

Press Release

Football for Peace and Reconciliation shows the way toward peace in Colombia

BOGOTÁ, Colombia. October 11, 2016 – streetfootballworld is uniting former F.A.R.C. guerrillas and civilian victims to overcome the scars of 50 years of internal conflict in Colombia through a common passion: football. The project is training 48 civilian victims and former F.A.R.C. guerrillas to conduct football programmes focused on peace and reconciliation. The newly trained peace leaders will give more than 4000 young people a safe place to play, learn, and interact.

In light of current political events in Colombia, football remains a constant and vital tool for fostering peace within communities. With the support of the German Federal Foreign Office, the Football for Peace and Reconciliation project is tackling one of the greatest challenges facing communities across the country: the reintegration and reconciliation of former guerrillas and victims of war.

“Giving them a new name, ‘Peace Leaders’, allows them to forget if they were on one side or the other of the conflict and helps change the way they see themselves and how they are seen by community members”, explains Football for Peace and Reconciliation project manager Ana Arizabaleta.

Launched in July 2016, Football for Peace and Reconciliation is being implemented in six communities affected by Colombia’s conflict: Barranquilla, Medellín, Puerto Tejada, Bogotá, Soacha and Santa Marta. In each community, inclusive sport training programs as well as “Football for Peace and Reconciliation” festivals are taking place to engage victims, former guerillas and the wider community in innovative methodologies promoting peace and reconciliation. Ultimately, a digital platform will be developed, where information on the methodologies will be available to sports associations, policy makers, media, universities and citizens across the country

The project is unique not only in the fact that it is bringing former guerrillas and victims together, but in that it is using football to do so. Three local organisations, Fútbol con Corazon, Colombianitos and Tiempo de Juego, are working in their communities with the generous support of the German Federal Foreign Office to prove that regardless of events in the political sphere, the peace process will continue to be driven forward by passionate individuals working on the ground.

“It is more important to train a human being than a footballer”, notes Juan Betancour, a peace leader and victim of the conflict. “Every time that you train a young person you are building the peace we all dream of.”

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About streetfootballworld

streetfootballworld is a global NGO that harnesses the power of football for good. We're building an alternate vision of the game: focusing the universal passion for football on tackling the greatest social challenges of our time. Our work supports a worldwide network of grassroots organisations that place football at the heart of sustainable social change. From refugee integration in Ireland to gender equality in Kenya, we're changing the world through football.

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