

HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE WORK
DONE BY THE FOUNDATION P.I.D.E.E.

1979 - 1992

Santiago, Chile, July, 1993

The Foundation, PROTECTION TO THE DAMAGED CHILDREN DUE TO THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, PIDEE, is a non-governmental organisation that has been working for 12 years with the following aims: To protect the child and the adolescent that have been affected by the repression fostered by the Military Government; to promote the investigation looking into the reports of political repression in children.

One of the first tasks undertaken was to register the case histories, cense them with the purpose of determining the size of our universe. This led us to produce an entry data card of the minors who were then medically checked up. Until December, 1992, the number of children assisted are the following: 8,135 minors that had suffered from different repressive situations.

If we compare the first organisation chart designed and published in a brochure, July, 1979, explaining the structure to be of our Foundation, together with the changes that would take place year after year, to the work accomplished in 1990, we can say that we were able to cover in that year a 99% of the aid, minors assisted required. It was not easy, it was a difficult job, but we were able to respond to the aims of a human group, specially formed by women who had become involved with the objectives stated above.

The first social reports of the time indicated that the alterations most frequently detected in the minors were a feeling of having been deserted and of spurn, different types of behavioural alterations, states of depression, principally school failure and drop-out, and the poor socio-economic situation of their families that resulted in a high index of malnutrition. The resources that started coming in were, on the one hand, used to hire psychologists and psychopedagogues, and on the other, to give these children some nutritional support.

From the very start we had in mind to open central offices in the provinces, and little by little these were opened up on the basis of the same programs developed in Santiago, even though greater importance was given to the Therapeutic Recreational Workshops.

Between the years 1983 and 1986 the number of children who profited by these programs grew meaningfully. The families aided show an increase of 120% and the minors of 130%. This increase is linked to background information of the political situation of the country at the time. Political demonstrations activated more repression - which in the first period of the regime had been kept inside less intense margins - and the result was massive repression. Extreme situations are recorded and these caused the death of many children in the streets. Once the Unit of Research and Report of Political Repression was established we could report that during 1983, 529 minors were arrested, ill-treated, abused and/or wounded. 28 other children between the ages of 2 and 18 were killed. The data obtained was published in a bulletin which was done to inform against the above mentioned abuses.

In 1983 we started to develop a program for returned people and a new group was formed that would allow us to enter the matter in a more specific way and employ new strategies to help these people to reinmerse themselves in the family group.

In the same period we opened up a new unit a group of Physical Health which was formed by a social worker, a pediatrician and a pediatric nurse, and these people, after initial check-up, could send the minors to the specialists required in each case. The distribution of medicines and the nutritional support of the minors were allocated to this group.

In 1985 a home for children in the high risk level was opened in Santiago, as well as in the provinces.

The Mental Health unit was expanded to include family therapy as well as other therapeutical strategies.

The Recreational Workshops extended their activities with children to offer workshops for parents.

A program of Pedagogical aid to children of Basic Education was installed and later on extended to students of Secondary Education, including a special program for returned students as a workshop of "bilingual studies", implementing this last activity with preparation courses for the Academic Aptitude Test.

The development of our project allowed us to pick up information from the experiences that have been studied and published in different areas, and that have, on the one hand, the characteristics of a report and on the other, that have served to ascertain and publicize the legitimacy of the work done. In this way we have added our efforts to those of other Human Rights organisms in and outside the country.

A pilot project called "Mental Health and Community Initiative" was established when massive raids into shanty towns took place. This project was conducted by city monitors whose aim was to organise the young people of the shanty town so that they would become active, striving to better their own mental health conditions.

The work done by the Foundation was looked upon as the result of interdisciplinary actions; the protection, defense and reparation of childhood at risk had to consider that the child develops as a whole, as a totality. Therefore, interdisciplinary action is a necessary condition for the coordinated and integrated help of the minors. It was not easy to establish this principle from the very start, but it developed gradually, implementing it thanks to the resources received for the different areas and programs.

On the other hand, the model was bettered thanks to the experience undergone, learning through trial and error. At the beginning, due to our inexperience and the lack of support - economic, social, psychological and ethical the people requiring aid had, our job was reduced to giving them the help needed.

From 1985 qualitative changes were produced in the model giving it an educational emphasis, so that the families could obtain their own resources and develop their capacities. Assistance is focussed from a collective as well as from a personal perspective, both by the workers as well as by the people benefitted, and in this way a work strategy is produced, the basis of an integral model.

In 1991 when the government of transition to democracy comes to power, our work suffers a transformation because we think that the new government will take over the bio, psico and social aid that we have been offering for years. Thus, we close the home, we put an end to the Physical Health Program and we devote more time to the educational development of the returned minor. The specific objectives suffer a change and are channelled through four programs: Psicosocial Aid, Community Action, Documents and Reports and Infrastructure. These programs are still running. PRAIS and the Reparation Law, sponsored by the government has allowed us to reduce the help we gave in the past.

Consequently, together with the National Office for the Returned, and on the basis of a project elaborated by the Foundation, called "Psicosocial Assistance to the Returned Minor" we have been working from December, 1991 to November, 1992 with the model already mentioned above.

The general project of 1992 rests on three sub-projects: Psicosocial Assistance, Extension connected to the defense, to the advance of, and to the divulging of the rights of the child and the adolescent at risk; and finally the Documents centre that works on the Reality of Childhood in Latin America.

When we think about our work in PIDEE we confirm that both situations, political repression and ill-treatment violate the healthy development and growth of the minor and of their families that suffer from it; this is validating violence as a mode of relationship. In this

context we have assigned the Extension Program as well as the publications of the Document Centre a very important role in the prevention and education of the ill-treated child, basing ourselves in a definition given by UNICEF, which says: "Ill-treatment is caused by an individual or by the society and it is necessary to admit that governmental, economic and social actions can be ways of ill-treating the child".