

URBAN II Evaluation

Project Case Study: "Drugs prevention – Porto Gondomar"



1.0 Goals

The project entitled “*Prevenir para não remediar – Programa de sensibilização nas áreas relacionadas com a Toxicoddependencia*” was carried out by the *Fundação para o Desenvolvimento Social do Porto* (FDSP) in collaboration with the *Fundação Portuguesa a Comunidade contra a Sida* (Portuguese foundation to combat AIDS) over the academic years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. This project was aimed at the following specific objectives under measure 5 “Drugs Prevention” within the URBAN II “Porto-Gondomar” programme:

- Promote the active participation of young people in actions aiming at healthy and fulfilling life styles;
- Facilitate access to information and to treatment programmes.

This is an integrated project focusing on drugs prevention, control and rehabilitation. The URBAN II “Porto – Gondomar” intervention zone was focussed on an area within the Campanha district, which was predominantly affected by drug addiction and drug trafficking. This problem was particularly serious in the neighbourhood of S. João de Deus, which has been described as a “hard psychotropic territory” by the project managers. Given the worrying effects that this situation may have in the area, in particular in the school community (students, parents and school-teachers), the project aimed at setting up a partnership with the *Fundação Portuguesa a Comunidade contra a Sida* (FPCS) with the following objectives:

- Promote the participation of young people in actions aiming at healthy and 'fulfilling behaviours';
- Disseminate useful information to the local communities as a whole and to the parents and school-teachers in particular about healthy and fulfilling behaviours;
- Support educational institutions in the identification of targeted measures to tackle drug addition and unhealthy behaviours in young people in this local community.

The total costs for the project amounted to 45.416 Euros, of which 31,791 Euros (approximately 70%) were provided by the ERDF.

The project was targeted to children and young people in the intervention area, in particular those who were at risk, as well as their parents and school-teachers responsible

for their education and well-being. The project focused on complementary services additional to the one's provided by the social services and educational institutions. In this context, the project was seen to “add value” to the existing offer in the following ways:

- In the light of the limited financial resources of schools in the intervention area, the project aimed to provide additional resources to explore new and alternative ways to complement the pedagogic work carried out within schools by teachers. Aims were to prevent children and young people from drug addiction and to raise awareness amongst them on the damaging consequences of risk practices.
- The project offered additional support to children and young people’s families, as well as to the teaching community in the schools located in the area mentioned above through training, recreational activities and awareness-raising activities. While the local services focused more on assisting drug addicts for their rehabilitation, the project concentrated on prevention measures targeting the local population more at risk (children and young people) in the environment where they were exposed at most (schools) with the close involvement of all interested parties (parents and teaching community).
- The activities undertaken under this project provided a common meeting point for parents, schoolteachers and young students to talk, discuss and work together on preventing drug addiction, making all people aware of the damaging effects of risky habits (VIH/AIDS, etc). In this way, the project provided a complementary way for parents, schoolteachers and young students to confront a sensitive issue in a relaxed and open manner contributing at the same time to improve intercommunity relationships and interfamily relationships.
- As a result, the project stimulated a more integrated and community approach than other local social services offered as it included the teaching community within the schools. It therefore recognised the key role played by the schools in this sensitive area and the needs to find new ways to come closer to children and young people to effectively prevent risky habits and reduce the risk to be exposed to such unhealthy dependencies.

2.0 Implementation

Under the overall responsibility of the FDSP, the *Fundação Portuguesa a Comunidade contra a Sida (FPCS)* managed the different activities carried out under the project in the following action lines:

(1) *Action 1: Coffee with Parents:* A total of 13 roundtables were organised over the academic years 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 around the topics of “Promotion of Health and Prevention of risky practices”. All roundtables with parents were organised by a multidisciplinary team of specialists in the fields of health and education and moderated by a community education workers (*animador*). Around 300 people, mostly parents, took part in these roundtables. As a result of the discussions held, a manual with key information gathered at the discussions was elaborated by the FPCS team.



(2) *Action 2: Play against HIV/AIDS:* With the support of other local community organisations, a competition entitled “*Brincar contra a SIDA*” (Play against HIV/AIDS) was launched, open to educational institutions from pre-school up to compulsory education levels. This competition aimed to develop recreational activities and games that provide information and raise awareness on the problems surrounding drug addiction. Around 7 schools covering a total of 2,000 children and young people were entitled to take part in this action through the development of 8 games and recreational activities. An event was organised in which the selected games and recreational activities were tested and the prizes were handed over to the selected schools.

(3) *Action 3: “Inter-Pares” Programme:* This action was carried out with the collaboration of volunteer university students that took part in training activities promoting young people’s personal and social skills and abilities to improve healthy lifestyles and reduce their exposure to risky and unhealthy conducts related to alcoholism, drug additions, etc.



One of the success factors of the implementation of this project was that it explored alternative ways to promote awareness raising against drug addiction and other risky and unhealthy habits (alcoholism, etc) in children and young people.

3.0 Results and Impact

The selected project has contributed to important direct and indirect “social and immaterial effects” that are difficult to quantify. On the whole, the project strategy conceived the family

and school's environments as a strong source of support for developing children and young people, providing close relationships, strong parenting skills, good communication, and modelling positive behaviours.

In this context, the following direct **outputs** realised by the project can be recorded:

- *Strengthened work in partnership (parcerias) in actions to prevent drug addiction:* the project stimulated local organisations to work together with schools, parents and children and young people, which added considerable value to existing social services on drug prevention. Around five preparatory activities were undertaken involving local actors from the very beginning. As a result, five schools took part in the activities organised by the project.
- *Reinforced awareness of the negative effects of drug addiction and addiction to other substances for health:* Through the development of training, recreational and dissemination activities, the project concentrated all efforts in making children and young students in the participating five schools aware of the damaging consequences of drug consumption and addiction for their health, etc. Approximately 200 students directly took part in the different activities alongside 175 other participants (parents, teaching community).

As most noticeable **results** achieved by the project, the following ones are to be noted:

- *More tools available for families and parents to prevent drug addiction in children and young people* in the Porto area covered by this project. As a result, the project has provided parents and schools additional tools to better identify those children and young people who are most vulnerable to substance abuse, and develop strategies to diminish their risk. The project has therefore contributed to reduce the exposure risk of children and young people to entering into drug addiction and/or other substances' addiction, in particular those who are not exposed to positive family influences or positive parenting roles.
- *Improved knowledge and awareness of the negative effects of drug consumption:* The project has promoted healthy behaviours for all family members showing a promising potential for those at risk. Parents and school teachers have become aware that the likelihood of their children in engaging in risky behaviours can be reduced by promoting clear messages of the importance of healthy behaviours.
- *A reinforced self-esteem and self-confidence of children, young people, parents and the teaching community:* the sense of hopefulness about the future and the attractiveness

of drug consumption by children and young people have been tackled by the project by means of promoting their active participation in local community activities alongside their parents and schoolteachers. The project has also enabled parents, children and young people to communicate with each other about their habits. Children and young people that have positive relationships with their parents are less likely to engage in various risk behaviours. At the same time, the project managed to empower parents and the teaching community valorising them in their personal and social relationships with their children and young students.

- *Improved inter- and intra- family relationships:* By talking openly to their children and taking steps to discuss these behaviours with them, parents have been aware of their role in helping prevent certain risk behaviours. In this context, family members taking part in the project activities experienced a quality improvement in inter- and intra family relations. This was achieved by means of setting up a common meeting point for children, young people, parents and the teaching community and the use of different ways to deal with sensitive issues through the recreational activities carried out by the project. As a result, the project also contributed to reducing personal conflicts within the families and between families (parents and students) with the teaching community, in particular those related to the risk of drug addiction and the addiction to other substances.

4.0 Identified Good Practice

The project represents a case of good practice among the projects undertaken under the “social pillar” of the Porto-Gondomar programme. Alongside the main results and impacts achieved by the project detailed above, the following aspects are to be noted:

- The project illustrates the application on the ground of the URBAN II “Porto-Gondomar”’s **intervention logic: to work WITH the local population** rather than to work FOR the local population. The selected project shows how the programme’s intervention logic has worked in practice at project level. The targeted population (students, parents and teaching community) has been empowered by means of being “leading actors” rather than “subjects” in the implementation of the project activities.
- The working of the **URBAN II partnership model** at project level, involving local authorities, schools and interested individuals (families and students ranging from primary to secondary compulsory school-levels). Applying this partnership model is easier said than done, when working with the populations most directly concerned with

prevention of drug addiction: schools, families and children in the most affected neighbourhoods.

- A success factor of this project was the **multidisciplinary profile of the team** involved in the management and implementation of the project (educational workers, voluntary university students, psychologists, etc) alongside the local coordinator in Porto. The composition of the project team seemed to be in line with the complex and sensitive needs and weaknesses identified related to the prevention of drug addiction and other unhealthy and risky habits. Furthermore, the project team reflects the integral and joint strategy embedded in the project (promoting drug addiction by means of working together with the teaching community, parents and children and young people through training, recreational and dissemination activities).