



Puntos Solidarios: On our way to sustainability

Venezuela

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Blog Post:

https://ihouse.uchicago.edu/fellowships/davis_projects_for_peace_grants_2/2022_davis_grant_recipients/2022_davis_grant_recipients_ana_and_ruth/

Summary

This project aimed to provide technical support and staff to teach children from underserved and violent communities. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, these children vulnerability due to the lack of access to proper equipment and technical basic needs such as electricity and internet, got immensely increased. Thank you to Davis Peace Projects, we were able to not only solve the technical part through the utilization of solar energy, but also to train and hire teacher volunteers to teach the kids mathematics and Spanish during the summer.

Project Description

Being born and raised in Caracas Venezuela, both of us, as public policy students, we have always been deeply involved and concerned about better understanding the root causes of our country's multi-causal crisis and conflict.

The previously existing "Puntos Solidarios" initiative seeks to promote and boost spaces where the most vulnerable communities can organize themselves to deal with the crisis through solidarity. We strive to face a temporary situation related to child malnutrition, providing a lasting solution, and promoting organization and citizen involvement to empower communities to address their problems to maintain peace. The areas where we have our programs are very complicated and dangerous where children do not have the opportunity to grow and develop decently. Our goal was to secure life-changing facilities where kids can grow with love, solidarity, and educational support, thanks to our group of volunteers. Leading mothers of each community direct these facilities and receive all the necessary equipment to cook every day for 150 children.

This project aimed to go a step further and engage in teaching the children basic skills in mathematics and Spanish. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19, most schools are teaching remotely. In these



vulnerable sectors, families do not have access to the basic needs of homeschooling. As some of these kids are becoming poorer, an entire generation is growing without the opportunity to get an education. Utilizing solar panels renewable energy, we were able to solve a huge side of the crisis which is the lack of electricity and internet access in our communities. Volunteers attended every week to help the children with academic support and recreational activities. Although we experienced some changes in the number of students enrolled, their ages and the times scheduled for class, all the program went smoothly and just as planned. These spots broke all the barriers of conflict and are an example of the restoration of nourishing and adequate communities for next generations of Venezuelans.

Reflection

Child malnutrition causes conflict. Lack of places where kids can develop themselves causes disharmony. The mix of both, causes violence. Through not just covering children basic nutritional needs but also their development and educational skills, we are contributing to a future not like the one that is currently imposed to them, where they most likely end up engaged in violent organizations or working for the gangs, but rather to help them to grow and choose whatever they want to be. By having more educated and well developed youth, we are also contributing to more spaces for tolerance, dialogue and respect, where conflicts can be peacefully solved instead of the current situation where extreme polarization has plagued our families and communities. This project showed us that resilience is a huge part of these children's lives, where we were able to witness first hand that passion and skills can still grow in adversity. We are personally inspired by each one of the students we were able to teach this summer in the sense of how motivated and engaged they were with the program, and we will definitely apply such lessons in our personal lives from now on.

Personal Statement

After this project, we learned that feeling empathy and vulnerability towards these children's raw context is not a weakness but rather a strength in this field where people tends to forget about the lives behind the numbers that we so often analyze. This made us realize on the importance of getting involved, and that being part of the solution implies not being an observer. The lack of resources and evidence-based knowledge to propose innovative solutions to the living conditions of those children given the depths of the Venezuelan crisis, did not just brought us to the University of Chicago to pursue out master's degree, but to make the impossible possible thanks to the support of the Davis Peace Projects Grants. There is still a long way to go on our road towards sustainability, but the mark that this program left on these children is something that will for sure be long-lasting for the rest of their lives.