Improving the quality of life for children in developing countries with the Waal Foundation and Moodle

The Waal Foundation (DWF) is a Dutch non-profit, non-religious and non-political organisation, with head offices in the USA and a regional office for Latin America in Ecuador.

The organisation was established in 1985 through a personal grant, and today the focus is on educational strategy to promote the prevention of birth defects. DWF does this through their PreNatal program.

The program is delivered online through an educational platform (Moodle) throughout DWF’s main working areas of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia in the Andean Region and Honduras and El Salvador in Central America.

The PreNatal program is also endorsed by universities in the five countries where the foundation is established.
Problem

To deliver the PreNatal program in the most cost-effective and best practice manner throughout the five countries that DWF operates in, the organisation required a space that would allow for:

- the integration and use of their work methodology (mediation and popular education);
- various resources such as videos, discussion forums, evaluations, surveys and other tools that serve for the strengthening and construction of knowledge.
- Offering blended courses that will allow professionals and practitioners to combine work and the study of our program.

After doing research on different LMS (Learning Management System), the organisation concluded that Moodle was the best option.

Action

“When looking for LMS within our locality, we saw that many educational institutions opted for Moodle, therefore, we asked for recommendations and experiences of their use, all were very positive and encouraged us to use it,” said Marco Vernooij, Director of DWF.

Marco’s team at DWF analysed Moodle’s technical conception, philosophy of use, techno-pedagogical possibilities, the user friendly system and the ability to adapt it to our needs.

“So far everything has gone well without complications. Moodle has gone hand in hand with the advancement of technologies and we as an organisation along with these advances. We also appreciate open access and support,” commented Marco.

Results

DWF deliver their PreNatal program through Moodle which they call Aula Virtual PreNatal (AVP).

AVP is used to:

- Train the program’s mediators on the prevention of birth defects during pregnancy, birth and early childhood on 3 levels Superior (Postgraduate professionals), Medium (Undergraduate professionals) and Basic (Communities).

The mediators act as change agents using a methodology of mediation and popular education and incorporating Human Rights and Intercultural approaches. Within the program, mediators dedicate time to put into practice what they have learned working with the target population and we expect they continue to do that after the program has finished. DWF train health, education and community development professionals and community leaders.

- Apply a holistic approach and train mediators on food security, chronic and non-transmittable diseases, psychology, nutrition, positive bounding, pregnancy aggressions (chemical, biological and sociocultural) as well as how to conduct positive change within the target population and on the institutional level.

- Encourage adoption of healthy practices by men and women in reproductive age as well on institutional empowerment on community and society level. We work with 3 campaigns the ABCD A = Alimentarse bien / Good nutrition, B= Buscar Ayuda / Ask for medical assistance, C= cuidar de agresiones / take care of chemical and sociocultural aggressions and D=Dar Amor / Give love. The second campaign is 3+9 = health and happy baby which means a 12 months’ pregnancy, 3 to plan and 9 of pregnancy. The third campaign is “Sin Daños a Terceros” to prevent teen pregnancy which is associated to children that born with disabilities.
• Better organise the Prenatal program, to look for new professional talents and to modify certain administrative processes, as well as to improve our methodology, resources and learning activities.

Currently, DWF is using discussion forums, collaborative activities and social networks to show the work of each of their students, for example:

https://www.facebook.com/PreNatalFdW/videos/1384768518272346/


https://www.facebook.com/pg/PreNatalFdW/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1384997221582809

• Create Learning Objects for the use of their students, to place them within their Moodle and thus continue to innovate their training process. An example can be seen in this subject of preventing teen pregnancy with their campaign Sin Daños a Terceros: https://avp.prenatal.tv/doc/obj_sda_3eros/story_html5.html

The organisation has also made the program optimally accessible from smartphones, tablets or other devices from the web and through the Moodle Mobile App.

“We think Moodle is simple to use for both students and teachers (learning curve),” concluded Marco.

“The advance in the technological structure thanks to the work of its nucleus of developers (before 1.9 now 3.4)”, indicated Marcelo Sotaminga, IT Coordinator.

“Strong support community for any questions, free software GNU (General Public License). Extensive documentation”, commented Marcelo Sotaminga, IT Coordinator.

“As a nonprofit, we are always open and intended to share knowledge and we believe Moodle is doing the same”, commented Sebastián Salgado, Project Manager.