



Lessons Learned from the Field

Research Study on Street Youth Serving Organizations in Lima, Perú

Submitted to: Health Bridges International Inc.

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1.0 – Introduction

1.1 Objective of Study

The primary objective of the project was to collect information on the organizations working with marginalized and abandoned youth toward the creation of an ongoing forum for communication between Lima-wide health and social service organizations that assist youth abandoned to the streets or experiencing homelessness in order to better scale service delivery and to work together to solve common problems.

1.2 Essential definitions

“Marginalized and abandoned youth in Lima”: Marginalized and abandoned youth are defined as adolescents or young adults (under the age of 24) living on the streets, institutional settings or in transient housing situations. They include youth, adolescents and young adults in the criminal justice system and wards of the state.

Coalition: A coalition is defined as a collaboration between organizations for the purposes of resource sharing, best practice development and policy development. The coalition may include government, non-government, faith-based and informal sector organizations and agencies.

1.3 The process

The original goal was to meet with as many organizations as possible in order to gauge if they were interested in forming a coalition and to gather information about their organization for an online database. I started with a list of organizations that had participated in the first Street Youth Symposium in 2012 held by HBI in the cities of Lima and Arequipa.

Week 1:

- Learned more about HBI
- Reached out to all organizations that had participated in Street Youth Symposium

Weeks 2-5:

- Interviewed 20 organizations/ individuals from all over Lima
- Through the snowball method I gained contacts of dozens of other organizations. These included:
 - The list of participants in RIDIACC meeting

- The list of all public and private CARs
- Other organization contacts
- Attended RIDIACC meeting

Week 6:

- Worked on gathering missing data
- Compiled spreadsheet
- Started website and report

Week 7:

- Finished report
- Finished gathering as much missing data.
- Worked on website

1.4 Summary of findings about existing coalitions

Originally HBI thought that Lima had no existing coalitions in place for abandoned or marginalized youth. However, I soon found out about a coalition called REDENAC that existed in recent years but had slowly died out. I was able to speak to some participants and leaders within this coalition in order to find out why it failed and what could be done differently in the future. Soon after, I found out about a coalition, RIDIACC, that was originated in Brazil. I tried to get in contact with the woman in charge of starting up the RIDIACC- Perú chapter. After weeks of trying to contact her with no luck, I decided to attend their third meeting in Lima. I got the information from other participants and went to the meeting. There, the leader of RIDIACC never showed up either and left all the representatives confused about where and how to proceed. Since the first meeting, attendance rates had been dwindling due to the lack of organization. There was a lot of confusion and differing opinions about who belonged to the coalition and who did not. In the end only 5 organizations went to the meeting. They organized an event run by an organization called Tiempo Para Compartir where they would run workshops and classes for educators working with marginalized and abandoned youth. They also expressed interest in doing lobbying and advocacy work as a group.

2. Internship Experience

2.1 - Challenges

- *Transportation:* Spending two to six hours on buses to get to and from an interview was very time consuming and at times frustrating. It would have been more time effective if the interviews had been through survey monkey, phone or skype. However, each method has its drawbacks. One interviewee stated she would fill out the questionnaire and email it back to me. This questionnaire was

never returned. Also, most Peruvians are more comfortable talking in person than over the phone or on skype. If I were to do it again, I would have offered phone or skype interviews as an alternative to in person interviews.

- *Lack of response:* Although I had a lot of contacts, most emails and phone calls went unanswered or the parties were uninterested. It was difficult to schedule enough interviews.
- *Interviews:* It was very difficult to guide the interviews. It felt like the people I interviewed were only interested in sharing their own thoughts and experiences and not necessarily in answering questions. I ended up approaching each interview as a learning experience and they ended up being great. I felt like a lot of the interview questions were not necessary and were kind of awkward to ask, so I stopped asking them. I did not understand clearly the vision of what all these answers would be used for if only the contact information and mission would go onto the database. Since I did not understand the vision, it was hard for me to convince the interviewee that the questions served a purpose.

2.2 - Opportunities:

- *IRB:* Filling out an IRB application was an amazing opportunity. Although it was time consuming, and in the end was unnecessary, it was very good for me to experience what it was like to fill it out.
- *Snowball method:* The snowball method of finding organizations and contacts was very successful. At the end of each interview, I would ask the interviewee if he/she knew of any other organizations that may meet the criteria or be interested in meeting with me. I went from having 15 organizations and group homes to 110.
- *Interviews:* The positives of going to the interviews in person, even if the information learned was minimal, was to make contacts, personal connections, and to ask about their interest and ideas about building a coalition. Having a phone interview would not have formed that connection and trust between us that may lead to stronger relationships and partnerships down the line.

2.3 - Lessons learned:

- *Prioritize questions:* When I first started, I had imagined that I would go into an interview and I would go through all my questions from beginning to end. What happened in reality is that each individual would talk about what they thought I would be most interested in hearing. This ranged from all of their fundraising projects, personal situations, religion, the situation for street youth, etc. Instead of forcing my 28 questions, I chose to prioritize the three to ten questions that I would be able to analyze and measure impact from.



- *Phone not email:* Very few people responded to my emails but email was a good way to initiate contact so that parties had a general understanding of why I was calling.
- *Coalition in small groups:* I think that it is necessary to have a large coalition that meets once a year. The coalition can be broken down into smaller groups with similar goals that meet more frequently. It is a lot easier to coordinate schedules and goals in a smaller group. For example, group homes might not have the same ideas and goals as a group that works with street kids. In the end they are completely different populations with very different needs.
- *Need money and full-time leader to have a coalition:* Having a coalition is a lot of work and is hard to manage without a paid full-time leader.
- *Desire but lack of follow through:* A lot of organizations know some of the benefits of creating a coalition but lack the time or motivation to follow through.
- *Hard to do anything with constantly changing administration* both within the organizations and the government.

3. Literature Review on Coalition Building

Copy and pasted from “Benefits and Challenges in Building a Community Youth Development Coalition” -- http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_CCP/files/125984.pdf

3.1 Benefits of Coalitions

- *“Successful coalitions can take various forms, but most are marked by shared goals, inclusive membership, community legitimacy and the ability to mobilize community assets and resources to create policy or institutional change.”*
- *“The web sites and listservs of many coalitions become a common resource to spread the word about youth related resources and opportunities.”*
- *“One coalition has become a hub for grant seeking and joint fundraising activities that benefit multiple youth-serving organizations”.*
- *“Rather than duplicating their efforts, organizations can split up or coordinate responsibilities in ways that afford more participants access to programs and allow for a greater variety of services.”*
 - <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/promotion-strategies/start-a-coalition/main>
- *“Spreading knowledge of quality youth development practices and modeling those practices in the coalition’s work and activities. Coalition leaders have participated in joint training sessions offered by the foundation’s technical assistance providers, but also organized similar sessions in their respective communities.”*
 - Building a coalition would be a great way to share best practices

- Increase access to data on populations being served
- Maybe include a database of key research done by organizations
- Maybe if some organizations already have community legitimacy, working together may make that initial bridge a smaller challenge (but also competing agendas may be a problem)
- *The REACH experience demonstrates that more effective coalitions have a social mobilization strategy that includes:*
 - *a clear and culturally sensitive process for recruiting, orienting and supporting new adult and youth members;*
 - *specific leadership roles for members;*
 - *active outreach to particular youth/adult populations in light of a specific substantive agenda; and*
 - *targeting particular groups for membership based on the resources that are needed to advance goals.*
- *Focus the effort on changing one or two key community-scale outcomes, rather than attempting to do too many things or spreading resources thinly;*

3.2 Barriers to Coalitions:

There are often barriers to starting a coalition. It is important to be aware of and anticipate these barriers because they may dictate the process the coalition will have to follow in order to begin successfully. Among the most likely:

- **Turf issues.** Organizations are often very sensitive about sharing their work, their target populations, and especially their funding. Part of the work of starting a coalition may be to convince a number of organizations that working together will in fact both benefit all of them and better address their common issues.
- **Bad history.** Organizations, individuals, or the community as a whole may have had experiences in the past that have convinced them that working with others - or working together at all - is simply not possible. A new coalition may have to contend with this history before it can actually start the work it needs to do.
- **Domination by "professionals" or some other elite.** All too often, agency people with advanced degrees, local politicians, business leaders, and others, in their rush to solve problems or to "help the disadvantaged," neglect to involve the people most affected by the issue at hand and other community members. Creating a participatory atmosphere and reining in those who believe they have all the answers is almost always part of starting a coalition.

Part of a solution may be providing support for those who aren't used to the "professional" way of holding meetings and reaching conclusions, while at the same time training professionals and others to include those whose opinions are likely to be



far more accurate and important to the solving of the problem than their own. This might mean bringing in an outside facilitator, or simply paying careful attention to guiding the process from within the group.

- **Poor links to the community.** A first step may have to be the development of hitherto nonexistent relationships among agencies and the community at large.
- **Minimal organizational capacity.** It might be necessary to find a coordinator, or for one or more individuals or organizations to find a way to share the burden of organization for the new group if it is to develop beyond - or as far as - a first meeting.
- **Funding.** The difficulty of finding funding is an obvious obstacle. Less obvious are the dangers of available funding that pushes the coalition in the wrong direction or requires it to act too quickly to address the issue effectively. New coalitions have to be alert to funding possibilities from all quarters, and also vigilant about the kind of funding they apply for and accept.
- **Failure to provide and create leadership within the coalition.** Coalitions demand a very special kind of collaborative leadership. If that leadership isn't available and can't be developed from within the coalition, its existence is probably at risk. It may be necessary to bring outside facilitation and/or training in collaborative leadership to salvage the situation.
- **The perceived - or actual - costs of working together outweigh the benefits for many coalition members.** The task here may be to find ways to increase benefits and decrease costs for the individuals and organizations for whom this is the case if the coalition is to survive.

If you understand the potential barriers to forming a coalition in your community, you can plan for them, and increase your chances of success.

4. Lessons learned from REDENAC

A lot of the problems seen through REDENAC were similar issues to what was stated above. The following information was stated by Anahi Camero from Lima Kids, Roxana Salazar from Teatrovivo, and Fabrizio, the former representative of REDENAC.

What did not work:

- Some individuals wanted to dominate the conversation. In order to prevent this, REDENAC would rotate who was in charge.
- Too much competition
- People did not want to share best practices (what had worked for them) because they didn't want people to replicate their work.

- Meetings just involved discussion but a lot of times nothing came out of it because they didn't have a budget, someone to support them, and they were not at the government level.
- Would discuss best practices but not efficacy or efficiency.
- Yachay came in and wanted to force every institution to serve one group of youth. They wanted all group homes to be registered as a CAR (INABIF group home) in order to participate in the network. The government would impose rules but wouldn't provide staff or funding for the project.

Advice for future networks:

- The coalition should work more at the government level. Having a coalition that does not involve good politics or ways to reach congress will not accomplish anything.
- The government should start the group and they should be the ones to expand. Yachay or MIMP should call upon the non-profit sector to see who works in this line of work, and move forward with that.
- Should not include everybody. Only the good organizations/institutions.
- Full time staff

5. Laws recommended for advocacy work

- Law that would give tax incentives to companies if they donated 5% of their money to a nonprofit (like what exists in many other parts of the world). "Nobody supports financially because they do not receive any benefits or incentives".
- To decrease penalty on youth who have committed a crime.
- To make "educator" a career in Peruvian universities

6. Recommendations/Possible Next Steps

- *Share database:* The hope is that organizations will use the database as a way to communicate and refer cases to other homes and NGOs. The database can also be used as a way for organizations to form contacts and share resources and programs across organizations. However, the website can only be used if it is in the hands of these organizations.
- *Have a yearly best practices meeting:* Although there was some backlash on sharing practices, I still think that this is necessary. Most organizations stated they would be interested in a meeting where they share experiences and best practices. This should happen once a year.
- *Do capacitaciones/talleres recommended:* These are listed in a private section on the website.



- *Keep database updated:* Over time, whether it is months or years, organizations will change, be gone, new ones will be added, and staff will come and go. Make sure to send out an email to the listserv once every 6 months to make sure information is up to date.
- *Support group that came out of RIDIAC's efforts:* The group that was created could use someone to give talks, help with logistics, keeping it together, helping group come up with common goals, getting other groups on board, etc.
- *In the future, do not meet with individuals because it is too time consuming.* Invite everyone to a meeting and discuss goals and if they are interested, they will stay; and if not, they won't.