**SOCIAL CHANGE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION**

**“*Radio and Pedagogy to disseminate the Colombian Truth Commission Final Report:***

***A Youth-Led Initiative”***

January – December 2024 (ongoing)

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**September, 2023**

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**CHAPTER ONE**

*El conflicto armado colombiano ha sido una inmensa tragedia cultural por varios motivos, porque rompió los vínculos de numerosas comunidades, especialmente en las regiones, porque tuvo una duración que lo hizo el más antiguo del hemisferio occidental, convirtiendo su extrema duración en un desangre de años, y porque se ensañó con campesinos, pueblos indígenas, afrocolombianos, raizales y rrom con una persistencia desoladora. Pero también porque la diversidad de sus perpetradores coincidió en sembrar el miedo, romper los lazos afectivos, silenciar las voces y expulsar de sus territorios a los pobladores en una gran operación de despojo y expulsión. [...] Al mismo tiempo, es la cultura, lo que contribuye a la construcción de la memoria colectiva, la verdad, la reconciliación y la movilización social[[1]](#footnote-1).*

1. **Introduction and background**

The present Social Change Initiative (SCI) seeks to contribute to the strategies being advanced in Colombia, South America, to promote the dissemination and appropriation of the Final Report of the Truth Commission, published in June 2022. In particular, the initiative partnered with *A Prender la Onda* Foundation (“*Let’s Tune In*” Foundation[[2]](#footnote-2)) to design, produce and disseminate a season of educational podcasts to be broadcasted by community, school and commercial radio stations in Colombia. In parallel, to carry out a process with students and teachers from a rural public school in San Pedro de Urabá, Antioquia, to discuss and analyze the notions of *truth, memory, conflict,* and produce radio contents with them as well. The contents of the podcasts were thought to be related to the eleven chapters of the Commission’s report. From a pedagogical approach, the podcasts would facilitate appropriation of the contents mainly by educational communities, school teachers and students.

The *Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition* of Colombia (or “Truth Commission”) was created by the Final Peace Agreement signed between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP guerrilla movement in 2016. The Agreement, and the previous peace talks, aimed at contributing to the demobilization and negotiated end of the conflict with the oldest guerrilla of the Latin-American continent, the FARC-EP guerrilla, after over five decades of internal war, that has left over nine million victims. The Commission was part of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition (the transitional justice system put in place). With a mandate that began in November 2018 and ended in August 2022, the Truth Commission was an extrajudicial State entity whose mandate was to clarify the patterns, structures and explanatory causes of the internal armed conflict. This, to satisfy the right of victims and society to the truth, promote the recognition of what happened, coexistence in the territories and contribute to lay the foundations for non-repetition, through a broad and plural participation process for the construction of a stable and lasting peace[[3]](#footnote-3).

The Commission delivered its final report in June 2022. The report[[4]](#footnote-4) is composed of 11 chapters that together have around 8.000 pages. The content was drawn from listening to over 30.000 testimonies of victims, perpetrators and third actors of the conflict; as well as from reviewing previous reports, studies and available research done by universities, think tanks, civil society organizations and victims’ organizations, government reports, among others. The chapters address different topics, including: the historical narrative of the armed conflict in Colombia and its main milestones; violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and gross violations of human rights law; violence against women and LGBTIQ+ people; and dynamics and effects of the conflict on ethnic groups. Other topics include the experiences of children and adolescents who lived through the conflict; an evaluation on the impacts, coping and resistance of victims and communities; and an analysis on the territorial dynamics of the conflict in each region of the country, including victims in exile. The report includes a chapter that summarizes the main findings and recommendations for non-repetition to avoid the recurrence of future violence. In addition to the written report, a vast multimedia digital platform was created and is available for public consultation. The platform contains audiovisual, graphic, multimedia and interactive materials that include testimonies, documentaries, exhibitions, and music to facilitate and promote the engagement of different audiences[[5]](#footnote-5).

The Truth Commission dedicated the last two months of its mandate to disseminate the report and the digital platform, as an effort, on the one hand, to contribute to the appropriation of its core messages, findings, recommendations, by the general Colombian society. On the other, to consolidate processes that would continue with its legacy once its mandate was over. As part of this effort, the Commission worked with hundreds of allies from civil society, academia, the international community, the private sector, among others, to promote the appropriation of the report by Colombian society and the different sectors. This, despite the challenge that entails considering the denial and polarization that the country currently lives, is taking place with a new Government that has manifested its commitment with the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the victims’ public policy.

When the Commission’s mandate ended in August 2022, the allies continued working on the dissemination of the report and its findings. They have also contributed to the implementation of the recommendations so the conflict does not occur again. One of these allies is now *A Prender la Onda* Foundation (APLO), a youth-led civil society organization created during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in Colombia to address the challenge of continuing educational processes with children and adolescents from rural communities with limited access to internet and electricity. APLO has two main lines of action: 1) the production of pedagogical podcasts with educational content to be distributed through community, school and commercial radio stations, as well as WhatsApp and other digital media; and 2) accompanying students and teachers’ groups so they create their own podcasts and contents to be broadcasted in their school radio stations, as well as to strengthen their research and journalism skills by giving them technical and practical tools during the creation processes.

As part of its mandate and strategic vision, APLO agreed to partner to advance with the present SCI proposal, oriented to build a season of podcast episosdes focusing on the Truth Commission’s Final Report, its findings and recommendations, particularly regarding the chapter on children, adolescents and youth. This, through a participatory and collaborative process with the students and teachers of one of their partner schools in Colombia, specifically in San Pedro de Urabá, in Antioquia department. The purpose, to create pedagogical content around the importance of truth and memory to build peace and reconciliation, in formats and languages easier to be understood, addressed and discussed by adolescents, youth and adults in the country.

* 1. **Problem statement**

Colombia, a middle income country in South America, has one of the highest levels of inequality of the region, with almost 40% of the wealth generated in the country concentrated in the 1% of the richest people in the country (Oxfam, 2023). This represents one of the highest Gini coefficients in the region, and the world, with an average value of around 0,51 in 2023 (World Bank, 2023). This, when referring to the concentration of rural land, goes up to 0,9, according to the last Agribusiness Census carried out in 2015 (Fajardo, 2018). Moreover, the country and its people have suffered for over five decades the violence of an internal armed conflict, in which most of the nine million victims have been from civil society. From this universe, 43% of the victims is under 28 years old, with adolescents and youth representing over 33%[[6]](#footnote-6).

Multiple attempts of finding a negotiated end to the conflict have been made. In fact, the Peace Process of 2016 followed a long history of over ten peace processes that have been promoted by different governments in Colombia, in a continuous attempt to finish the long-lasting internal armed conflict in the country. Some of them derived in successful demobilization processes, like the process with left-wing guerrillas in the 90s, that led to the end of around four armed groups, and the participation of the former combatants in the political, social and economic life. In 2004, on the other hand, the AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia), the largest paramilitary group in the country demobilized, with over 40.000 people going through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. However, the Colombian conflict is complex, as it has multiple actors -legal and illegal-, interests, and businesses intertwined with the war and the drug trafficking. This makes it difficult to achieve a complete peace among the different parties, with recidivism rates in each of the processes leading to new illegal armed groups, progressively more related to urban crime and micro trafficking.

As a consequence of a long history of armed conflict, the deepest roots of the Colombian society have been affected, deriving in what the Truth Commission -created after the 2016 Peace Agreement- called a “*culture of war*” among the citizens. This history, and the strategies to address it, has contributed to generate collective fear against the internal “enemy”, the one who does not feel or think as one does. Following a manicheist conception of society, of *good* versus *evil,* the notion of building peace with those who have made the war becomes a challenge. This, in turn, has contributed to increase polarization and opposition against the most recent efforts made to negotiate peace with different armed actors.

Particular regions of the country have been disproportionately affected by the armed conflict. San Pedro de Urabá is one of them. In the 90s, the region and its inhabitants experienced a period of exacerbation of the war between guerrillas and paramilitaries, in which the civilian population was caught in the middle. In the early 2000s, the FARC-EP guerrilla entered the community and massacred a group of social leaders, members of the community action board, and entered people’s houses, causing the displacement of hundreds of families. Years later, with the confrontation between the guerrilla group and paramilitaries to control the territory, the families who stayed suffered confinement, threats, forced disappearance and homicides. As part of its work in that region, the Truth Commission carried out a public recognition of responsibilities by former combatants of the FARC 58th front in San Pedro de Urabá, where they recognized their role in the massacre in el Alto San Juan and the rural area of La Rula in 2001.

Nowadays, over two decades later, large shipments of cocaine continue to flow through this region, mostly controlled by an illegal armed group -El Clan del Golfo-, which also continues recruiting, sponsoring and paying gangs of hired assassins, especially children and youths. In this context, the situation of young people and their involvement in micro-trafficking networks and "gangs" is another phenomenon of concern. Despite participatory processes with the government and the communities have identified this challenge and elaborated plans to address it, the phenomenon continues, in part, due to the different forms of violence that persist, next to historical exclusion and vulnerabilities of different types, including complex migratory dynamics (Fundación Ideas para la Paz, FIP, 2021).

In an attempt to help address this challenge, the present initiative contemplates participatory processes with high-school students and teachers, to create pedagogical content focusing on the history of the region, and the importance of historical memory and truth as resistance mechanisms among the communities. The content includes a series of podcasts to be broadcasted on community, school and commercial radio stations. The rationale is to transform part of the contents of the Commission’s report into formats and language that are friendly to adolescents and young people. The initiative, as stated earlier, partners with a Colombian community-based foundation called *A Prender La Onda- APLO* (“Let’s Tune In”).

* 1. **Goals and objectives**

**General Objective (GO):** Contribute to the dissemination and appropriation of the Truth Commission Final Report in Colombia through pedagogical podcasts to be broadcasted in local and national comercial, community and school radio stations.

**Specific Objectives (SO):**

**SO1:** Generate and disseminate educational and pedagogical podcasts from the chapter on adolescents and youth of the Commission’s Final Report, as well as from other materials of the digital platform.

**SO2:** Promote local processes within the educational community of San Pedro de Urabá, Antioquia, through the production of their own journalistic research processes and creation of pedagogical content for radio, based on the Commission's Report.

* 1. **Challenges and mitigation strategies**

The challenges identified regarding this process can be categorized in three levels. The first one refers to the participation of the local community of students and teachers. This has to do, on the one hand, with the voluntary character of the process and meetings held, mostly in extracurricular hours, potentially hindering the engagement of the participants. On the other hand, it has to do with challenges in connectivity in the region where the school is located.

The second level has to do with the process itself. The process contemplates analytical, research and discussion exercises among students, with their families, friends, teachers and communities. As it was stated in the previous section, the Truth Commission and, in general, the transitional justice system derived by the Peace Agreement of 2016 are highly politicized. This has to do with the polarization caused by the meaning of the process in a wounded society like the Colombian one, and the referendum that took place to support the agreement -when it was rejected by the majority of the population-. This challenge, then, refers to the possibility that the teachers or students refuse to work on such topics, which is a challenge present in almost any participatory exercise.

Last, the challenge posed by security issues in the territory where the project was implemented. San José de Urabá, and the Urabá region in general, in Antioquia, has been one of the regions the most affected by the armed conflict in Colombia and the violence derived by it. With the complexity of the Colombian conflict, in which multiple armed actors -both legal and illegal- are involved, and with a drug trafficking issue worsening the situation, the Peace Agreement did not mean the end of the conflict. Currently, other illegal armed actors are fighting for the control over territories and communities, posing severe risks to certain local processes.

To address the above challenges, the SCI team put forward different strategies. First, regarding the issue of participation and engagement, we established a minimum of rules from the beginning with the teachers in charge of the students who were participating. Then, we designed homework meant to be stimulating for the students, as it entailed carrying out their own journalistic research in their communities. Last, in cases where very few teachers and students joined the online sessions, we modified the methodology to continue with asynchronous processes in which we recorded the contents and asked the students to do the same with the activities assigned to them.

Regarding the issue of refusal to work on the topics of truth and memory, we began by addressing the issues in terms of the students’ and teachers’ daily lives. This approach allowed for discussions and collective reflections on the meaning and importance of such notions, before framing it within a sociopolitical context related to the peace agreement, the transitional justice system and the role of truth and memory for building peace as a nation.

Third, regarding security issues in the region, we began by excluding certain topics of the Commission’s final report from the conversations and journalistic exercises led by the youth. For instance, the issue related to forced recruitment of children and adolescents by illegal armed group is something that continues taking place with certain groups making presence in the territory, thus posing potential risks to the youth openly talking about them in their communities and neighborhoods. Second, we carried out context assessments with local organizations known by APLO to determine whether it was safe for the team to go for in-person meetings. As a result of this, we replaced in-person sessions programmed to be carried out with the students and teachers in San Pedro de Urabá, with online sessions.

**CHAPTER 2**

**2.1. Literature review**

The present social change initiative based its foundations on the understanding that countries that gone been through decades of armed conflict, have seen its nation-building processes culturally affected, subsuming its society into a *war culture,* as stated by the Truth Commissions’ President, Jesuit Father Francisco de Roux. One element of this war culture is that violence becomes a normalized element of the daily culture and way of interacting with others, where the one who thinks differently than me becomes an enemy. In such contexts, polarization also arises. This was the case in Colombia, in which sixty years of armed conflict, with government actors, left-wing guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary groups, have mostly victimized civil society, which represents over 80% of the total victims (Truth Commission, 2022).

When collective memory-building processes address specific topics, feelings of grief, anger, hatred might arise. In such cases, addressing them through regular channels can lead to discussions and increase confrontation instead of contributing to build peace and reconciliation among people, based on a common history. Alternative languages, narratives, means and formats, can then -and have- contribute to build bridges, empathy and common understanding, appealing to the most human elements present in the shared history that is being rebuilt and remembered. The Commission recognized the reconciliating element of culture and art, and thus maintained it in a central place through its work, partnering with multiple grassroots organizations, community and national media channels, to contribute promoting such collective discussions, reflections and building processes.

Moreover, it identified media as a fundamental actor within the armed conflict context. For instance, radio became a companion through the painful processes of families who suffered from having one of their loved ones kidnapped or forcely disappeared by an armed group. For instance, a radio program called *Voces del Secuestro* (Voices of the Kidnapped), allowed the families sent messages to their loved ones for over twenty years. Also, it contributed naming and putting in the public agenda the horrors of the conflict, for families and part of society living in urban settings, less impacted by it in a direct way. However, it has also been used by political leaders to justify conflict and armed confrontation, appealing to emotions to counter negotiated alternatives to finish the conflict (Truth Commission, 2022).

In this respect, it followed what sociologist Johan Galtung stated regarding culture’s role in peacebuilding: *“while the cultural and structural basis that feed confrontation remain intact, durable peace will not be possible, as violence vicious cycles will remain active”* (Galtung, 1998). Galtung has dedicated most of his academic research to theimpact on the construction of public opinion that culture, media and journalism have, particularly regarding conflict and peace. The author identifies two journalistic paradigms when addressing armed conflicts, that can vary over time and across contexts. On the one hand, peace journalism is oriented towards a nuanced and multifaceted exploration of conflict, its actors, perspectives, causes and outcomes, in an effort to understand the underlying story, humanize the parties involved and, mainly, contribute to the de-escalation of violence. War journalism, on the other hand, dehumanizes the parties, and emphasizes victory or defeat from a reactive perspective and from the visible effects of violence, with narratives oriented toward propaganda (Galtung, 2003).

Building on Galtung’s concept, Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) define peace journalism as a decision-making process of editors and reporters on what to report and how to report it, that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict. The authors see it as an alternative to traditional Western journalistic practice, and a potential energizer for activism towards democratic change on a supranational level. Moving beyond Galtung's original concept, which was primarily focused on the analysis of news content, they argue peace journalism should be seen as a collaborative effort that involves journalists, media organizations, policymakers, activists, and citizens around the world, and that seeks to foster a more diverse and inclusive public discourse about conflict and its resolution. This idea of a global dialogue is rooted in a broader perspective on media and democracy that emphasizes the importance of media diversity, participatory media practices, and the democratization of media ownership and control. The political element of media and journalism, then, becomes clear.

Such a collective, transnational effort would align with the efforts of alternative media outlets already operating in countries affected by war. Also referred to as independent, citizen, activist, radical, community or autonomous media, alternative media aims at working against, or seeking to “develop different forms of the dominant, expected (and broadly accepted) ways of doing media” (Atton, 2004, ix). While each of the labels carries specific implications (in terms of scope, reach, internal organization, and funding resources), the focus is on media initiatives that operate outside two main stakeholders: the State and private economic groups. Most importantly, they represent “challenges to hegemony, whether on an explicit political platform, or employing the kind of indirect challenges through experimentation of existing roles, routines, emblems and signs that Hebdige (1979) locates at the heart of counter-hegemonic cultural styles” (Atton, 2004, 19). In contrast to mainstream media, alternative media often tends to promote horizontal decision-making, and participatory practices, while working on a smaller scale and being less constrained by bureaucracy or commercial interests (Coyer & Fountain, 2007).

This form of structure allows the promotion of an active engagement of audiences, which are not considered passive receptors of information whose political opinions and consuming decisions are to be molded (as some of the above-mentioned models of communication seem to suggest), but instead are deemed active co-creators of content. This model gives room for broader experimentation in storytelling and aesthetics and promotes the proliferation of voices and perspectives. Referring specifically to community radio, Lewis and Booth sustain that “within its own practice [it] tries to offer listeners the power to control their own definitions of themselves, of what counts as news and what is enjoyable or significant about their own culture” (1989, p. 9).

Alternative media outlets in countries experiencing conflict and violence often operate in difficult and dangerous circumstances, and face significant challenges in terms of funding, access to resources, and protection from persecution. However, many of these outlets have already been working towards the goals of peace journalism by providing alternative perspectives on conflict and violence, giving voice to marginalized groups, and promoting dialogue and understanding across ethnic, religious, and political divides. Lynch and McGoldrick's vision of a transnational effort to invest in peace journalism would support and build upon these efforts and could help to create a more global network of alternative media outlets and peace journalists who are working towards the goal of promoting peace and justice through responsible and ethical journalism.

Going back to Colombia, the link between the owners of the main mass media channels and the social, political, economic, and military elite is clear (Murillo, 2003). This link has determined, to a big extent, the language, source management, and reach of journalistic coverage of events, particularly in regard to the armed conflict. According to several authors (Valencia Nieto, 2014; Valencia-Tello, 2014; Misión de Observación Electoral, 2016; Villa Gómez et. al., 2018; Pinzón, 2020), this alliance between the national leaders and the media owners has degenerated, in multiple cases, into a journalistic style that deviates the attention from the structural causes of the social conflict, prioritizing the armed confrontation and causing widespread fear within the main currents of the public opinion: a war journalism, would argue Galtung.

Such tendencies can be identified from the beginning of the conflict in the country. The first experiences of radio in Colombia date back to 1929. By 1940, there were at least 120 radio broadcasting stations. While initially most programs had a cultural or educational purpose, they soon began to generate spaces for political debate and, as different authors have noted, for ideological polarization (Pita Pico, 2018). They became particularly relevant for the country as a drastic bipartisan conflict dived the country into two opposing identity groups: Liberals and Conservatives. Such a schism set the conditions for particularly violent events, such as a failed coup in 1944 and the assassination of a liberal candidate for the presidency, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, in 1948—an event known as El Bogotazo, which marked the beginning of the period known as La Violencia (The Violence). Particularly in the latter episode, radio revealed itself a powerful tool for inciting collective mobilizations: as television channels and press offices were significantly damaged by the mobs reacting to Gaitán’s murder, liberal, socialist, and communist groups seized radio stations and used clandestine ones to summon and organize the general population among the chaos. Much false or inaccurate information circulated during that period, demonstrating how, from the early use of radio in the country, it was used to manipulate and confuse the listeners to incite violence (Pita Pico, 2018).

Throughout the 20th century, the diffusion of radio programs was constantly the object of pressure by legal, illegal, and paralegal forces, thus radio served “not only as a common space for information, but also functioned as a channel to incite, organize, denounce, confuse, placate and persuade, according to each specific circumstance” (Pita Pico, 2018, p.169). Such potential capacity keeps determining, to present, the role of media in the persistence of discourses that do not promote the de-escalation of violence: as noted by Villa-Gómez et. al. (2020), mass media, particularly radio, plays a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing the beliefs, memories, and emotions that lead to political polarization and the legitimization of violence in Colombia. The authors contend that the media constructs a binary discourse of *us vs. them* that essentializes identities, stereotypes groups, and dehumanizes the enemy, which reinforces political polarization and contributes to the persistence of violence.

This analysis fits well with Galtung’s definition of war journalism. Villa-Gómez et. al. suggest that the media's role in the fabrication of memories, emotions, and beliefs about the enemy goes beyond a simple reflection of reality and instead creates a reality that can lead to the normalization of violence as a legitimate means of achieving political goals. The consolidation of a *them* in contrast to an *us* is accompanied by an emotional dimension, establishes an inflexible standpoint that is inflexible in face of dialogue, and that responds to an irrational rejection. Similarly, Galtung suggests that war journalism operates by appealing to readers' emotions and affects, which go beyond common sense.

Francisco de Roux, president of the Truth Commission in Colombia (CEV), has asserted in several interventions that the ethical and moral imperative in the country is, today, to give an end to the war, and to stop associating violence and politics; but in order to do so, it is necessary to depolarize the discourse, break the stigmatization with alternative, progressive political expressions so that multiple voices can participate from democracy just as much as those representing traditional powers. In the same line of thought, and bringing to the table the writing of Judith Butler (2017), Villa-Gómez at. al. (2018) insist on the need to challenge Colombian hegemonic media so that other stories, other versions, other experiences, and other narratives circulate. In this way, all types of life become visible and cognizable, and all the lives that have fallen in this war can be the object of mourning. The media could play a more constructive role in conflict resolution by promoting a more nuanced and inclusive discourse that recognizes the complexity of the conflict and promotes dialogue and understanding between different groups (Villa-Gómez at. al., 2018).

More specifically, community radios in Colombia can play a key role – and have-, according to Saffon and Uprimny (2007). First, because they allow marginalized communities to exercise their right to express their opinions and ideas through the media, which was previously difficult and expensive due to the dominance of commercial or public interest radio stations. Secondly, because they create spaces where marginalized communities can express their visions of the world directly in their own languages and stories, thus protecting their right to democratic participation and enriching citizen deliberation. Thirdly, because they serve as a mechanism for empowering local grassroots organizations and strengthening social ties, identity, and solidarity of marginalized communities, which greatly enriches democracy. The existence of community radio stations creates a more pluralistic panorama of radio communication in the country, offering radio listeners a greater number and diversity of options, including those closest to their way of life, thus materializing the right to plurality of information and the constitutional principle of cultural diversity. Finally, acknowledging the importance of community reflects the general acceptance of the importance of the right to communication, i.e. the right to equal access to technological spaces of information and knowledge. Here is, precisely, where the enormous added value of partnering with APLO and their allied local radio stations lies.

**2.2. Theoretical underpinnings**

As stated in previous sections, Colombia’s Truth Commission recognized the role of culture in the armed conflict: “societies that have suffered armed conflicts for extended periods of time, with widespread violence and systematic violations to human rights and IHL, suffer in terms of how they establish social networks. This, in turn, affects its daily dynamics, as it constitutes mechanisms that adapt to and naturalize conflict, based on rigid dynamics, biased and reductionist positions that bring along violence legitimization, and defined conflict as *untreatable*” (Bar-Tal y Halperin, «Barreras sociopsicológicas para la paz”, in the Truth Commission Final Report, 2022). Impacts suffered have been fixated, and “enemy identities” inherited and transmitted; logics of fear, hatred, stigmatization, revenge, resentment and dehumanization have emerged and persisted; and ideas of power associated to the drug trafficking business have added up and deepened structural violence related to racism and patriarchy in Colombia.

In fact, the Truth Commission dedicated one of its Final Report’s sections and findings to the cultural aspect of war, and culture’s key role to help building the collective memory, truth, reconciliation and social mobilization (Rey, 2018). Culture, the Report states, is what gives rise to essential issues that allow us to live or not in community. A matrix of common sense among the members of a community. In Colombia, there is a prevailing distrust of the other, the different, which the armed conflict has exacerbated. The Commission's approach was not to detach culture from the understanding of the conflict, not to link it only to direct armed actors, IHL violations and war strategies, but to understand the contexts, and to look at the cultural issues in which the conflict has been instilled and rooted. In order to generate real changes from here, it states that "adjustments in legislation or institutions are not enough if there is no transformation of behaviors, values and relationships with others” (Truth Commission, 2022).

From such approach, the Commission also dedicated its third and fourth non-repetition recommendations to culture and media, advising the government, on the one hand, to create a comprehensive strategy so cultural transformation becomes a national-level project with concrete actions at the territorial level. Such project must allow for the principles and values of the peace culture presented by the Commission to reach society and permeate it through different communication, cultural, artistic and narrative tools. On the other hand, the Commission refers to public, private, alternative and community media, recognizing their main role in disseminating narratives and guaranteeing the right of truth. In this respect, the Commission invites them to continue reflections and conversations around their role in society, and to put forward strategies so as part of their work they contribute to the appropriation of a culture of peace as a collective social value.

The recognition of the role of media and journalism by the Truth Commission in Colombia recalls the different roles and operating mechanisms that have been identified through time by different theorists. First, it recognized the agenda-setting function of media, first hypothesized by Bernard Cohen (1963) and further developed by authors as M.E. McCombs and D. L. Shaw (1972). According to this perspective, media’s most notorious capacity is that of determining which subjects occupy the attention of the majority of the population: is not a matter of shaping the general opinion (what people think) but of putting certain issues on the spotlight while relegating others to the background (what people think about) (Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This means that the more attention the media gives to a particular issue, the more likely it is that people will perceive that issue as important.

The armed conflict, then, is not only based on objective causes or reasons, but also on intangible issues, on beliefs and values that have not been made sufficiently conscious and that have been convenient for a system of racial and class orders and privileges that maintain a low-intensity democracy. In this respect, cultural approaches become key to address other factors associated with violence in the territories in the country. It is not a matter of separating morality and politics, but of emphasizing those moral transformations that alter the political and moral values of the country. Peace, for example, or at least a negotiated solution to the conflict with FARC-EP guerrilla group, was proved in 2016 not to be a social value collectively appropriated. Multiple sectors in the country were not willing to “negotiate with the enemy” or did not support the proposal of the peace agreement presented by the Government and derived by a six-year peace dialogue process, which led to the refusal of it through a referendum carried out that year. Here, again, media played a crucial role, in what Robert Entman would have defined as the framing role (1993), as some of the main media channels in Colombia broadcasted the opposition campaign against the referendum, that appealed to the deepest feelings of Colombians and depicted the peace process as an unjust and biased one, by emphasizing certain aspects of it and downplaying omitting others, thus shaping the way people understood and responded to it (Entman, 1993).

Despite the result of the referendum, the Government renegotiated with the opposing parties the content of the Agreement, and presented the new version to the Congress, following the current legislation that allowed him to do it. It was approved. The process, then, continued forward towards the implementation of the Agreement. As a result of such process, the reforms, policies, and the transitional justice system put forward as part of the agreement, were not supported or recognized but a proportion of the Colombian society, who saw it as illegitimate. This was also the case of the Truth Commission. A central question in such a context was how to separate such entities, the reforms and in general the efforts to implement the Agreement and achieve a negotiated solution to the armed confrontation with the FARC guerrilla, from the government and their political character, to turn it into a national matter that brought everyone in society together. Very soon it became evident that profound collective cultural changes, even if not enough by themselves, were necessary to advance towards reconciliation and sustainable peace in Colombia.

The challenge ahead was not minor. Colombian culture is deeply rooted in society, and several aspects of it even contributed to the armed conflict to remain and exacerbate. The Commission evidenced, for instance, that the *war culture,* based on exclusion and exploitation, have beenpart of Colombian history since the colony, contributing to the establishment of certain parameters and invisible rules that have led to the unequal, racist and classist society the country has nowadays. Moreover, the Final Report was published amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and a context of presidential campaigns and elections, which added a challenge for its findings and recommendations of non-repetition of the armed conflict, to generate a stir of high impact among Colombian citizens.

Recognizing the size and complexity of such challenge, the Commission put forward a wide participatory process to include and dialogue with every sector and stakeholder, in an effort to ignite collective processes that allow the appropriation of the thousands of pages of the report, and the multimedia content, by Colombian society, as a tool to promote peaceful coexistence and cultural transformation. It also designed a cultural and artistic strategy, with communication and pedagogical components, to guarantee the broadest possible reach of its Report, in its different formats and languages, and the sustainability of its legacy after the end of its mandate. Initiatives like the one carried out as part of the present social change initiative, are part of such legacy.

**2.3. Change theory and how it was applied**

*“La ficción les vinculó con dolorosas verdades;*

*al contar otros finales, lograron imaginar otras relaciones*

*y formas de vivir en comunidad, desafiando las etiquetas*

*de víctimas y victimarios y ayudando a conciliar*

*los lazos entre los habitantes del municipio”[[7]](#footnote-7).*

The present initiative is based on the premise that was also at the basis of the Truth Commission’s work, and its efforts to guarantee a wide and robust appropriation of its report, its findings and recommendations by the Colombian society. The premise is that, recognizing the armed conflict as something rooted not only on military strategies, but on much deeper structural and cultural dynamics, for a society to avoid the recurrence and repetition of violence and conflict, it needs to know, understand and recognize what has took place through the history of the country. Society needs to know what happened, how it happened, who did it, who suffered and who benefited from it. Especially, younger generations need to familiarize with their families’, communities’ and territories’ past, to understand where their current contexts and dynamics come from, and gain tools to become agents of change in their own communities. When such past entails stories of loss, pain, fear and suffering, alternative languages and formats can help address difficult topics in a way that allows for the processes to also be healing. Art, in fact, has been recognized in Colombia for helping naming the conflict in particular ways, often becoming a testimony and a resistance mechanism itself.

In Colombia, as stated in previous sections, culture and art have played a role in contributing to counter violence and war, discuss and address difficult topics in alternative languages and formats to avoid polarization and allow for empathy. Radio, in particular, has been recognized as a channel to facilitate communication processes that build citizenship, strengthen the public sphere, facilitate social participation in local decision-making processes, demand transparency in government and propose alternative collective imaginaries. The theory is that most Colombians are not violent and that the only way to counteract violence and "the violent" is to strengthen the discursive competencies of civil society. A social fabric made up of responsible and empowered citizens who value the public good, who demand transparency from their rulers, who participate in collective decision-making processes and who cultivate local cultures, will eventually reject violence (La Iniciativa de Comunicación, No. 88, 2004).

It is necessary to invest in the social fabric and rely on local leadership. Peace needs to be sustained by strong social capital to ensure reconciliation processes, peaceful coexistence, local self-management capacities and economic development, especially the reactivation of rural areas. In this context, good practices have been accumulated in the accompaniment and empowerment of individual leaders of change, Community Action Boards, productive associations and other community organizations, where women and young people play an increasing role. These people are not only key in their communities, but can also be crucial to build trust and mobilize other leaderships in other territories (APC-Colombia & UNOSSC, 2016).

In such an understanding, the work carried out by organizations and local stakeholders, as in the case of *A Prender la Onda* -APLO- and the educational communities they work with, become a key element of the engine. Their approach to education recognizes the role of flexible and alternative methods that use digital and radio means, to potentialize curiosity among children, adolescents and youth in their formative processes. This allows them to know themselves and interact in a healthier, more comprehensive way in their contexts. Such approach, in the specific project carried out as part of this change initiative, incorporates an element that becomes common with previous peacebuilding initiatives in the country, that is the role of truth and memory as a tool for reparation, reconciliation, recognition and non-repetition of the armed conflict.

It becomes an additional part of the peacebuilding engine, whose added value derives from the territorial rootedness, the pedagogical experience and the effort to not only create contents that reach the communities, but also promote previous processes with students and teachers so they can actively engage and produce their own contents locally. This means, moreover, they get to know and familiarize with new contents to use for their podcasts, allowing to address complex issues with younger populations, and bring them closer to the history of their own country -a history that, in several cases, is also the present nowadays. This, through a process that comes from their daily lives, from a local approach to peacebuilding, that adds up the territorial cultural level to the political, economic and institutional transformations of a country towards reconciliation and peacebuilding.

With the above premise, the proposed theory of change for this social change initiative understands that, **if** Colombian youth from the San Pedro de Urabá community, affected by the armed conflict for decades, participate in pedagogical and educational processes to address and get closer to the history of their country and the armed conflict, through alternative languages and formats -specifically radio-, **then** they gain soft and hard skills to become agents of change in their own communities, aware of their past and of their role to contribute to future reconciliation and local peacebuilding.

Based on it, the present initiative partnered with A Prender La Onda, a Colombian civil society organization with experience working with youth and students in the country to produce pedagogical radio contents and promote educational processes at the local level. A key element of the partnership was to leverage previous community processes, in order to guarantee a more robust basis on which to begin the specific work around the Truth Commission’s Final Report. This played in fact an important role, as it meant working with a group of students and teachers with certain leadership skills and interests, that contributed to the commitment and participation throughout the process. On the other hand, the group had already experience in participatory co-creation processes, which allowed them to better understand the activities we proposed and carry them out, in terms of elaboration of scripts for radio contents, and their subsequent production.

**2.4. Methods and design**

The intervention envisaged in this project has three main stages: the pre-production and production of the podcasts; the podcasting; and the methodological transfer with one of the students’ groups.

The first stage of the process intended the review and selection of the topics and materials to be used in each podcast. To do so in a participatory way, we designed and administered a short questionnaire for the teachers and students of the schools in which APLO works. The respondents provided feedback on what topics they considered interesting to be included in the episodes. Further, an online session was held with the teachers of the schools participating in the project to share with them the results of the survey and the general overview of the project. Based on the input derived from the surveys, and along with the curriculum and pedagogical teams of APLO, we reviewed and chose the specific materials to use and write the scripts of each podcast. Once the scripts were approved by the team, the production process progressively began.

The podcasting, the second stage of the process, is contemplated to begin in parallel with the first one, as the episodes are released as soon as they are ready. APLO has currently around 20 allied radio stations in eight regions of Colombia (25% of the regions of the country), in which the episodes will be broadcasted. In an effort to increase the audiences reached by the content, new radio stations will bei contacted, to aim at building new alliances with them to broadcast the episodes.

The last stage envisioned the sustainability of the intervention. This, as it aimed at strengthening skills of the students and teachers of one of the schools participating in the process, in San Pedro de Urabá, Antioquia. Particularly, the objective was to carry out formative sessions with them to introduce the topic of historical memory and truth for peacebuilding, and give them theoretical and technical tools so they can replicate the pre-production and production process to generate their own contents based on the Truth Commission’s report.

The reason why this specific school was prioritized, was because APLO has been working with the student’s group and teachers of this institution for over two years; training them in skills and tools to create podcasts with pedagogical content chosen by them, to be broadcasted in their own school radio station.

As part of this stage, a booklet will also be elaborated to systematize the process of creating the podcasts, with the indications and guidelines to orient the students’ group -and potentially other schools, teachers and students-. An on-site workshop was contemplated to present the podcasts and general results of the project to the school, and work with them on the contents of the booklet. For now, the workshops have been all carried out online.

Throughout the process, the evaluation and monitoring of results is thought to be carried out in two ways. On the one hand, a second survey will be applied after the podcasts are broadcasted, with a sample of the educational communities with which APLO works, and that are involved in the process. This survey, named “learning survey”, aims at assessing the appropriation of content and concepts by the audiences after being exposed to the radio episodes. On the other hand, a methodology is implemented to measure the results of the intervention in terms of audiences reached by the content. This focuses on the scope of the broadcasting and, unlike the first one, does not assess the appropriation of the information by the audience.

**CHAPTER 3**

**3.1. Interventions and activities**

The social change initiative is based on the alliance with A Prender La Onda (APLO) organization in Colombia, a civil society organization created during COVID-19 pandemic, after the Ministry of Education suspended in-person courses throughout the country. Its vision is to connect educational communities throughout the country with flexible education, created with and for the students and teachers, recognizing their local realities. Nowadays, it works with seventeen allied radio stations in 8 out of the 32 departments in Colombia, with over 30.000 students tuning in and listening to the episodes produced and broadcasted. Moreover, it was worked with over ten working groups with students and teachers in their schools, to produce their own radio contents to be broadcasted in their radio stations. Over one hundred students and professors have participated in this co-creation process.

The DVI contemplated two parallel processes: the first one, the pre-production, production and broadcasting of the episodes of the podcast focusing on the Truth Commission’s Final Report. The second, a participatory pedagogical process with a group of students and teachers from the public school in San Pedro de Urabá, Antioquia, around the importance of memory and truth for peacebuilding, from a local approach that recognizes its role in daily coexistence and community building.

The first process began with internal meetings with the APLO team and former members of the Truth Commission, to review previous initiatives with civil society put forward to disseminate the Final Report, with a specific focus on radio. Also, to determine a group of possible topics to focus the podcast episodes on. And last, to discuss how to address certain specific topics with younger audiences in careful ways. For instance, the issue of how to talk about forced disappearance or displacement with communities that have been affected by the armed conflict directly, like the educational community of San Pedro de Urabá. This community belongs to a region that has suffered the conflict since its origins, with the confluence of multiple actors and interests. In fact, over 40% of the deaths associated to the conflict in Antioquia come from the Urabá region (Roldán, 2003, in the Commission’s Final Report, 2022). Younger generations, in such contexts, have most likely lost their loved ones as a consequence of the conflict, often becoming orphans at very young ages. We also took into account, from a psychosocial approach, the lack of control on the reactions of the audience when broadcasting radio programs. In such cases, addressing certain topics without directly naming it, appeals to alternative narratives, languages and formats, with fictional characters and contexts, like comics, tales, graphic novels, or songs. This can contribute to diminish the possibility of occurrence of traumatic reactions of listeners if affected by any of the contents or topics contained in the episodes.

In other cases, we recognized that certain topics might pose a direct threat or risk for people speaking about them publicly, especially in communities still controlled or with strong presence of armed groups, like San Pedro. That was the case regarding forced recruitment, a crime that has affected at least five thousand children and adolescents in Colombia, and that armed groups rarely recognize. In that case, we decided not to include forced recruitment as part of the topics to address with the students during the sessions, as they had homework in which they were called to talk to their families and communities about them, and the impact on their daily lives, and posteriorly to produce their own podcasts around the topics. This, to avoid any potential risk for them afterwards, when producing and broadcasting the episodes in their communities.

Once we defined the topics, we carried out a short survey with the options for the students and teachers to determine the preferred ones to focus the podcast season on. Out of it, the preferred chapter of the Commission’s report was the one focusing on the consequences of the conflict on children, adolescents and youth, and their resistance processes. The chapter is called “*The armed conflict: not a minor problem*”, and is formed by multiple sub-chapters, that address topics such as absence and orphanage in children and adolescents victims of the armed conflict; children and adolescents forcedly displaced; the armed conflict in schools and their surroundings; forced recruitment of children and adolescents by armed groups; and resistance of adolescents and youth against the conflict.

Then, the creative process with the APLO team began. I supported them in the curation of the materials to read, review and use as the general framework and basis for the episodes. Then, we collectively read fragments of the report, and we went through the materials available in the digital platform, created as part of the specific chapter, and derived a series of written and audiovisual inputs. With it, the creative team began writing the first drafts of the scripts, fictionalizing the inputs to create the animals who were the main characters of the story, and the context where the facts took place. At the moment of submitting the present report, four out of six episodes are ready, and are going through the recording and production process. The broadcast stage is expected to begin in September or October 2023.

Below, there are some fragments of the scripts. Each one of them addresses the selected topic as a conversation between two or more fictional animals, who analyze fragments of the Truth Commission’s Final Report and the contents of its digital platform, sometimes reading directly the fragments and others reacting to them, from their own experiences and perspectives. Language is simple and colloquial, as it not only evokes conversations between children in Colombia, but is also thought for a young audience, and aims at appealing to human feelings that we all share. This, in an effort of generating empathy for those who have directly suffered from the conflict, especially children and adolescents.

The following is part of the conversation between *Bee* and *Hummingbird,* the two protagonists of the third episode called “Where is my home?”, that focuses on the effects of forced displacement on children in Colombia:

***Bee:***

*Uhm… it is one thing when you get to know a new place for fun, but I feel that in this case,*

*it is like that place that generates protection,*

*that safe place where you can rest and do many things day by day...*

*I feel that it must be a sea of emotions of all kinds...*

***Hummingbird:***

*Oh yes, it is home, where you are already very familiar with many things, you have a circle of friends that make you feel good....*

*(Sighs) and in fact I also feel that leaving those objects*

*that represent happy moments must be very sad, but also a bit upsetting,*

*like it is very unfair that this has happened and continues to happen.*

***Bee:***

*Now, after this situation of displacement...*

*What does it mean to arrive in a new place where everything is unknown?*

***Hummingbird:***

*You know, there are many ideas that come to my mind, one of them may be...*

*that uncertainty caused by arriving in an unknown place,*

*where the enjoyment of rights becomes a daily struggle.*

*To get what is necessary to survive, because, in many cases,*

*the places where they arrived were not prepared to receive them.*

The second process began in parallel, with the prioritized educational community of San Pedro de Urabá, in Antioquia department. We carried out two online sessions with them, and a third one is planned for late September. In the first session, held in May, the APLO team picked up from where they left of the process in 2022. Then, we introduced the specific topic related to what the Truth Commission and its Final Report were, sharing with them a general context of the peace process and the transitional justice system put forward. We did it by first introducing the notion of conflict and of truth, asking the participants what it meant for them in their daily lives today, in their ways of relating with other people and building community. Without us referring directly to the armed conflict at first, the young participants’ responses addressed it, showing the direct impact it has had on their families, their lives and their predecessors’. While sharing the context and carrying out this analysis, we also deepened on the role of community and school radio in the process carried out by the Commission from 2018 to 2022, and as part of its legacy now that its report was released and its mandate finished, in August 2022.

Then, we discussed the role of the students group to contribute to the social appropriation of the report and for building peace in their territory. We asked them *why is it important to speak about this?* And *how can we help communicating it?,* and gave them examples of other youth-led collectives and platforms working on community radio for peacebuilding in other regions of the country. Last, we asked them if they had the interest and possibility of participating in a collaborative co-production process, both by being part of the episode recording phase, and by producing their own contents through interviews and research done in groups.

After the first session, the students were asked to carry out an activity on their own, individually or in groups, of asking their families about their understanding of truth, memory, and their importance in their lives and their communities’. The students carried out a research exercise to deepen their understanding of their own territory, from an approach of the truth and historical memory of it.

Such conversations were supposed to be presented and discussed during the second session with the group, planned to be carried out the first week of August. The convened day, however, most of the participants did not join the session, despite they had committed previously and agreed on the date and time to meet. We met with APLO team to discuss the best way to continue with the process despite the lack of participation during the second session. Also, the issue regarding the complexities for the participants to join arose, recognizing the specific context in which they work and the implications of participating in extra-curricular, voluntary processes. Multiple teachers, for instance, asked us to do the sessions later at night, so they could take care of their house chores before joining.

The decision was to prepare the session as an asynchronous one. Each one of us, then, prepared their own interventions in videos or audios, and we built the presentation with the contents of the session, to share with the students and professors, so they could continue with the agreed activities and the process. The second session focused on the history of our territories, and the importance of memory in our lives, both individually and as part of our communities, and more in general of Colombian society. In this session, we also shared with them pedagogical contents created by the Truth Commission as part of its pedagogical strategy, specifically focused on tales written by youth in municipalities in Colombia strongly affected by the armed conflict, as a resistance strategy against it. The expected result of this session was, first, for the students to read the first scripts elaborated by the APLO team for the episodes’ production, as some of them were selected to record the voices of the characters. Second, the students were given tools on how to adapt the contents available at the Commission’s webpage -both the written texts and support material- for their own creative process.

The result of the second session, the asynchronous one, was the student’s creation of two short tales, based on the tales we shared with them, adapted to their own realities and history. These stories, we reviewed them with the APLO team, in terms of orthography, syntax, and in general contents and style. Afterwards, we began the production process with the students, to create the first episodes of their own podcast, that will be broadcasted in their school radio.

The group of students, that have been working with APLO in previous journalism processes, is composed by children and adolescents of around ten to fifteen years old. As part of their work, they also held a meeting, called an “*en vivo*” (live), to explain the focus of their current radio program. In a video, they shared with us their presentation at school, where, through fictional characters, they built on what they had worked during the sessions, to hold a public conversation around the importance of memory and truth in their municipality. Here is some of what they said at that event:

***Teacher:***

*Knowing the history of the municipality is key, because that is the memory,*

*the oral heritage left by the ancestors.*

*It is key so the children and adolescents who do not know it, get to know it.*

*Telling the story is a reflection of the past, knowing, explaining and*

*valuing events that shaped its own history.*

***Seagull (student # 1):***

*I invite you to know the historical memory of San Pedro de Urabá.*

*First of all, we thank the first inhabitants who have contributed to the*

*construction of the history of this territory; their contributions were*

*of great importance for the construction of this episode.*

[…]

***Butterfly (student # 2):***

*But this peaceful life was surprised by violence.*

*One day it was interrupted by illegal armed groups;*

*there were many years of uncertainty, fear and pain.*

*Today, we continue to build a San Pedro that is growing every day.*

*We have built participatory spaces for victims and return and relocation plans.*

***Student # 3:***

*We have heard how the history of the territory has been woven,*

*how peace has been sought.*

*May this transition, with the recognition of responsibility,*

*truth clarification and resistance of those who have the hope of a better future,*

*lead them to truth, justice, restoration and non-repetition,*

*to ensure peace and strengthen democracy.*

The final stage of the process with APLO and the group from San Pedro de Urabá high school will entail, first, the finalization of the episode production, and its broadcasting in the community and other ally radio stations in Colombia. Six episodes will compose the season, that will also be uploaded to APLO’s webpage and Spotify channel, for public access. On the other hand, the episodes written and produced directly by the students and teachers, will also be finalized to be broadcasted in their high-school radio. In the end, both monitoring tools will be applied to collect, first, qualitative information on the effects of the episodes on the students who participated in the process, and their content appropriation. Second, to assess the reach of the contents in terms of listeners of the various radio stations that partner with APLO to broadcast the episodes. While this is an approach to assess the immediate and short-term effects of the process on the communities directly involved in it, it is worth considering that cultural transformations might take up to five or ten years of community work at the local level to take place. This initiative becomes a part of the engine, to contribute to long-term peacebuilding processes in Colombia, in which youth become the protagonists.

**3.2. Key findings/impact**

The present initiative, as stated in previous sections, partnered with a civil society organization in Colombia, with pedagogical experience and previous local interventions with educational communities. By doing so, it aimed at leveraging existing processes, structures and networks that could contribute to making the initiative more sensitive to local realities and sustainable in the longer term. In that respect, it was based on the notion of collaboration and partnership to achieve better and lasting results.

My contribution to the initiative had to do mainly with presenting the idea to develop a radio season, with a pedagogical approach, based on the Commission’s Final Report. Also, by bringing into this new process the specific information, materials, networks and knowledge to help making it a more sensitive and nuanced process. By doing this, I actively participated in the sessions’ conceptualization and design, as well as in their realization, with writing, review and preparation of the materials, and participation during the sessions with specific information on the Truth Commission, memory, truth and their role in peacebuilding. Moreover, I facilitated meetings and collaboration with former members of the Commission, especially those who were part of the pedagogical team, who was in charge of the dissemination strategies with civil society and schools. By having advisors with expert knowledge of the strategies and contents of the Report, the project aimed at taking the needed precautions and measures to putting in place a *do no harm* approach when working with youth and addressing complex topics related to the armed conflict in Colombia.

Through the partnership with APLO, our intervention contributed, first, to address difficult topics with young students in Antioquia region through pedagogical exercises, and to promote research processes for them to know better their own history, territory and collective memory. By doing so through participatory and dynamic activities, we generated engagement, which has allowed the process to advance so far, with them producing their own contents and generating collective conversations with their fellow students and families. As the initiative built on an existing pedagogical process, with students that have shown leadership skills within their own educational communities, the work we had with them contributed to provide them with additional tools, knowledge and skills to put in practice in their own projects. This is, in fact, already taking place, as they showed us their first drafts of scripts for their episodes:

***La historia de la guerrilla y los soldados***

*En la casa de Diana se encontraban los soldados y afuera, en la calle, estaba la guerrilla.*

*Un comandante de la guerrilla dice: apunte para disparar.*

*Los soldados responden: A la guerra.*

*Entonces cuando ya van a disparar aparece una señora bajita, viejita,*

*que se llama Daniela y dice: Por favor, deténganse, no quiero la guerra.*

*El comandante de la guerrilla le dice: quítese señora,*

*el problema no es con usted y la señora responde: no, los problemas no se resuelven así,*

*se resuelven con paz.*

*Entonces la guerrilla y los soldados la vieron tan valiente que se fueron*

*y se acabó la guerra y vino la paz.*

*Fin[[8]](#footnote-8).*

Second, once the season is ready with all the episodes produced and broadcasted, and linked to APLO webpage and Spotify channel, we would have contributed to the vast array of materials produced by civil society aimed at promoting the social appropriation of the Truth Commission’s Final Report. By leaving the pedagogical materials available, we will be contributing to future groups of students and teachers with the tools and contents to produce their own research and journalistic processes. Last, we contributed to leave a tangible result from a powerful participatory process in which the youth themselves led the conversation on memory, truth, and their importance for peacebuilding, for their country, but especially for their families, communities, and themselves.

**CHAPTER 4**

**4.1. General conclusion**

Amidst an armed conflict that has reached almost six decades, and that have left over nine million victims so far, Colombia has also a vast array of multiple initiatives that have been attempting to build peace in the territories; to protect the communities and the social tissue from fragmentation and from the confrontation between armed groups; to resist and survive a history of continuous violence. Such local, grassroots processes, many of them youth-led, have also contributed to the development of high levels of resistance and resilience. Recognizing this richness, and the limitation of resources -financial, human and in terms of time-, the present initiative built on this long tradition in the country, to leverage existing capacities and processes. From a collaborative approach, then, my initiative was based on the premise that partnering with *A Prender La Onda -*APLO- would allow much bigger and more sustainable results. And today, with the process still ongoing, I can state that the premise was correct.

Second, the process reconfirmed the importance of recognizing the complexities, specific needs and interests of a community when working with them. An initial milestone of the present initiative was precisely a meeting with students and teachers to present the draft of the project and hear from them their opinions, reactions and willingness to participate or not in it. We collectively discussed the specific topics, the chore concepts, notions, their meaning and their importance. This, from an approach that valued and recognized their own experiences, contexts, and the role of such concepts, *memory, truth, peace,* within. Regarding this aspect, working with a group of students and teachers with previous work with APLO organization was, again, an advantage.

The engagement achieved from the students and teachers was evident after the second online session we had scheduled. Despite we could not hold it as planned, because not all the participants not joined, by speaking with them afterwards, it became evident there were reasons related to their contexts and situations, that made it difficult for them to participate. The teachers, for instance, manifested that the time picked for the session, 18:00h -thinking of doing them after the end of the school day-, clashed with their daily chores at home. Even if we did not carry the session, we received the documents and other products agreed with them as part of their independent work at school and with their communities, allowing for the process to advance. Another element that I consider played a role in their engagement and commitment had to do with the approach we used when addressing the topics. By building empathy and appealing to realities known by them, we facilitated reflections around the importance of such memory- and peace-building processes through journalism in their own communities.

**4.2. Recommendations/implications for policy**

Three main implications derive from the implementation of the present initiative: the importance of *collaboration, territorial approach and participatory processes.*

The first element has to do with the value of, first, considering limitation of resources and, second, recognizing availability of initiatives, stakeholders and programs being implemented in the same territory or with the same community. As stated in previous sections, by partnering with existing processes, such as the pedagogical ones carried out by APLO in multiple regions of Colombia, I aimed at building a collaboration in which both parties put their added value to the equation. APLO, on the one hand, shared their human resources, expertise and pedagogical processes with school communities. I added the specific knowledge on the Truth Commission, its Report and other materials, the background of the work carried out, networks of strategic stakeholders and familiarity with the pedagogical strategies put forward to disseminate the Report and its contents, and promote its social appropriation.

The second and third elements that become relevant for policy makers when thinking of participatory processes for collective memory-building is the territorial and participatory approaches. Only when reading the context, the dynamics, stakeholders, previous processes and needs, one has the necessary elements to know how to design an intervention that responds to them. In this case, we began by selecting the prioritized community to work with, and becoming familiar with the group of students and teachers, and their previous processes with APLO. Then, we carried out a general overview of the context, including reading the territorial chapter of the Report dedicated to that region, doing research on the past and current situation of the region, and collecting primary information from the APLO team regarding the previous processes held with them. Here, participation becomes key as well. First, because it allowed us to understand the interests, needs and willingness of the group to engage with the process, thus giving us valuable information to orient the intervention -in terms of the contents, the exercises and the tasks-. Second, because a participatory, collective, co-creation process as the one carried out with the students and teachers to design their own podcasts and to be part of the production process of the episodes written by the APLO creative team, strengthens engagement and interest. By actively engaging them from the beginning, they appropriated the process, the contents and exercises, allowing their continuous participation.

**4.3. Sustainability plan**

Building on the general conclusions of the previous sections, a key element when aiming at sustainability has to do with collaboration as well. The decision to collaborate with APLO had to do, on the one hand, with the recognition of their added value to the process, in terms of expertise, pedagogical experience and human capacity. But it also had to do with an efficiency analysis, to potentiate the limited resources I had, in terms of time, money and capacity. By partnering with them, the initiative leveraged the existing processes in San Pedro de Urabá, the previous work carried out by APLO with the students and teachers, and the skills gained by them through such exercises.

Also, the collaborative approach looks ahead in terms of installed capacity in the communities, in this case the school community in Urabá. In fact, while it is not guaranteed, since it has been and will continue to be a voluntary, extra-curricular process, APLO has been working with this group for over two years, maintaining levels of engagement and participation both from students and teachers. Through a formative process done in 2022, the student group also gained technical and practical tools to carry out journalistic research and production of radio content, and received from APLO basic elements to continue doing so.

On the other hand, the participatory approach contributes as well to the sustainability of the process. By consulting them from the beginning about the focus, content and dynamic of the production of a season focusing on the Truth Commission’s Final Report, they became active agents of the process themselves. They participated in the discussions, analysis and collective conversations, and were in charge of carrying out the journalistic tasks agreed, which empowered them as content producers and memory builders in their families and communities. The appropriation of the process that comes with a participatory approach with adolescents and youth, contributes to the sustainability of the initiative once it finishes.

Last, an added value of APLO when working with schools, teachers and students, is also the pedagogical process behind production and broadcasting of materials. Such approach has led to the creation of guidelines, instructions and orientation videos for teachers and students in other schools, so they can undertake their own journalistic and creative processes in their communities, based on the contents available on APLO webpage and Spotify channel. While it is never a complete guarantee, the approach used in the present initiative aimed at accompanying grassroots processes, partnering with organizations and leaving the necessary knowledge and skills for the participants to continue advancing in the activities contemplated. This, in turn, constitutes a contribution to larger peacebuilding processes in Colombia in which youth are -and should continue being- the protagonists.

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# APPENDICES

# Online sessions:

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# Presentations of the online sessions

# Episodes’ scripts

# Students’ draft stories

1. Rey, G. 2018. “Las Dinámicas del Hormiguero”, at the Truth Commission’s Final Report, 2022. *English Translation:* The Colombian armed conflict has been an immense cultural tragedy for several reasons, because it broke the ties of numerous communities, especially in the regions, because it had a duration that made it the oldest in the western hemisphere, turning its extreme duration into a bloodletting of years, and because it raged against peasants, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Rrom peoples with a devastating persistence. But also because the diversity of its perpetrators coincided in sowing fear, breaking affective ties, silencing voices and expelling settlers from their territories in a great operation of dispossession and expulsion. […] At the same time, it is culture that contributes to the construction of collective memory, truth, reconciliation and social mobilization. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. APLO Foundation’s webpage: <https://www.aprenderlaonda.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Spanish version of the Commission’s mandate is available here: <https://web.comisiondelaverdad.co/la-comision/mandato-y-funciones> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Spanish version of the written chapters is available here: <https://comisiondelaverdad.co/hay-futuro-si-hay-verdad> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The digital platform of the Commission is available here: <https://comisiondelaverdad.co/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Victims’ Unit, 2023. July’s Bulletin. Available at: <https://datospaz.unidadvictimas.gov.co/boletines/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “Fiction connected [the youth] with painful truths; by telling alternative endings, they were able to imagine other relationships and ways of living in community, defying the “victims” and “perpetrators” labels, and helping repair the social tissue between the members of the community. Available at: <https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/el-arte-de-contar-nuestra-historia> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *English translation:* In Diana's house were the soldiers and outside, in the street, were the guerrillas. A guerrilla commander says: Aim to shoot. The soldiers answer: To war. Then, when they were about to shoot, a short, old lady called Daniela appears, Her name is Daniela and she says: Please stop, I don't want war. The guerrilla commander says to her: "Get out of the way, lady, the problem is not with you and the lady answers: no, problems are not solved that way, they are solved with peace. Then the guerrillas and the soldiers saw her so brave that they left and the war ended. and the war ended and peace came. The end. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)