
Training of Trainers in Villavicencio, Meta, Colombia (Picture taken by Wendy Betancourt, UN National Volunteer, Project Associate of the "Volunteers for Peace" UNV-UNDP Project, 2016)

Volunteering for Peace: Empowering young volunteers as actors for peace in Colombia

UNV together with UNDP Colombia are implementing the "Volunteers for Peace" project aiming at strengthening the capacities and awareness of young volunteers and activists about the peace process, peace education and reintegration.

This year, the theme of the International Day of Peace is "The Sustainable Development Goals: Building Blocks for Peace." The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is the newly adopted plan of action for all countries that seeks to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all through a collaborative partnership.

The focus of this International Day of Peace is on understanding the interdependence between development and peace. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved in contexts where peace and security are not guaranteed. At the same time, the conditions for peace cannot be created in societies that do not tackle development challenges in a constructive manner.

In the effort of promoting a holistic approach towards peace where peace is not only the absence of war but the necessary conditions for the well-being of all, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is supporting activities on peace education and community-based reintegration with youth in Colombia.

In the midst of its peace process, the immediate signing of the peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC guerrilla appears as a crucial step, but many challenges remain. The post agreement phase needs to ensure the end of direct violence, but should also act as a catalyst to generate the conditions for sustainable peace and development.

In this spirit, UNV together with UNDP Colombia are implementing the "Volunteers for Peace" project aiming at strengthening the capacities and awareness of young volunteers and activists about the peace process, peace education and reintegration.

A series of trainings are taking place in 4 regions of the country (Antioquia, Meta, Nariño and Norte de Santander), where young people in their communities are broadening their knowledge on peace, youth participation and empowerment, as well as volunteerism and the peace agreements signed in La Habana. Empowered youth leaders and volunteers are currently implementing their own plans of action calling for peace in the country.

In parallel, peace festivals around the motto “Let’s Make Peace” have been organized in Arauca, San José del Guaviare and Quibdó in close partnership with the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace in Colombia. The festivals gathered hundreds of young students who had the chance to discuss and learn from the peace agreements.

Young people also participated in cultural and non-formal activities, including a puppets’ show on conflict resolution, role-playing games on peacebuilding and dynamic discussions on volunteerism, youth and peace.

These activities contribute to “enhancing ownership and capacities of civil society to engage in the peacebuilding process” as well as to “increase the civic participation and participatory dialogues in efforts to sustain peace”, outcomes of the UNV Global Peacebuilding Programme.

Volunteerism makes positive impact by empowering youth community volunteers as peace ambassadors, galvanizing wider community engagement in favor of the peace process and, more broadly, strengthening the social capital essential for a lasting peace. Volunteering actions embodying the spirit of civic participation, reconciliation and positive change are certainly part of the building blocks for peace.

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#)