

AVSI in Latin America and the Caribbean



The AVSI Foundation's programs and activities in Latin America and the Caribbean have continued to strengthen through partnerships with numerous community organizations, non-profit service providers and businesses in 10 countries across the region.

The portfolio in Latin America provides a glimpse into the **AVSI methodology in practice**. The method of taking seriously the person in his or her entirety means that AVSI does not operate with a pre-determined agenda for areas of intervention, project design or implementation. Instead, AVSI's country programs in Latin America are born and shaped by sharing the needs and desires of the people and their communities, building on the available resources, namely on the **organizations and institutions which have emerged as active protagonists** of local development.

Countries

- Argentina
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Ecuador
- Haiti
- Mexico
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Venezuela



Sectors

- Education
- Urban Upgrading
- Health/ Nutrition
- Employment & Business Development
- Agriculture/ Environment
- Emergency

Regional Overview

AVSI and its partners' projects tend to have a **lighthouse effect** on the surrounding environment. By revealing the possibility of change through experience of a more human and dignified life in an individual or community, a light full of hope naturally spreads outwards, touching the lives of other individuals and spurring the quest for human dignity and fulfillment. Over time, this effect has translated into scaling-up of effective initiatives and the creation of networks through which people can exchange to better their knowledge and commitment. Some results have been the publication of operational manuals and syllabi for educational activities ranging from early childhood to vocational training, as well as procedural guides for small businesses in order to compete and win contract bids.

Economic growth and human development in the region continues to be uneven. Global thirst for commodities and land, financial sector excesses and unpredictability, persistent inequities in income distribution, indications of serious educational deficiencies, climate change risks and natural disasters pose an inevitable and continuous challenge. Yet, notable increases in the availability of local resources—financial, technical and political—along with the prevalence of targeted pro-poor national policy programs and growing domestic demand are also shaping the landscape in important ways. AVSI and its partners are adapting to find sustainable avenues to reinforce, scale up and reproduce the important initiatives begun over the years, relying in particular ways on integration of efforts with government, private sector businesses, and civil society.

Across Latin America & the Caribbean, AVSI has

550 national and **25** foreign permanent staff in country;

92 local partners among CBOs, government institutions, and NGOs;

90 business partners & reaches **3,000,000** beneficiaries.

AVSI's Method in Action: the Civil Society Potential in Latin America

The strong tradition of civil society in most Latin American countries has meant that AVSI can streamline support to existing organizations with which AVSI enjoys a long-term relationship of mutual trust and consistency in values and vision. In turn, the result of AVSI's engagement in Latin America is most visible in the exceptional growth and capacity of partner organizations deeply rooted in their communities. The strength of these organizations is evident in their expanding budgets, national and international partnerships, and their capacity to adapt to a changing context in pursuit of greater impact and sustainability.

ACDI in Santa Fe, Argentina, has been a multi-year partner with the Inter-American Development Bank's Multilateral Investment Fund (IDB-MIF) and has replicated a technology project developed with agricultural producers in Argentina to meet the needs of small producers in Nicaragua, while also providing technical assistance in Brazil in the cattle/meat, fruit, and dairy sectors.

DIJO – Creemos in Oaxaca, Mexico, has entered into cooperative agreements with other international organizations such as CESAL, with government agencies and with large international corporations such as ENEL.

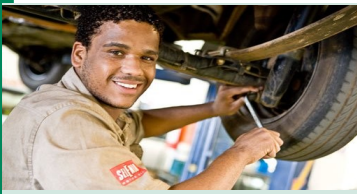
Networking leads to Synergy

AVSI Foundation links a network of country programs and local organizations into a global network united by a shared vision and common methodology. Across Latin America, the number of opportunities for cross-fertilization of ideas and capacity has multiplied due to the growth and strengthening of the network and its constituent members. Initiatives of south-to-south cooperation continue to emerge, with AVSI playing a facilitating role to encourage this horizontal exchange of experiences.

CESAL, a Spanish NGO and member of the AVSI Network, has expanded its partnership with AVSI in Peru, Ecuador and Mexico.

CREN, a center for nutritional recovery and research in connection with the University of São Paulo in Brazil, has conducted assessment and training visits in various places within the global AVSI network, in particular in Latin America and Haiti, and has become a technical reference point for AVSI's nutrition-related interventions in many countries.

Alliance with the Private Sector for Human Development



FIAT Plant in Brazil

Another asset of the Latin American context is the relative strength of the private sector. AVSI's relationships with local and international businesses continue to grow throughout the region, with important experiences of achieving synergy among objectives and complementarities of resources to leverage support for community development. The scaling-up of interventions in recent years is proof of the mutual benefit when business strategies meet effectively with the unique resources and position of civil society, also taking advantage of tax incentives that foster corporate investments in society in Latin American countries such as Brazil.

In **Brazil** since 2007, AVSI has been implementing a project with **FIAT Automotive in Betim, Belo Horizonte** for market-driven preparation of the youth from the neighborhoods surrounding FIAT's plant for stable employment and improved quality of life of all inhabitants. The *Árvore da Vida* project demonstrates the potential for a win-win situation when civil society and the business community find themselves working together for common goals. The project is being replicated through a partnership with Case New Holland (CNH) in Contagem and continued with the participation of a wide range of local and international companies. Complementary nutrition focused interventions in these two industrial municipalities outside Belo Horizonte have benefited from the support of businesses, Magnesita and ArcelorMittal.

Also in **Brazil**, AVSI and its local partners CDM and AVSI Nordeste continue to work with subsidiaries of Grupo Neoenergia to expand and improve an efficient supply of electricity and environmentally-friendly appliances in informal urban settlements, or *favelas*, working with COELBA in Bahia since 2001 and with CELPE in Pernambuco since 2009. As community-based, civil society actors, both CDM and AVSI Nordeste have played an essential role in enabling the electrical companies to gain trust among clients and therefore to better address their needs in a cost-effective way.

In **Peru**, AVSI works with an environmental engineering firm, Control Ambiental, to improve water and sanitation services in peri-urban villages. A recent pilot project to convert organic waste into compost is on track to becoming a self-sustaining, profitable enterprise with many layers of benefit for the local community.

In **Mexico**, DIJO—Crecemos received a prize in 2010 from an international pharmaceutical company for its successful effort to respond to childhood malnutrition. DIJO continues to strengthen collaborations with businesses to achieve greater local sustainability of the services provided.

Sectors of Intervention

Education and Child/ Youth Development

Projects in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela

AVSI programming in Latin America is concentrated in the **social-educational** sector, with projects in all 10 countries. AVSI approaches the child and youth in a holistic way, considering also the family and community linkages that are so essential to a child's well-being and development. All educational initiatives supported by AVSI aim to engage parents and other adults in different ways that bolster their responsibility towards children's education. Exposure to beauty and consistent, personal relationships that start from the infinite value of the person are the primary "tools" used in this educational path for both children and adults. Educational models and approaches which have been proven effective and documented over the years are put into dialogue with the specific needs, resources and challenges of each situation.

In **Ecuador**, AVSI assists families to ensure early childhood education takes place in the home and is accessible in the community. The *Pre-Escolar en la Casa* (PELCA) program extends integrated support to families by engaging both women and men, and has been adapted to the urban setting of Quito as well as the rural region of Portoviejo. An elaborate curriculum manual has been produced.

In **Haiti**, AVSI works in the poorest and most violent neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince to improve re-integration of street youth and former gang members into their families and increase school completion rates among children and youth. A particular focus is on giving children such as domestic servants, or *restavecks*, a real opportunity to return to school.

In **Brazil**, AVSI's partner Cantinho da Natureza in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, serves the children and families of the poor Morro dos Cabritos neighborhood, expanding to meet needs for day care, primary school and after school academic reinforcement. The Cantinho also actively engages adults, both by encouraging positive involvement of parents and through providing vocational training courses which include direct partnerships with potential employers.

Also in **Brazil**, AVSI will begun a new program in the summer of 2011 to engage adolescents in Contagem, Minas Gerais, on a pathway of academic support, recreation, community service, and preparation for employment. The "Youth in Action– Citizens Committed to the World" program is funded by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Learn More at:
www.cantinhodanatureza.org.br

Distance Support Program

The **Distance Support Program (DSP)** is the backbone of most of AVSI's educational projects in Latin America. Through the DSP, AVSI supports local partner organizations to provide quality education and care for children and youth on a personal, individual basis at all stages of their development. Made possible by private child sponsors, the DSP provides over 11,000 children in Latin America the opportunity for schooling, complementary educational activities, vocational training and micro-business support.

DSP operates with 93 partner organizations in: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela.



Early childhood education center in Quito, Ecuador

Employment and Small Business Development

Projects in Argentina, Brazil, Haiti and Peru



Cocoa growth in Bagua Province, Peru

The second most important area of programming in Latin America is **employment and small business development**, with a particular focus on youth. In the increasingly urbanized context of Latin America, AVSI and local partners are concerned that young people have the capacity, willingness and personal qualities necessary to build a stable foundation for themselves and their families. Entrepreneurs and small business owners likewise face barriers of information, technology, capital and technical skill to take advantage of the globalized economy.

A comprehensive vision of the person allows AVSI to recognize work as an absolutely essential element of human life, not only as a means of income generation. Yet the challenge of encouraging youth to enter and stay engaged in the workplace and in services designed to help them secure a job is not simple. AVSI and its partners have understood that the essential element is a personalized accompaniment that helps the individual discover the meaning of skills development and work as a possibility for the growth of their whole personality. The private sector has increasingly become a key partner in AVSI's initiatives to address employment challenges in the region.

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Learn More at:
www.fiatspa.com

In **Brazil**, AVSI and local partner CDM have enjoyed a long-term partnership with FIAT to improve the job readiness and technical skills of youth living in the slums near the FIAT factories. Over time, the supply chains and dealers have gotten involved, recognizing the mutual benefits for society and business and as an expression of their corporate social responsibility.

In **Haiti**, following the 2010 earthquake, AVSI has helped open community centers in Cite' Soleil and Martissant to train and employ youth living on the streets and to aid in social integration of those released from juvenile prisons. The artisan centers produce jewelry, uniforms, and hand-painted accessories.

Learn More at:
www.ucss.edu.pe

In **Peru**, AVSI supported the creation of a specialized center for entrepreneurship and business development within the Universidad Católica Sedes Sapientiae which serves the poor and marginalized communities on the northern side of Lima. After years of close collaboration, the center now operates independently as a service made available to the school community and beyond. In 2010, AVSI in Peru began a long-term initiative to better integrate small producers in the textile, coffee and cacao markets into cooperatives and within the value chains.

Urban Upgrading

Projects in Brazil

AVSI has pioneered the development of well tested and highly valued methodologies for large scale **urban upgrading** projects with the key elements of community participation, government collaboration, and effective integration of physical, social, educational and economic dimensions of urban communities, bridging the gap between the “formal” and the “informal” city. From the 1980’s, AVSI’s “Alvorada Program” in Belo Horizonte, Brazil has been a prime example of the positive impact of joining forces among public, private and international players and of the potential of investments that take effective programs to scale while preserving consistency with the original methodology.

The relationships AVSI has built with the communities in Brazil set the stage for partnerships with local energy companies, who otherwise had difficulty reaching consumers to provide basic services efficiently. This collaboration has led to other integrated social interventions and upgrading.



Upgrading and Family Relocation in Alagados, Brazil



In **Brazil**, AVSI implemented two multi-million technical support programs in urban upgrading in Salvador, the capital of the State of Bahia, and in other cities in the state (2001-2011) in connection with World Bank programs and within the Cities Alliance framework. In 2009, AVSI started to reproduce the methodology in the state of Pernambuco, specifically in Recife and Olinda. Recently AVSI embarked on a tripartite collaboration among AVSI and the Governments of Brazil and Italy and Cities Alliance to transfer the urban upgrading methodology to Maputo, **Mozambique**.

Learn More at:
www.citiesalliance.org/ca/node/405

Agriculture and Environment

Projects in Haiti, Argentina, Nicaragua, and Peru

While much of AVSI’s work in Latin America is centered in urban environments, AVSI and local partner organizations are also addressing agricultural and environmental needs. When confronting environmental problems, AVSI and partners strive to identify points where the interests of communities and civil society, local governments and business intersect, with the underlying assumption that the resources of the natural world are an asset to be preserved for the benefit of human society in the present and into the future.

In **Haiti**, AVSI is building on a history of work on agricultural technical support in Les Cayes and in South Department since 1997 to address nutritional needs through household interventions of land-management and gardening. The program expanded to integrate food security, water supply and sanitation, and reforestation and environmental protection initiatives, which now also extend geographically to the municipality of Torbeck.

In **Argentina**, AVSI’s long-term partner ACDI continues to engage a wide range of stakeholders from civil society, government, business sector and international institutions to confront issues of carbon emissions and climate change, looking for win-win solutions. One example is the effort to gather and make available information on carbon emissions through the CIOMTA project. In 2007, AVSI and ACDI launched an initiative on sustainable agriculture and promotion of traditional products which complements the efforts to improve the competitiveness of small producers in the meat and fruit industries through the TRAZAR and FruTIC programs.

Learn More at:
www.acdi.org.ar
www.ciomta.com.ar

Nutrition and Health

Projects in Brazil, Ecuador, Haiti and Mexico

Access to health care is always included in the support offered to vulnerable children and families through AVSI's Distance Support Program (DSP). Yet, in light of particular challenges and unique sets of resources, **nutrition** and **health** programs have been developed to support the growth and development of children and youth with integrated attention to mothers and the family environment.

In 2011 AVSI is supporting the launch of a regional Nutrition Network in light of increased south-south cooperation among AVSI partners engaged in community based nutrition and health programs. The Nutrition Network will facilitate the exchange of information and best practices and will catalyze new collaborations.

Learn More at:
www.dijo.org.mx

In **Mexico**, AVSI partner DIJO-Crecemos runs a community kitchen in the marginalized neighborhood of Monte Alban. Over 300 children receive a healthy breakfast each day, together with a heavy dose of nutritional education and growth/ health monitoring. Mothers are very involved in the operations of the kitchen and significant gains have been made in addressing the dual burden of malnutrition and obesity. In recognition of the effective methodology, DIJO received a national award by a leading pharmaceutical company in 2010.

Learn More at:
www.unifesp.br/suplem/cren/

In **Brazil**, AVSI partners with the CREM Nutritional Education and Recovery Center in São Paulo to support their public education and outreach for children and families in marginalized urban areas. In partnership with the AVSI Network, CREM, has provided technical support in the area of malnutrition interventions to AVSI partners in Salvador Bahia, Brazil; Haiti; Peru; Ecuador; and Mozambique. CREM utilizes a sophisticated methodology of clinical care reinforced by linkages with communities and area universities.

In **Haiti**, eight emergency nutrition centers were set up in some of the most depressed areas of Port-au-Prince, specifically in Cité Soliel, to help those displaced after the earthquake. Now they have become permanent and irreplaceable for the services they provide to the neighborhoods, and have extended to also offer integrated child health care and pre- and post-natal care including breast-feeding classes for mothers.



Breakfast at the DIJO-Crecemos community kitchen in Oaxaca, Mexico



AVSI Foundation, a non-profit, non-governmental organization with headquarters in Italy, is working in 40 countries across various sectors for the promotion of the dignity of the person, according to Catholic social teaching, with special attention to education. AVSI also has offices in New York City and Washington, DC, USA.

From aware and committed persons, and the structured relationships among these, come private initiatives which are concrete contributions to the common good. AVSI seeks to facilitate partnerships with the private sphere and the public sector to more effectively share resources, ideas and energy in the building up of a healthy and productive society.

Local Partners

Argentina	Asociación Cultural para el Desarrollo Integral (ACDI) – Santa Fe
	Obra de Padre Mario Pantaleo – Buenos Aires
	Cooperação para o Desenvolvimento e Morada Humana (CDM) – Belo Horizonte, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro
Brazil	Centro de Recuperação e Educação Nutricional (CREN) – São Paulo
	Obra Social da Parroquia Santa Cruz da Copacabana/ Cantinho da Natureza – Rio de Janeiro
	Centro Educativo Virgilio Resi – CEDUC – Belo Horizonte
Colombia	Corporación Prosol – Bogotá
Ecuador	Corporación Universitaria Estudio y Trabajo (CUET) – Portoviejo
	Fundación Sembrar – Quito
	School of Agriculture of UNDH – Les Cayes
Haiti	Organization for Environment Rehabilitation (ORE) – Les Cayes
	SNEP/DINEPA (Haitian Institution for Water Management)
	Municipality of Port-au-Prince
	Justice and Peace Commission – Port-au-Prince
Mexico	Centro de Solidaridad Juvenil (CSJ) – Campeche
	Desarrollo Integral de la Juventud Oaxaqueña (DIJO) – Oaxaca
Paraguay	Centro de Solidaridad “San Roque González de Santa Cruz” – Asunción
	Fundacion San Rafael – Asunción
Peru	Universidad Catolica Sedes Sapientiae (UCSS) – Lima
	CESAL Peru
Venezuela	Fundación San Antonio – Humocaro