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MUSIC AND ART PROGRAM FOR ADOLESCENTS AROUND COLOMBIA

1. Ideas

a. Analysis of the issue

In Colombia there is a high number of adolescents between 12 and 17 years old, who are left without parents, an actually is very problematic to accommodate them in new homes because the adoption is more frequent for babies and small children.

This group of children, under the responsibility of *Bienestar Familiar* (the welfare institution of Colombia) are left in homes of families who receive financial aid from this entity in exchange for taking them or in institutions with bigger number of children that live there permanently, along with some staff and teachers. In most cases, these foster-families don't have any or little special education about children, adolescents and their development, and these turns out to be a problem for the family and the child, the later may end up feeling homeless, without a purpose or identity, so they are in greater risk of being involved in violent gangs or illegal activities.

However, his children are covered in their "material needs", they are provided overall with enough food, comfortable sleeping arrangements, clean clothes and schooling by the government, but in the development of any child, the relatives that are closer help them built the structures and develop of tools for their psychological and emotional welfare in their adult lives and since children - even adolescents- learn thru example, the children from *Bienestar Familiar*, even with food and beds at their disposal, have intangible voids, "emotional needs", that are considerably more difficult to fill than the essential ones, the "material ones".

They learn mostly thru their example, so, any person living with an adolescent is an important influence, and is inconceivable that this particular group of children - as a result of neglect, death or violence- are left with that needs unresolved, that, **if left like that, translates later in problems as a young adult, continuing the vicious cycle that brings more children to the hands of welfare.**

b. Description of the idea

As a **pilot** of a much more ambitious program that would include the adolescents from every region of the country- we concentrate on the **municipality of Cundinamarca**, a part of the *region Andina*, which includes the capital city of Bogotá.

The idea is to approach two basic problems of the adolescents (between 12 and 17 years old) that are staying in foster care of the government (Bienestar Familiar) in Bogotá: one is their need for affection, love and sense of belonging somewhere and the second is their need for a second chance to have a productive and well-balanced life in society, in general to be included in society.

We would like to create a Music and Arts program that includes the possibility of staying for a period of time in a friendly environment: *family houses* in smaller towns near the main city who are subsidized by “Bienestar Familiar”, and had a previous orientation to all the members of the families. The orientation would be *open to all the members of the town*, addressing the essentials about development **psychology, leadership, social values, methods for the resolution of conflicts, good practices in food management and optimization of home resources**, expecting that the inhabitants of the town would receive some of the benefits.

This program in these smaller towns will allow these adolescents to continue their education and to help them build stronger connection to arts, music and other people, thus helping build a stronger self-esteem.

Additionally the idea consider the inclusion of some native teenagers in the courses of the program, this will help to establish bonds between these two groups of adolescents and provide a rich opportunity for young population of the towns.

c. Alternative Ideas

While we were talking as a group, different solutions where discuss when the subject of adolescents in the custody of the government came up. The original idea for the project was to create music programs in the institutions were the

adolescents are currently living, but, the opposing party/stakeholder questioned if all the young people would be attracted by the idea of playing an instrument (taking in consideration that the emotional condition of a child in government care is different from that of a child living with a family). Later on, it was decided that there would be a number of other programs related to the arts; sculpture, dancing group or theater, so that the project could be appealing to more adolescents.

When the subject of the context in which the adolescents were raised (when in custody of the government), an idea came up. Taking advantage of the better emotional conditions a rural context may bring to the life of a child, exchange to a rural house would be possible for those kids with a better behavior, as an addition to the initial and later reformed idea.

2. Intervention

a. The key methodology

The first and most important step is to make contact with the **community and relevant authorities** of the town where the exchange will be made, to get approval and support, or in the worst case, to defend the project. Then, the project will continue as follows:

- **Locate the voluntary families that would host the adolescents in the small town selected.** These families will have an interview in which they will be informed of the program and the personal history of the teenagers enrolled. Then they will receive instructions, advice and capacitation for dealing and living with adolescents.
- **Locating the place where the adolescents will study.** This place, must be suitable for young people to practice their tasks of music and arts (theater, painting, dance, etc.).
- **Select and hire the teachers/instructors** trained in art or music and with emphasis in adolescent pedagogy.
- **Manage all necessary financial resources** (for instruments, tools, logistics sites, etc.) with government authorities, foundations, volunteers and NGOs
- **Conduct a community outreach meeting** through the 'Boards of Community Action' (Juntas de Acción Comunal), where they will divulge the project and its benefits, to the young people that come to the town and the locals.
- **Selection of the adolescents** who are going to be part of the project:

These must meet the following requirements:

- Having between 12 and 17 years old.
- Do not have committed any crime or disciplinary offense.
- Do not currently use drugs.
- Actually wanting to participate in the program.

Young people who meet these requirements and who volunteer to be part of the project, pass to be evaluated by a psychologist's of Bienestar Familiar. After that, the list of those selected will be finalized, then they will choose in which areas of music and art they are interested in.

b. **The most critical obstacles**

- We need to emphasize to the groups of adolescent that will be a part of the program, that we expect greater things from them, that we don't see them as problems we need to solve, as it's actually seen. This is really hard because everyone -even themselves, **hadn't always expected something great about their future.**
- The **acceptance from the natives**, especially conservative/traditional adults and older people because of their fear to the city's bad habits, they will be worried about bad influences for the kids and teenagers, and a possible rise of delinquency in the town. And as a consequence could be a problem to find enough houses to accommodate the kids.
- **Insufficient government funding**, because government policies are not usually interested in subjects such as music and arts, only in things that could give a direct profit. Also the range of the project, because at the beginning this project will take place only with few adolescents.

c. **Most relevant stakeholders**

The principal stakeholders to this case are the teenagers (12-17 years old) of the Bienestar Familiar (the beneficiaries) and the teenagers of the town, the teachers of music and arts, the entity Bienestar Familiar, the government, community, private entities.

Some allies could be the teachers and leaders from music and arts academies like the Conservatory of music of the National University, also known singers and other artists who may be interested in promote such program.

Families that will receive the adolescents in their homes are a huge stakeholders of the project, since they are the young people closest contact

while the exchange takes place. The inhabitants of the town are also stakeholders.

3. Implementation

a. How to win supporters?

Winning supporters may be -as is common with social driven projects- a difficult task. In our case, for this project, we have a not-so-narrow spectrum of possible supporters since it can be seen as an Arts/Culture program or a Social Development program.

We could bring as examples of successful social ventures, programs easily relatable with the Colombian context like the *Sistema Nacional de Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela*, in order to show the possibilities of our own project, or, as a nearer example, the *Red de Escuelas de Música de Medellín*, which is a strong network that is not entirely “socially driven”, but has a great and positive social impact to unite the young people -no matter their social-economic state- in the music education.

Winning supporters will also include, in our case, the population of the town where the exchange will take place, we absolutely need their support to have a successful result of the project. In their case, we will need to emphasize the harmlessness of the group of adolescents participating in the program, and give them tools of intervention (direct communication with the authorities or some minor veto powers) if any doubts or worries arises during the exchange.

b. Efforts and resources

We need the **cooperation of the governorship of Cundinamarca** (the municipality near the city of Bogotá)

We expect the **sufficient amount of money** to create/build/refurbish our Music and Arts Centers, this money should come from different stakeholders (the government, donations of private entities, *famous singers*)

We require a very strong **communication between the different communities** to coordinate the exchanges and execute the mobility programs. We also require families who are willing to help and could accommodate the students in their homes.

We expect **teachers** trained in arts and music, and money to support them as well. Also the National University could help provide ongoing **training for teachers.**

c. **Estimated time to accomplishment**

In this kind of processes focused on cultural education, a long period of time is required to see results, and adding the time required to construct the network, to establish the system and to obtain the support of stakeholders. We could only guess a range of time, guessing the estimated time to finish the project, with the best luck and everything working great, and comparing it with to the case in which we had no good luck and the delays are showing up in every step.

- Best time: 5 years to accomplishment
- Worst time: 10 years to accomplishment
- Approx. time = (best + worst) / 2 = 7.5 years to accomplishment.

4. **Impact**

a. **The best measure of success, potential for replication and scaling**

As discuss in class, the indicators for properly measuring social innovative projects or programs are extremely hard to find. Social results need more time to be noticed than sales/profitable results, and, the results that are our target, involve intangible changes, emotional changes which are subjective and that varies from one person to the order. However, we have the advantage of working with adolescents under the care of the government system, so, they are properly accounted for in official statistics that range from nutrition status to rates of criminal offences.

In the government statistics, there are three indicators that can be a useful to best measure the success (and the potential) of the project:

- Rate of participation in arts/cultural groups,
- Rate of adolescents continuing their education in a college level
- Rate of criminal offences done by minors.

The ideal result of these three statistics would be a lower criminal rate, and a growth in the other two. If the later results are achieved and continued, we would be able to show the potential of scaling the project in a medium term. The replicability potential of the projects, is restricted by the context in which the replicated project would be implemented; the project relies on the knowledge of the manners and values of the rural people of Colombia, and so, we do not conceive possible a replica in a place where these qualities do not exist - meaning outside the country.

b. **Unintended side-effects**

- One side-effect may be a change of behavior, values and habits of the town teenagers and the villagers. These changes could be *positive or negative*.
- *Adolescents leaving in the middle of the program*, taking away the opportunity for others to be a part until a new group is formed.
- An unintended side effect could be that the two groups of adolescents cannot be integrated and *remain an excluded group* (Native and new group of teenagers).
- One side effect would be the adolescent's *no adaption to the new environment*, resulting in rebellious acts, even some criminal offences during the exchange, thus giving a bad recognition to the program for future groups.

c. **Indirect effects**

The indirect effects are wide and really hard to relate with a specific event or social program, but we expect that the future effects of our project will transcend the indicator of unemployment, criminality, progress, equity, etc.

We expect to change the **cultural view** and the actual conception of the teenager who is in a welfare program, so they are viewed as young adults who are in a scholarship in music and arts, and actually had a possibility of a great future, so society can expect great things from them.

The possible detriments of the project could be host families getting bored with the adolescents since there are “outsiders” and there is a chance that they will not get along with the other members of the family, thus resulting in the shutting-down of the project in that town.

The project could be considered “not sustainable” financially because the group of teens is small, and these adolescents do not produce money, however, as we expect to expand the regions in which the project takes place, we hoped this wouldn't mean the total end of the program.

Scale 7.