



Horizons

OF FRIENDSHIP

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO END POVERTY IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

Dear Friends,

February 2024

Happy New Year! I hope that you had an excellent holiday season! I'm very excited to share with you some highlights of our trip to Mexico and Central America. This was a very important trip for me as Horizons' new Executive Director. It gave me the opportunity to finally connect in person with some of the organizations we work with and to reinvigorate our partnerships.

Our first stop was Chiapas, Mexico where our partner DESMI is based. There, we visited two of the Indigenous communities DESMI supports through sustainable food security projects. We also learned more about the violence the area is experiencing as result of the territorial disputes among drug cartels. The violence is worse near the border with Guatemala, but there is hope and resiliency despite these difficulties.

For example, we met with members of the community of San Francisco inside a barn-turned-community hall where groups of men and women made presentations about their projects, which included a bakery, family gardens and a chicken coop. I was particularly inspired by one young presenter, Lydia, because of her clear pride and passion for her project and the changes taking place in her community.

We also visited several of the projects supported by DESMI in the town of Chono'myakilo. I was impressed by community-based initiatives that focused on growing blackberries, making natural fertilizer, and building a greenhouse to grow medicinal plants. These grassroots projects are independent of government, and are supported solely by your generous donations.

The next stop was El Salvador, where we were greeted by our partner, ACUDESBAL. I was very excited to meet Mario, the organization's president, and the community leaders of the Bajo Lempa Region. These communities have a fascinating historical background; they are made up of former refugees, former members of the rebel armed groups, and former members of the military who settled there after the civil war ended.

I remember asking Mario how these diverse groups managed to get along. It turns out that working together on community-based initiatives is a very powerful reconciliation tool. We also met with people leading the emergency response groups being trained by ACUDESBAL to manage natural disasters.

I expressed my interest in visiting the football field built by our partner with your generous support to provide a space for young people to enjoy soccer.



DESMI facilitated a tour to the community of San Francisco, where Lydia (pictured above) proudly educated us on their community collectives that included a bakery, growing medicinal plants, homestead and community gardens, and raising livestock.



A crop of blackberries harvested in the community of San Andreas in Chiapas, Mexico.



I want to help Horizons empower people in Central America and Mexico.

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Soccer is more than just a sport here; it is the heart of the community, an activity that brings people together and allows children and youth to focus on fun, decreasing their level of involvement in crime and gangs.

Mario quickly grabbed his cell phone and sent some messages. To my surprise when we went to the field, we were welcomed by over 10 members of the community, who thanked us for making this project possible.

Our final stop was in Guatemala to visit our partner PIES. They work to provide education on the prevention of sexual violence, deliver support to survivors of sexual abuse, and promote the sexual and reproductive health of young women.

PIES strongly believes in taking a holistic approach to the prevention of sexual violence, and showed us the materials they use to educate students, young people, medical professionals, and government officials.

Our visit to the Safe Haven shelter for survivors of sexual abuse supported by PIES was the toughest part of the trip. The shelter is 80% overcapacity and houses almost 150 minors, including 40 babies whose mothers are survivors living in this shelter. I saw a 13-year-old girl taking care of a toddler, and heard another girl say her parents were finally coming to meet the baby she was holding in her arms.

These things shouldn't be happening. They are tragedies and PIES is working tirelessly to prevent abuse. In the meantime, there is hope for the girls at the shelter. Thanks to generous donations like yours, they have access to workshops, opportunities to develop new skills, and medical support, which also includes a full-time psychologist to encourage and assist them.

I have now seen firsthand how the projects supported by Horizons, our partners and you are vital to the wellbeing of people in Central America and Mexico, who face hardships like sexual and drug-related violence, poverty, and food and water insecurity on a daily basis. I've also seen how hard our partners and people in communities are working to bring about change.

I ask you to continue to support these projects with a gift of \$50, \$75 or \$100, or even a smaller amount. Your donations make a huge difference to the lives of people in the South.



Rodrigo stands in front of a soccer field created by ACUDESBAL, fully funded through your generous donations. This is a space where kids can play, avoid forms of crime, and where the entire community can have fun.



Horizons staff were warmly welcomed by our partner PIES. They showed us all the educational resources on sexual and reproductive health they have created as part of the Safe Haven project.



Please accept my thanks for your generosity. Happy New Year! Feliz Año Nuevo!

Rodrigo Konigs,
Executive Director
Horizons of Friendship



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