



**CASE STUDY:
Peace Messengers & Peace Guardians
in Cote D'Ivoire**

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"I have been able to step over my troubles by making corrections in my life after listening to another person share the mistakes they made."

BACKGROUND

InsightShare was commissioned by UNICEF to undertake a participatory evaluation of its peace building programme implemented by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in a number of selected local high schools and groups of out of school youth based in and around Daloa in Côte d'Ivoire.

Two separate, supportive interventions were employed by UNICEF and SFCG to counter the violence in these schools.

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1. Peace messengers clubs is a student-led mechanism created by the Ministry of National Education (MOE) upon a ministerial decree in 2011 for the prevention and resolution of conflict and the promotion of peace in schools. As a school based activity the clubs work from the inside with the learners, and also in the wider community to promote peace.
2. Peace guardians work mainly from the outside. Members of these clubs are either high school students, out of school adolescents and youth or former students' union representatives. They are young people, mainly males, who are former perpetrators of violence in schools who are now working as activators for peace.

Evaluation Audience and Purpose

This evaluation was primarily undertaken to benefit UNICEF and SFCG, to give them some critical insights into what value their joint intervention in Daloa has yielded to assist them in sharing and carrying the learning forwards. In addition the Ministry of Education and their partners have an interest in this evaluation. They are concerned by the regular disturbances caused by the gangs or syndicates (students and teacher strikes) leading the schools to shut down for days. They recognise this as a major risk for Cote D'Ivoire's education system and as such they wish to better understand the profiles of the young people involved; their motivations, hopes and concerns. This evaluation and the associated videos hope therefore to address this and to look more closely at this programme which works with youth, who were socialized in violence, to help them play a positive role in society and become promoters of peace.

The qualitative data collected from the beneficiaries of the programme at this exit point, close to the end of the programme cycle, provided the local evaluation team with a rich source of evidence to use to compile an independent participatory analysis based on the perspective presented by beneficiaries. The data collected has been carefully synthesized by the participants into information that has been further refined and analysed and presented here in this case study.

As such this case study represents key knowledge generated by the programme activities. This will enable the partners to both validate the impact and results achieved and inform any future decision making process and or scaling of the effect.

This participatory evaluation focuses on understanding what factors had contributed towards containing the violence within schools in Daloa, increasing attendance and reconstructing a supportive learning environment.



Situation Analysis

The prevailing national context before the intervention was described as*:

- Socio-political crises since 1990 with the instauration of democracy in the country
- The politicization of adolescents and youth in Côte d'Ivoire's past conflicts and their well-documented role as both victims and perpetrators of divisions and violence
- Military and political crisis since 2002 with impact on social cohesion within communities
- Significant and harmful influence of politics transforming schools and universities into hotspots mirroring the broader conflict
- Increased violence in schools and universities including conflicting relationships with the teaching and supervisory staff
- Limited capacities and platforms for young people to engage in constructive dialogue and efforts to prevent or mitigate conflict in schools

** Extracted from documentation provided by UNICEF*

By targeting schools, the above factors effectively destabilized the education system leaving in its wake a lost generation imprinted with violent norms and an emerging generation that had to deal with the fallout of violence, both of these groupings of youth are ready to make different choices to move forward towards peace.

The stories that emerged from the youth beneficiaries as part of this evaluation paint a picture of a degraded social context prior to the start of the programme. They highlight the principal barriers/blockers to peace ingrained in society after years of conflict and unrest and are the key areas that the programme focused its attention on:

- Breakdown in family relationship and lack of support of troublesome children, adolescents and youth by their parents, families and communities
- Tendency for families and communities to marginalise or expell young people from schools or communities, when presenting challenging behaviours
- Lack of male and female role models, including fathers and mothers— many of the stories highlighted particularly the lack of parental input from the fathers
- Persistence in dicriminatory sociocultural norms and practices affecting girls and women
- Disregard for the education system leading to ongoing disruption of classes
- Schools seen as a target to create chaos
- Negative behavior traits were valued, providing a sense of identity and power
- Lack of general regard for their peers, who they regularly victimized, in some cases this attitude extended even to teachers and their own parents
- Negative actions that inflicted either physical or emotional trauma on others
- Use of stimulants, such as drugs and alcohol, aided perpetrators to carry out violent actions at school and in their community, often these brutal attacks gave the perpetrator a sense of pride, because it made them feel fearless and earned them the respect and fear of others
- Being part of an association or gang was seen as something to aspire to. Youth described the power and identity the gangs provided them with and also the sense of safety and protection
- Multiple external barriers/blockers to peace such as post electoral violence, social inequalities, economic pressures, difficult circumstances, lack of education and skills

The overall problem of violence in schools was deep seated and had become the cultural norm, gangs and thugs controlled the schools and they could at the blow of a whistle cause closure of classes or vandalism of school property. They ruled through fear and intimidation, during the evaluation, many of the stories that were told recalled a culture within the schools of systemic bullying and robbery, many learners shared how they had been targeted and victimized on a daily basis. Even the school administration was not excluded from this,

educators were powerless, a number of the stories collected describe cases where they were assaulted, their personal property was damaged or stolen and even some cases where family members were threatened and assaulted.

A highly organized and functional hierarchal syndicate of cells was operating in most schools, only a few private schools were free from this influence. This insurgence within schools was coordinated by leaders at the local level, often a single individual, who had the power to control the system under his command. The members of these individual cells followed their leader blindly and did whatever he said. These are powerful figures who have established their position on brutality and physical strength, others positioned in the inner circle of power around him were assigned key roles and given titles or nicknames such as Hitler, Killer, Machete, the brain... to describe their positions, this involved critical functions such as recording things and communication within the syndicate and between syndicates.

The core partners

To counter this a coordinated strategy was developed and implemented to challenge and change the situation and reinstate safety and security in the targeted schools.

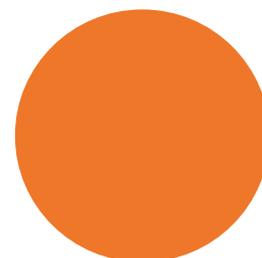
A key person on the side of the Peace Guardians, is a young man named Pilon, he was instrumental in directing and holding that intervention together during the implementation of this programme cycle. He used to be the leader of the Daloa cluster, with a number of cells reporting to him. SFCG was able to gain his trust and encourage him to turn this around and lead the entire structure he controlled away from terrorizing the community towards peace building.

The local police force have proven to be another key local partner, their were a number of a stories collected which spoke about improved relationships between youth and police. At one of the public screenings of the evaluation films in Daloa a police representative stood up to share his support for the programme and said that the local police force had noticed its strong influence in reducing disturbances inside and outside schools.

System Players: Ministry of Education and UNICEF

Implementing Partner : Search for Common Ground

Local Actors: Peace Clubs, Peace Guardians, local police force



THE EVALUATION JOURNEY

Why PV MSC?

Participatory Video (PV) was used in this context because it is an accessible, flexible medium of recording community stories of change. It can capture what surveys, questionnaires and bar charts fail to communicate: the human stories behind development projects.

Participatory Video has the ability to empower and engage diverse stakeholders in dialogue, while Most Significant Change (MSC) adds a structured selection process and the capacity to extract qualitative data from stories. Through the use of participatory analysis, these stories yielded rich findings, encouraged reflection and amplified the learning. The Most Significant Change technique uses a carefully structured, time bound and open question to frame stories to capture the most significant changes that the group has undergone. The MSC question asked here was; What has been the most significant change in your life as a result of joining the Peace Club or being a Peace Guardian over the past year?

When an Evaluation Becomes a Peacebuilding Intervention

This project provided an opportunity to reinforce and add new skills in participatory evaluation to a group of youths that InsightShare worked with during our PVMSC evaluation in Abidjan at the start of 2015. A group of 4 trainees were selected from the 12 trainees involved in that previous evaluation to co-facilitate this current evaluation. With InsightShare's facilitation, coaching and mentoring they were able to further their training, practice their skills and move to a new level of competency. The hope is that these trainees can now constitute a local team who can carry out PVMSC evaluations with other UNICEF and SFCG beneficiaries and programmes, developing broader competencies and providing them with livelihood opportunities.

The PV MSC evaluation was also intended to be a peace building activity in itself as it provided a supportive space for the Peace Messengers and Peace Guardians to come together to connect with each other, interact and share learning. The underlying process of PVMSC is storytelling, this then stimulates deeper dialogue around the cross cutting issues emerging from personal experiences outlined in the stories. These issues of cause and effect are extracted by the participants and reflected back to the group where they are cycled and amplified to stimulate conversation, from this exchange the key blockers and enablers are identified.

Looking in to what was happening before and what was happening now, participants are able to see what has changed and what combination of factors enable the change to happen.

The Evaluation Team

Neville Meyer and Jacob Redman, led the evaluation intervention for InsightShare. They were supported by four local facilitators and a translator, this group facilitated the evaluation with their youth peers and also carried out the bulk of the analysis on the data collected. The evaluation team was supported during one day of the analysis by the eight youth beneficiaries whose stories had been selected. They also played an important role in the screening events, their contribution assisted in making greater sense of some of the data and in identifying key elements that enabled change.

The Participants

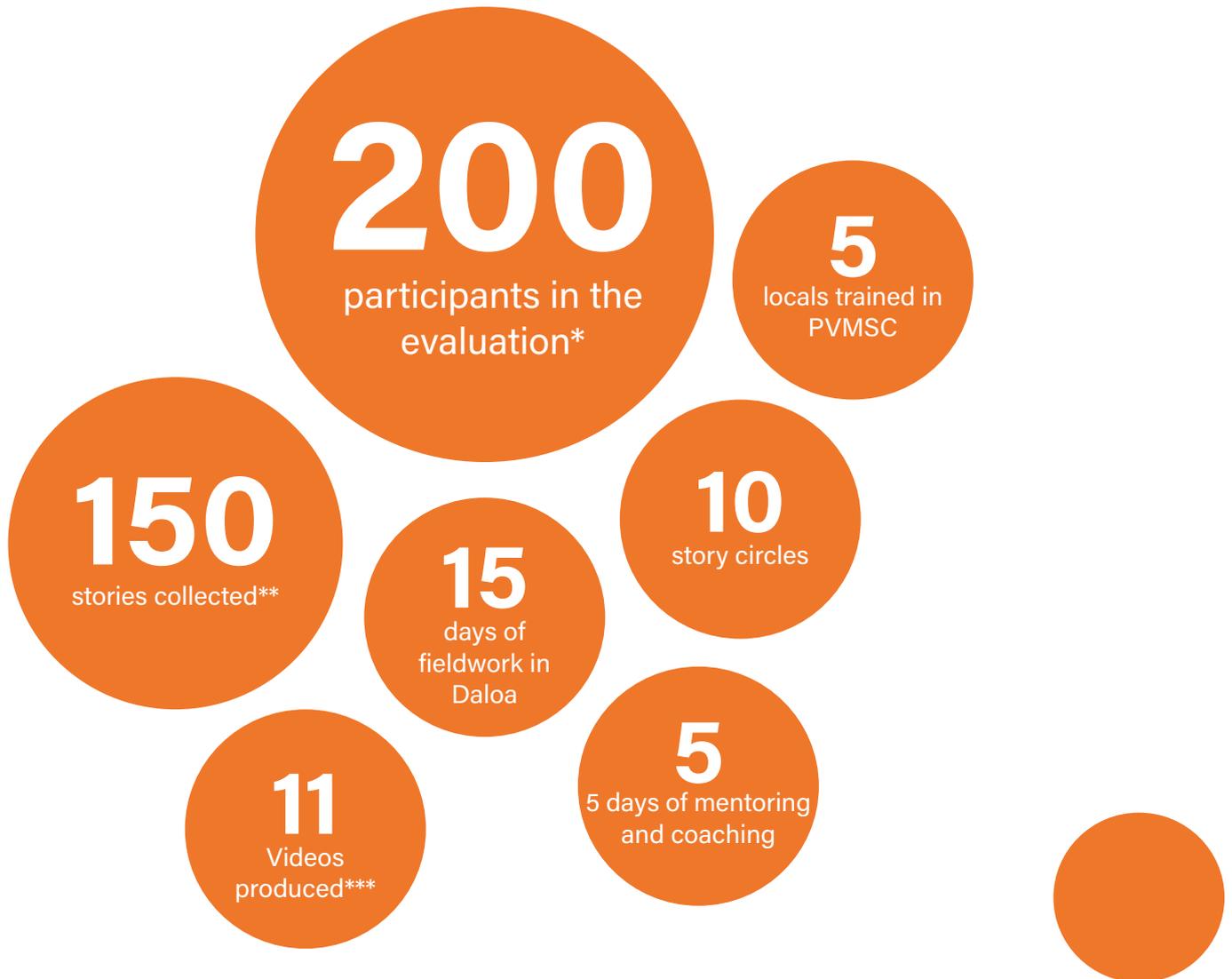
These were all young people who were actively involved in the programme, representatives selected from Peace Messenger clubs in the target local schools and representatives from a number of Peace Guardian clusters in and around Daloa.

SFCG led the participant selection process, guided by a brief from InsightShare. Selecting the Peace Messengers was efficiently done through the peace club supervisor in each school. The supervisor is a teacher who is committed to working for peace, they also attended the story collection and screening days with the youth from their schools and sat at a distance as silent observers.

Responsibility for the selection of the Peace Guardians in Daloa was given to Pilon, the Daloa group leader, he randomly selected people from his network without prior notification nor any specific criteria. He also tried to influence the selection in Issia, this dual selection was in part responsible for the fact that too many participants turned up on the first day of collection. Without any selection brief or criteria the Daloa peace guardians were simply told to turn up, many had no idea what they were there to do until the initial introductory presentation. Nonetheless these challenges were all skilfully dealt with by the partners and the evaluation team and did not prevent the work from progressing.



PV MSC EVALUATION IN NUMBERS



**Including learners from the selected schools who are participants in peace clubs, out of school youth who are members of the peace guardian structure, educators who are supervising peace clubs, project staff from SFCG, local stakeholders and representatives from the Ministry of Education.*

***this included 34 stories we collected from 2 story circles in Abidjan plus 10 stories that were shared by the local facilitators*

****Including 8 testimonies, 1 video report, 1 video compilation of filmed testimonies and a short 3-minute summary - all have consent for public sharing.*

METHODOLOGY

Phase Zero: Project Preparation

Prior to undertaking the evaluation in Daloa the InsightShare trainers and local facilitators spent some days preparing together. The first step was to exam the knowledge the local facilitators had retained since the last exchange with InsightShare, this was undertaken using a workflow exercise. This PVMSC refresh was then followed by a practical story collection test in Abidjan with a small group of participants who had been part of the last training exercise. This was followed by a team reflection to identify gaps in knowledge and know-how to aid the standardization of practice

Phase One: Story Collection and Selection

Over a period of 4-days we worked with 8 groups of 15 beneficiaries in Daloa. Each person was given an opportunity to share their personal story in relation to the MSC question presented. A local facilitator then summarized the stories and led a selection process and logging the reasons why a story was selected. These reasons were then filtered to define a set of criteria against which the shortlisted stories were evaluated.

After checking that the selected storyteller was open to continuing with the process, the group supported them to dig deeper into their experience by drawing a river of life and using specific probing questions. Their story was then filmed; they were given the chance to then watch back the recording on camera before giving their consent. While this was happening the rest of the group used the river of life as a plan to dramatize the story, which was then filmed. The Peace Guardians took part in a soul focusing exercise in place of doing a drama.

Phase Two: Listening and editing

The evaluation team worked together on computers to write up the scribe notes collected from the story collection phase. From each story the main blocker, enabler and change were highlighted.

The selected stories were prepared for the screening by the team using editing software. The local facilitators then carefully listened to and transcribed each testimony. Each testimony transcription was translated from French to English.

Phase Three: Beneficiary Screening Events

Three separate screenings of the selected testimonies was undertaken. The audiences at each of these screening was asked to identify the key message in each testimony and to identify the change. The audience was then divided into three groups, two worked independently to select their MSC story, while the third group undertook a focused group discussion. Each group prepared a presentation report where they shared their selection and described the change they had identified as well as the blockers and enablers to change.



Phase Four: Participatory Analysis

Cards depicting key blockers, enablers and change were generated from the scribe notes, these were then clustered in themes, each theme was then labeled to give the cluster a name. The storytellers joined us for a day and they analyzed the clouds on the walls and added anything that was missing from their stories in a different color.

The Peace Messengers, the peace guardian and the facilitation team then worked in buzz groups to develop a chain of change, this was then sequenced in chronological order to identify what it was that started the change process and the sequence of event that unfolded. The facilitation team developed a script that summarized the key finding of the project, this was then filmed and edited into a video report.

Phase five: Stakeholder Screening Event

A wide range of stakeholders attended the screening events, including representation from the Mayors office, the local police department and from the Ministry of Education plus a number of School principals, they all had a direct involvement or a keen interest in the programme. The two films selected from the beneficiary screening events and one additional testimony from one of the girls was shown. Once again the stakeholders were asked to identify the key messages and the change, they were provided the opportunity to talk to the storytellers for clarification.

A group made up of those who had already attended the beneficiary screening or were themselves storytellers went outside to develop a future vision for peace. Following the breakaway session, we gathered again for a presentation from each group. In closing a short video compilation and the local evaluation team's video report was screened.

RESULTS



The stories of most significant change

The project resulted in the filming of eight participatory video stories of most significant change. Summaries of their stories follow. This word cloud represents the frequency of words mentioned by the young people in the 120 stories told. It highlights the important (negative) role played by the FESCI (syndicate) which was mentioned more than 84 times. The more positive role played by friends and school. Fathers were mentioned in many stories, usually as distant and authoritarian. Other strong influencers we can see are brothers, school, the clubs and SFCG.

"I no longer need to be violent to be respected, how other people in my community see me is now important to me."

"A person is not born with violence in them, people who are weak or who have been hurt look for violence, I was one such person, but now I have found something that is stronger than violence, it had the power to change me on the inside."

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Ange Parfait Zozoro

I had my own gang, we disrupted classes whenever it pleased us. We offended teachers, sometimes they got angry but we did not care for them or that we were putting our lives in danger.

SFCG came to our school, they talked about peace club messengers. We weren't interested, I just wanted to be seen. I was a leader, my gang feared me even my community, I was very dangerous and aggressive. If you made me angry I would harm you without a care for you. I attended SFCG's training, but it was difficult to accept because my fellows were not willing to be part of it. I did learn some little lessons but still kept on fighting.

I did not listen to my parents. I preferred to be disruptive and I got very bad marks. I started thinking about the messages of the peace club and I decided to go see my educator to find out more. I decided to drop everything, to commit myself to my studies to reach for success. It is not easy to commit oneself to peace, you must forget about bad company and focus on school and family. I have learnt from my past, when I see the slashes on my body, it reminds me that I gained nothing from being disruptive, you must become a model pupil and take good actions, then people will notice you and talk about you and bless you, this will open up the way ahead.

Cissé Hassan

I never liked going to school. In grade 3 my brother and I decided to disrupt classes. We beat up the class leaders, those in charge of cleaning the classrooms, we threw stones on the roofs and jammed the locks with twigs, then we insulted the teachers until we were sent home.

My peers listened me to. I planned to disturb the academic calendar and the whole town. When I ordered people to disturb, they did it and when I said stop, they stopped. Then a friend convinced me to attend a training by SFCG, there were others who were also involved in the disturbance, I told myself that this seemed serious, so I stayed. I was told to write down the word reconciliation on a sheet of paper and then tear it up. I did it, then I was asked to stick the paper back together again, it was very difficult. I realized at that moment then it's easy to destroy but difficult to restore. The training was powerful, it has transformed me, I have committed myself to sharing peace with others, inside and outside the schools, even within families. I have now become responsible, I have learnt how to forgive, I have become wise and am now respected in my community, today we are proud to be Peace Guardians.

Cynthia Cardello Onblehon

I live with my mother and have to pay the rent and my school fees. I have to also feed my mother and myself every day. When I asked my older sisters for help with my school fees, even though they had money, they refuse saying I was big enough to look after myself.

One woman I worked for abused me, but I had no choice, I had to do it for the money. I blamed my sisters because they could have helped but preferred to watch me suffer. One day, I decided to commit suicide, I went to the bush to do it, on the way I came across an old man who asked where I was going and what do you want to do in the bush? He asked me what was troubling me. We went to his village where he sold one of his pigs and gave me the money for my school fees.

SFCG came to my school looking for pupils to join the club of Peace Messengers, we were taught how to forgive others who have done you wrong, In the club I was changing but I was still angry towards my sisters. My mother called one day to tell me my sister had given birth and her husband had chased her away, she was asking me to send her money because the baby was sick. At first I refused but then I remembered that even though my sister does me wrong she remains my sister. I told myself that money doesn't make happiness, so I gave her the money and the baby recovered, through that I was able to learn to forgive.



Jonas

I joined a small group of pupils, a kind of union, who were always disrupting classes. We spent our time planning disruptions, rather than attending classes, this allowed the violence to rise up in me and I was always ready to fight. In 2010 I failed and was expelled from the school. I attended a private school, there it was the same, I kept on committing acts of violence over and over again and disrupting classes.

SFCG talked to us at school and invited us to attend a training that would help students reform their reputation, at first I resisted, by Mr. LoKou was persistent, the training gave a blast to my life and I realized violence did not build anything, it just destroys. I had a new purpose to my life, and I was able to solve my disputes through dialogue and diplomacy rather than violence.

Koné Abdul Khalil

I wanted to be a great and well known leader in Daloa, I started by selling drugs to my older brothers and their friends, I earned a lot of money. When I was in Grade 6, I saw a very violent guy fighting, who got everything he wanted and whom everyone feared, I wanted to be like him. So I created my own gang at school, we even used to beat-up girls, but people were not afraid of us, so we had to become more violent to earn their respect, I also threatened my teachers to force them to give me good marks.

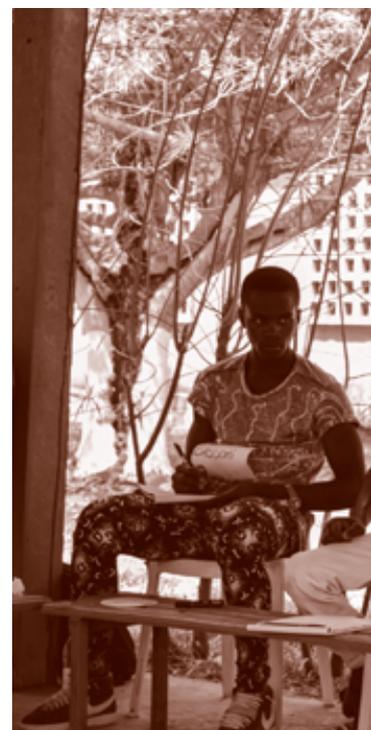
I was expelled from school, Pilon paid me a visit at home, he told me that violence was the cause of my failure and that we can only profit through practicing peace. He asked us to join the Guardians of Peace to stop people fighting at schools. Now, all those who once feared me can see the positive change I have undergone. I created a group called "Choco Mara", we don't fight anymore, we play football a lot, to be a member of our group you are required to be non-violent. Now I feel very happy!

Kouakou Kouassi Sylvestre

I came across a group of young boys who were known for creating violence in our school. I liked the way they used to disturb classes, so I joined them. Sometime we were happy to be in class, but other times we didn't feel like school and we would make sure there was no class. We were doing this for many years, without any valid motive. We saw exams are a kind of punishment, a way of exclude us from school, we didn't see them as a part of the education process.

SFCG came to our school to promote peace and non-violence, they wanted to train pupils in participatory theatre. As I was a member of the Art and Culture Club I was selected. After the training, we were tasked to spread awareness amongst our peers who were still involved in violence in schools. However it was hard for me, I was still a troublemaker. So I had to make a choice to change my behavior, my first step was to drop being a disturber and become a diligent student, this was my start on the way to change.

My change has been gradual, but now I am out in the front driving the awareness campaign and acting in dramas to communicate peace. When a conflict sparks, people come to me, I am ready to step in and bring solutions. We must go forward! We must turn our back to violence, it is a gangrene that rots our life away.



**Jallande**

In my family the atmosphere is very tense. My father is never at home; he doesn't know what I'm up to. When I do something that displeases my mother, she insults me. Telling me that I am stupid, that I am not a human being. That hurts me. I used to cry in silence, hiding my tears by taking a shower. Over time I withdrew into myself and I became cruel towards others, even my friends became afraid to ask me for anything.

In Form 4 my close friend told me about a club that could help, I attended the training for SFCG where I learnt that I had nothing to hide. By speaking out about my feelings, my behavior changed, now I am a peaceful girl. When I am asked for something, I answer calmly and respect the other.

Thierry

I was the leader of my class, my aim was to disrupt classes so that the teachers could not teach. I was offered a place in the union and after a while it was handed over to me to rule. I used to plan disruptions, strikes and actions which hindered the education system in Issia. We used to blow whistles to disrupt classes for no reason. If we were late the teachers refused to allow us into class, then we would strike and close the school. We loved doing foolish things that made the administration and teachers angry with us.

One day a guy called Pilon came to meet me, he told me about SFCG and peace promotion in the schools, then he asked me to gather 25 people to form a club to restore peace. In the past I did not like talking with the authorities, but right now I am involved in solving issues in my community. Thanks to SFCG I can communicate, I can share, I can discuss with the authorities, my friends and brothers of my division.

Today we are responsible and working hand in hand with the school authorities and the regional education office of Daloa. When there is trouble in the schools, we are called in to intervene and restore order, we are no longer the "disruptive ones" - we are now Peace Guardians.

[WATCH ALL VIDEOS HERE](#) 

Outputs and Outcomes**Value for Participants**

Both the story collection and the screening events were high energy exchanges, the interactions between both the Peace Messengers and the Peace Guardians were meaningful for them. The events were much more than just spaces for talking and listening to each other, they provided a safe space for expression marked by singing and dancing that reinforced their shared identity and united them around their common cause, to promote, create and maintain peace.

Video Report

A short film was compiled by the evaluation team that summarized the key findings of the evaluation and provided key recommendations to the partners. This film gives a high level overview of the positive impact this programme has achieved and calls system players to scale the effect.

Rapport vidéo Daloa, Cote D'Ivoire fr/eng subs - 4.30 mins

[WATCH HERE](#)



The full English transcript can be found in the annex p 85

Compilation Videos

These were compiled from selections of the 8 recorded testimonies, overlaid with images of the faces of the Peace Guardians from the soul focusing video exercise. The film shows what the situation was like before the programme, what the programme did to activate change and what was the result of the programme on an individual level as well as the impacts on a community level. A short 3-minute film was also created for use on UNICEF's social media platforms

Echos de Paix en Cote D'Ivoire fr/eng subs 11 min & 3min version

[WATCH HERE](#)



The programme has brought hope and stimulated a future focused outlook, **education has now been elevated and is prized** not only by those in the schooling system, but equally so by those who were deprived of education by their past disruptive behavior. **Many Peace Guardian** have returned to school and those too old to do so all want to now obtain some or other skill or vocational training.

Learning is happening within the sample schools, both an increase in school attendance and a noted improvement in results, **90% of the Peace Messengers have improved their school results**, of which more than half have seen more than a **30% improvement in their grades**. 7 stories attributed the change they made to their **involvement in peace clubs**, another 12 peace Messenger stories highlighted their **involvement in participatory theatre** and once again highlighted the important role that being a **promoter of peace and sensitizing others** had in enabling them to make necessary change in behavior.

There is a widening ripple effect that the Peace Messenger beneficiaries are demonstrating by campaigning for peace in their communities and **recruiting more and more people to stand for peace**. Peace clubs established in the sample schools have been proactive in going to other schools around them to promote peace and even to establish peace clubs beyond the reach of the programme. The pass on effect amongst the Peace Guardians has also be highlighted, with an impact that reaches **beyond the individual change and into the community** as they are influencing their circle of friends and diminishing the levels of violence in their immediate communities. Many participants testified to the **increase of respect** they now have for others and the value they place on human rights.



Families are benefiting from the programme, beneficiaries on both sides of the programme have shared examples of how longstanding rifts in their family have been restored and how now there is a renewed understanding and respect for the importance of family and their ability to personally contribute to maintaining peace and wellbeing.

The change at a personal level has had a direct bearing on what people place value on in the world around them, before beneficiaries idolized negative heroes, such as Hitler, and even took their nicknames from such figures. Now they have turned their attention to people who have made a positive difference, such as Mandela. The change has extended even to how people dress and present themselves in public. The potential of hope for a better future has expanded and with this they now also believe that they are able to make a positive contribution to their community, to their country and to the world. 11 stories credited openness (willingness to change), 7 realisation (described as switching on a light by one participant) , 7 respect (and consideration of the other) and 5 credited role models as key factors enabling them to make a positive change in behavior.

A handful from both the Peace Messengers and the Peace Guardians **see themselves as champions for peace**, some are moving around the country sharing the peace they have found with other districts where there is still strife and violence. Others have declared that they want to dedicate their lives to the struggle for peace. A wider circle from the Peace Messengers are wanting to cascade the message and mission of peace after they are finished with school and within higher education.

The stories demonstrate a shared sense of identity that extends beyond just having a badge or a club, the word movement came up a lot. For them it is about belonging to something greater than themselves, **a movement for change**. There is an expectation that out of this programme something much bigger is going to emerge and that they will be part of it.

The Enablers of Change

The evaluation team identified the following key drivers of change from all the stories presented in Daloa, what was interesting to see was that the programme was able to provide a counter balance to the key blockers (see earlier p 4) to restoring peace in the sampled schools.

The main enabler of change identified was the commitment of SFCG to the peace building process, this was mentioned in 39 stories as a key change factor. When this was unpacked with the storytellers we were given the following additional information and insight into what it was that SFCG did to activate peace in the sampled schools.

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- The learning that; one cannot promote peace without being in peace, that its easy to destroy but difficult to repair and that without peace nothing could be achieved
- The training enables us to restore order and justice at school
- We learnt the importance of education
- Fun activities, such as dance, poetry, songs and participatory theater in school
- Peace messengers train class mates and address the whole school every Monday
- Interaction between schools, seed other Peace Messengers club
- A greater sense of interaction with others
- Holding responsibilities in my community
- Knowing what was expected and the associated responsibilities of being a peace messenger/guardian
- Learnt how to manage internal conflict, became more confident, developed self-control, challenged my behavior and exercised respect - Value myself and my potential
- Learnt how to evaluate consequences and live life positively
- Learnt to live without violence and how to forgive
- Learnt reconciliation methods, how to be tolerant and accept others' opinions, to reject violence and practice non-violence
- A strong desire to keep the positive impact I have undergone after the training and to follow the example of our advisor.

Mentors have played a prominent role in inspiring those around them to make different choices about what they do and where they want to direct their lives. Beneficiaries within the programme have followed the example of the leaders they look up to and are associated with, these role models have a significant influence and ability to guide their followers in any given direction.

A number of external factors have also made a contribution to enabling peace to develop roots, this included the government's determination to end violence, the support from the religious community and the police who sought collaboration. The timing was right as many of the agitators of violence had grown weary of violence and were looking for a way out. The renewed value placed on family and the improved relationships between parents and their children has also added weight to tilt the situation in favor of peace.

The schools that were once the victims of the violence have also become entry points for change, allowing SFCG access into their establishments to establish peace clubs and work from the inside has been a significant contributor to the change. The combined effect of the enablers has restored hope and has been instrumental in carving out a new vision for the future.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the following statements and reflections have been gathered directly from beneficiaries, from their stories, from their discussions during story collection and their responses at screenings. We made a specific point in the process to have space for beneficiaries to provide their suggestions on how the programme could be improved (see the video report for a summary of their key recommendations).

Other recommendations were extracted indirectly during the analysis stage. We made a specific point to ask the local evaluation team to be on the lookout for key elements they felt should be shared with the partners, when writing up the scribe notes, or checking flipcharts from the screenings and from the interactions we had with the storytellers during their participation in the analysis stage.

Strategies to reinforce the capacity of beneficiaries

Peace Guardians need to strengthen and expand their methods for containing and confronting violence. During the evaluation there was an incident at one of the sample schools, someone blew a whistle to call others to gather and force closure of the school, the Peace Guardians were quick to respond, but they responded by confining the whistle blower and then beating him. This kind of thing is happening less and less now and the Peace Guardians have undoubtedly been very successful in using their presence and force to contain any flares of violence and disruptions in schools. It does however highlight the need to continually reinforce the work that has been done with the Peace Guardians in anger management and in strengthening their ability to use communication to advance a non-violent approach in response to the anger invitations they receive. In this way partners can continue to ensure that this important protection role they are playing in no way becomes a platform for them to apply the methods they used before, when they were perpetrators of violence.

Counseling and psychosocial support was identified by the storytellers and the local evaluation team as something that would support some of the Peace Guardians who have committed and/or been exposed to violence and trauma to overcome the wounds they carry from the past and fast track the working of inner reconciliation.

Monitoring personal growth and development of each and every member on an annual basis against a set of behavior and activity indicators defined through consultation with them. By each one assessing themselves and seeing the progress they are making they are encouraged to consolidate the change that is happening within, making it difficult to go back to old ways if they are faced with similar scenarios and stresses that provoked a leaning towards violence.





Peace Guardians supported the idea of an appraisal system which focuses on individual performance and was linked to performance based incentives proportioned to responsibility. The appraisal system could reward individuals for the progress they have made in changing their behavior and for their dedication to serve with something visible, such as life skills badges and certificates of merit. Ultimately, although they enter the programme in the full knowledge that they are volunteers they say that they cannot continue indefinitely as volunteers and that the current stipend for transport is not enough. A longer term Peace Guardians programme will need to think about how they will reward individuals and acknowledge the value they add.

Many Peace Guardians argue that they are providing an essential security service to schools and that this benefits the school, the learners and the community. They expressed the hope that after the closure of this phase of the programme, perhaps a new phase could start, where they might receive payment for some services covered by school budgets with support from local government and the local businesses community, who could cover some of the cost as part of their social responsibility. The challenges of such a scheme are many and we are unsure how realistic this might be. In the meantime many of the Peace Guardians are now back to school. For those who were not able to get back to school, the programme is exploring vocational training, something that was a priority for many of the youth, who are very keen to contribute to the local economy and be more employable.

Strategies to inform project management and participation

The Peace Guardians represent a group of youth that have come a long way, but there is still a long journey ahead. This is the first year of work with this out of school “hard to reach” group of youth who were socialized into violence and power games. Rivalries and divisions can still erupt at any moment within the group and this delicate balance has been navigated skilfully by the partners throughout the programme. One of the strategies used up until now by SFCG in Daloa has been to work largely through their youth intermediary as the principal point of contact, namely the youth leader Pilon. This key strategy in the successful early growth and uptake of the programme may also risk becoming a barrier to its sustainability and evolution longer term. Many of the young Peace Guardians expressed that they would like to have a more direct interface with SFCG and have less filtered through Pilon. They feel this would address their need for more inclusion in the development and structure of the programme and would increase their ability to speak out about things that are of concern. The partners have listened to this feedback and are developing their plans to ensure that “quieter voices” in the group are taken into consideration and are exploring a rotating coordination approach. They also point out the need for further training and capacity building in leadership and communication skills to strengthen the foundations of the group and its ability to ride out internal storms and be sustainable longer term.

Explore options to strengthen the linkages between Peace Messengers and Peace Guardians as well as define clear segregation of roles and responsibilities that fosters cooperation and promote interdependence. There is value to be added by creating opportunities for them to interface and foster collaboration, many have returned to school with support from this programme, in those cases they asked; do they go back as messengers or guardians?

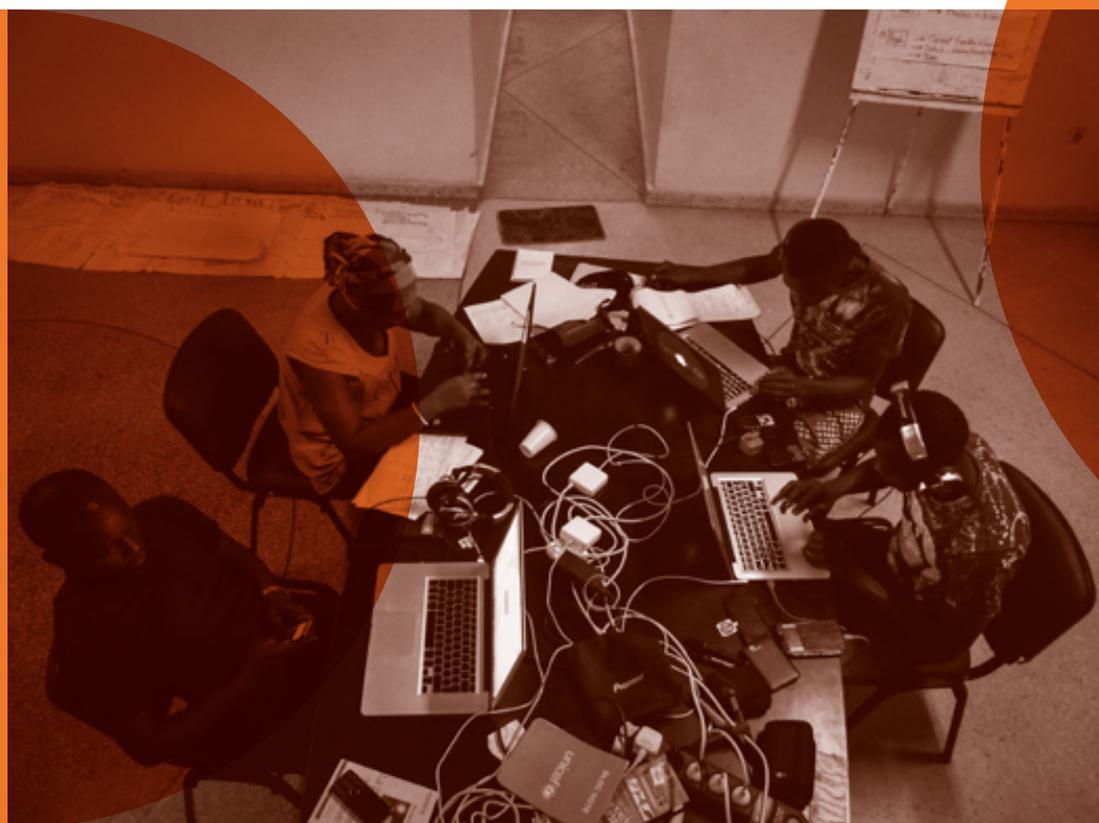
The programme is already reaching out to other secondary schools through their awareness campaigns and participatory theatre. The peace messengers mentioned the importance of trying to cascade the effects of the peace clubs to primary schools, because they know that if they can reach the children early enough this new generation will accelerate the peace building approach. Their argument is that once someone is a teenager and caught up in violence it is a difficult task to change them, better to aim for prevention at an earlier age. The Peace Messengers are keen to play a role in planting peace clubs in primary schools and thereafter to monitor and mentor them until they can stand on their own feet.

Explore ways in which Peace Messengers can support and facilitate learning in the classrooms – peer to peer teaching, study groups etc.

Peace messengers leaving school have asked what next, how can they continue supporting an emerging culture of peace, is there an access route to become part of the peace guardian structure? Some will move on to universities, can they form a structure there? Others will be absorbed into the local community. They have suggested the formation of some-kind of wider citizenship initiative – a national fellowship of peace builders.

Mentorship was identified by the participatory analysis as a key factor that enabled change, it should feature as a key focus in the next programme cycle as a vehicle to cascade capacity building (each one teach one) and for social support (personal struggles). Mentorship is also a cost effective way of sharing knowledge and skills.

Put in place an internal participatory monitoring and evaluation system. SFCG and UNICEF can build on the current PVMSC methodology, that uses real experiences to inform implementation and reporting, drawing on the trained team of skilled local facilitators. Also explore expanding this to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth, anywhere that is dealing with adolescents and youth issues, to ensure their ideas and voices are heard and that they are able to influence the approaches, policies and programmes that are targeting youth.



Strategies to inform programme succession and scale

Building a structure for succession that is constructed with and by the Peace messengers and the Peace Guardians that gives them a voice and a say in the design and ongoing implementation of the strategy as it adapts to the future shift in the development climate within Côte d'Ivoire.

Within the Peace Guardians girls have been overlooked, the programme needs to ensure that gender dynamics are addressed so that girls have equal access to the programme, including being involved at a leadership level, so they can champion women's rights and the issues that are affecting girls.

The Peace Guardians have made a clear request for additional activities within the programme that focusses on job creation and income generation, stimulating the spirit of entrepreneurship by finding pathways towards self-help, so they can participate and contribute to local economic development.

Trainer Recommendations

We recommend exploring the Certified Phase Life Skills Programme as a positive model which could build on and reinforce the achievements of this programme. It aims to reinforce the power of realization – thinking skills, emotional intelligence, self-help, asset based development, relationship, money management, artistic expression, non-violent communication, human rights – this could go a long way to support youth to make the transition to adulthood and responsibility.

Peace messengers we heard from and worked with expressed that they feel ready to take on wider health and human rights issues. There is a huge amount of human capital both within the Peace Messengers and the Peace Guardians. Among both groups there is a desire to develop further skills specifically in the areas of: facilitation, leadership, mediation, counseling and citizenship. By focusing on furthering this personal development this wider potential could be unlocked. The Peace Messengers have expressed a vision that goes beyond just peace promotion in schools and the Peace Guardians are eager to reach out into their community to become community development practitioners.

Trainer Conclusion

The two pronged strategy, working with youth both in schools and out of school, has been a very effective vehicle to stabilize the violent culture that prevailed in the schools. It is highly unlikely that the positive results of this programme would have been possible to the same extent had the partners only focused on working with Peace Messenger clubs inside the schools.

The targeted strategy of converting the head of the syndicate to being the agent of peace was highly effective and had a domino effect down the whole chain of command.

The Peace Guardians are in many ways a lost generation, but they are not a lost cause, as a result of their past actions disrupting and vandalizing schooling they deprived themselves of an education. Education is now valued and desired by these same youth, this is a 180-degree shift. There is now a new focus of looking forward to a brighter future where peace prevails, there is a renewed vision for a prosperous nation, the spillover of this programme into the wider community holds the real possibility of turning the tide and starting a nation building campaign – a supportive environment has been created in which purpose and common cause can take root for the good of all.

Based on what we have heard and seen, this programme holds the ability to catalysis and drive wider social change, for this reason we recommend that the learning and success achieved here is amplified and scaled out across the nation of Côte d'Ivoire. **This intervention has provided a framework and the essential scaffolding to design a national programme.**

*Violence is the easy way it leads you downhill,
peace is the difficult road to take—if all of us worked
together we will not finish building a house in a day,
but we could break a house down in a single day.*