Weaving Networks of Charity

2013

AVSI-USA
2013 ANNUAL REPORT

WWW.AVSI-USA.ORG
ON THE COVER

Children from the Monte Alban neighborhood outside of the city of Oaxaca, Mexico, perform folkloric dance as part of the celebration to inaugurate the new Crecemos community center.

AVSI MISSION
To promote the dignity of the person through development activities and programs with particular attention to education, while drawing from the social teachings of the Catholic Church.

AVSI-USA MISSION
To support the AVSI network by leveraging financial resources in the U.S. in order to broaden the achievements of member organizations in promoting human dignity in developing countries.

OUR APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

CENTRALITY OF THE PERSON
The person is seen according to his/her unique value and fundamental relationships: within the family and in society. The person cannot be defined by a social category or a limitation such as poverty, disease or disability.

STARTING FROM THE POSITIVE
Every person and every community represents a potential resource, regardless of their vulnerability. This means valuing and strengthening all that has been accomplished by the people in the community and also helping each person to understand his/her own value and dignity.

WORKING WITH
The approach to project planning and implementation starts from a relationship with the people whom the project is targeting and builds with them along a path of mutual education and empowerment.

DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY & SUBSIDIARITY
A development project must enhance the capacity of people to associate, recognizing and supporting the creation of intermediate bodies and local institutions integrated in the social context.

PARTNERSHIP
Partnerships are promoted with and among all the actors in the particular context, including institutions that are public and private, local and international, in order to favor synergies and optimize available resources.

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On September 5, 2013, the United Nations celebrated the first “International Day of Charity”. The commemoration was proposed by the Hungarian Ambassador to the United Nations in recognition of the importance of global solidarity as a common good for humanity. The UN also chose the 15th anniversary of the death of Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta as an appropriate day for the celebration. At AVSI-USA, we were deeply impressed by the desire of UN diplomats to highlight “charity” as something worthy of our attention and to recall us to the legacy of Mother Theresa’s extraordinary life.

With this in mind, we invited our colleagues from Oaxaca, Mexico to come for a visit and to help us go deeper into the meaning of charity, the “law of life”. The experience of a gratuitous love for our very existence, the first sign of charity in our life, is at the heart of AVSI’s mission.

During her brief stay with us, Maria Socorro del Rio, Executive Director of Crecemos-DIJO in Oaxaca, recounted her own story, and explained that, in her experience, charity is never something abstract or idealistic. Twenty years ago, Maria Socorro was asked to nurture the small activity of college students who provided after-school tutoring to marginalized kids into a formal organization. This job description did not fit with her plan of a corporate career. Yet when she met the women who were so grateful for the work begun by those first volunteers, Maria Socorro let herself be moved. She recognized what she had in common with those women who seemed to come from a different walk of life: they each had deep love and concern for their children but also a need to be accompanied in order to face the challenges of life.

Maria Socorro stayed with them and has since tended to the growth of Crecemos-DIJO which is now a mature organization active in multiple communities around the city of Oaxaca and impacting the lives of hundreds of children and their families (see Page 2). Over the years, Maria Socorro’s best weapon against the environment of resignation, despair and violence which pervades the periphery of the beautiful city of Oaxaca is her own certainty of the positivity of life.

Last October in Washington, DC and New York City we celebrated twenty years of Crecemos-DIJO with Maria Socorro del Rio. At those celebrations, she witnessed to us the change in herself during these years, and not only the changes she had seen in the others. We understood that when you let yourself be loved it is only natural that you come out of yourself and convey that love to those around you. As Pope Benedict wrote in Caritas in Veritate, “As the objects of God’s love, men and women become subjects of charity, they are called to make themselves instruments of grace, so as to pour forth God’s charity and to weave networks of Charity.”

This Annual Report seeks to shed light on some of the varied textures and patterns which we as AVSI-USA have been fortunate enough to weave with the generous support of many donors and foundations.

Each person can play a role in this common endeavor of weaving networks of charity. It is up to each one of us to remain open to see and, in freedom, to respond. As we heard from Fr. Herald, CFR, who spoke at our “Charity is Freedom” event in October in New York City:

“Charity: discovering, recognizing and responding to another as a good in themselves and a good for me. Charity: the way in which I can finally, fully become who I am. How beautiful and amazing it is that for me to be really me, for me to be really free, I need you.”

Sincerely,

Ezio Castelli
President AVSI-USA
SUSTAINING A PRESENCE: CRECEMOS

PROBLEM

• Financial constraints facing local community organization to maintain essential services and ensure continuity of long-term health and education interventions
• Children’s poor nutrition and diet hinder early childhood development and learning
• The education system has serious deficiencies due in part to frequent clashes between teachers’ unions and the government, resulting in the periodic closure of schools
• Families living in poverty cannot access sport, extracurricular support and enrichment activities for their children

RESPONSE

Through its Opportunity giving program, AVSI-USA is building a solid base of donors who contribute to operating costs and help Crecemos maintain its focus on relationships and quality services. To learn more visit our website.

LONG TERM GOALS

1. AVSI-USA will assist Crecemos with grant writing, fundraising, and strategic planning to further strengthen its organizational and fundraising capacity
2. Crecemos will deliver nutritional and educational services to support healthy child development and expand the horizons for children living in poverty
3. Crecemos will help mothers and families live with positivity and hope in an environment of despair and violence
**PROBLEM**

- Families and communities in Sub-Saharan Africa are under stress due to a heavy disease burden, high HIV prevalence, poverty, and disruption caused by violence
- Governments have plans to support the most vulnerable households but lack the resources and trust among the target communities to effectively deliver services and link the poor with quality care

**RESPONSE**

AVSI-USA provides administrative and management support to two USAID funded projects to care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children and their Families implemented by AVSI in Uganda and Ivory Coast.

**Partners:**
AVSI Uganda, CARE, TPO, FHI360 and dozens of local organizations
AVSI Ivory Coast, government ministries and dozens of local organizations

**Budget:**
$30 million over 4 years in Uganda
$10 million over 4 years in Ivory Coast

**LONG TERM GOALS**

1. To build partnerships among local community-based organizations and government institutions so as to reduce the vulnerability of households and children to food insecurity, disease and other negative shocks
2. To offer an innovative project approach that has the flexibility to adapt services to meet the specific needs of each family and to empower them to seek the services and support they need to meet their own goals
PROBLEM

- The quality of education provided to the refugees living in the Dadaab refugee camps remains sub-standard despite recent improvement in teacher certification and training
- Refugee girls, the majority of whom are Somali and of the Muslim faith, face many obstacles to completing school

RESPONSE

AVSI-USA supported AVSI in their collaboration with UNHCR and US State Department (PRM) to implement an education project in Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, focused on recruiting and training Somali refugee women as teachers.

RESULTS

- 3 teacher resource centers were re-built and resumed operation
- 56 female teachers in the camps completed mentorship training course
- 156 subject head teachers received training on quality improvement measures
- 917 boy and girl scouts received uniforms and participated in scouting activities
- 1 early childhood learning center was built
- 4 school greenhouses were built to provide access to nutritious foods and incorporate practical business skills learning into school curricula
QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN ECUADOR

PROBLEM
• The quality of education in Ecuador is low, especially for the poorest segments of the population
• Working class parents have limited possibilities to offer their children enrichment and cultural activities

RESPONSE
AVSI-USA secured foundation funding to enable AVSI Ecuador and local partner Fundacion Sembrar to implement an innovative education project for children outside of Quito, Ecuador.

RESULTS
• 150 children received a complete set of school supplies at the beginning of the school year
• 150 children participated in daily after-school sessions to reinforce basic skills and to support homework completion
• Cultural outings and two weeks of summer camp were organized to give children a range of experiences and to foster positive adult-child relationships
YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT IN KENYA

PROBLEM
• Youth living in the urban slums of Nairobi have few opportunities to continue their education through secondary school
• Urban youth have limited skills to offer on the job market

RESPONSE
AVSI-USA secured foundation funding for AVSI Kenya and local partner St. Kizito Vocational Training Institute to expand access to vocational training in Nairobi, Kenya.

RESULTS
• 103 youth (70% female) participated in technical training courses
• 82% of participants successfully completed training courses
• Local training partner, St. Kizito Vocational Training School, achieved recognition by the local government and related youth ministry
• Community partnerships were strengthened to improve the long-term sustainability of the training school
EDUCATING CHILDREN THROUGH ART IN HAITI

PROBLEM
• Children living in rough urban neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince suffer from violence and the disruption caused by the 2010 earthquake; they bear the brunt of poverty and poor basic services
• Schools and teachers lack the resources to welcome children with affection and with attention to all the dimensions of the growing child

RESPONSE
AVSI-USA secured foundation funding for AVSI Haiti to implement a project in Cité Soleil and Martissant, two of the most violent neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

RESULTS
• 530 children participated actively in art classes, experimenting with different media
• 380 youth participated in after-school art workshops
• 1,500 youth participated in community wide art exhibits and activities
• 1,000 adults participated in community wide art exhibits and activities
EMERGENCY RESPONSE FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

PROBLEM

• Syrian refugees, primarily women and children, crossed the border and settled in Lebanon with few material goods, poor housing and concerns about security
• Syrian refugee children face considerable barriers to integration in the Lebanese school system and risk a significant disruption in their educational path

RESPONSE

AVSI-USA received over $8,000 from hundreds of U.S. contributors in support of the AVSI global emergency campaign to deliver essential aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

RESULTS

• 9,150 refugee families were given life-saving basic goods such as tents, blankets, and cooking utensils
• 2,400 refugee families received winter kits
• 500 children participated in literacy and numeracy classes in the camp settlements
• 500 children attended language classes and after-school tutoring to better integrate into public schools in Lebanon
• 960 children, from both the Syrian and host communities, participated in psycho-social and recreational activities
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support and Revenue</strong></td>
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<td>Contributions</td>
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<td>Program Service Revenue</td>
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<td>Interest Income</td>
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<td>Other Income</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL REVENUE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
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<td>Program Services</td>
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<td>Overseas Programs &amp; Grants</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Changes in Net Assets</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Net Assets, Beginning of Year</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Net Assets, End of Year</strong></td>
<td>$90,461</td>
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*AVSI-USA is a 501 (C)3 Public Charity registered in the State of New York EIN: 13-4147973*
WE ARE GRATEFUL TO ALL THOSE WHO SUPPORT AVSI-USA, WITHOUT WHOM OUR WORK WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR MISSION OR TO A SPECIFIC PROJECT, YOU CAN DO SO BY CREDIT CARD ON OUR WEBSITE, OR BY CHECK.

Questions? Interested in volunteer opportunities? Write to infoavsi-usa@avsi.org