



# A Note From Our Executive Director



*Dr. Johnny Camacho and his team performed 12 surgeries during a mobile surgery campaign in Cochabamba in late 2020.*

Dear Friends,

As I write this note, much of the world is still struggling to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. And while vaccine distribution is underway throughout the United States, our brothers and sisters in Bolivia and Paraguay still await access to this life-saving medication.

The pandemic reveals anew the heavy burden that systemic inequity places on those who are marginalized. But none of us have been immune to its effects. Through this shared experience of fragility I have felt more deeply called to act in solidarity with all people throughout our world, particularly those who suffer and are most vulnerable.

Solidarity—which calls us to a deeper awareness that we are all related and profoundly connected—teaches us to forge deeper connections with others and to allow their sufferings and joy to become our own. Solidarity spurs us to transformative action in the world.

This call to action comes to life through the mission of Solidarity Bridge. Thanks to the deep connection between our US community of supporters and our partners in Bolivia and Paraguay, we directly served hundreds of patients in 2020. We also distributed personal protective equipment to health workers and critical medical supplies

to our partner hospitals, impacting the lives of thousands more patients and medical professionals.

Like many of you, we have found new ways to be together to share our sufferings and joys this year. Working together in a spirit of mutuality is crucial to our ongoing mission, and despite physical distance, our partnerships have continued to grow and deepen. The pandemic has placed a spotlight on persisting inequities, and we've stepped forward with peers around the world to advocate for justice in global surgery.

In this report, you'll read of the many things we accomplished throughout this challenging year. We are grateful to all who responded to our call for renewed support during this crisis. Together we remain resolute in our mission to build a more just world.

Sincerely,



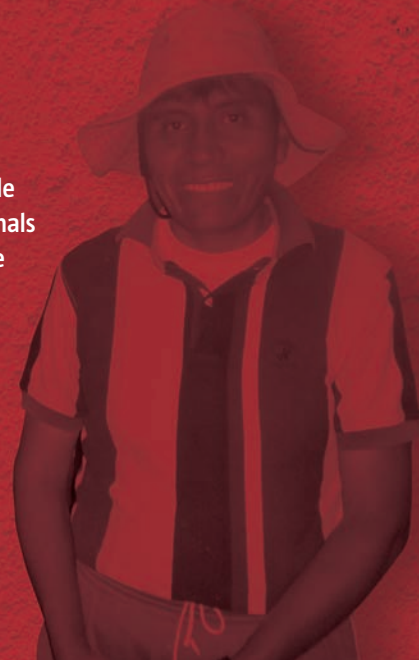
Ann Rhomberg  
Executive Director

## VISION

We seek a just, compassionate, and interdependent world, where the health needs of those most vulnerable are prioritized and medical professionals have the necessary resources to serve their communities.

## MISSION

In a spirit of solidarity, we partner with communities in Bolivia and Paraguay to increase access to safe, affordable surgery and other essential health care.



### **Surgical preparedness is a direct indicator of pandemic preparedness**

*A hospital's surgical workforce and operating room resources serve as a reservoir of critical care capacity for responding to a pandemic like COVID-19. In 2020 we helped to institute the Latin American & Caribbean Working Group of the G4 Alliance, focusing attention on unmet surgical needs in the region.*



# Our Impact on Patients

The overwhelming demands of the pandemic challenged the capacity of the health system in Bolivia. Staff and supply resources were diverted to treat COVID-19 while other diseases continued to cause suffering. And for many families, economic losses increased the barriers to essential health care. Addressing these realities, we doubled our Solidarity Fund for patients.



*Juana Erika, right,  
with her sisters*

**444** Total patients served

**106** Surgeries Provided

**Juana Erika** has always known health to be a fragile thing. Her family lives in a lowland region of Bolivia where Chagas disease is widespread. In her twenties, the disease attacked her heart and she received a pacemaker to keep it beating. The device helped at first, but after only a few years, she began to feel symptoms of heart failure again. At the time, she was caring for her ill parents and covering their medical bills. Economic constraints prevented her from accessing care for her own symptoms. During the height of the



As part of our pandemic response, 202 patients received support for medical expenses related to prescriptions, COVID-19 tests and other diagnostic exams.

pandemic, her symptoms worsened—she needed a new pacemaker urgently.

Juana Erika is a single mother and her worsening illness left her unable to work and support her son. They were assisted by her siblings, but the cost of a pacemaker was far out of the family’s reach. Through collaboration with her doctor, Puente de Solidaridad, and Solidarity Bridge, she was able to access affordable and timely surgery—even during the pandemic—restoring her health and enabling her to return to work.



**Maily** underwent open heart surgery in March, and was released in time to celebrate her first birthday at home in April. Bolivia has one of the highest rates of infant mortality in South America, and heart malformations are the most common birth defect putting children at risk. In 2020, we provided 23 surgeries for children like Maily.



**Sabina** began to suffer excruciating pain after every meal, forcing her to severely restrict her diet. Worried for her health and nutrition, her children sought help through our general surgery program and Sabina received gallbladder surgery at Clinica Santa Maria. Through formal agreements, our partner hospitals work to eliminate economic barriers to essential health care by providing lower-cost surgeries.



A health crisis cost **Luna Maria** her job and her home in the midst of the pandemic. This financial devastation also threatened to end her cancer treatment. Through the generous support of our donors, her care is continuing. Her mother and son are pictured here reviewing her prescriptions with a social worker from Puente de Solidaridad.

# Supporting Our Medical Partners

*In May, as hospitals strained amid the surge of COVID-19, our warehouses were emptied of all supplies. In July, our 40' shipping container arrived, and staff at Puente de Solidaridad worked urgently to distribute these life-saving materials.*



Health workers, committed to serving others, met severe difficulties in 2020. They worked to provide high-quality care while facing an extreme lack of resources and dire risks to their personal health. Hundreds of doctors and nurses in Bolivia have died from COVID-19. Working toward our vision of a world where all are adequately resourced and protected, we responded to this crisis by sending emergency shipments of medical supplies throughout the year.

**\$1,104,016** | **Medical Supplies**  
**34,267lbs** | **Donated**

- 6 shipments to Bolivia, 1 to Paraguay
- 79 bulk distributions to hospitals and other care facilities
- 126 individual donations to patients needing supplies inaccessible elsewhere

CardinalHealth



## **Supporting 3x As Many Health Facilities**

*Through emergency shipments made possible by our pandemic response, we expanded supply donations beyond our hospital partners to other care facilities throughout Bolivia.*



# Working in Solidarity

Relationships of solidarity and mutual learning are crucial to our success. In 2020, we creatively connected the many people who contribute to our mission. Working together, we continue learning, serving, and advocating for a healthy and just future.

Year-round care in our surgical programs continued thanks to 23 Bolivian medical teams who provided operations for 106 patients.



*On mission trips, US practitioners offer lectures and hands-on learning. Without travel and in-person exchanges, we created opportunities to collaborate in new ways. We connected virtually to discuss cases, share best practices, advocate for global surgery, and dream together about the future of our mission. There were also opportunities for doctors and other specialists to exchange support and encouragement during a time of great stress and isolation.*

- 1** Mission Trip
- 3** Missioners
- 34** Virtual Mission Encounters
- 23** Bolivian Surgical Teams



## REVENUE

**\$2,343,612**

In-Kind – \$1,281,166

Cash – \$1,062,446



- In-Kind **55%**
- Individuals **28%**
- Organizations/Corporations **17%**

## EXPENSES

**\$2,002,416**

In-Kind – \$1,112,048

Cash – \$890,368



- Direct Program **89%**
- Fundraising **4%**
- Administrative **7%**

## NET ASSETS

**\$1,031,473**

In-Kind – \$491,126

Cash – \$540,347

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**\$75,000 +**

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## **Responding to Crisis, Prioritizing the Most Vulnerable**

*With the surge of COVID infections overwhelming the national health system, the Bolivian government did not have the resources needed to aid NGOs and religious organizations that provide important health services. Recognizing this crisis, our partners at Puente de Solidaridad directed essential medical supplies to organizations serving the homeless, elderly, incarcerated, and isolated indigenous communities.*



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## SINCE 1999

**Medical Supplies Donated** **\$43,654,364**  
**Patients Served** **66,769**  
**Surgeries Provided** **6,754**  
**Missioners** **461**  
**Mission Trips** **101**



### Solidarity Endures Through Our Loyal Volunteers

*Our mission depends on the time and talents of many US volunteers. In 2020, we stayed at home to fight the spread of COVID-19. But there was still urgent work to do in our warehouse to prepare medical supplies for shipment and support our bulk mailings. We are grateful to the many volunteers who gave their time this year, volunteering solo in our office when it was safe to do so and coming up with creative ways to accomplish tasks from the safety of their own homes.*

## In-Kind Corporate Donors

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Wines for Humanity

## Missioners

Juan Lorenzo Hinojosa  
Charles Levy, MD  
Richard Moser, MD

## Volunteers

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Terry Burson  
Mike Canter  
Ellen Dalton  
Mary Dougherty  
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Catherine Flanagan  
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## Dharma Trading Co.

FIBER ART SUPPLIES & CLOTHING BLANKS SINCE 1969

For 18 years, we have facilitated a partnership between Puente de Solidaridad and Dharma Trading Co. which confronts the inextricable links between poverty and poor health. Dharma Trading sells textiles produced by artisans in Bolivia, honoring their cultural heritage, paying living wages, and supporting locally-sourced, low-impact, or recycled materials. The Goff family, owners of Dharma Trading, generously support our pediatric heart surgery efforts.



### ***Our Mission Continues to Grow***

*In 2020, we formed a new partnership with the Bolivian department of Potosí. We look forward to collaborating in areas of medical equipping, detection of cardiac disease, and mobile surgery campaigns. Our heart surgery program will also expand to serve children from the southern city of Sucre, and our neurosurgery program is working to provide new access to spinal surgery in 2021.*





The majority of our mission work takes place in Bolivia, a country of 11 million people. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic quickly overwhelmed the nation's already fragile health system. As hospitals across the country buckled under the strain, Bolivia suffered one of the world's worst case-fatality rates. The virus was particularly devastating to the medical community which mourned the loss of hundreds of doctors and nurses.

Despite these harrowing challenges, our local medical partners remained committed to serving their communities. They used their characteristic resourcefulness and innovation to respond to the crisis. Inspired by their example, we worked flexibly and creatively to increase our support of their work. Thanks to our strong partnership with Puente de Solidaridad and the generosity of our US community, we succeeded in serving hundreds of patients and delivering 17 tons of essential medical supplies in 2020.

**Thank you for making this possible!**

## Solidarity Bridge Staff

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