

United Nations Innovation Fair 2011 - Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in education

Terre des Hommes International Federation

Name of the approach

- 1. Bringing education to groups either marginalized or living in hard-to-reach locations**
- 2. Meaningful education – for life and the world of work**

Description and implementation methodologies

More than 20% of the Terre des Hommes development projects relate directly to education and many more are indirectly connected to this field. One of the main axis of the Terre des Hommes work is to bring educational opportunities to children who are unable to attend regular school programmes. Terre des Hommes is therefore working on facilitation of education to marginalized groups by special projects like education for working children in mines, as the "Bridge School Project" in India. Tent schools established near the mines enable education to children who have never seen a school and offer them new perspectives for life.

A similar project of education for street children is run in Zimbabwe where many children have lost their parents through HIV / AIDS. In one of the largest cities of the country, Terre des Hommes supports a project in favour of a growing number of street children. Without perspective, they are exposed to the danger of criminality and exploitation. The project offers them a work perspective by an alternative school centre that provides practical and technical skills.

Terre des Hommes is keen to provide educational opportunities of relevance which have a concrete impact on children's successful integration into their communities. An outstanding approach in education for marginalized groups and populations in rural and hard-to-reach locations is the concept "Iskay Yachay". In Quechua language it means "Double knowledge" and provides both modern education and traditional knowledge to indigenous populations in the Andes. It is an example of an education project that is seeking to reach children in the language they understand and with direct relevance to their environment.

This innovative education project for indigenous people at the same time generates quality education. Practical and theoretic parts are included in the school program. For instance, a garden is cultivated outside the school where traditional knowledge is directly applied in practice. Children also learn traditional dance or music, and they are taught both in the official language as in their indigenous mother tongue.

What is innovative about this approach

This approach endeavours to bring educational opportunities to communities which are hard to reach and unable to connect to the official educational system.

The aspect of both modern and traditional knowledge is well adapted to the real challenges of life young people face in the life of work. Meaningful education means also to focus on learning material and issues that really concern their future life and are not merely imported education models from other societies. In rural locations, traditional agriculture knowledge for instance is a vital need for populations to survive, and at the same time, with modern education, children are prepared to interact with the world of tomorrow.

Evidence of results and impact

Improvement of social cohesion, in particular between generations, is a proven impact of the methodology. Usual school models may create tensions between generations, whereas the “double” approach creates continuity and understanding between them. In general, children are leaving rural areas to find work in the cities with what they have learned at school, and often without finding a job, whereas the elder generation experience the frustration to lose bonds with young people and not to be able to transfer the precious traditional knowledge they have learned through generations.

The concept of the “double” approach of school combines in an effective way modern education and traditional “savoir-faire” like regional agriculture knowledge, traditional rituals, cooking, handicraft, as well as the indigenous language. This approach has also generated a new curricula at a nearby University that trains teachers. University education modules in “Intercultural Sensitivity” are taught to future teachers so as to promote understanding and respect between cultures and enable them to provide children with what they will really need in the world of work. Thus marginalized populations get a chance to enter in the world of work and out of poverty through appropriate school curricula.

Cost associated with the development and implementation of the activity

The above-mentioned educational approaches show to be cost-effective. Terre des Hommes works in partnership with local organisations. Its financial support to the different projects varies between EUR 36'000 and EUR 460'000. The rest of the project costs are matched by other sources of funding.

Contact information

Terre des Hommes International Federation
31, chemin Frank-Thomas
CH- 1223 Cologny/Geneva
tel +41 22 736 33 72
e-mail: info@terredeshommes.org