

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND A CULTURE OF PEACE

THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE

Colophon

Editors:

Daan Stelder
Sanne van Amerongen

Contributors:

Ana Polgár
City of Daejeon
Emilia Califano
Jerome Gama Surur
Dr. Katarina Kruhonja
Dr. Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi
Maider Maraña
Dr. Mohamed Boudra
Municipality of Palmira
Peace in Our Cities Secretariat
Peter Knip
Renske Pelsma
Dr. Tadatoshi Akiba
Prof. Dr. Tarik Kupusović
Tessa van Laarhoven
Dr. Ton Rombouts
Prof. Thulisile Nomkhosi Madonsela
Dr. Vasu Gounden
Wim Deetman

Coordination and editing:

UCLG Peace Prize Secretariat
VNG International
Nassaulaan 12, The Hague (Netherlands)
+31 70 373 84 01
peace.prize@vng.nl
www.peaceprize.uclg.org
UCLG World Secretariat

Designer:

studi-k
March 2021

This project has been made possible with support from:

United Cities and Local Governments
Diputació Barcelona
Gipuzkoa Regional Council
VNG International
PAX
City of Tromsø
The National Fund for Peace, Freedom and Veterans Care (vfonds)

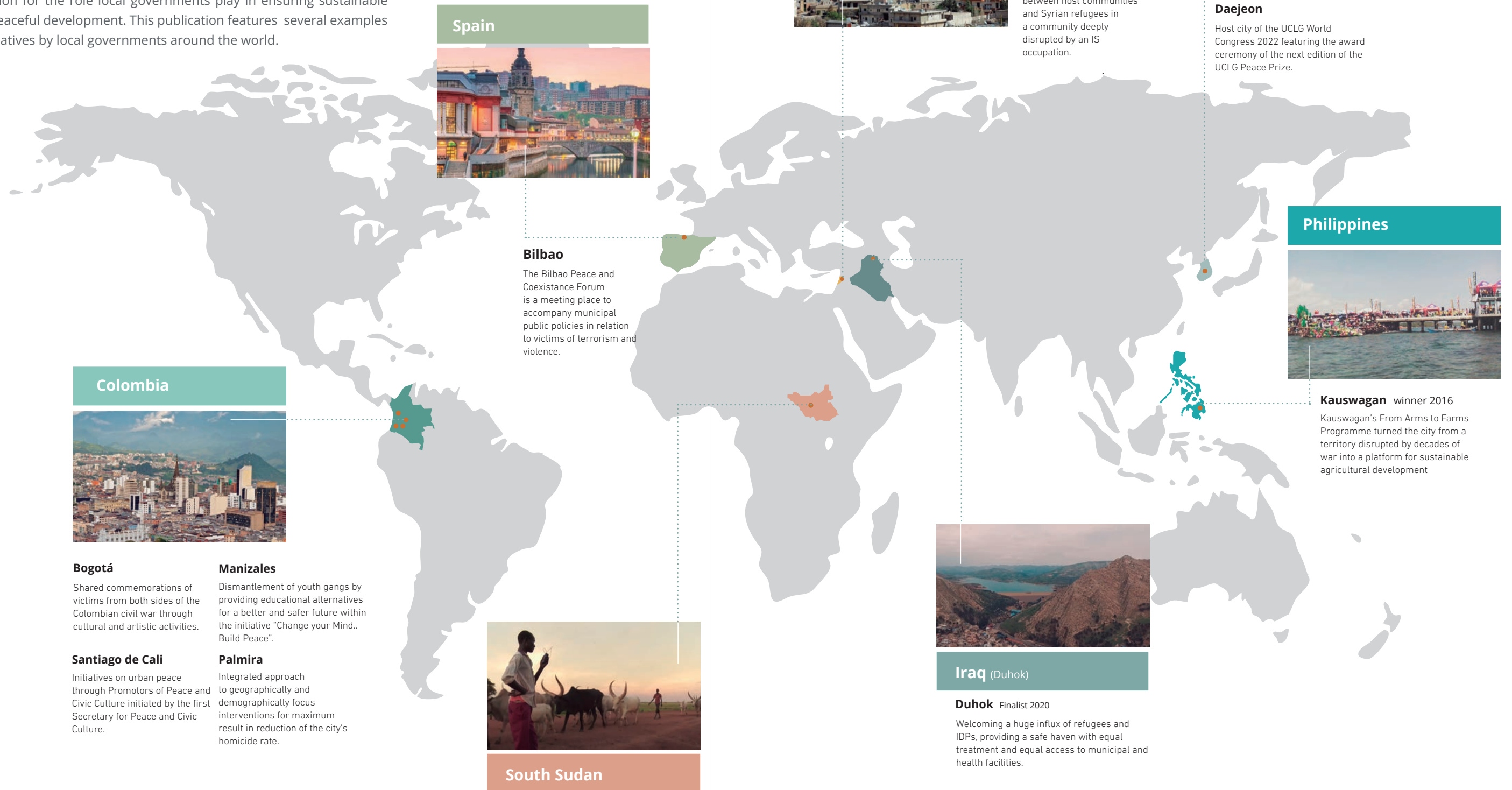
Table of Contents

•	World map spread Peace initiatives featured in this edition	04
•	Foreword: - Dr. Mohamed Boudra - Dr. Ton Rombouts	06
•	Municipality of Arsal “Dialogue of Life”: Winner UCLG Peace Prize 2019	10
•	History of the UCLG Peace Prize	16
•	Other Four finalists 2019 UCLG Peace Prize: Bogotá, Duhok, Manizales, Santiago de Cali	20
•	City Diplomacy and the ‘Glocal’ Skills to Foster Peace	28
•	Experiences from Previous Winner: Kauswagan	30
•	Personal Stories: interview with former gang members from Manizales	34
•	Promoting Peace after a long social enrooted Conflict: the Experience of the Gipuzkoa Regional Council	38
•	Honorable Mentions: Bilbao, Wau, Toribio	44
•	Web of Support for Local Peace - Peace in Our Cities	48
•	Palmira and the Quest for Urban Peace	50
•	Account of the second edition of the UCLG Peace Prize	52
•	Selection procedure of the UCLG Peace Prize	54
•	The Jury	56
•	The Jury Report	60
•	Future Glimpse: UCLG World Congress 2022 Daejeon (South Korea)	64
•	Partners of the UCLG Peace Prize	68
•	Become a partner of the prize	70

PEACE INITIATIVES FEATURED IN THIS EDITION

WORLD MAP SPREAD

The UCLG Peace Prize collects succesful and inspiring peace initiatives undertaken by local governments worldwide and stimulates others to follow suit. Moreover, it aims at generating international public attention for the role local governments play in ensuring sustainable and peaceful development. This publication features several examples of initiatives by local governments around the world.



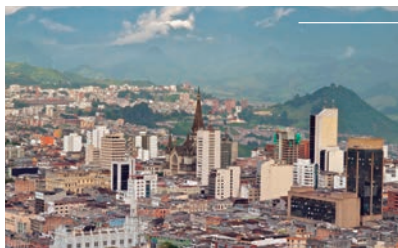
Spain



Bilbao

The Bilbao Peace and Coexistence Forum is a meeting place to accompany municipal public policies in relation to victims of terrorism and violence.

Colombia



Bogotá

Shared commemorations of victims from both sides of the Colombian civil war through cultural and artistic activities.

Manizales

Dismantlement of youth gangs by providing educational alternatives for a better and safer future within the initiative "Change your Mind.. Build Peace".

Santiago de Cali

Initiatives on urban peace through Promotors of Peace and Civic Culture initiated by the first Secretary for Peace and Civic Culture.

Palmira

Integrated approach to geographically and demographically focus interventions for maximum result in reduction of the city's homicide rate.



South Sudan

Wau Honorable Mention

The Marial Bai Peace initiative was set up to manage cattle migration and reconcile cattle keepers from Tonj and Gogrial and communities of farmers from Wau.

Lebanon



Arsal Winner 2020

Initiating and facilitating dialogues and mediation between host communities and Syrian refugees in a community deeply disrupted by an IS occupation.

Republic of Korea



Daejeon

Host city of the UCLG World Congress 2022 featuring the award ceremony of the next edition of the UCLG Peace Prize.

Philippines



Kauswagan winner 2016

Kauswagan's From Arms to Farms Programme turned the city from a territory disrupted by decades of war into a platform for sustainable agricultural development



Iraq (Duhok)

Duhok Finalist 2020

Welcoming a huge influx of refugees and IDPs, providing a safe haven with equal treatment and equal access to municipal and health facilities.



“Cities are the main place of interaction between people, groups, ideas and values. Cities and territories are also the scenes of the greatest inequalities and where various types of violence proliferate.”

2021 is a seminal year for international solidarity and peacebuilding. Two years after UCLG adopted its Durban Declaration, in which we expressed our resolve to become a municipalist movement driven by equality and local democracy and in the midst of a pandemic, we continue to see peace as the final objective of our actions. Seeking happiness for our communities and mastering the art of conflict resolution in a peaceful manner is the best guarantee towards sustainability and has always been at the heart of our international municipal movement. This crisis has uncovered our shortcomings and calls on us to rethink, together, how to improve our systems that were already showing exhaustion.

We have been in similar defining moments before in the history of humanity and, in all cases, building bridges between communities has been critical, both in the recovery and the redefinition of priorities. The work that has been carried out by our membership, led by VNG in relation to the UCLG Peace Prize builds on the very history of our century old municipal movement and its very DNA composed of global vision and solidarity among communities.

The future calls on us to understand that peace goes beyond absence of violence in our streets and that our destinies are more intertwined than ever before. Structural inequalities that have not been addressed are just as harmful in peace building as any specific conflict. Fostering a culture of care, inclusion and solidarity is critical both for local and global peace alike.

Yet, peace is often seen as an abstract value, something to live by or defined by the relations between countries, in which cities and local government have little role in. This notion is challenged by our work in UCLG, as we are convinced that it is at the level of our communities that we learn to live together, it is at that level where our aspirations and dreams are shaped. Moreover, it is also the space where transformation needs to start.

Cities are the main place of interaction between people, groups, ideas and values. Cities and territories are also the scenes of the greatest inequalities and where various types of violence proliferate. Understanding the different types of violence and their origin is critical and our work around the World Forum on Cities and Territories of Peace, in which we addressed peacebuilding as going beyond thinking about violence. This has allowed us to promote dialogue among our communities as a way to build spaces and communities free of violence, and to overcome the inherent fragility of our coexistence.

A culture of peace requires conflict transformation through dialogue and negotiation on equal terms, using non-violent means. Local and regional governments, who have demonstrated their commitment and transformative actions, are essential if we want to overcome unprecedented challenges. Local governments have proven to play a critical role in post conflict situations but they are also critical in creating the bases for peaceful societies. UCLG longstanding work in city diplomacy and peace building aims at addressing both issues and has international solidarity at the core.

The UCLG Peace Prize is an essential tool to on the one hand recognize the important work done by local, regional governments and their associations in the most challenging situations, and on the other hand to foster renewed dialogue around peacebuilding and transformation. As an award that celebrates local approaches to peace, it also showcases how local approaches to peace make local actors essential for mediation and facilitation in conflict resolution and essential to keep the value of peace alive in our streets, in our territories. The initiatives awarded by the UCLG Peace Prize give us great hope and they show us the way towards a Pact for the Future where we redefine the relation among people, the planet and governments.

We hope that these initiatives will continue to inspire as we pursue our daily construction of peace in each street, neighborhood, city, town and territory.



Dr. Mohamed Boudra

MAYOR OF AL HOCEIMA,
PRESIDENT OF THE UCLG AND
PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MAYORS OF MOROCCO (AMPCC)

“Nations are as weak or powerful as the stories they tell to themselves and to others”.

This sentence from the opening speech of the UCLG World Congress in November 2019 in Durban (South Africa) has been resonating in my head with regularity for several months now. It was an unforgettable experience. Thousands of local governors gathered with Graça Machel the widow of Nelson Mandela as their guest of honour.

A few days later on the closing day of this congress I dared to say: “what applies to nations, also applies to cities: *“Cities are as weak or powerful as the stories they tell to themselves and to others.”* As we all know, sometimes stories are too pain- and shameful to tell. And yet, representatives of five local governments shared that day their powerful stories with us. Stories, that gave me goose bumps and I am sure these had the same effect on most of the people in the audience. Applications from 19 countries in all corners of the world have been received with the 2019 edition of the Peace Prize, out of which our high level jury had selected five top contenders as finalists.

Local governments have, as you probably know, a central role to play in preventing conflicts, building bridges and dialogue after conflict and promoting a culture of peace. Through the UCLG Peace Prize we aim to celebrate successful initiatives of local governments and stimulate other local governments to follow suit, as well as to generate much-needed international public attention for the role of local governments in this field.

The jury members noted that all finalists of the award displayed exceptionally high quality initiatives and would be worthy to win the award. All five finalists are working very hard trying to solve difficult peace challenges, and are doing so under complex circumstances. Reconciliation after armed conflicts, disarming terrorizing youth gangs, as well as promoting peaceful coexistence of people from different religious backgrounds after a huge influx of refugees. Efforts like these displayed by the finalists of the award show that people can surpass even the most difficult circumstances, showing that there is hope for a positive future in their communities.

Three years ago in Bogota the UCLG Peace Prize was awarded for the first time. Our most recent finalists were Aarsal (Lebanon), Bogota (Colombia), Santiago de Cali (Colombia), Duhok (Iraq) and Manizales (Colombia). Although all five initiatives have the quality of a winner, the jury could only select one finalist to receive the 2019 UCLG Peace Prize: the municipality of Aarsal!

On behalf of the organization, I would like to thank all participating cities again for their applications. These are all lessons in courageous administration and moral conduct.

In the years to come, we together with the Secretary General of UCLG are making plans on how to pass on the best practises of the first two editions of the prize and how to bring the UCLG Peace Prize to a next level.



Dr. Ton Rombouts

AMBASSADOR OF THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE
MEMBER OF SENATE OF THE NETHERLANDS
FORMER MAYOR OF 'S-HERTOGENBOSCH, THE NETHERLANDS.

Winner
of the 2019
UCLG Peace Prize



“Dialogue
of
Life” post IS:

Arsal

Winner of the 2019 UCLG Peace Prize

In 2014, the Islamic State (IS) and Nusra cells infiltrated Arsal, a town in eastern Lebanon, from Syria. The belligerent occupation of the town left deep wounds and resentments. It tore the community apart between supporters and victims of the terrorist groups and caused major tensions between the Lebanese inhabitants and Syrian refugees residing in Arsal. The local peace initiative of the municipality of Arsal successfully rebuilds social cohesion and overcomes mutual fear by facilitating dialogue and *sulha* mediation sessions.



Background



The municipality of Arsal lies in one of Lebanon's most fragile areas. Situated in the deserts of the North-Eastern Beqaa Valley, it straddles the border with Syria. The majority Sunni town is culturally segregated from the surrounding Lebanese Shia majority towns. Aarsal's community of sheepherders, cherry farmers, stone cutters, and smugglers is among the poorest of Lebanon.

Due to its proximity to Syria and the civil war that raged there, Aarsal has in the past decade witnessed exceptional and difficult circumstances unlike any before. In 2014, violence of the Syrian war spilled over when fighters linked to Al-Nusra Front and IS invaded the town of Aarsal. This invasion led to a violent occupation. In this period, the town faced many killings, kidnappings, bombings, shootouts in the streets, and violent public executions. For over two years, the urban area and surrounding pastoral fields and mountains served as a frontline between the terrorist groups and the Lebanese Army.

Ever since the liberation by the Lebanese Army in the summer of 2017, the municipality of Aarsal has been dealing with the consequences of these horrid years. Policing, mediating, and keeping peace in the poverty-stricken community is its daily struggle. Aarsal's residents not only suffered from the war through its violence, but also its economic consequences were felt greatly. Before the war, the livelihoods of the people in Aarsal consisted mainly of farming, sheep herding, stone quarrying and trade with Syria (including smuggling). All of these activities were heavily affected by the war, leaving people in a vulnerable situation.



Influx of refugees

As a consequence of the unsafe and violent situation in Syria, many Syrians fled to Aarsal. The town of Aarsal hosts a large concentration of informal tented settlements. Next to the roughly 35.000 Lebanese inhabitants, more than 60.000 refugees reside in Aarsal. Many of these refugees have an illegal status and most of them are highly vulnerable and dependent on humanitarian aid.

The arrival of the many refugees caused tensions and insecurities. Lebanese and Aarsal community members often perceived Syrians as people who had caused harm. This mistrust was fueled by perceptions about the refugees living in tents being supportive of IS and that some of them were immediate family members of IS fighters. Lebanese inhabitants were having difficulties in differentiating between assailants and refugees.

The security concern is, however, not the only problem that causes hostility towards the Syrian refugees. The refugees compete with the Lebanese inhabitants for job opportunities, food, and shelter. Unlike the security concerns, which are becoming less prominent, this competition remains a continuous source of tension in Aarsal. While the Syrian assailants have left the town, those people who fled Syria because of the war are not expected to leave any time soon.



The Project

The current municipal council won the local elections in May 2016 with a landslide over the IS-colluding council. The council prevents escalation and other transgressions against the rights of its vulnerable inhabitants with an initiative called "Dialogue of Life". The project aims to rebuild social cohesion and overcome mutual fear and hatreds between its Syrian and Lebanese inhabitants through dialogue and conflict mediation. In this way, it tries to prevent further outbursts of conflict. The motto of this initiative is 'ulnerability knows no nationality'. By stepping in where and when necessary the Municipality organised interventions in order to help both groups 'who might have a different nationality, but are both equally vulnerable'.

Since the municipality does not have the financial means to either tackle the underlying socio-economic inequalities, nor the infrastructural deficiencies in the area, it acts as a crisis manager reacting to outbursts of conflict. Dialogue of Life's strategy is aimed at solving any potential conflicts before these escalate. When the project started, tensions escalated into killings in the community. The municipality aims to convince people to forgive instead of kill. When a conflict arises between two parties, the municipality organizes *Sulha* mediation sessions to bring their points of view closer and prevent them from fighting each other. Through these conversations, people often realize that the problems are simpler than they thought or that the other party has a different perspective than expected.

When small conflicts did turn violent, the municipality of Arsal has paid for the restoration of the caused damage in order to reduce the risk of further escalation and retaliation. With the damage reimbursed, aggrieved persons were less prone to engage continue the cycle of violence through revenge. Additionally, the council liaises with the national government and security services to protect its community from unnecessary harsh treatment and sentencing.

The project started to show positive results quickly after its implementation. While the situation in Arsal remains volatile and social discontent and fears that any Syrian is actually a violent radical are still present among parts of the population, Arsal has so far been successful in preventing eruptions of serious violent conflict. Since June 2016, the municipality of Arsal has not registered any human victim induced by violence despite the fragile context people live in.

"Dialogue of Life's winning strategy is to put out any sparks before they start a fire"



2019 UCLG World Congress

"The municipality of Arsal displays great efforts in addressing potential sources of conflict in a community that has been through a very difficult time and is still facing complex challenges"

Senator Ton Rombouts, Award Ceremony, Durban 2019



2019 UCLG World Congress

UCLG PEACE PRIZE HISTORY

REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE

By Peter Knip, Director of VNG INTERNATIONAL



The editors of this publication invited me to describe the history of UCLG's Peace Prize for local governments. Taking into account that I have been involved in municipal attention for issues of conflict and peace since 1977 and that I have actively promoted the establishment of the UCLG Peace Prize, I was pleased to be able to give a positive answer to their request. However, this is not a balanced study of the origin and the complex development of the Peace Prize and its context. It is rather a personal note in which I would like to share some reflections on the history of the UCLG Peace Prize with the interested reader. If you don't mind I will follow my personal story from the past 40 years.

Arising Awareness

It was in the '70s of the last century that the idealism of building a better world seized my heart. As a youngster I felt attracted to the movement against apartheid in South Africa, the work for human rights in the world, the resistance against nuclear energy and the aid for developing countries. Amongst all the issues, however, the initiative of the Interchurch Peace Council (IKV – nowadays merged with Pax Christi into PAX for Peace) in the Netherlands in 1977 to resist nuclear weapons and to align with democratic opposition in Eastern Europe had the strongest appeal to me. The view that foreign policy should not be formulated by a small elite but by all citizens and that my own local politicians should feel responsible for international issues like peace and development inspired me. At the age of 21, as chair of a collective of peace organisations in my hometown Delft, I visited our mayor to discuss the question whether Delft should decide to become a nuclear free local authority as token of resistance against the conflict between the East and the West.

Nuclear Free Zone Local Authorities

Since the rise of the national states in the 18th century the role of towns in foreign policy, in questions of war and peace, vanished. However, even before the First World War, individual cities called on central governments to protect human civilisation against the atrocities of war. Probably the first example which convincingly underlined that local governments can and should play a role in peace building and conflict resolution in a world dominated by national states was the massive twinning movement, the 'jumelages', after the Second World War. Initiated by citizens in France and Germany municipalities in both countries, soon followed by municipalities all over Europe, linked with each other in order to seek reconciliation and overcome the deep wounds of the war. The second wave of international attention in the '60s and '70s of the last century was clearly focussed on poverty reduction in developing countries; active local solidarity groups knocked on the door of the municipalities and initiated actions to support the development of people in other countries. This was immediately followed by a third wave of concern amongst civilians in many countries about the East-West conflict and the nuclear arms race by the end of the '70s and '80s. Local governments together with citizens initiatives tried to break down the images of the enemy and to reach out to opposition groups by establishing linkages with local governments behind the so-called Iron Curtain. Grassroots activism in the Southern Pacific, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Canada, the United States and Western Europe resulted in decisions by thousands of municipal councils to declare themselves a nuclear free zone. One of the first was the city of Manchester in the UK in 1980; the city took the initiative to start the Nuclear Free Zone Local Authorities movement as well. In The Netherlands, the first municipality that decided to call itself 'nuclear free' was Hellevoetsluis in 1981, soon followed by 200 other Dutch cities, including my hometown Delft. In 1982 "Mayors for Peace" was established by the mayor of Hiroshima which strengthened the attention for nuclear disarmament even further.

First National Conference on Municipal Peace Policies in The Netherlands

Although one might argue that nuclear free decisions were just a kind of 'tokenism', it was a period in which the discussions about the role of local governments as actors of peace deepened. The understanding grew that local governments as tier of government closest to the citizens could play an important role in creating a culture of peace. Instruments like awareness raising, peace education, multi-stakeholder dialogue, bridging gaps between groups through sports and culture, reintegration of combatants in society, international cooperation, twinning and political statements can be used to shape this role.

Being still very active in this peace work in my free time, both in my hometown Delft as well as nationally, the Mayor and deputy mayors of the city of Delft asked me to join them during the second international congress of the Nuclear Free Zone Local Authorities Movement in Perugia, Italy, 1986.

Together with deputy mayor Arie Pieter Hoogendam and my colleague activist Rens Looij, I participated in this conference where we met with colleagues from other Dutch cities like Rotterdam, The Hague, Deventer, Zaanstad, Wageningen and Enschede. In close cooperation with Dion van den Berg of the IKV we took the initiative to organise the first national congress on municipal peace policies in The Netherlands. With the support of the mayor of Delft at that time, Huib van Walsum, I organised this conference in 1987. To our utter surprise representatives of more than 100 Dutch municipalities attended the conference which resulted in the acceptance by the national Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) to house this initiative if sufficient Dutch local governments would be willing to support such an initiative financially. After a campaign supported by the Dutch 'Perugia cities', the Network for Municipal Peace Policy (PGV) was established with more than 140 municipal paying members in the beginning of 1989, chaired by mayor Huib van Walsum. Employed by the VNG, I became the first secretary of this PGV with the aim to strengthen and deepen the role of local governments as actors of peace and to investigate what the role of national associations of local governments in this field could look like.

Peter Knip at the congress in Perugia, 1986



Fall of the Berlin Wall

In the autumn of 1989 the Berlin Wall, for many people unexpectedly, collapsed which brought an end to the period of Cold War between East and West. An impressive number of local governments in former Eastern European countries twinned with local governments in Western Europe. On behalf of the Network for Municipal Peace Policy I could initiate with -initially lukewarm- support from the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) the first East-West town twinning congress hosted by the city of Rotterdam in 1990. The congress was an expression of wide-spread interest of municipalities and active citizens groups in Western European countries to contribute to a peaceful Europe and to support the building up of democracy in the former communist countries. In many countries, including The Netherlands, active town twinning platforms of cities having linkages in the same countries were organised in order to exchange experiences and to discuss the best approaches. From my position as secretary of the Municipal Peace Platform I could actively contribute to this development and succeeded to get access to financial support from the Dutch government and later on from the European Commission to offer professional assistance to the reform in Easter Europe.

The Association of Netherlands Municipalities came quickly to the conclusion that they had to play a role in issues like development cooperation and promotion of peace and democracy and decided already in 1991 that such issues should be part of the regular attention of the VNG. They asked me to take on this role as coordinator of international work of the VNG. From this position, enabled by the global developments and with the support of an increasing number of young colleagues and colleagues in Dutch municipalities, we were able to intensify our work with a growing amount of financial support for international projects. In order to cut a long story short, this was the beginning of what is nowadays VNG International, the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities which is involved in projects and programmes of strengthening democratic local government in more than 40 countries in the world.

UCLG PEACE PRIZE HISTORY

REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE

By Peter Knip, Director of VNG INTERNATIONAL

No End of History

The hope that peace and cooperation would be the future of the world after the end of the Cold War, clearly expressed by the famous article of Francis Fukuyama 'The End of History?', vanished already soon with the awful war that broke out in former Yugoslavia in the early nineties, the failure of the peace process between Israel and Palestine, and other ongoing regional wars in other parts of the world. Again many local governments in Europe embarked on activities to support local governments in various former Yugoslavian countries. Other municipalities increased their cooperation in support of a peaceful solution between Israel and Palestine often in the framework of larger networks like the Municipal Alliance for Peace in the Middle East (MAP) in which my VNG actively participated and the European Network of Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East (ELPME) in which the Italian Co-ordination of Local Authorities for Peace and Human Rights as well as the United Towns Organisation in France played a major role.

Against this background of ongoing concern about violence and war in the world it was logical that municipal attention for peace and conflict resolution became a priority on the agenda of the new world organisation of local governments, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), after the merger between the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the World Federation of United Towns and Cities (FMCU-UTO) and Metropolis in 2004. UCLG decided to establish a special political Committee on City Diplomacy, Peace Building and Human Rights in 2005 which should: 'Advise the world organisation on issues of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction in order to contribute to the creation of a stable environment in which the citizens can live together in peace, democracy and prosperity'. Wim Deetman, mayor of The Hague and chair of VNG, became the first president and inspiring leader of this Committee.

First World Conference on City Diplomacy of UCLG

The new world organisation brought various strong networks promoting local governments as actors for peace together. The Italian Co-ordination of Local Authorities for Peace and Human Rights, the Province and City of Barcelona, United Towns Organisation France, the Canadian Association of Municipalities (FCM) and my VNG joined hands to raise the attention for this city diplomacy role of local governments. It led to preparatory conferences in Perugia and Barcelona in 2006 and 2007. With strong support of VNG and in cooperation with IKV/Pax Christi and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict we succeeded to organise the first World Conference on City Diplomacy of UCLG in The Hague, June 2008. This successful and impressive congress with several representatives of local governments from war-torn countries like Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, Liberia, Rwanda, Israel and Palestine resulted in 'The Hague Agenda on City Diplomacy', a document with concrete suggestions for further action. Amongst the different suggestions for further action in The Hague Agenda the idea of a World Peace Prize for local governments was mentioned.



World Conference on City Diplomacy, the Hague, 2008

A long Way to go

From my perspective the intensity of municipal attention for the specific role of local governments in building peace decreased in the past decade, despite the preceding process of growing recognition for the role of local governments in peace building which led to the World Conference on City Diplomacy Congress in The Hague in 2008. The Conference recommended to launch a biennial local government Peace Prize. In the period after the conference we can observe a more general trend of inward looking local government in Western countries. Although it is difficult to judge as a contemporary, I am inclined to say that the economic crisis, budget cuts in local government, growing security problems and the rise of more populist politics mark a slow but steady shift in municipal orientation from solidarity to economic self-interest and mutual gain.

As a consequence some of the founding fathers of the World Conference on City Diplomacy are no longer able to field the strength that they showed in the past, building on the commitment of their members, like the Italian Co-ordination of Local Authorities for Peace and Human Rights. Although I felt very much attracted by the idea of launching a Peace Prize for local governments that invest in conflict resolution and peace building, I had to admit that also my organisation VNG International did not have the funds to realize such an ambitious plan. Within UCLG, where we merged the Committee on City Diplomacy, Peace Building and Human Rights with the Committee on Development Cooperation chaired by the Canadian Association of Municipalities (FCM), our VNG politicians, in particular former Mayor Ton Rombouts of 's-Hertogenbosch, and myself continued to keep the idea of a Peace Prize alive. With the support of FCM and the Barcelona Region we worked on the political acceptance of a formal Peace Prize by the World Council of UCLG over the years. The good cooperation with the UCLG World Secretariat and in particular Emilia Sáiz has been instrumental in achieving this institutional anchoring.

Both PAX and the Barcelona Region continued to be crucial partners in the preparation towards the first Peace Prize edition; both in the elaboration of the first terms of reference and in making available funds for the implementation. I also need to mention Jeremy Smith, former Secretary General of CEMR, who developed the first action plan for the Prize.

A decisive factor for the Peace Prize was the moment when in 2015 the City of Bogotá committed at the political level to the realisation of the first edition of the Peace Prize. This ensured that within the UCLG World Congress in 2016, the Peace Prize had an important podium and sufficient visibility. The National Fund for Peace, Freedom and Veterans Care (Vfonds) in The Netherlands decided to make available the actual amount of the Prize, which has been awarded to the municipality of Kauswagan (Philippines) for their efforts to reintegrate insurgents in the community with the programme 'From Arms to Farms'.

After the first edition of the Peace Prize, it became clear that there is still both a lot of interest in and a need for this Prize. An increasing number of people understand that local governments can play a crucial role in prevention of conflicts and peace building. The Prize helps us to put the role of local governments in peacebuilding more clearly on the agenda. Due to the success and recognition of the first edition of the UCLG Peace Prize, a second edition was launched with support from new partners such as the Gipuzkoa Provincial Council and the City of Tromsø. I am proud that what I have been working on for more than forty years has resulted in this international UCLG Peace Prize. The second edition of the Prize has already been awarded at the UCLG World Congress in 2019 to the Municipality of Aarsal in Lebanon. Looking forward to awarding the next edition of the prize at the UCLG World Congress in Daejeon in 2022, we will continue to work towards securing the financial means as well as committing the World Organisation and its members to maintain the issue of city diplomacy towards creating a culture of peace at the local level high on the agenda.

Peter Knip
Director VNG International

OTHER four finalists 2019

Bogota, Duhok, Manizales, Santiago de Cali



Shared Commemorations
Bogotá (Colombia)

After decades of violence there has finally been a breakthrough in ending the conflict in Colombia with the peace agreement. In Colombia's capital city, Bogotá, an engaging initiative was launched in order to reunite groups in society that had become estranged from one another. *The Shared Commemorations* initiative, led by the Municipality of Bogotá, invited both family members of people that had been actively involved in fighting (either through one of the armed groups or the national army) as well as the family members of victims of the war, to engage in activities with the objective to come to terms with the past and promote reconciliation.



Background

Since the mid-20th Century Colombia has been entangled in a very violent conflict between various armed guerrilla and paramilitary groups, the Colombian government and other actors. This conflict has been highly disruptive for the Colombian society as recent generations of Colombians have grown up surrounded by violence. Although peace negotiations between different actors of the conflict have been underway for some time, only recently they have been successful. In August 2016 a breakthrough was achieved when a final peace accord was signed between the two main actors of the conflict, the Colombian national government and the FARC.

Bogotá, Colombia's largest and capital city, was often the scene of this violence. Enforced disappearances, territorial disputes between armed actors and some of the country's most striking acts of violence have taken in place in Bogotá. In July 2019 this city was home to more than 300.000 people who can be considered to be victims of the armed conflict. Therefore, it was here that the *Shared Commemorations* peace initiative has taken place.



The project

The *Shared Commemorations* initiative implemented by the Municipality of Bogotá has a multi-stakeholder approach. It involves not only the victims and active parties of the war, but also several civil society organisations, the private sector, government agencies and the international community. Starting in 2018 several workshops were given in which families of victims and actors of the conflict who fought on opposite sides could participate. Activities were centred around the idea of using artistic expression as a way to facilitate dialogue and to find a common ground between participants in order to enable reconciliation.

The activities that took place as part of the initiative were diverse. For instance, in 2018 a workshop was given to reconcile family members of disappeared soldiers of the National Army with family members of disappeared members of the FARC or other insurgent groups. In 2019, in the framework of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, a workshop was organised in which Colombian fashion designer María Luisa Ortiz helped women who were victims of sexual violence to heal and to reconcile with their past. Later, in mid-2019 around International Disappearance Day a letter-writing exercise started where people could have an imaginative conversation with a relative who had disappeared during the war through writing a letter. Afterwards, the letters circulated in public places, schools, universities and government buildings stimulating a public discussion about these forced disappearances.

As a result, all these activities together helped victims and relatives of victims to better cope with their grief and to mend relationships with other actors of the conflict, including perpetrators, resulting in more social cohesion in the city. Due to its success the *Shared Commemorations* initiative has received wide national media coverage and recently the initiative was also featured in a video during the Geneva Peace Week 2020. The method used by the Municipality of Bogotá serves as an example that can be used by other local governments that have to cope with the aftermath of conflict.



FINALIST
of the 2019
UCLG Peace Prize

**Safe Haven for IDPs and Syrian
Refugees in Duhok Governorate,
Duhok (Iraq)**

In 2014 the rise of Islamic State (IS) and the deterioration of the conflict in Syria caused a large influx of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP's) in the region of Duhok in Iraq. While Duhok is one of the smaller governates of Iraq, over the course of six years it received hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. Together, the people of Duhok and their local government welcomed the displaced persons and ensured that they received the same access to public services as other citizens of Duhok.



Background

The Duhok Governorate lies in the North of Iraq where it shares a border with Turkey and Syria. Due to its geographical location and the relatively stable situation in the Kurdistan region of Iraq it has been a preferred destination for many IDPs and refugees fleeing from the violence in the rest of Iraq or Syria.

Among the IDPs and refugees are people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds like Arabs, Yazidis, Christians, Kurds, Shabak, and Muslims who all live together peacefully. The Duhok Governorate has made an effort to organize activities to celebrate these differences to promote a peaceful coexistence. Historically the Duhok Governance has known a long tradition of different groups living side by side. Before the large influx of IDPs and refugees the region was populated by several groups with Kurds forming the majority, while groups of Assyrians, Chaldeans, Arabs and Armenians represented minority groups. Being predominantly Islam, the region has a long tradition of tolerance towards other forms of religious practice, such as Christianity and the religion of the Yazidis.

Before the attacks on the city of Mosul by the Islamist extremist group ISIS the governance of Duhok counted just over one million inhabitants. The bombing of the city of Mosul adjacent to the Kurdistan region combined with the conflict in Syria caused the number of inhabitants in Duhok to rise to two million, putting an enormous strain on the infrastructure and resources of the region.



The project

To be able to cope with the great numbers of new arrivals the governance of Duhok created the Board of *Relief and Humanitarian Affairs* (BRHA) headed by the Deputy Governor through which all humanitarian interventions could be coordinated. In just two months' time more than twenty camps were built for the IDPs and refugees (17 IDP camps and 4 refugee camps). All of these camps have been equipped with hundreds of kilometres of electricity, water and sewage networks and in every camp a health centre was constructed. Additionally, more than a hundred schools were built to allow the IDPs and refugees to continue their education. The BRHA was also successfully in lobbying for funds at the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Federal Government of Iraq, as well as coordinating the humanitarian intervention in the region not only with UN agencies, but also with relevant governmental directorates and more than 150 international and local Non-Governmental Organisations. Educational, cultural and sports activities are being organised on a regular basis to encourage peaceful coexistence among people with varying backgrounds.





Change Your Mind ... Build Peace (Cambia Tu Mente ... Construye Paz) Manizales, Colombia

For many years several neighbourhoods of Manizales have been the scene of violent outbursts caused by criminal gangs. The city counts a total of 24 gangs, many of which originated in the city's poorest neighbourhoods where a lack of opportunities has drawn mostly young people to these groups. The Change Your Mind ... Build Peace initiative of the Municipality of Manizales has created new opportunities for youth allowing them a way out of the violence.



Background

The city of Manizales is located in central Colombia. It is a relatively small city of 400.000 inhabitants located in between the larger cities of Bogotá, Medellín and Santiago de Cali. The mountainous landscape and unique climate of the region around Manizales make it the perfect place for the cultivation of coffee beans, and region is known for the production of high quality Colombian coffee. The city also has challenges, and to deal with the problem of youth gangs it has developed a special initiative to increase security for its citizens.

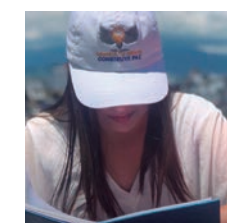


The project

What makes Change Your Mind ... Build Peace so unique is that it was not thought of in an office, but that the initiative resulted out of a dialogue between the Municipality and its people. In a process of trust building and designing appropriate interventions, gang members were asked the question what lifestyle would motivate them to abandon the criminal life. Many indicated that they would do so if they received help from the municipality to start a new life, for example by helping them enrol in university or by helping them start a professional career. With these ideas in mind the Change Your Mind ... Build Peace initiative was developed.

In order for the project to succeed not only the participation of former gang members was needed. Agreements were made with local universities to grant scholarships to ex-gang members while career opportunities within the Municipality were offered to those looking to start their professional career immediately. Through this initiative several ex-gang members were able to enrol in university starting studies in law, journalism and accounting, among others. Members of various gangs have been able to participate in the project, not only benefitting the gang members but also the neighbourhoods where they live.

The initiative has helped reduce the city's homicide rate, dismantling four gangs (two per year), improving the perception of security in the city and transforming violent youth into peace actors. The initiative has been awarded several prices such as the UN Public Service Award in 2018 when Change Your Mind ... Build Peace was chosen among 5000 projects from around the world for its social impact. The initiative has also received special recognition both from the National Government of Colombia and the Organization of American States. Due to its success the initiative is planned to continue indefinitely and plans have been made to replicate the project in at least two other Colombian cities.



FINALIST

of the 2019
UCLG Peace Prize



Peace Ambassadors and Civic Culture (Gestores de Paz y Cultura Ciudadana)
Santiago de Cali, Colombia

In order to reduce the amount of violence in Santiago de Cali, the municipality created a programme for both victims and perpetrators of the violence in the city. *The Peace Ambassadors and Civic Culture* initiative helped them to become ambassadors for peace through a unique programme including trainings, psychological support and community service, allowing the participants to work on their future while giving back to the community.



Background

The city of Cali is the third largest city of Colombia. For decades the conflict in Colombia and the heavy drug trafficking in the region surrounding Cali have had a large impact on the city. As Santiago de Cali is the largest city in the South of Colombia many former combatants in the region moved to the city after more and more armed groups were being dismantled over the course of the conflict. The violence in the city even reached a point that Cali was proclaimed Latin America's most dangerous city.

As the conflict in Colombia was coming to an end, cities such as Cali were still left with many of the ex-combatants and a high level of violence related to drug-trafficking. The Municipality of Cali was the first to create a special Ministry of Peace and Civic Culture in charge of initiatives such as *GPCC - Peace Ambassadors and Civic Culture* to promote human rights and prevent violence in the city.

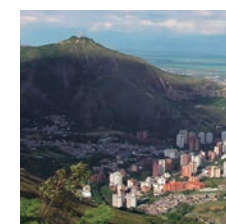


The project

The project works with three different groups: victims of the armed conflict, former combatants of armed groups and former gang members. Among the main perpetrators and victims of the violence were mostly youths, therefore they have been the main beneficiaries of the initiative. *The Peace Ambassadors and Civic Culture* initiative aims to strengthen the skills and competences of the city's most vulnerable population. To do this, the participants follow an artistic training either in dance, theatre or music, which also enables them to feel empowered and to restore their rights as citizens. Simultaneously the initiative helps to build trust between these three groups and restructure the social fabric of the city.

Besides receiving artistic training, the participants also receive psychological support helping them to make the transition to a new life. Part of the strength of this initiative lies in the fact that the participants not only receive help from the city, but also give something back. They do this by becoming active in contributing to caring for the environment, civic culture, mobility or tourism. As such, the participants become ambassadors for peace, thus giving back to the community and city. After successfully fulfilling all aspects of the initiative - the artistic training, the community service and the psychological support, the participants receive a remuneration to improve their financial situation and reduce the possibility of a relapse into criminal activities.

At the end of the programme, lasting a maximum of 18 months per participant, they will have acquired a new set of skills and increased level of confidence to pursue a new profession. In turn the society benefits from these young individuals being given a second opportunity at life and thus leaving the criminal scene behind. The project not only had significant impact on the participants and the society, it also has shown how artistic expression can be a powerful tool for personal and social transformation.



City diplomacy and the “glocal” skills to foster peace

By Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, PhD



By addressing local conflicts through international partnerships, municipal authorities have progressively emerged as one of the primary hopes for peace. This dynamic can be traced back to two unique characteristics of cities.

On the one hand, the municipal government represents the political institution closest to the citizens. As such, municipalities are tasked with understanding the most pernicious causes of violence and separatism and building a peace movement in cooperation with local actors. On the other hand, as the primary providers of public services, city administrations have special tools to counter socio-economic imbalances underlying the fratricidal violence disrupting the urban fabric. However, armed violence often imposes overwhelming limitations on urban governments' functioning, making foreign support desperately needed. It will come as no surprise that this help originates mainly from other local governments engaged in the so-called city diplomacy.

City diplomacy's birth and spread are indissolubly linked to municipal commitment for peace and reconciliation. From city twinnings between former World War II enemies to the ongoing peacebuilding activities in the Middle East and the Sahel, cities have extensively used their unique political and technical expertise to support counterparts in need. Such actions primarily feature a long-term perspective based on shared values and development goals while empowering local actors through a co-creation and co-responsibility approach.

As the values underlying the creation of the UCLG Peace Prize show, it is increasingly clear to cities around the world that their peers in zones affected by war and systemic violence represent much more than mere recipients of moral and tangible solidarity. The best practices emerging from these challenging areas inspire and guide municipal policies and action in peaceful places. It appears evident that the ability to mediate conflicts, promote dialogue, integrate and empower minorities, ensure social cohesion and equality constitute precious lessons for those cities marked by separatism, hate speech, and violence. It is painfully clear that no urban society is exempted from those risks. In short, city diplomacy's approach to peace and crisis management has become a powerful argument for all those advocating for mutually beneficial international partnerships for development.

A question of skills

States and intergovernmental organizations increasingly recognize that cities' international action for peace is an effective and impactful diplomatic venture. Nevertheless, it is clear that such practice has specific characteristics and requires particular attributes to be implemented. City diplomats who design, coordinate, and implement these peace activities must exhibit a unique set of skills, which include crisis analysis and management, negotiation, intercultural dialogue, knowledge transfer, training, communication, and engagement skills to foster participation in international partnerships.

Mainly acquired on the ground and through the exchange of best practices conveyed by networks of local authorities such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF), and VNG International, these abilities have turned city diplomats into irreplaceable actors of peace and reconciliation.

The pandemic: challenges and opportunities

Despite the growing recognition of city diplomacy's potential for peace, reconciliation, international friendship, and local development, opposition from public opinion groups is likely to increase in the near future. Inevitably, local governments worldwide will see their resources severely affected by the pandemic's socio-economic consequences and will be forced to make budget cuts. The temptation to follow the dictates of “my city first” has never been so high in recent times.

However, the pandemic itself highlights the close interconnection between the destinies of increasingly urbanized and interconnected human beings. The global spread of the virus has considerably exacerbated the inequalities in societies around the world. In addition to experiencing higher rates of contagion, minorities of all kinds have already been disproportionately suffering from the crisis's economic impact.

As cities across the world are called upon to develop ambitious recovery strategies in order to avoid raising inequalities, the worsening of existing social frictions, and the spread of hate and violence, city diplomacy becomes a timely and extremely valuable resource.

Few episodes in human history have featured such a synchronous shock urging communities worldwide to join forces and find in each other a source of inspiration and a partner to tackle the local impact of the global challenges undermining their resilience, development, and wellbeing. An even greater responsibility falls today on city diplomats' shoulders: to remind the whole world that just, sustainable, and long-lasting recovery requires a glocal path.

Dr. Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi is the author of *City Diplomacy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). He teaches City Diplomacy at Sciences Po and the École Polytechnique in Paris, and he chairs the think tank Urban Flag.

@KihlgrenGrandi



Winner
of the 2016
UCLG Peace Prize

Winner UCLG Peace Prize 2016:

‘From Arms to Farms’, Municipality of Kauswagan

Kauswagan is a municipality in the Lanao del Norte province of the Philippines, which since the 1970s has been the stage of the Moro conflict between an Islamic secessionist insurgency and the Philippine Army. In 2010, local government stepped in and made an effort to fight the root causes of the conflict, which were poverty, food insecurity and inequalities between population groups, notably Muslims and Christians. The project ‘From Arms to Farms: Walking through the Paths of Peace’, proved very successful in addressing these issues.



The Moros are a large Muslim population group from the southern Philippines. They have a long history of rebelling against occupants, starting with the fight against Spanish colonizers during the 16th century. In the 1970s, a secessionist insurgency was started by the Moro National Liberation Front, whose armed struggle was continued by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) after a split several years later. While government forces countered the insurgency, Christian militia stepped into the scene as well, and tensions persisted well into the new millennium.

Kauswagan has continuously been affected by the violence of the conflict, especially after 2002, when the central Philippine government declared ‘all-out war’ against MILF. In 2010, a new municipal administration launched a project that sought to fight the problems that were believed to be the root causes of the conflict, namely poverty, food insecurity and inequalities between different population groups.

‘From Arms to Farms’ is an agricultural training programme that helps former combatants to reintegrate into society while at the same time addressing the food security problem. It is part of the broader Sustainable Integrated Kauswagan Area Development and Peace Agenda (SIKAD PA). Whereas the central government was primarily concerned with countering the insurgency with its military force, it was noticed within the municipal government that whenever rebels were demobilized they would face the same problems that caused them to pick up arms in the first place, and that as long as these problems were not addressed the risk of violence would remain.

The agricultural programme covered the areas of demobilization and food security, with the assistance of the Philippine Army, the Agricultural Training Institute and several other NGOs and CSOs. So-called Peace Path Workshops sought to restore trust within the different groups of the community, so that a durable ending of the conflict could be achieved over time. These workshops were led by the different organizations involved with the project and religious leaders, while they targeted as many parts of society as possible.

The Kauswagan municipality has seen a significant reduction of poverty since the project was started in 2010. After a peace agreement was signed between the Philippine government and the insurgency, a climate was created that further allowed the normalization of relations within the community. The case shows that limited measures taken by the central government can be supplemented by local action for a sustainable solution. What impressed the jury of the 2016 UCLG Peace Prize most is that the local government of Kauswagan managed to bridge the relation between peace and socioeconomic development by looking beyond the symptoms of conflict and addressing the root causes of violence. As the Mayor of Kauswagan put it: “without food there can be no peace”. By alleviating poverty and increasing food security, the local government worked towards an inclusive peace that is more than the absence of violence but encompasses equality in socioeconomic opportunities. Combined with the strong impact of the project on multiple levels, this approach made the municipality of Kauswagan the winner of the first edition of the UCLG Peace Prize.

‘From Arms to Farms’ is an agricultural training programme that helps former combatants to reintegrate into society while at the same time addressing the food security problem.



Impact of winning the UCLG Peace Prize

Winning the UCLG Peace Prize in 2016 has generated not only national but also international attention for the Arms to Farms project and more opportunities opened up for cooperation. The highly successful project has been expanded and has been able to inspire other local governments to initiate similar agroecological transformative peace projects. In 2018 Kauswagan received an honourable mention at the Future Policy Awards which celebrates policies that create better living conditions for current and future generations.

THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE 2019

PERSONAL STORIES I

How the project ‘Change your Mind... Build Peace’ (Manizales) changed their lives; personal stories from former gang members.

The project “Change your Mind... Build Peace” was born from the work of an ambitious young man that grew up in a marginal neighborhood of Manizales. **Andrés Cortes**, now 40 years old, is the key between the gang members involved in criminal activities and the municipality. In the past eight years, he has become the figurehead of the program. While municipal administrations change over time, Andrés is always there to support young people in getting a better life. The UCLG Peace Prize Secretariat interviewed him to talk about his past, motivation, and ambitions.

What did your life look like before the project “Change your mind... Build Peace” was born?

“I must say, I have quite a dark past. I grew up in a neighborhood of Manizales in which most young people belong to a gang. I was part of such a gang too. We fought against other gangs and were entangled in criminal activities. At some point, my home converted into a prison. I could not leave my house anymore, because I had too many enemies that wanted to hurt me. Sadly, also my family and friends suffered from this situation. Because of my involvement in conflicts, they were in danger too.”

Were you satisfied with your life at that point?

“No, I was not. I was crazy, I realized that, but I felt that there were no other options than being part of the gang and being involved in violent acts. The only thing I wanted, was to survive. This meant that I could not leave my house unarmed and that I had to participate in illegal activities to earn money. It was a sad episode of my life.”

What made you realize it was time for a change?

“An impulse for me to make a change, was a violent attack upon me that I survived. I did not leave my home often, but a certain evening I went to visit my grandmother, because she was very sick. After my visit, I was waiting for a taxi to pick me up and bring me home. Suddenly, a motor passed me and the person on that motor shot me. I fell to the ground with bullets in my chest and thought I was going to die. At that moment, I realized how delicate my life was and that I did not want to be part of criminality anymore. It was time for a big change and it was now or never.”

What was this change?

“I started by leaving my neighborhood and leaving the city of Manizales. I wanted to start over. First, I went to Venezuela. Initially, it was difficult to leave everything behind and find good job entrances, but eventually I found a job in commodity. I stayed here for 18 months and then went back to my mother in Manizales, but the atmosphere was still tense and I left again. This time, I went to Bogotá to work in the

surveillance sector. In Bogotá, however, I had quite some acquaintances involved in crime who wanted me to become part of their group. I refused and went to Medellín to search for other opportunities. When I arrived there, I fell in love with a group of children that lived there and played on the streets. When I was playing with them, I realized that I did not know what it was like to be a child. I was born in a toxic environment of criminality and violence and had never been completely free. This realization was really a turning point in my life.”

What did you do with this realization?

“After six months in Medellín, I turned back to Manizales. There were still conflicts, but the situation was a bit more calm. Most of my enemies were gone, which made it easier for me to process my past and find my place in the community. I wanted to make things better for myself and my neighborhood. I went on working with children and searching for means to help them getting a better life. I wanted to be there for all those innocent children who suffer from the older people that kill each other.”

So you had this willingness to help the community. However, often willingness of one individual is not enough. How did you convince others, municipality officials for example, to support you?

“In 2012, I was listening to a local media channel which made public that two hostile gangs of my neighborhood made peace. However, this information was incorrect. The two gangs described in the article belonged to the same group, they were no enemies. I did not relate to the article and decided to approach municipal officials. We started to talk about the things that happened in the neighborhoods. I told them about the life I lived, the lack of opportunities, and the feeling among youngsters that the state abandons them. I explained the need to create opportunities and promote coexistence. From that moment onwards, things were getting shape and in august 2012 I officially became an employee at the municipality. One of the first activities I organized as a public servant of the municipality was a meeting with 19 gangs operating in Manizales in 2012. This created the program “Stick to the Pact” (Pégate al Parche).



The meeting was held in a church and was about accepting errors, sharing experiences, and working towards reconciliation. This revolutionary meeting reached the headlines in Colombian newspapers.”

How was your work received by the community and the municipality?

“Very well. In the succeeding years I went on searching for strategies to prevent youngsters from taking the wrong path in life. I started seeking the support of private companies and intervened in educational institutions too. The results were great. Homicide rates were declining, which proved the effectiveness and credibility of my work. In 2016, a new municipal administration was elected. This administration was committed to continuing the good work. They focalized the work on the most important gangs and introduced more methodology, making it a more systematic approach. This is when “Change your mind... Build Peace” was born, of which “Stick to the Pact” is the pillar.”

How did the project change your life?

“I once was a criminal, now I am a public servant and do good. Even though sharing my testimony was hard in the beginning, it has proven to be effective for myself as well as for the community. I want to keep on bringing the change I believe in. The project has become the journey of my life.”

What does the future look like for your city?

“I see a bright future for my city. The project has shown that when there are real opportunities available, people will leave their criminal life behind. We therefore need to give youngsters the opportunity to leave criminal settings and mix with other groups to see that there are alternative ways to organize your life. By improving the lives of these young people, we will slowly transform our society and create safer environments for future generations.” ■

THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE 2019

PERSONAL STORIES II

One of the beneficiaries of the project agreed to share his story with us. Just like Andrés, he grew up in a poor area of Manizales, but has been able to give his life a positive spin with the support of “Change your Mind... Build Peace”. He is 25 years old and currently studying psychology at the University of Manizales.

In what circumstances did you live before participating in the project “Change your mind... Build Peace”?

“My life has been very chaotic. From a young age, I have been exposed to violence and other problems. An incident that had a huge impact on me was the murder of my father. I was 9 years old, when I found his dead body in our home. With his death, a lot of problems arose. My mother was economically dependent on him and thus financially, but also psychologically, not able to take good care of me and my brother. This is why we went to live with my grandmother. She was, and still is, always there and did her best giving us all we needed. My grandmother and mother, however, do not have a good relationship. My mother has always felt excluded. These complex familial relationships have had a big impact on my childhood and adolescence.”

What about living in a neighborhood where many gangs operate? How did you experience this as a young boy?

“Since I was a child, I have been aware of the situation and environment I lived in. I did not want to be part of any group, but I lived in a world where I had to. I had to be friends with everyone. If I was not a friend, I ran the risk of being robbed, attacked, or worse. So, I had to belong to them, in order to protect myself.”

The situation you lived in seemed quite hopeless. However, you are now a successful psychology student at the University of Manizales. How did this change come about?

“It has always been my dream to study psychology. I wanted to understand what was happening to me and around me, but I did not have the financial means to go to university. Thanks to the project “Change your mind... Build Peace” I have been given the opportunity to make my dream come true. I was already familiar with their initiatives in my neighborhood and knew many people working there. One day, these people approached me and selected me as one of the candidates to receive a scholarship. They believed I could give a good image of my neighborhood and would be an ambitious student. Initially, I did not have high expectations. To study at the same prestigious university as the son of the Mayor seemed utopian. But here I am, already in the fourth year of the study program.”

Did your studies help you to better understand the environment you live in?

“Absolutely. In the most marginal and poor neighborhoods, people are unconscious. Because of this unconsciousness, they behave irrationally. They justify their excessive use of drugs for example, even though it completely destroys them. I always try to confront these people and try to make them realize how their behavior is self-destructive. I know that my conversations with them will only have minor effects, but I will keep on having them and try to make people more aware. at the same prestigious university as the son of the Mayor seemed utopian. But here I am, already in the fourth year of the study program.”

How do you see your future?

“In the short-term I simply want to successfully finish my studies and possibly follow post-graduate education to amplify my knowledge. My dream is still to work as a psychologist and to be able to live an independent life, away from the criminal ambiance I grew up in.” ■

Promoting peace after a long social enrooted conflict: the experience of the Gipuzkoa Regional Council

Maidar Maraña

Former Advisor on Human Rights - Gipuzkoa Regional Council
[General Directorate for Human Rights and Democratic Culture]

**BIZIKIDETZA
LANTZEN**



As we all know, the consequences of any conflict become visible on a local scale. Long after official documents have reported the end of a conflict, the population in each town still faces the consequences of the past tensions. These consequences have been built up for years in different layers in its streets and squares, in the ways the population moved or communicated and in the manners of looking at each other. Local governments have, therefore, an important role to play in this regard.

There are solid experiences and practices in promoting peaceful coexistence after a conflict in the international arena. They can be inspiring for decision makers throughout the world. But all of them need to be adapted and tailored to the specific and intrinsic characteristics of each territory, to the unique realm of a place. Already for many years, has the Gipuzkoa Regional Council, as a local government entity, had a strong commitment to work with post-conflict and coexistence programs.

This was also one of the reasons to join the promoters of this second edition of the UCLG Peace Prize. When we learned about the existence of the UCLG Peace Prize, the Gipuzkoa Regional Council immediately felt involved with its aim and decided to contribute, since international cooperation is key to support our entities at the field.

History of the conflict

As one might be aware, the Basque country suffered from a very long dictatorship from 1936 to 1975. In addition, since the 1960s political violence arose, including the emergence of the armed group ETA and its terrorist activities as well as other armed groups. During those decades, different political and institutional measures were taken to face the situation and other human rights violations in the Basque country. All these realities generated for decades a climate of violence and led consequently to distrust among the people who live here.

In October 2011, the ETA group announced the end of armed activities and the group dissolved in May 2018. This development herald a new stage in the history of Basque society.

Even though peace has been restored, the root causes and problems are on the governmental agenda again which have been left aside during the conflict. In addition to the enormous suffering, the legacy of violence translates into a set of serious problems, chained to the past, that have a negative impact on our present and future.

Decades of terrorism, violence, human rights violations, division and tension left a series of issues of great complexity in Gipuzkoa. Such as the response to the needs and rights of the victims, the management of the memory of the past, the social coexistence, prison policy, and education in democratic principles, among others.

But for lasting peace and social cohesion, which we want to be rooted in the society, it is mandatory to act from those institutions that are closer to people: local governments. Because of the local approach to peacebuilding and peacekeeping, the Gipuzkoa Regional Council felt so closely linked to the lines of this Peace Prize.

Bizikidetza Lantzen program

Coming back to Gipuzkoa, our programs are committed to a shared responsibility together with the municipalities in our Bizikidetza Lantzen program. In Basque “Bizikidetza Lantzen” literally means “Working for Coexistence”, because we are well aware that consolidating social peace and coexistence will need a lot of work. This is a dynamic process that shows different needs as we go along. However, we do not always clearly see what the next steps will be, so it is a priority and an essential factor that we defend the process of working for coexistence itself.

The Bizikidetza Lantzen collaboration program with municipalities established six areas of work:

Bizikidetza Lantzen Program – areas of work

1	Promote dialogue and agreement between the different political sensitivities /parties with municipal representation
2	Promote forums and experiences of plural coexistence among citizens
3	Promote initiatives for social education in human rights
4	Strengthen support for victims of the conflict
5	Develop a memorial policy at the municipal level
6	Contribute to the reintegration processes of prisoners

The Gipuzkoa Regional Council generates the framework and guarantees the means to develop the Bizikidetza Lantzen program. But it does not start until the authorities of a local government request it. It is, therefore, a voluntary process in which it is made clear that it can only be carried out if there is a real commitment from decision makers and politicians in that municipality. During the last four years, this program has been implemented in 24 municipalities with the leadership of local authorities, which means reaching 67% of the population of Gipuzkoa.

To better understand the situation, it should be noted that, with the exception of the capital city, all the municipalities in the Gipuzkoa territory have less than 60,000 inhabitants and normally between 2,000 and 25,000 people. Some of the towns that participate in this program have only a few thousand inhabitants. This means that this climate of violence has been experienced between neighbors and close relatives for decades, which shows the complexities of the situation when trying to get a peaceful coexistence after decades of fight.

Looking to the six proposed areas of work already mentioned, each town chooses which instrument could best address their challenges, with the first area being mandatory. Due to the nature of the conflict that the Basque Country has experienced, we see area one as crucial to favor a democratic culture among different political sensibilities. Politically motivated violence has curtailed the political activity of our municipalities as well as the freedom of expression and democratic political exercise. For all these reasons, it is essential to foster agreement among the different political parties with representation in each municipality, and to ensure that the exercise of dialogue is free and respectful.

The municipalities themselves can decide upon duration of these political dialogues; in some municipalities they started six years ago and in others only one. Most of the people (77,5%) who participated in the evaluation of the program in 2018 agreed that the meeting point for political dialogue has been a useful tool for working in coexistence within their towns (figure 1). Similarly, they acknowledge that the path they are traveling is long and difficult, but that the tool to promote political dialogue is useful and necessary. The instrument of the group of politicians gives them the option of working on complex and painful topics in other types of environment. All of the participants in the evaluation highlight that, in any case, this is a medium-term process.

Has the political forum for dialogue been useful for working together at the municipal level?

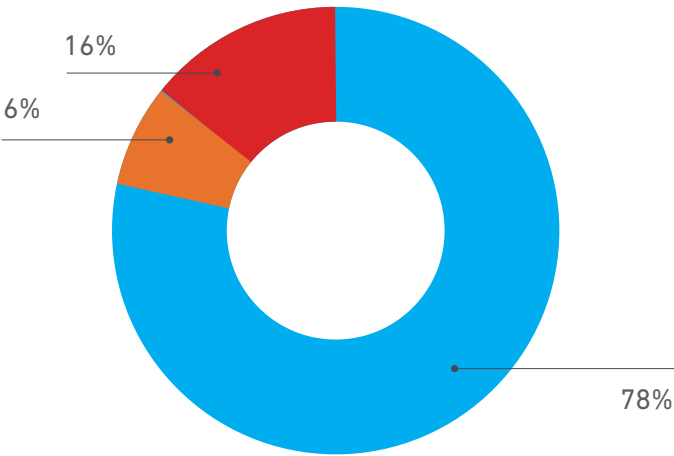


Figure 1 – Evaluation from participants in the political forums – Bizikidetza Lantzen program, 2018



Some of the subjects that these political groups worked in were the context of respect between participants, personal autonomy, honesty, working with mutual knowledge, understanding and acceptance, empathy, confidentiality and discretion, consensus, or opportunity to express and manage disagreements.

One of the things learnt during last years is that the politicians' leadership and personal involvement are a key factor for success, beyond ideologies and parties. The proposed political groups had success in some municipalities, but not in others, regardless of their political colour. Even in the same town, when there is a change of people due to elections or other factors, the process can be completely altered: when such a change happened, in some cases, the group was unable to find the formulas to continue; on the contrary, sometimes new people into the group created a greater dynamism and confidence. This makes evident that the one who participates is not the "political party-representative", but the person. All this makes us understand the importance of the determination of each one with this project and the exercise of a sincere and committed participation.

It is also important to point out that the Gipuzkoa Regional Council proposes and facilitates for the Bizikidetza Lantzen program the external help of a professional person who supports the political group, and who is also chosen by the municipality itself. The facilitation work and the accompaniment of someone external and professional has been considered not only useful, but indispensable by those who participate in the program.

Bizikidetza Lantzen program also proposed in a second line of work the creation of dialogue groups of citizens, interested in promoting reflection on the past violence in their lives. Everyone can participate, in a voluntary basis. Regarding the creation of these forums and meeting spaces for the citizens, external professional support is also provided by the Gipuzkoa Regional Council, but it is the group itself who set their agenda and decides on the steps to follow (themes of discussion, meeting formulas, etc.).

The evaluation of the development of these groups in 2018 showed that, despite some setbacks and crises, in general the citizens' groups in different towns are alive and continue to work. Following citizens feedback during the evaluation, one thing that they learnt in the groups was that, when a problem arises, it is important to take the necessary time to face difficult issues.

Our experience and evaluations therefore indicate that our work is difficult and full of ups and downs although, in turn, clearly necessary and indispensable. This peace-building, this strengthening of the democratic culture, can only be done from the local reality: we, as local governments, are obliged to open our eyes and develop our obligations to promote this kind of possibilities. Definitively, we need to encourage safe spaces for dialogue with the final aim to guarantee that violence is never again a possible option.

Honourable mentions 2019

UCLG Peace Prize

Bilbao Forum for Peace and Coexistence (Bilbao, Spain)

Honourable mentions of the 2019 UCLG Peace Prize

The municipality of Bilbao has set up the Bilbao Forum for Peace and Coexistence to undertake public actions aimed at bringing people and City Council representatives together, accompanied by specialists, and to breach the silence about the past.

Euskadi (Basque Country) has been a playground of conflict for more than 50 years. Politically motivated violence by both the terrorist organisation ETA fighting for independence, as well as uncontrolled vigilante groups and state security forces (police abuse), afflicted the region and its people.

A total of 95 citizens of the city of Bilbao were killed between 1960 and 2010 by these various actors. Although violent upsurges have decreased over time, particularly after the dissolution of the ETA, citizens have been left with emotional pain and unsolved questions about the past.

The peace initiative

In November 2017, the Mayor of Bilbao, Juan Mari Aburto, set up the Bilbao Forum for Peace and Coexistence, with the primary objective to undertake public actions aimed at bringing people and City Council representatives together and breaching the silence about the past and help to strengthen the values of respect and coexistence.

Efforts to reach consensus about its content and encourage participation by all citizens already started two years before when the Mayor approached victims and personally asked them for forgiveness on behalf of the whole society for not speaking about what happened in the past. Subsequently, victims were invited to cooperate through the Forum as a way of moving to reconciliation.

The Bilbao Peace and Coexistence Forum is made up of 20 people, including victims, political groups and experts in the field of Peace and Coexistence. It is a meeting place and collaboration to accompany municipal public policies in relation to victims of terrorism and violence, in order to work and agree on actions and programs that help deepen the values of respect and coexistence.

Four priorities have been established among the Bilbao Peace Forum functions. These are:

- **To know the proposals of Bilbao City Council for the recognition and support of victims of terrorism and violence.**
- **To channel relations between the victims and the municipal administration.**
- **To propose positive initiatives for strengthening social empathy towards victims and their families and supporting the progress and improvement of coherent public policies.**
- **To open up channels for participation for listening to the victims and incorporating the suggestions and concerns in the municipal policy.**

Since the approval of the 2018 Action Plan and in collaboration with other peace institutions, more than ten public activities facilitated by the City Council have been held by Forum volunteers in different city districts.

Central to these events are victims' testimonies and their sincere commitment to coming to terms with the past. By organising public events and holding dialogues with victims at the centre rather than speaking about the victims, the open wounds of the past and the pain of those who lost their family members and friends can be softened and trust and respect can be restored.

The target audience of the events organised is the whole population. In fact, all the activities and talks organised in the municipal district centres are open to the whole society. The aim is to reach all corners of Bilbao so that the general public "is aware of and understands the pain of the victims, and to make them more visible and present throughout the society of Bilbao".

Good cooperation with victims was also not a given, as all those years of violence and political upheaval have created a plurality of victims in terms of time and space, which made mutual recognition difficult. Despite the challenges, the initiative has yielded positive results.

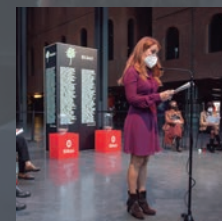
The presence of a public audience has not only helped to process victims' sorrows, but also contributed to facing the past altogether, showing that the violence that took place was unjust.

By transferring victims' testimonies one by one to all the city's districts, the community's awareness has been raised. Lastly, the initiative has attracted attention of other municipalities dealing with the same problem of a troubled past. Yet, the work is not done and it takes time and perseverance to restore coexistence. Therefore, plans for follow-up actions are already in the making.

Every year, on November 10th, Bilbao remembers the victims on the occasion of Remembrance Day, which has been established by the main Basque institutions in 2010, as it is the only date on which there has never been a fatal attack. In connection to this, on 10th November of 2020, the Mayor of Bilbao, Juan Mari Aburto, together with the rest of the Municipal Corporation and members of the Bilbao Forum for Peace and Coexistence, chaired the ceremony. The commemoration, organized by the Bilbao City Council, was held in the Azkuna Zentroa Atrium, where a commemorative totem recalled the names of the victims. The tribute began with the reading of a moving poem in Basque and in its Spanish version. In addition, the names of each of the victims of have been read, while they have been projected on the screen in the Atrium. The most symbolic part has been the floral offering, in memory of the victims. Bilbao Symphony Orchestra performed two pieces of classical music: a fragment from Tchaikovsky's Elogy of the Sereneta for Strings op. 48 and the adage for strings op. 11 by Samuel Barber.

Last but not least, it is important to mention the work and role of the Forum's technical secretariat, Bakeola, a centre specialized in the satisfactory approach to conflicts that has been working with social and educational agents from a perspective integral. The activity promoted by Bakeola is developed in tune with the concepts of positive peace, based on the principles of social justice and equality, as well as a creative perspective of the conflict, understanding it as an opportunity for change and transformation of situations that generate conflict inequalities. They promote processes aimed at improving coexistence, Human Rights, community development and social construction to achieve a Culture of Peace. Within the framework of the Bilbao Forum for Peace and Coexistence, the technical secretariat facilitates

the reactivation of interviews with victims, fosters pre-political spaces, where victims express themselves and feel comfortable. They also do the job of attracting people to the Forum, and accompany them there.



Municipal Road Management Scheme (Corinto-Toribío, Colombia)

Honourable mentions of the 2019 UCLG Peace Prize

Clashes of interests over land use and even violent confrontations between indigenous communities, farmers and private companies are not an unknown phenomenon in the northern subregion of the Cauca in Colombia. The Cauca is a remote and rural area affected by years of armed conflict between guerrilla groups such as EPL and FARC, and state security forces. The Corinto-Toribío Municipal Road Management Scheme is a peace initiative set up in 2018 to promote reconciliation, cooperation and sustainable development in the Cauca.

The peace initiative

The Municipal Road Management Scheme comprised two phases. As a foundational step, a social dialogue aimed at reconciliation was created and facilitated by the local government of Toribío. Different groups were brought together, including indigenous authorities, the Indigenous Association of Northern Cauca (ACIN), representatives of farmers, the Agro-industrial Sector of the Sugarcane represented by the labour union ASOCAÑA, the local authorities of Corinto and Toribío, an entrepreneur (Hidroconsultoría) and engineers from Universidad Javeriana Cali. Bringing all these groups together was one of the biggest challenges of the project, due to different interests and conflicts from the past.

The indigenous inhabitants of the Corinto and Toribío communities have suffered from systematic discrimination, harassment, and repression in the past and the present, not only by guerrilla forces but also by state security forces. They have often been a target of indiscriminate bombing, forced disappearances, kidnappings and assassinations, which made it difficult to engage them in the peace-making process. Yet, through empowerment and a focus on the preservation of indigenous identity and visibility, the local governments try to make their inhabitants agents of their own development.

Despite the 2016 peace agreement, militias and armed dissidents are still present in the region, which makes the setting and the peace agreement fragile. After consultations between the different representatives, the second phase of the project started. Plans were made and actions set up to expand the road infrastructure in the area, in which the municipality was supported by USAID and financed by ASOCAÑA. Lands that had been used for growing illegal crops were also planned to be restored. The first construction phase started in September 2018 and follow-up plans are negotiated for the next stage. The idea behind this transport project is that it is beneficial for all groups involved. Indirectly, it has improved relationships between rival factions, while the creation of new partnerships with other municipalities is another positive side effect, contributing to a more stabilised region. Directly, the project creates opportunities to cultivate alternative and more varied crops while the highway makes it easier for products to be traded, which guarantees a higher level of food security for the citizens. In addition, the roads connect the remote municipalities with the rest of the region, making health and education services more accessible for the indigenous communities.

The initiative can therefore reduce both the social and economic exclusion of the indigenous citizens and foster sustainable development. Moreover, there is a strong potential to replicate the initiative in other rural areas of Colombia facing similar challenges.

Marial Bai Peace Process and Peace Agreement (Wau, South Sudan)

Honourable mentions of the 2019 UCLG Peace Prize

The Marial Bai Peace initiative was set up to manage cattle migration and reconcile cattle keepers from Tonj and Gogrial and communities of farmers from Wau in the already divided Kuajena County in South Sudan. This region is highly volatile due to the division in opposing factions in the country's civil war, presence of rival militias on each side of the river that runs through the region, and violent outbursts of agro-pastoralist conflict.

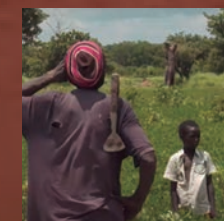
Since its independence in 2011, the Republic of South Sudan has been a site of ongoing social unrest and conflicts related to the civil war, thereby dividing territories and communities. Conflicts related to violence between communities have complicated the situation even more. One of these conflicts has been a dispute between farming communities and cattle keepers. Particularly during the dry season when pastoralists move across state and county borders, violence back and forth bursts out as crops are eaten or trampled by the cattle and animals are killed as vengeance, leading to death, destruction, poverty and hunger. Moreover, the conflict negatively impacts inter- and intra-governmental relations, in a context where local government resources are already limited and a shared regulatory structure is often lacking.

The peace initiative

In November 2012, the local governments of six counties started to organise meetings to agree on common understanding and approaches to the problems surrounding agro-pastoralist conflict in order to end the violent incidents and improve governmental relationships. Roles and responsibilities were divided and practical issues such procedures around cattle migration and compensation of damages were discussed and settled. The activities consisted of stakeholder meetings, bi-annual conferences and consultations focused on information-sharing and coordination, involving representatives from both the farming and pastoralist communities, and the local and state governments, on equal footing.

Although starting the initiative was difficult, as some citizens and factions refused to sit at one table due to past and present conflicts, the Marial Bai Peace Process helped to build up goodwill and trust between the communities as well as between the communities and local government officials in the longer run. More than a hundred community consultations and two years of monitoring cattle migration management followed. The Marial Bai Peace Agreement and its recommendations were the outcome of this process. An Interstate Policy that regulates cattle migration between 31 counties was set up and implemented, overseen and yearly evaluated by the Interstate Coordinating Committee. This body is made up of members elected by the chiefs, the traditional leaders of the communities, thus making the communities responsible for the peace process.

Due to the initiative intercommunity violent incidents have decreased over time, compensation for damages is peacefully settled and relationships between local communities have improved. Yet challenges such as changing leadership at different government levels, shifting priorities and a lack of funding continue to present risks to stability. The fact that the national peace process is still ongoing further poses a risk to this precarious balance. Only when all stakeholders are committed to the Marial Bai Peace Agreement, peaceful coexistence can be guaranteed.



THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE

WEB OF SUPPORT FOR LOCAL PEACE

The spiderweb derives its strength not only from its material; scientists have discovered it is also its ability to stretch as it responds to localized stresses. This allows spiderwebs to take a beating and repair the damage quickly.

Mayors and local leaders can benefit from emulating this approach, ‘stretching’ as they work to build and maintain peaceful communities in their cities. At the time when local governments are experiencing unprecedented stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and secondary effects that threaten public safety, establishing stronger links with both local organizations and international networks is one of the ways city leaders are stretching to reduce violence in their cities.

Roughly 600,000 people are killed violently every year, with 9 out of 10 of these deaths taking place outside of conflict zones - in communities and cities ostensibly at peace. According to recent research by the Small Arms Survey, without any significant changes to current policy and practice, over the course of the next 10 years we will see a slight increase in this number of violent deaths. But if serious action is taken nearly 1.5 million lives would be saved.

Cities are among the places where serious action is needed. Not only because cities are where the majority of humanity resides, but also because cities have demonstrated greater ability to lower their violence levels respective to countries. We know from examples around the world that the right investments can save lives and build healthier, more peaceful societies. We also know they can do so in a relatively short period of time.

Cooperation with and an investment in local CSOs and community-based partners is among the most important steps city leaders can take towards effectively addressing multifaceted challenges of violence in urban settings. Many local organizations, by default, are not just ‘stretchy’ but also scrappy in their efforts to build peaceful communities. As a result, they are best placed to:

Deploy resources quickly to meet the emerging need when the risk of violence spikes. For example, countless CSOs have redeployed their resources during the pandemic to set up platforms to support victims of domestic violence.

Act as agitators. Those hurting most from violence are typically poor, young, minority communities often overlooked by or intentionally excluded from services and other social benefits. Community-based groups play an important role in shining light on their condition in an effort to provide relief. CSOs also typically stick around over time; they are not prey to election cycles or the political whims of whatever party is in power. This staying power provides a deep reservoir of knowledge that is essential to making sure violence prevention is community supporting, not community harming.

Be human rights champions. Often the most appetizing solutions to urban violence problems for city officials are quick fixes, techno-surveillance solutions, or punitive security and law enforcement interventions. These interventions may reduce violence in a very short term, but evidence demonstrates that more often than not these types of interventions fail in the medium-to-long term and do great harm in the process. Given the staying power, community-based groups are often a counterweight to such measures, demonstrating alternative paths and the harm done through quick fixes.

The local peacebuilding groups can also act as amplifiers of the information to combat the violence problem in situations of low trust in government. In cities as diverse as Chicago, USA and Cali, Colombia so called ‘violence interrupters’ are working to prevent retaliatory violence, connect youth with support mechanisms and work within communities to define visions of public safety.

Global Links

In a globally interconnected and influencing world, engaging with local CSOs won't be sufficient to address the scale of present and future challenges. Mayors and local leaders should also be looking at global networks as engines for political mobilization, knowledge dissemination, and support in acquiring resources. Given the range of harmful, ineffective ‘solutions’ being sold in the marketplace of ideas, such networks are also essential to building momentum towards effective, sustained violence prevention solutions that are simultaneously peace reinforcing.

Through these networks city leaders are learning about innovative partnerships between CSO and local municipalities in other cities. Like the one in Guadalajara, Mexico. There the city government worked with civil society organizations to implement a gender perspective in order to curtail and address violence against women by making sure it was a reportable crime.

These networks are also important to shine light on impediments to progress that may otherwise not be receiving due attention. Through raising a collective voice and amplifying one another's voices, cities can show the way that, for example, nationally-originated policies are harming communities. Collective advocacy can also motivate international organizations to better understand the paramount importance of city diplomacy in today's modern world.

Peace in Our Cities was launched in 2019. With now 18 cities and over 30 organizational partners, we are a coalition of actors who are looking at urban violence squarely in the face and making a determined effort to reverse its pernicious advance. Not through heavy enforcement, but rather through balanced, evidence informed approaches.

We believe that government and civil society must be jointly involved in promoting safety and reducing violence. As a result, we have engaged equally with both since Peace in Our Cities’ inception. We also recognize that evidence alone does not change minds. As a result, we have invested in peer exchange and narrative change. We know that words on a page are not the same as lives saved. Therefore, we focus on both influencing policy and decreasing the actual numbers of victims and survivors of violence.

Recognizing the strength of complex and resistant webs, we have invited our membership city officials and their local CSO counterparts on an equal footing. This sets up a dynamic in which perspective and knowledge each actor brings to addressing the violence problems in their communities is valued. It places partnerships at the heart of addressing a problem, violence, which manifests itself differently and is the result of many interlocking factors.

END

This contribution is by the Peace in Our Cities secretariat, co-managed by the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies at NYU’s Center on International Cooperation, Impact:Peace at the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego, and +Peace, an alliance of the world’s largest peacebuilding organizations.



Local Links

Network Among the Webs



PALMIRA AND THE QUEST FOR URBAN PEACE

The strategy to bring down homicides in one of the most violent cities of the world.

Palmira, Colombia has been recognised nationally and internationally as an extremely violent city. In 2011, the city faced a peak of violence and a homicide rate of 98.1 per 100,000 inhabitants, ranking it first on national level and including Palmira among the most dangerous cities in the world. Today, although the municipality's homicide rate is at the lowest point since the data is available (36.4 in December 2019), it still lies above the national rates (25.4 per 100,000 inhabitants) and the international average. Among the twenty largest cities in Colombia (regarding the number of inhabitants and territorial extension), Palmira's homicide rate is second after Cali, their geographic neighbour. The cities' dynamics of violence interrelate daily, to the point that 10% of homicides nationwide take place in this urban area.

As you can imagine, Palmira is facing a tremendous challenge. Therefore, it is regarded as essential to proceed with the political will to keep these rates down, reduce it even further, and cure homicide violence in Palmira. However, political will is not enough: there is the need to act smart and use data to deliver evidence-based policy. Local authorities have been able to identify where violence takes place and who the perpetrators are. It turned out that violence in Palmira is concentrated in very few places: almost 50% of homicides occur in only 22 of in total 180 neighbourhoods. Next to this, only a small group of people appeared to generate the violence in those places. Youths turn out to be the main offenders as well as the main victims: 54% of homicide victims were between 16 and 30 years old. As a result today, Palmira stands still and – even worse - the city's future is locked up.



The Palmira strategy

This is exactly why the Palmira authorities have decided to design and implement a comprehensive strategy for violence prevention. Using quantitative and qualitative data, types of violence and homicide rates were analysed. At the same time, possible explanations of the phenomena were placed in a geographical context. From this analysis, nine territories or clusters were defined for developing an intervention. Each cluster focuses on one or two primary neighbourhoods, but also takes into consideration other surrounding neighbourhoods that share similar geographic and sociocultural dynamics of violence. Using this strategy, the impact of an intervention in nine clusters expands to 32 around the city. Crucial to Palmira's strategy is the idea that violent territories do not coincide with administrative geographic divisions. Therefore, it is important to try tracing the inhabitant's comprehension of where violence occurs. Eventually, the programme aims at moving forward from simply police presence to a comprehensive approach which brings the state to those marginalized territories.

The strategy explained

Palmira's strategy will deploy programmes compelling five components.

1	2	3	4	5
Interruption:	Intervention:	Prevention:	Safe environments:	Access to Justice:
Delivering actions that contain or dissuade violent actions and providing access to institutional offers to provide opportunities for youth at risk.	Central to Palmira's approach is believing in the power of second opportunities. Therefore, it is needed to provide a way out from criminal life to the youths and those who left prisons, for example by providing psychosocial support, soft skills, and job training to ensure legal income generation.	The designated territories are the focus of the local authority's social policy. In search of better use of free time, trainings are being provided on the topics of conflict resolution, and harm reduction in drug consumption. In total, 19 programmes will be implemented in these areas.	Certain locations and community infrastructures are badly affected by violence. That's why Palmira is working on situational prevention together with their Infrastructure Secretariat, Security Secretariat, and Government Secretariat to transform the places and indirectly change people's perceptions.	To avoid citizens taking justice in their own hand, justice needs to be brought closer to them. Specifically, it is believed that restorative justice is key in this venture to ensure reconciliation and better coexistence.

Aiming high

Ultimately, Palmira aims at reducing the homicide rate among youth from 80 to 66 in the coming four years. Achieving success in this quest requires leadership, according to Palmira's mayor Oscar Escobar. Therefore, the strategy includes police and other citizen security actors in the whole process of implementation, to ensure both approaches (policing and prevention) complement each other and progress in the same direction. Additionally, the strategy has been included in the master Municipal Development Plan and receives significant investment by the municipality for the upcoming four years. The coming year, Palmira's authorities keep sharing updates on their implementation process, discussing the challenges they face and hoping to inspire other local governments who are struggling for peace as well.

ACCOUNT OF THE 2019 UCLG PEACE PRIZE

After being awarded for the first time at the UCLG World Congress in Bogotá in 2016, the second edition of the UCLG Peace Prize has now been concluded. This process led once again to the collection of inspiring examples of local governments working for peace around the world, and to the fostering of exchange and dialogue about the myriad ways in which local governments can do this. This article provides a brief overview of the second edition of this Prize.

Launch and selection

The second World Forum on Urban Violence and Education for Coexistence and Peace, organised in Madrid in November 2018, featured the gathering of the UCLG World Council. This meeting marked the launch of the second edition of the UCLG Peace Prize. The forum had over 5000 participants including local government officials, Nobel Peace laureates, and experts on peacebuilding.

In the outcome document of the event, the Forum defined peace not as the opposite of war, but as the opposite of violence. Cities that are committed to constructing coexistence and the consolidation of peace should strive to put an end to all forms of violence, be it direct -that which is visible and palpable at first glance, such as war, crime, gender violence-, structural -stemming from injustices that enable and perpetuate violence- or cultural -violence that arises from beliefs and ideology, and that which is used to legitimize the other forms of violence. This is in line with the broad interpretation of the concept of peace as applied by the UCLG Peace Prize, albeit with a broader scope that also includes rural, local and other subnational governments.

The launch of the 2019 UCLG Peace Prize was followed by an application period of five months, which ultimately led to the selection of five finalists by the Jury. More information about the selection process can be found on pages 60-63. The Jury (pages 56-59) concluded on the selection of the Colombian cities of Manizales, Bogotá and Santiago de Cali, as well as the Iraqi Governorate of Duhok and the Lebanese Municipality of Aarsal, as finalists for this edition of the award. This publication features articles on the inspiring initiatives of these finalists. The UCLG Peace Prize secretariat worked together with these five local governments to produce short documentaries on their initiatives. Simultaneously, preparations were made with the finalists to send delegations to the UCLG World Congress in Durban, in November 2019, which was the stage for the award ceremony of the prize.

Awarding the prize at the UCLG World Congress

The World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders, convened by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), is the largest gathering of mayors, presidents of associations, councillors, and local and regional practitioners from around the world. It also gathers the most influential local and regional leaders, councillors, local governments, partners, and actors implicated in the decision making at local level. The Peace Prize found its place in two sessions at the congress.

Firstly, a session has been organised in which the finalists presented their initiatives using the short documentaries that have been produced. All finalists had the chance to present their project and answer panel questions. The session also featured participation of representatives from VNG International, the Provincial Council of Barcelona and Gipuzkoa Regional Council. Secondly, the award ceremony has been organised in which all finalists received a token of recognition and the Lebanese municipality of Aarsal has been announced as winner of the UCLG Peace Prize 2019. All finalists were called on stage and received a bronze statue. The winner ultimately received a larger trophy and a prize cheque of €20.000 to invest in the winning peace initiative or to stimulate learning and exchange. The finalists received their statues from political representatives of Barcelona Provincial Council and Gipuzkoa Regional Council, and the Mayor of Aarsal received the award from UCLG President Parks Tau and UCLG Co-President and Mayor of Barcelona Ada Colau.



Looking forward

The path of the Peace Prize does not end with the 2019 award ceremony. The partners will continue to work towards the goals of increasing recognition for the role of local governments in this field, showcasing successful examples and inspiring local governments to set up new initiatives. To this end, the Secretariat will continue to support finalists and other successful examples in sharing their initiatives. An example is the support that has been given to representatives of the Governorate of Duhok to share their story in various sessions, among which a dedicated session for the Peace Prize, at the World Urban Forum in Duhok in February 2020. The online HagueTalks event that marks the launch of this publication is another example of this work. At the time of writing, the preparations have started to launch the next edition of the UCLG Peace Prize in November 2021, which is set to be awarded at the next UCLG Congress in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, in 2022.

THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE 2019

SELECTION PRODECURE

Each edition of the UCLG Peace Prize starts with an official launch of the call for applications. Local governments around the world can submit their peace projects, after which a thorough selection procedure takes place. This article provides more insight in the process that led to the selection of our finalists and winner in 2019.

Call for applications and eligibility

The UCLG Peace Prize 2019 edition was officially launched in November 2018 in Madrid, at the second World Forum on Urban Violence. This marked the start of the application period during which eligible local governments could submit their projects. The prize is open for award to local governments who either themselves work for peace and conflict resolution in their own area, or provide positive assistance to local governments in conflict and fragile areas, which includes pre-and post-conflict situations. The prize is awarded to a local government as an institution, not to individuals. There may well be cases where local governments work together on a peace initiative, and in such cases the prize could be awarded to them jointly. This may for example include cooperation between a conflict-hit local government and its external partner city. The Peace Prize is open to any subnational government that falls within UCLG’s own interpretation of the term “local government”. Broadly speaking, this means that a local government is a subnational government defined as such by its own country’s constitution or legislation. Any nominated initiative should have taken place within the 3 years prior to application. The initiatives to be considered for the award of the Peace Prize must be free of any political partisanship, i.e. they must in no way directly promote the cause of any specific political party or political view.

Selection of finalists

Local governments could submit their application using a standardised application form, and add annexes in the form of photos or videos. Applications from local governments in 19 different countries were received, working in a wide range of different contexts. These applications were first reviewed by the technical Evaluation Committee. This committee ensured background checks on strong applications, collected more information where needed, and rated all applications on the following criteria:

1	The impact and effectiveness of the initiative in favour of peace – how did it help to prevent conflict in the locality. For example, how did it help to minimise the impact of a current conflict, how did it help to bring about effective practical reconciliation between divided peoples, or how far did it contribute to post-conflict reconstruction (physical, economic, social etc.).	10 points
2	The degree of difficulty, complexity or danger of the situation faced on the ground by those involved in the initiative, having regard to the nature and consequences of the conflict (or post-conflict environment), or the degree of severity of risk in a pre-conflict situation	10 points
3	The broad replicability or learning potential of the initiative for other local governments in other conflict situations (including pre- and post-conflict as relevant)	10 points

4	The degree of demonstrated innovation or creativity shown in planning and implementing the initiative.	5 points
5	The organisational commitment of the nominated local government to its work for peace.	5 points
6	The organisational commitment of the nominated local government to its work for peace.	5 points
7	The organisational commitment of the nominated local government to its work for peace.	5 points

In total, the above criteria provide for a maximum score of 55 points for nominated projects. All applications and their particular scorings were then shared with the Jury of the Peace Prize (see pages 20-27). In a series of conference calls and through additional requests for information from strong contenders, the Jury selected a shortlist of five finalists. These finalists are featured in this publication, as well as several honorary mentions.

Towards the 2019 World Congress

The UCLG Peace Prize Secretariat worked with the five selected finalists to produce short documentaries about the initiatives of the finalists. These videos can be found on the YouTube channel and website of the UCLG Peace Prize. All finalists were supported to send a delegate to the UCLG World Congress in Durban in November 2019. At this congress, the produced videos were used in the Inspiration Session with the finalists, as well as during the Award Ceremony. The jury has finally decided on the Lebanese municipality of Aarsal as the winner of the 2019 UCLG Peace Prize, on the basis of all the information collected and the videos that have been produced. At the time of writing, preparations for the 2022 edition of the Peace Prize have started and the evaluation criteria and selection process are expected to be further elaborated.

THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE 2019

THE JURY

Katarina Kruhonja

Dr. Katarina Kruhonja is a peace activist and one of the founders of the Centre for Peace, a Non-Violence and Human Rights NGO in Osijek, Croatia. She studied medicine and was a nationally recognized senior specialist in nuclear medicine in Osijek hospital from 1992 to 1996. After she retired as a medical doctor, she decided to join the post-war peacebuilding efforts in war-torn areas of Eastern Slavonia, coordinating multi-ethnic peace teams which were supporting a processes of peaceful integration in Eastern Slavonia. In 1998, Dr Katarina Kruhonja received the Right Livelihood Award – the alternative Nobel Peace Prize – together with Ms. Vesna Teršelić, founder of the Croatian Anti-War Campaign. Between 2004 and 2010, she was involved in national and regional cooperation on dealing with the past processes, particularly on monitoring the national war crime trials.



“Peace policies are also important in ‘peacetime’ periods, so that local communities become, and remain, a place where common hope and future depend on human connection, trust and cooperation between ordinary people. As a jury member of the UCLG Peace Prize, I am encouraged to see that local communities dedicated to peacebuilding are emerging in different geographical regions and in different cultures.”

Wim Deetman

Mr. Wim Deetman was a member of the Dutch Lower House and later held his position of Minister of Education during three consecutive cabinets, after which he returned to the Lower House to become its president for a period of seven years. He then became Mayor of The Hague, city of peace and justice, from 1996 to 2008. In this position, Mr. Deetman has been instrumental in positioning the city in the international peace and security domain leading to the International Criminal Court being situated in The Hague. He is also a former member of the Dutch Council of State and former Chair of the UCLG Committee on City Diplomacy, Peace Building and Human Rights. The Wim Deetman Scholarship Foundation has been established in his name, providing students from developing countries the chance to pursue a master’s degree in the area of peace and justice in The Hague. Mr. Deetman has joined the jury of the UCLG Peace Prize for the second time.



“The theme of peace and justice is close to my heart, and stands rightly so at the core of the agenda of the city of The Hague. In concert with efforts at the national and international level, local governments have a strong responsibility in contributing to peace at the local level, when the safety of their citizens is threatened. The UCLG Peace Prize, advocating this role of local governments and highlighting inspirational examples, has my fullest support.”

Tadatoshi Akiba

As the former mayor of Hiroshima Dr. Akiba has considerable experience in communicating the dire realities of atomic bombing and has brought great improvements to municipal policies in the field of fiscal health, transparency, citizen service and youth violence. He has been a visible peace activist and an advocate of the abolition of nuclear weapons. During his tenure as President of the Mayors for Peace Network Dr. Akiba has contributed greatly to the expansion of the network, which presently has 6,991 member cities in 161 countries. Dr. Akiba has held commendable positions as Chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI), President of AFS Japan, in addition to a post as a Professor by Special Appointment at Hiroshima University. For his commitment to peacebuilding Dr. Akiba has received many international prizes including the prestigious Ramon Magsayay Award, the Buddha International Peace Award and the Otta Hahn Peace Medal. He also joined the jury in the previous edition of the UCLG Peace Prize.



“While I served as President of Mayors for Peace, I came to feel that there is a worldwide paradigm shift going on that would make our objective important and possible. To put it simply, we are moving into the Age of Cities after the mentality of the previous era, the Age of Nation States, has created so many problems without being able to solve them. In order for us to create a truly peaceful world, we need to work from the local government level and the grass roots level upward to the nation states, to impose the people’s will and the wisdom born from their everyday struggle for survival upon the ‘establishment’ of the world.”



Thulisile Nomkhosi Madonsela

Professor Thulisile Nomkhosi 'Thuli' Madonsela is a South African advocate and Professor of law, holding a chair in social justice at Stellenbosch University. In 1994, she helped draft the final constitution of South Africa promulgated by Nelson Mandela. In 2009, Professor Madonsela was appointed Public Protector for a seven year term. She was the only full-time commissioner in the South African law Reform Commission at the time. For her role as Public Prosecutor Ms Madonsela received international praise for her efficiency and professionalism and this position has most put her in the public eye. As an advocate for Gender equality and the advancement of women, Professor Madonsela is a member of South African Women Lawyers Association and Business Women's Association of South Africa. In 2012, she was honoured with South Africa's Most Influential Women Award. Professor Madonsela has further been named one of TIME100's most influential people in the world in 2014 and Forbes Africa Person of the Year 2016.

"Inequality is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, inequality creates fractures, but on the other hand, inequality undermines our ability to progress. Without inclusiveness, social justice and participation in any democracy, peace is an illusion."



Tarik Kupusović

Dr. Kupusović was the Lord Mayor of Sarajevo during the second half of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the siege of Sarajevo (1994-1996). As President of the country's Association of Towns and Cities he has established close relations with many cities and mayors in other countries to restore the workings of local autonomous government in his country's devastated cities. In addition to his political experience, Dr. Kupusović has a strong academic record. He is a Professor in Fluid Mechanics, Hydraulics and Water Management at the University of Sarajevo and also Director of the Hydro-Engineering Institute Sarajevo. As team leader and coordinator of many local and international water and environment projects, he has published around 200 scientific and professional papers. Dr. Kupusović was also on the jury of the first edition of the UCLG Peace Prize.



"Cities may be historical and contemporary centres of civilisation, culture, tolerance, and economy, but they are also the source of organised crime, conflict of every kind, and of war. Spread of conflicts and their resolution depend on local elites, intellectuals, and leaders. Such are empirical facts of the 1992-96 war in Bosnia, as well as of all recent wars. I am therefore convinced that conflicts can be prevented and victims of ongoing ones considerably reduced by means of political wisdom conceived in urban environments. That is how I understand the message of the Peace Prize: promotion of affirmative activities by honest people on the local level, people who set example for others."

Jerome Gama Surur

Mr. Jerome Gama Surur is the former State Deputy Governor of Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan. He played an important role in aiding internally displaced persons in the conflict in South Sudan and is an advocate of equal rights for all. Coming from an Economics and Public Administration background, Mr Gama Surur enriched his knowledge of public policy and administration at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. Being the Chairperson of the South Sudan Technical Borders Committee as of 2014, he contributes to resolving border conflicts and peaceful coexistence amongst the border communities. He published a book, titled 'Reaping without Sowing', about the role of humanitarian organisations in the development of the young independent nation.



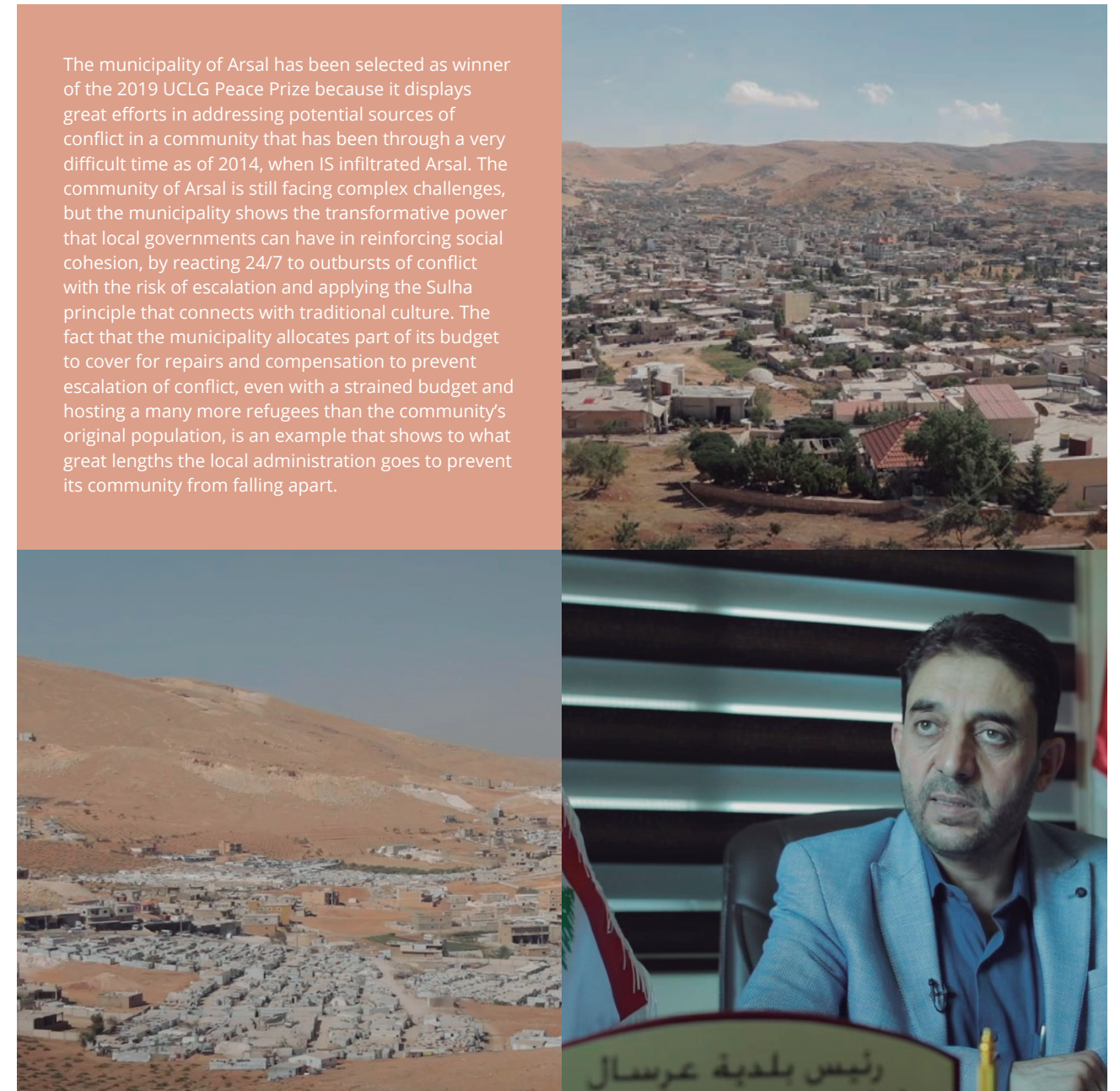
"The UCLG Peace Prize has become an epicentre bringing together different initiatives from cities and local governments around the world, promoting peaceful coexistence amongst people caught up in conflicts. In so doing, the UCLG Peace Prize creates a space to exchange success stories for possible replication and challenges to work on. Certainly, without the involvement of the UCLG Peace Prize, nothing could have happened so far."

UCLG PEACE PRIZE 2019 THE JURY REPORT

Applications for the 2019 UCLG Peace Prize have been submitted by local governments from 19 different countries around the world. Out of these applications the high-level jury of the prize has selected five top contenders. The jury noted that all finalists display exceptional peace initiatives, working hard trying to resolve difficult challenges and that they are doing so under complex circumstances. Beside you will find the 2019 jury report which provides insight into the reflections of the jury on the shortlisted applications.

Arsal (Lebanon)

The municipality of Arsal has been selected as winner of the 2019 UCLG Peace Prize because it displays great efforts in addressing potential sources of conflict in a community that has been through a very difficult time as of 2014, when IS infiltrated Arsal. The community of Arsal is still facing complex challenges, but the municipality shows the transformative power that local governments can have in reinforcing social cohesion, by reacting 24/7 to outbursts of conflict with the risk of escalation and applying the Sulha principle that connects with traditional culture. The fact that the municipality allocates part of its budget to cover for repairs and compensation to prevent escalation of conflict, even with a strained budget and hosting a many more refugees than the community's original population, is an example that shows to what great lengths the local administration goes to prevent its community from falling apart.



Bogotá (Colombia)

The jury is impressed by the innovative way in which the City of Bogotá manages to bring together victims and relatives from multiple sides of the protracted Colombian conflict through culture and artistic expression. One of its efforts is the use of commemorations on specific dates as a mechanism to establish collective recognition. The initiative is a prime example showing how suffering in conflicts is universal and that rather than fuelling resentment, the sharing of experiences and breaking the silence about traumatic events from the past can aid in the process of reconciliation and healing. The Shared Commemorations approach is effective in promoting the reconstruction of the social fabric of the community. The initiative shows effective collaboration with the private sector and other stakeholders, and has inspirational value for local governments in post-conflict areas around the world due to its high degree of replicability.

Duhok (Iraq)



The jury commends the Governorate in Duhok for the way in which it displayed compassion and resilience in providing a safe haven for a huge amount of internally displaced persons and refugees. Located in an area that is facing complex and protracted threats to stability, Duhok has managed to prevent tensions between different population groups from escalating, while equally providing essential services in the face of enormous pressure and a fragile context. The effective coordination of the crisis is impressive. Duhok's population has grown exponentially including communities with different religious backgrounds, which live in peace together as the governorate works hard to ensure peaceful coexistence. The safeguarding of human rights and human security undoubtedly contributes to this prevention of conflicts. The jury recognises the high learning potential for other local governments both in the region and elsewhere who are faced with the daunting challenge of providing a safe place for displaced people.



Manizales (Colombia)

The jury is impressed by the results of the *Change Your Mind, Build Peace* programme of the City of Manizales that started in 2016, with a significant drop in homicide rates and the dismantling of four gangs in two years. The approach of co-creating the initiative with young people themselves has undoubtedly contributed to its success. The initiative also shows the value of working with committed higher education institutions to be able to provide alternative opportunities for young people who are members of a gang. By anchoring the initiative in legislation, the local administration ensures the sustainability of the initiative beyond changes of government. The jury notes that this is a highly replicable initiative for other local governments that are dealing with protracted violence and proliferation of gangs.

Santiago de Cali (Colombia)



Cali has been one of the cities that has suffered the most from violence in Colombia, from drug-trafficking to war and its consequences. The Peace and Civic Culture initiative works with a mixed target group, consisting of victims of the armed conflict, former combatants, young ex-gangsters, and residents living in violent parts of the city. Furthermore, the strategy incorporates an age-specific approach with a high prevalence of young people, and it includes men and women from various backgrounds which makes it a profoundly inclusive approach. The jury values the linkage between economic remuneration for Civic Culture and Peace Managers with the merits of completing a route which includes social, psychological and artistic components. The rate of recidivism among the participants is very low (1.2%) which shows the value of an approach as comprehensive as this. Santiago de Cali has been a finalist in the previous edition of the UCLG Peace Prize as well and the jury recognises that the city of Cali continues to be a strong example of how local governments can set up powerful programmes that contribute to a culture of peace.

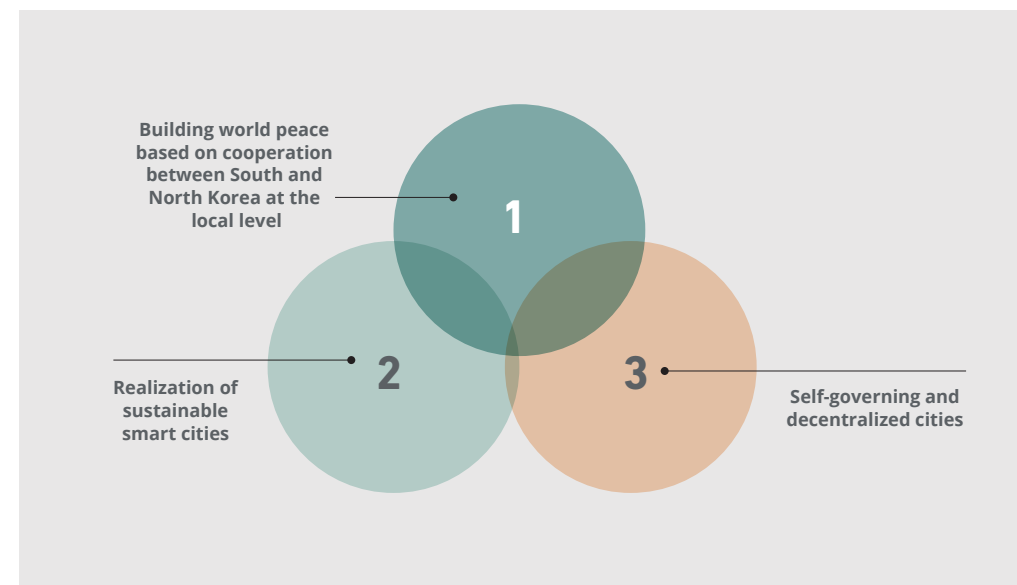


Future Glimpse: , the 2022 UCLG World Congress in Daejeon, Republic of Korea

In October 2022, Daejeon will host the 2022 UCLG World Congress. The City of Daejeon has been chosen as the ideal location for the 7th UCLG World Congress. The UCLG World Summit will take place, for the second time, in the Korean Peninsula.

The World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders has evolved from a gathering of mayors, councilors, and partners to a complete policymaking experience that provides an opportunity for the full constituency, partners and members of the civil society to be a part of the future of the municipal movement.

THE UPCOMING CONGRESS WILL FOCUS ON THREE ASPECTS:



In particular, Daejeon is seeking an opportunity to invite delegations from North Korea in cooperation with the UCLG World Secretariat. The participation of the North Korean delegates to the Daejeon UCLG World Congress will contribute to building peace in the world. Therefore, the Summit will be an important moment to showcase the potential of local and regional governments as peacebuilders. The third UCLG Peace Prize will be awarded in Daejeon, in conjunction with the 2022 UCLG World Congress.



About Daejeon

The host city of 2022 UCLG World Congress, Daejeon Metropolitan City, is located at the center of the Republic of Korea with its area of 540 km², and has the fifth largest population in the country with 1.5 million inhabitants.

A survey has selected Daejeon as the city with the highest quality of life in Korea. Moreover the city serves as an important transport hub with the national route, expressway and KTX (Korea Train Express), running through Daejeon.

Daejeon is the largest technological hubs in Korea and one of the largest in the ASPAC region, boasting over half a century of focusing on economic development and science. Moreover, it is also the heart of the national administration and science. Daejeon Government Complex is home to 13 government agencies, and the Innopolis Daedeok is home to 2,000 institutions and companies, including 45 public research institutions, 58 government and public agencies and 19,000 private companies. The Innopolis has been playing the role as the hub of new technologies and high-tech industry.



The 2022 UCLG World Congress will be held in Daejeon Convention Center, located in Yuseong-gu District (Republic of Korea)

tentatively from 3 to 7 October, 2022.

World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is a global network of local and regional governments and their associations, committed to representing and defending their interests on the world stage. UCLG's network of members represents over 70% of the world's total population and is present in all world regions: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Eurasia, West Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and North America. Organised into seven regional sections, it also has two specialised sections: as metropolitan section and a Forum of Regions. UCLG's key priorities are the promotion of decentralisation, good governance, sustainable development policies and innovation through city-to-city and association-to-association learning.

“The consequences of any conflict that disrupts a culture of peace often manifest themselves on a local scale and as such local governments have an important role to play in situations of conflict, mainly acting as responders to the basic coexistence issues.”

Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia (Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa)

The Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa is responsible for governing and administering the province of Gipuzkoa, located in the autonomous region Basque Country in northern Spain. Equality and citizen coexistence are being highly valued by the Provincial Council and they believe that, based on mutual respect and the memory of victims, this will help to gradually heal any wound left by violence. Due to its extensive experience in coexistence programmes and post-conflict management, The Regional Council of Gipuzkoa, being a member of the UCLG network, decided to be part of the Peace Prize organisation. An excellent example of Gipuzkoa's commitment to coexistence can be seen in the Bizikidetza Lantzen programme: people of different backgrounds engage in dialogues and reach agreements for coexistence, promoting forums, experiences and actions at a local level.

“Gipuzkoa is a territory terribly punished by violence, both in terms of the number of victims and the social tension that the conflict has caused for decades. It is also the territory where they have worked with great intensity for dialogue and coexistence, from the institutions and from the citizens. It's a good example of the value of local initiatives.”

Diputació Barcelona (The Barcelona Provincial Council)

The Barcelona Provincial Council is an intermediate local authority, which operates in the region of Barcelona, promoting the progress and welfare of its citizens. Its territory covers 24% of the total area of Catalonia and includes 311 municipalities, comprising over 5.5 million people. The institution offers technical, economic and technological support to municipalities, providing quality local services in a more homogeneous way throughout the territory. Following the idea of multilevel governance, it coordinates the municipal services and organises public services beyond the local level. Its aim is to share objectives, improve the level of well-being throughout the territory and improve the quality of services. The Provincial Council is firmly committed to the internationalisation of local governments. For this reason, the International Relations Directorate works in the field of development cooperation – at the European sphere as well as at international level – by means of the participation in international networks, transnational projects and development cooperation and giving support to the municipalities to elaborate actions and internationalisation plans.

“This edition has received many applications from cities and regions from all continents, and the diversity of local government peace initiatives is inspiring: the different contexts and approaches show the importance of the role of local government in conflict prevention, peace building and post-conflict reconstruction in fragile contexts around the world.”

Tromsø kommune (Municipality of Tromsø)

Tromsø Municipality lies in Northern Norway, covering the largest urban area in the region. Most of Tromsø is located on the island of Tromsøya and due to the effect of the Gulf Stream, the municipality has a mild climate, although it is located in the Arctic Circle. Tromsø municipality is to the highest degree an international municipality that has, both internationally and nationally, made visible a will and a desire to get stronger on the field in the international arena. Several major projects are underway within culture, health, urban development, organisation, technical services and more

PAX

PAX brings together people who have the courage to stand for peace. It works together with people in conflict areas, meets with politicians and coordinates efforts with committed citizens. For more than 35 years now, PAX is actively involving local governments in its peace work. Special programs are developed and implemented to support local governments in conflict and post-conflict countries. PAX sets peace in motion: it believes that peace belongs to everyone and everyone who believes in peace can contribute. Therefore, it calls on committed citizens to take part, for the sake of peace. PAX operates independently of political interests and is supported by a wide group of involved citizens, social organisations and churches.

“This edition has received many applications from cities and regions from all continents, and the diversity of local government peace initiatives is inspiring: the different contexts and approaches show the importance of the role of local government in conflict prevention, peace building and post-conflict reconstruction in fragile contexts around the world.”

VNG International

VNG International is the international co-operation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). The organisation is committed to strengthening democratic local governance worldwide. It supports decentralisation processes and facilitates decentralised cooperation, implementing projects on behalf of a variety of development partners. Building on existing experience, with high quality services such as benchmarks, taxation tools and handbooks, VNG International provides capacity building services to strengthen local governments, their associations, training institutes and decentralisation task forces both in developing countries and countries in transition. VNG International houses the UCLG Peace Prize secretariat.

“The UCLG Peace Prize is not an end in itself. The Prize has been created to support the further recognition of local governments' role in peacebuilding and in ensuring exchange and learning between local governments on this issue.”

National Fund for Peace, Freedom and Veterans Care (vfonds)

The National Fund for Peace, Freedom and Veterans Care (vfonds) is a foundation from the Netherlands working on the theme of peace. Vfonds seeks recognition and appreciation for those who wear a uniform and serve under the Dutch flag anywhere in the world. Through awareness raising, education and publicity vfonds tries to win the respect and appreciation for everybody that is involved in international peace operations. Each year, vfonds supports over 200 projects that increase knowledge about war and conflict and teach people skills to make an active contribution to peace themselves. In addition, to keep the memory of war alive and to not take peace and living in freedom for granted, the foundation supports museums about the resistance movement in the Netherlands and memorial centres.

“Vfonds wants to inspire and motivate different generations to actively contribute to a strong democratic rule of law and peaceful societies, based on the lessons learned from war and conflict.”



BECOME A PARTNER OF THE UCLG PEACE PRIZE

A CALL FOR PARTNERSHIPS
TO COLLECT GOOD EXAMPLES AND INSPIRE
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TOGETHER.



The consequences of any violent conflict often manifest themselves on a local scale, which is why local governments are instrumental in preventing conflicts, building bridges and dialogue after conflict and promoting a peaceful environment. Becoming a partner of the UCLG Peace Prize means your organisation is choosing...

- ... to be part of an organisation that underlines the crucial role local governments play in promoting peace;
- ... to actively support local governments who are striving for peace and justice in conflict areas;
- ... to celebrate successful initiatives for conflict prevention and peace-building by local governments;
- ... to be supportive in generating international public attention for the role local governments play in ensuring sustainable and peaceful development;
- ... to be part of an international network that is committed to contributing to peace and dialogue around the world.

Options for partnerships range from financial support and a seat on the steering committee to active contributions in the day-to-day work of the Secretariat. Is your local government or organisation interested in becoming a partner of the UCLG Peace Prize, or would you like to hear more about our work? Please get in touch with us through

Peace.Prize@VNG.nl