

**Hermes programme for conflict management at school
Bogotá Chamber of Commerce, Colombia**

Introduction

Violence at school can be defined as any process that violates or affects the physical, social or psychological integrity of a person or group within the framework of school. Specific expressions of violence at school can vary widely, and are in some way linked to the idiosyncrasies of each individual society. The most widespread forms of violence are: classroom disruption, discipline problems (conflict between teachers and pupils), abuse between pupils (bullying), vandalism and physical damage, physical violence (aggression, extortion), and sexual harassment.¹

Studies by the Organisation of Ibero-American States for Latin America (OEI),² state that 22.9% of students say they have been verbally abused by their peers, 15.6% say they have been robbed, and even more alarmingly, 9.6% report having been physically assaulted. That is to say, more than 50% of Latin American students have suffered some form of direct aggression.³ Abuse of teaching staff is also alarming. Nearly 20% of teachers have experienced some form of violence and 2.3% say they have been a target for aggression, although there are many teachers who resort to intimidation and other abusive action in order to exert their power and authority.⁴

In Bogotá in particular, in 2006: "One in every two students had been robbed at school (56%) and one in three had suffered beatings and physical abuse from their peers on school property (32%). In the latter group, 4,330 stated they had required medical attention following the attack, and 2,580 said they were threatened by an armed assailant. As for the victims, one in every two said they had insulted one of their peers the year before (46%), and one in three said they had been offensive to or had beaten another of their peers (32%)."⁵

Violence at school yet another expression of the exclusion and segregation, an element that must be viewed in context as an unfortunate form of response to this situation, one that generates enormous frustration, aggression and, ultimately, violence. Violence is frequently linked to ethnic, economic, social, political and cultural discrimination, showing that high levels of inequality also deeply affect these age groups.⁶

Other factors may also help explain the aggressive nature of children and adolescents, and these include: domestic violence and abuse; poor parental control; poor academic performance; and easy access to weapons. All of these have inherent implications on poorly developed moral values and social attitudes. Similarly, young people receive messages from various media that show violence as the way to deal with conflict and difference; this provides another factor that weighs heavily upon student behaviour. As a result, school students are provided with a world view of a world that does not exist in

¹ Aznar, 2007.

² Report entitled "Preocupación de la violencia y maltrato en escuelas de América Latina"

³ Organization of Ibero-American States, 2007.

⁴ Cabezas, 2008.

⁵ De Zubiría, 2008.

⁶ ECLAC, 2008c.

reality, but these children adapt and develop in new ways until violence finally becomes a way of life.⁷

Given this situation, there is no doubt that the educational system can play a fundamental role in conflict prevention, for school is the only place other than their homes that can help shape them as individuals. Children can be taught to use dialogue rather than aggression as a line of defence through the teaching of new attitudes and values such as tolerance and acceptance of diversity.

The Hermes programme for conflict management -an initiative of the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce that is implemented in Bogotá and several surrounding municipalities in the department of Cundinamarca - aims precisely to encourage dialogue and tolerance. This is approached as a collective challenge for social change working out of primary nuclei such as schools and having a significant impact on family, social and cultural dynamics. The programme aims for cultural transformation, preparing people to approach any conflict in a peaceful manner. It works on the basis of education playing a fundamental role in providing openings for discussion of the world view of the students and the wider meaning of conflict for human beings.

Hermes is a model that works with the whole educational community. It provides a series of teaching tools to transform conflicts through a return to dialogue and agreement in an atmosphere where respect for the other and tolerance of difference can become a reality. Thus, the programme seeks to improve the quality of life of young people and the educational community, training school leaders, strengthening their personal and social skills and stimulating creativity in using conflict situations to transform the school environment.

This is an innovatory project that breaks with the traditional model of education, and the methodology applied means the main actors in conflict resolution between peers, students and teachers are community members trained to work as mediators. This model confirms that it is essential to avoid social isolation of young people, including them in the wider dynamics, above all in terms of participation and the exercising of their rights, from a citizen perspective. Thus it is not enough to work for the empowerment of young people, if this is not approached from an integrated perspective thinking in terms of the construction of citizenship.⁸

Due to its extraordinary success and innovatory perspective, the Hermes programme for conflict management at school took the second prize in the "Experiences in Social Innovation" competition organised by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) with the support of the WK Kellogg Foundation.

Violence at school: A violation of the rights of the child

Many of the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are violated by acts of violence at school. Section 2 of Article 2 says that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members." Where violence occurs in school, the child who suffers is not receiving due protection and are suffering

⁷ McAlister, 2000.

⁸ United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2005.

discrimination and punishment. Similarly, Article 19 states that “States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation; characteristics that are clearly present in violence at school.” And last, but by no means least, violence at school, often reaches levels that result in drop-out, contravening the right to education of every child and adolescent as stated in Article 28 of the Convention.

In view of the above, the model proposed by the Hermes programme for the management of violence at school can be seen as an expression of Article 12 which states that children have the right to be heard - and it is precisely this point that forms the key to the proposed mediation process.

Colombian Context

In recent years Colombia has achieved significant economic growth becoming one of the most dynamic economies of South America. The economy has been expanding since 2001, reaching a peak in 2007 (with growth of 7.5%). In 2008, following the tendency in many other countries, growth was limited to only 2.5%. In view of the worldwide recession, the Banco de la República has estimated growth of between 1% and 3% for 2009.⁹

Although the unemployment rate in Colombia has fallen from 17.3% in 2000 to 11.5% in 2008, it is still the highest in South America, exceeding the regional average of 7.5%.¹⁰

According to information on poverty and extreme poverty available for Colombia, the former has fallen from 54.9% in 1999 to 46.8% in 2005 and extreme poverty from 26.8% to 20.2% in the same period. However, this reduction has been lower than that of Latin America and the Caribbean on the whole, which has achieved a reduction of poverty from 43.8% in 1999 to 39.7% and of serious poverty from 18.5% to 15.5%.¹¹ Approximately 41.5% of the Colombian population are children, of whom 38.9% live in poverty and 17.5% in extreme poverty.¹²

It is also important to remember that Colombia is fighting a civil war that has led to extensive forced displacements, with official figures stating there were 2.8 million internally displaced at the end of 2008,¹³ a figure that accounts for 5% of the Colombian population - the second largest figure in the world.¹⁴ According to information from UNICEF in Colombia, 55% of the displaced are less than 18 years old. Bogotá has received 15% of all people displaced in the country in the 2000 to 2006 period.¹⁵

History of the programme

In 1997, the Chamber of Commerce promoted and validated a project known as “Ariadna – tejiendo los hilos de la paz” (Ariadne – weaving the fabric of peace) with the

⁹ Junta Directiva del Banco de la República (2009)

¹⁰ECLAC / ILO. Crisis and the labour market (2009)

¹¹ ECLAC, 2008e

¹² UNICEF, Colombia.

¹³ UNHCR, 2009

¹⁴ Ibañez, A.M., Velásquez, A., 2009

¹⁵ Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional, Colombia, 2007

support of the Inter-American Development Bank. The project methodology and conceptual framework sought to approach the issue of interpersonal conflict between young people and generate transformation processes in order to change attitudes and responses. The target group were children aged between 11 and 18 years old who were to become the protagonists of the programme. In January 2001 the project was rolled out in 10 educational institutions in poorer areas of the city and surrounding zones.¹⁶ It was then extended to 47 State schools, with 687 school conciliators, 582 youth representatives on the school conciliation service and 4,228 members of the educational community (parents, senior management, teachers and students) made aware of the availability of school conciliation services. In 2006, an agreement was signed with the Bogotá Education Department, meaning the programme could be expanded and integrated into public policy in the district.

This model endorsed the leadership capacity of young students as school conciliators and foregrounded conciliation as the correct response to a counterculture permeated by values of aggression, threat and verbal and physical violence as a means of conflict resolution. In the course of unrolling the programme those involved underwent a process of internal reflection and feedback from community dynamics. This led to deeper analysis of the diversity of conflict and the natural modes of conflict resolution that were seen as legitimate in each community. This inherent variation leads to calls for a new methodology, better able to respond to the more specific characteristics of each group. The outcome of this process was the "Hermes programme for conflict management at school" named after the Greek god of negotiation.

This new model included teachers, senior management and parents, focussing on emotional intelligence as a way to tackle conflict. This emotional intelligence perspective was also used to identify and develop the skills and competencies needed for conflict resolution.

Programme objective

The objective of the Hermes programme is to offer members of the educational community a series of pedagogical tools with which to transform conflicts. These work to reintroduce dialogue and agreement in an atmosphere of mutual respect where tolerance is a pervasive value.

Methodological model

The programme begins with a preliminary discussion of context and characterisation on the basis of relationships. Work is undertaken to define the relationship dynamics of the educational community and the meanings constructed around conflicts, then a training plan is drawn up for conflict administration and management in the school context. Each educational institution works on the basis of its own understanding and interpretation of relationships. Reflective and participatory opportunities are then provided for training with the various constituent members of the educational community, in an effort to develop the skills and tools necessary for conflict management in the educational contexts. Administrative mechanisms for conflict transformation are established: a Conflict Transformation Board is appointed to approach any conflict amongst the various members of the educational community and alliances are made with the Coexistence

¹⁶ The area of Cazucá –Soacha and area (19) of Ciudad Bolívar- and the tenth area of Engativá

Committee. Finally, attempts are made to achieve the agreement and participation of parents in support of the Conflict Transformation Board.

Once these elements are established and the programme is included on the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce Biennial Strategic Plan, the agreement phase begins:

- Contact is made with public education authorities both local and district or departmental.¹⁷
- A semi-structured interview is held with the main actors (senior management, teachers and students) of the institution where work is to be carried out, in order to: obtain details of the needs and specific characteristics of each of the educational institutions and the community; and evaluate the real potential for success at the implementation stage – an element that basically depends on the level of commitment to participation and support expressed by directors, teachers, students and parents.
- When this information has been gathered and a participation agreement has been drawn up, a feasibility study is undertaken including analysis of the characteristics of the local population and recognition of the context, coverage and internal organisation of institutions. This provides an evaluation of motivation levels for executing and sustaining the proposal.

Educational institutions are selected on the basis that they: provide secondary education for students aged between 11 and 17 years old - corresponding to grades 8 to 11; the school staff must be prepared to accompany the programme; the school must make an impact and have coverage in the area surrounding the school; the beneficiary population must correspond to socio-economic strata, 0 to 1 to 2 to 3 and; must be State schools.

These submissions are analysed by the programme team, who decide on implementation viability and success potential. This is followed by the Promotion and Dissemination Phase. This phase aims to spread the proposal socially in the educational community, using methodological strategies that respond to the interests and motivations of the actors involved. In this phase, the programme is presented to the students, teachers and senior management, the objectives and horizons are laid out and community consensus is sought on the appropriateness and viability of the scheme. Once collective acceptance has been achieved, leaders are identified to participate directly in the programme and constitute working groups. These are the Teachers and Guardians Group and the Student Group, both of whom participate in an active and ongoing manner as a support team in the process, promoting sustainability in the short-, medium- and long-term. The leaders are asked to make a statement of intent and commitment - elements which constitute minimal guarantees for the optimal development of the proposal.

This is followed by focussed intervention with the leader groups, developing the Conflict Recognition Phase where semi-structured workshops are used to provide openings for self reflection and collective reflection, stories are told to provide examples of the meanings systems behind conflict in daily actions and members are given an opportunity to clarify their perspective on the situation. These stories are used to construct a reading of institutional conflict particular to each individual context (neighbourhood, location, school, peer group, family). This phase allows for better understanding of the possibilities for transformation of a situation. The fact that young people themselves are

¹⁷ The Mayor's Office, the Education Department and the Local Education Authority (CADEL)

responsible for identifying these provides a first level of independence, making the young person aware that they can become an agent of change in their own situation and not just a passive recipient. Teacher tutors participate as observers during this phase.

Then comes, the Teacher Training Phase, where teachers are offered opportunities to build trust and acquire recognition of the importance of their role as teachers. They are encouraged to recognise the plurality of young people and understand that their forms of expression can offer possibilities for mutual enrichment and the construction of new points of reference for relationships. In this phase, teachers undergo a self-reflection process, where they redefine their role and connect with the situation faced by their students. They record their experiences and perceptions in documents known as "self-reference protocols."

Once these first levels of awareness raising have covered the role of the teacher and the dynamic of shared responsibility in relationships with students, the Student Training Phase begins. Here, the student tutor takes leadership of the intervention, while professionals in the Chamber of Commerce support the process with ongoing feedback. Methodological strategies agreed by all members of the group are put in place to support this. These are built on the basis of analysis carried out in the Conflict Recognition Phase that is consistent with the life experience of young people. These openings provide opportunities for dialogue, where emotions, experiences and details of daily life can be voiced. These are used to approach the underlying ethical principles and consensus is established on values that can provide meaning in the lives of each of the protagonists. This process allows for reflection on the responsibility of the School Conflict Manager, and encourages integration between Project actors sharing their different perspectives and areas of knowledge, broadening teacher outlook to understand the youth perspective and establishing more horizontal teacher-student relationships. Work is also undertaken on personal advancement with the young people, allowing them to develop skills and social competences in terms of peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution and personal growth. During this stage, emphasis is placed on structured work in workshops to develop emotional intelligence and moral principles.

This is followed by Training in Alternative means of Conflict Resolution. This phase introduces concepts and tools of alternative conflict resolution and an understanding of conflict from the transformation perspective. There is discussion of their personal views and the social function they play as conflict managers. This first level includes an introduction of approaches the many conflict management alternatives available to each institution. Then, depending on their willingness to adopt the various processes of conflict resolution, each of the trainee group decides whether or not to continue and become a member of the Conflict Management Board, confirming their participation in a group ceremony.

Once training is completed and they have stated their willingness to participate, the Specialisation Phase begins. Here collective analysis and evaluation of the particular requirements of the context are used to select the most appropriate conflict resolution method and technical training begins. Opportunities are also provided to review and revise the skills and knowledge already acquired using role-play style exercises, simulations and case studies. Techniques are taught for managing the deeds of commitment and, more especially, to engender awareness of the social responsibility borne by members of the Conflict Management Board as this mechanism increasingly becomes a social point of reference for the educational community. This phase is followed by the Certification Ceremony - a highly significant moment for both the groups and the institution, as this is when the young people and teachers make a public

commitment to become conflict managers and provide a public example of positive coexistence.

Once certified, each educational institution holds its own official launch of a Management Board inaugurated by its managers. This ceremony promotes the educational community the Board as the perfect channel for resolving of any conflict that may arise within the community, inviting members to abandon violence as a way of overcoming differences. The conflict boards and managers enter into their official capacity at this time.

And the programme does not end here. In the Continuity Phase alliances are formed between the Coexistence Committees or other school governance bodies and senior management, helping to endorse the permanence of the model. Meanwhile, the strengths and difficulties arising within the work lead to the development of a second level of specialisation, where managers increase their knowledge and empower their conflict resolution skills, improving their performance and strengthening fundamental elements of emotional intelligence and social and communication skills. In this phase, and following phases, managers must make this their own choices on conflict management and promote alternatives in the school environment, generating change in the institutional culture. In order for the programme to have a lasting impact, awareness-raising sessions must be held in the educational community to ensure that they recognize and legitimise the Management Board as the appropriate mechanism for resolving any conflict that may arise from day to day interaction. Definitions are also provided of the administrative aspects along with strategies for creating and administrating the Management Board.

Meanwhile, certified students are entitled to join the Red Nacional de Gestores y Conciliadores Escolares (RENACEG – National Network of School Managers and Conciliators). This allows them to extend their influence beyond the boundaries of their own school and to benefit children in other educational institutions. These 'Jornadas de Conciliación' (Conciliation Workshop Days) allow the students to broadcast information on alternatives for managing differences. One of the main objectives of the network is for the managers to see themselves as important players in the community, local and district forums. By exercising their rights, they can participate actively in training a new type of young person capable of proposing strategies that contribute to a healthy coexistence. The network gains ongoing inspiration through weekly meetings, where two leaders from each board share their experiences and make plans for their future undertakings as a network.

Many of the young people on the management boards are nearing the end of their secondary education, so the Chamber of Commerce supports educational institutions in training replacements. Hence the teachers and tutors work with the student managers to transfer their knowledge to a new group of conciliators, setting up a "replica group." This basic activity ensures the continuity and sustainability of the model through time. This method also mitigates against the mechanical copying of the same model, allowing for ongoing adaptation to the specific circumstances of each school at a given moment in time.

The programme began in January 2001, and is currently¹⁸ in place in 225 State centres at socioeconomic levels 0, 1, 2 and 3 in 19 areas of Bogotá and in Zipaquirá, Chía, Cajicá, Tenjo, Tabio, Sopó, Fusagasugá, Arbelaez and Subia - municipalities in the department of Cundinamarca.

¹⁸ April 2009

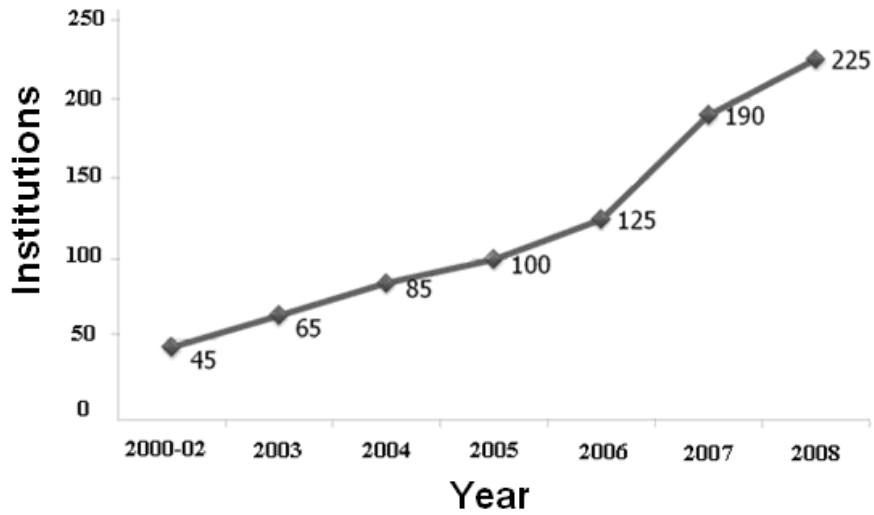
Impact and Outcome of the Programme

The most important impact is the consolidation of a conflict negotiation model with students and teachers as central actors in processes that operate on terms of respect for the skills and abilities of each individual in a way that is completely different from a disciplinary model based on the unquestioned authority of teachers or senior management. The model is built on flexible basis and can therefore accommodate the specific characteristics of each educational institution, its students, communities and time. It promotes reflection on the sources of conflict and works from a perspective of emotional intelligence rather than the imposition of rules. The replica group and tutor model means that continuity of the model is addressed from the outset with no need for intervention from the Chamber of Commerce. As a result, the Chamber has been able to multiply the model in a larger number of schools and the model has become independent of their ongoing presence. Another important outcome is that co-ordinated work with public education authorities on the district, municipal and departmental level has led them to look upon the Chamber as an important ally.

The programme has trained 20,826 mediators, and has impacted more than 220,000 people. A recent study by CIMAGROUP Market Research and Analysis showed that 74% of programme users classed general performance as between good and excellent, 93% of students who have used the Conflict Management Boards indicated they had achieved peaceful and effective conflict resolution, in 90% of cases the agreements reached by the conciliation board were fulfilled, and 84% of pupils state they would use the Boards to resolve any conflict. Some 56% now believe in conciliation as an effective method for conflict resolution and 100% of students and teachers at participating schools state that they are aware of the programme.

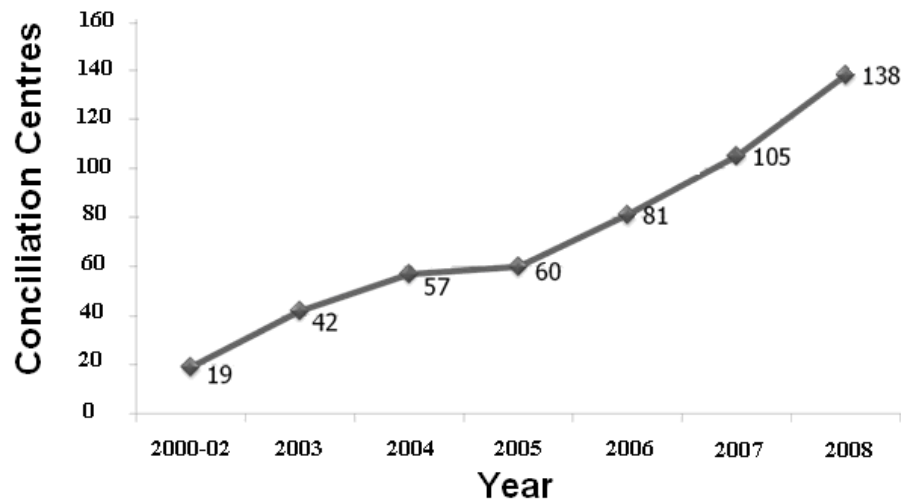
The good outcomes achieved have led to an enormous increase in the number of schools served (see Figure 1) and the number of active Centres and Boards (see Figure 2). It must be pointed out many more schools and have asked to be considered for the programme but budget restrictions have hampered this. Conciliation Workshop Days have been run by RENACEG members in an attempt to deal with this "unsatisfied demand." These meetings are held in schools where the programme is not operational, and network members work with students from other educational institutions to familiarise them with the experience and to develop peaceful conflict resolution models in their own schools.

Figure 1
Educational Institutions linked to the Hermes programme



Source: Presentation by the General Coordinator of the Hermes programme to the VIP Committee. Medellín, Colombia, November 2008.

Figure 2
Active School Conciliation Centres and Conflict Management Boards



Source: Presentation by the General Coordinator of the Hermes programme to the VIP Committee. Medellín, Colombia, November 2008.

One important contribution of this programme has been the identification of the most common causes of conflict within schools, an element that has contributed to the definition of possible solutions. These are theft, name calling – mostly pejorative, discrimination, preferential treatment, aggression and the lack of respect, amongst others. In RENACEG workshops, it has become clear that discrimination - understood as a lack of tolerance of difference on the basis of race, religion, economic status, sexual preference, fashion, music tastes, football, friendship groups, etc – is the cause of most incidents and is the underlying factor in most conflict situations. It has also become clear that students have a negative view of conflict, which is widely viewed as an element that

makes relationships more complex, stunts personality development and jeopardises security. The fact that they opt for aggression as a defence mechanism when conflict arises can frequently be seen as a direct outcome of a social context where a young person is forced to remain constantly alert, leading them to react violently to any negative stimulus.

Costs and Funding

In 2007, the programme had a total cost of nearly US\$ 272, 000, 85% of which correspond to fees for technical and professional staff supporting consolidation of the model and training mediators (see Table 1). The cost for each institution served stands at US\$ 1,400 and each Mediation Centre costs US\$ 2,500. Mediator training has an annual cost per person of US\$ 13 and service per person comes to US\$ 1.20. These figures make it clear that the relatively high total cost is due to the extensive coverage, and the economies of scale achieved are reflected in the unit cost per person trained and served. However, it is important to remember that this programme is based on the voluntary work of mediators who are the keystone of the entire project. It is essential that this work be voluntary, both in terms of the lack of payment, access and permanence and it must in no way become paid or obligatory. However, expenses must be covered in terms of transport and food for mediators when they are away from home, and this represents 6% of the total costs.

The programme has two main sources of funding. The Bogotá Chamber of Commerce - the institution that created the scheme - contributes 80% of the total budget. The next largest funding comes from the Mayor's Office of Bogotá, which has signed an agreement to cover 50% of the cost of fees and materials for 36 district schools through the district education department. A similar agreement has been made with some municipalities of Cundinamarca, including Zipaquirá.

Table 1
Cost of Hermes programme, 2007

Description of cost	USD ¹⁹	%
FEES		
Payment of fees to professional project consultants/multipliers responsible for training and awareness raising on the benefits of the project in the student community	230,893.62	85%
RENTALS		
Hiring of the amusement park where the RENACEG network closing ceremony was held	13,256.97	5%
SERVICES		
Services such as printing, photocopies, etc, necessary for the activities of the consultants and the production of materials to be provided to participating schools	8,645.02	3%
VARIOUS		
Payment for stationery, transport, food for conciliation sessions with children participating in the project	17,191.21	6%
PROMOTION		
Promotional materials designed for various events with project participation	1,550.00	1%
Total	271,536.81	100%

Source: Information provided by Hermes programme officials for 2007

¹⁹ Exchange rate used: US\$ 1 = COP\$2.008

Obstacles and challenges to implementation

As with all projects, there are always obstacles to the process. One of the first difficulties encountered was in the educational community, especially amongst senior management and teaching staff, who lack the capacity to accept an understanding of the school environment as not only a space that offers academic content but also as a laboratory for a life of peaceful coexistence. This vision is clearly at odds with the training received by teachers; hence it is no surprise that some degree of resistance may be encountered. In many schools, the teaching staff expressed doubts as to the possibility of incorporating this type of agreement and dialogue project as a method for conflict resolution in the place of the authoritarian style generally used to maintain security and control. As a result, in the early stages, opportunities had to be offered for dialogue with senior management and teachers in order to ensure their active participation in the process without them feeling threatened or that their role as educators was being questioned. Parents played a key role in this process, raising their concerns over violence in schools and the effects this can have on drop-out rates and the negative impact on learning. The awareness raising process rapidly produced results due to the efforts made by these sections of the educational community. This provided proof of the advantages of their change in perspective and the usefulness of such an outlook in improving student learning processes within a framework of peaceful coexistence.

However, many educational entities tend to see the programme as a 'quick fix' that will change the working atmosphere within schools, overlooking the fact that it is really a process that requires some time before it can become consolidated and produce good results.

Similarly, difficulties have been experienced in meeting established deadlines in some cases due to the high turnover of teaching staff. This leads to suspension of the programme in some schools and the response is implemented inadequately – this has become a recurrent problem for which the Chamber has found no concrete solutions. In practice, this situation has increased costs, for when staff leave, the process must be initiated with new teachers within the School. However, those teachers who have completed their training and transferred to other schools take the change in approach to the school environment with them and multiply the model in other places.

Innovatory aspects

One of the central elements of innovation is that the students are the central agents in conflict resolution processes rather than passive recipients of guidelines or actions implemented by adults. The integrated anti-violence perspective is also innovatory, as it works within the school and then reaches beyond into the community and even into family life. Conflict management is in the hands of children and young people, teachers and parents, a process that leads to greater empowerment and shared responsibility throughout an educational community where they all become protagonists in the process.

Another extremely important aspect is that teachers have been given explicit recognition that their conflicts can also be dealt with by the Conflict Management Board. It is well known that teachers can both cause or suffer from conflict situations that can generate discord in the school. For example in one testimonial a teacher said "I had many problems with class 10B, they were a critical class, with high levels of absence, unwilling to work or participate. The students and I agreed to take the issue to the school Negotiation Board and when I was there I recognised that I was making errors and they

(the students) also recognised their failings. It is not a case of finding out who is right and wrong but of working to improve coexistence, and we have achieved it."

As has already been explained, the methodology is based on a 'constructionist partner' method and development of emotional intelligence has been a key and innovatory element in approaching conflict at school, helping to build coexistence on the basis of dialogue that recognizes conflict without seeking to attribute blame or establish who is right. It is a model that breaks away from the system of teachers controlling undesired behaviour through their authority over pupils to a broader perspective of authority based on knowledge and understanding rather than sanctions. Similarly, dialogue between the students who are dealing with their problems reduces the sensation that some students have supremacy over others, mitigating against negative categorisations and their implicit violence.

All of the above builds flexibility into the paradigms and allows emphasis to be placed on social responsibility, agreement and dialogue in conflict, making it possible to overcome antagonistic relationships. The programme allows for the generation of peace-maker groups within each educational institution, training individuals who will become peacemakers in each and every area of their life when they leave school.

Another central element of the programme is the systematic nature that allows it to be easily reproduced. At the same time, the methodology is flexible enough to be adapted to each of the individual situations where it is applied.

Last, but by no means least, the importance of the RENACEG network must not be overlooked. This space allows the various mediators to share and knowledge experiences, providing ongoing enrichment for learning whilst also offering a channel through which to train mediators in educational centres where the Chamber has been unable to work, further consolidating the model. This network also generates a great feeling of ownership and pride that strengthens all mediators, both students and teachers.

For more information:

Rafael Bernal Gutiérrez
Director of the Arbitration and Conciliation Centre
Patricia Ricco Arias
Director of the Hermes conflict management at school programme
Telephone (571) 3830605, extension 2323
rafaelb@ccb.org.co
escolarcac@ccb.org.co

Annex 1

Actual cases of mediation

The following are actual cases of mediation processed by the Management Boards:

Case 1: *Observation of a case of conciliation between two students*

Participants *Student 1 and Student 2*

"The conciliator gives the person who asked for conciliation the chance to speak first, to explain their reasons for the conflict. After hearing both sides the conciliator decides on the motive of the conflict, which is not necessarily the issues stated in the declarations made by the children, and offers a way of reaching a solution. If both parties accept, they both apologise. After this they sign an Agreement. This establishes a relationship of respect and they make a commitment to treat each other well and to respect each other. In this case the conflict was resolved without the intervention of an adult."

Case 2 *Case between teacher and students*

(The mediator is the Hermes programme facilitator)

Participants: Student and Teacher

"The person who requested conciliation is given first opportunity to speak, in this case the pupil.

Presentation of the rules.

Motive: Lack of opportunity for communication

Commitment: To seek an opportunity for dialogue outside the class and to help the teacher in class. This commitment, made on the basis of a complaint by a pupil will facilitate coexistence in the classroom."

Case 3 *Conflict between courses, agree the terms of the conflict and which member of the group will represent them in mediation.*

"In the last phase, *sustainable Hermes* aims to consolidate the Programme in school, generating internal replication mechanisms. The young people, who have been trained, once they have completed the three phases previously described, are close to graduation whereby, they and the group of teachers work to transmit the experience to other members of their peer group. In this case the Programme technical team only provided accompaniment, as the leaders already had the training and experience necessary to carry out the transfer.

However, those who are leaving the school are already armed with a very valuable tool to apply in the rest of their life, both in their family surroundings and in their relationships outside the home, with friends, at work, etc, expanding the project, beyond the school. The Colegio Departamental de Cundinamarca del Municipio de Zipaquirá provided evidence to corroborate this experience."

References

- Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional, Colombia, "Tendencias del desplazamiento durante 2006" 2007. Disponible desde:
<http://www.accionsocial.gov.co/documentos/Tendencias.pdf>
- Aznar, Inmaculada, Cáceres, María Pilar, and Hinojo, Francisco (2007) "Estudio de la violencia y conflictividad escolar en las aulas de educación primaria a través de un cuestionario de clima de clase: El caso de las provincias de Córdoba y Granada (España)": REICE (Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación). Available at:
<http://www.rinace.net/arts/vol5num1/art9.pdf>
- Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá (2009) "Acerca del CAC": Centro de Arbitraje y Conciliación. Available at:
<http://www.cacccb.org.co/contenido/contenido.aspx?catID=20&conID=6>
- Cabezas López, Carlos (2008) "Violencia escolar: el acoso del profesor hacia el alumno"
- Cerezo, Fuensanta (2006) "Violencia y victimización entre escolares. El bullying: estrategias de identificación y elementos para la intervención a través del Test Bull-S": Departamento de Psicología Evolutiva y de la Educación, Universidad de Murcia. Revista Electrónica de Investigación Psicoeducativa. Available at:
http://www.investigacion-psicopedagogica.org/revista/articulos/9/espanol/Art_9_115.pdf
- Chávez, Marcela (2002) "Perfil del departamento de Cundinamarca": Centro de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Regional. Available at:
http://www.uncrdlac.org/SHE/8_1_perfil_cundinamarca.pdf
- Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca CRIC (2008) "Estructura organizativa". Available at:
<http://www.cric-colombia.org/estructura-organizativa-ubicacion-geografica.htm>
- DANE (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas) (2003) "Encuesta de victimización": Departamento Nacional de Planeación. Available at:
http://www.dane.gov.co/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=55&Itemid=658
- _____ (2005) DANE, Boletín Censo General 2005 Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas. Available at:
http://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/censo/Bol_nbi_censo_2005.pdf
- _____ Dirección de Censos y Demografía (2007) "Colombia una Nación multicultural. Su diversidad étnica": Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas. Available at:
http://www.dane.gov.co/files/censo2005/etnia/sys/colombia_nacion.pdf
- De Zubiría, Julián (2008) "La violencia en los colegios de Bogotá": Instituto Alberto Merani. Available at:
http://www.institutomerani.edu.co/publicaciones/articulos/2009/La_violencia_en_los_colegios_de_Bogot%C3%A1.pdf

- ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) (2008a)
"Estadísticas sociales": Anuario estadístico de América Latina y el Caribe. Available at:
http://www.cepal.cl/publicaciones/xml/7/35327/LCG2399B_1.pdf
- _____ (2008b) "Capítulo I: Pobreza, exclusión social y desigualdad distributiva":
Panorama social de América Latina. Available at:
http://www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/2/34732/PSE2008_Cap1_Pobreza.pdf
- _____ (2008c) "Capítulo IV: Agenda social violencia juvenil y familiar en América Latina.
Enfoques desde la inclusión: Panorama social de América Latina. Available at:
http://www.cepal.cl/publicaciones/xml/2/34732/PSE2008_Cap4_AgendaSocial.pdf
- _____ (2008d) Estudio económico de América Latina y el Caribe 2007-2008
- _____ (2008e) Panorama Social de América Latina 2008
- ECLAC- ILO (2009). "Crisis and the labour market". ECLAC/ILO Bulletin The employment situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, June 2009
- Ibáñez, A. M., Velásquez, A. "El impacto del desplazamiento forzoso en Colombia: Condiciones socioeconómicas de la población desplazada, vinculación a los mercados laborales y políticas públicas". Serie Políticas Sociales, División de Desarrollo Social, CEPAL 2009
- Ibáñez, T., 1993. "La psicología social como elemento deconstruccionista"
- Junta Directiva del Banco de la República (2009) "Informe al Congreso de la República" Marzo 2009. Available at: http://www.banrep.gov.co/documentos/junta-directiva/informe-congreso/2009/marzo_resumen_2009.pdf
- McAlister, Alfred (2000) "La violencia juvenil en las Américas: Estudios innovadores de investigación, diagnóstico y prevención": Pan American Health Organization.
- Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo (2009) "Coyuntura económica de Colombia 2008": Oficina de Estudios Económicos. Available at: <http://www.mincomercio.gov.co/eContent/Documentos/EstudiosEconomicos/Infor meecon%C3%B3micoenero09.pdf>
- Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo (2008) "Exportaciones colombianas y balanza comercial": Proexport Colombia. Available at: <http://www.mincomercio.gov.co/econtent/documentos/EstudiosEconomicos/ExpoDiembre2008.pdf>
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional (2009) "Ordenamiento territorial para Colombia": Sociedad Geográfica de Colombia. Available at: <http://www.sogeocol.edu.co/conjunto2.htm>
- Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia (2004) "¿Qué son los mecanismos alternativos de solución de conflictos (M.A.S.C.)?": Programa Nacional de Conciliación. Available at: http://www.conciliacion.gov.co/paginas_detalle.aspx?idp=40#

- Moreno, Juan Manuel (1997) "Comportamiento antisocial en los centros escolares: una visión desde Europa": Revista Iberoamericana de Educación. Available at:
<http://www.oei.es/oeivirt/rie18a09.htm>
- Nuestras Manos (2008) "Noticias sobre mediación escolar". Available at:
<http://www.nuestrasmanos.org.ar/Sugerencias/Secciones/Violencia%20Escolar.htm>
- OEI (Organization of Ibero-American States) (2007) "Preocupa la violencia y maltrato en escuelas de América Latina". Available at:
<http://www.oei.es/noticias/spip.php?article1256>
- Ortega, Rosario and Del Rey, Rosario (2003) "La violencia escolar: Estrategias de prevención": Editorial Graó.
- Pinheiro, Paulo Sérgio, Independent Expert for the United Nations (2006), Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. Available at:
<http://www.violencestudy.org/>
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) (2009) "Human Development Reports": Available at:
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/espanol/>
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific And Cultural Organization) (2008) "Los aprendizajes de los estudiantes en América Latina y el Caribe. Primer reporte de los resultados del Segundo estudio regional comparativo y explicativo". Available at:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001606/160660S.pdf>
- UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) (2009), Desplazamiento interno en Colombia. Available at: <http://www.acnur.org/t3/crisis/crisis-humanitaria-en-colombia/desplazamiento-interno-en-colombia/>
- UN-HABITAT (United Nations Human Settlements Programme) (2005) "Juventud, violencia y políticas públicas en América Latina": Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe. Available at:
http://www.unhabitat-rolac.org/default.asp?pag=recursos.asp&id_secao=73&id_idioma=2