



EXPERIENCES IN SOCIAL INNOVATION

2006-2007 Cycle

FINALIST

The Miguel Magone and Laura Vicuña Program: An alternative to youth gang violence, an opportunity for labor insertion and a response to the high indices of Salvadoran emigration (El Salvador)

The "Miguel Magone and Laura Vicuña Program", was developed by the Salvadoran Foundation for Education and Work (EYTRA in Spanish) and the Don Bosco Industrial Park. It attends low income youth at social risk, ex-gang members or adolescents who have inflicted the law. This program combines formal education and technical/vocational training at companies. Through this program youth gain the necessary tools to abandon their situation of extreme vulnerability and social exclusion, earn income and construct a better future for themselves within legal parameters.

To be accepted to the program, the youth must be between the ages of 14 and 22 years and possess the necessary social skills to interact with other adolescents. The social skills required are assessed through psychological tests.

In the case of imprisoned youth - prior to acceptance - an agreement must be reached with prison authorities, judges, inmates and parents (or responsible adult) so that he/she may serve their sentence within the program instead of in prison.

Once admitted to the program, the youth signs a "letter of commitment" in which he/she accepts the rules and conditions of the institution. The adult responsible for him/her and for paying the monthly "savings fee" is also committed at this time. The money saved during the youth's stay in the program is the capital he/she will have to begin a productive life once they leave the program- for example to start up his/her own small company. The amount of this capital is not very much yet it is of great symbolic importance since it represents and reinforces the commitment made by the youth's family and teaches them the value of saving. Nearly 80% of the families follow through with this commitment and those who can, find a "Godparent" (sponsor) who is willing to credit the savings account with an extra amount.

Monday through Saturday interns have room and board, education, and access to workshops (carpentry, electricity, sewing, and mechanics) and internships at 10

companies at the Don Bosco Industrial Park. Besides, they have medical and dental coverage, psychological support and sports facilities. Weekends are spent with their families to strengthen family ties.

This model considers education a right; it does not deny the adolescents' current needs and reality but rather incorporates it and teaches them how to work and evolve from their own reality to re-insert themselves as useful citizens within their social context. The model encourages them to have an entrepreneurial and associative vocation, helping them believe they can be their own employers and that they are capable of developing a small enterprise. The internships they carry out at the Industrial Park highly enrich their training and business management skills. An effective connection between education, enterprise and development is established.

During 2006 the program attended over 585 youth (85 of which were interns). Monthly cost is USD\$180 per beneficiary. One of the program's most important achievements, among many others, is the fact that 92% of program graduates are currently working and have successfully re-inserted into society.

For further information, please contact:

Marta María E. Luzzatto
FUNDACION ALTERNATIVA SOCIAL Y EDUCATIVA
falternativa@bariloche.com.ar
Tel. (54)-2944-427791