



friends of  
**Batahola**  
Annual Report 2021



***Scholarship Program Allows  
Fernanda to Pursue Her Dream  
of Becoming a Teacher***

When Fernanda Membreño was just eight years old her mother passed away of a brain tumor. Both she and her sister were entrusted to the care of her maternal grandmother. It was a traumatic and uncertain time in Fernanda's young life.

"My older sister was the person who took the responsibility for my care. She played the role of mother in my life. I am so grateful to have the sister I have. I am indebted to her and to my grandmother," Fernanda said.

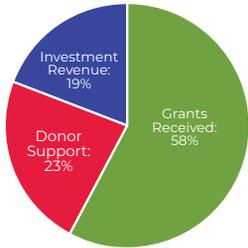
**After her mother's passing, Fernanda heard children from her Acahualinca neighborhood talking about the Center. She took the initiative to get more information, and her teacher encouraged her to apply for a scholarship to continue with her education. She applied for that scholarship and was accepted into the scholarship program. Now she is finishing her last year of high school!**

To Fernanda, receiving a scholarship is more than ongoing financial support. It is a blessing that allows her to continue with her education and to achieve her dream of becoming a teacher. When she was younger, she said she struggled with her studies, and that struggle motivated her to want to help other young children like her.

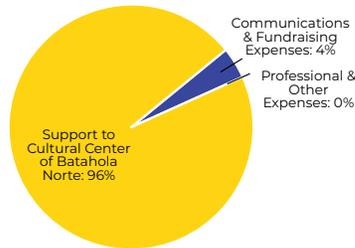
The scholarship is also a blessing to her grandmother who receives only a small monthly retirement benefit. It helps her grandmother put food on the table for herself and her two granddaughters.

We use the professional services of a CPA to prepare our 990 tax report. Ninety-six percent of donations go to the direct support of the Cultural Center of Batahola Norte. All board members are volunteers, and there is no paid staff.

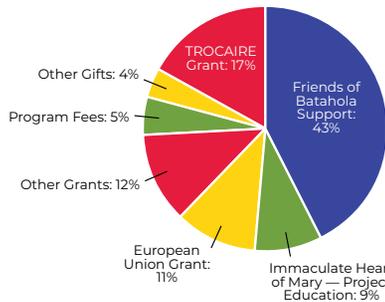
**Friends of Batahola 2021 Revenue**



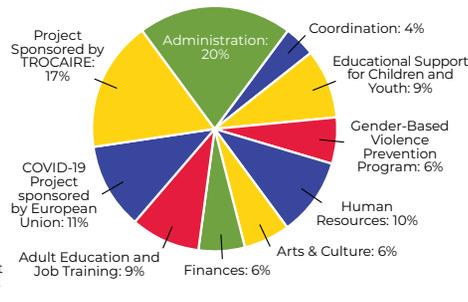
**Friends of Batahola 2021 Expenses**



**2021 CCBN Revenue**



**2021 CCBN Expenses**



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# A Year of Learning in 2021

## Student Scholarship Program Alleviates Financial Pressures

In 2021, the Center continued offering scholarships to students taking classes at the Center, as well as to grade school, high school, and college students. These scholarships help defray educational costs, making education possible for more students. Last year, 222 students benefitted from these scholarships. Personal growth, parenting, and leadership workshops are also offered to the parents of scholarship students with the goal of improving home environments.



Gema Barrios, mother of a scholarship student, said, "Ever since my son belongs to the scholarship program at the Center, he has improved his school performance. Also, I have had a better communication and relationship with him, thanks to what I have learned in the good parenting workshops."



## Vocational and Technical Courses Lead to Jobs and Help Put Food on the Table

Every year, the Center welcomes young and adult students to its vocational and technical courses: computer skills, sewing, cashiering, cooking, baking, pastry making, cake decorating, hairstyling, communicative English, and natural medicine. In 2021, 452 students enrolled in one or more of these classes with a retention rate of 83%. The success of these courses lies in developing skills that result in jobs and home businesses.

Rebecca Aguirre, a mother of three sons, said, "A friend encouraged me to take cake decorating to earn money to support my family and afford household expenses. Once I complete this course, I want to learn pastry making because it is important to continue with my education."



## Arts and Culture Program Draws Students Into the Center Where They Are Safe and Can Express Their Creativity

The Center's arts and culture program is well-recognized for being a safe place for young and adolescent students to develop their creativity, artistic skills, and Nicaraguan identity in courses such as drawing, painting, folkloric dance, flute, and guitar. In 2021, 118 students enrolled in the program with a retention rate of 89%. Many of the arts and culture students also participate in one of the Center's three performance groups: the Nuevo Amanecer Folkloric Group, the Margarita Navarro Ensemble, or the Angel Torellas Choir. These groups bolster students' self-esteem, confidence, and sense of belonging, not to mention being a wonderful outlet for their creative talents.



The success of this year's arts and culture program lies in the implementation of a new BIMODAL teaching methodology which combines face-to-face and virtual classes, very useful during the pandemic. Credit for this methodology goes to the arts and culture team who created the content for the program, using digital and technology tools.

Parents and guardians often express how much they value the arts and culture program because it offers their children a safe space to develop artistic skills. Coming to the Center also exposes students to the many other educational opportunities open to them at the Center and to value education. And it's common for parents, when they see the programs offered at the Center, to enroll in a class and start their own educational journeys.



## The Sister Margie and Father Angél Legacy Circle

These are donors who have remembered the Friends of Batahola in their estate planning. If you have remembered us in your estate plans, please let us know so we can add your name to this circle. If you would like more information please contact us.

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## A Community Library Where All Are Welcome

The Center's library welcomes students and individuals of all ages from the surrounding community. It's a safe gathering place of learning and discovery. In 2021, more than 250 students regularly visited the library. Older scholarship student volunteers run the programs offered at the library: good study habits, tutoring sessions, reading clubs, and storytelling. Personal growth and self-esteem workshops are also offered to both young and adolescent students.

Sofia Espinales, a dance student at the Center who often visits the library, said, "I love coming to the library, mainly on Saturdays, because storytelling time is fun. During the week, I come with my friends and play board games. This is the best library, since I can play and study. The librarians are always willing to help me with difficult homework."



## Basic Literacy Program for Adolescents and Adults Allows Them to Complete Grade School

Many teenagers and adults never had the opportunity to attend or finish grade school. As a result, they never learned to read or write. The comprehensive three-level basic literacy program offered at the Center addresses this need. In 2021, 53 students, ages 14-70, successfully completed the program and now have the option of enrolling in a vocational or technical course at the Center.



Seventy-year-old Vilma Alemán said, "I heard about this program, so I decided to come back to school. In my childhood, I never had the opportunity to go to school. I'm happy and proud of myself that now I feel more confident reading the Holy Bible and preaching the Word of God in my community."

## Integrity Program Targets Pervasive Gender Violence

Last year, the integrity program continued its work in the Acahualinca, Cedro Galan, and Batahola Norte communities. Its strategic goal is to address and prevent gender-based violence which is prevalent in Nicaragua. The integrity staff conducted 350 activities and provided 180 individual counseling sessions. They reached 297 women and girls and 106 men and boys.

In a safe environment, girls and women discuss different types of violence and how they have experienced it. They are taught about their human rights and the right to live free of violence. Maria Bermúdez, a single mother, said, "Unfortunately, the violence most likely starts at home with husbands and companions. Sometimes we reproduce those violent patterns with our sons and daughters. Because violence begets violence, the first step to live free depends on identifying situations that put women and girls at risk."

Ivania Gago, a student at the Center, said, "To be part of the personal goals sessions with a psychologist allowed me to recognize how important I am, and I could rethink my life goals and understand that it is possible to combine these goals with my responsibilities in the family. Now I take time for myself."

The integrity program's mission has always included workshops and programs for boys and men, so they understand their role in the process of living free of violence. Francisco Abraham Pineda who lives in Acahualinca shared, "I think the big mistake of men is to believe that women are our belongings and that's when the violence starts. They are not objects! On the contrary, women and men are a family team with rights and responsibilities. I feel great participating in the workshops with other men because we have learned that as men, we must help with the housework, take care of our children, and participate in school meetings."





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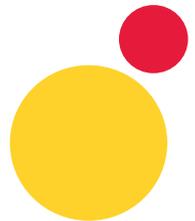
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