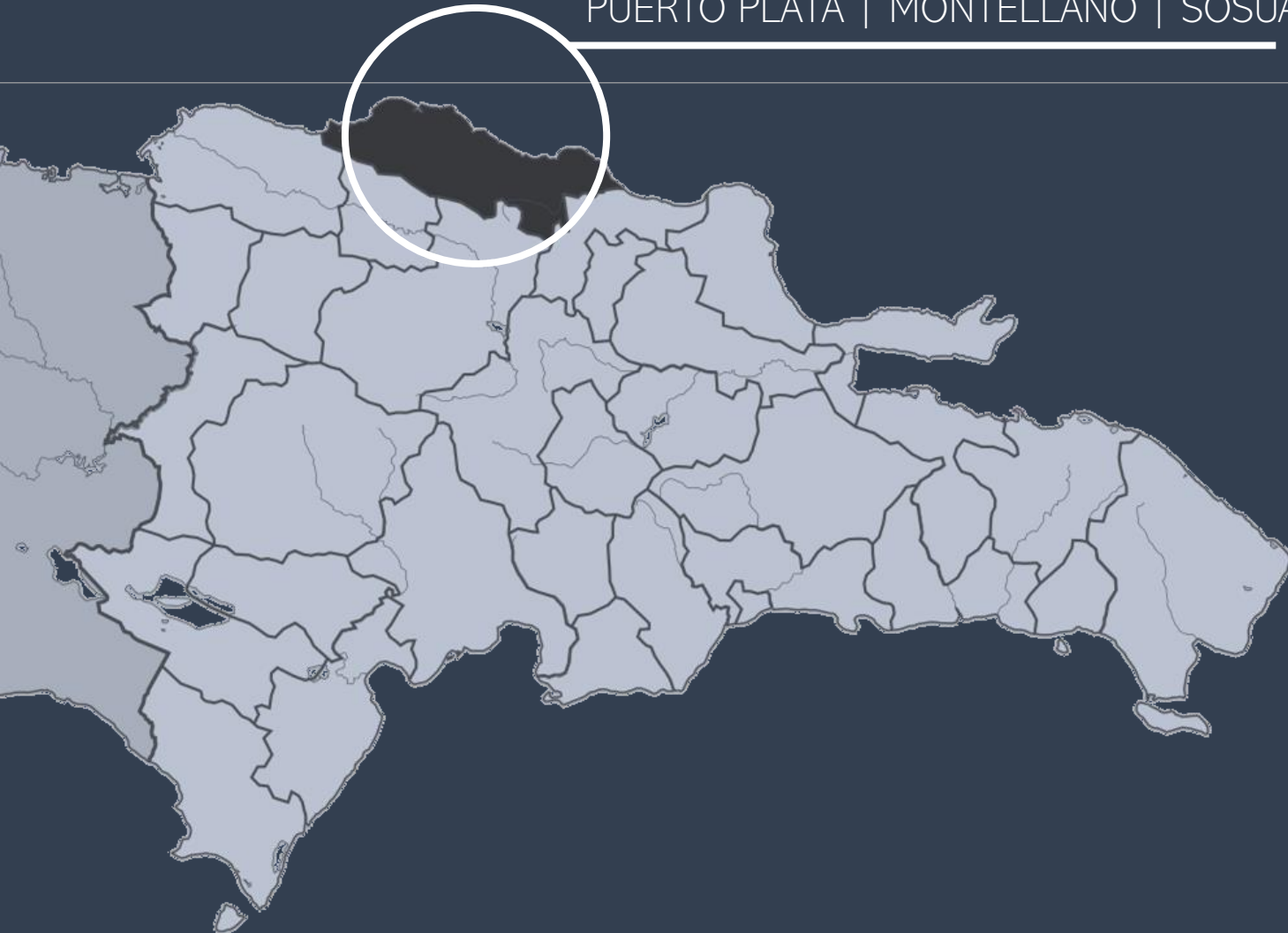


# AREAS OF IMPACT DURING 2023

---

PUERTO PLATA | MONTELLANO | SOSUA

---



During 2023 we had the opportunity to continue scaling health services to more communities located in our province. Thanks to the combined services including community days, health clinics and educational workshops we managed to reach over 6 municipalities, 12 municipal districts, 15 sections, 8 places, 23 neighborhoods and 44 sub-neighborhoods.



# RAISING THE VOICES OF THOSE THEY WANT TO SILENCE

For Health Horizons International, the implementation of the Health Promotion Policy Guidelines requires the implementation of approaches and strategies that facilitate the strengthening of citizen participation, the exercise of human rights and the committed action of social actors to promote the formulation of public policies aimed at creating healthy environments and behaviors.

Within this framework, HHI orients its intervention towards the development of strategic alliances with Regional and Local Governments, social and economic sectors, local authorities, private institutions, the media, communities, families and individuals to strengthen participation and political commitments so that they interact as a mediator in favor of health.

The formulation of these healthy public policies and the incorporation of health as a primary issue in public agendas are the great challenges for health professionals to coordinate and negotiate policies, programs and projects aimed at improving the health of the population. In this social context, the strengthening of spaces for consultation, alliances, and social networks is a means to achieve such ends. What have we accomplished through Health Advocacy?

We ensure that state institutions comply with national and international agreements related to the provision of health services.

We created the first educational manuals in the country focused on the comprehensive management of chronic diseases.

We contribute to the training and creation of policies focused on universal access to health, prioritizing key populations.

We work with international organizations to ensure compliance with international agreements focused on nutrition, environment, health, among others.

# ENSURING NO CHILD IS LEFT BEHIND.

As part of the commemoration of the National Day of the Rights of the Child in the Dominican Republic, on September 29, our first pediatric clinic was carried out in the community of Mosovi, in the municipality of Villa Montellano.

As part of our institutional strengthening and alliances with institutions, Health Horizons International carries out a successful pediatric clinics in collaboration with the Divina Gracia Episcopal Church and the Rotary Club of Puerto Plata, where consultations were provided to more than 60 children. Services included health education, vaccination, medical consultations, medication, and connecting children to other specialists that are part of the Public Health network; fortifying our partnership with government institutions across the region.

Starting this 2024, a HHI Pediatric Clinic will be held every September 29 of each year!



# RESPONDING TO THE CHILDREN NEEDS.

Children are one of the most susceptible focus groups within the beneficiaries of our institution. According to a report from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2021, the prevalence of childhood obesity in the Dominican Republic is 12.5%, which means that approximately one in eight children is at risk of developing chronic diseases. related to obesity.

In addition, other factors such as child exploitation and forced labor, discrimination based on identity, and child marriage; among other variables, it increasingly harms children in the country. **What have we done to counteract this?**



WE PROVIDE FREE CONSULTATIONS WITH SPECIALISTS LINKED TO THE PUBLIC NETWORK THROUGH OUR MEDICAL OPERATIONS



WE WORK WITH THE FAMILY UNIT TO GUARANTEE THAT CHILDREN DEVELOP IN HEALTH-CONSCIOUS ENVIRONMENTS, OPTIMAL ENVIRONMENTS AND SKILLS TO ERADICATE HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS, REAFFIRMING A HEALTHY CHILDHOOD.



WE CLOSE THE IMMUNIZATION GAP IN CHILDREN BY MAPPING THE AGE RANGE AND ESTABLISHING VACCINATION DAYS IN HOT SPOTS



WE CONTRIBUTE TO THE FORMULATION, EXECUTION AND COMPLIANCE OF POLICIES THAT SAFEGUARD CHILDREN FROM THE VIOLATION OF THEIR RIGHTS





This year, our work involved supporting the implementation of the national malnutrition reduction plan, through the use of the MUAC plastic appointment for measuring the condition of children, pregnant women and nursing mothers, delivery of food kits ready-to-take therapeutics to the beneficiary population according to the degree of malnutrition where they are and registration in the NutreMUAC App.

Once the project was completed, a total of 181 children and 38 women were reached, with a total of 219 cases visible in the App, which implies a goal reached of 104.3%, in relation to the goal per community of 210 cases captured.

Due to our reach, an increase was achieved in the registration of cases of children from a 48.36%, going from 122 to 181. In the case of women, 8 new cases were registered, going from 30 to 38, for a percentage increase of 26.67%. In the same way, progress was made in the cases of children with some level of malnutrition, showing an improvement in 88% of cases.



## HHI AND UNICEF TACKLE MALNUTRITION IN THE NORTH COAST









# HHI LEADS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE BREASTFEEDING

During the month of August, Prolactar RD promoted by the Health Horizons International Foundation and the Puerto Plata Rotary Club held an awareness talk for women and family members in the Pancho Mateo community about the importance of breastfeeding. The event was facilitated by Lcda. Nidia Ortega, shared relevant information for more than 20 mothers present.

Breast milk contains all the nutrients, vitamins, and minerals that babies need to grow during the first six months of life. It also contains antibodies that help breastfed infants fight disease and even boost brain growth. Breastfeeding has many benefits for both mothers and babies, and with the right support, advice, and encouragement, almost all mothers can achieve their personal breastfeeding goals.

However, a variety of social and cultural factors can affect a mother's decisions about breastfeeding, including whether to breastfeed, how to breastfeed, and for how long. Lack of breastfeeding education is prevalent in many countries around the world, particularly in developing countries.



During the workshop, the participants learned about the benefits of breastfeeding for both the baby and the mother.

Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for most babies. Breastfed babies have a lower risk of asthma, obesity, type 1 diabetes, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Breastfed babies are also less likely to get ear infections and stomach viruses.

Breast milk shares the mother's antibodies with her baby. These antibodies help babies develop strong immune systems and protect them from disease. Also, breastfeeding can reduce a mother's risk of breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Like Health Horizons International Foundation, Rotary International makes high-quality health care available to vulnerable mothers and children so they can live longer and grow stronger. They expand access to quality care so that mothers and children around the world can have the same opportunities for a healthy future.

In September, Health Horizons International Foundation trained 15 CHWs as Promoters of breastfeeding through the PROlactar courses.





**Health Horizons  
International**

*IN OCTOBER OF  
2023 HHI  
BECAME PART OF  
THE NATIONAL  
HEALTH  
INSURANCE  
NETWORK*

¡AHORA ACEPTAMOS TU SEGURO!



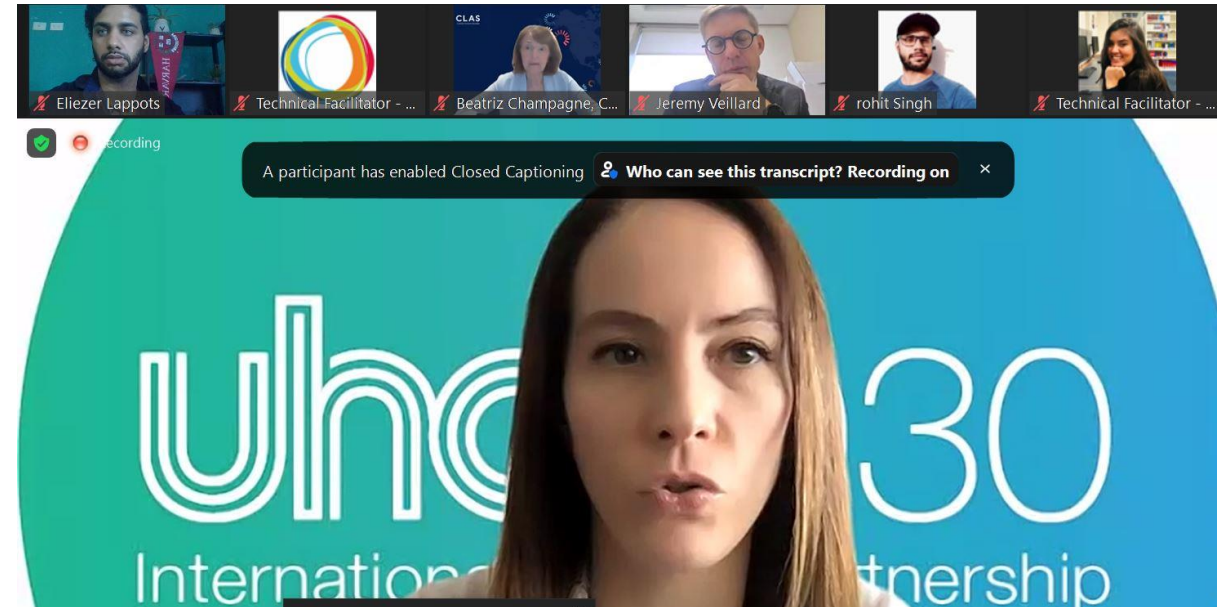
**SeNaSa**

La ARS de los dominicanos



AGENDE SU CITA LLAMANDO O  
ESCRIBIENDO AL  
+1 (829) 452-0243





*Catalyst 2030 is a global movement of social change innovators. It comprises NGOs, social entrepreneurs, intermediaries, funders and other social change innovators, collaborating in this urgent moment to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our Executive Director and President, Dr. Eliezer Lappots-Abreu became the first Dominican permanent member of this organization.*

# one

YOUNG  
WORLD



At the heart of every global threat is a failure of leadership. Today's young generation is the most informed, most connected generation in human history. One Young World identifies, promotes and connects the world's most impactful young leaders to create a better world, with more responsible, more effective leadership.

The annual One Young World Summit convenes the brightest young talent from every country and sector, working to accelerate social impact. Delegates from 190+ countries are counselled by influential political, business and humanitarian leaders such as Justin Trudeau, Paul Polman and Meghan Markle, amongst many other global figures.

Delegates participate in 4 transformative days of speeches, panels, networking and workshops. All Delegates have the opportunity to apply to give keynote speeches, sharing a platform with world leaders with the world's media in attendance. The agenda is shaped by the One Young World Community through the Global Consultation Process, ensuring maximum relevance to the issues affecting young people. In addition to listening to keynote speakers, Delegates have the opportunity to challenge, interact with and be mentored by world leaders.

This year, our Executive Director and President, Dr. Eliezer Lappots became the 1<sup>st</sup> Dominican to attend this event in representation of Health Horizons International and the Dominican Republic.





EXECUTIVEDIRECTOR'S  
REPORT NOV| 23