

Young Health Programme in Portugal

The current economic crisis is impacting many families in Portugal with rising unemployment rates and increased poverty – a recent study found that 21% of Portuguese children live below the poverty line. Adolescence is a period of vulnerability, agitation, conflict and development. Often adolescents are aware of the real risks associated with certain practices and behaviours, however, they choose to ignore them. This emphasizes the importance of ‘participatory strategies’ to promote healthy lifestyles involving active participation, not only from the individual but also the family, peers and community in general.

The Portuguese Young Health Programme: LIKE ME, promotes the mental health of pre-teens, between the ages of 10 and 12, with behavioural issues, triggered mainly by self-concept, self-esteem and self-image problems. Many of these youth have little or no access to healthcare and live in vulnerable situations.





What do we want to achieve through the Programme?

General Objective

Encourage youths to take control of their health and well-being, achieving self-reliance and self-respect and thereby preventing future risk behaviours. This will be achieved through personalised and specialised support from a multidisciplinary team using a peer education methodology, in the scope of informal education.

Specific Goals

1. By 2015, increase self-esteem in youths by 30%.
2. By 2015, increase the number of youths trained in the field of mental health by 10%.

What activities are taking place locally?

- **Research:** a survey has been conducted amongst school children to assess attitudes to mental health. This will help determine and prioritise information needs and provide a baseline to evaluate programme outcomes
- **Collaboration:** establish networks and engage with other relevant projects and neighbourhoods
- **Thematic workshops:** focusing on recreational, sports and self-expression activities to apply the methodology of non-formal education
- **Training:** youths will be trained in the area of mental health through peer education and provided with ongoing support, supervision and monitoring throughout the project
- **Theatre:** a series of 'Cine Forum' soap opera style productions will be produced on key topics lasting 5 minutes featuring key characters, aged 10-12, that go through various situations
- **Holiday camp:** it is planned to invite all those who have participated in the project from the beginning to a holiday camp, with the aim of producing a 'Manual of Good Practice'

What has been achieved so far?

The survey has been undertaken by 113 school children and, in late 2014, five of the seven subjects initially planned have been covered.

Local partner

Médicos do Mundo (MdM) is a non-governmental organisation, established in 1999, that develops national and international projects. MdM's mission is the provision of healthcare to the most vulnerable of populations, both in emergency situations and in combating social exclusion.

MdM have identified two strategic priorities:

- **Development** – medium and long-term projects with the objective of providing the basis for a broader and more sustained development of health:
 - National Projects – actions aimed at people excluded from our society and who live on the limit of the social resources to which they are entitled
 - Information, Education and Communication – initiatives aimed at informing the public of the most neglected structural issues that may be subject to disclosure and education
- **Emergency** – urgent aid in regions affected by hunger, war, epidemics or natural disasters

<http://www.medicosdomundo.pt/pt>

<http://www.astrazeneca.pt/Responsibility/young-health-programme>