

COMMUNITY WORK

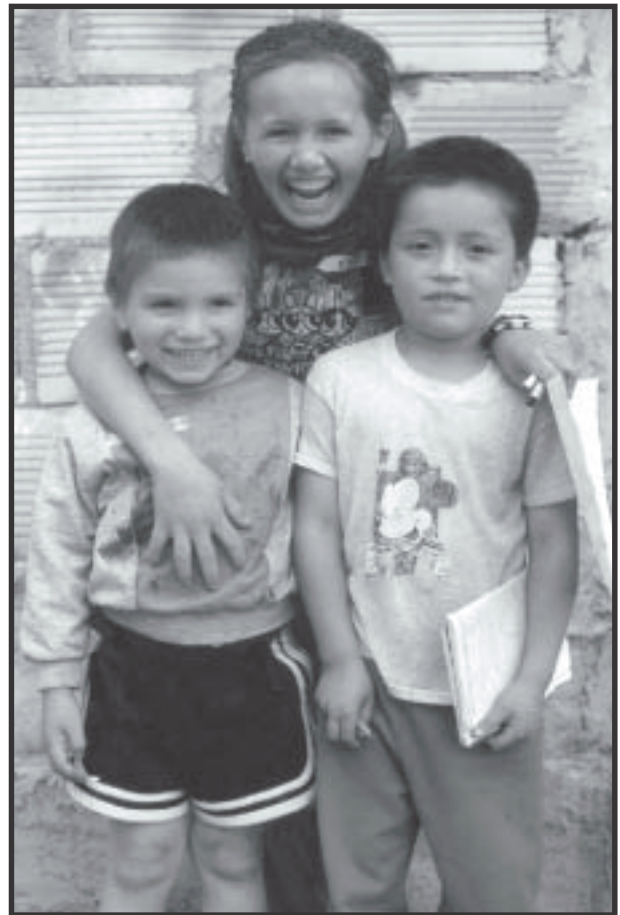
OVERVIEW:

As young peacebuilders we must provide an alternative to the ugliness created by war. We need to help other young people to enjoy their life; to appreciate the natural environment and value the traditions and beliefs of their cultures.

In our discussions at CAP meetings, we have emphasized that we cannot wait for peace before we act in a peaceful manner. We need to nurture the ways of life that support our vision of how society should operate and the values it should exemplify.

In the following pages we have included summaries of community projects CAP groups have organized to demonstrate peaceful ways of being. An important part of this work is finding ways for young people to actively participate in these projects. We want them to understand that peace is not something that is just given to them. Instead they need to realize that peace must be consciously promoted and maintained.

Some examples of our project include the peace garden in Colombia, the cultural dancing project in Burma-Thailand and garbage collection in Angola. We have also organized programs to promote a peaceful way of being amongst people such as the campaign against domestic violence in Cambodia. Young people are usually the initiators of these projects.



PEACE GARDEN

BRINGING BEAUTY INTO OUR LIVES

The Situation:

The civil war in Colombia has forced thousands of families from the rural areas to the outskirts of Bogota. For young people the move from the country to the city is very difficult. Friends and familiar surroundings are replaced by the hostile and cold environment of the city.

Many children complain that they never feel warm in their hearts or their bodies. When asked what they missed most from their homes, they often talk about the physical beauty of their homelands, with the rivers, trees, lush green fields and flowers. One boy said, “My eyes hurt” from looking at all the ugliness in Usme, the barrio where he now lives.

The Strategy

The young people transformed the park in Usme into a peace garden. Working together they cleaned up the garbage and repaired the play equipment, basketball court and benches. They planted flowers, bushes and trees.

Then they began to think about how to maintain this park to ensure that it wouldn't get ugly again. So they came up with an idea. Each plant, shrub or tree was given the name of one of the young people. If Mario planted a tree, its name is Mario, and Mario looks after that tree. “Now we have a peaceful beautiful place for children. And like all peace it must be maintained – and that is what we are doing.”



OUR CULTURAL IDENTITIES

SHAN NATION YOUTH DANCE PROJECT

The Situation:

Like other ethnic groups from Burma, the Shan people have fled the repression of the Burma military government. But unlike other ethnic groups, the Shan Nation does not have refugee status in Thailand. This means that they cannot stay in the refugee camps along the Burma-Thai border.

For Burma's ethnic peoples "Our ethnic identity is fundamental to our sense of who we are." In the refugee camps cultural training is an important part of a young person's education. The graceful movements of each ethnic group's dance steps affirm their way of being and relationship to the world. This helps maintain a connection to their ethnic identity apart from their home country.

But the Shan Nation are denied this: "We do not have the opportunity to easily organize programs to maintain and promote our culture. Because we are in Thailand and therefore not inside the environment from which our culture developed, we have to make a special effort to hold it. So the Shan need specialized programs for this."

The Strategy:

Dance training was provided for Shan young people living in a border village on the Thai border.

"Traditional dancing is an opportunity for us to be active, it is a mechanism to learn about our culture. If we lose our traditions, we might lose our identity, not know who we are."

How does this promote peacebuilding and social justice?

Peacebuilding requires the establishment of equitable relationships. For Burma's ethnic people this is tied to recognition of their cultural identity and the development of ways that these different ethnic groups can live together.

For young people the first step is to gain a firm understanding of their cultures. Youth leaders believe that this is necessary before they can begin to speak confidently and collaboratively with others.



CAMPAIGN AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

YOUTH LED PROGRAM

Summary:

Through its youth peacebuilding project CAMP Cambodia created a national children/youth network titled CYP: Children and Youth for Peace. This included children's clubs, the students' commission and young women's organizations.

CYP decided to organize a campaign against domestic violence. Its first event was a two day program on domestic violence in Rattanak Mondul, a rural area particularly affected by the war as it was the Khmer Rouge's last stronghold. Participants in the workshop included public servants, authorities, teachers, citizens, disabled people and students.

The program included a workshop, public rally and march against violence. The workshop, which was facilitated by youth, began with a discussion on the effect of the Pol Pot Regime on family relationships. All aspects of the event were a big success. In this interview, conducted just before the workshop, the youth organizers described their plans:

Q. Why did you choose domestic violence as the issue?

A. Many people say that domestic violence is a big problem in Cambodia. They link it to the war, they say it is a legacy of the war. Maybe. We don't have any statistics about this, as before no one talked about – it was just a part of life. Maybe this is something for the ngos to research. Now everyone just knows that the level of domestic violence is very high.

Q. How have you organized the workshop?

A. Our objective is to give adults a new perspective on this. We hope that we will be able to find solutions together. It will be youth working with adults. The participants are from local authorities such as the local chief of the village. Most of the participants will be men. This is new for us, to be giving a workshop for adults.

Q. Was it difficult to get adults to attend?

A. No, because we have members from the local community in our network. They have credibility with the chief and with the authorities and they talk about the importance of giving children a voice.



We will use the opportunity to communicate and to speak publicly. Also we will be doing a march. Of course we asked advice from them on how to do it. We have invited the provincial governor to come. Unfortunately the governor said he could not come to the opening ceremony because it is so far away. He said he would come if we would pay for his transport but we did not have enough money for that. We also thought he has his own money and we are volunteers.

Q. How has the march been organized?

A. In organizing the march we have learned that you have to be a bit tricky. You have to give them some kind of award. So we have said, "Come to the march and you will get a T-shirt or you will get something." Then once they arrive we tell them about the content of the march. So we can talk about our issues and they will listen but you have to have something to attract them, something that matters to them. Not just what we think is important.

Q. How did you organize it?

A. The network has worked together. We are sharing the responsibility so we have to do a lot of planning. We have to say to people, "Okay you're going to do a workshop on child rights and you know this, but you have to strengthen your capacity because you're going

to be doing this workshop with adults. It is more difficult and it has to be very good.”

Because there are two things: one of it is about facilitating, the other is about facilitating adults. We have not done that before. It will be a different kind of group to work with. We are going to practise here first so that we are really ready. We will go two days ahead to practise again.

Everyone coming to the workshop has made a commitment to participate in the march and to bring people to the march. It will take place near the bus station in the market. Lots of people are there. We will organize the stage. There will be speeches and presentations. We are also going to give out a quiz about domestic violence. We will give presents for those who can answer all the questions.

Q. This must be a lot of work.

A. Yes. The network has organized everything. The network worked together on it: we had to figure out how to do the letter of intent; about the t-shirts that we’re going to give out about domestic violence. We had to prepare the test and try it out. The whole team that was elected in December will participate. We need to be well prepared, to make a good impression. We are going to another state where we have not been. In the last workshop it was youth so we shared everything but now we are facilitating adults.

We know that is a big step for us. We want to show that young people have something to say to adults, that we can work with older people, not just with youth.



Practising Cambodian traditional dance

POST-CONFLICT PROGRAMS

RESPONDING TO LOCAL YOUTH'S NEEDS

The Situation:

Zvornick is a small town on the border with Yugoslavia. Once a predominately Muslim town it has been settled mostly by Serbs since the war. Like most of eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina, Zvornick's economy is in ruins – the factories are no longer operating and the rate of unemployment is high. Youth feel that they have few opportunities and can be very disillusioned about the future.

The Strategy:

SUNCE, a youth based group, conducted four initiatives to address a range of needs of young people in Zvornick. These issues were identified through consultations with children and youth in Zvornick. An overall objective for all these activities was to encourage adolescents to become actively involved in their community, to think of positive actions.

Sex Education

The current education system in Zvornick is very basic with few opportunities for “extra” courses such as sex education. However, a survey of youth in Zvornick revealed that the war had produced concerns about sexuality. Two cases of AIDS have been confirmed and the level of teen pregnancy and prostitution has increased considerably. Several youth reported concerns about sexual abuse in the family.

SUNCE see this as a legacy of the war. They decided to take on this issue by providing an informal sex education program for youth. They organized several radio talks and school presentations on AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy and contraception.

Traffic Education

Though Zvornick is a small town, it has a traffic problem – two boys were killed last year. Drivers pay no attention to traffic rules and careen around the streets. SUNCE sees this as a problem of lack of civic responsibility – that people forget to care about each other as they are only trying to forget about the difficulties of their situation. To remind people that they must take care when driving to think about young children, SUNCE created posters which they posted on the streets of the town.

Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency is identified as an increasing problem in Zvornick. SUNCE began work on this topic by consulting with the local police to confirm the facts. This was followed by a series of round table discussions amongst youth, officials and elders in the community. An important focus of these discussions was the trauma caused by the war and the need to find ways to heal these wounds.

How does this promote peacebuilding?

Post-conflict peacebuilding requires the conscious establishment of good community relations.

