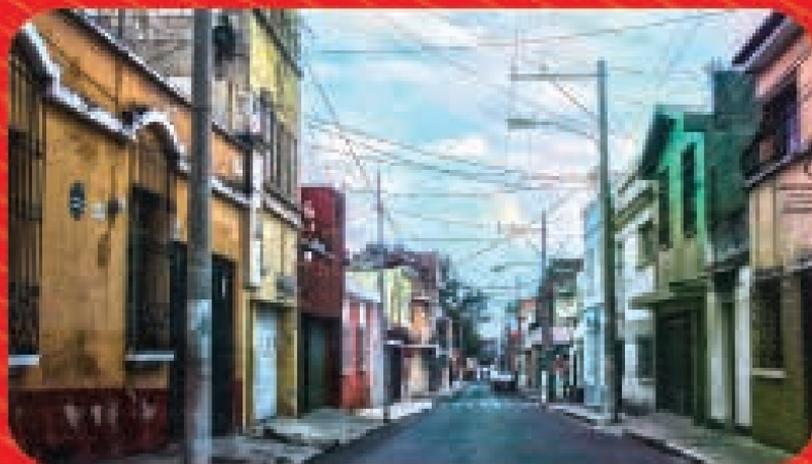


Implementing Local Peace Networks in Urban Spaces:

Lessons Learned

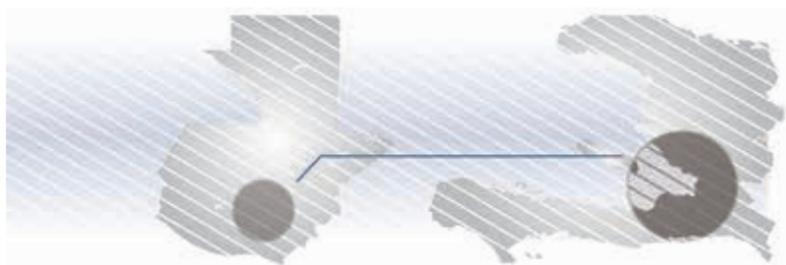


**American Friends
Service Committee**

Quaker values in action

**Implementing
Local Peace Networks
in Urban Spaces:**

Lessons Learned



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Implementing Local Peace Networks in Urban Spaces: Lessons Learned

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Introduction

Local Peace Networks (LPNs) are groups that work toward resolving community disputes, particularly in areas experiencing high-levels of violence and social exclusion. Their underlying objective is to transform the conflict's roots and build local capacities for peace. Each LPN is typically made up of small groups of six to 12 participants (named as Micro Peace-Networks, MPN) who become facilitators in their respective communities.

This report gathers observations and recommendations from participants in “Developing Conflict Analysis Tools for the Local Peace Networks,” a Dialogue and Exchange Program (DEP) hosted by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in September 2012. Prior to this conference, practitioners had applied a number of LPN-related tools (see Appendix 1) in Guatemala and Haiti to reduce urban insecurity. The conference in Haiti allowed practitioners to pull together their experiences and clarify the LPN methodology.

Together with its local partners, the AFSC has played a pivotal role in the development of LPNs. As an international Quaker nongovernmental organization, the AFSC works to address the root causes of conflict and build the potential for lasting peace. Questions or comments about this report should be addressed to AFSC's Haiti office, as listed on the facing page.



About Local Peace Networks

Following five years of progress, AFSC and its local partners are close to establishing the LPN's in Latin America and the Caribbean. The foundation of the LPN process rests on developing communal trust and cooperation, and addressing the root causes of conflict in order to build lasting peace. The methodology involves facilitating small-group dialogues with six to 12 participants in a given urban contested space. Participants are active community members who then facilitate community-level peace building. Adapted from the World Café methodology, the LPN uses a three-step meeting process:

- 1) communicating preliminary ideas, problems, and community concerns;
- 2) working at a deeper level to understand the dispute and find viable alternatives to the problems; and
- 3) implementing actions and evaluating those actions in the community.¹

The process culminates in a larger cycle based on the conflict transformation paradigm of professor John Lederach. This technique sanctions the disputing parties to host a permanent and cyclical process of analysis, planning, experiencing, and evaluation in order to “read and face the facts in the community, in terms of peace.” Asociación Grupo CEIBA² originally designed this methodology in Guatemala, through a project conducted in partnership with AFSC in 2010.

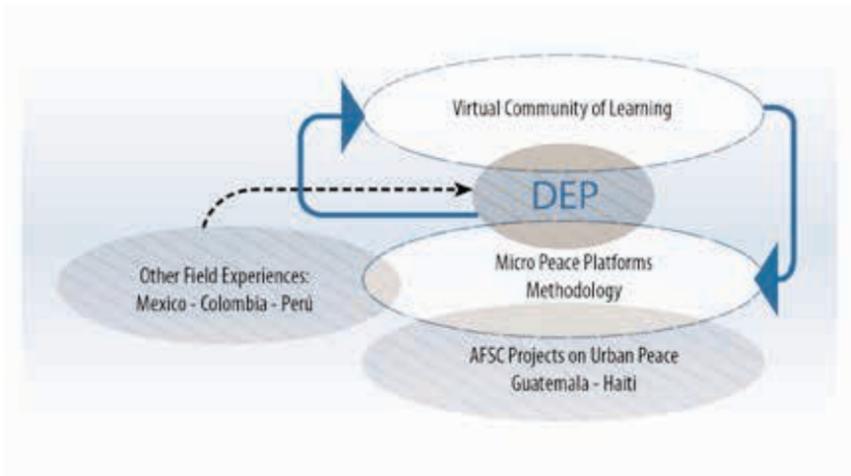
A core feature of the LPN methodology is the “theory of change.” In a process known as “backward mapping,” facilitators (or planners) think about the long-term goal in backward steps and make intermediate- to short-term changes in order to achieve the desired result. The outcomes of each step serve as preconditions for the next stage. These connected outcomes are mapped into

1 The World Café methodology draws on seven integrated design principles to act as a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogues. See www.theworldcafe.com/method.html

2 Association for the Promotion and Development of the Community

what's known as an outcomes framework. This graphic representation of the change process then guides the planners in their work.

The Virtual Community of Learning (VCL) has guided the development of the LPNs. During the past five years the VCL has drawn in more than 50 professionals and people with field experience who represent the learning process and exchange lessons on how to approach urban insecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean. In particular, the VCL analyzes and improves the peace building approach in urban areas, especially among groups affected by urban violence such as women and youth.

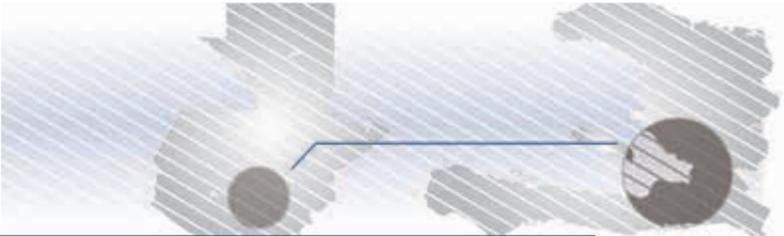


Guided by the VCL, the DEPs serve as an information sharing conference guiding the development of the Local Peace Networks

Prior to the Haiti conference in September, two important DEP conferences took place in 2012 involving more than 25 practitioners and professionals:

- **“Framing Urban Peace Platforms,”** Guatemala City (March 28-29, 2012). This conference analyzed the achievements and challenges of the LPN methodology.

- **“Developing Conflict Analysis Tools for the Local Peace Networks,”** *Port au Prince, Haiti (August 24-26, 2012)*. This conference was the culmination of a series of discussions with the VCL for Urban Peace and Conflict Transformation. It finalized the methodological details and transferred and promoted it as a general methodology for urban communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Context in Guatemala and Haiti

Many parts of Latin America and the Caribbean experience high levels of urban violence. The conflicts can range from intergang warfare, the narcotics trade, and other criminal activities, to civil wars and state-directed forms of violence. Guatemala and Haiti are considered among the most dangerous countries in the world. Both are plagued by widespread urban violence.

The AFSC is active in the civil society networks of both countries and has fostered widespread partnerships engaged at the grassroots level to bring support to people in need. Together with its local partners, AFSC has implemented a number of peace building programs to stem the violence. In 2011-2012, LPN programs were initiated in an attempt to reduce urban insecurity, increase youth civic engagement at the local level, and plan and create circles to heal the social fabric affected by violence. Programs such as the Mobile Mediation Unit and Conflict Mediation, On-street Interviews (face-to-face community research), and the Youth Focus Groups have been important features of the LPN's development.

Guatemala

Following almost four decades of civil war that left more than 200,000 dead (mostly civilians), Guatemala has been going through a slow process of recovery, justice, and reconciliation. The country remains a violent society.

With an average of 36 per 100,000..., the violent death rate in Central America is the highest in the world. However, this extremely high level of violence hides important differences within and across the countries of Central America. National sources reveal that in 2011 the so-called Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) concentrated 89 percent of the total homicides in the region, with firearms used in the vast majority of cases.³

Given this context, AFSC has been working with Grupo Ceiba to set up a conflict mediation device. The “Peace Bus” (“Burrita de la Paz”) mobile unit is designed to assist people suffering from violence (physical, emotional, psychological, etc.). People convene in the bus and familiarize themselves with the process before commencing mediation. The process is based on the LPN methodology. The bus makes it possible to initiate dialogue since 30-to-40 people are seen weekly. The Peace Bus also is a symbolic space or sanctuary of peace providing a concrete and tangible symbol of the LPNs.

Haiti

Violence has plagued much of Haiti’s history. Brutal dictatorships, state-directed violence, rebellions, and instability dominated much of the 20th century. Ongoing violence as a result of drug trafficking, rival gangs, and opposing political groups, combined with unaddressed social inequality between the majority Creole-speaking-Afro descendants and the White (and mixed) minority, contin-

3 KOFF Swiss Peace Report on Armed Violence in Central America, October 2012.

ues to trouble the nation. Human rights abuses are widespread.

The World Bank reports that much of the country's violent crime takes place in Port-au-Prince's urban slums. The root causes of the violence include deep structural inequalities in income and opportunity, rapid urbanization without proper infrastructure and services, a large and growing youth population, the ongoing presence of gangs and their financial backers, the availability of weapons, the expansion of drug trafficking networks, and a weak criminal justice system.⁴

To make matters worse, Haiti is vulnerable to natural disasters. The impact of the 2010 earthquake and the subsequently slow recovery process has heightened violence. The AFSC and its local partners have cited problems that increase tensions and violent incidents. These include scarcity of water, food, and sanitation; the psychological difficulties experienced by many people ("people act different now"); limited access to resources; conflict over land; violence against women; youth unemployment; and lack of safe spaces. AFSC and its local partners used the Citizen Score Cards technique (a LPN tool, see appendix) to evaluate the situation. The evaluation revealed that people are living in greater fear in the selected neighborhoods due to violence and other problems.

A central feature of the project in Haiti is the creation of conflict resolution programs at local schools. For example, youth, students, teachers, administrators, and parents in the city of Croix des Bouquets convene weekly to discuss violence prevention and conflict transformation in the five neighborhoods. The group uses conflict transformation tools with theater, conflict participative tools, community dialogue, and mediation (see appendix). The nearby school, Saint Charles Borromeo, is becoming a model of peace building education and community outreach in Haiti – 650 students and their parents are involved in violent conflict anticipation through the school peace LPNs.

4 Violence in the City - World Bank



About the Haiti DEP Conference

Sixteen participants took part in the September 2012 DEP conference “Developing Conflict Analysis Tools for the Local Peace Networks.” Practitioners, academics, and AFSC’s local partners in Guatemala and Haiti were part of the VCL (see appendix). Most participants were involved in the design, evaluation, and/or implementation process for the LPN methodology and had field experience.

The gathering focused on enhancing the capacities of youth and community leaders to analyze local conflicts and apply the Local Peace Networks methodology in their efforts to reduce violence. It sought to fully document the methodology in order to promote it as a *general* methodology for the LPN’s in urban communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Haiti DEP sought to address a key problem identified during the Guatemala DEP: the assumption that following the LPN the conflict analysis was “formally finished,” despite the fact that participants did not fully comprehend the sources of tension or discover their own potential for peace. It was thought that if this problem were not correctly addressed, the methodology would result in a superficial response to the underlying causes of conflict. Another weakness in the methodology was how to lead LPN’s into true connector and divider analyses – their very starting point.

Another goal was to identify some key questions:

- What are the most appropriate tools to help the LPNs identify the roots of violence in urban disputed spaces?
- How do we apply these tools with young people, women, and community members who are not familiar with conflict analysis?
- How do we link such analysis with urban planning at a local level?

Based on these questions, the DEP designed a discussion process to develop a handbook on LPNs that includes the most relevant analytical tools.



Recommendations from the conference

Practitioners' comments confirmed that LPNs were on the right track. Some were general observations while others specified the tool.

- The facilitators possess sound knowledge of the local context and reality.
- Youth were well organized (Indigenous youth project and Croix des Bouquets Project).
- There was adequate participation of various actors.
- Solid foundations were laid to generate moving areas of peace or resolving conflicts (Guatemala).
- Local based leadership generated confidence.
- The methodology is replicable and adaptable, and applicable to real problems, values, and practices.
- The methodology promoted dialogue between generations.
- The methodology has improved capacities for territorial urban planning (Leogane project).
- The "donkey of peace" (Peace truck conflict mediation mobile unit) is a good entry point for the community.

The DEP conference proceedings revealed a number of valuable lessons learned on LPN. The seven lessons featured below capture different stages of how to establish LPNs. They also can be seen as a step-by-step strategy for perfecting the LPNs:

1. Understand the local context
2. Determine the scope
3. Find participants
4. Discover social connectors
5. Overcome power structures
6. Respond to difficulties
7. Influence public policy

1. Understand the local context

During this phase of the analysis, community members and facilitators identify the relevant community factors that could affect their understanding of peace and violence (e.g., economic, social, political, and cultural factors).

Adapting the LPNs to each local context is a necessary challenge. Differences among settings matter and failing to adapt to a particular context will likely hinder the LPN's effectiveness. For these reasons, facilitators and participants must identify and grasp local (and also inter-local) factors such as:

- Manners and customs
- Languages and dialects
- Cultural views, feelings, emotions, patterns, and circumstances

Some places also have greater divisions, conflicts, and uses of violence that must be taken into consideration.

Among the tools that can be adapted for local contexts are discussion groups to analyze the context, creating maps of local violence, and socio-drama (using dramatization and role playing to identify and remedy intergroup problems and conflicts).

2. Determine the scope

In this stage, participants determine where and how to develop an LPN with the organization that initially supported the methodology. This involves identifying viable communities in need of peace building, establishing an appropriate entry point and corresponding exit strategy, and ensuring the quality and long-term stability of the LPN.

Getting these factors right will help to ensure the quality, stability, and continuity of the LPN. It is crucial to build trust and keep promises made to the community.

More successful projects take place in communities where the theoretical principles are better understood. Furthermore, if community members discover and adapt this methodology to suit their specific needs, there's a greater likelihood of ongoing peace work after the project cycle ends.

3. Find participants

Since the main goal of the LPN is to transform the roots of conflict and build the local capacity for peace, finding participants is vital. Is not possible to begin sustainable community peace building work without understanding what people, institutions, programs, or experiences are connecting community members despite the conflicts.

During this phase, facilitators identify the key people who can start connecting others in the community, based on criteria such as reliability, respect, and experience in the community.

A group of six-to-12 people is the ideal size for community discussions, these groups are named Micro Peace-Networks. For example, in the community of "El Limon" in Guatemala City, this number allowed people to build trust, have a real opportunity to participate, and give their opinions in a safe manner. Most of the participants became more friendly neighbors after participating in MPNs.

In Haiti, however, the LPNs themselves do not help develop interactions with parents, teachers, or other groups since participants are mainly youth. Nevertheless, interaction between groups of parents, community leaders, professors, school staff, and other community members is taking place in a useful way.

In order for the LPN to be seen as a safe space, it is essential to decide what criteria will be used to invite people to participate. Using key informants and establishing informal dialogue in the community is key to the formation of a viable group. Questions that must be answered include:

- How many people should be included? (Each case is unique and will differ depending on the context.)
- What is each participant's age, gender, status, ethnicity, social group, and place of residence?
- Who does each participant represent? Are they participating as individuals or as local/community representatives?

These different concepts of peace imply different approaches to the resolving the conflicts and, consequently, different "successful indicators" that must be evaluated.

4. Discover social connectors

The next step is to find the connectors. During this analysis, the group identifies what is producing peace despite the conflicts (this can include people or other mechanisms) and make those factors part of the Local Peace Network process.

The LPN's success depends on acquiring suitable connectors to bridge the divide. Types of connectors vary and can include individuals, civil society groups, and businesses. They need to be disinterested, active at the local level, and possess necessary resources. They also must demonstrate a track record of fostering partnerships and achieving positive change.

It is important to identify who is/are recognized in the community and what sort of person/people the disputing parties desire. Do they share goals and are they able to work together? Note that the true leaders may be “subsoil,” not necessarily visible to outsiders. Examples of suitable connectors include older people, spiritual guides, midwives, school teachers, health workers, and artists.

Other mechanisms also can play complementary roles. These include institutions or programs engaged in peaceful community activities at the local level. For example, active listening by the female owner of a local store could be a significant connector between children and women, the sense of belonging for a local cultural festival, or the solidarity produced after an emergency situation.

5. Overcome power structures

LPN participants must understand the local power structure in order to address the roots of the conflict. This part of the analysis also helps create a balance of power inside the LPN. Therefore, it is essential to quickly identify the power structure and interpersonal dynamics, both of which can be context specific and unknown to outsiders.

An important question to answer is how the LPN could create a *new* non-hierarchical power structure, giving an equal voice to all, which perhaps does not conform to local norms.

For example, when two police officers joined one meeting in Guatemala City, other participants in the LPN felt uncomfortable. The conversation became tense, which made some participants afraid. However, the facilitator asked the officers to sit at the same level as the rest of the group and present themselves with first names. Gradually the people started to see the officers as general participants of the group, albeit with different institutional responsibilities for promoting peace in the neighborhood.

This demonstrated that the same rules must apply to any local authority figures participating in the group (police, pastors, or public servants). They must not have any special privileges or dominate the LPN. Therefore, part of the LPN strategy must be to identify the position (or status) of participants whether

they come from the local, city, regional, or national levels. Determining how local authority figures are linked to the issue of an unequal power structure is vital as it could undermine the LPN's outcome. Informal dialogue, widening the discussion, and building partnerships can help with this process.

6. Respond to difficulties

This component helps clarify the conflicts that must be overcome and the main issues that have to be changed or transformed in the community. The facilitators need to capitalize on shared ethics and values among those people who are in conflict, outline their expected behaviors, and identify what could jeopardize the peace building process. There are many social dynamics – tensions, divisions, and stress – that can strain the process. Issues that need to be addressed include:

- What are sources of stress, tensions, or ruptures? How do we resolve these?
- What can be controlled and what cannot be controlled?
- Can building partnerships help alleviate these tensions?
- Do cultural situations develop tensions (including at the family and personal levels)?

To overcome these problems, it's useful to employ tools such as mapping, identifying key informants, and socio-dramatic monitoring LPN. (Note: for young people, it's best to use participatory techniques as young people often don't want to talk about their conflicts).

It is of paramount importance that facilitators appropriately and/or ethically respond to these complications.

A community analyzing their own ethical responses to violence

After identifying the main factors dividing the community, facilitators and some community members and local institutions working in Guatemala City created an exercise that would help them anticipate their responses to different kinds of violent situations and the reasons for these responses. The group used different hypothetical situations:

- What can we say as LPN if someone tries to bring a gun to the meeting?
- What can we say or do if we see children at risk or suffering parental violence in our neighborhood?
- What if a person involved in a crime or violent conflict asks to join the group?

The group talked for two hours about these and similar issues. They contrasted their conclusions with the vision of peace they had defined. Then they developed different “key messages” they wanted to send to the community when it faced similar situations:

- Guns are not useful for a dialogue. They are tools for physical damage. Here we invite people to use their voice.
- Parents are not the only ones responsible for the well being of the children in our community. We all are indirectly responsible for building a healthy community for our children.
- We are open to the dialogue for issues linked to the common wellbeing. We will support people interested in contributing to improving our coexistence and to search for solutions together with us and we respect all neighbors. But we cannot approve of violent practices.

7. Influencing public policy

Beyond the space of the LPN, it's important to consider public policy and public perceptions. Therefore, an essential next step is to develop a strategy for infusing a culture of peace building into government policymaking. It's also a good idea for the LPN to address a topic of public interest. Doing so can increase the LPN's visibility and impact.

Participants from the DEPs organized by AFSC and its local partners gave some examples of how to achieve these goals:



This activity will be really useful for my institutional work. I am an adviser to the Minister of the Interior in Guatemala and I am in charge of designing new policies related to citizen insecurity. I will prepare my proposal based on a justice & peace strategy, through actions linked with the peace platforms.

Axel Romero, Adviser to the Ministry of Interior, Guatemala



I work with the Mennonite churches in urban areas in Managua, Nicaragua, and for us, this activity was very important. Together with MCC [Mennonite Central Committee] we will prepare some workshops in Managua in order to transmit the vision of [Local Peace Networks] to our 17 local partners. We have already defined our "entry points," our population, and the kind of conflicts we need to approach, but we didn't have a methodology as practical as the LPNs. On the other hand we will start an exploration with the Alternative Dispute Resolution Department to take advantage of the "Burríta de la Paz" strategy in order to search for possible ways to install a mobile unit in Managua.

Martha Garcia, Mennonite Churches, Justice and Peace Commission, Managua



About the American Friends Service Committee

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Our work is based on the principles of the Religious Society of Friends, the belief in the worth of every person, and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.

AFSC has more than nine decades of experience building peace in communities worldwide. Founded in the crucible of World War I by Quakers who aimed to serve both humanity and country while being faithful to their commitment to nonviolence, AFSC has worked throughout the world in conflict zones, in areas affected by natural disasters, and in oppressed communities to address the root causes of war and violence. It supports local organizations' initiatives in trauma healing, community recovery and reconciliation, as well as nonviolence and humanitarian assistance.

Appendix

LPN-related activities and implements to date
(gray indicates activity has occurred)

TECHNIQUE / PROJECT	PEACE IN TOWN: GUATEMALA	URBAN INDIGENOUS YOUTH: GUATEMALA	THE WORK IN PAVON PRISON: GUATEMALA	LEOGANE AND MARTISSANT AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE: HAITI	SCHOOL IN CROIX DES BOU- QUETS: HAITI
On-street Interviews Community Research					
Stockholders interviews					
Youth Focus Group					
World Cafe					
Connectors and Dividers Analysis					
Citizen Score Cards					
Theater					
Camps					
Livelihoods					
Mobile Mediation Unit and Conflict Mediation					
First Aid					
Trauma Healing					
Arts					
Sports					

TECHNIQUE	DESCRIPTION
On-street Interviews Community Research	Facilitators and LPN members walk around the community visiting key places and people. They discuss the initiative to promote a culture of peace, and (identify) different opinions, suggestions, and concerns.
Stakeholders interviews	Participants present the program to key people and policymakers in order to obtain their opinions and collaboration.
Youth Focus Group	These small discussion groups use a list of key questions to explore the expectations, concerns, and impact of the program.
World Cafe	In this cycle of dialogues, people chat while having a cup of coffee. After the initial ideas or concerns are presented, participants develop a deeper understanding of the problem, think about alternatives or actions they could take, and then analyze the experience.
Connectors and Dividers Analysis	This technique identifies the sources of tension and the capacities for peace in the community.
Citizen Score Cards	These short surveys explore the perceptions and experiences related to conflict, violence, and insecurity in the neighborhood.
Theater	This tool can be used to dramatize hypothetical situations in the community and to explore different solutions.
Camps	Camps help young people build social cohesion. Youth are able to share and exchange their experiences in a participative learning process.
Livelihoods	These activities help youth augment their incomes as they work with other participants.
Mobile Mediation Unit and Conflict Mediation	A Mobile Mediation Unit can be an entry point for conflict mediation in the community and provide a space to approach affected parties.
First Aid	Like the Mobile Mediation Unit, the First Aid Clinic is another starting point for conflict mediation. It helps spread the key message that the program is against violence.
Trauma Healing	Dialogue circles focus on traumatic experiences and self-support.
Arts	Clowns, painting murals, music, and cultural activities can be a tool for sensitization.
Sports	Sports are a good way for participants to learn about collaboration.

List of Participants

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- **Enrique Ruben Oviedo Saavedra**, Corporacion Sur
- **Martha Lujan**, Directora de Esfera Ciudadana
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About this Report

Written for the American Friends Service Committee by Kees Keizer from materials developed for and by the participants in the Dialogue and Exchange Program. Edited by Mark Graham, Willie Colon, and Ivan Monzon.

This publication was financed by EED.



**American Friends
Service Committee**

Valores cuáqueros en acción

