



# ANNUAL REPORT //2020



# Changing for Good

2020 was a year  
of change.

We all learned the hard skills of acceptance, transformation, and resilience as everything changed: our homes, our schools, our interactions, our societies.

But change brings new beginnings. And young people all over the region took advantage of the new virtual world to keep growing. Hand in hand with TeenSmart, youth registered on JovenSalud.net to take online courses and to receive virtual coaching from health professionals. Teens who needed support to make positive changes in their life, found it with TeenSmart.

This is now our  
**new reality:**

- We can provide support to teens anywhere, anytime.
- We can make a positive impact using technology.
- We can bring light and hope where there is darkness.
- We can provide tools so that youth continue their personal development.



**That's  
powerful.  
That's Change  
for Good!**

# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends of Teen Smart

We all learned a lot last year, didn't we? Just like the young people we serve, the TeenSmart team had to reflect, to pivot, and to experiment in order to grow.

## And grow we did!

- Use of TeenSmart by teens in other countries increased by 150%
- 14,100 counseling questions were received from more than 3,000 teens
- 2,384 teens signed up for online life-skills courses

We also launched our digital transformation technology plan to serve more teens on more platforms, more quickly. During phase 1 of the plan, **we developed our new machine learning cognitive assistant, "Ariel"**, to respond to teens automatically on Facebook and JovenSalud.net. Ariel has been a total success so far! In this new decade, TSI is getting ready to go mobile and direct, impacting as many lives as possible with your support.

Here in 2021, we are also very excited about Eric Liljenstolpe stepping up as President of the Board of Directors. Eric brings many talents and gifts to the role, but above all he is a believer in the power of personal transformation.

Finally, I want to thank you because your support ensured that TeenSmart could be open for children, teens, and young adults every single day of 2020. Thanks for believing in us!

## Let's all keep believing in youth!

With gratitude,  
Adriana Gómez Gómez





**67% of our  
users during  
2020 were  
girls //**



# Mission and Vision

Our mission is to use online technologies to empower youth to make smart decisions, live healthy lives and contribute to their communities.

We envision a world where millions of youth have become healthier, more educated, productive and active in improving their communities.

## Reaching across borders



2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016 2018 2020 2022 2024 2026 2030



# 2020 Challenges



COVID-19 transformed our reality. Schools closed and teens who received TeenSmart's services at school were no longer able to access us in that way.

**160 million** students in Latin America stopped going to school in person.

When COVID-19 started, we looked at JovenSalud's statistics:

**40%** of our users considered themselves depressed

**836** teens asked questions about depression

**364** teens sought help/information due to suicidal concerns

**2,552** coaching sessions focused on emotional health

**429** teens inquired about anxiety

**117** teens asked about stress

# In 2020, we were there for each of these teens!

**65,700** personal messages to  
teens on WhatsApp

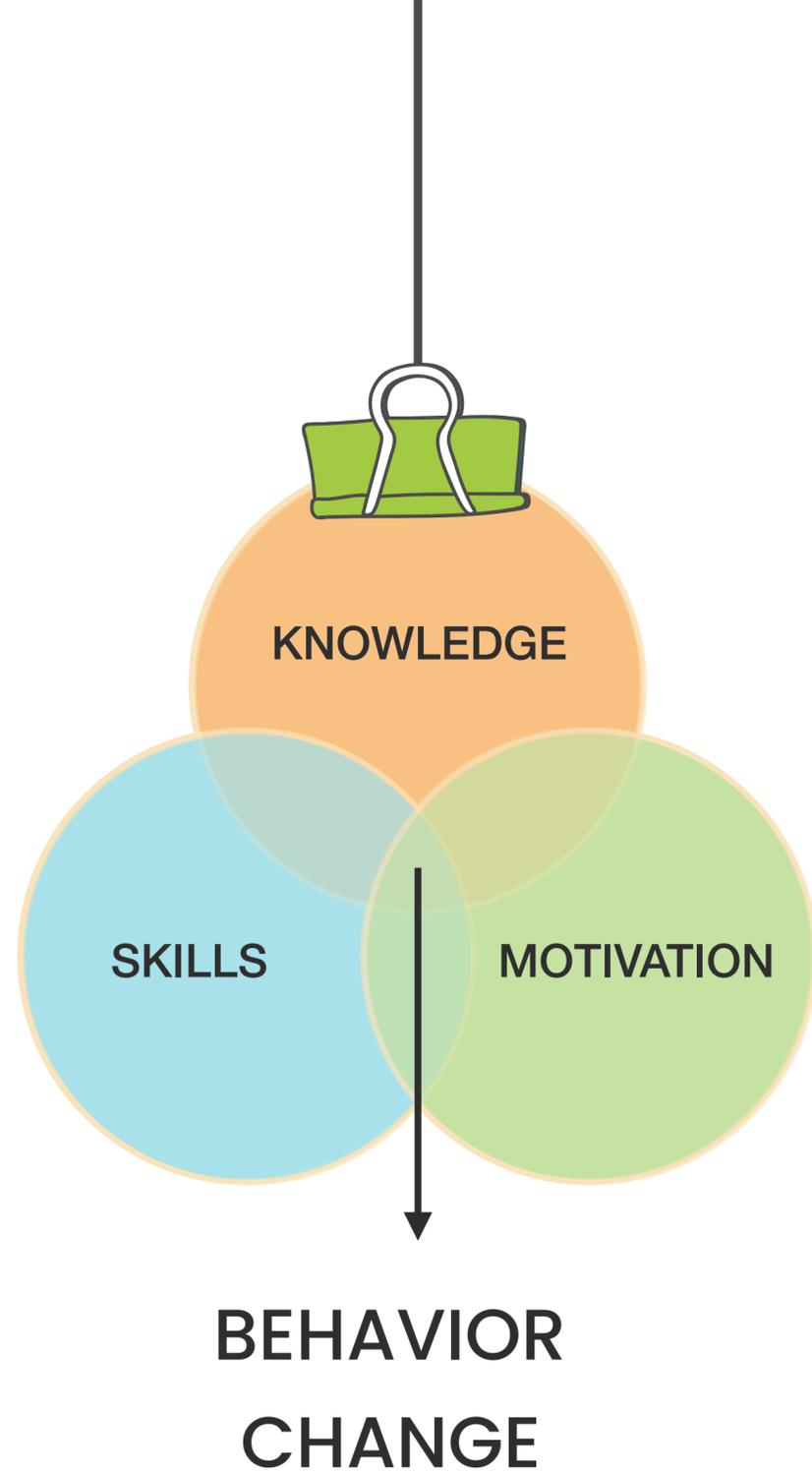
**13** Facebook Lives

**3** Youth Leadership conference,  
and **4** graduations

**120** young adult volunteers

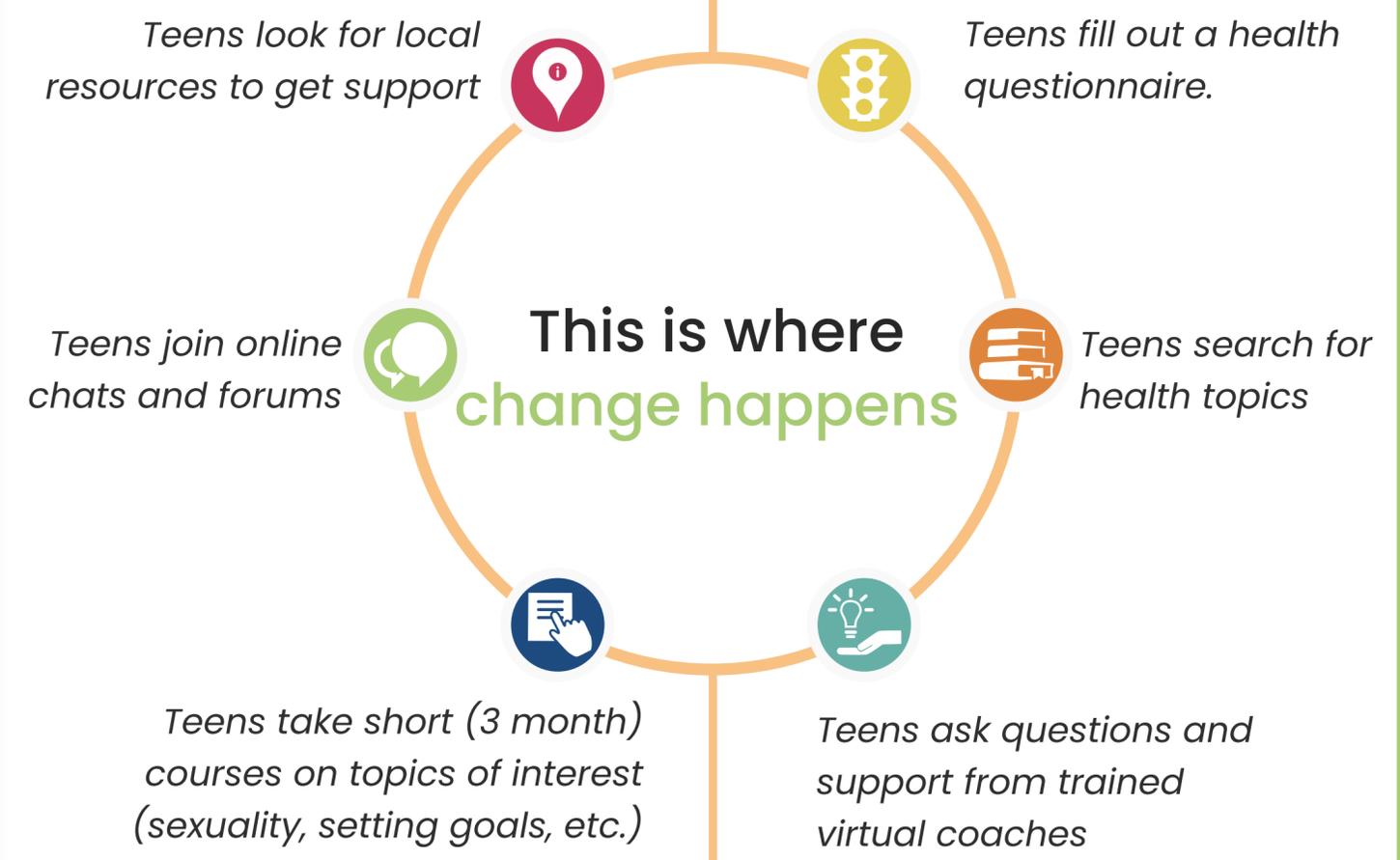
**NEW** counseling team specialized  
In high-risk counseling





## Our theory Of change

When teenagers are empowered with knowledge, skills, and motivation, they will make smart choices to reduce or prevent risky behaviors, and build life-skills that promote education, employment, and social responsibility.





# OUR RESULTS

//2020



**Table 1: Trends in services provided, 2010–2020. Includes users from all countries and ages 10–24 years old**

Indicator	Unit of measurement	Before 2016	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Total registered users	Number of youth	31,132	8,027	12,689	9,444	13,191	7,999	82,482
Health questionnaires	Number completed	25,612	8,655	15,625	11,295	14,070	5,879	81,136
Completed online courses	Number of courses	3,045	1,104	2,339	1,604	2,726	1,219	12,037
Online coaching sessions	Number of coaching sessions	55,759	13,280	18,019	9,368	14,287	14,500*	124,813
Teens getting coaching sessions	Number of youth	3,674 annually	3,782	7,141	3,944	5,694	3,432*	
Average use for coaching sessions	Number of coaching sessions per teen	3.9	3.5	2.5	2.4	2.5	4.65	
Allied organizations	Number of organizations	75 Annual %	75	123	130	72	127	
Income (USD)	Amount of dollars	873,815	322,344	343,027	328,328	352,514	356,533 **	
Expenses (USD)	Amount of dollars	1,051,615	286,190	323,647	350,490	385,454	356,533	



**\*14.100**

Coaching sessions were made via the JovenSalud Platform and 400 were made via social media.

**\*\*An extraordinary donation** was made to TeenSmart on December 31, 2020 in the exact amount required to eliminate the organization's operating deficit for 2020.



**In 2020 [Accenture](#) Costa Rica's Search and Content Analytics Group provided pro bono support to TeenSmart to improve JovenSalud's search engine, relying on user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) design to facilitate greater access to rich content and services. // [Read more about this partnership here.](#)**



# Special projects

## El Poder Está en Ti

This past year, Grand Challenges Canada invested in TeenSmart to pilot and evaluate a project to reduce adolescent pregnancies in Nicaragua.

The project was called El Poder Está en Ti (The Power Is In You). For 4 months, 408 girls and boys aged 14-17 participated in the study using their smart phones. Half were randomly assigned to TeenSmart's intervention where they received 2-3 weekly micro-messages (short videos, games, graphics) to build healthy sexual and reproductive knowledge.

### The result:

- 408 teens participated in either the experimental or control groups
- 92% of the experimental group completed the intervention
- Teens were extremely satisfied with the project, rating it at 98%
- Teens' levels of sexual and reproductive health (knowledge, skills and motivation) increased
- Knowledge about how to identify improper relationships improved by 20% (for example, an older man with a teenage girl)
- Sexual abstinence became a more plausible decision for participants, particularly boys

*Learn more and hear from the teens who participated in the project by clicking on the links below.*

[The Power Is In You info video](#)

[Isleydi's Testimony: The Power Is In Me.](#)



**55% of new users  
in 2020 found  
JovenSalud via  
social media or  
by word of mouth**

// (compared to  
just 13% in 2019)



# Special projects

NoEstásSol@  
(You Are Not Alone)

With financial support from the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB), in 2020, TeenSmart launched an innovative micro-learning messaging campaign to prevent COVID-19 transmission and to strengthen mental health among teens.

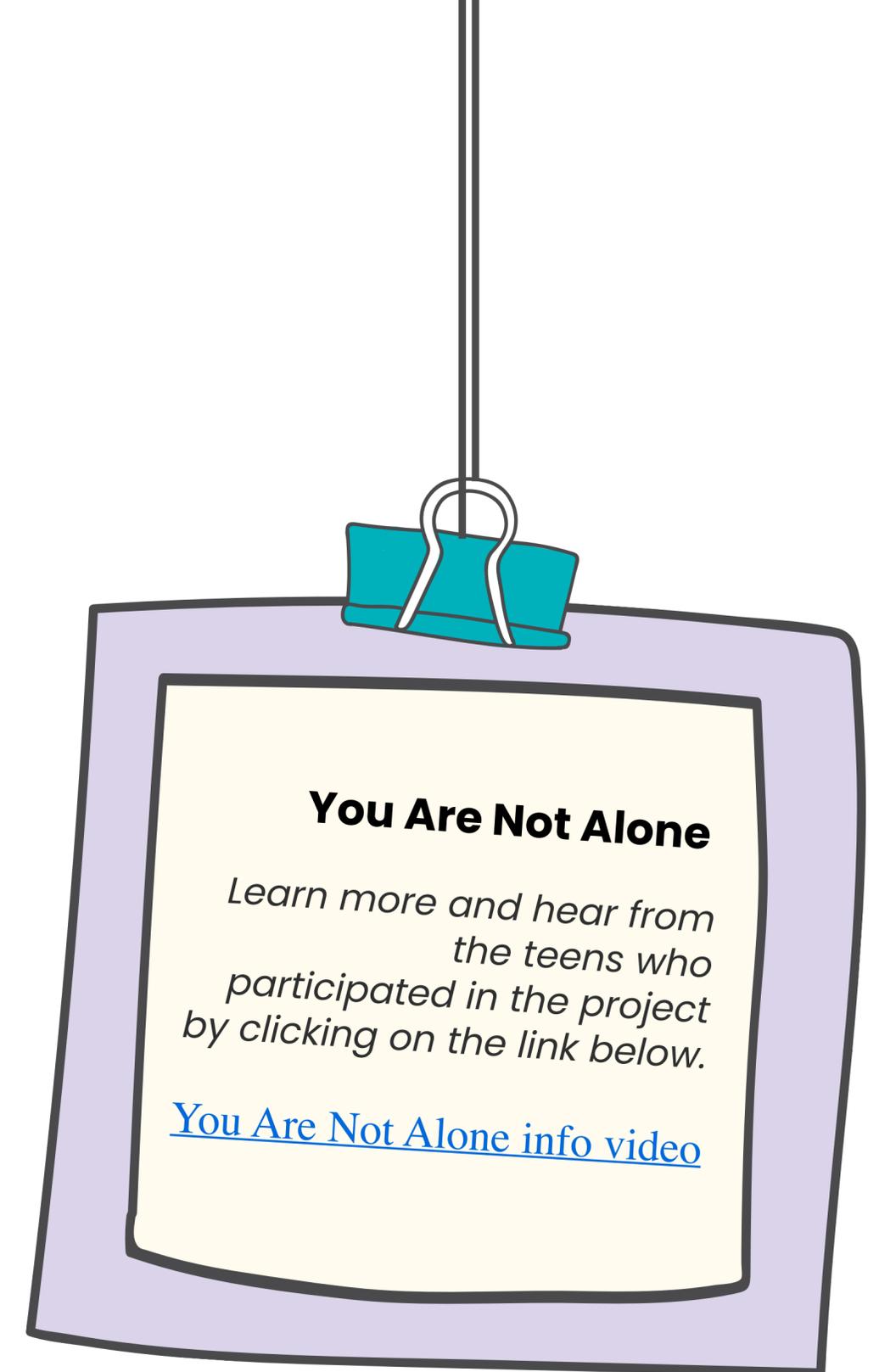
**The IDB and BID Lab Nicaragua made this (and much more!) possible** by investing in Phase 1 of TeenSmart's Lift Campaign through the creation of TeenSmart's chatbot, "Ariel". Ariel is available on the JovenSalud Facebook page and responds immediately to teens, guiding them to our confidential and safe online platform, [JovenSalud.net](https://www.jovensalud.net).

Many thanks to [Quovantis Technologies](#) who developed the chatbot.

## The result:

More than 1,800 teens from all over Central America received interactive multi-media text messages on their phones for 7 weeks and showed statistically significant improvements in 20 out of 38 indicators, such as:

- Better self-control over their life and their emotions
- New skills to improve their mood like exercise and deep breathing
- How to listen to others to resolve conflicts
- Self-care habits
- Family relationships
- COVID-19 prevention



**During 2020,  
coaching sessions  
increased by 46%  
per teen //**





**IN THEIR  
OWN  
//WORDS**





Kristel, 17, Costa Rica

# My life has Changed...

...since I finished TeenSmart's female health course. Before the course, my life was a constant crisis of personal problems. But in the course, I learned a lot more about my experience as a young woman and as a result, **I have been learning how to cope with things in a more mature and appropriate way.** This means that small problems don't escalate like they used to. I even went on to take other TeenSmart courses and to get more involved in the youth graduations and the Virtual Youth Camp. For anyone who is still not using the platform, I tell them that they have to register because it is really helpful, and the facilitators are great. The counseling services are especially amazing.

# Always by your side



Yesbelin, 20, Nicaragua

**For most of 2020, I was wracked with anxiety.** Part of it was due to the pandemic and part of it was due to other factors outside of my control. I felt angry and sad and my physical health really suffered as a result. But then a good friend told me about JovenSalud so I signed up and I started talking to the coaches, who really helped me a lot! I went on to sign up for the women's health course and the #NoEstásSol@ (#YouAreNotAlone) project. It was amazing. **I learned about taking care of my physical and emotional health,** about thinking through my decisions, and about my rights as a young woman. All of this has helped me to reflect on my personal journey and all that I have been through to become who I am. And I'm not through! Now I feel prepared to face the changes in my life without fear because I know good things can come from hard moments. These days, I am positive and I share that feeling with others to help build them up, to strengthen them and encourage them. I know we can turn our problems into opportunities and recognize our potential! The power is in each one of us and we only need to use it! -



David, 17, Costa Rica

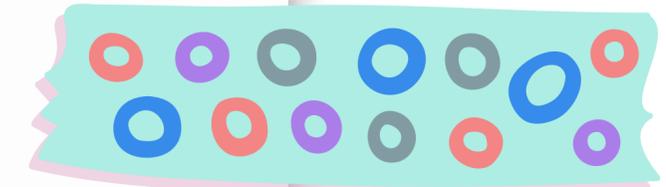
# You feel supported

My name is David, and **I am a peer health promoter with TeenSmart.** With JovenSalud's online courses, I have found a place to learn about myself and ways to grow as a person in a society that is constantly changing. Ever since I registered on the platform in 2017, I've taken three different courses; I began with my life-project course called CRECER Para SER, and then I took the men's health course, Conóce-T, and finally the internet safety course, SmartClick. There's still several courses I haven't taken and I hope to have a chance to do so!

These are my favorite things about JovenSalud:

- You feel supported. In each of the courses, there are facilitators who are constantly supporting you and helping ensure that you don't feel alone.
- JovenSalud has helped me to be more secure of myself and to find the best solutions to my problems. I'm proud to say that I am very confident about my short, medium and long term goals.
- I'm clear about my stance around drugs, thanks to JovenSalud
- The coaches help you develop emotional stability and improve your self-esteem (which is so hard) so we don't harm ourselves or others.

## Listening in order to grow



We constantly learn from our teens in order to serve them better. In 2020, we learned:



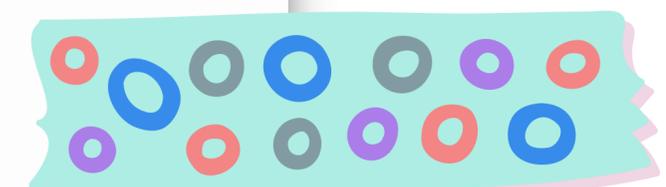
Social media is great for attracting young adults (18–24) to JovenSalud, but schools are still the best way to spread the word among tweens and teens (10–17). When we join in partnership with schools and other allies, TeenSmart’s contents are reinforced, and young teens have greater support networks and continuity.



Cellphones and internet penetration are widespread and growing, however, the digital gap is sadly surprising. Official numbers in Central America indicate 60%–70% access, but that is not true in the case of minors.



Teens will use JovenSalud.net in meaningful ways without adult intervention; however, human coaching does make a difference. The closer teens are to our staff and volunteers, the more they trust in our services and go on to graduate. Thanks to supportive WhatsApp messages, relevant Facebook lives, and youth-friendly virtual events, 53% of enrolled teens graduated from TeenSmart’s online courses, which is very high compared to other 100% e-learning interventions (such as Canopy Lab, Coursera, Kahn Academy) where graduation rates are 7%–11%.



# Your support Matters

This is how your financial gifts supported youth in 2020

**1219** scholarships for online courses

**56** TeenSmart schools and youth centers

**4** TeenSmart school graduations, where more than 500 teens participated

**3** Youth Leadership conferences

**2** new versions of our sexuality and healthy lifestyle courses for teens between 14-18 years old

Updates to our online safety course and our life skills course

**42** new topics in our health library

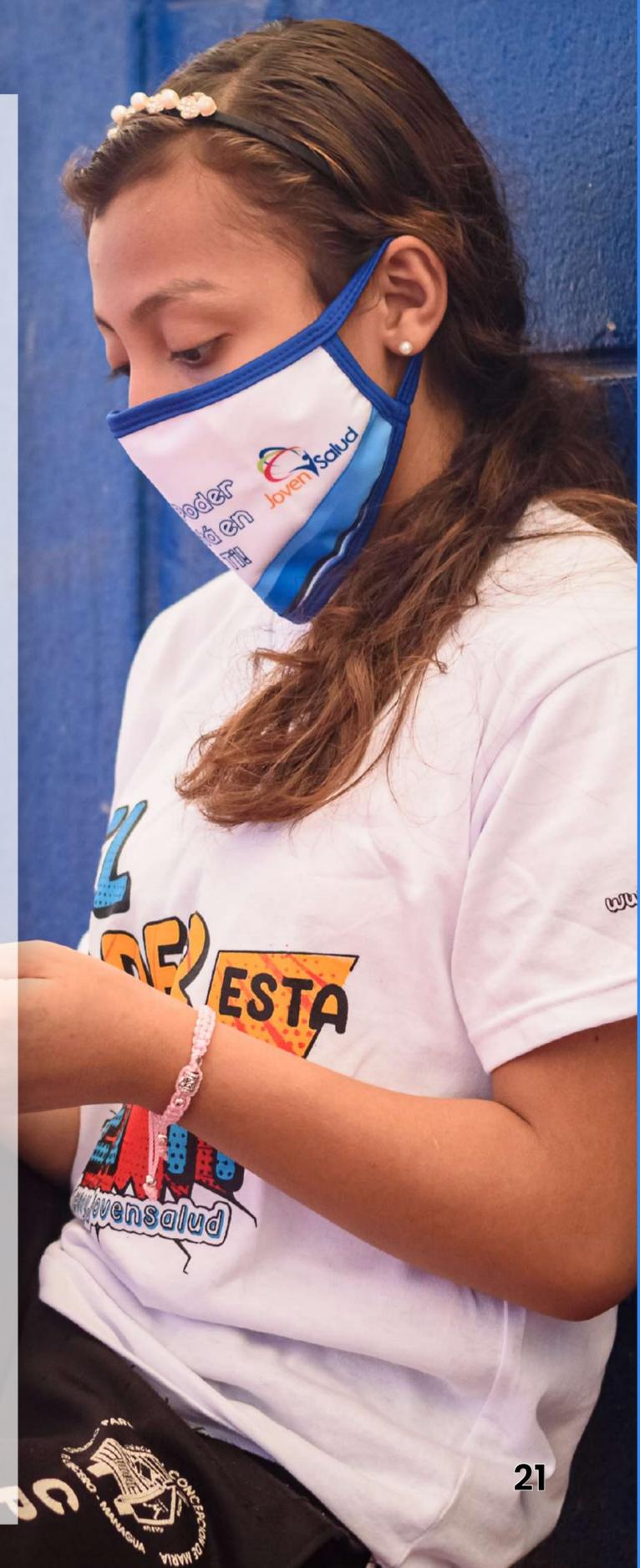
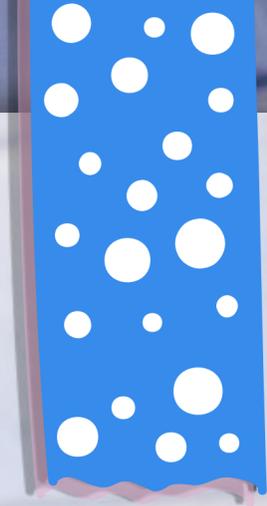
**52** trainings for implementing partners

**65,700** WhatsApp calls and messages for recruitment and retention

**120+** volunteers behind the scenes

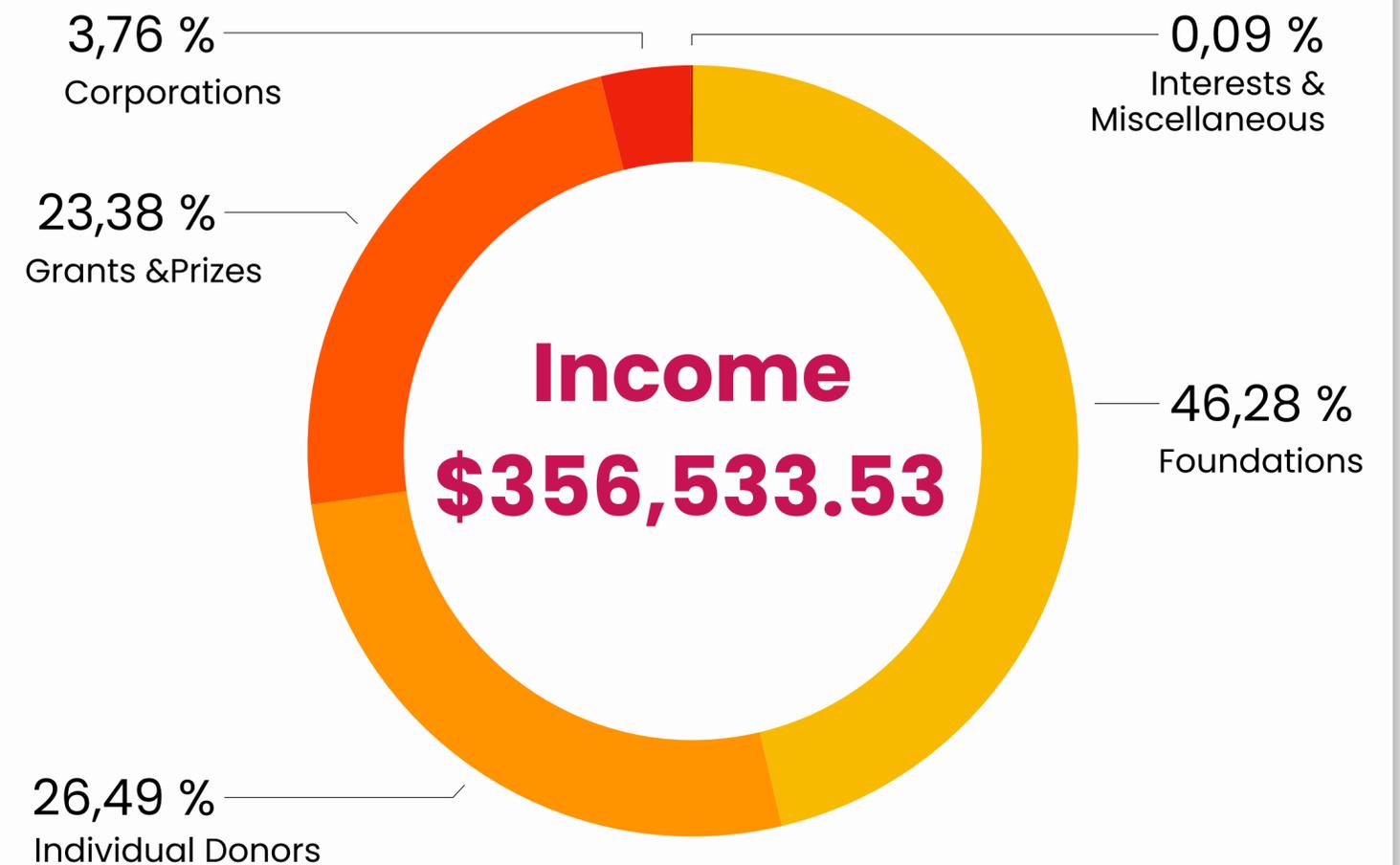
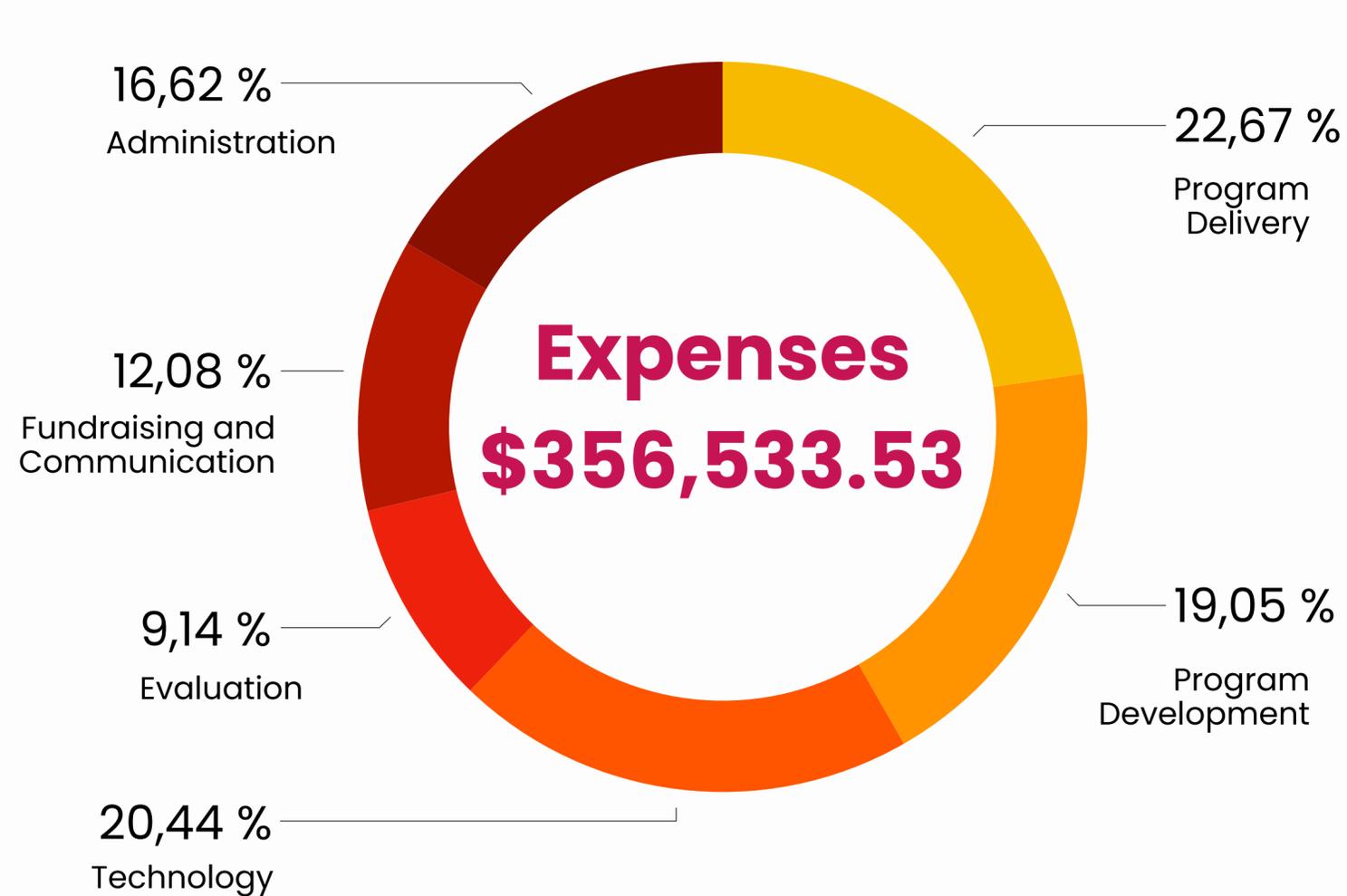
**20** new videos for virtual courses and case studies

Development of a mental and emotional health multi-media message sequence and development of an SMS message sequence for CLARO Nicaragua



# Financial Summary

\*An extraordinary donation was made to TeenSmart on **December 31, 2020** in the exact amount required to eliminate the organization's operating deficit for 2020.





**The majority of JovenSalud life-skills courses were completed by users on their own phones and in their own homes // (as opposed to in schools)**



# Our Donors

Thank you to the individuals that donated to our work in 2020



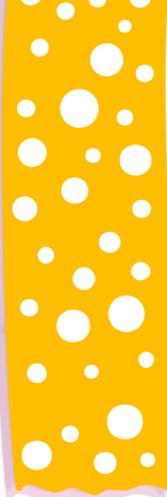
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Alfonso Agüero  
Georgette Aguilar Valerio  
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Paula Ammons  
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Armando González  
Mary Ellen González  
Evelyn Goslin  
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Xavier Viteri  
Jerry & Martita Wein  
Kathy Winn  
Miriam Zablah de Bandes  
Lydia Zamora  
Comunidad Cristiana Emaus



# Thank you

to the individuals, foundations,  
and corporations  
that donated to



**In 2020**





**EL  
PODER ESTÁ  
EN TI**  
#soyjuvenaltd

# Our Allies

The Clayton Fund



Hospital Clínica Bíblica



FUNDACIÓN Carlos Slim



El Líder Mace en ti



Grupo MAS



.VÉRITAS UNIVERSIDAD

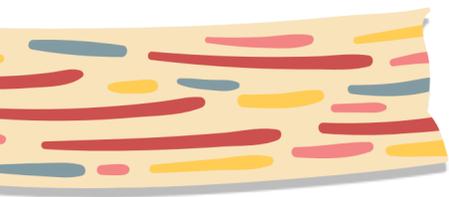




*Joan Fanning, Paul Fishman and family*

## Why my family Supports TeenSmart

I first learned about TeenSmart through the Evans School of Public Health at the University of Washington. I had long since admired and trusted Cathy Strachan Lindenberg (TeenSmart's co-founder) and so when she asked me to join TeenSmart as a Strategic Thought Partner, I knew my time would be well worth it. However, it was in getting to know the TeenSmart staff and supporting them in asking the hard questions of a mission-driven organization, that I really began to value all that this organization offers. I was so impressed with the vision, heart, and capacity of TeenSmart, that my family and I decided to make a significant contribution to support the mission.



# Our Board of Directors

- Eric Liljenstolpe (President), USA- Costa Rica
- Christian Thwaites (Vice-President), USA
- Rosa María Solórzano (Secretary), USA
- Ken Hoadley (Treasurer), USA- Costa Rica
- Rosemary Boehmer de Selva (Vocal), Nicaragua
- Fernán Gallegos, Costa Rica
- Leonor Gutiérrez, Costa Rica
- Jack Hastings, USA

- Randolph Kissling, Costa Rica
- Cathy Strachan Lindenberg, Costa Rica
- James Lynch, USA
- Gally Mayer, Costa Rica
- Mariángeles Morales, Nicaragua
- Maria Sara Roberts, Costa Rica
- Lidya Zamora, Nicaragua



# Our Staff



## Costa Rica

- Adriana Gómez Gómez, Executive Director
- Carolina Alfaro González, Evaluation Specialist
- Alonso Blanco, Software Engineer
- Jafet Brenes, Virtual Supervisor
- Mary Coffman, Fundraising & Communications Director
- Joice Corrales Carvajal, Program Development & Institutional Support Coordinator
- Ana Esquivel Herrera, Communication Specialist
- Mariana Harnecker, Platform and Educational Content Director
- Carlos Hernández Pérez, JovenSalud Platform Administrator

- Graciela Monge Hernández, Digital Health Promoter
- Georgina Sánchez Aguilar, Virtual Supervisor
- Ulises Torelli Rodríguez, Senior Software Engineer
- Hellen Valverde, Digital Health Promoter

## Nicaragua

- Sorayda Aguilar Pilarte, Administrative and Program Assistant
- Luis Felipe Guillen, Digital Health Promoter
- Ericka Hernández Gómez, Virtual Supervisor
- Vilma Medrano Garcia, Program Development & Institutional Support Director

# How to Get involved

1. Join our virtual volunteer program
2. Give an in-kind donation such as an event space, food, t-shirt, tablets.
3. Make an online donation via [www.teensmart.org](http://www.teensmart.org)

**USA Mailing adress: 107 Apple Cart Way Morrisville, NC 27560**

**Costa Rican Mailing adress: PO Box 402-2010, Zapote, Costa Rica**

**Costa Rican physical address: De la Universidad Veritas, 300 Este. Edificio blanco, local esquinero número 2, frente a Radio Puntarenas. Zapote, San José, Costa Rica.**

*Tel: (506) 2253-5618*

*E-mail: [info@teensmart.net](mailto:info@teensmart.net)*

*Youth Services Website: [www.jovensalud.net](http://www.jovensalud.net)*

*TeenSmart is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.*



