

Empower 19 youth living on the streets in Mexico: Towards a safe future and an independent life free of violence

I. INTRODUCTION

Living in a violent home severely inhibits a child's ability to achieve healthy development, secure future employment and overcome conditions of poverty. Additionally, if the causes and consequences of violence remain untreated, it is likely that a child's skills for interacting positively with his or her environment will be damaged, thus perpetuating the cycle of family violence from one generation to another.

As a direct result of the violence, poverty and abuse that children experience at home or the communities where they live, each year thousands of children in Mexico are pushed to a life based on the street – either because it is the source of economic income for the child or because the street becomes the place he or she calls home. Life on the street exposes children to many additional harms such as physical and mental abuse as well as economic exploitation. Likewise, children living or working on the streets are denied the right to education as well as the opportunity to develop necessary skills to lead productive lives. The difficulties that these children face every day make them one of the most vulnerable segments of society. To address and prevent these difficulties, it is critical to focus on the underlying conditions and consequences of violence in the home and to work to resolve those conditions so that children can grow up in a safe environment.

II. ABOUT JUCONI FOUNDATION

Founded in Puebla, Mexico, in 1989 by a Mexican-British initiative, Fundación Junto Con los Niños de Puebla, A.C. (JUCONI Foundation) is a non-profit, non-political and non-religious civil society organization.

JUCONI Foundation is committed to preventing and healing the aftermath of violence that affects children, youth and their families who live in marginalized situations and extreme poverty. To achieve these goals, JUCONI works with three key populations: (1) children who live on the streets; (2) children who work on the streets, and (3) children who work in the market. JUCONI's approach to working with each of these groups is to provide long-term personalized therapeutic interventions to ensure that each child and every member of his or her family acquires the emotional, cognitive and social skills necessary to integrate into the family and society.

JUCONI has more than 26 years of experience providing this type of intensive therapeutic attention to children and their families in Puebla. Based on this experience, JUCONI is recognized as a world leader organization in preventing and treating family violence as well as promoting children's successful reintegration back into safe homes after living on the street. As a result, JUCONI now addresses the dual problems of family violence and street-involvement through two complementary pillars: the JUCONI Program and the Technical Support Center.

1. Through the **JUCONI Program** in Puebla, we carry out direct services for children and families. Specifically, we provide long-term personalized educative-therapeutic interventions, with a focus on building up strengths and positive models. These services are provided to both children and their families in three JUCONI subprograms:
 - a. Street Child Subprogram. In this program, we provide services in our two children's residential homes, JUCONI House and the Youth House, as well as in children's family homes.
 - b. Working Child Subprogram. In this program, we provide services in the families' own homes.
 - c. Market Child Subprogram. In this program we provide services at our day center, called the JUCONI Center.

The JUCONI Program provides the following services to ensure positive and permanent changes in four key life areas for each child, youth and family:

- a. Academic achievement: ensuring access to school and an ability to establish and maintain academic improvement.
- b. Positive social relationships: creating the ability to foster and maintain positive relationships with peers, neighbors and authority figures.
- c. Economic opportunities: ensuring the acquisition of skills and values that guarantee success in formal employment.
- d. Family integration: creating positive communication, free from violence and enhancing family unity to protect all members.

Each year, the JUCONI Program provides services to approximately 350 children and 120 families in Puebla, facilitating children's full reintegration in their families and society in 8 out of every 10 cases.

2. Through the **TSC (Technical Support Center)**, we collaborate with other organizations and professionals who serve similar populations of children and families. Specifically, the TSC has three main objectives:
 - a. To develop new methodologies and materials that enhance the quality of the services offered through the JUCONI Program.
 - b. To share with other organizations and government programs the tools and methodologies that have proved to be effective in preventing and eliminating family violence, and
 - c. To advocate for policies and solutions that help to break cycles of family violence and exclusion. These three tasks are designed to ensure that JUCONI provides more solid and successful solutions for the most vulnerable children and families in Mexico and the world.

Each year, the TSC offers training to 500-600 individuals from approximately 100 organizations that work with children and families throughout the world. As a result, JUCONI indirectly impacts the lives of approximately 12,520 children on an annual basis.

III. THE CHILD STREET SUBPROGRAM AND JUCONI'S YOUTH HOUSE

The **Child Street Subprogram** (CSSP) benefits children who live or spend long periods of time on the streets and provides them with individual, family and communitarian educational and therapeutic services to heal traumas and restructure their confidence and strengths as well as those of their families. CSSP services are provided in two residential homes, JUCONI House and the Youth House.

JUCONI House is a residential community of 20 boys and eight staff members. It is an 'open door' community where children come and go to school and other activities in accordance with their age and circumstances and with the knowledge and permission of educators. Everyday life is structured around routines, schooling, sports, art and creative activities etc.; within this structured environment, children have a time for therapy (Special Time/play therapy) every week. To prepare for reintegration with their families, children from JUCONI House visit their families with JUCONI educators either fortnightly or monthly and progress to more frequent visits and overnight stays to which they come and go alone before ultimately returning home with ongoing support from JUCONI educators and a Family Team.

The **Youth House** is a residential community that provides a home for 12 young men ages 14-15 to 18 (21 in some cases) in situations where reintegration into their families is no longer possible and at least to other 7 who receive JUCONI's services without living in the House. The Youth House provides similar supports systems to those of JUCONI House, and also focuses on preparing youth to live an independent life and become fully integrated into society as young adults. Children live in the Youth House for a minimum of two years, and are only admitted after previously living in JUCONI House, where they developed skills to live in society and learned tools to heal the wounds caused by the violence they have experienced in the past. With the Youth House, JUCONI ensures that even when family reintegration is not an option, young men can still have access to a promising future free of violence. Once they are ready to live an independent life (around 18 -21 years), these young men then graduate from the JUCONI Program, allowing other youth in need to also benefit from these services.

Some of the specific services offered in the Youth House include: psycho-educational, therapeutic, social and recreational activities, as well as medical care, balanced food and workshops on personal finances. The Youth House environment also provides young men with a sense of physical, emotional, moral and social security where they can achieve emotional stability, maintain confident communication and focus on preparing for work in a way that allows them to cope with challenges in life.

Educators at the Youth House work with each young man to make a life plan that addresses the challenges he will face after graduating from the Program. This life plan is reviewed every six months by the educator or therapist so that the young man establishes achievable goals. Academically, residents of the Youth House are provided with vocational guidance to choose the career for which they have skills and they receive close support in pursuing career goals. They can also participate in the Labor Culture Workshop (LCW), which helps them develop skills for entering the labor market and become fully reintegrated into society.

Additionally, the "Youth Club" (a social space that offers a range of activities and opportunities for reflection and personal growth), seeks to provide Youth House residents with an opportunity to recognize and reinforce the skills that each one of them has, and to help them learn new skills. For this reason, JUCONI constantly aims to offer youth workshops, training and business visits to help the boys develop practical skills that will enable them to expand their education and employment options.

Finally, even when boys are staying in the Youth House, relationships with families are built and sustained to ensure that these young men have family support as the move into their adult lives.

IV. FUNDING REQUEST – YOUTH HOUSE OWNERSHIP

JUCONI works hard to maintain high standards not only in the services it provides, but also in the infrastructure where it carries out those services. JUCONI allocates the majority of its resources to promoting children's full development and successful reintegration into society, however, maintaining each building or facility in optimal conditions requires significant external financial support.

JUCONI has been able to permanently acquire certain equipment and facilities for children, youth and families to ensure adequate, comfortable and safe places to play and learn, and also have privacy during their therapy sessions and trainings. The Youth House, however, has always been rented rather than owned, thus generating high expenses that could otherwise be allocated into the Program implementation. As a result, we seek to use the Global Giving platform to raise funds that will assist us in purchasing a permanent Youth House that could fulfill the requirements of the educative-therapeutic intervention process, as well as the environmental needs of the young men living there.

Objective:

The main objective of this project is to purchase a facility where we can establish a permanent Youth House which will in turn help us to guarantee the successful reintegration into society of Youth House residents by maintaining high-quality standards both in the services provided and in the surrounding infrastructure and environment.

Features of the house:

JUCONI has already identified a property in Puebla that meets the needs and requirements of the youth and staff. Its value is \$198,020 USD (\$3 million 200 thousand MXN) although we are only requesting funding for \$30,500 USD. The property has the following features:

- Land area of 410 m²
- Construction of 429m²
- The ground floor has 10 spaces including: cellar, kitchen, living room, educators office, dorm and playroom
- 3 bedrooms on the first floor (in the back part)

- Possibility of using the rooftop as a roof garden, where young men would have an area for planting and amusement

Benefits of owning the house:

By allowing JUCONI to save up to \$1,176 USD (\$19,000 MXN) each month, we can ensure the maintenance of the Youth House and minimize monthly costs. Additionally, the certainty of not having to move the location of the Youth House again in the future strengthens the sense of belonging and safety among the youth residents. The Youth House location in the downtown area of Puebla also represents an increase in the young men's occupational opportunities because there are many job options there as well as affordable housing and nearby resources like museums, transportation routes, schools, etc.

Other benefits:

- **In the short-term:** provide educational and therapeutic services to youth affected by violence to support their full development and successful reintegration into society.
- **In the medium-term:** prevent and treat both family violence and risks faced by children living and working in the street.
- **In the long-term:** diminish the rates of family violence and children/youth living on the street in Mexico and other countries, as well as replicate JUCONI's model through its constant consultancy and technical assistance to other organizations with similar work.

V. JUCONI FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

For nearly 20 years, JUCONI was mostly funded by European foundations and multilateral organizations such as UNESCO and the European Community. About five years ago, organizations in Mexico became ineligible for these resources after the country was reclassified as a "middle income" country. Since that time, JUCONI has been successful in gaining the trust and commitment of Mexican society and has been able to guarantee its subsistence through a diverse portfolio of individual donors as well as Mexican and some foreign foundations.

In order to review JUCONI's financial statements please refer to the Annual Reports attached to our application in Global Giving.