The Innovations Fund in Chile: creating youth leaders in Climate Change Adaptation

When the Chilean Red Cross was informed of the opportunity to apply for seed money to pilot a potential climate-change related project, the organization easily identified what its focus should be – to provide climate-change adaptation awareness activities in schools, daycares and community centers via Chilean Red Cross youth volunteers.

In August of 2010, the Chilean Red Cross was awarded funds to launch such a pilot project, titled “Juventud y el Cambio Climático” (or Youth and Climate Change). The pilot was created jointly between representatives of the organization’s Health, Youth, and Disaster Risk Management Department’s, and was designed to fulfill four key objectives: 1) to train 25 youth volunteers as youth facilitators of climate change adaptation activities in schools and after-school centers; 2) to create two separate, climate change training modules – one for children ages 9-14, and one for youth ages 15-19; 3) to host six climate change awareness-raising discussions amongst children and youth in schools; and 4) to sponsor 2 climate change adaptation projects or activities lead by newly-sensitized children and youth.

In addition, the Santiago Metropolitan area was selected as the pilot’s focus area because 1) it is the nation’s capitol, comprising almost 40% of the nation’s population and the largest pool of Chilean Red Cross youth volunteers, and because 2) this project, if successful, could ultimately be integrated into the Chilean Red Cross “Escuelas Seguras”, or “Safe Schools” youth program, which is run out of Santiago and involves youth facilitating discussions on various youth safety and prevention topics in schools.

Successes to Date

The project has already seen several key successes. These are:

• **Training of youth facilitators.**
  The project generated so much interest that 30 youth volunteers from the metropolitan area were selected as youth facilitators. All were selected based on their submitted applications, which were designed to assess applicant's ability to contribute to the project.

• **Development of training modules.** Three training modules were developed - one for youth facilitators and one-each for youth-led climate-change awareness-raising activities with children (ages 9-14) and youth (ages 15-19). All three were initially created jointly between the Youth and Disaster Risk Management Departments with information from the Climate Centre and local experts, and have been improved upon based on youth facilitator and child/youth participant comments. In addition, youth facilitators were invited to experiment with the delivery of the climate change adaptation message in efforts to adapt the delivery to their personal styles and audiences. The result has been that youth facilitators have created several presentation delivery methods for children including a skit between a Red Cross volunteer and the earth, and a story about how climate change affects humanity.
• **Outreach to at-risk children and youth.** Almost 200 youth and children in at-risk communities in the metropolitan area have now participated in Chilean Red Cross-led climate change adaptation awareness-raising presentations and activities. Based on this success, the Chilean Red Cross has had several invitations to continue and to increase these activities, including an invitation by local schools to return the following school year and by a local national non-profit, which has invited the Chilean Red Cross to present at its national summer camp to over 100 children, as well as to guide them in making their national conference a week-long awareness raising event on climate change.

• **Integration of Climate Change into Youth Services.** The success of this project has resulted in the inclusion of Climate Change Adaptation sessions in the 2011 Chilean Red Cross National Youth Conference. Much of this success is attributed to information on Youth on the Move and the National Year of Youth provided to youth during presentations, both of which motivate Chilean Red Cross youth to get more involved.

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