CAMARA CHILENA DE LA CONSTRUCCION

WORLD CHAMBERS COMPETITION APPLICATION

PROJECT NAME:"Prisoner training and social/work re-entry"
CHAMBER: Construction Industry Chamber of Commerce (Cámara Chilena de la Construcción, CChC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the main challenges facing justice-related public policies in Chile is the shortfall in prison facilities, both in terms of quality and appropriate quantity for the existing prison population (shortfall of 34%). This has been recognized by the authorities, who have understood that in addition to urgently expanding prison capacity, alternative measures are required. The prison crisis in Chile is significant for public security reasons, since prisons are a source of crime spread but also because the prison system does not ensure respect for the fundamental rights of prisoners. Rehabilitation and re-entry of prisoners has not been considered systematically in Chile.

The Construction Industry Chamber of Commerce (Cámara Chilena de la Construcción, CChC) is a trade association whose main objective is to foster the development of the construction sector as an essential component of national development, in the context of a social market economy based on private initiative. Throughout its 61 years of history, the Chamber has also aimed to support the welfare of Chileans through its Social Network (Red Social).

The project promotes prisoner work and social re-entry through job training and the acquisition of proper working habits and values, training for a trade in the construction sector. The inmates receive economic support through transport and lunch allowances plus a monthly allowance conditional on an 80% minimum monthly attendance. After the training, the Chamber places the beneficiaries in a job from a partner firm. Since then, follows a monitoring period tracking the employment situation of the beneficiary.

Between 2009 and 2011 a total of 410 beneficiaries were selected to the first part of the training process. The number of inmates enrolled for the training program is lower than those who started the work habits and values training, usually because the correctional police can withdraw their permission to continue due to bad behavior or non-compliance of rules. The percentage of people who enter the job training stage has risen from 77% in 2010 to 90% in 2011 and 2012 (even though the final figure for 2012 is not final because we are just in the middle of this process). Practically nearly all who started the trade training process completed it and were placed in internships in companies in 2010 and 2011 and the same projections can be made for 2012. The results show that to date approximately 65% of all participants in the program continue working in the companies where they did their work experience. 11 companies have participated to date.

The results have been widely highlighted by Gendarmería and the Ministry of Labor emphasizing that there is no record of recidivism among participants and that work placement levels of the program equal the best performing programs of the Ministry of Labor, which are not targeted at such a complex population as with this program.

The program has a significant economic impact on the beneficiaries and their families resulting from the work placement. The high work placement rate and prisoner motivation levels are accounted for by the high value inmates give to this opportunity.

The success of this initiative shows that this CChC program is highly significant in terms of public policies since it would, if extended, relieve the prison overcrowding problem. Gendarmería has calculated that the cost of keeping one prisoner inside is US$1,000 per month. Meanwhile, the program has work habits and values training and training costs that do not exceed 20% of that amount in monthly terms.

The program has been implemented until now in some prisons in some Chilean cities on a minor scale. The program is applicable and expandable to a national level. The Training Corporation of the CChC has estimated it can grow by 500 beneficiaries a year. Meanwhile, the Labor Ministry and Gendarmería consider this to be an example of intervention that can be supported by public funding, which would allow it to be maintained over time. This program can also be applied internationally. The evidence shows that the social and work re-entry of inmates as well as prison overcrowding is a widespread phenomenon in Latin America.

The Construction Industry Chamber of Commerce (CChC) considers that this initiative satisfies the requirements for the World Chambers Competition in the area of social responsibility because it is innovative, it is demonstrably successful; the CChC has included a range of institutions in the program (public institutions, private non-profit institutions, and private firms);it makes an undeniable contribution to a high profile social problem that has not been tackled by public policy; it has allowed private companies to make a contribution to crime reduction by supporting an innovative program, specifically by providing employment; and it has shown CChC partner companies that individuals with a prison record can be productive and employable workers.