

Asociacion Artistica para Ninos (ASART)

Organization's Information

Asociacion Artistica para Niños ASART
Escazu
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Costa Rica
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http://www.asart-ca.org/index_esp.html

Description of specific project, practice or technique:

THEATER FOR THE OPRESSED TO PROMOTE A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The Project I would like to nominate is a Regional project called called Barrio Limpio, Barrio Sano (A clean neighborhood is a healthy one) developed by ASART through the support of COSUDE (Swiss agency for Cooperation and Development) based on the technique called Theater for the Oppressed.

The object of this project is to help create a collective conscience about the need to take care of the environment and also about the importance of recycling. This project was developed by ASART in order to support an ongoing local project in Nicaragua called REUTILIZARTE (Reuse Art) that has 3 pillars:

1. Self esteem
2. Conflict Resolution through non-violent channels
3. Environment

ASART worked with children from the areas of La Chureca and Acahualina, a city dump in Managua Nicaragua, near Lake Xolotlan. The children of the community developed a play with the help of Pofessor Rosa Maria Matute and ASART which has had great impact. Due to the great success of the play ASART took the play to three main local markets that cause great pollution in the city's capital: Huembes Market, Mayoreo and the Oriental. Later on it was also presented at Ciudad Sandino and also to the Diplomatic Council and student body of the Universidad Centroamericana of Nicaragua (UCA).

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Info on Organization or agency including history and scope of work:

ASART stands for Artistic Association for Children. It is Costa Rican based, however it develops projects in Central America.

This organization creates programs in Costa Rica and Nicaragua focusing on recreational activities in the field of fine arts (theater, dance, music, fine arts). The activities are based on Art Therapy.

ASART works based on volunteers. Its services began in coordination with local Costa Rican Government Shelters such as PANI and in marginal urban communities. All the services that ASART offers are free of charge.

Two or three volunteers are assigned to a shelter or community center, as needed. On average,

the volunteers will lead a group one or two times per week, depending on the availability of the children and their families. Children attend two hours per day, but for volunteers this work period is extended—depending on their requirements (For example, American University students must fulfill 150 hours of community work). When the volunteers have completed teaching their courses, they must stage a small event for children to make personal presentations of drama, song, art, music, dance, poetry or whatever they have prepared for the occasion.

Services are usually provided on Saturdays, or during days that don't conflict with school. This helps encourage a greater number of children to attend. The courses are often taught either early or late in the day, so volunteers can help the children with their homework and then start the art classes. The courses are given throughout the school year, even during summer vacation. We want to provide beneficial recreational activities, all year long.

ASART uses Art therapy and visual arts for therapeutic purposes. It is based on the idea that visual representations contribute to the construction of meaning of psychic conflicts, therefore promoting their resolution. The visual representation would be, from this perspective, a construction of process of thought.

It also uses the Theater of the Oppressed, that seeks to find the truth in order to transform. There is no place for a passive spectator, and all parties are engaged.

ASART also promotes environmental education, love and respect for nature through artistic recycling. This involves using non-biodegradable waste for creating jewelry, artwork, murals, masks, toys and more.

ASART also creates murals with children in educational institutions or community centers, instilling a sense of pride through the representation of their own drawings on walls in their communities.

Describe the context in which the agency works, analyse conflict, and indicate how this analysis has influenced the peacebuilding work of the organization:

About the THEATER FOR THE OPRESSED project I mentioned above, I consider this to be a great initiative because although it was born in Costa Rica it has also reached Nicaragua. It is great to see that initiatives born in Costa Rica can lend a helping hand to the Central American region in order to promote collaboration and a "good neighbor" attitude.

Because of the great poverty levels of pollution that affect this nation, Nicaragua has a great need of these initiatives to help protect the environment. ASART has found a key way to educate and promote peace and the protection of the Environment in Managua through local theater.

The message ASART wanted to get through was that even if you are poor it does not mean you have to live surrounded by trash and pollution. You can still have dignity and pride. The theater techniques used by ASART, among other activities and initiatives, seek to empower the people and make them participate actively in the cultural life of the country; it also promotes leadership, self respect, pride and discipline.

Impact of work:

ASART targets Costa Rican and Nicaraguan children ages 2-18 who suffer social, psychological, sexual or physical abuse.

Most participants are poor children living in rural communities. It specializes in free recreational art therapy activities and programs for these children in order to promote high self esteem, to

increase their capacity to interact amongst each other and with their communities, to develop respect for each other and the environment.

ASART also promotes local industries for single mothers through creative enterprises. It also promotes Corporate Social Responsibility through sponsorships and promotes volunteers amongst student populations.

ASART also promotes negotiation, peace building and dialogue between the peoples. It seeks to promote the Culture of Peace and diminish violence and pollution in the Central American Region.

Story of agency's peace work:

In 2009-2010 the Criminal Investigations Department of the Justice Ministry of Costa Rica (OIJ) had a peace building campaign called "Deshágase de algo que nadie quiere" (Get rid of something no one wants). The object of this campaign was to create a conscience about the issue of firearms and the negative influence that violent toys have on children and on the future of Costa Rica.

ASART was part of this great campaign. During the campaign the children of Costa Rica were asked to "turn in" any violent toys they had to the OIJ. Later on ASART and its founder Sylvia Kettlehohn Gron, who is also a sculptor helped other artists to create a sculpture made out of the toys that the children brought in.

The sculpture was displayed in the Justice Plaza Building in San José Costa Rica and was a great success among the visitors and the department employees. The OIJ celebrated this initiative because it shows how teamwork between government agencies, schools, high schools, and citizens can be effective and successful in order to promote national peace.

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