

ICDP YOUTH TO YOUTH PROJECT AT THE FEENIX REHABILITATION CENTRE

The ICDP program "I am a person too" was implemented in an attempt to help the process of rehabilitation of a group of people whose lives were shattered due to drugs. The facilitators took into account the problems of this community, especially the emotional conflicts caused by consumption of drugs.



Luciana Aristizabal made contact with the organization called Feenix, after meeting some of the young people who live in this institution. Feenix houses primarily young people, but there are also some adults. Although the project planned to work only with young people, adults wanted to join in and so they too were integrated in the ICDP meetings. The ICDP trainer and the facilitators felt that their task was to assist them all as fellow human beings in a hard process, individuals in need of a helping hand in order to successfully rehabilitate and learn from their mistakes and difficulties. Many of the adults were parents.

Taking drugs turned them into people feared and rejected by society: aggressive, dishonest and some even committed murder. ICDP facilitators decided to give their support, confidence and knowledge in the attempt to break this cycle and the ICDP guidelines for good interaction were their main tool.

Most of the young people said that drug taking was due to the emptiness of their family lives, or that they took them just for fun to try out, but now they find it difficult to control it and to find

the wrong path. With adults we had a different approach, adapting to the characteristics inherent to their age. Therefore, our work was very interesting because we had such a varied group: teenagers, youths and adults.



The main problem of the Foundation, was the lack of economic resources, which further complicated obtaining the required professional help. At times, tensions within the Foundation were strong and neither the organization nor the professional staff seemed to be in tune with people who needed their help. The young people were aggressive and unhappy as a result. But we provided for their need to feel loved and they felt safe and relaxed during the hours of our workshops. Many lives, many stories, full of sorrows and joys – and the ICDP group of facilitators were always at young people’s disposal. They only saw us once a week - and this was the only time when they said they felt they could express themselves freely. Three hours each week, a time during which young people could release their anxieties through plays, songs, stories and games, remembering with joy (or perhaps sadly) their childhoods, their children and their parents.

We found in our experiences that the ICDP humanistic approach works, the impact and the results are amazing and immediate.



WHAT THE PARTICIPANTS SAY ...

“With you I shared many pleasant hours, I learned to be with my daughter's future and give a good example of love. You change the monotony in us, Thank you for giving us not only learning but also a great time.”

“Because you have so much patience with us - the former addicts, I am surprised that you being only four women, handled so many of us so well. I learned to express myself, to be a better partner. I felt very at ease, happy and comfortable.”

“I learned to pick up my dreams; I learned how to identify my moods, to love and appreciate my family; to have fun, express and share with the people around me; to have empathy, learning to put myself in the shoes of the people, to know and understand that everyone has problems and we can all learn from everyone. I felt wonderful in all our meetings, thank you - you will always have a place in my heart. Thanks for making me a person with more humility, nobility, understanding, and I feel full and bigger to learn all this thanks to you.”

“ I gained self-esteem, I felt very peaceful; it was rewarding. You told us about interesting things about personal and emotional communication. Thank you very much!”

“ICDP strengthened me as a father; because of drugs I've never shared any time with my daughter but she is now my motivation to get out of trouble. I realized how important it is to have a parent in childhood; a parent able to decipher children's actions in times of rebellion, their moods, etc.. understanding that they just want attention, they just want a little love from their parents. With examples and through this methodology, it made me realize that more than a father, my daughter needs a friend.”

”It is the most humane and disinterested program that has ever reached us.”

“ ICDP managed to revive our emotional side, making us relive those feelings of laughing and crying like children again.”

“ICDP is an important addition to the treatment for all here, it gives us confidence and makes us feel that someone else is there to support us, giving us back the strength that we sometimes lose because of the weaknesses of our mind; but at the same time reminds us why we are here and what is our goal. ”



EXPERIENCES OF THE TEAM:

“One of the participants was a young man who became homeless and recycler, slept feeling raindrops falling on his body, cold, suffering and feeling the depths of the street, without relying on anyone, without belief in God. As he says, being a person who did not have much but just enough to live. He used to be hardworking, studious and honest but due to drug addiction later went on to sell his belongings and started sleeping on the sidewalks, sniffing the garbage in the hope of finding food or maybe something to sell so he can buy the drugs.

One day he asked me:

- Are you happy to live?

- I said: Yes

- He answered: I am happy to live again

This moved and touched me, leaving a lump in the throat.

I was moved by the courage of these young people who have gone from being on top, to fall to the bottom and to now accept their problems and regain motivation to carry on. They appreciated our efforts, especially because they had felt ignored, excluded by society, as most only saw their mistakes and did not recognize or could not see beyond the appearance of a person.” – Luciana Aristizabal

“Hearing about all they had to live through, from family problems and violence, to economic problems and also emotional rejection – made us more committed to their cause and their lives. Behind every person there was a hard life story and after hearing their stories, their problems, their dreams, their aspirations errors, we realized that we too learned a lot from them” - Fajardo Agueda

“As a facilitator, I embarked on a process full of lessons, joys, sorrows, questions and new understanding, all linked to such a big problem as drug addiction is in our society. These young people found themselves in the midst of many problem, difficulties within their family, economic, social – and in the drugs they saw a way out. We became a helping hand to get them out of this problem, to help prevent them from drowning all their hopes, helping them believe that they can move on by learning from their mistakes. This project gave me the opportunity to enter the world of this beautiful group, a group that feels isolated and lacks of opportunities due to past wrong doings. They are aware of all the damage they have caused to society - most regret it and apologize for it. They are finding the strength now to resolve their past, some are seeking for a school for their children, others for an opportunity to excel themselves, many are now returning to believe in themselves and are ready to pick up the many dreams left behind due to their addiction to drugs.”
–Lynx Zarifah

“For the first time I could live and be able to put myself in the shoes of each and every one of the participants who lived in extreme situations, psychologically injured and nearly destroyed by addiction to drugs, trying to survive.

It was difficult for them and many times they had their crisis, reduced to impotence like helpless children. It was amazing to watch how with our support each week, they were evolving and recovering, leaving aside the resentment and hatred, to make way for the affection, and love each other almost like a family.

This project, full of learning and goals, has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Seeing the positive results in these affection starved and needy people fills me with satisfaction and joy.

As trainer, this project allowed me to become more aware of my role in assisting the young facilitators in a challenging task and helping them deal with their experiences. With great love and gratitude we dedicated our time to this group, who allowed us to be part of their lives and they become part of ours. – Amata Aristizabal

ABOUT OUR TEAM WORK:

Our experiences as an ICDP team were innumerable; we complemented each other not only in the delivery of the program to the community of people we were working with, but also in each working group when we were preparing our meetings, we learned to develop and execute different tasks together; we designed activities for the group that created sincere and tranquil atmosphere.

We held interviews with each participant, asking about their studies, their dreams, the goals they wanted to achieve – this was a very difficult job, listening to their problems, being silent and just witnessing every story, realizing that most became drug users due to problems in childhood.

Although we did not have drug problems, we could share and hear their problems, and we did so through recreational activities outside the workshops and by cooking together, generating joy and laughter and behaving not as directors of a program, but as one of them.

We prepared role plays in advance of the meetings and, as there was four of us, we could do it really well and provide good demonstrations as examples for different topics of the ICDP program. The role plays achieved our goal; for example, we did a role play to explain what is empathy and how it is when there is no empathy (contrasting two examples). Feeling empathy and understanding what the other person is feeling was one of the most important issues for them; one of the side effects of the rehabilitation process is to have ever changing moods and by practicing empathy they were discovering how to respond to each others needs.

We offered ICDP workshops and through these we showed them that they could succeed, that there is hope, and space for dreams and opportunities; that they are not alone, that there is always someone waiting behind the door of the Foundation waiting full of joy to meet a recovered person, wanting them to succeed; that there are always new opportunities, new people and programs such as ICDP willing to help, to reach out and show them the beautiful side of life, and that they can go ahead towards it.

This report was prepared by Luciana Aristizabal - Project Coordinator



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Thanks ...
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