

# Youth Violence and Safety

APRIL 8, 2021

GLOBAL INNOVATIONS  
ON YOUTH VIOLENCE,  
SAFETY AND JUSTICE

**Focus:** UNESCO's Open Schools Program implemented in several Latin American countries and Fundación Reintegra's Life and Work Skills Program based in Mexico City; both focus on neighborhoods with high poverty, violence, and crime rates

**Goal:** Identify each program's successes and challenges with a view to transferability

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

**Open Schools was started by UNESCO in 2000, adopted by Brazilian Ministry of Education in 2004, and by 2010 implemented across 4,000 schools, serving c. 4 million Brazilians. Other examples include Guatemala where it was implemented in 220 schools.**

**Schools become attractive weekend community spaces for children, adolescents, and adults to engage in sports, artistic and cultural activities.**

- Important to invite the community in, building comfort with space and each other
- Activity leaders are typically community members, unless special expertise is required
- Safety provided informally by community's knowledge of its own members
- Emphasis on:
  - Intergenerational exchange
  - Respect for diversity
  - Youth leadership development, as rights holders in charge of their own lives
- Focus intentionally not on additional formal schooling, but on alternative recreational, information, and training activities

**Successes include:**

- Greater social inclusion, sense of belonging
- Reduced drop-out rates
- Greater community involvement in schools
- Less violence in schools, community, and homes

**Advantages include low program cost and ease of replication across contexts due to flexible structure.**

- Cheap (c. \$1-2/participant/month)
- Impact measurement includes levels of violence in the school and surroundings

**Fundación Reintegra's program started as an employability program in 2008, but became a life and work skills program by 2013 as they realized life skills were as or more important than the labor skills.**

**Three stages develop skills and entrepreneurship:**

1. Learning silk screen printing or baking
2. "Lab" where students make and sell products

- Also provides income to foundation
3. Entrepreneurship stage, foundation-supported with small (\$30) loans and use of equipment

**The program focuses on reflection and community, as well as goal setting and planning.**

- Emphasizes positive role models, rather than drug dealers most visible in community
- Participants begin in offset cycles; older participants mentor newer ones

**Successes including building life and labor skills:**

- Greater self-esteem, sense of achievement
- Better teamwork and individual habits
  - E.g. discipline, responsibility, punctuality
- New financial understanding
- Entrepreneurial mindset
- Skills in printing or baking

**Small scale emphasizes personal connection, but it leads to high cost and may pose scaling challenge.**

- 50-80 learners/year, in groups of 12 who come 3 times/week
- Expensive (\$30/student/month)

**Key considerations for both interventions include:**

- Private sector involvement, financially and as skilling and pathways partner
- Partnerships with other organizations, government actors to share resources and scale
- Impact measurement should consider:
  - Telling human stories, not just numbers
  - Measuring costs avoided as well as successes (appeal to funders)

**Education can play a key role in violence reduction, which requires:**

- Support from government leaders
- Buy-in from school directors and teachers
- Development of community curriculum for safety

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- "Life and Work Skills Program: Community Prevention Centers" by Sofia Frech\*

