



Photographed by Maureen McKeon

## Resilient Women, Resilient Businesses

Dear Friend of Namaste,

For the 250 female micro-entrepreneurs who were enrolled in Namaste's Creating Prosperity Program (CPP) at the beginning of the year, 2020 seemed especially promising. By late February these clients had increased their profits by an average of 118% and the skills they were gaining through our program were helping them carve clear pathways out of poverty. We all know what happened next: COVID-19 arrived and wreaked havoc across the globe.


When the Guatemalan government closed its borders and shut down the economy on March 13, our clients' sales plummeted, their spouses lost their jobs, and they quickly spent whatever limited savings they had in order to keep food on the table. Guatemala's economic and social fabric was already threadbare and the government was ill-equipped to manage a pandemic.

Namaste realized that we were the first-responder for our clients. Our Business Advisors began calling clients on a weekly basis to collect data on their safety, medical emergencies, food shortages and business vulnerabilities. Below is a snapshot of our clients performance during the first few months of the pandemic.

**Pre-COVID Guatemala**

60% of the population lived in poverty prior to COVID-19

50% of children suffer from malnutrition




1 hospital bed for every 2,500 people (1/7th the capacity as the US)

only a handful of working ventilators in the country




Guatemalans wave white flags begging for food.

**March 2020** ..... **May 2020**



**100%** of our clients experience a drastic decrease in sales

**95%** of our clients become the primary breadwinners in their household (living with others who are unemployed due to COVID)



**100%** of our clients are concerned they won't have enough money to buy food



**15%** of our clients are earning a profit in May

In July, the government began to gradually reopen the economy. With Namaste's support, our clients are beginning to recover their profits

**October 2020**

**93%** of our clients see an increase in profits from the prior month



Client profits increase by an average of **13%**

The following pages showcase the small victories of our clients in 2020, and the impact Namaste was able to achieve with your contributions. As the demand for our services grows in Guatemala, we need your continued support more than ever. Please join in our efforts and donate today!

Namaste,

Bob Graham  
Founder & CEO

**Namaste's COVID Relief Programs**

Informed by client data, and funded by generous donors like you, we shaped our COVID relief plans using five principles:

- 1 PROVIDE CONSISTENT, CARING SUPPORT**  
We know the details of our clients' business, their family circumstances, their hopes and dreams. In addition to ongoing business advising, our team will continue to provide critical emotional support.
- 2 BUILD COVID-PROOF BUSINESSES**  
During client meetings (in person or by phone) we continue to collect data about their business performance. We work with them to identify additional sources of income, or help them reshape their business entirely.
- 3 BREAKS ON LOAN REPAYMENTS**  
Namaste offers a 3-month grace period and cuts our interest rates by 50% through 2020.
- 4 CASH FOR EMERGENCIES**  
Cash grants specifically to help clients cover essential needs like medical care (including COVID tests), food, housing, etc.
- 5 BASIC INCOME SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM (BISP)**  
We supplement the incomes of clients earning less than 80% of minimum wage to ensure they can make ends meet.

# Resilient Women, Resilient Businesses

Namaste's clients share a common, remarkable trait: **resilience**. Their resilience was hard-won long before COVID arrived in Guatemala. Our clients have survived volcanic eruptions, devastating hurricanes, a brutal civil war, gender-based violence, and an endless array of challenges inherent to living in poverty. Though COVID has presented these women with unprecedented economic hardship, Namaste's strategic support has empowered these women to make their businesses as resilient as they are.

## Catarina



"The truth is that the money I received was very helpful, because at one point I was stuck and depressed because there were no sales. My advisor helped me see things from another point of view and helped me restructure my business so that I could generate additional revenue. I am really very grateful to Namaste Foundation for the support they gave me during the crisis, because I've worked with other institutions and no one's ever cared so much about me." -Catarina

Catarina is an indigenous woman with a 3rd grade education, who lives in Solola with her husband and two small children. In 2017, Catarina enrolled in cycle 1 of the CPP so she could get support growing her business selling traditional Mayan clothing.

Catarina made outstanding progress during her first two cycles of the program. She joined Namaste's Savings Club, and for the first time in her life, she felt a sense of control over her future.

She was enrolled in cycle 3 of the CPP in March when COVID arrived in Guatemala. Her sales plummeted, her husband lost his job, and with no safety-net and two small children to feed, Catarina was distraught.

In June, Namaste provided her with a cash grant of \$150 to keep food on the table and stay afloat while we worked with her to restructure her business. With guidance from her Namaste Business Advisor and a microloan, Catarina restructured her business to make and sell prepared food.

She began cycle 4 of our program in July, and she is quickly recovering her losses.

## Loly



"My business advisor told me to go to other stores, write down the products that customers were looking for that were out of stock, and buy them. Then, he told me to inform my customers that I opened a store that sold those products. He gives me ongoing support and advice, and didn't leave me stuck doing the same business that wasn't working. Day by day, I am earning more money and I am more hopeful about the future." - Loly

Loly is 35 year old single mother of two children. Prior to COVID, Loly was running a small business selling cakes and pastries.

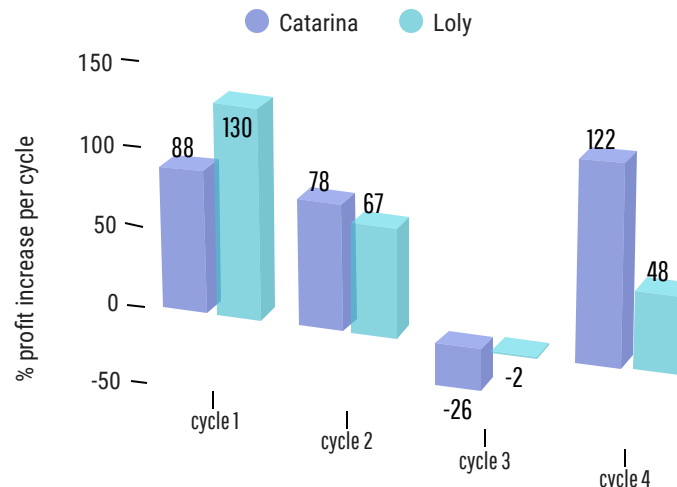
During the first two cycles of the CPP, Loly's business was thriving. Her increased earning power made her feel confident and proud of the example she was setting for her children.

Loly was in cycle 3 of the CPP when COVID arrived. For the first two months of the pandemic, Loly didn't sell anything, and it soon became clear that her business selling cakes and pastries would no longer sufficient to support her family. As a single mom, she was desperate to find a way to take care of her children.

Her Namaste Business Advisor worked with Loly to identify needs in her community and helped her restructure her business. She used her micro-loan to purchase inventory to establish a small convenience store out of her home.

She recently began cycle 4 of the CPP and she is once again earning a profit.

Catarina and Loly's change in profit per cycle of the CPP



Each cycle of the CPP is nine months long, and includes nine one-on-one sessions with a Namaste Business Advisor, ten hours of financial literacy training, and a micro-loan. Both Loly and Catarina were enrolled in cycle 3 of the program when COVID hit. You can see the impact of the pandemic on their businesses above.

# Our Impact

## Basic Income Supplement Program (BISP)



to **162**  
women

who were making less than 80% of minimum wage, as Namaste helped them restructure their businesses.



"Thank you for the advice, not only for business, but also to help my family, because it made us feel more confident. The [BISP] funds helped me buy medicine for my son, and food for my family."

Paulina, enrolled in Cycle 2 of the CPP

## Building COVID-Proof Businesses

**96%**

of clients received guidance from Namaste about how to make their businesses more resilient to COVID



**89%**

of clients have changed the way they reach their customers



For example, many clients have started selling new or different products to meet the shifting demand caused by COVID



"Namaste helped me realize that without public transportation or tourism, I would not be able to earn enough money selling traditional clothing. They encouraged me to look at what people in the community are buying. With their advice and my loan, I started making and selling tortillas and other food. This additional income has helped me stay afloat, and pay my bills and debts. The foundation has made me feel so much better about my financial situation and my business."  
Micaela, enrolled in cycle 2 of the CPP



## Emergency Household Fund



Distributed **\$7,000**  
in cash grants  
to **44** women

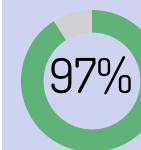
who were unable to cover the cost of housing, medical care or food for their families

**96%**

of clients have been able to cover essential household expenses



**90%** of our clients have been able to repay their Namaste loans



want to advance to the next cycle of Namaste's program