



# Programa Velasco

ANNUAL REPORT 2018



Women's Economic Empowerment Early Childhood Education

Family Support Services

Dear friends,

Two years ago, we challenged ourselves to dive deeper into improving program quality, initiating more efforts to build sustainability, and ultimately, better meeting the needs of those we serve. We rose to the challenge and created our first strategic plan which we are now proud to review. We also took stock of the role that you – our Programa Velasco community – have played in educating and empowering children, families, and women entrepreneurs in El Salvador. Here are some highlights you have helped to make possible this year:



The Strong Bonds Project is for children aged 7-12 who graduated from, or are connected to our early education work. For the project, we piloted after-school activities and mental health services. Children and parents participated in activities to improve social and communication skills, increase self-confidence, and strengthen positive relationships between family and peers.



Our Women's Empowerment Project underwent a thorough evaluation process in which we reviewed our model, curriculum, and impact. Using the insights from this process, we hired an intern to serve as an advisor to the entrepreneurs and to assist them with their bookkeeping and accounting skills. We also partnered with Salvadoran professional entrepreneurs, who acted as mentors for our participants by offering them insights and encouragement on the local market.



We not only provide access and resources for counseling services, but this year we dedicated more efforts to supporting ANADES, our partner organization with monitoring and evaluation assistance, and trainings on counseling services and strength-based trauma-informed care. This technical support helps ensure that children and families receive higher quality programming.

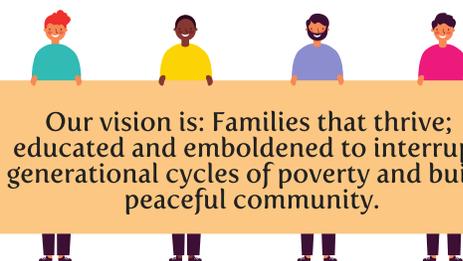
We are proud of these improvements and they ultimately affect the quality of life for each of our participants. Of course, there is more work to be done. We are initiating a new strategic plan that outlines increased and renewed investments in sustainability, a strong commitment to continuous improvement in program quality and data analysis, and widespread impact to educate and empower more women entrepreneurs and their families in holistic ways.

The challenges the Salvadoran community and our work faces are complicated, systemic, and will not be resolved overnight. However, as we look ahead, we have a groundswell of ambition and hope.

We are driven by the empowerment of our participants and the generosity of our donors. Empowerment and support lead to a lasting impact for women entrepreneurs, children, and their families. We recognize that our past and future successes are rooted in the partnerships we share with you.

Thank you for your commitment. We are proud to have you as part of our community.

Our mission is to educate and empower children and entrepreneurial women in El Salvador to build strong families and create better futures.



Our vision is: Families that thrive; educated and emboldened to interrupt generational cycles of poverty and build peaceful community.



Annie Boyd-Ramirez  
Executive Director

Juan Velasco  
Co-Founder

# Early Education and Family Support Services

As a part of our commitment to educate and empower children and families, we continue to sponsor children's scholarships and teacher trainings for the ANADES Child Development Center, our partner organization. Through this collaboration, we support opportunities for children, their families, and teachers to foster social-development skills and increase their knowledge of child development.



Mateo and his parents Ivette and Frederick have benefited a great deal from opportunities at the Center.

Mateo is a cheerful 6-year-old, and he and his parents, Ivette and Fredrick, have benefited greatly from the multi-disciplinary services at the Center. At three years old, Mateo's doctors diagnosed him with mild Autism. He had a limited vocabulary and struggled controlling his temper at school, often interacting with peers aggressively. After receiving this diagnosis, his parents were concerned about how other children would treat him.

Ivette and Fredrick's worries eased as they collaborated with the Center's social worker, psychologist, and teachers to foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment for Mateo. For example, this year, thanks to support from Programa Velasco, the Center's social worker and Mateo's teacher participated

in a training called TEACCH: Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). They learned techniques to assist Mateo and other students in the classroom, such as focusing on students' strengths in order to gain independent learning skills and reduce stress.

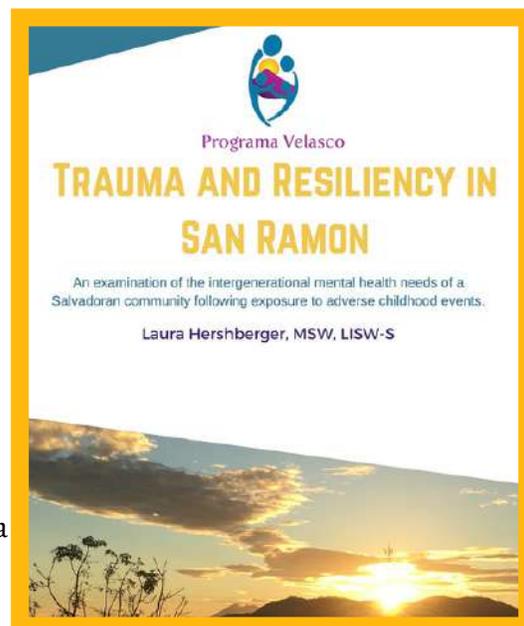
Mateo's teachers and the support staff have incorporated what they learned in the training to facilitate activities that support his language acquisition, social-emotional skills, and peer interactions. They have also assisted Ivette and Fredrick to utilize parenting techniques to foster Mateo's development. As a result, Mateo has blossomed. He is more comfortable expressing himself and engaging with his classmates, as he often shares his opinions and actively participates in activities. The multidisciplinary support services at the Center have been invaluable to Mateo and his parents. We are looking forward to supporting them for another year!

## Mental Health

Promoting mental health is another holistic component to lifting up families and women entrepreneurs. To better understand the needs and previous experiences of those we serve, parents, women entrepreneurs, and youth completed the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) survey, which we also adapted to include questions about positive childhood experiences that build resilience and create protection.

We had the pro-bono support of Laura Hershberger, MSW, LISW-S, who analyzed the survey's results, wrote a report, and presented it to our staff. In addition, Anne Farina, MSW, LCSW, provided an in-depth analysis and wrote a Statistical Analysis Addendum.

By analyzing the data and looking at comparisons and the statistical significance of these results, we deepen our awareness of the level of trauma that exists in the community and the need to provide evidenced-based, trauma informed care. This understanding informs our priorities, program content, protocols, and action steps in the journey of educating and encouraging families to interrupt the cycles of poverty and cultivate a community of peace. You can find a copy of these reports on our website.



# Women's Economic Empowerment

## Women's Empowerment Project Savings & Lending Collective

Entrepreneurs joined our Women's Empowerment Project in 2017 for a two-year training program to gain more business management skills, boost their self-esteem, and increase their knowledge about entrepreneurship. Here are some developments the 11 graduates have made since January 2017:

- 82% now maintain a savings for their business (up by 72% from baseline)
- 73% now considered themselves financially independent (up from 55% at baseline)
- 73% now identify as having a high self-esteem (up from 55% at baseline)

The entrepreneurs have made these strides and expanded their skill sets by exploring innovative ways to manage their businesses and confront the emotional, technical, and social barriers that can limit their economic mobility and personal growth. Their success is key to igniting more activity in local economies and improving social cohesion.

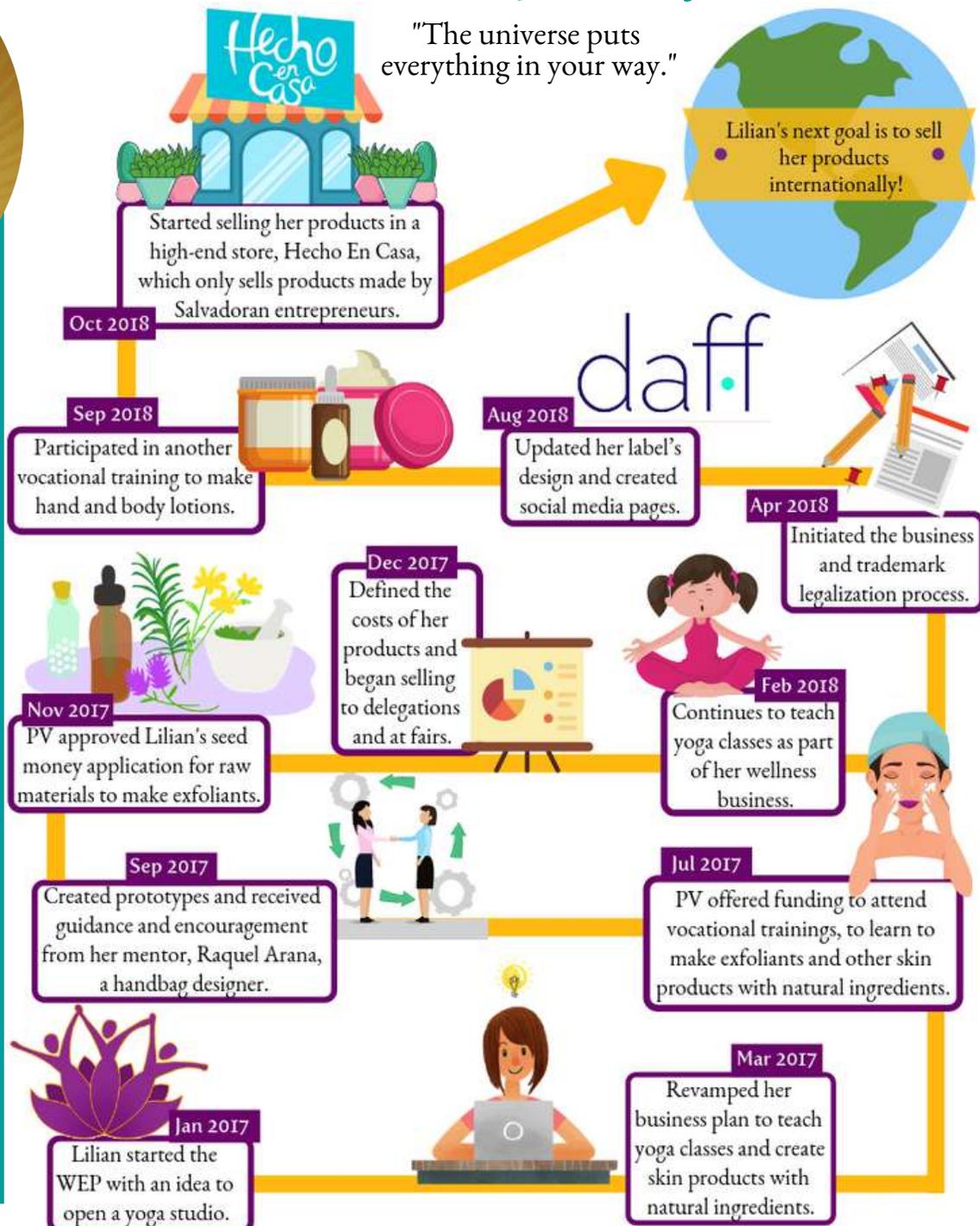


Lilian Rivera is the owner of Daff, a wellness and beauty product business. It is clear that Lilian thinks, feels, and acts like an entrepreneur, and yet she is the first to say she was not always that way. In the past, Lilian's self-doubt and intimidation often paralyzed her from taking necessary steps in her business, such as creating new exfoliant mixtures, improving her business marketing, and even completing basic bookkeeping.

Even still, Lilian was persistent and open, and when her determination meshed with encouragement from her mentor Raquel and the Project's staff, Lilian unlocked her confidence, reconnected with her passion, and motivated herself to implement the tasks she previously considered too risky and difficult. Way to go Lilian!

## Lilian's Journey:

"The universe puts everything in your way."



# With appreciation

Patty Rauch-Neustadter served as our board president in 2017 and a board member since 2014. Sadly, this past February, she passed away. She left a lasting gift for those we serve - an endowment to fund children's early education scholarships.



Patty continues to take care of others! We miss Patty and her wit, mentorship, and joy. Her deep-rooted commitments to social justice, supporting families, and ensuring wide access to education are examples for us to follow.

# Special thanks to ~

Andy Mark joined our board in 2013 and has since served as the board treasurer and fundraising committee member. Andy is a trusted sounding board with his advice on our financial management and his encouragement for us to be thoughtful and strategic as we innovate and evolve. Thank you for your leadership, friendship, and dedication to Programa Velasco and all those we serve. Programa Velasco is a stronger organization because of you, Andy!



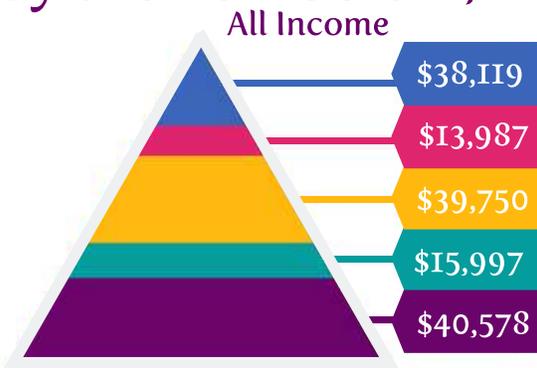
## Our Board of Directors:

- Andy Mark
- Chantal deAlcuaz
- Elizabeth Sanchez
- Gary Neustadter
- Juan Velasco
- Katy Erker-Lynch
- Nancy Svoboda
- Patty Rauch-Neustadter †
- Tito deAlcuaz

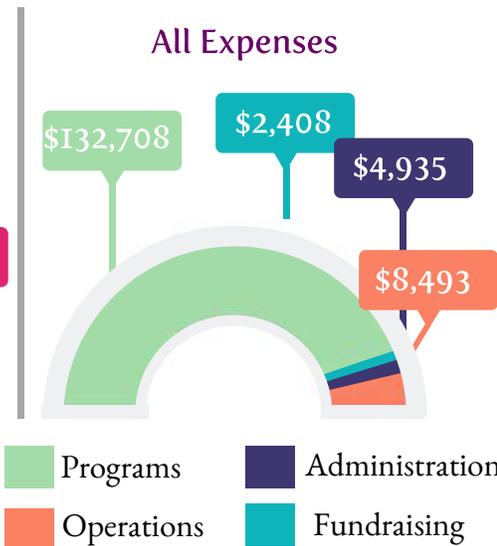
As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child – and to lift up families and train women entrepreneurs – a village of supporters is needed, too! We are especially grateful for the many people who have shared their gifts and talents to support those we serve:

Raquel Arana, Carrie Todd, Portia Bajwa, Araceli Pantoja, Clare Casey, Noelle Brigden, Lauryn Gregorio, Allison Ramirez, Erica Olson, Jean Reidy, Bonnie Berg, Laura Hershberger, Anne Farina, students from Centro Ellacuria, Santa Clara Univ. Professor Long Le and students in his Micro-credit Lending class, and CRISPAZ university, high school, and faith community delegations.  
Thank you for all you have done!

# By the numbers... Jan. - Nov. 2018



- Women's Empowerment
- Family Support Services
- Strong Bonds Project
- Early Childhood Education
- Unrestricted



\*Our financial reports will be finalized in January 2019.

# Stay Connected With Us!

Sponsor a child, woman entrepreneur, teacher, or family!

Read about our participants' stories on our blog.

Discover your impact in action on social media:



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