

TRANSFORMING CONFLICT THROUGH TRAINING AND RECONCILIATION CENTERS ON THE NORTHERN BORDER OF ECUADOR

Final Report May 2010 – May 2012



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Transforming Conflict through Training and Reconciliation Centers on the Northern Border of Ecuador



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Acknowledgement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The northern border region of Ecuador, specifically the provinces of Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos, has become an area highly affected by conflicts, with numerous individual, family and community conflicts of varying degrees. The problems relating to security and violence in the region are not easy to analyze, given the complex combination of a lucrative illegal economy, the cross-border effects of the violent Colombian conflict, youth gangs, high levels of poverty and lack of basic services. An overall strategy addressing each of these problems is needed to reduce violent conflicts and create a culture of peace in the region. Samaritan’s Purse (SP) focused on lowering the level of conflict among one particular group – youth – in its 2010-2012 USAID/DCHA/CMM project.

Transforming Conflict through Training and Reconciliation Centers in the Northern Border of Ecuador, financed by the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) Office, was implemented by Samaritan’s Purse from May 2010 to May 2012. It has contributed to reducing conflict and creating a culture of peace in nine different municipalities in the northern border provinces of Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos, Ecuador.

Throughout the project, the intervention strategy has focused on two strategic objectives which were achieved through theoretical training, practical implementation and technical assistance. Twenty-one training workshops were carried out in different communities over the course of ten months. Over 2,700 beneficiaries were directly trained by SP during this time period in Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos. The participatory methodologies used throughout the project have provided communities and key local actors with the knowledge and tools necessary to implement conflict transformation training and reduce violence.

The project also included a practical implementation component which allowed beneficiaries to apply conflict management and mitigation techniques learned in training. This included the establishment of twenty reconciliation centers, peace committees and early conflict alert systems with the beneficiaries who participated in direct training by SP. Twelve are located in four counties in the province of Esmeraldas: Quinindé, San Lorenzo, Esmeraldas and Muisne and eight are located in five counties in the province of Sucumbíos: Cuyabeno, Cascales, Dureno, Shushufindi and Nueva Loja. Each center provides a location where the individual peace committees can plan community peace initiatives such as workshops about peace, parades, debates, dramas and sports events, all with the principal objective of creating a

Strategic Objective 1:

Increase the capacity of people affected by conflicts in order for them to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner on their own.

Strategic Objective 2:

Increase the practice of conflict transformation and peace-building techniques that help create a culture of peace in various communities.

culture of peace in their communities. The centers also function as points of assembly for the early conflict alert system and mediation, and for replication training.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

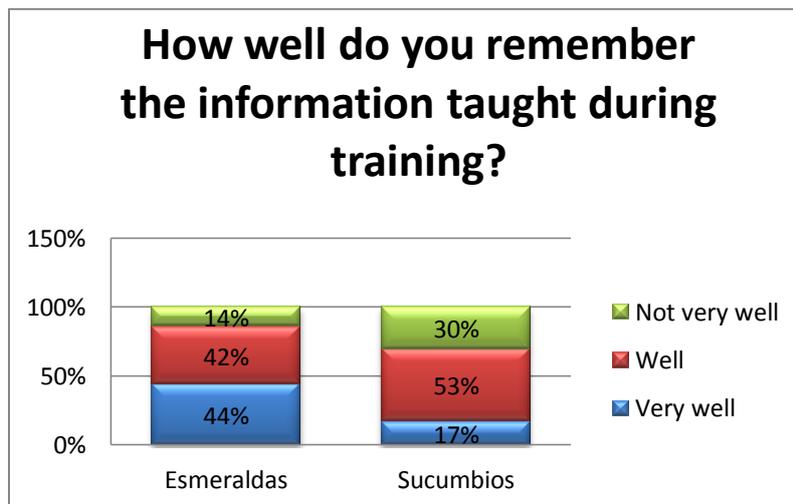
The project's overall targets were achieved or even surpassed in some cases. As outlined below, all expected results set out in the Program Management Plan were achieved over the two years of the project.

INDICATORS	TARGETS		Total Achieved	Percentage of Total Achieved
	Desegregation	Project Total		
1. Number of conflicts transformed in a non-violent manner in target areas through project activities		20	30	150%
	Desegregation	Project Total	Total Achieved	Percentage of Target Achieved
2. Number of people trained in conflict transformation and a culture of peace	TOTAL	2,700	2,704	100%
	40% male	1,080	1,155 (43%)	107%
	60% female	1,620	1,549 (57%)	96%
	10% Colombian	270	77 (3%)	29%
	90% Ecuadorian	2,430	2,627 (97%)	108%
	6% indigenous	162	140 (5%)	86%
	41% Afro-descendant	1,107	670 (25%)	61%
	53% Mestizo	1,431	1,894 (70%)	132%
	80% youth aged 12-18	2,160	2,162 (80%)	100%
	20% older than 18	540	542 (20%)	100%
3. Number of trained beneficiaries who recall at least two conflict transformation techniques learned in training		1,620	1,890	117%
4. Number of people trained through replication training in their community		10,000	11,236	112%
5. Number of early conflict alert systems (ECAs) in operation		15	20	133%
6. Number of people who perceive non-violence as an effective means to resolve		2,000	2,620	131%

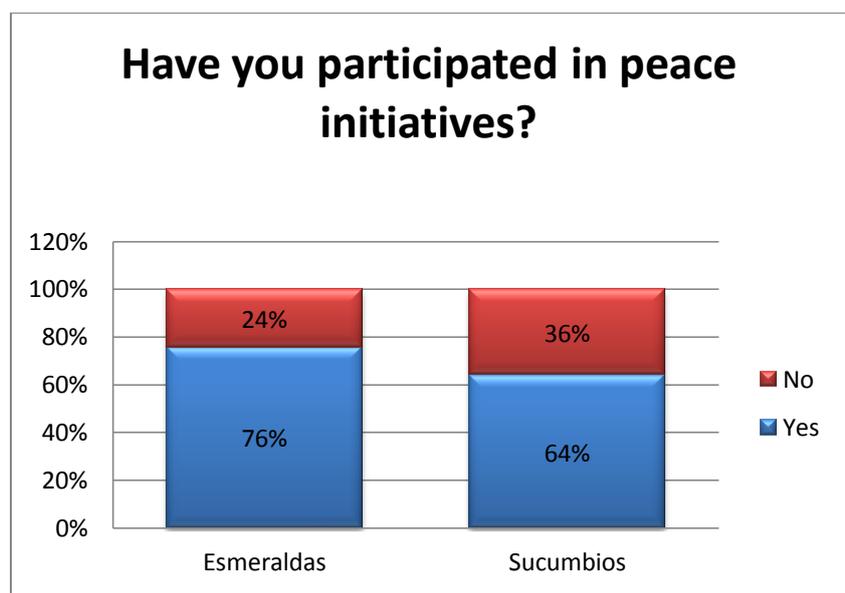


conflicts				
7. Number of peace initiatives carried out by peace committees		36	47	131%
8. Number of reconciliation centers in operation		20	20	100%

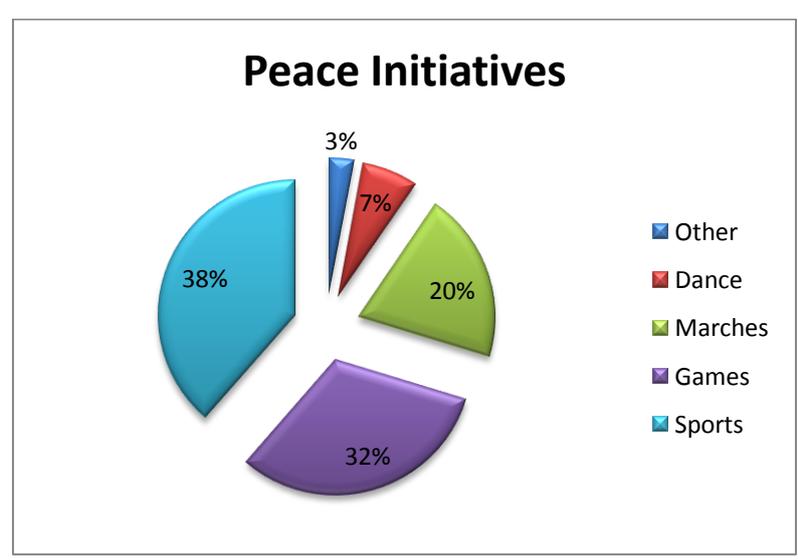
A third-party evaluation of the project was carried out by PRIME Consulting, which surveyed a wide range of active participants in the project—not only those who received training, but also those who participated in subsequent activities and events. This was particularly helpful in analyzing the success of the project. Throughout their report, differences between the two provinces of Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos were noted, with Esmeraldas having more positive results overall. The difference in the numbers between the two provinces, however, can be explained by several factors. For example, direct training by SP in Esmeraldas was completed in November 2010, while in Sucumbíos training was not completed until May, 2011. This meant that Esmeraldas had more time for further training and replications that reinforced knowledge about conflict transformation and peace, to implement peace initiatives and to practice reconciliation and mediation techniques. Overall, the report from PRIME is positive and outlines various achievements of the project. One such achievement was the amount of information that participants retained from conflict transformation training. The graph below shows that over 70% of participants in Sucumbíos and over 85% in Esmeraldas recalled the information taught “well” or better.



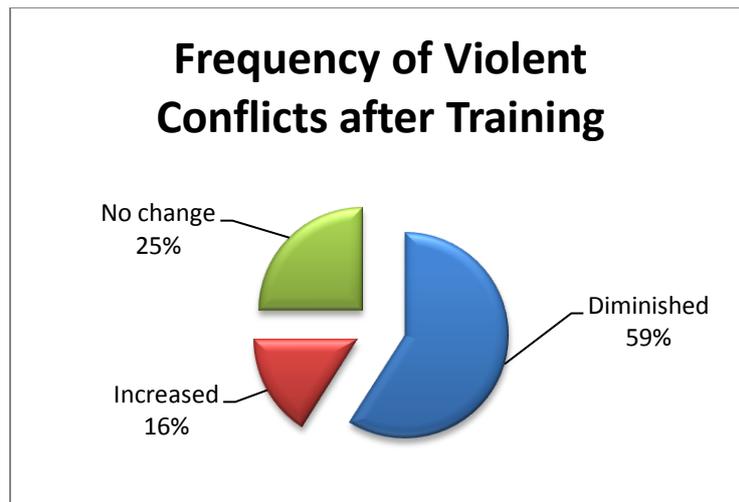
Another encouraging sign was the high level of positive responses when participants were asked if they had participated in peace initiatives in their province. Over 75% of those surveyed in Esmeraldas and more than 63% in Sucumbíos stated that they had participated in such initiatives.



A high level of participation in peace initiatives could be attributed to the fact that SP allowed local communities and beneficiaries to plan and implement their own initiatives. Through local participation and community buy-in, participants were able to meet and come up with their own ideas for reducing conflict and creating a culture of peace in their communities. Below is a chart outlining the most common peace initiatives.



Perhaps the biggest achievement of the project, which was outlined in the PRIME report, was the reduction in violent conflicts in the beneficiary secondary schools and communities. As outlined below, almost 60% of participants surveyed stated that violent conflicts had decreased after training. It remains to be seen if such a percentage can be sustained over the long term (five or more years), but this result reflects the fact that the project was able to achieve positive change in attitudes and behaviors in less than two years of work in the communities.



Major Accomplishments

The major accomplishments during the 2 year implementation period were:

Formation of provincial peace networks in Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos

The formation of the provincial peace networks brought together the eight reconciliation centers in Sucumbíos and twelve in Esmeraldas. The goal was to provide a platform for youth to express themselves and exchange ideas about conflict transformation and creating a culture of peace. The peace network was also a link for sustainability of the project's goals and achievements by bringing together over 100 youth in each province. The events included discussions about various topics centered on peace and conflict transformation, cultural and theatre presentations and the presentation of certificates of completion of the conflict transformation workshops.

Over 2,700 beneficiaries directly trained and 11,000 beneficiaries trained through replications

Samaritan's Purse was able to directly train more than 2,700 beneficiaries in conflict transformation techniques. As outlined above, the results are close to achieving the targets in each beneficiary category. The number of Colombians originally expected to participate was high, because the project was implemented in the formal education system, using local high schools. Samaritan's Purse found that many Colombian refugees are not part of the formal education system. Through using a train-the-trainer methodology, more than 11,000 beneficiaries were reached with the message of peace and conflict transformation techniques.

The formation of reconciliation centers

The formation of twenty reconciliation centers reached the original target; it is an accomplishment that throughout the project twenty centers and their members became leaders for peace and non-violent conflict transformation in their communities. Below is a list of the twenty reconciliation

centers that form part of the project. The various participants are shown in the “members” column; however, the groups mentioned are not the only ones participating. The institutions mentioned below are the main participants in the centers, but, in the various counties, different local organizations and government representatives participate in the activities carried out by each center.

Reconciliation Center Members and Locations

Center	Members	Municipality	Province
ESMERALDAS			
Junta Civica Norte Reconciliation Center	Bethel Secondary School, Prado Viteri Secondary School and Segundo Salas Mesas Secondary School	Esmeraldas	Esmeraldas
San Lorenzo 1 Reconciliation Center	Pedro Antonio Saad Secondary School	San Lorenzo	Esmeraldas
San Lorenzo 2 Reconciliation Center	22 de Marzo Secondary School and Otilio Ramirez Secondary School	San Lorenzo	Esmeraldas
Simon Plata Torres Reconciliation Center	Simon Plata Torres Secondary School and the Federation of Black Women, County Council for Children and Adolescents	Quininde	Esmeraldas
Rio Canande Reconciliation Center	Rio Canande Secondary School and Chachi Community Presidents, Chachi Government Board	Quininde	Esmeraldas
Camarones Reconciliation Center	Julio Mena Velez Secondary School, political leaders, parents, National Police Commission, CNNA	Esmeraldas	Esmeraldas
Vuelta Larga Reconciliation Center	Jorge Chiriboga Guerrero Secondary School, community leaders, teachers	Esmeraldas	Esmeraldas
Latin Kings Reconciliation Center	Members of the Latin Kings Nation, CCNA	Esmeraldas	Esmeraldas
Ramon Bedoya Reconciliation Center	Ramon Bedoya Secondary School, teachers, diverse women’s associations	Esmeraldas	Esmeraldas
Nuevos Horizontes Reconciliation Center	Nuevos Horizontes Secondary School, parents and teachers	Esmeraldas	Esmeraldas
Muisne Reconciliation Center	Alfredo Perez Guerrero Secondary School, County Council for Children and Adolescents, Peace Core volunteer, Municipality, Women’s	Muisne	Esmeraldas



	Forums		
Segundo Salas Mesas Reconciliation Center	Segundo Salas Mesas Secondary School	Esmeraldas	Esmeraldas
SUCUMBIOS			
Napo Inti Picari Reconciliation Center	Inti Picari Secondary School	Lago Agrio	Sucumbios
General Farfan Reconciliation Center	Rafael Rodriguez Palacios Secondary School, Teniente Poltica, Parish Board, local community representatives, Red Fronteriza de Paz, Parish Security Council	Lago Agrio General Farfan Parish	Sucumbios
La Bonita Reconciliation Center	La Merced Secondary School, Parrish Security Council, political leaders, Parish Board	Alto Sucumbios Santa Barbara Parish	Sucumbios
Dureno Reconciliation Center	Dureno Technical Secondary School, Parrish Board, senior politicians, Cofan indigenous community, Parish Security Board	Lago Agrio Dureno Parish	Sucumbios
Cascales Reconciliation Center	Cascales Secondary School, Humberto Fierro Secondary School, Sevilla Peace Committee, County Security Council, County Council for Children and Adolescents, political leaders, local police	Cascales	Sucumbios
Cuyabeno Reconciliation Center	Jeronimo Carrion Secondary School, County Security Council, County Council for Children and Adolescents, Police Commissioner representative, Municipal Culture Department	Cuyabeno	Sucumbios
Segundo Orellana Reconciliation Center	26 de Septiembre Secondary School, Camilo Gallegos Secondary School, INFA, provincial government, municipal government, political leaders	Lago Agrio	Sucumbios
Shushufindi Reconciliation Center	Shushufinidi Technical Secondary School, County Council for Children and Adolescents, County Security Council, political leaders, County Sports League, Shuar Yamanunka indigenous community, parish boards	Shushufindi	Sucumbios

Reconciliation Centers Operating Status

The reconciliation centers in the beneficiary communities met with SP staff regarding the end of involvement of USAID and Samaritan’s Purse in the project and discussed different strategies of continuing it in the various communities. The target of twenty reconciliation centers functioning in the beneficiary communities has been achieved.

The initial idea of having three separate groups, a reconciliation center, an early conflict alert system and a peace committee, was not implemented as planned. Changes were made so that the principal concepts of conflict prevention, education and mediation were implemented. This is further explained in the lessons learned section. The reconciliation centers in various communities have expressed interest in continuing, in one form or another, prevention, education and reconciliation events in their communities to lower conflicts and create a culture of peace.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The following information is a brief summary of total project expenses. A complete financial report will be submitted from our international headquarters in Boone, North Carolina directly to the USAID offices in Washington. In accordance with 22 CFR 226.34, no equipment was procured under this award that would require disposition approval from USAID.

	Budget Total	Project Total to Date
USAID	599,333	599,333.00
Samaritan’s Purse	95,480	131,618.37
TOTAL	694,813	730,951.37

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the project was a concern, since funding was only for a two-year period. It was thought that behavioral and social change could be achieved, but sustaining such change over time would be difficult. By including a wide range of local actors in the project, SP was able to achieve varying levels of continuity beyond the life of the project which could eventually lead to sustainability. One key actor involved since the beginning of the project was Plan Ecuador, the national government institution in charge of development in the northern border region. Although they did not become involved financially during the project implementation phase, they kept close watch on the goals and achievements of the project. In the final months of the project, Plan Ecuador showed interest in continuing and expanding the activities and goals achieved during project implementation. They have requested a work plan and logical framework from former SP employees who worked on the project in order to analyze the possibility of continuing project activities.



As mentioned above, many secondary schools have publicly said that they wish to continue the training on their own because of the benefits they have seen. By allowing participants to take ownership of the project from the beginning, overall community buy-in was achieved. The creation of the reconciliation centers and peace committees allowed beneficiaries a practical outlet for the knowledge gained during training. It also provided a forum for discussion among community members about conflicts and possible solutions, further empowering them to increase initiatives that create a culture of peace. From a technical perspective, the meetings of the different centers and committees gave SP the ability to constantly observe, measure, and evaluate progress of the project. Continual feedback and constructive criticism from the communities and the SP technical team enriched the project through an ongoing evolution and learning experience.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following is a list of lessons learned throughout the course of the project.

Captivating the Audience

The participatory training method used in the initial direct training by the SP technical team, combined with the theory of Dr. Lederach, provided a unique way for participants to learn. Rotating through five different classrooms kept young participants alert and focused throughout the entire training workshop. The novel idea of seeing conflict as an opportunity gave participants a different perspective on them. This was combined with unique practical mechanisms, such as reconciliation centers and peace committees that provided participants with a way of putting into action the training and knowledge obtained.

Constant Feedback and Evaluation

- **WFP Food Distribution**

During the implementation of the direct training and replications components in the province of Esmeraldas, SP combined training in conflict transformation with the World Food Programme's (WFP) Food for Training. The food became a valuable tool that allowed SP to compensate participants for their time spent in the training workshops. However, this created dependence and an assumption by the beneficiaries that they would receive something during every activity of the project. This same methodology was not implemented in the province of Sucumbíos and the results for both provinces were similar. Due to the fact that extra SP resources outside of the project cost-share were spent in distributing the food, the overall cost undoubtedly outweighed the benefit.

- **Early Conflict Alert Systems**

The early conflict alert systems (ECAS) were a more difficult concept for the participants to understand. However, the central concept of the ECAS was prevention of conflicts and many

of the reconciliation centers and peace committees were implementing conflict prevention methods and techniques in their communities. These may not have been known or understood as early conflict alert systems, but the intention of their actions was conflict prevention. In future implementation of the project, it would be useful to simplify the terminology by calling groups that are formed to create a culture of peace through education, prevention and resolution “Peace Committees.” This term was the most widely used and understood in all of the communities.

- Secondary School Participation

There were two particular cases where secondary schools that participated in the direct training did not continue with the project. This had to do mainly with lack of desire or effort by school officials. In schools that continued with the project, there was a significant buy-in from the school’s teachers and directors. In one school, the principal felt that it was too much work for the students to be participating in these activities and decided not to continue after a few months of implementation in his school. In another school, the directors expressed little interest and leadership; they eventually became involved in an economic scandal with the Ministry of Education, making it impossible to work with their school. In both cases, the schools were replaced with other schools and organizations. The Latin Kings and the Salas Mesas Secondary School replaced the schools that dropped out of the project. Resources were allotted to Salas Mesas and Latin Kings and activities implemented and goals achieved with them.

Drama

To understand the principal conflicts affecting beneficiary communities, the project used the arts, specifically drama and music, during the second day of training. Through the arts, participants were able to act out conflicts, which gave the SP technical team a window into the daily conflicts affecting these communities. The artistic representations of conflicts were organized, created and directed by the participants taking part in the training. The principal objective of these “sociodramas” or plays was to allow participants to artistically express themselves and to put to practical use the conflict transformation mechanisms taught during training. This also allowed participants to reflect on community conflicts and search for peaceful resolutions to their daily problems. The plays were a useful tool for the communities to identifying their own conflicts and plan non-violent prevention and resolution initiatives based on their reality.

Replications

The pedagogical methodology used in the project provided an easily understandable content for beneficiaries, which was also easily transmitted from direct beneficiaries to others in their community. Those trained became facilitators in conflict transformation and, with their local knowledge about community conflicts, they were able to identify and plant possible solutions. This further strengthened the project by using local knowledge about conflicts and providing peaceful mechanisms for the community to implement. These facilitators carried out replications after



receiving training. Through the replications, beneficiaries were able to train over 11,000 people in the two provinces.

Peace Committees

The peace committees were formed by beneficiaries who took part in either direct training or replications of training. All members of the committees had the common goal of promoting a culture of peace in their communities. They also gathered information about common conflicts in their communities and carried out participatory planning activities to transform existing conflicts using non-violent means. After identifying conflicts and searching for possible peaceful resolutions, the most viable peace initiatives were prioritized. In many cases, the support of local organizations and institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, helped in executing the various initiatives.

Peace Initiatives

All activities that prevented or peacefully transformed conflict or promoted a culture of peace were called peace initiatives. This was an easy term for beneficiaries to understand and relate to. Every peace initiative was identified, developed and implemented by the beneficiaries and SP provided limited resources and technical assistance. The principal peace initiatives that were carried out were:

- Training of youth and replicating to other beneficiaries

After receiving the training, beneficiaries were prepared as facilitators of peace whose main activity was replicating the training to others in their community and creating other peace initiatives.

- Marches promoting a culture of peace

Marches were organized and prepared by the peace committees. The principal objective was to promote a culture of peace and the marches were often done on international days relating to peace, such as the International Non-violence Day (October 2) and the International Day of Peace (September 21).

- Sports

Sports were one of the most viable alternatives identified by youth that allowed them to include other youth who were involved in conflicts. During the sporting events, which were usually soccer, the main concepts of peace and conflict transformation were conveyed to the new participants. Participants also used this space to share life experiences about conflicts and non-violent ways to transform them.

- Reconciliation centers

The reconciliation centers were the practical tools where people, organizations and/or communities went to solve their problems. The reconciliation centers were usually part of the secondary schools where training was held. In many cases, the schools would provide a space for mediation to take place; in other cases, such as the Latin Kings in Esmeraldas, their mediation occurred in their weekly meeting place, which was a local park. All the mediation that took place in the centers dealt with topics that did not require legal proceedings.

- Participatory planning

Once the peace committees and reconciliation centers were created, the planning of their activities allowed each one to prioritize and eventually reach their goals of conflict transformation and promoting a culture of peace in their communities. The members of the reconciliation centers planned their own activities and, in some cases, found their own resources from local governments and the community.

- Provincial Peace Network

Provincial peace networks were formed in Sucumbíos and Esmeraldas. Events took place in each province that brought together over 100 participants. These events were used to exchange experiences, continue conflict transformation training and integrate the reconciliation centers from the different communities. Currently, the provincial peace networks are formed in each province with representatives of the reconciliation centers from each community. The hope was that, by bringing participants together, they would be further encouraged to continue and even expand their efforts to create a culture of peace in the two beneficiary provinces.

- Mini projects for peace

These projects consisted of various initiatives of the communities that were presented to SP with the objective of strengthening a culture of peace. Samaritan's Purse provided a small amount of economic resources to implement these projects, which included a barber shop, sewing workshop, welding equipment, computers and projectors. All mini projects for peace were ideas from a reconciliation center that were based on their local reality and would help them to transform conflicts peacefully, continue conflict transformation training, provide them with small incomes and, in general, help to create a culture of peace in their communities.

SUCCESS STORIES

Samaritan's Purse believes that an impact has been made in the beneficiary communities and the lives of numerous participants, particularly those of youth. PRIME Consulting, the third party consulting firm that did a final evaluation of the project stated: "We believe that, in the long term



and with the involvement of these types of social actors, projects like this could have a quantifiable impact on crime reduction in two of the more violent and problematic areas of Ecuador.”

Many of the beneficiary communities and secondary schools have expressed great interest in continuing the project in one form or another. With small amounts of resources and a greater participation from Ecuadorian government institutions, the twenty reconciliation centers that were formed will be able to continue to create a culture of peace in their communities. Although there were many success stories throughout the course of the two-year project, below are two short examples of the positive change achieved in such a brief period of time.

Latin Kings

The Latin Kings organization in Esmeraldas formed an integral part of the project. Originally, they were trained as part of a pilot training within the project, aimed at reaching the most vulnerable youth in the city of Esmeraldas. Since many of the Latin Kings have experienced violent conflict, while at the same time going through a rehabilitation process with various projects implemented by the government and Catholic Church, it was SP's intent to involve them in the conflict transformation training in the hope of forming a reconciliation center with them. We soon discovered that the organization had the desire to change public perception about themselves through working as agents for peace in their communities. The Latin Kings became one of the most active peace committees in the project. They carried out various initiatives that included: peace murals on walls in Esmeraldas, celebrations for Mother's Day and International Child Day, and spreading peace messages through pamphlet distributions on the streets of Esmeraldas. Perhaps one of their greatest achievements as an organization was the change in public perception that many people had about the Latin Kings after participating in events based around a culture of peace. Samaritan's Purse was able to assist the Latin Kings in setting up a barber shop through their mini project for peace. This has provided some of their members with income and a micro-enterprise that can grow in the future.

Ramon Bedoya Navia Secondary School

The Ramon Bedoya Navia Secondary School, located in one of the most conflict-affected neighborhoods of the city of Esmeraldas, was the last school to receive training in the province of Esmeraldas. From the beginning, Samaritan's Purse had the support and assistance of the principal and staff of the school. Throughout the project, the school and its students were active participants in implementing peace initiatives in their community. Their mini project for peace was the purchase of welding equipment in order for the students to learn a trade and, therefore, stay out of conflict by keeping busy and possibly finding employment. The teachers mentioned on numerous occasions that violent conflicts had decreased in the school and that students were using conflict transformation techniques to peacefully transform their conflicts. During Samaritan's Purse's final visit to the secondary school, the principal, teachers and students expressed their gratitude and all

reiterated their desire to continue the project with or without the help of Samaritan's Purse or USAID.

Transforming Conflict through Training and Reconciliation Centers on the Northern Border was able to achieve or surpass its established targets. Continual monitoring and evaluation, which allowed for feedback and improvement, provided a platform for change and innovation throughout the project. Involving local authorities in every aspect of the project allowed SP to have direct input from beneficiaries about the project. Although two years is not enough to affect long-term behavioral change in the communities in Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos, the project has had positive feedback from numerous secondary schools and communities that have reported fewer conflicts and less violence. Given the short implementation period, these comments create hope for long-term sustainability and expansion of the project's achievements.