

Isla Urbana USA Annual Report 2021



IslaUrbana

States where we worked: Oaxaca, Chihuahua, Jalisco, Guerrero

Annual Report 2021

Rain For All. *Ecología.* Water Sustainability

Rain For All. *Harvest the Rain*

Bridging Mexico-USA

Rain For All

Oaxaca, Chihuahua, Jalisco, Guerrero
Se inicia la cultura hidráulica (*Rain For All*)

(RWHS) Components: Leaf Filter . First-Flush device . Rainwater tank . Calmed Inlet . Floating intake . Filter train .
Communities supported: Mazatec, Raramuri, Huichol, Mephaa
T'oxi nandá tui (Rainwater Harvesting) Water Sustainability . Rain For All . Harvest the Rain . Calmed Inlet . Floating intake . Filter train .

#RainForAll



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“The reality of access to water for low-income communities in dispersed rural or peripheral urban areas and indigenous peoples is sporadic supply and unreliable water quality, leaving many people dependent on costly or unsafe water sources,”

Léo Heller, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights to safe water and sanitation in Mexico



Dear Isla Urbana U.S. supporters,

As we reflect on the accomplishments of last year, I'm deeply grateful for what I see. **Nearly 4,100 people were impacted by clean water efforts in 2021!** This has a special significance for our team because these accomplishments took place in the sierras of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Jalisco, Chihuahua and were ALL RURAL. Rural systems cost more as they require much larger cisterns, take substantially more logistical planning and require much longer periods of time to install (as communities are less dense and homes and schools are dispersed).

People sometimes get caught up in numbers, and it is right to ask how many individuals are impacted. Often though, important follow up questions are missed such as, **“How does this affect the day to day lives of those impacted?”, “How do we continue to strive for true sustainability within the community?”**. When you live in the mountains and are walking 6 hours a day to obtain water for your family or attend a school where you can't wash your hands to avoid getting sick and the nearest hospital is a 3 hour drive away, the impact of having access to a clean and sustainable water source through a rainwater harvesting system is invaluable. So I've closed the year knowing that we did something extraordinary. In a time when we are still living through a pandemic with the various complexities that come with living in the most rural zones of Mexico, the year was surely something to be proud of.

Thank you friends, family and supporters. Please don't ever feel that your donations, volunteer hours, support, and attendance at our events don't make a meaningful difference. Your individual contributions matter and we'll keep moving forward with your support.

In gratitude,
Sol Garcia

Director of U.S. operations

ACHIEVEMENTS *in 2021*

Isla Urbana in the U.S. continues to be an important source of support to Isla Urbana's non-profit projects in Mexico. The year flew by as we have stayed quite busy adapting to a new way of engaging others during a global pandemic.

+ \$150,000
USD

Funds
raised in
2021

4,094

Individuals
Impacted

8
Schools
Installed

4 systems installed
(2 Rarámuri, 2 Huichol); 4 hand-
washing stations in
Raramuri schools;
3,046 impacted

23
Homes
Installed

4 systems in the Sierra Ta-
rahumara; 12 systems in the
Sierra Mazateca ; 7 systems
in the Sierra Huichol;
115 impacted

3
Community
Centers
Installed

2 systems in Guerrero for
the women and children
of Tachi A'gú; 1 system in
a community center in the
Sierra Huichol;
95 impacted



INCLUDES:

100 Household Upgrades

Tlaloquitos transported and replaced in La Laguna and La Cebolleta in the Sierra Huichol; **500 impacted**

40 Household Upgrades

Tlaloquitos assembled in the Sierra Mazateca; **200 impacted**

82 Remote follow-up visits

12 maintenance and training team visits in the Sierra Mazateca; 70 follow-up visits and existing system survey in Sierra Mazateca; **60 impacted**

5 Workshops

1 workshop in Guerrero for the women of Tachi A'gú, where we installed a third system; 3 training workshops in the Sierra Mazateca; 1 educational workshop to form an intercultural team with local installers from the Sierra Huichol in Záratecas; **78 impacted**

HIGHLIGHTS in RURAL MEXICO



Here are some of the highlights!

In 2021, Isla Urbana USA focused largely on funding and installing systems in indigenous and rural communities throughout Mexico

Huichol in Jalisco

The work with the Huicholes was one of the projects which we were very anxious to see completed, as the realization of the Tlaloquito replacements and the installation of new systems impact more than 800 individuals.

This feat is even more incredible knowing that, during the past year, there has been a wave of violence in that same region. The violence has been grave and frequent, which made us decide not to send any more teams to the Sierra Huichol until further notice.

Even so, we have been able to get help transporting the needed material there, escorted by members of the National Guard, allowing 100 Tlaloquitos to arrive in the Sierra. Additionally, we have put efforts into consolidating an intercultural team of local technicians that has realized rural coordination activities, installations, improvements of existing rainwater harvesting systems, and educational workshops for beneficiaries on the correct use of the systems. We're excited about the future!



Mazateca in Oaxaca

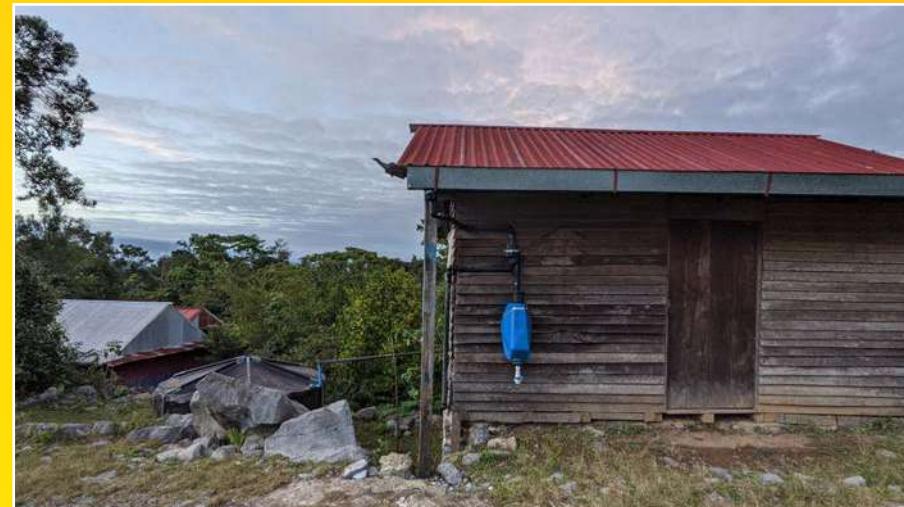
Returning to the Municipality of Tenango was a goal we had long hoped for and seeing the images of families impacted is one we were proud to share with our funders.

In November, our community outreach team in conjunction with the local leader visited 70 of our previously installed systems in order to monitor their efficacy and impact after a couple years of isolation due to the pandemic. Armed with the survey information, in December, the installation and training team set out for the Sierra of Oaxaca with all the materials. It takes our team 12 hours to drive from Mexico City to Tenango. Once there, the communities served are reached by foot in half of the cases and homes are scattered in small settlements throughout Tenango. During the 14 day trip, the team visited the Mazatec communities of Genova, Peinecillo, Cerro Alto, Agua Dulce and Rancho Pineda while installing 4 complete systems and assembling more than 40 Tlaloquitos (First Flush devices). These activities took place alongside 60 different community members that took part in separate stages of the visit and training sessions in each of the communities visited. We organized training workshops throughout the trip, delivered illustrated manuals in Mazatec and completed more complex maintenance on a few older systems.



Téxui nandú tú

Rainwater Harvesting in Mazatec



In these indigenous communities most of the population live with a high degree of marginalization and high quality or abundant water sources are scarce. Families walk up to 6 hours per day for water and the systems will greatly alleviate their efforts! The remaining 8 systems funded this year for these communities are scheduled to be installed at the end of February 2022 by locally trained installers and the receiving families.

Raramuri in Chihuahua

As our work with the Raramuri continues, we are grateful to have played a role in the installation of the first handwashing systems, as well as in growing efforts to install school systems through the *Escuelas de Lluvia* Program this year. Additionally, our Calabash cisterns are a great success in the context of this environment, and help to build the local economy. In short, our work with the Raramuri continues to be a special commitment to us.



Mè'phàà in Guerrero



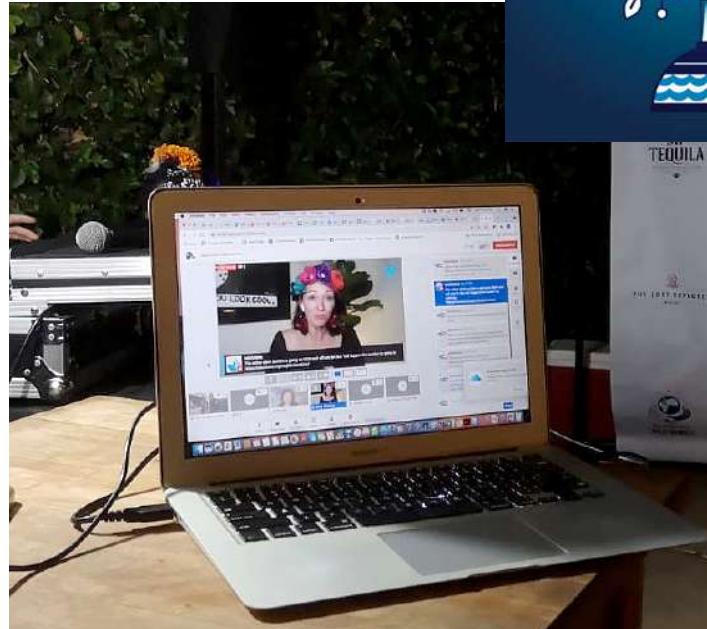
This last project consisted of 2 systems installed and a workshop in collaboration with Mè'phàà women in Ayotoxtla, Guerrero. This project was one we were particularly excited about as it supported a group of women that we were very much inspired by, Tachi A gu, who are a group of indigenous women that are determined to see their way out of issues of domestic violence through economic empowerment. This has included opening a hotel and restaurant to help support their efforts. The systems installed have a total storage capacity of 20,000 liters. The water will be used for the needs of the restaurant, the hotel, and the personal use of the women living there.

We are proud of all of the work that we have been able to support!

EVENTS *and* CAMPAIGNS

In late October and early November, Isla Urbana hosted our first in-person Agua Vida Celebration in two years which was a big step for us as we had been forced to focus on online events due to the pandemic. A team of dedicated youth volunteers from the World Affairs Council, interns and Isla staff organized to plan, fundraise and host our first ever multi-location Agua Vida celebrations in LA and Texas. The group also supported our online livestream for our U.S. supporters, hosted by Kelly Abanda. This included interviews, videos of our work in Mexico and a live transmission with our L.A. and Mexico gatherings. Only a few weeks later, Isla Urbana also hosted Agua Vida Minnesota.

The Agua Vida LA and Online events prompted the formation of an event committee for next year's L.A. fundraiser which is already set to meet in January 2022! If you're interested in being a part of it, please contact us.





California

Our event in Los Angeles was hosted at actor's Kelly Perine's Hollywood Hills home. Attendees celebrated together with live music provided by DJ Soulfire and a performance by Rose Clay through a Dia de Los Muertos theme. Sol Garcia, Director of U.S. operations, oversaw this beautiful get together which also included delicious food provided by Estella Gutierrez a silent auction, prizes, goodie bags and guests who were dressed in a Dia de los Muertos theme.



4

LOCATIONS
MEXICO CITY, CALIFORNIA, TEXAS & MINNESOTA

+100

SUPPORTERS

and

\$45,000

**USD
RAISED**



Texas

Earlier in the week in Coppell, Texas, we celebrated in the home of our dedicated volunteer Mateo Young. Joined by David Vargas, Isla Urbana Co-Founder, this southern celebration included live-art, music by Joy Jackson, the premier of a video showcasing our work with the Raramuri and many new connections!

Minnesota

Just a few weeks later in Minnesota, Renata Fenton, Isla Urbana Co-Founder, celebrated with the generous support of the Regan family and many more generous supporters at Casey Lake Park. Old and new friends reconnected to celebrate Día de los Muertos with a performance by Alma Andina and raise money with a silent auction, which included arts and crafts from Oaxaca.

EVENT AND CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS:



VIRTUAL PROGRAM





Inspired by the travel limitations brought on by Covid, Isla Urbana U.S. created a Water Activists virtual program to accompany our traditional Summer Program. This is designed to give students the resources necessary to become agents of change in their local communities. The virtual program includes mentorship from IU directors, knowledge on our community-level work, and leadership workshops. We will also challenge participants to identify and build action plans for addressing a problem in their own community. This program was introduced to our UPenn student community in December 2021, and will continue to evolve throughout 2022 as we engage additional Universities and High Schools.



Water **History**



SUMMER PROGRAM



Our Summer Program is geared towards High School students with University mentors and provides an opportunity for them to travel to Mexico City for a week to take a deeper look at our work and the issue of water scarcity in Mexico City.

Students visit communities that we work with, install a rainwater harvesting system, enjoy ecotourism activities and more. Since the start of the pandemic, we paused on holding the program in person and instead took the time to restrategeize how to best organize the program in these ever-changing times. We currently have plans to hold the in person program in 2022 with safety measures in place while continuing to provide a unique and rich experience. If you're interested or know of a student or school which may be, please contact us at requests@islaurbana.org.



INTERNPGRAM

For the first time, Isla Urbana U.S. now has an official intern program. In the Fall of 2021, we accepted 3 exceptional interns from Belgium, Texas, and Washington D.C. in the following areas: Content Generation, Operations & Development, and Student Outreach & SARAR Liaison. We will also have a student intern joining us in the summer to support our 2022 Summer Program. As we continue to grow, we will build and formalize our intern program, inviting interns every year to join Isla Urbana for 3-6 months. Interns will help us grow our impact in the United States and build bridges between our US non-profit and Mexican organization.



“Isla Urbana is an incredibly interesting organization, and their work will keep on inspiring me for the rest of my life.”
- Jan Lippens



“Working at Isla Urbana feels like an adventure - I find myself always learning something new and broadening my perspectives as we work together to bring access to water for all Mexicans.”
- Jesse Bogdan

“My journey with Isla Urbana over the past six years, from my participation in the Student Summer Program throughout high school and college to moving to Mexico to become an intern, has been the most rewarding and perspective-changing experience of my life. I am constantly growing, whether it's by learning to live within another culture, mastering a second language, or challenging my own views on how to empower communities.” - Samira Mehta



UNIVERSITY CHAPTERS

Isla Urbana USA now includes two university chapters! One based at the University of Pennsylvania which was founded in 2018 and the other at University of Maryland, which was founded this year! These chapters are designed to educate students on water scarcity issues in Mexico and our work to address this crisis while also supporting them as they raise awareness about sustainability, the world water crisis and Isla Urbana's work. These students also fundraise for our projects and learn what it means to be water activists. Several University chapter students will be joining us next summer in Mexico as mentors for our high school participants in the upcoming Summer Program 2022. If you're interested in starting your own chapter or learning more, contact us at requests@islaurbana.org.



“I started a chapter of Isla Urbana because their goal to achieve water sustainability and increase access to potable water really resonated with me, and it was a mission that I knew I wanted to support and raise awareness for.” - Annushka Aliev, President of Isla Urbana at UMD



Members of our UPENN chapter holding a fundraiser by selling Huichol jewelry.



“I was immediately drawn to Isla Urbana’s meaningful work making clean water more accessible. As a pre-med student I am particularly interested in the intersection between environmental advocacy and community health. Isla helps communities avoid water-borne illness through education and rainwater harvesting systems. It is truly inspiring and I am so grateful to be part of it.” - Hannah Futeran, President of

Isla Urbana at Penn

STORIES

from the field

As we support projects in both urban and rural locations throughout Mexico, we thought it would be great to share a bit about the community members that we work with, particularly in rural areas as this was a big focus for us in 2021. In rural zones, we often use hand pumps and much larger cisterns as electricity is hard to come by and individuals have to walk extremely long distances while also needing to harvest as much water as they are able.

It is important to note that rural communities have less access to health services and are more at risk of diseases. Community members regularly deal with the challenge of missing work and/or school due to needing to collect water for the household. Additionally, it is often women and children that are tasked with collecting water, which at times puts them at greater risk when traveling long distances in the dark. With this in mind, we want to show you the stories of the families that we support in the Sierra Mazateca (Oaxaca), Sierra Huichol (Jalisco) and Sierra Mephaa (Guerrero).

Don Roberto and Doña Francisca

This couple lives in the Genova community which lies at a 2 hour walking distance from the nearest road. Their sons migrated to other places and they live in a house simply made of wood and sheet metal. They have had their system for 6 years now which has raised their quality of life significantly by not having to carry water back and forth, especially now that they are older. Don Roberto is a local representative of Genova. He became a leader in order to bring road access to the community. Their dream is that he and Francisca may visit their children and grandchildren more often without so much difficulty.





Don Cutberto

Don Cutberto rented a lot and built a small home for him and his family. His family is composed of 20 people that live and sleep in the same place. They have significant water needs and carry water long distances and many times a day with the help of a donkey. The system installed in 2021 will provide 15,000 liters of good quality water without having to leave their home.

Saturnino

Saturnino is a father of two daughters and an uncle to teen boys. He's in charge of providing clean water to his family and he carries water up and down the mountain. He walks 6 hours a day to fill three, 5 gallon containers of water. He lives in one of the most remote communities in the Mazateca, which is located at a 4hr walk from the nearest road. Nothing comes easy here; attending school, venturing out for food, medical services, access to water or building a home.

Saturnino is a bricklayer and carpenter. He built his home in Peinecillo with his own hands which meant that he needed to carry all the construction materials. Saturnino is a curious person and the local technician, he has also installed many rainwater harvesting systems including his own!





Doña Julia and Don Marcos, La Laguna

Julia and Marcos' household is made up of nine people (two men, two women, three boys and two girls), all of whom live together and share, not only the house, but also a Rainwater Harvesting System (RWHS) that provides clean water ten months a year. In the context of the Sierra Wixárika, the growth of families does not always imply a geographical separation and that is why having households with several families is quite common.

Marcos and Julia are in charge of the RWHS, although everyone participates in its maintenance and cleaning for its proper functioning. The water that is harvested during the rainy season is used for all needs. During the dry season, however, the family carefully cares for the water harvested and restricts its uses only for drinking and cooking. This is how both families can survive the dry months by managing this essential resource for everyone.



Alfreda, Ayototla

Alfreda is a Mephaa leader from the Sierra of Guerrero. If you met her you would never know how difficult her life has been as she is very kind, helpful and always smiling. Born into a very sexist community, she was not allowed to decide her own future; her husband was chosen for her, she could not go to school and she also suffered violence at home. When she had children, she was worried that her daughter's future would be the same as hers and was determined to change that story. Alongside other women in the community she founded TachiAgu, a local community center and restaurant. With great efforts and no resources they completed the buildings, organized with the other women and began earning an independent income in a sustainably designed refuge. This space has allowed Alfreda and the other women involved to gain a higher degree of freedom and reducing the violence suffered at home. Alfreda has designed a new married life for herself, she helps feed and clothe her children and now sends them to school. In one generation, Alfreda has completely transformed the lives of women in her community, including her own.



ISLA URBANA MEXICO

Isla Urbana Mexico
has been doing some
impressive work!

Take a look at the
numbers and more of
the exciting things that
we've been up to!

SINCE 2009

21,817

Total systems
installed

130,902

Users/
Beneficiaries



Worked in

14

States in
Mexico



871 M

Million liters
harvested

81,596

Water trucks
saved each year

In 2021

**Brasil
and Chile**



Installed

80

Rain Schools

and

282

Handwashing Stations



IslaUrbana



#RainForAll

As we look forward to 2022, we are excited to grow and develop our U.S. non-profit in new and exciting directions. The pandemic made us rethink our communication with supporters and the direction of our fundraising efforts as we've been challenged to adapt to a new world. We close the year quite proud of what we accomplished in 2021 and ready to implement new and exciting projects for 2022. With your help, we plan to come back stronger than ever!

Thank you!



IslaUrbana

www.islaurbana.org/english

requests@islaurbana.org

SPECIAL THANKS TO:



sumac

