

# Mini-Case: Crear Vale la Pena

Ines Sanguinetti, founder of Crear Vale la Pena (CLVP, Creating is Worthwhile), was in Berlin when she received the “quake e-mail”, as she described it, a five line message sent by CVLP’s major donor to inform of a 50% cut in donations beginning the following quarter. Ines called her executive director, Rodrigo Kon, and said she was returning to BA on Friday in the early morning and she wanted to meet with CVLP’s executive committee by noon. “I want Juan to attend”, said Ines before she hung up. Juan Pena, chairman of the Fundacion El Otro (FEO, The Other Foundation) was Ines’ husband and CVLP’s co-founder.

## Ines Sanguinetti and CVLP’s Origins

Ines Sanguinetti, founder of Crear Vale la Pena (*Creating is Worthwhile*), was a professional dancer and choreographer. She was twice granted a scholarship by the American Dance Festival and joined the International Choreographer’s Program in 1991. She co-directed and independent ballet company, and toured across the globe.

To her, art was a basic need, like eating or sleeping. She believed that art was a transforming force in the development of social identity and meaning. “While poverty undermines individuals, art can convey the meaning of life and act as a social driver.”

CLVP was born in 1991 as part of the FEO’s school support program. FEO had been created the year before to provide support for children at social risk in the La Cava neighborhood of Buenos Aires, one of the city’s most heavily populated shantytowns. There was

no sewage, waste collection or public lighting. Dwellers were mostly immigrants from elsewhere in Argentina and neighboring countries.

Sanguinetti remembered that at first this foundation did not know how to mitigate poverty. But she began to see artistic education as a means to mitigate social risk and lack of identity, and convinced FEO to fund a course on art. The course, which included music workshops and dancing lessons, became very popular with students not only from La Cava, but surrounding neighborhoods as well.

## CVLP's Evolution

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*Fundacion CVLP* was created in 1996. It developed a social inclusion program based on art education. CVLP focused on two issues, poverty and isolation. Poverty was an economic problem, but isolation was an individual and social condition that transcended material needs. In her words "social isolation erodes the foundations supporting socially valued identity, until it is cut off and undermined".

CVLP initially relied on funds provided by FEO and its members and sponsors. One member, however, became a major direct donor. Subsequently, CLVP also received a grant from the Social Development Ministry, and later by the Avina Foundation with indirect support from *Fondation de France*. With additional resources, CLVP increased workshop offerings, hired new teachers and purchased equipment. By 2002, CLVP had provided services for 4,820 students, and trained 45 teachers and 120 others in art-related crafts. CVLP also supported artistic productions, including art festivals. Kon, the Executive Director, recalled the first CVLP show

staged at Recoleta, a wealthy Buenos Aires district, and site of many of the most important cultural institutions in Latin America:

These were artists, who were moving audiences with their compelling creativity and not because they came from la Cava. They were effectively building a new collective social identity. Everyone of them went all out to make this production possible -- those on stage, those on lightening, and those ushering people to their seats.

The show, *From la Cava to Recoleta*, was a big success, triggering articles in the nation's leading newspapers and magazines. Edgardo, a 20 yr/old student, was quoted:

The center has helped us to go places, to show what we can do, to show *ourselves*, to travel... Without realizing it, we are learning a new vocabulary, a new language. I remembered what I was like before and I see what I have become... 5 years ago, I was wandering the streets. Now, I have a path, I am headed somewhere.

## CVLP's Situation

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Despite these successes, however, CVLP faced a terribly difficult situation. The "quake-mail" was received as Argentina was reeling with a worsening economic crisis, which had already stressed CLVP's employees and resources. CVLP had no experience in fundraising; its clients were desperately poor, and because its revenues were so small, it was unable to qualify for grants from larger foundations, like Fondation France.

Kon, like others at CVLP, were shocked by the news, and wondered how CVLP could possibly continue to be able to fulfill its commitments.