

Peacebuilding in a Troubled Land: Developing a Robust Peace Education Program in Colombia's Northern Cauca Region

Colombia

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Background:

Since 2022 began, three environmental and indigenous rights defenders have already been killed in the northern Cauca department. One of them, Breiner David Cucuñame, was only 14 years old. The region I call home has been torn by violent conflict for a long time. In 2006, Wilder Fabian Hurtado, a 10 year old Nasa boy, was killed by the Colombian army. Breiner and Wilder are two of 118,000 children and youth killed by the armed conflict in Colombia over 50 years. The peace agreement signed in 2016 has formally ended the armed conflict between the Colombian state and the FARC guerrilla. Yet violence continues, making it evident that peace cannot be signed into existence: it must be built. Peacebuilding is a slow and difficult process, and education is its cornerstone, but Colombia has largely missed the opportunity to make something powerful out of peace education since 2015, when it was made compulsory. Caucan youth thirst for educational experiences that promote a greater understanding of peace in connection to their own vocational and personal development within the community. Recent figures from the regional government place the number of youth recruited by illegal armed factions over the last 3 years at 400, while an average of 3000 Caucan students drop out of high school each year.

Project description and timeline:

My goal is to develop a peace education program for young people from the Jambaló region of Cauca. This program will consist of distinct workshops that answer to specific needs of high schoolers in Jambaló; these will be organized around the themes of Human Rights, Professional and Vocational Exploration, and Leadership and Entrepreneurship. Since students in Jambaló have a demonstrated need for diverse mentorship, my peace education program will recruit not only students but also teachers, parents, and other members of the community -- 40 people will participate in the two-week program. The program teachers will be recruited from a variety of partner institutions (such as Colombia's *Universidad Nacional* for advice on higher education and local unions for vocational instruction). Some of the questions that will drive the program include: What are the main obstacles young Jambaloans face in transitioning into a safe work life after schooling? How does armed conflict impact young people's educational opportunities and aspirations for the future? How can the community successfully model and support peace-enhancing modes of work and citizenship? These place-based questions will guide our discussions of peacebuilding, vocation, and community leadership, hopefully sparking novel insights as well as new friendships among the participants. Ultimately, the project's goal is to create a community support network that enhances young people's educational and vocational opportunities, steering them away from lucrative but ultimately self-defeating sections of the local economy linked to illicit crops and drug trafficking. For my project I will collaborate with Pedro Medina, a leader of *Asociación Protierradentro*, a Caucan grassroots organization that coordinates diverse educational activities both within the department and in Bogotá.

Week	Activities
March 15-31, 2022	Draft goals and contents of the workshops
April 1-30	Establish partnerships with other institutions: <i>Fundación Tierra de Paz</i> , <i>Universidad Nacional de Colombia</i> and <i>Jóvenes sin Tabú</i> for workshops on human rights and peacebuilding. <i>Asociación Protierradentro</i> , <i>Universidad Nacional</i> , <i>Universidad del Cauca</i> , <i>Universidad Autónoma Intercultural Indígena</i> and <i>Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje</i> for workshops on vocational development and leadership. ¹

¹ I have established contact with *Fundación Tierra de Paz*, *Jóvenes Sin Tabú*, and *Universidad Nacional*.

May 1-31	Assign facilitators to specific workshops and design content for our three themes: human rights, professional and vocational development, leadership and entrepreneurship. We will assign two facilitators to each theme and two volunteers to take charge of the logistics to carry out the workshops.
May 18	Open the call for applicants and send to the following schools: I.E. Wilder Fabian Hurtado, I.E. Bachillerato Técnico Agrícola de Jambaló and I.E. Renacer Paez. Share the call for applicants with community members.
May 18-June 17	Establish host institution for program and organize logistics
June 18-June 25	Close call for applicants (18th of June), and choose participants based on leadership, social commitment, civic engagement, and interest in participating in the program. The rubrics to evaluate these criterias will be developed with facilitators and volunteers, who will also participate in the selection process.
July 18-29	<p><u>Human Rights and Peacebuilding Workshops:</u> July 18th - 20th</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 days - 2 modules of 3 hours per day each <p><u>Vocational and Professional Development:</u> July 21st - 25th (break on the 24th)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 days - 2 modules of 3 hours per day each <p><u>Entrepreneurship and Leadership:</u> July 26th - 28th (break on the 29th)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 days - 2 modules of 3 hours per day each
July 30	Vocational and higher education fair: We will host universities, organizations, and companies to offer resources and bridge communication between them and the community of Jambaló.
July 31	Closing ceremony: community commitment to peacebuilding
August 3-10	Aid in the creation of a community support network and foster replication

Long-term impact and sustainability

This peace education program aims not just to be a transformative experience for its 40 participants but also to have reverberating effects on their families and the community of Jambaló as a whole. After the program is over, we will help create a community support network that will aid students in applying what they learned throughout the program, especially with respect to further education and concrete opportunities for work or apprenticeships. Finally, we will document the program, collect participant testimonies, and share it in a video to help replicate it throughout the Cauca department. This project could become a blueprint for future peace education programs throughout the region.

Peacebuilding

As a Caucan from Jambaló, the years since the signing of the Peace Agreement taught me that war never ends with the stroke of a pen. There are wounds to heal and debts to be repaid, especially to youth, paradoxical as this may sound. Even though they have lived through fewer years of conflict, young people often have the hardest time envisioning a livable future for themselves. The thought of transitioning from high school into work or higher education under the current conditions of violence and precarity can be pretty scary, and I want to make it less so. The peace education program I propose will help the community of Jambaló in the arduous task of cementing a multifaceted understanding and commitment to peace. Peace, according to my vision, is necessarily a communal project, one that affirms life and interdependency in the face of separation, futurelessness, and death.

Peacebuilding in a Troubled Land: Developing a Robust Peace Education Program in Colombia's Northern Cauca Region – Budget Proposal

The following budget proposal gives the overall cost of the program with an estimated cost of **9,950 USD**. The program is free for all participants to attend. All facilitators are intended to be volunteers from the allied organizations, and as compensation the program will cover all the costs regarding accommodation, food and transportation.

Facilitators Expenses	Number of People	Days	Cost per person (USD)	Cost total (USD)
Food per day (3 meals)	8	14	9	1,008
Accommodation per night	8	14	10	1,122
Transportation ¹	8	Roundtrip	120	960
			Total	3,090

Participant Expenses	Number of People	Days	Cost per person (USD)	Cost total (USD)
Food per day (2 meals)	40	14	6	3,360
Transportation ²	40	14	4	2,240
			Total	5,600

Logistic Expenses	Number of People	Days	Cost per person (USD)	Cost total (USD)
Rent of the place where the program will be carried out		14	50 (per day)	700
Workshop materials	40	14	1	560
			Total	1,260

Total Expenses	Cost
Total Facilitators Expenses	3090
Total Participant Expenses	5600
Total Logistic Expenses	1260
Total Project Expenses	9950

¹ Most facilitators will not be from the place of the program, some of them will need to travel from other corners of the country.

² All participants live nearby the place where the program will be carried out (40 minutes to 2 hours far by car)