

Refugees in the making of peace

Westminster College

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I. Project Summary

Refugees in the making of peace covered a vast range of activities that were not originally in the proposal; however, they were necessary for the full development of the project. Fortunately we had the help of Gabriel Hernandez, Executive Director of the Kalamary Foundation and Enoy Alean a native peasant from Colombia. Gabriel Hernandez was very important to get the final location of the project within the urban area. The volunteers, listed above, worked in the local school *Leoncitos*, where we performed several activities. Art: guided by Shauna Aminath and Gustavo Godinez. Drama: guided by Edinson Arrieta and Matthew Lowell. Finally, music: guided by Felipe Cordero. Mohamed Shakir was in charge of documenting the daily progress for the project and also taking the pictures for it. These activities in the school took place from 4:00 till 6:00 everyday. The work for the project began on May 29th with the preliminary arrangement in Sincelejo by Edinson Arrieta and Gabriel Hernandez. During a whole month starting on the 2nd of June we worked from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Rural Area of Panseñor with Mr. Enoy Alean where we wanted to help the community finding out what their weaknesses were and how we could help them. We also intended to stay for two weeks living round the community and staying with them and experience what it was like to live their lives.

II. Project Results

Not Accomplished Goals

1. We were not able to live in the rural area with the families as was intended in the original project. This was mainly due to the late arrival of some participants in the project.
2. The arms education campaign was not carried out as indicated in the project outline. However he feel that we have achieved the same objective through our project in the local school.

Accomplished Goals

Rural Area:

1. For the children of the families in the rural area we were able to organize Breakfast before school for two months.
2. Visit (observe and inquire about the living condition) over forty families.
3. Convinced the community to work together to produce in a 2 hector communal farm which was provided by the project and overseen by the Kalamary foundation and the members of the project.
4. After an extensive research on the epidemiology of the area, a Health Campaign was launched.
5. We feel that with the many visits we made to the families we were able to convince a large majority of the community on the importance of participating in the local politics.

6. After two weeks of starting the breakfast program it was observed by the school that more children were attending school. We found out about this after a brief meeting with the teachers and also by the personal account of the overseer of the program, our guide and friend.
7. Through introduction of the communal farm to this area we feel that we have strengthened the camaraderie among the people and hopefully this will lead to a stronger Panseñor.

Urban Area:

1. One month of intensive work with children ages 8-12 years old.
2. The art committee was able to finish more than 20 paintings which are on Westminster's campus for further activities.
3. The Music and the Drama committee prepared two presentations.
4. The presentation and the paintings were shared with the community at the presentation in the municipal theater.
5. We created awareness in the school and the Sincelejo community on the importance of extracurricular activities in children's activities.
6. The music committee managed to get musical scholarships in a local academy for every single one of the children in the project.

III. Implications

The project affected the lives of every single child and family involved. This project which focused on the importance on the extra curricular activities in school acted as a new alternative against child labour and child abuse. Refugees in the making of peace made history in Sincelejo and Panseñor, being the first project of its kind ever developed in the area and opened new possibilities and connections to future projects and initiatives. The contacts and human resources are available and funding is crucial for the successful growth of this initiative. The members of project secured a strong precedent and the continuity of the project depends both on the success of the community crop in Panseñor and on the proper use of the musical scholarships and the success of the art exhibition (using the paintings brought from Colombia).

We learned that to make a difference it is not necessary to be a high political character or an extremely influential person; it only takes commitment and organization. The two months of the project changed the lives of many in a very positive way, which is why we believe that a continuous support on initiatives like the 100 Projects for peace is crucial to help willing and committed individuals to work towards the betterment of such communities.

It is not that the people don't want to progress, it is not because they don't have strength for it, it is because they lack the fundamental thing that one needs in order to push oneself, motivation. Years of living in a corrupt political system has let their morals touch the ground and we believe that initiatives like this actually give the under privileged the motivation they need to walk towards progress with the great strength they have harvested for years.

