

HOTEL CON CORAZON IMPACT STUDY 2009-2016



EIGHT YEARS IN LAS LAGUNAS

Already eight years working in the community of Las Lagunas in Granada, Nicaragua, made us decide to take a closer look at whether our efforts are making a difference. We conducted an impact study to gain a better understanding of how our students and other stakeholders are experiencing our programs and how this may be changing their lives and the community at large. We can proudly report that our work clearly has a positive impact, and together with all the people involved with Corazón, we are heading in the right direction, changing lives and the community.

The study consisted of three parts: a quantitative study to determine what former student participants are doing now and whether they have continued their studies. And two qualitative approaches to learn from participants' experiences through storytelling and focus group discussions.

The study was designed and facilitated by Hanna Ulseth, a Master's degree student from School for International Training in the United States.

Hanna: "An impact study helps to understand change and to evaluate effectiveness. It was a privilege for me to be part of this process and to hear all the different perspectives. I am grateful for the experience of connecting with so many people and seeing first-hand what a team effort this project is and what a difference it has made. I'm especially thankful to all those who shared their stories and hopes for the future."



FACTS & MISSION CON CORAZON

According to the 2015 United Nations Human Development Index Report, the primary school drop out rate in Nicaragua is 51.6%. In primary school, 3 out of 10 students are already one year behind their age group; and out of 100 that start the first grade, 40 don't make it through the sixth grade. These statistics are attributed to a lack of education funding, inadequate facilities and resources, and insufficient teacher training. Furthermore, many students live in poverty and must leave school to find work to support their family.

The mission of Hotel con Corazón is to help people in developing countries build a brighter future by investing in education and work.

- We support children to finish their education all the way from primary school up to higher education- so that they increase their employment prospects.
- We stimulate local economic development by running a profitable business- a healthy enterprise that creates jobs and provides income and professional development for its employees.

THE CORAZON APPROACH

Foundation Hotel con Corazón strongly believes in the power of education to maximize the potential of individuals. Therefore, 100% of our profits are invested in local education programs to empower students, their families and the community to build a brighter future.

We work towards our vision through a variety of strategies:

- Tutoring and extracurricular activities.
- Home visits and parent workshops.
- Scholarships for secondary and university students.
- Collaboration with other NGOs.

Through these ingredients we work together to increase the quality of life in the community and ultimately to break the cycle of poverty.



PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE ALL OUR DECISIONS



- **Fun and Fresh:**
Contemporary, no-nonsense and having fun together.
- **A place to be you:**
Simple luxury and genuine service to offer a home away from home.
- **"Couleur locale":**
International spirit in our hearts and local blood in our veins.
- **Good business:**
We want to make a healthy profit for a good cause.

ENJOY TODAY, CARE FOR TOMORROW

NUMBERS

- Since the start of the program in 2009, a total of 414 children have participating in tutoring classes.
- Fourteen secondary and 29 university students have receiving scholarships. We are supporting 166 students since then through our collaboration with other NGOs.
- Since 2012, of the 29 scholarship recipients, seven have graduated and are working.
- In our scholarship program, three students decided to stop and are no longer studying. Four students no longer receive scholarships as they are working and are now able to pay their tuition themselves.
- 71% of all students that participated in the tutoring programs are still studying (65% of the girls, 76% of the boys), 19% have stopped and 10% we were unable to find any information.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 Projected
Elementary school (Las Lagunas)	48	86	96	105	145	168	163	159	160
Secondary school (Las Lagunas)			7	10	37	32	32	32	35
Secondary school scholarships					4	8	9	11	14
University scholarships		1	2	4	12	19	15	19	15
Via other NGOs	11	11	21	11	22	21	12	26	26
Employees' education (and children)				12	12	11	15	19	15
TOTAL	59	98	126	142	232	259	246	266	266

STORIES & FOCUS GROUPS

Starting in November 2016, we collected stories using an innovative research tool called Sprockler. More than 100 students, parents, tutors and other stakeholders were asked to share a story about an experience related to Hotel con Corazón. Interviews were carried out at both schools (San Pablo and Bertha Gutierrez), with scholarship recipients, graduates and drop-outs, both in the community and at the hotel. Afterwards each storyteller answered clarifying questions that allow larger patterns to emerge once all stories are collected.

We also conducted a focus group discussion to understand our impact in the community. We talked about the strengths and challenges of the community, the role and impact of the hotel, and people's hopes for the future. Seven people participated, including two community leaders, the clinic doctor, two mothers of tutoria participants, a father of two scholarship recipients, and one of the oldest members of the community. In this report we share the main insights of our research. If you want to read or listen to the stories of the students or other storytellers, visit the interactive report at <https://sprockler.com/reports/hotelconcorazon/>.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

1: Increased motivation:

All groups of participants (parents, tutors, students and scholarship recipients) shared that they feel more motivated in their work, studies, and personal lives as a result of participating in the Corazón program. Some parents expressed their desire to return to school after seeing the advancement in their children in order to help them with their homework and make progress themselves.

"A special moment for me was when the secondary students took a special trip to visit the INTECNA technical college. That day I realized that I wanted to study auto-mechanics....I'm now studying there! The tutors helped me to prepare for the entrance exam and taught me how to be more focused on my studies and that learning is an important part of life..." - Victor, student Las Lagunas and now scholarship student Automotive Transportation (19)



Mother with children in the community

2: Increased parent involvement:

More parents are involved in their children's education and participate in reunions and workshops. Community members noticed that there are many more parents that attend the monthly 'parent's school' at Hotel con Corazón than other school events.

"I want to be involved and make sure that my son has a better life and education than I did. I raised my son by myself and Hotel con Corazón has supported me to do that. Now I attend 'parent school' at my son's high school and am not afraid to participate and speak up." - - Leyla, mother of Deyvi, secondary scholarship recipient

3: Increase in knowledge:

Many younger children expressed a change in abilities and an increase in knowledge. They explained that before coming to tutoring classes in the afternoon they were not able to read, write, add and subtract and now they are able to.

"I've learned a lot. I feel happy in English and in computer class. I have also learned many values, to respect and value. Coming here makes school easier. Also when they take us to new places outside our community and learn about our culture, it makes us feel proud of being Nicaraguan." - Eddy, student (13)

4: Increased pride and confidence:

A change in abilities has also led to an increase in pride and confidence. Students said that they now know that they can succeed and learn even when "things are difficult." This pride is also evident in the tutors' stories, who shared



University students tutoring secondary students in the hotel

their excitement when some of their most 'challenging' students learned how to read and write. Many tutors also expressed a personal change, becoming more confident in their teaching abilities and searching for new, creative teaching methods and strategies.

"Before tutoring classes, my son didn't know how to read. Thanks to the tutors, he has learned to read and participate in the dynamics and games, in the abilities that he didn't believe he had and to develop as a person and to love himself." - Violeta, mother

5: Increase in secondary school enrollment:



San Pablo School in Las Lagunas

The number of secondary students has increased dramatically. Students used to have to travel into the city to attend secondary school. Due to increased enrollment, San Pablo school has started offering Saturday classes for students.

"There are many more students staying in school. Before we didn't have a secondary school, and now there are too many students in one classroom! Just a few years ago there were only 10 sixth graders and now there are 40!" - Rebeca, mother

6: Noticeable town improvements:

Many people also shared that Hotel con Corazón together with other NGO's has played a role in the improved infrastructure and maintenance of the schools. Los Amigos de Las Lagunas, a group of several NGO's (Opportunity International, Casa de La Mujer, CociNica, Clinica Apoyo, Hotel con Corazón) and some volunteers, painted the school buildings and preschool classrooms, planted flowers, and donated new desks. Through these partnerships, we strengthen our own work and support each other on various projects to reach the wider community. The community now has its own clinic and a factory that provides jobs producing safer, more environmentally friendly stoves.



University students working and learning in the hotel

"Our community has improved and looks much better. People are taking better care of their community and there is less trash in our community now." - Don Jose, community leader

7: Applied learning success:

Many scholarship recipients shared positive stories about being able to apply what they learn in school to an actual work environment, such as the hotel. Some of the scholarship recipients also talked about sharing their knowledge and giving back to the community through providing homework help and classes to reinforce what they are learning in school to secondary scholarship students in Las Lagunas on Saturdays.



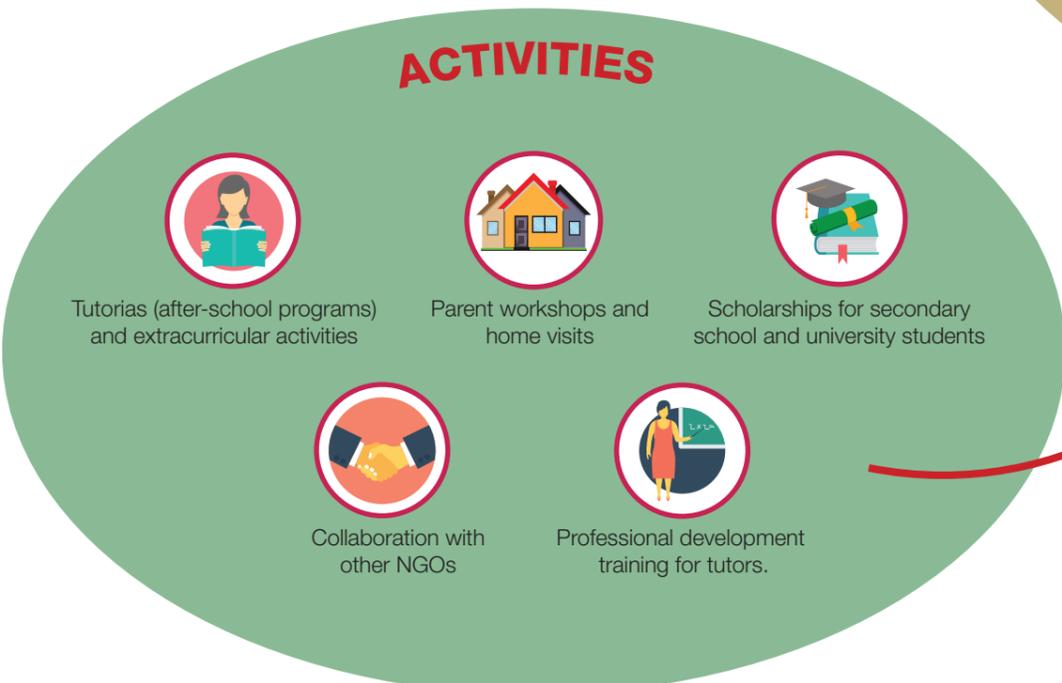
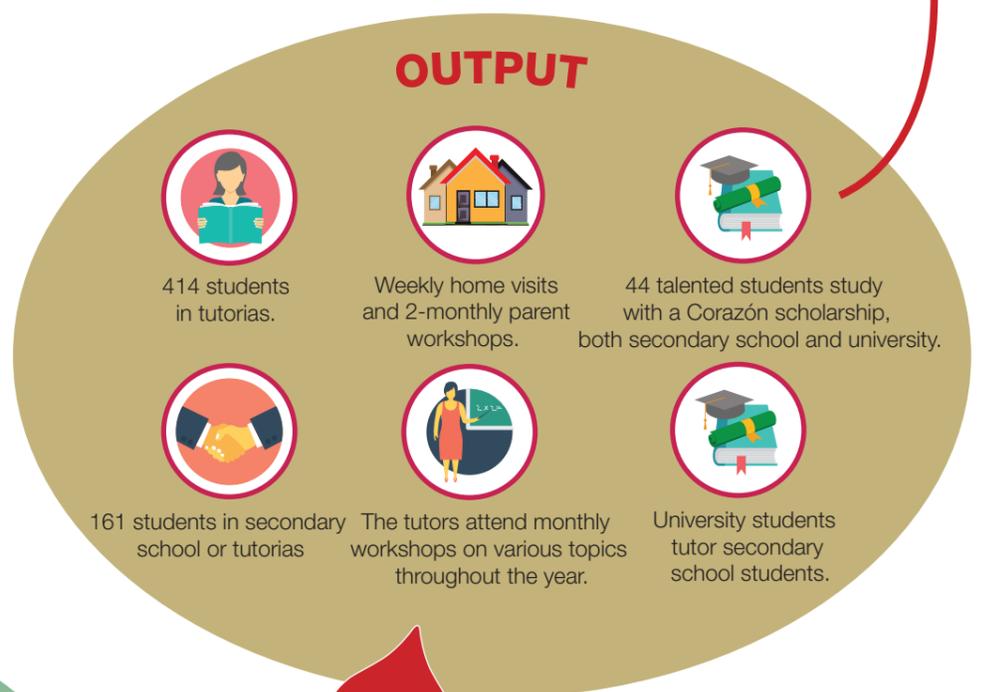
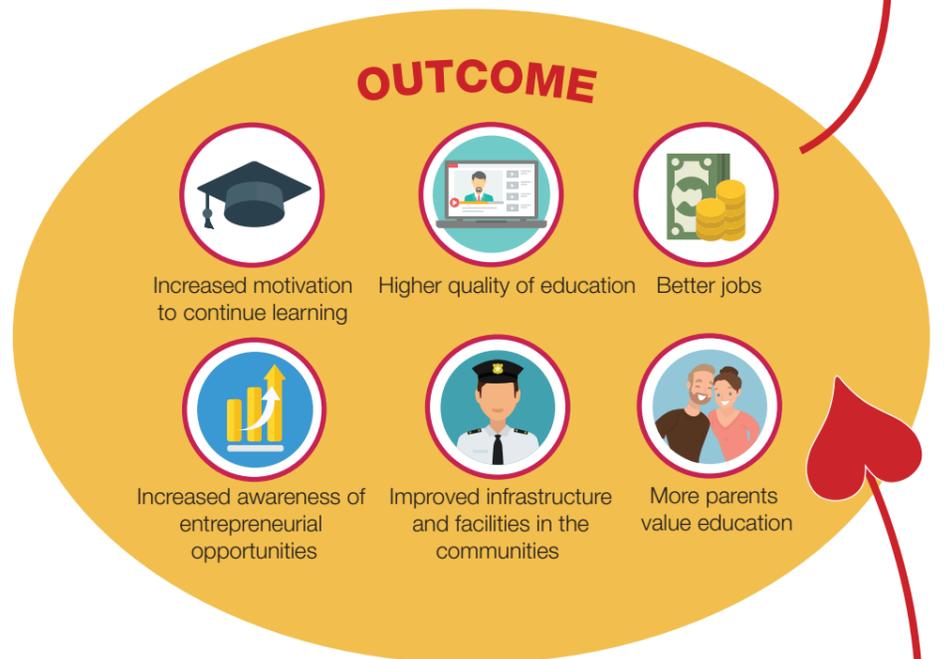
"One of the crucial moments that I have experienced with Foundation Hotel con Corazón is that it has given me the opportunity to share a little of what I have learned throughout my life as a student with the young scholarship recipients for the same foundation that supported me." - Reneo, university scholarship student

8: Awareness of the importance of education:

Many people shared that they now have a stronger appreciation for the education that they are receiving, and believe that this enables them to develop personally and professionally and will contribute to their future success.



"The tutoring program serves to strengthen and enrich the education system. Here in Nicaragua there is a huge education deficit, especially in rural areas. This tutoring program is comprehensive and integral as it not only reinforces their homework and the course material they learn in the morning, but also strengthens their self-esteem and independent learning by taking them on excursions outside the community. Students tell me that this experience has changed their world!" - Doctora Reyna, Clínica Apoyo



THEORY OF CHANGE

With the input from all of the people involved with the Hotel con Corazón foundation (founders, (ex)-managers, board, new entrepreneurs, we created for the first time a Theory of Change to demonstrate and better understand the link between the different activities and aspects of our programs and how we hope to achieve our long-term goals and desired impact. We aim to finetune this further next year.

SENSEMAKING

Together with some of the stakeholders we discussed some of the patterns that emerged from the stories. -

Positive change:

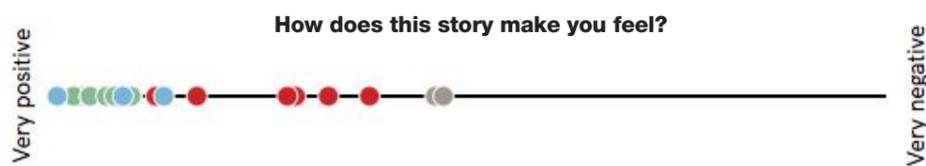
Participants shared that the enthusiasm and encouraging responses did not come as a surprise because people have experienced positive change: better communication, stronger relationships, more opportunities and improved awareness and knowledge.

"The programs of Hotel con Corazón have made a great impression on everyone involved. People feel proud and happy of the progress that has been made." - Victor, scholarship recipient

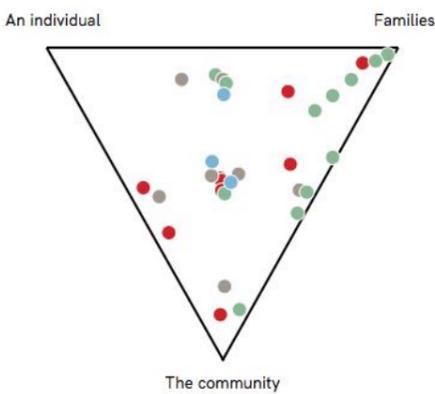
"These are all positive experiences. People believe that these programs have helped them to grow and to see things in a different way from what they have learned in other places." - María Belén, Education coordinator

Collective impact:

Participants noticed that most stories represent a change on a more collective level – influencing families and the community as a whole. They noted that when individuals change, then most likely this improves family relationships and the community as well. They stressed the importance of family and unity in Nicaraguan culture, which is why home visits and involvement of parents has been critical to the success of the program.



The change in my story affects...



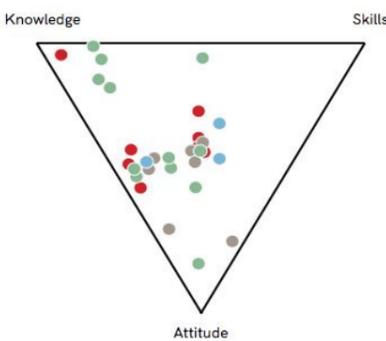
"It is our hope that in the future, the students who graduate and attend the university won't leave our community but return and help make a difference." - Leyla, mother

"We are humans and we have connections with other people; therefore, we must recognize that our attitudes and behaviors affect others." - Blanca, university scholarship recipient, Veterinary Medicine

Beyond knowledge:

The majority of the stories describe a change in knowledge and attitude. Tutors, parents and students shared that they were more motivated and learned important values, as well as new knowledge. Scholarship recipients shared that through their hotel experience, they were better able to apply and develop skills related to their knowledge.

The change that I describe in my story is mainly about a change in



OTHER IMPACT

In this impact analysis, we focused on the educational programs. Hotel con Corazón also initiates other activities that benefit the community.

Social impact:

The Hotel serves as a popular venue for social projects to convene and share ideas, expertise and experiences, including in 2016:

- The Reading Workshop for 80 adults from around the country.
- Positive Discipline Workshop for educators and parents.
- UP Nicaragua Girl's Empowerment Retreat for two groups.
- Salsa classes where tourists and local meet.

Environmental impact:

We strive to keep our ecological footprint small.

- A local farmer collects all of our food waste and uses it to feed his 12 pigs, contributing to his livelihood and the environment.
- We recycle as much as we can and leave only a very small amount of trash that needs to be collected by the city.
- We recently switched from plastic to environmentally friendly cloth bags for laundry.



Economic impact:

We are proud of our progress and contributions to the local economy.

- We provide jobs, good working conditions and support for a staff of 22.
- We fund the professional development of our employees by offering an extra 10% of their salary to be used towards education for themselves or their children. Since the program started, nearly half of the 45 employees have received this bonus. Two people have graduated with university degrees in tourism/hospitality management and systems engineering, and three of the tutors will complete their Master's degrees in Education in July 2017.
- We buy our fruits and vegetables from local vendors to support and stimulate the local economy.

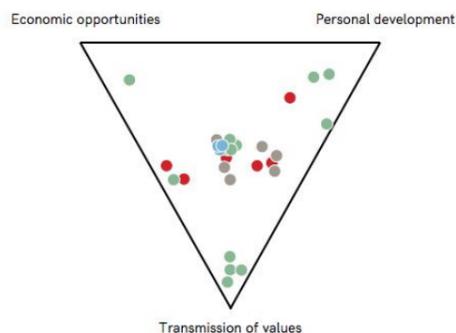


NEXT STEPS

Based on the results of the study, we identified some areas that we want to continue to build upon in order to grow and improve. We will:

- Continue to foster our partnerships and relationships with parents, students and other local NGOs.
- Implement a structured training for the tutors in innovative education techniques both from external professionals who can carry out the trainings, as well as sending the tutors to trainings so that they can come back and train the others.
- Improve our monitoring and evaluation system and build upon our records system and data collection, including digitalizing everything for better access and communication with participants and former participants.
- Involve parents even more through interactive and participatory workshops based on their learning wishes.
- Improving our tutoring classes for secondary students increasing the amount of time we spend with them.
- Search a solution for our lack of adequate space for secondary tutoring. Include more empowerment workshops for secondary students about goal-setting, personal strengths, and vocational training.
- Strengthen relationships with teachers of San Pablo and Bertha Gutierrez so that we can grow together and have a deeper impact.

Education is important because....



"This shows us that besides learning academic skills, we must also work on practicing different values such as respect, honesty, tolerance, and equality if we want to contribute to our country." - Claudia, tutora

Balanced education:

Participants explained that all factors are connected and there is a balance between the three.

"This demonstrates that if a person doesn't have values, then he or she will not be able to achieve full personal development, and thus will not be able to obtain economic opportunities to benefit themselves and their families." - Leyla, mother

You will find more stories and the patterns behind them in the interactive Sprockler report <https://sprockler.com/reports/hotelconcorazon/>.