

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hermes, a program to manage school conflicts, began on January 2001 as an initiative of the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce, a private non-profit company with public utility, considering the value of the educational processes to transform beliefs and cultural paths that must be impressed in the children's early years. In this way, this innovative program pretends this cultural change have a pacific approach to the conflict, taking into account the principal role that education has actually in the way to break the traditional education scheme and offer the students and parents a central role to manage conflictive situations.

The program started at 20 educational institutions in Bogotá in two of the most populated areas of the capital city; actually it benefits 290 schools of 19 localities of Bogotá and it has been extended to 15 municipalities in the department of Cundinamarca.

To accomplish its purpose, ( transform the violent culture to embrace the conflict and create new versions of citizenship and pacific coexistent, encouraging the dialogue and tolerance), the program works with all the educative community. It is conceived to attend groups between 12 and 17 years old that comes from highly conflicted areas, in their school, their families and their social environment.

Is also a collective bet for a social change from primary circles at the school, with a significant incidence in familiar, social and cultural dynamics.

With the experience and leadership that the Arbitration and Conciliation Centre of the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce has in the application of ADR, both in law and business sphere, this entity recognized the importance to establish a unique methodology that could answer in a specifically way the needs of the school field, achieving the construction of a methodological proposal to the Hermes program that consists in different kinds of intervention into the educational community for a year and a half, such as:

1. Recognition of the conflict dynamic
2. Training and education
3. Conflict managing
4. Sustainability and continuing strategies

This methodology responds to the particularities of each one of the scenarios in which the intervention works and promotes the personal development through internalization of value processes and social skills. It also provides technical tools to make an autonomous approach to the conflict in which the beneficiaries can attend their own hearings to resolve their differences with property and responsibility towards the educational community.

Teachers and teenage tutors, once certified as school conflict managers/mediators, become members of the first Managers and Conciliators Network of Latin America (RENACEG), supported by the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce.

Parents express how a big change is noticed in the family atmosphere and in the personal relationships because values like respect, tolerance, responsibility and listening skills are now considered, which result in a better communication and relationship. In the students linked to the program, significant changes can be remarked, like managing emotions, impulse self-control, the strengthening of values and the development of social skills as dialogue, listening capacity and empathy.

## ¿WHY DID THE CCB DEVELOPED THIS INITIATIVE?

In Colombia, violence has become a referent directly associated to the armed conflict, without taking into account scholar violence in relation to the social structure, the socialization standards given by school, the national situation and the social environment in which students are.

The last decades' social conflicts generated sliced societies, weak states and the prolongation of conflicts within the State, affecting civil society. Experiences such as the ones from Ireland and South Africa clearly show the importance of business organizations in generating conflict management models within armed conflicts that procure to identify the causes of structural violence and the urge to strengthen the relationship between society members.

Conscious of the reality of our communities, and wanting to contribute to their organization and development, the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce has created a program in order to strengthen alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and spaces, taking into account the recognition and respect of the typical conflict solution mechanisms of each community. The program also points towards the possibility of building and strengthening the relationship community – Enterprise/State, in favor of generating new alternatives of conflict management elaborated with the communities.

In this new type of enterprise, in which life standards improvement impact directly over the prosperity and wealth of the business community, the CCB has understood its leadership in order to offer the opportunity to respond in an active way with projects and policies that contribute with the improvement of relations and their harmonization, achieving a positive effect over the profitability and productivity of the business community.

Schools are, beyond places where students learn, spaces where they socialize and interact and where the habits and social and moral values that they have interiorized throughout their daily life (within their families, neighborhoods, cities, countries, religions, etc) are reflected in their behavior and attitudes.

Changes do not necessarily come from the higher levels of the educative structure; on the contrary, changes begin from the active participation of all the social agents involved in the education such as teachers, directors, parents, students and business community.

Based on this institutional policy, the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce of (CCB) along with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), created a program that was initially aimed to the diffusion of the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, which permitted a logistic, intellectual and methodological construction of the development of the scholar conciliation project **“Ariadna- Tejiendo los hilos de la paz” (Ariadne: weaving the threads of peace)**. Based on the experience achieved in this field and its innovative enterprise vision, the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce created a new program, from a peaceful coexistence vision, which implies a component of violence prevention, social tissue construction and formation on ADR mechanisms which is called **“Programa para la gestión del conflicto escolar HERMES” (Hermes: program for school conflict management)**.

The project was backed by the trust and credibility that the CCB has, especially in the field of ADR.

## ¿ WHO IS DIRECTED TO?

The program addresses the conflict between students, but also those related to other participants in the school community, such as teachers, students, teacher-student and any active agent within the educational community:

- Students

- Teachers
- Directors
- Administrative Staff
- General Services
- Parents or guardians
- Neighbors and those who work near by

The influenced population is part of educational communities of schools located in socioeconomic status between 0, 1, 2 and 3 (being 0 the lowest and 6 the highest). Of these, 98% are public schools, with very particular characteristics, which produce different types of social phenomenon; one of these is the constant changing of schools that some students are going through, due to the fact that they come from low-resource families in migration situation. This results in a lack of belonging regarding the young people and with this the explanation of why the constant moving within the city. In other cases the students are sons or daughters of demobilized fighters, paramilitaries, guerrillas, families in precarious economic situation, with high rates of malnutrition, domestic violence, single mothers, rebuild families, families that belong to groups of gangs, teenage pregnancy, substance use and sale of drugs. Many of these young people do not finish their studies, due to the fact that they are obliged to fulfill responsibilities and necessities at home, having to work in temporary jobs or ending up being part of gangs and criminal organizations in the streets.

However, many of these young people seek to transform their socio-economic realities, aiming to establish new dynamics within their relational environment. They are young people with initiative, creativity and open their personal spaces to impact their lives through reflection and personal change. To them, the program has managed to represent a valid and legitimate option, which allows them to shine in their social environment, accomplishing an empowerment of the processes of transformation of their community and leading within their institutions new proposals of coexistence.

Within the target population are also teachers of the institutions. This group is known mostly for being the promoter of coexistence within the school, to seek new initiatives that impact the lives of students. However, we cannot ignore that these teachers often are part of the socio-economic context described above, which makes that this program generates as well changes in them, in the way they relate.

Finally, the program seeks to have an intervention with parents in schools where the program develops; however, the work with them has a lower impact, since the dynamics of most of these families is within informal economy, which makes it difficult to have an ongoing work with them. Many of these women and men have temporary jobs, working in family homes, as street vendors, construction workers, as guards or in other cases they are illiterate, which causes fear to participate in training processes. This type of work enables parents to program themselves and have time to continue these processes.

#### **¿ WHICH ARE ITS PURPOSES?**

The program for school conflict management “Hermes”, has as a strategic purpose to provide educational community members (students, teachers, schools and parents) with a set of pedagogical tools to transform their conflicts, through the approach to dialogue and an according field, in a respect for others background and in where the tolerance and understanding to the differences can be a reality.

As specific purposes, the program pretends:

- Realize a preliminary diagnosis of the educative context and establish the characterization of this diagnosis from the relationships dynamics.

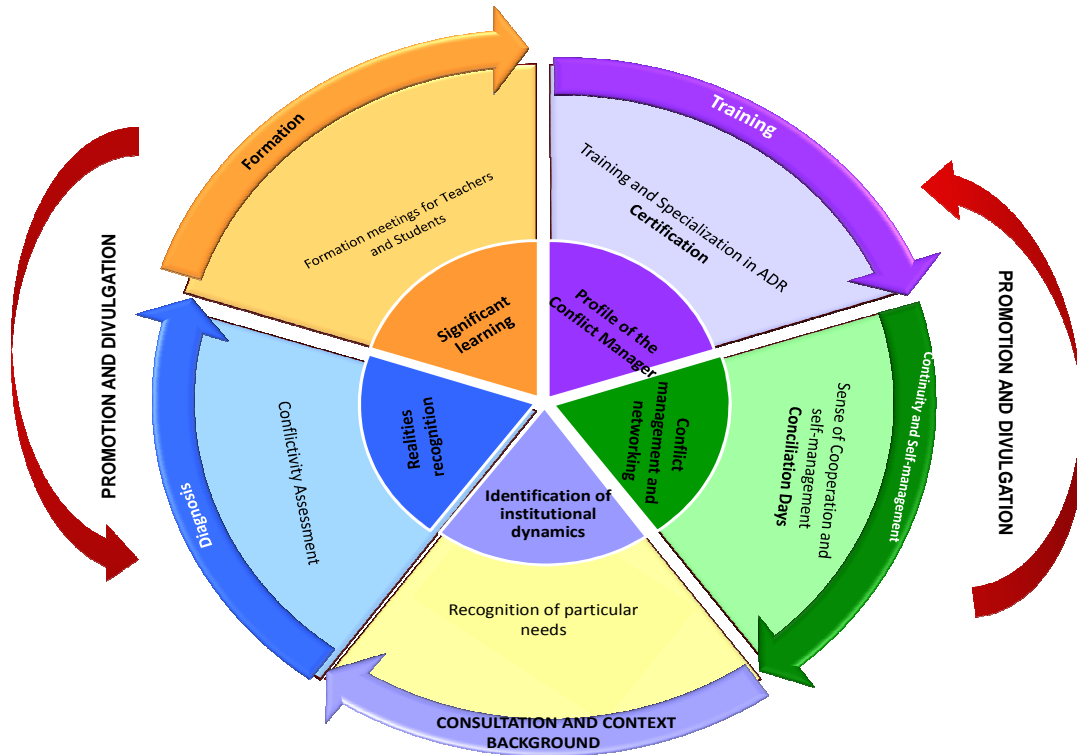
- Recognize the relationship dynamic of the educational community from the meanings that are built around the conflicts
- Construct and re-construct from the different interpretations that arise from the relations a plan of training for the administration and management of the conflict in the school environment of each educational institution.
- To build reflexive and participative scenarios of training with the different members of the educational community, aimed to develop skills and tools for the conflict managing in the school context.
- To create mechanisms to manage conflict transformation.
- To shape the conflict transformation board to address the conflicts between the different members of the educational community.
- To make alliances with the coexistence committee or other school government agencies.
- Establish an agreement and participation dynamic with the parents as partners of the conflict management team.
- From RENACEG, participate in the activities and proposals that contribute to the strengthening of the citizens' participation, as well as social responsibility.
- To build continuity, self-management and sustainability around the system of the educational conflict management plan to encourage the Hermes program.

To frame this purposes the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce has walked a long path, that involved time, ideas, resources, activities and concrete actions that enable the achievement of the Program, which improves constantly with the benefit contributions.

Following this, there is a detailed description of the content, activities and concrete actions that were carried out for the development and implementation of the program.

## ¿HOW IT WORKS?

### PROGRAM'S METHODOLOGICAL ROUTE



This program is designed to develop skills and competences in the conflict management at school, involving every member of the educational community in conversational networks that potentiate self-reflection and collective reflection about their own reality, which allows all these members to modify and make changes to their position about the daily context.

The program's strategic route is determined by a correlation of phases that seek to generate a process of consciousness, internalization, collective reflection and attitudinal changes, which has to be reflected in the educational community interaction. Those phases are:

1. Consultation & Background reading, which allow to contact the governmental organisms of the local education system (DILE -Dirección local de educación (Local education Direction), Secretaria de Educación Departamental (Secretary of Departamental Education), Directivos de instituciones (Institutions Directors), and Alcaldías Municipales (Municipal Mayors)). Once this contact is done, a process of identifying the background starts, which consists in an analysis of the relationship dynamic and conflicting aspects of the educational community, to notice the particular conditions of the context and define the path of the intervention that fit with the reality.

2. Divulcation and promotion, which main purpose is to share the program with the educational community, from methodological strategies that are according to the interests and motivations of the people involved.
3. Conflict Assessment, in which conversation scenarios are afforded from the teaching strategies, to respond to the most important interests and motivations of teenagers. There are spaces for self-reflection and collective reflection in which life backgrounds are identified to make evident the behavior systems that give meaning to daily actions respect to conflict.
4. Training for Teachers, that is a stage of the intervention prepared for the team of tutors to construct trust and self-recognition scenarios which seek to raise awareness in these people of the importance of their teaching role, the recognition of students from their plurality and ways to express their selves, as a possibility for mutual enrichment and construction of new relational references.
5. *Training in ADR*, in which we introduce young people and teachers into the comprehension of the conflict through the perspective of transformation, and the Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods.
6. *Specialization phase*, in which we initially selected the Alternative Method of Conflict Resolution after a collective analysis, evaluating the needs of each context and accordingly receive technical training in the operation of the method.
7. *Certification*, a ceremony is preceded by both the Director of the Arbitration and Conciliation Centre of the Bogota Chamber of Commerce and the Coordinator of the program, which seeks to recognize the trained students as conflict managers at school.
8. *Continuity*, seeks to consolidate a self-management committee within the educational institutions to create mechanisms that support the continuity of the program.
9. *Reconciling work-days*. Additionally, this program seeks to recognize managers as an important part in the community, both in local and district levels, and participate actively in the exercise of their rights, by building a new version of youth able to propose new strategies that contribute to peaceful living.

Hermes program offers an alternative to a peaceful resolution of conflicts within educational institutions, this is a program directed to the educational community, but basically helps students, and attends a level of interpersonal conflict that marks its relationships' dynamics with its peers in closed spaces such as schools, which normally evidence a culture that privileges the force and violence as a response to the conflict.

It is a collateral experience, which makes part of the institutional dynamics, and therefore does not imply that the student works overtime, it is incorporated into school time, which makes them internalize and value this experience, feeling it like part of their training and not as if it is increasing their academic load.

The program defines a level of intervention in training, not technical, and seeks the transformation of beliefs and culture of violence as a response to conflict, with a high educational content and the development of different abilities and social skills, which develop through reflection and self-reflection the axiological framework of students and teachers.

**¿ WHICH IS THE PARTICIPATION OF THE GROUPS OF INTEREST?**

## **State**

The CCB, along with the Secretary of Education, has realized several cooperation agreements that have permitted the union of efforts to consolidate spaces of coexistence with the educative community and the promotion of human rights and ADR mechanisms.

With the Ministry of Education the program is selected as part of the outstanding experiences portfolio, and highly recommended for its contribution on the development of the citizen competencies required by the Ministry's standards for the educational community.

Another relevant aspect is the citizen participation in the social control programs as a subject of rights and obligations, through formation conferences along with the Centre for Oversight Attention (CAV for its initials in Spanish) of the CCB, generating a new type of youth which perform oversight tasks and social control within their schools and community.

Along with the local authorities, the CCB establish permanent links and communication channels with the Office for Institutional Management of the District Secretary of Education, who is the entity in charge of the public policy making and the government plans in the education and coexistence area in Bogotá. Along with the Local Direction of Education (DILE for its initials in Spanish), the Office for Institutional Management and local schools we define the priority and urgency of intervention at such schools.

In the municipalities, links and communication channels are established with the local mayors and meetings are set up with the Secretary of Education, the Family Welfare Institute and other related entities. In such meetings, the intervention strategies and the schools which can be benefit by the program are defined. Finally, the process starts directly with the schools.

## **Schools**

The program has allowed that in most educational institutions, school government takes ADR methods as an important and definitive action to consolidate agreements that then become into standards, guidelines and policies.

Most of our young managers who have been trained in the program are themselves, also young student representatives. This allows them to fulfill their democratic task of representation of the interests of their peers and to disseminate, promote and lead new conflict management versions generating a process of empowerment from the positive and good practices as a mean of cultural and political transformation of the student community.

The ability to conclude and agree that the program develops as part of the skills that the individual must possess to properly manage the conflict, allows the appropriation of spaces for participation from which the students can serve as subjects of law. Actually there are 2694 living monitors, a figure which is the result of leadership and social skills acquired by Hermes program managers and that have been designed to perform a new role within their educational institutions managing to transform the dynamics of school life.

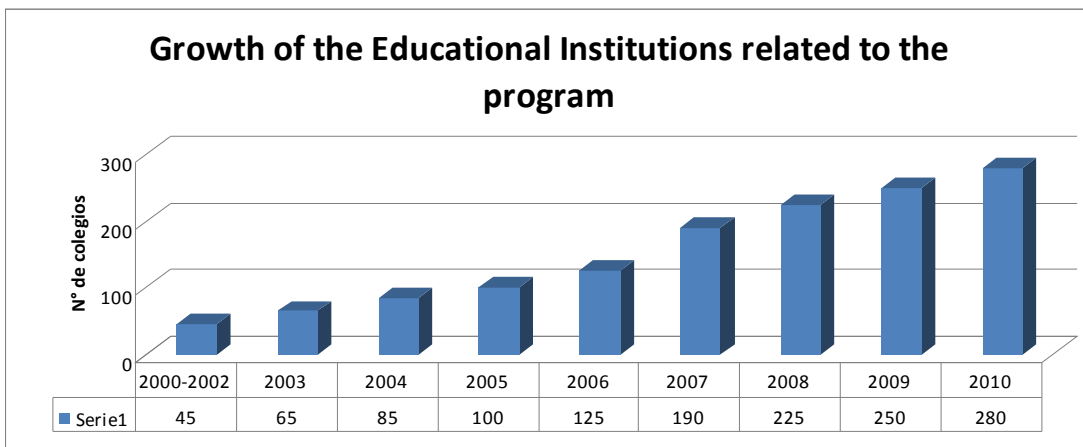
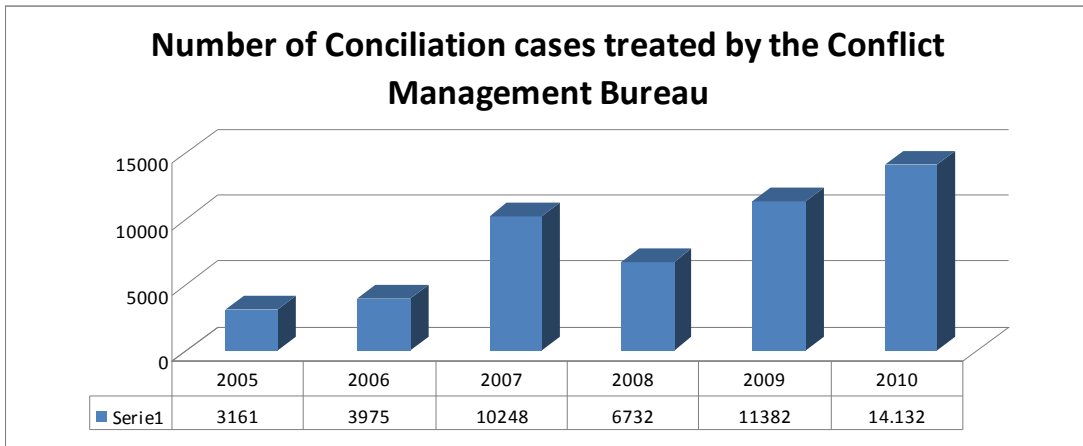
Another important aspect that directly responds to the needs of the educational institutions, is the work that the Network of Conciliators and School Conflict Managers (RENACEG for its initials in Spanish), which allows young people to voluntarily make conciliation workdays at other schools where the program for school conflict management Hermes may not be implemented. This work is done by the young managers and facilitators of the program that have been certified by the CCB and an average of 50 cases is attended per school every day either in the morning session or the afternoon session.

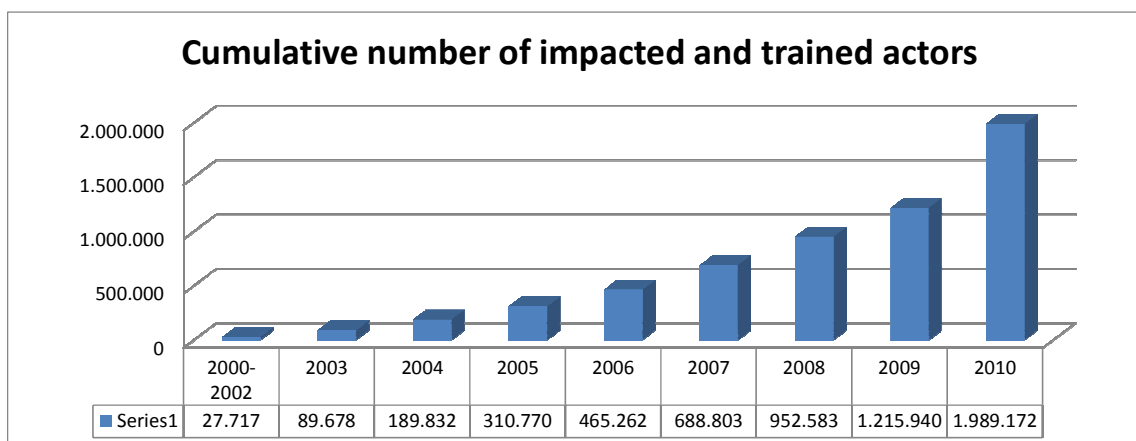
## Allies

The alliance between the CCB and the Inter-American Development Bank (BID for its initials in Spanish) has permitted the financing and the developing of the pilot experience to create a methodology for intervening the educational communities with ADR. After this support CCB assumed the developing of the program with own resources and the responsibility of the execution with a permanent orientation in research to assure innovation in the methodology.

On the other hand, the program has made some agreements of partial cooperation for example the Southern Living program that the KFW Bank Group is supporting the program with the District.

## RESULTS





In the last research of Clients Satisfaction and Loyalty elaborated by the marketing department of the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce, it was identified that inside the initial expectations of the directives of the educational institutions linked to the program, it was recognized the need to create more tools to resolve the conflicts and to cooperate in the promotion of a better coexistence inside the institution.

In the same way, teachers expressed in a similar line that it was identified as a need by the community to decrease the rates of the conflict occurrence, verbal and physical aggressions and, in general, to improve the coexistence inside the schools through the implementation of the program.

Going deeper in the investigation, the 93% of the directives show that their expectations were accomplished in a high percentage, as well as the 99% of the teachers, the 98% of the students and the 96% of the members of RENACEG. The previous results are an evidence of a timely, efficient and precise answer offered by the Hermes program, thanks to the implementations of innovative strategies that respond to a particular reality in each one of the educational contexts.

## RECOGNITION

The program has been recognized nationally and internationally; among the most prominent are:

**THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION** recognizes the program as a proposal that makes part of the portfolio of outstanding experiences, recommended by the Ministry of Education for its contribution to the development of citizenship skills required as standards for the school education sector.

### CEPAL – Economic Commission for Latin America

The Hermes Program won the second place in the contest "Experiences in Social Innovation", in 1000 proposals presented for the Social Innovation Fair held between 2008 to 2009 which was organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) with the WK KELLOGG Foundation support.

CEPAL, with the WK KELLOGG Foundation support, identified and analyzed 4800 social innovation experiences from Latin America and the Caribbean, gathered in five annual cycles of the competition. After the evaluation made by the committee of eminent, our program for school conflict management "Hermes" was selected among the 25 cases considered for being more innovative and generate more impact on social development in the region as the best educational model.

In 2010, members of the jury that in the five contest cycles awarded the 25 most remarkable initiatives of social innovation in the region has visited 5 of the winning projects, including the Hermes program. The

purpose of the visit was to identify the key factors for the success of these programs, to extract the lessons learned, to understand how to overcome obstacles and meet the social innovators.

#### **UNICEF**

This international body met the program through the ECLAC and made the decision to support the promotion and dissemination of this innovative experience to strengthen the practice of promoting initiatives that support the protection of the rights of children, this through the publication of a document based on the program, and the compilation of testimonies.

The testimonies can be seen in the following link: <http://vimeo.com/9387342>