

Peace Community of San José de Apartadó

August 15, 2016

(Translation and Summary by Eunice Gibson, CSN Volunteer Translator)

THE PROJECT

Food Self-Sufficiency in the Peace Community

THE REPORT

Reporting Entity	Peace Community of San José de Apartadó
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Project Period	2015-2016
Reporting Period	2016

**PEACE COMMUNITY OF SAN JOSE
APARTADO MUNICIPALITY**

2016

- **BACKGROUND OF THE PEACE COMMUNITY OF SAN JOSE DE APARTADO**

In Antioquia, covering the Urabá region, where our Peace Community is located, barely 8 kilometers from the urban center of the Municipality of Apartadó, unfortunately and regrettably, the situation has not been improving. We have made report after report of the events that every day demonstrate the deterioration of public order. Nevertheless, the government seems to be deaf and dumb about the circumstances, and that makes a complicated situation worse. Particularly in recent months, the advance of the paramilitaries is tied to illegal planting and to the drug trafficking business, which is growing day by day in the region, with the blessing of the government. Its ambivalent pronouncements seem to ignore its responsibility and it resorts to bald-faced lies to misrepresent the paramilitaries' control in this region.

All around the boundaries of the Peace Community, the paramilitaries not only maintain their bases; they also maintain their encampments and the farms they have been acquiring recently. They have built roads and constructed a housing development in the town of Rodoxalí. That generates greater pressure and worry among the campesinos. It's a sneaky strategy intended to take over their land, generating displacement bit by bit. They seek to control the people in every sense; politically, economically, militarily, and socially. They have been doing this in several of the towns in the District of San José. They carry out a census, with the threat that if your name is not on their list, you will be killed or "disappeared".

There was a clear example of this in the case of the young man, Buenaventura Hoyos, "disappeared" by paramilitaries on August 31, 2013. The advance of

the paramilitaries in the towns in the Community is evident. A few months ago, they already took over the town of Arenas Bajas where there are humanitarian zones that are part of the Peace Community. Subsequently they have been carrying out military operations in towns like Arenas Altas, La Unión, La Cristalina, and La Esperanza. They have taken over towns like Rodoxalí and they are threatening to take over La Resbalosa and Mulatos, towns where we have been able to put together resettlements for displaced families from the Community and families of campesinos from the area. In the last few days we have also seen a strong paramilitary presence there. They patrol those areas and they have also been forcing the campesinos to sell their land parcels to the paramilitaries. They have also built a tertiary road between Nuevo Antioquia and Playa Larga where the hacienda La Marina, which belongs to the paramilitaries, is located, and built a second road between Nuevo Antioquia and Rodoxalí. That road was constructed illegally with the help of the local government. Because of this paramilitary advance, the campesinos have to sell their land or else be displaced from the area. If they refuse, they will be killed, because the paramilitaries already own extensive territories like those in the town of Playa Larga where they have a paramilitary training base. They have also obtained another base in the town of La Hoz.

The guerrillas continue to be present in our area and they generate fierce actions in an area where they have not been before. That increases the armed conflict and the risk to the civilian population. Because those very guerrillas have killed several people in this area in the last few days, claiming that their victims were informants who had collaborated with the paramilitaries or with the Army. That has resulted in the displacement of some more families in the region. While it's true that the cease-fire decreed by the Farc has diminished the battles and combats in the region, the capture of civilians in the region has not stopped; nor has the advancement of paramilitaries in the region come to a halt.

The destruction of subsistence crops has been the plan of the armed forces in order to keep displaced campesinos from returning. They have been destroying crops that the people need for food. Their plan is to destroy months of work and avoid the repopulation that our Community is working on..

In the last few years there has been a peace process, where the government has negotiated some agreements with the FARC, an insurgent guerrilla group that

the government has fought with weapons. However, even though the winds of peace and hope are blowing, the persecution of our Community and the surrounding population has not stopped.

Puerto Nuevo, Naín, Alto Joaquín, and Las Claras continue to be Peace Community sites in the area of Córdoba, as well as La Esperanza, Mulatos, La Resbalosa, La Unión, Arenas, San Josecito and La Cristalina—In those places our educational work has been essential in advancing our system, and advancing the permanent search for an alternative education, entirely focused on building a supportive economy, based on food self-sufficiency. The defense of our land is our principal reason for our peaceful resistance.

We are making more progress every day in building participation and democratization in our Community, with assemblies and weekly meetings in every location that takes part, reporting and evaluating the work being done in all of the locations. Same with the education group. It is carrying out the difficult task of building spaces for participation and awareness, not just in the children, but also creating ways of reflecting on the matter of the land and its defense by the adults in the Community, by using the model of food self-sufficiency as our way of life. We have created a team made up of women and young people from the Community to find the necessary means for food self-sufficiency in our Community. They do technical studies in the Community for young people and women who are heads of families.

For these and other reasons we once again affirm that the project we have carried out has allowed us to strengthen the Community and to give hope to other families in our area. In spite of the attacks, the Community has the power to convert the pain into hope and to build a life through real actions of solidarity.

To continue, we provide a brief exposition of what we have been doing, even though we are aware than many times it is limited by what we have had to experience in reality. The project, more than being an investment, is a transformation that has allowed us to stay anchored to the spaces of our Peace Community. It consolidates the Community, and more than anything, it is taking a strong step in the organization of the Community, of the work that has been done in campesino agriculture. It is the best community education that the Community has ever produced and provides a powerful cohesion in our

Community.

Because of it, we are able to expand because the participation of various areas in the community; it allows several families to take more part in our process. There are real cases in the towns in the District of San José, who have come closer to our Community so that we could support them and help them, not to mention new families that have taken refuge in our community system. Because our goals are the defense of our farms, and of living collectively, so that we have more power than we would have if we acted individually. Joining forces has allowed us to achieve collective reinforcement, because with the support of community self-sufficiency, all can take part in the memory of what all of our communities have lived through. We are working on that at the school with the children, with the teachers, and with the Community.

The effort for food self-sufficiency is developed in two special focus areas: working with women and young people are the two real and concrete steps that we are taking, because that has allowed us to take better advantage of the possibilities for peaceful resistance, because we can be stronger and more unified. That will allow greater community participation in the defense of our land in the midst of a wave of paramilitary activity carried out jointly with the armed forces that have been complicit in this criminal activity.

We have already pointed out what is going on with the intensification of the conflict and the paramilitary activity that is challenging the survival of the campesinos and placing their land ownership at risk. They take advantage of the Land Restitution Law to give land to outsiders who don't come from this region, or they just simply take over parcels that border the property of our Community.

But the carrying out of this Project has allowed a serious advance for our Community's system, generating serious effort, an element that is essential for us to be able to go forward with our method of civil resistance. A group of young people are learning in school how to do research. This gives them technical training. We have also been carrying out a process for adult literacy at seven locations in our Peace Community as well as in the children's schoolwork. We include gender by opening an area just for women, improving their situation, and a location just for young people.

- **THE RESULTS**

We are glad to be able to present in concrete format the results and progress we have had in this Project. We have obtained results that are totally satisfactory. It is clear that the results exceeded our expectations. They have completely met the objectives we established, not just in the short run, but in the long run as well. We are most excited and satisfied because our principles are based on the defense of our lives.

In relation to **Food Self-Sufficiency**, we set a goal of recovering the understanding of the cultural practices of our ancestors in managing crops that are organic and sustainable, using the following research goals:

- Management of seeds and plants native to the region for the purpose of conserving those seeds and products. All of those are subjected to investigation and used in the training of a group of women who are widows and heads of families. They work with a group of young people, including some who are orphans because of the war. In part this project is based on the necessity to build community among the campesino communities.

- Regarding **medicine**, the important part was based on serious efforts to transmit the knowledge of the most elderly women to the youngest people, explaining the role of women in the communities as essential to life and to collective effort. We were able to create a primer of medicinal plants along with other notes focused on the **WOMEN**. By doing this, we were able to put together the research carried out on this subject in relation to medicinal plants, concluding with the primer or manual of medicinal plants.

- In **women's education and leadership**, as is well known, our Community is trying to create spaces where women can participate as an essential nucleus in the midst of a society where *machismo* rules. In our Community we are strengthening our efforts to attain gender equality where the women can use their gifts and leadership for our collective and community-wide endurance. Because they are the ones who, shoulder to shoulder, have given the best example of hope and reconciliation. As part of that, we have had several workshops for education and skill building and that has allowed us to take a very important step forward in community development.

Another important moment has been the organizational work being done by the young people, because, in a society where exclusion is total, young people can fall into vice and can be dragged into the war by one or another armed actor. In our Community, a very important focus is to encourage dialog between adolescents and older adults. Thus we achieve better cohesion and community commitment from the young people. That has made it possible for youth and adults to work together in agriculture, by forming farm work groups and groups to study the implementation of the self-sufficient *hectare*. So the young people are leading a community and collective effort that includes agricultural research and working with the women who are working on medicinal plants, providing serious advances toward project goals.

- **ANALYSIS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Several goals and some precise dynamics, mentioned previously, were set for the project, and if you analyze what has been accomplished and the reality that the Community has experienced in the last few months, the verdict is that the project is a success. We have taken very significant and concrete steps in living out our principles and regulations as a community in a Project for Living such as our Peace Community, above all, when we are risking our lives in the midst of death.

Among the many successes, one is that what we have achieved as a community, directly and indirectly, is not just for a few people, but rather it is a success for the whole community, especially the work done by the women and young people focused on food self-sufficiency farming.

For that, many thanks. Words do not match the reality of what has been built, because we have carried out the duty to build an alternative future.

However, and in spite of the effort we have made so far, and of the fact that the results obtained so far are satisfactory, we know we have to keep working on this project. There is still a great deal more work to be done and the work is very important because it means that the Community can have the possibility of collectively and autonomously sustaining our system.

Our conviction is that the very first line of our primordial principle is the Defense of our Lives. And that implies giving ourselves over to a communitarian life that calls upon us to build our Community day after day, shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart, all in the face of pain.

- **ECONOMIC ACTIVITY REPORT**

In relation to the young people of our Community, four delegates from each location are taking part in a process of leadership training and skill-building. This will include periodic meetings. The most important subjects are community leadership, with emphasis on food self-sufficiency and on the role of women in the Peace Communities and in the creation of respect for others and living in tune with the natural world.

The resources made available between 2015 and 2016 allowed us to facilitate the transportation of members from the Peace Community to other communities for exchange of knowledge and exemplary practices in the Community. It also facilitated the transportation of several delegates from the communities to the place where the workshop meetings were being held. Another important accomplishment has been the ability to have the boys and girls, the elderly and pregnant women from our Community to eat at the community dining area and be served food prepared in the community kitchen. There are still a few more activities to carry out and those will be done during this year until our school calendar ends on December 21, 2016.

School Functions

School	Teacher's Name	Number of students
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Alto Joaquín	Edilma Torres	12
Las Claras	Alberto Berrio	21
Puerto Nuevo	Fernando López	16
Mulatos	Luis Miguel Cerpa	26
La Resbalosa	Uberli Guerra	22
San Josecito	Martha Vásquez	42
La Unión	Yair Usuga	33
Naín	Walter Cerpa	17
	Total	189

Summary of Expenditures

CONCEPT	EXPENDITURE
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- **Agriculture Education**

Workshops

Nutrition Workshops	\$5,901.000
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Transportation of delegates from the Peace Community	2,461.000
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Research Materials

Supplies and materials for workshops	1,850.000
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- **Nutrition Support**

Community dining room	12,805.000
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Total Expenditure \$23,017.000

Total Donation Received \$28,900.000

Balance (Income – Expenditures) \$ 5,883.000

NOTE FROM CSN : This report covers expenditures of two years' funds received from FFF, as is explained in the text.

2015 \$ 3,776 US

2016 \$ 5, 600 US

(Combined exchange rate is 3,083 Colombian pesos / dollar)

