

**Davis Peace Project Report - Promoting non-violence among Guyanese youth
Future Generations Graduate School
Student: Goldie Scott, Volunteer Youth Corps Inc, Guyana
Project Start date: 25th April 2011
Project end Date: 29th September 2011**

The Davis Peace Project was written at the time when Guyana was in the process of preparing for its General elections. Due to setbacks at the Guyana Elections Commission, the elections have been deferred to a later date in November.

Project Goal:

To increase youth participation in non-violence activities during the period of the general election, thus reducing the number of reported cases of youth-led violence in society.

'Peace means being able to put aside personal grievances and conflicts in the interest of representing a common good of seeing a united and violence-free Guyana'. (Goldie Scott)

Did other fundraising efforts contribute to your project?

Yes, Volunteer Youth Corps was able to host two fundraisers to support the project goals.

Event 1: Equilibrium Fun Day and Party - Invited the private sector to support the project and to assist in hosting our first event 'Equilibrium'. The initiative was supported by the following partners: Slingers' Family Entertainment and Gold-rock Entertainment, Banks DIH (a local beverage company), National Communications Network and Hits and Jams Entertainment. The actual event was held at GNS Sports Complex.

Ground on Sunday, 12th June 2011. The event commenced at 2:00pm with several booths and a number of games to attract the youth. The event was intended to raise funds for the project while at the same time promoting equality among the different DJs who were invited to perform. Although the event was well promoted on television and radio, it had to be postponed to the following weekend due to inclement weather. The event attracted about 100 youth, mainly volunteers, youth and fans of slingers family.

Event 2: Peace Fest – Youth actors planned this second event.. Their vision was to host a cultural show targeting In-school youth from high schools around the capital city Georgetown, along the East Coast and East Bank. Although approval took some time, VYC eventually was able to get the Ministry of Education support. The event was initially organized to be hosted at the National Park during school hours on the last day of school; however this was later changed to the GNS Ground, due to past problems with the Ministry. In attendance were around 300 in-school youth, youth clubs, VYC peace educators and volunteers and guest artists. Three plays were performed which included Brothers, Reflections and Neighbors. Leading up to the event, performances were also held at five schools in Georgetown (see details below).

Details about how the project worked.

Thirty youth were trained as Youth Peace Educators – Auditions were held at VYC giving youth the opportunity to perform a two-minute dramatic presentation on peace. Outstanding actors were selected to work on the project.. The auditions lasted about one week.

Persons selected ranged from well known actors to teens who regularly participate in VYC's after-school sessions.

A Community Youth Facilitator (a UNDP National Volunteer), led a one-week peace education and drama training May 9 to 15. Areas covered included: Peer education and SALT concept of peace and drama and Street Theater Stills and Dance. Two young writers were invited to work with the team for the period, along with a dance group 'All Steppers'.

Training of nine popular DJs – Hosting of the training session for DJs posed some challenges due to their busy schedules. Still achieving the objectives, the coordinator met individually with each DJ and their manager on and off site to discuss the terms of the project and to invite their collaboration. Meetings were held with the following: DJs at Hits and Jams Entertainment, Slingers Family, NCN – Casual (radio), Gold Rock and New Generations.

Moreover, during the latter part of May, DJs were targeted to develop messages promoting non-violence. These messages were added to a popular Disc and distributed to every public bus at the Bus Park. A total of 1000 CDs have been distributed to date. The leadership for production was taken by DJ Selecta Face from the Slingerz Family. Awareness about the project was promoted well in most public buses for about one month before CDs were placed. The CDs communicated the messages to the youth population about youth resistant

violence. We envisioned that the number of youth that heard the messages for the month could possibly be 2000-3000 or more.

VYC was able to print 50 T-shirts carrying the project name along with a theme developed during the training: 'Violence is not my defense'. All peace educators, DJs, and volunteers received t-shirts.

Youth-led street theater- The trained peace educators during the first 40 days focused on rehearsals. Rehearsals were still happening regularly at VYC centre in preparation for upcoming events and activities.

There were drama and dance performances at the following sites: Ethnic Relations Commission held a sports and fun day event targeting youth from several regions at Carifesta Sports Complex; Equilibrium Fun Day and Party; Peace Fest; DJ Party held at Guyana Cricket Club; City Mall; East Ruimveldt Secondary School; Tucville High School; Lodge Secondary; South Ruimveldt; St. John's High School; and at the VYC office closing ceremony for the summer program. Some events were promoted and organized by DJ Selecta Face – Slingers Family.

The value of the project was our ability to use existing events to highlight the importance of peace through the arts. It is our hope that Guyana would have a general election free of violence and racial tensions. and that youth would resist being actors to perpetuate violence.

The peace educators met almost daily to rehearse lines for plays. Most of the plays lasted about 15 minutes. Eleven shows have been held to date. These shows were important to effectively propagate social messages and to raise youth awareness regarding critical issues.

A mural painting activity is presently in the planning stages. The mural is expected to be executed on Thursday, 29th September, on the Lodge Community Field. VYC is looking to partnering with other youth NGOs and the private sector to make this initiative a success.

Were there unanticipated difficulties? Yes, they were a few unanticipated difficulties such as:

- Past conflicts between DJs presented the biggest challenge-some DJs refused to partner with other DJs.
- High cost associated with venue usage which resulted in venue changes
- Budget constraints due to poor private sector financial commitment.
- Most events hosted by DJs commence at 23:00hrs or midnight – this presented a significant challenge to high school kids who were part of the drama team.
- Some DJs showed a lack of commitment due to the request for voluntary commitment and in some cases due to prior commitments.
- There were issues surrounding PA system and generator access especially for street shows; as a result, most of the performances were held in organized settings or at in-door locations.

What worked well?

- Recruitment of youth actors, their auditions, rehearsals and public performances.
- DJs production of CD highlighting messages promoting non-violence.
- Promotion of events through the small contributions made by private sector

What did not went that well?

- Poor attendance at the first event 'Equilibrium' due to poor weather conditions
- DJs conflict – one group refused to collaborate with the other group
- Insufficient private sector support

Target reached – About 3000 youth total were reached through DJs messages, organized events, buses, and peace educators.

Sustainability -VYC has incorporated drama in its curriculum for its after-school youth empowerment program. One of the writers has committed to continue with the youth on VYC's after-school program twice weekly.VYC has an existing peace curriculum that is being implemented in schools and at the community centre weekly.

Promoting Non-violence among Guyanese Youth

