

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF PEACE PROGRAM



OAS PEACE FUND



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EUROPEAN UNION

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT
OF THE OAS IN THE BELIZE - GUATEMALA
ADJACENCY ZONE (OAS/AZ)



In 2009, the OAS Office in the Belize-Guatemala Adjacency Zone (OAS/AZ) launched the culture of peace project to bring students and children from the neighboring communities of Belize and Guatemala under one roof to partake in music, art, language and crafts workshops. Since then, the program has grown and expanded beyond what was initially envisioned, having benefited thousands of children from the communities of Melchor de Mencos, Benque Viejo del Carmen, El Arenal, Santa Cruz and Jalacté.

While the original goal of the program was to promote friendships and foster understanding among the neighboring youth, the limited access to specialized training in the rural areas quickly transformed

the project into a highly relevant instrument which helps local youth develop practical skills that become income generating activities.

Today, the culture of peace program offers a variety of courses that range from basic painting and language lessons to more sophisticated educational opportunities in technical and technological skills such as electrician training.

RESULTS AND OUTCOMES:

- Greater access to non-formal education for adolescents and



for members of the community and development of technical and vocational training that can enable the participants to engage in future productive livelihoods.

- Increased cross-cultural communication, teamwork, interaction, and cooperation between AZ community members.

- Greater involvement of children and young people into the institutional life and everyday activities of their communities, and development of hobbies as a method of encouraging adolescents to find a positive



direction in life and to keep them out of trouble.

- Strengthened partnerships between local government authorities, migration officers and schools on both sides of the border.

- Increased self-esteem and confidence among the youth in the AZ by developing problem-solving skills and empowering them to generate change and act as agents of hope for a more peaceful and respectful coexistence.

- Increased enrollment of women in the culture of peace program, with females accounting for at least 50 per cent of such enrollment.

