



Mexico, San Luis Potosí – ‘For the respect and dignity of our children’ – Health – Education

“I didn’t want to live any more, I was scared, I didn’t like him coming into my bed to do bad things that hurt me. My mum said I was a liar and she washed my mouth out with soap.

Thanks to the Marillac Centre, everything has changed. I had some therapy that helped me understand that it wasn’t my fault. Mum also learned lots in the workshops and she started to believe me. She reported my step-dad and now my brothers and I can live in peace” Lupita, aged 11.

Context

- 31st December 2015: A young girl aged 9 arrived in hospital, covered in blood, following a vaginal tear. She had multiple injuries as well as a severe infection.
- 26th January 2016: A child died following a pulmonary infection. He was a victim of sexual abuse at school, his classmates had put his head down a dirty toilet.
- 31st January 2016: There was widespread sexual abuse at a primary school. The children in Year 6 abused the children in Year 2. The Principal declared that it was just an “unimportant game”.

Unfortunately, these aren’t just isolated cases. Sexual abuse, paedophilia and harassment happen every day and are often treated as inevitable facts-of-life that children risk encountering!

Faced with the ignorance and lack of awareness about this type of violence, which severely affects children’s lives and has huge consequences that last into adulthood, the AIC volunteers from the Marillac Centre couldn’t remain indifferent. So they started a project with the objective of supporting children who have been victims of sexual abuse, but also of preventing it and raising awareness among parents and the community.

Project Theme and Activities

Creation and implementation of a project that has a systemic approach and includes prevention, raising awareness and supporting the victims of abuse.

Education:

- Creation of 2 educational booklets, one for adults, the other for children, used during workshops organised for parents and by primary school children and teaching staff in schools.

- Specific training of a team who will in turn become coaches themselves through workshops, educational materials, pedagogical tools and consultations, all of which can all be reproduced.
- Reporting perpetrators to the appropriate authorities and legal advice for parents of children who are victims of abuse is a key part of the project.
- A huge campaign to raise awareness in the community through posters, wristbands with a slogan and a media campaign, thanks to the generous support of Global Media, the main local radio station.

Health:

Psychological support for children, strengthening of their self-esteem, a process of socialisation and social reintegration through activities and games and by living together.

Key Figures

- Education: By 31st October 2016, a total of **813 children and 126 adults** had received training from **21 coaches**.
- Health: **1131 psychological therapy sessions** had been given by 7 psychologists.

Future Prospects and Impact

The coaches have given prevention workshops in schools, sports centres and at the Marillac Centre itself. The results have been very positive:

- Increase in the number of children followed by the Psychology Department at the Marillac Centre.
- Increase in the number of schools that want to include these workshops in their programme. The workshops have already been given at 7 schools in San Luis Potosí.
- A new cycle will begin in November 2016. 4 salaried psychologists and 2 salaried trainers will be necessary, as well as a series of psychological tests. The total budget required comes to **10,429 Euros**. Those in charge are actively looking for this funding at a local and international level.

The volunteers know that the journey to eradicating bullying at school, paedophilia and sexual abuse will be arduous and difficult. But they're doing their best, conscious that having a dream is the first step to making a utopia become a reality.

