



## **EXPERIENCES IN SOCIAL INNOVATION**

**2006-2007 Cycle**

**SHARED FIFTH PLACE WINNER**

### **Program for violence prevention among youth in non-traditional education groups and schoolchildren at social risk by means of Conflict Management and Resolution and Mediation of Peers (Argentina)**

The "Program for violence prevention among youth in non-traditional education groups and schoolchildren at social risk by means of Conflict Management and Resolution and Mediation of Peers" is implemented by the *Fundación Alternativa Social y Educativa* (Social and Educational Alternative Foundation). Its main objective is to introduce to educational establishments, programs that teach pacific resolution of conflicts and peer mediation to help reduce and/or avoid the use of violence to settle interpersonal student disputes. The programs are applied to traditional (formal) and non-traditional (non-formal) education groups.

Schools and other educational establishments in the city of San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina -as in the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean- are experiencing a rise in violence. The violence is manifested through harassment, physical and/or psychological abuse, insults, fights, aggression towards teachers, armed gangs and even deaths as a direct result of intra-school violence.

This critical situation led the Foundation to seek viable alternatives to confront increasing violence levels. The search resulted in the creation and implementation of a teacher-training program on Peer Mediation. One of the attendees was a local school director who offered to implement the pilot Peer Mediation Program at her establishment, where one student had been wounded by gunshot. The results were very positive and the training program for teachers was extended to other schools.

After teacher training, the school carries out "awareness workshops" for general school staff and parents. Following, over a period of 1-2 months, at least two trained teachers instruct their students in general terms on the subject of Conflict Management and Resolution and Peer Mediation techniques. Students are then instructed more intensively on the subject and finally a selection of "student mediators" is made. The selected students, together with teacher Coordinators form part of the Center for Mediation, where strategies for mediation and co-mediators are defined. The place where mediation will take place, how the students involved

in conflict will be approached, what will be done with the signed agreement, among other matters are taken care of as well during the first Center meeting.

Subsequently, Peer Mediation is implemented with support provided by the supervising teachers and follow-up and counseling is made available by the Foundation. Student mediators also collaborate in the training of new ones and share their valuable experiences with them. Student mediators are selected first on the basis of their will to assume that role and must have parental permission. Second, students are selected to represent a diverse student profile and those who have been victims or perpetrators of violence are also given priority.

To date, the program has been implemented in 13 schools of San Carlos de Bariloche and a decrease in student violence has been detected as well as a more harmonious relationship between students and teachers.

Moreover, the Foundation is in contact with student mediators that have graduated to insert them in *no-to-violence* community related activities.

In 2004, the Provincial Council of Education of the Province of Rio Negro initiated violence prevention training for primary school teachers with the support of the nation's Justice Department. This fact of great significance demonstrates that the model used by the Foundation is highly replicable.

The impact this program has goes beyond school limits. The girls and boys that have come to learn that disputes may be settled peacefully also become a factor for positive change in their homes, community and future life.

**For further information, please contact:**

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