WORLD LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE
CLUB DE MADRID

The Shared Societies Project:
Leadership for Dialogue, Diversity and Social Cohesion

Building a world safe for difference

Replicable example of practice

Commitment IV

Ensure the legal framework protects the rights of the individual and prohibits discrimination based on ethnic, religious, gender or cultural difference.

Suggested Approach:

- Introduce programmes of affirmative action that include the equipping of members of groups, disadvantaged and discriminated against, with the skills necessary to function confidently in work and other social and economic contexts.

APOI-Social-Community Intervention Project with Immigrant People

Country: Spain

Background

- This project is a response to the arrival in Madrid in recent years of large numbers of Roma families from Eastern European countries, mainly Romanians and Bulgarians who were looking for places to settle more favourable than those they left behind, both economically and in terms of discrimination.
- Since 2007, Romanians have become the major immigrant group in the Madrid region. It has quadrupled since 2003 and the Bulgarian population has doubled its number.
- Among the Romanian and Bulgarian migrants there are significant numbers from the Roma community,
- This group faces multiple marginalization not alone because they are migrants, but because their life experience and lifestyle are very different from the community in which they are now living and they have difficulty adapting. Many come from rural areas where they have no experience of a big city and even of amenities such as electricity.
- They are less welcome than other migrants because their lifestyle is so different and this leads to disapproval and distrust and a demand that are moved away from the rest of the population.
- Begging in the street is common among the families, often involving children, but it is forbidden in Madrid.

- The families have no knowledge of resources available and need special social care which not only covers emergency shelter but provides social support, education and social care to children as well as job search training.

Goals

- Develop basic reception services and provide total comprehensive assistance for immigrant families, in situation of vulnerability and social risk, mainly coming from Eastern European semi-nomadic or itinerant ethnic minorities (e.g.Roma).
- Faciliate their general integration while ensuring non-discrimination in access to public services.
- Improve health and hygiene standards.
- The project is specially focused on the protection and education of minors, as well as the total eradication of child begging and enrolment in school.
- Specific objectives are:
    - Providing basic services (accommodation, maintenance payments, transportation, medication)
    - Supporting access to housing and work.
    - Educating in personal care and daily responsibilities and developing skills to be able to adapt to life in the city of Madrid.
    - Schooling for children.
    - Facilitating access to services and regular resources

Method

- In 1999 ACCEM, a nationwide NGO, established the project ACUMA jointly with the Red Cross to work with the Roma population in one area. Red Cross was to look after health and ACCEM would focus on education and child caref.
- In 2000 the ACUMA Project became APOI (in Romany, “Urgent”) to provide integrated services through an initial cooperation agreement between IMSERSO (Secretaria de Estado de Emigracion e Inmigración/National Institute for Migrations and Social Services), the Community of Madrid and the Madrid City Council, signed on November 7, 2000. The Madrid City Council assumed responsibility for management and monitoring and provides the funding.
- The APOI Project has expanded its work since 2009, welcoming immigrant families who are in urgent needs and risk of social exclusion, regardless of their place of origin. From January to April 2009, along with families from Romania and Bulgaria, families from other countries such as Mexico, Ecuador, Uganda, Nigeria, Russia or the Dominican Republic have been also received. To reflect this wider range of clients the name was changed.

- At first APOI worked with the families were they lived in shanty dwellings. But the conditions were very bad and it was difficult to introduce new personal and social skills in areas such as hygiene and education,
- The public authorities wanted to clean up the site and in the process a child was injured by a lorry and taken to hospital. Most of the community encamped outside the hospital and there were many complaints from the rest of the population.
- This fortuitous circumstance led to a change of approach and, as an immediate response to the situation at the hospital, temporary emergency accommodation was provided on the outskirts of the city. From then on the programme of social care and training was provided for families in the sheltered accommodation.
- The Project has two sites where families are housed in small temporary houses with their own kitchen and bathroom and there are also communal facilities for education and social interaction
- The project also has 3 apartments in the city where families can move when they are ready and are financially independent. These families are offered ongoing monitoring and support.
- There is no set period that a person stays as it is recognised that long term help is necessary. Families usually stay about 2 years.
- People are occasionally asked to leave if their behaviour is seen as disruptive but they are free to ask to come back and the situation will be reviewed with them.
- The Project can accommodate 52 families at one time.
- Each specific objective is achieved through a series of activities as follows:
- Provision of basic services:
    - Assistance with formalities for civil registration.
    - Financial support for food, transportation card and medication if necessary.
- Development of personal and social skills:
    - Hygiene and personal care.
    - Language and basic literacy.
    - Nutrition
    - Child care
    - Family planning.
    - Home management
    - Motivation for work and introduction to working practices
    - Using public services to find for example, employment and housing.
- Schooling for children:
    - Initial introduction to education in shelter

  - Introduction to normal education system

- Encouragement of parental involvement in children's education. There are 37 staff for both shelters and also to support those living in the Project's apartments. They are from Spanish, Roma, Roumanian and Bulgarian backgrounds as so understand the cultural background of the families.
- The Project realises that there is a pressure not to change as well as a desire to change.
- The basic approach is that the families are helped to find their own solutions to problems and to do things for themselves.
- Everyone has to be appreciated as an individual – there is not a standard approach that can be taken to everyone. They have to be listened to and can not just be told what to do.
- The key to helping the families is the personal link that the staffs establishes with them. At the same time it is important for staff to be aware of the limits of their relationships. They ar not a brother or a sister.
- The Project believes that the problems are not in the people but in the process that they find themselves in of trying to integrate in a new society.
- The Project has changed its approach in the light of experience. For example they originally moved families from one shelter to the other as their social skills increased but they have realised that it works well to mix new families and those who have been with the Project for some time as the new families want to emulate the others.
- On the other hand originally the children all went to one school but now they find it more helpful to mix them with other children.
- Because so many people are living together there are conflicts and the families also have to learn how to manage inter-personal tensions to avoid conflict.

Impact

- The Project has supported 2000 families since its inception and research indicates an 80% success rate. The Project has facilitated the inclusion of Romanian and Bulgarian families into the wider community.
- All children are enrolled in schools and have access to books and nutrition.
- All children receive the same immunization against disease as other children.
- Child begging has almost ceased in 3 years.
- All families have been registered and are entitled to all public services.

Enabling conditions

- There was a strong public demand that the problem of itinerants should be tackled.
- There was particular concern about the children of itinerant families.
- The level of need among the itinerant families was very high
- From 2000 there was a coordinated approach by national regional and municipal government.
- The Project's existence has been confirmed by its inclusion in the first and second Madrid Plan of Social and Intercultural Coexistence produced by the Municipality.

Contact / Referentes for further information

Paula de la Rocha (ACCEM), Tel: +34 91.532.74.79 madrid@accem.es