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This year, Crecemos DIJO celebrated 25 years. This anniversary celebration has also been an occasion for us to reflect on how much we have grown. I am surprised that our impact is more than I could have imagined when I first arrived here 20 years ago. I realize that all our effort has been worthwhile, for all of us, in terms of learning, growth and the ability to respond to challenges and crises. Every time we were faced with a need, we have worked harder, despite our limits, always pushing forward. Over these 25 years, we have stayed close to our history and have walked along a path. Each step of the way has taught us something, and thanks to that we are who we are today.

One fundamental thing that we have learned is to be present, to face the challenges and opportunities that arise along the path we are walking. The needs we have encountered in our communities are big and require serious interventions, professionalism, and structure. Embracing these challenges has been of great value for the organization; and it is a value that our partners recognize because even when we have made mistakes, we have been able to show them that we are able to keep a serious commitment. Our partners recognize this quality and have the confidence to continue betting on us.

At the organizational level, we strengthened our programs and structure, a task that involved both management and operating systems. It also gave us an occasion to analyze our programs and projects according to criteria of efficiency and effectiveness, while at the same time, establishing new indicators and improving our monitoring and evaluation processes.

We also strengthened our communications and visibility strategies, based on the questions: What do we want to communicate? Why do we want to communicate? We want to communicate that we can create social development with a human approach and that each of us, with the resources available, can join and be part of the change.
This year, we were invited by the Ministry of the Interior to be part of the Citizen's Commission of Evaluation and Support for the Social Prevention of Violence and Crime. This Commission monitors and evaluates violence and crime prevention programs. For us, it was a great honor to be part of this Commission because it is a recognition of the work we do in the field of youth violence prevention through activities implemented at our Sports Schools.

Another innovation that developed this year is the collaboration with the AVSI network in Latin America, which brings together all the expertise of the network and partners. It is a great opportunity for Crecemos because we are confident that together we are better, and that after years of making isolated efforts, we can now introduce ourselves as part of a network that is supported by many partners. This new step also poses a challenge, because to be in this network it is necessary to maintain and increase our level of professionalism and our human commitment.

What’s next for Crecemos DIJO?

A journey of continued growth and deepening; growing in professionalism and deepening in the educational method which is the heart of our work. What does this mean? It means that each person, contributor, and beneficiary is unique and individual, and with this dignity deserves to be regarded with his/her limits and great possibilities. We will accompany each other, walking together on a path of mutual learning to realize our goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who make help Crecemos exist:

- To the families, because they keep us going.
- To our staff, for their commitment and passion.
- To partners and donors, for their confidence.
- To the volunteers, for sharing their desire to help.
- To universities and students, for recognizing in us a chance to learn.
- To our friends, for their companionship.

I hope that in this report we can convey the commitment that we assumed 25 years ago, which today has matured, thanks to the support of all of you and to the Mystery that allows us to continue growing together.

*María del Socorro del Río Angulo*
01. 25th Anniversary
25 Years: “In front of a concrete need, a friendship is born”
On Friday, October 26th, Ezio and I were greeted as warmly as ever by Socorro, Adriana, Fely and all the other staff and volunteers at Crecemos in Oaxaca, Mexico, under the bright blue sky dotted with pink bugambillia flowers and the mountain landscape framing the scene. That evening we met together at the Parish of St. Carmen for a Mass of Thanksgiving, celebrated by Fr. Lorenzo Fanelli, an Italian priest who nudged some university students to go out into the community and propose the life that they were living to others. The origin of Crecemos lay in that first, small initiative: certain of the goodness and source of hope which they had met, those young people went out of their comfort zone to meet their neighbor with an invitation to share in their happiness.

A prayerful celebration of thanks was a moving way to begin our Fiesta to mark the first 25 years of Crecemos. Children from the Crecemos communities proclaimed the readings, sang and played the guitar and mandolin. Towards the end of the Mass, the congregation was moved to tears and deep smiles as a group of families with children of all ages presented an offering of flowers to Mary at the front of the altar, while the budding group of young violinists from Monte Alban played Ave Maria in the choir loft above. It was glorious!

After Mass, all were greeted by mariachis in the plaza of the church, as we enjoyed hot chocolate and sweet bread and had the chance to mingle. What was most striking about the Mass and simple outdoor reception in the plaza was how joyful everyone was to belong to something beautiful. Crecemos is much more than an organization; it is a friendship, generous and open. Since my last visit to Oaxaca was just a few months ago, it was beautiful to experience a warmth and familiarity with so many of the kids, mothers and staff. I too was at home.

While most of the families went on their way after the reception, the Crecemos staff and invited guests from Mexico and around the world met together at a hotel to continue the celebration. We were treated to a reflection called “Faces of our history” in which we enjoyed stories about the origin of Crecemos and of its growth and evolution over the years.
The short documentary, “The Awakened Heart”, produced here in the US by our very good friends Simonetta Wiener and Giovanni Morricone, once again moved the audience in a deep way. The staff of Crecemos chose the film to give us a glimpse of the present, of what Crecemos has become over these past 25 years thanks to the relationship with so many people who had the courage and passion to respond to needs and opportunities with simplicity.

In a final moment, I was invited to participate in a dialogue, together with a few other friends, to share our thoughts on why we are interested in collaborating with Crecemos in the future, and to offer some tips from our experience. We spoke about practical things like communicating experiences of real people and the changes in their lives and the constant preoccupation with professionalism and transparency.

I hope that I was able to express something that I’ve learned from many of our regular donors, and which helps me to stay focused as I do the various tasks which constitute my work: it is a good for us to know that a place like Crecemos exists in this world, a place where people are dedicated to the common good with a view of the human person that is holistic and values the inherent dignity of each one, that honors and defends the family, a place that educates to beauty, order and truth. Further, it is a good for me to be linked to this place so that I don’t forget my own desires for these good things for myself and my family and friends, so that I don’t give up hope.

Maybe none of us alone has the capacity to make a noticeable difference in the world, or even in one community. Maybe the problems of the day are so large that they overshadow anything we can do to lessen them. Maybe our effort would be more efficient if we focus closer to home. All of these objections have some validity, but more convincing to me was experiencing again how together, each bringing to bear the resources and talents that he/she has, this beautiful place and people has grown over the years and will continue to thrive and to touch the lives of many, many more in the years to come.

My dear friends and supporters of Crecemos here in the United States, we are part this friendship. Please receive from Ezio and I the warmest greetings from Oaxaca and remember that you, too, are welcome to go visit and see for yourself!

Jackie Aldrette
AVSI-USA Managing Director
02. Who we are
Crecemos-DIJO (Integral Development of Youth in Oaxaca), is a civil society organization with 25 years of experience. They focus on the social development of families living in vulnerable contexts, with a focus on children and adolescents. Crecemos DIJO was established in 1993, as a response to the need to train young university students in a more humane and professional way. In turn, motivated by their desire to volunteer for an NGO, these students began offering free advice on legal, psychological, and pedagogical needs, as well as accounting. This activity led by students and Crecemos partners became the Family Support Centers which also works with children with learning disabilities. This is how Crecemos started working with education, from a comprehensive approach that involves physical, cognitive and social development, and which remains a priority for the organization.
Mission

We support the human development of children and adolescents and their families living in vulnerable situations implementing comprehensive education programs, based on the principle of subsidiarity, in which people are involved in the construction of the common good.

Vision

Our vision is to promote community development in vulnerable contexts in which individuals are the protagonists of their own development.
Model of Intervention

Children and adolescents living in vulnerable contexts have fewer opportunities to achieve a good quality of life and general well-being since they live with many scarcities and social risks. At Crecemos DIJO, we address three of the main problems that prevent the development of a girl, boy or adolescents: malnutrition, educational deficiency and socio-affective risks.

Our institutional programs respond in a timely manner to these needs, which are linked together to promote the integral development of the human person.

Crecemos DIJO’s methodological approach puts the person at the center of the intervention. It is fundamental to take into consideration all the elements of their lives, even the most difficult situations because even those are an important resource.

### Actors

#### Family

We involve mothers, fathers or/and guardians in the processes of intervention, in order to achieve their active and co-responsible participation. Through concrete actions such as the enrollment process, communal work, workshops, and home visits, the family is accompanied to strengthen its role as the first and foremost educator.

#### Community

Promoting healthy living environments to reduce levels of violence and conflict, creating spaces where families can interact with each other and also with social actors present in the community.

#### School

School plays a very important role in the life of children and adolescents. It gives them access to an academic training process, and therefore a priority that must be carried out as a joint effort. Crecemos offers direct support to schools, teachers and the rest of the educational community on specific topics such as nutrition, and reading strategies. Crecemos also supports children's community libraries.
03. Results 2018
Situation of Children in Mexico

In Mexico, there are **39.2 million** children and adolescents:

- **63%** under 15 are victims of some kind of violence (ENIM 2015)
- **33%** between 5 and 11 suffer from being overweight or obese (ENSANUT 2016)
- **51%** live in poverty (CONEVAL 2016)
- **18%** under 5 do not have an adequate level of development (ENIM 2015)
- **82%** do not reach the expected learning milestones (INEE, Prueba Planea 2015)
A study done by UNICEF in Mexico in 2013 found that Oaxaca is the state with the second highest nutritional risk in the country. Oaxaca presents higher percentages of malnutrition among children under 5, school-age children and adolescents compared to the national average of low weight and low height, especially in rural areas. Meanwhile, problems related to obesity are more common in urban areas, especially among school-age children, girls and young women.

In the communities where Crecemos DIJO operates, we mainly find three major problems related to malnutrition: chronic malnutrition (growth deficit), obesity and/or anemia. A boy or girl who suffers from chronic malnutrition in early childhood will not be able to reach his/her full potential. Not only in terms of growth, but in many other areas: the low height of a child represents a cognitive development delay. As women need balanced diets to give birth to healthy babies; children who had a nutritious diet can guarantee the economic and social future not only of their own children but also of the country.

Crecemos improves the eating habits of families and therefore decrease malnutrition rates among children and adolescents by providing technical and material support that can be used to fulfill basic needs using available resources, culture and tradition.

Project: Community kitchen and dining room

From Monday to Friday in the dining room of the Maria de Guadalupe Community Center in Monte Alban, Oaxaca, Crecemos serves a nutritious and balanced breakfast and hot meals that ensure an adequate amount of food while improving eating habits of children and adolescents. After eating at Crecemos, they have the energy required to do their school work. Children also participate in growth monitoring, regular health check-ups, and nutrition education. Good hygiene is also emphasized. Healthy habits are brought home through the significant level of participation of mothers as volunteers of the centers.
Food that feeds, food that educates

- 50,077: Breakfast/ nutritionally balanced meals provided
- 764: Children and adolescents
- 100%: Of children and adolescents improved their food and hygiene habits
- 519: Nutritional monitoring consultations
- 63.6%: Of children and adolescents who came to the community kitchens with anemia now have normal hemoglobin levels
- 8.4%: Of children and adolescents who came to the community kitchens with malnutrition now reached a normal nutritional status (anthropometric indicators)
Oaxaca is the Mexican state with the highest educational deficiency in the country, according to the National Households Survey done in 2004 by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics (INEGI). According to the research performed between April and December 2014, 53.7% of adolescents 15 years and older living in Oaxaca reported not having completed secondary education.

The Government of Oaxaca recognizes that out of every 100 children entering primary school, 93 of them reach secondary school, 65 continue their studies for higher education, 23 are at the top level, and only 13 finish with a bachelor’s degree.

In the communities where Crecemos DIJO intervenes, the problem further accentuates the social inequality gap that already exists in the state. The opportunities to find decent jobs for those who drop out of school are minimal. In many cases, they fall into addictions or join gangs.

The purpose of the program is to enhance the cognitive skills and abilities of girls, boys and adolescents to raise their academic level from early age to adolescence.

Projects:
Promoting Early Childhood Development

The project provides tools for parents to improve the development of healthy habits at home. These habits are focused on children so they can have adequate physical, cognitive and socio-emotional stimulation.
Timely detection of risks in children's growth and development is an investment that guarantees better opportunities in their lives.

- 202 Boys and girls involved
- 100% Parents who receive tools to strengthen their children's learning habits
- 314 Hours of work invested in Promoting Early Childhood Development
- 75.2% Of children have improved their skills in four areas: cognitive, motor, personal-social and communication
School Reinforcement

To improve the academic level of children and adolescents, we engaged them in academic activities that enhance their verbal and written communication skills, and understanding of mathematical logic.

Providing academic support to children and adolescents to reduce school drop-outs

- 29.2% of children and adolescents who improved their academic skills
- 207 children and adolescents who participated in educational clubs and academic counseling
- 1401 hours of work invested in academic enrichment
Children’s Community Libraries

The libraries promote reading as a fundamental tool for language development, cognition, social skills and learning for girls and boys in communities with limited access to relevant children’s books. The libraries have more than 300 children’s books chosen by relevance. Some of the titles can be found on the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), a Swiss non-profit organization that selects the best books for children and adolescents by content and illustration.

We implement continuous actions to promote reading strategies

- **509**
  Girls and boys that have increased their interest in children’s literature

- **More than 1,500**
  Appropriate children’s books acquired

- **4**
  Libraries opened
Risk Prevention Program

Juanito, with his two older brothers, would always arrive at the community center in Monte Albán, Oaxaca, with a smile on his face. They would have breakfast and then move on with their academic activities. The boys lived with their father. Their mother left due to her husband’s violent behavior and alcoholism. When his brothers grew up, they joined a gang in the neighborhood that stole and robbed people in buses to buy alcohol or drugs. At Crecemos, we did everything we could to bring them back, but it was not possible.

One day, while we were walking down the road, we found out that Juanito, then 7, was already part of the gang. We were going to lose him too. The social and affective needs of these children like Juanito are evident. This is how the program was born: to offer girls, boys, and adolescents healthy recreational alternatives for their free time. Currently, Juanito is a child who continues to attend soccer training and plays the guitar in a Rondalla (ensemble of stringed instruments) group.

When we talk about risks, we refer to every socio-familial experience that threatens the physical or emotional health of children and adolescents. In vulnerable contexts, we can find that the main risks are addictions, violence, crime and abandonment.

The program implements activities that allow children and adolescents to have a healthier life. We have identified protective factors such as sports, music, and art that, within an educational methodology, strengthen inter and intra-personal relationships and keep youth away from harmful behaviors.
Projects: Sports Clubs

In partnership with Fundación Real Madrid and the NGO Cesal, we created two sports clubs, that promote values, the integral education of children and adolescents, and the social inclusion of the most vulnerable.

The first Fundación Real Madrid - Crecemos Sports Club began in July 2011 to benefit children and adolescents in Monte Albán and Pintores; two marginal urban suburbs of Oaxaca. From the beginning, soccer was a great attraction for children and adolescents. They wanted to participate without knowing that it would also help initiate a process of learning and significant change in their lives. Recently, the club has begun to offer basketball, which can integrate a larger number of children and adolescents living in at risk contexts.

The second Fundación Real Madrid - Aerogubiños Sports Club started its activities in April 2013, benefiting children and adolescents in Unión Hidalgo. The Crecemos DIJO interventions in this community have been able to give opportunities to children and adolescents to improve their learning skills and to address social issues that are predominant in the area.
Generating healthy environments of coexistence is a key factor for the decrease of violence

- 62% of children and adolescents have improved their social and emotional skills.
- 97% of participants are enrolled in school.
- 348 participants.
- 1,500 hours of soccer/basketball practice.
- 5 public school partners.
Promoting Art and Culture

We encourage girls, boys and adolescents to make the most of their free time in activities that allow healthy fun, personal and social development. The key to the effectiveness of these activities lies in the fact that they become means for personal growth, self-realization, and openness to new dimensions of life.

Music and art have strengthened psychosocial development and family bonds

- Of children and adolescents improved their social and emotional skills: 85%
- Children and adolescents participated in activities to promote art and culture: 207
- Hours invested in teaching and promoting artistic and cultural activities: 400
Crecemos and you

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