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When I began working with Clínica just one year after it began to serve children with disabilities, I was moved by the courage of families who waited for hours for a single consult from a professional. At that time, therapy services in Nogales, Sonora, were almost nonexistent, and I dreamed that someday children there would have skilled therapists and well-equipped special education programs to attend.

One of my first students was a little girl named Rosario, whom everyone called “Chayo.” She was both extremely bright and hearing impaired. Chayo was a pioneer. This brave little girl received hearing aids and speech therapy at Clínica and believed that she could do anything. She became the first severely hearing-impaired student mainstreamed in regular classes in Nogales, Sonora. With encouragement and support from her teachers there, she attended secondary and trade schools and eventually became a secretary. When she came back to see me as a young mother, I found that I had tears in my eyes.

Today, Nogales, Sonora has special education programs staffed by dedicated professionals who constantly seek in-service training both through Clínica and through university and other government programs in Hermosillo, Sonora, and sometimes even in Mexico City. One of our Sonoran volunteers, Erika Ibarra, has become a leader in special education in Sonora. Teachers and therapists there face incredible challenges, but they are making profound changes in the lives of the children we serve at Clínica.

