

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019



**Rain For All**



IslaUrbana  
FOUNDATION

[www.islaurbana.org/english/](http://www.islaurbana.org/english/)

# INTRODUCTION



## **Dear friends of Isla Urbana Foundation,**

We can't believe another year has gone by! This has been an especially exciting year at Isla Urbana. In March, we launched our biggest, most ambitious project yet: to install 10,000 rainwater harvesting systems in conjunction with the government of Mexico in just 1 year. That's more systems than we've ever installed before!

At the same time, we used funds from the Isla Urbana Foundation (IUF) to continue and even launch programs in both old and new regions. Therefore, it's been an incredibly busy year for us, but it's also been one of the most exciting periods in Isla Urbana's journey, and we couldn't be prouder and happier.

We've had several fun events this year, both in Mexico and in the United States, including the Tlalocan party and the Agua Vida fundraising events in California and Dallas. We've enjoyed strengthening our relationships with our partners, and are so thankful to create new relationships with others who are motivated to help create a lasting impact.

Here's a deeper look into our year. Again, we couldn't have done it without all of you and we sincerely thank you for your ongoing support for the water revolution.

**In gratitude,**

**The Isla Urbana Foundation Team**

# 2019 AT A GLANCE

## Isla Urbana Foundation installed rainwater harvesting systems in:

**10** rural Raramuri homes

**6** Huichol locations: 1 home, 1 ceremonial center, 2 schools, 1 community center, 1 clinic

**1** Mazateca home

**12** urban schools

**10** urban homes ...and traveled to the sierra Mazateca to provide system follow up, maintenance, and user training courses.

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**39** total

### Other achievements:

We organized 3 Agua Vida events in Ventura, LA, and Dallas

Students at the University of Pennsylvania launched the first Isla Urbana University Chapter

Students at Coppell High School in Texas launched the first Isla Urbana High School Chapter

We held our 4th annual Summer Program in Mexico City, this time with high school students and university student mentors from UPENN

We hired a consultant for the year and ended the year with a new part time hire, an Operations and Finance Associate, to take on the work of the consultant and grow the role on a part-time basis

**We fundraised roughly \$115,000 this year and impacted a total of 7,940 individuals with your support!**





# HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER PROGRAM

After fundraising for their journey to Mexico, 7 students and 1 chaperone came to visit us in June. During 6 action-packed days, students had the hands-on experience of installing a rainwater harvesting system in one of our communities while interacting with local members, visited a school with one of our systems, and also toured the city, including visits to famous landmarks like the Frida Kahlo Museum, Coyoacan's markets, the Zócalo, the pyramids of Teotihuacán, and attended a folkloric show at Bellas Artes.

The students raised \$6,500, and with a match pledge from Briggs Equipment for \$5,000, a donation from the Pacific Council on International Policy for \$1,000, and other donations adding up to \$1,000, the 2019 Summer Program raised a total of \$13,500 for rainwater harvesting systems!

Thanks to their hard work, systems have been installed in two schools: CAM 69 (a special needs school serving 200 students in Quiltepec) and Secundaria Diurna 287 (a secondary school with 800 students in Iztapalapa). Added funds are going towards a future school to be installed in early 2020!

**Our Summer Program will be growing next year with an expected group total of 25 students!**

**We're also discussing the possibility of growing in the future by including more schools, even other countries! Stay tuned for more information!**











## Agua Vida Dallas

**At our annual Agua Vida Dallas event this month, we raised \$10,000, which is enough to install rainwater harvesting systems in 2 schools and 1 health center for the Raramuri in Chihuahua next year!**

A sincere thank you to everyone who attended and supported Isla Urbana at this event, including: Briggs Equipment, Jackson Thomas, Willie Hornberger, Hunter Hunt, House Representative Rafael Anchia, Topo Chico, Javier's Restaurant, and the General Council of Mexico in Dallas Paco de la Torre. **As always, we had a wonderful time celebrating rainwater harvesting with you all!**





## Agua Vida Ventura

We had another fantastic visit to California this year! The week included a networking session, a dinner party in Los Angeles, and a festive fundraising event in Ventura. We raised enough for 4 rainwater harvesting systems for the Huichol community. Most of all, we enjoyed the best company while seeing dear friends and once again witnessing the power of community to enact positive change.

A big thank you to all who supported our annual Agua Vida Ventura event. Including Lewis Engineering for sponsoring the event, Alcaraz Catering for providing delicious food, Tomitos Appliances for donating a refrigerator for our raffle, Rodela Flowers, Mr. Shrimp, La Michoacana, Gabriel's Bobcat Service, our volunteers, those who donated auction items, Consulate of Mexico in Oxnard, MC Miguel Rodriguez, our entertainers, including Latin Fusion, Rudy Luna la voz de los Terrícolas, the Ballet Folklórico Internacional de West Covina, Simis Karaoke, y Sarai Noyola! This event would not have been possible without everyone's support.

Thank you as well to chef Steven Havens, Jeb Havens and ReWINEd Weekend for



all of their support with organizing the L.A. dinner event. A special thank you to our special guests who were there to enjoy the amazing food, wine and entertainment!



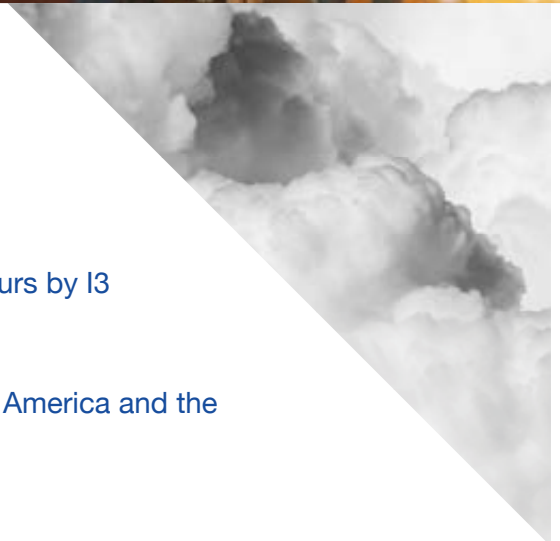
# RECOGNITION

We are beyond proud that every year Isla Urbana's work and impact is recognized with numerous nominations and awards, both national and international.

Here's a look into our recognition this year:



- Winners of the 'Knowledge Without Borders' category of the Iberoamericanos de Juventud Award, Spain.
- Selected as 1 of 10 of Latin America's most innovative entrepreneurs by I3 LATAM.
- Finalists of the IDB-FEMSA Award for the Best Innovation in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 'Water and Sanitation' category, Panamá.
- Finalists for the Heineken Green Challenge, Mexico.
- Finalists for the Premios Ciudad in the 'Environmental Action' category, Mexico.
- Recognized by the UBS Visionaries for Social Entrepreneurship, Mexico.
- Signed a contract with the UN to receive funding in 2020 for our work with the Huichol.





# SYSTEM DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS

We are always working to improve our system's design to ensure that we provide beneficiaries with the best, most efficient, durable, and highest-quality rainwater harvesting systems. At the end of 2018, we rolled out our 4th version of the Tlaloque and Tlaloquito, which we put into effect this year.

We made numerous improvements to our system, including: the automatic valve on the Tlaloque to empty the first flush; finalizing a liquid chlorine dosing device to purify water, which will especially benefit rural communities where chlorine tablets are difficult to find; reducing the amount of organic material that might enter the tank, reducing toxicity and increasing water quality; and more.

In a database with all of our users, we track each system's installation process from beginning to end and follow up with almost 100% of the systems for maintenance and checkups. Therefore, our feedback for next year will be stronger, enabling us to continue improving our system.

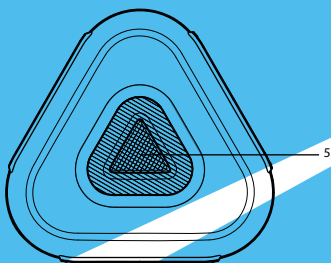


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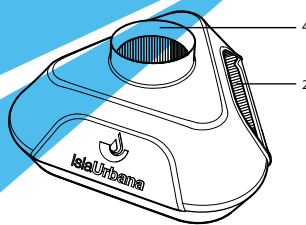


FIG.5

# OUR SYSTEMS

## Huichol

As many of you know, Isla Urbana has had a commitment to the Huichol community nearly since our inception. We have been working with them since 2010 through Ha Ta Tukari, a collaboration between Isla Urbana, LUUM, and Proyecto Concentrarte. Together, we envision a future where all Huichol have rainwater harvesting systems.

**This year through IUF, we installed 6 systems with the Huichol in the sierra of Jalisco.**

**These installations included:**

- 2 primary schools benefiting a total of 141 children and 11 adults
- 1 clinic that attends to San Andres Cohamiata's population of 800 people and where 23 other nearby towns may visit
- 1 community center benefitting 35 female and 5 male artisans who use the center to create and sell their work, and to hold trainings to grow their businesses
- 1 home benefiting a mother and her 5 children
- 1 ceremonial center, which was the first ever system of its kind due to a personal invitation by leaders, benefiting over 100 people, including religious representatives and their families

**In total, at least 1,098 individuals in the Huichol community were impacted in 2019.**





## Raramuri

**This year, we were very excited to launch a new project with a new technology: the calabash cistern.**

In July 2019, David (Isla Urbana's President) and mason, Sergio Gutierrez travelled to Tanzania to learn how to build a calabash cistern, the most inexpensive type of cistern in the world, intending to bring this technology back to Mexico and use it as part of our rainwater harvesting systems. After their training they taught two local masons in the Raramuri Sierra how to build the calabash cistern.

**This year, they installed 6 rainwater harvesting systems with the calabash cistern in homes in the Tarahumara Sierra, benefiting 36 individuals.**

Aside from providing families with a water supply, these systems have many advantages: they are very inexpensive, give 6 days of work to 3 masons in the Sierra per installation, are stronger than the regularly-used ferrocement cisterns, and use local materials for its mold.

In 2020, IUF intends to scale the project. We will install another 12 systems, partly with funds raised during our Agua Vida events, and Agua Vida Dallas 2019 raised enough funds to install systems in 2 schools and 1 health center in the Sierra. We hope that by partnering with others, we will be able to finance hundreds of these incredible systems in the coming year.

We're overjoyed that with funds raised for IUF, we are able to pilot new projects like this one to make the greatest impact in communities with the most need.





# Mazateca

Isla Urbana has been working in the magical and mountainous Mazateca region in Oaxaca for 5 years. Up to now, we've installed over 100 systems in 4 communities. This year, with funds from IUF, we conducted our first follow-up and maintenance trip together with The Hunger Project.

In August 2019, we visited 3 communities where we have installed systems, conducted 3 trainings and 5 maintenances, and switched to Tlaloquitos (our smaller version of the Tlaloque used in rural areas). **We completed 1 new installation, and conducted 18 household surveys, learning that 82% of the interviewees were capturing rainwater.**

The Mazateca region has a high potential for rainwater harvesting. One system can fulfill a family's water needs for a full year since the average rainfall during the rainy season is 5 times that of Mexico City. The Mazateca have historically harvested rain, but Isla Urbana and The Hunger Project have optimized their systems and processes.

We are hoping to continue building closer relationships with the Mazateca community leaders and provide more extensive training to local technicians so that they can install the systems themselves. We hope to expand within this region and bring more systems to Oaxaca.





## Urban Systems

This year, Isla Urbana began its most ambitious project yet: installing 10,000 rainwater harvesting systems in 1 year. In collaboration with SEDEMA, the Secretary of the Environment of the Mexican Government, we have been installing systems in areas experiencing the highest water scarcity in Mexico City, including the municipalities of Xochimilco and Iztapalapa. SEDEMA's project will continue until they install 100,000 systems throughout Mexico City's most vulnerable communities over the next 9 years.

Isla Urbana Foundation also continues to fund the installations of urban systems. Although we have made great strides with the SEDEMA collaboration, we still have a long waiting list of many urban homes outside of the program that need our support. This year, we funded 10 systems benefitting 60 people, as our commitment to our urban communities continues.







Be sure to check out our short documentary series called 'Historias de Agua' about all the stages of the installation process. Find our videos on our YouTube channel, available in English and Spanish.

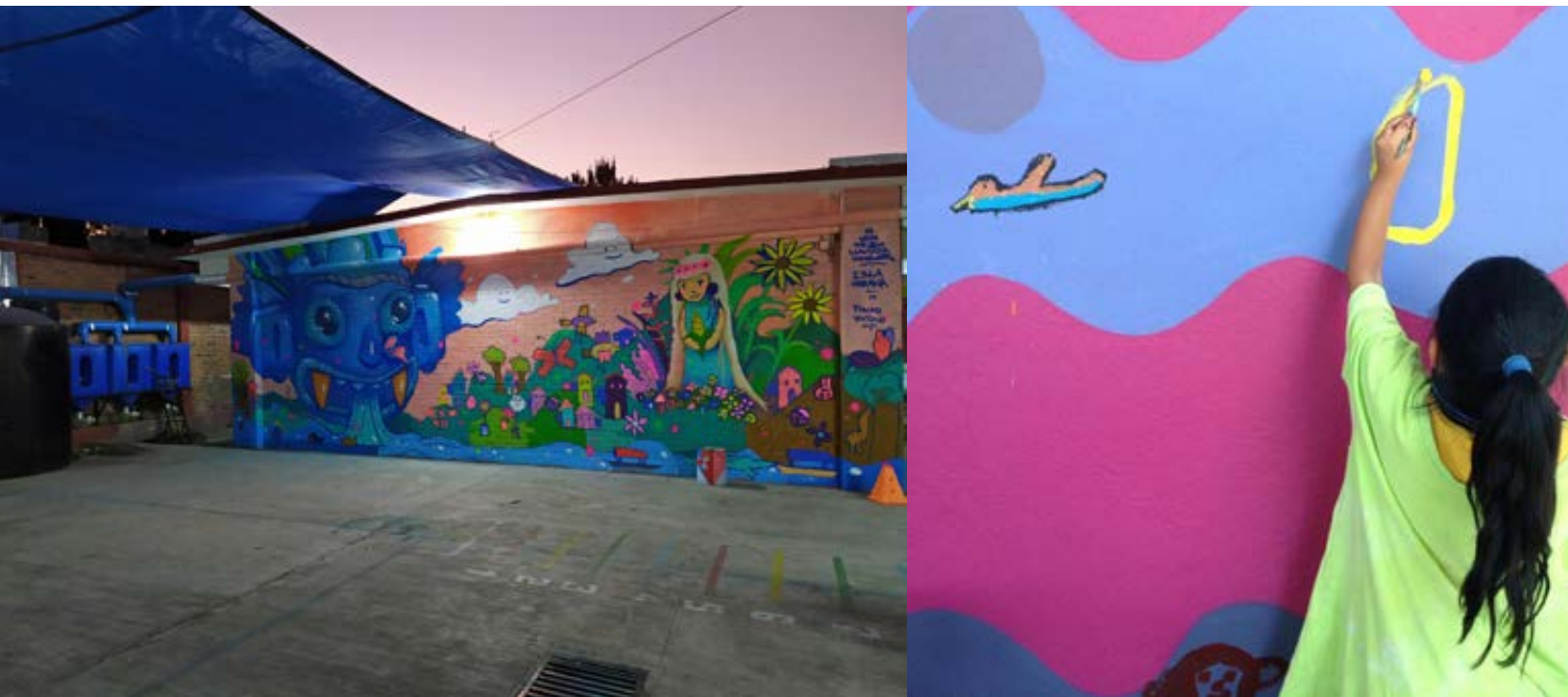




# Schools

Escuelas de Lluvia, our environmental education and water awareness program for students across Mexico, grew, flourished, and expanded to other states this year. With IUF's funding, we installed rainwater harvesting systems in 12 schools across Mexico City and the State of Mexico, benefiting 6,692 students and 480 teachers and staff, for impacting a total of 6,740 school users.

Through our environmental education program, we held workshops where students became 'guardians of the rain' and created rain committees formed by parents, teachers, and children who made plays, poems, songs, and educational activities focused on culture, rainwater harvesting, and increasing environmental awareness from an early age. Our schools became self-sufficient and did not suffer any water shortages.



Escuelas de Lluvia also published its first article about the program in the online magazine H2O Gestión del agua, painted 6 murals, and created new materials to support school workshops. We collaborated with the United Nations Environment Programme, the City Adapt project, and also with BRIGGS, VIA International, the Rotary Club and private donors.

**We're very happy to see Escuelas de Lluvia impacting more schools by giving them their own water supply and transforming childrens' education by cultivating an awareness about the way in which we interact with water.**







Check out the new video of 'Escuelas de Lluvia' on our YouTube channel, available in Spanish.



# ¡GRACIAS!

## Special Recognition

We are grateful for our collaborators, partners and supporters. Together we are a stronger and greater force in support of our mission. We'd like to give a special thank you to:



**Via International**, who has been partnering with us for over 6 years. This nonprofit does excellent work with bringing groups from the U.S. to explore other countries while also giving back. We welcome groups from them on a yearly basis and are always blown away by their willingness to learn, get their hands dirty, and give back. We are excited to further grow our collaboration with Via International for many years to come!



REMOTE YEAR

**Remote Year**, one of our new partners this year. Remote Year coordinates coworking and traveling groups for people working internationally. As new groups come to Mexico City, we join Remote Year's orientation for their travelers who host a monthly #tacosforwater challenge to fundraise for our cause. They also produced a fantastic short video about our work. We're so happy to have started this ongoing partnership with such a wonderful company!





# Recognition

We had some special visits from the Pacific Council on International Policy (PCIP) this year in Mexico City. PCIP is growing their Mexico Initiative through partnering with us and other Mexican entities with the intention to hold events, produce analysis and commentary, and foster exchange with Mexican leaders.

Sip Tequila and Triarchy Jeans each give \$5 for each of their products sold to Isla Urbana. We appreciate their commitment in building businesses that give back to a sustainable future in Mexico through rainwater harvesting!

Briggs Equipment, who not only have supported our summer program, but have also funded various schools throughout this and previous years. Their support has been key in helping us build our Escuelas de Lluvia program.

Purpose Portfolio, who have been a consistent source of support to our work since 2016!

JWAC, UPENN, and Interceramic who have all been strong supporters of our Summer Program.

**Thank you all!**





## Our Team

We hope that this report gave you a good glimpse into our efforts this year! As we continue to grow slowly but surely through efforts from the U.S., we are mindful that our U.S. nonprofit is deeply fueled by the idea of building bridges between the U.S. and Mexico. We know that there are many people who reside in the U.S. as long time supporters of Isla Urbana and we often receive new inquiries by people in the U.S. and around the world who want to get involved. We welcome the new relationships and the building of existing ones with friends in the U.S. and abroad, and are honored to run a nonprofit that fosters connections between individuals who want to make a lasting, sustainable impact.

**We're all so excited to continue growing in our capacity us to serve as many people across Mexico as possible. We can't wait to see what we can accomplish together in 2020.**

**Cheers to another successful year!**

P.S.  
To reach  
a global  
audience, our  
Instagram is now  
bilingual!

**Follow us @isla\_urbana**



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**