From 2013 to 2016, Y Care International worked with the YMCA of Guatemala, Caja Lúdica and Peronia Adolescente to reduce marginalisation of young people.

Using the innovative ‘Change the Game’ methodology, young people affected by or at risk of violence strengthened their wellbeing and engagement in their family and community.
The results

Change the Game
The Change the Game methodology transforms young people into leaders who catalyse change in their community. Sport and play is used as a common language between young people. They collectively decide their own rules and use sport to promote participation and tolerance over competition and winning.

The approach is adapted to each context. In Guatemala, the civil war ripped many families apart and has become a silent burden, even for those born after the conflict. The methodology allows young people to learn about their history and understand their families’ stories and how the conflict affected them.

Developing new leaders
We supported 58 young women and 56 young men through the Change the Game leadership development diploma. The young leaders participated in a five-month programme which included 150 hours of capacity building training and planning and implementation of activities with their peers.

After three years in the project, all 114 new leaders started running activities in their schools and community on a regular basis compared to only 6 people in 2013.

Young leaders developed new skills for critical thinking, conflict resolution and facilitation. They also found support in one another, one young woman stated that ‘we are walking together, supporting one another’.

Improving wellbeing and personal resilience
Young leaders experienced significant improvements in their personal wellbeing. In 2016, 99 out of 114 young people reported they had increased their confidence in themselves and 89 of them were making plans for their future. This is compared to 106 people (93%) reporting feeling stressed on a regular basis in 2013.

Acceptance of the use of violence had fallen by 85 per cent and 67 per cent felt they could now control their anger and apply non-violent approaches instead. We believe these coping mechanisms will help reduce the factors that limit a young person’s development.

Working with peers and the community
The young leaders trained 540 young people in the Change the Game methodology and reached over 16,000 other young people and community members through festivals. These events reached across five different ethnic groups with 59 per cent of people claiming they helped reduce stigma.

The festivals also provided young people with rare access to a safe space. Combined with the wider awareness raising and advocacy gains, 63 per cent of young people believe their community has improved in the last five years and 80 per cent feel safer.

Transforming family relationships
In 2013, 89 per cent of young people reported they had experienced violence in the last 6 months. This violence often happened in the home. Based on this information we supported 383 parents through the Crianza con Cariño programme (Raising Children with Love and Tenderness). The programme nurtures understanding of young people’s needs and values and develops new skills to reduce negative parenting behaviours.

Parents reported they now have increased self-esteem and confidence in their parenting skills. 67 per cent of parents now use non-violent techniques to reduce the risk of violence in the home. Because of such changes, over 90 per cent of young people now feel more supported by their families.

Changing the Environment
In 2013, only 2 per cent of young people had any engagement with local government. We supported 300 young champions to work with their local authorities to push for change. Their efforts secured 13 safe youth spaces and two local authorities have guaranteed youth representation. The youth advocates further influenced the creation of four youth policies. 73 per cent of these young people now report that decision makers listen to their opinions.

Few schools offer a safe and engaging environment for young people. We trained 1,069 teachers in the Change the Game Methodology and supported 6 schools to create anti-bullying policies. 72 per cent of teachers have integrated new approaches into their teaching and 69 per cent report that students are now more engaged with school.
What changed?

- Over 16,000 young people and community members reached.
- 92% of young people feel better supported by their families.
- 60% fewer incidences of violence being experienced by young people in the last 6 months.
- 97% rate the project as being good or very good.
- Acceptance of violence amongst young people has reduced by 85%.
- 59% of young people report a reduction in stigma.

What next?

We worked with five different ethnic groups in this project and understand that indigenous groups in Guatemala face high levels of institutionalised racism and discrimination. In future projects, we will integrate the idea of ‘buen vivir’ the collective good life that is intrinsic to many indigenous groups of Guatemala. This will help guarantee the needs, traditions, and culture of indigenous groups are at the centre of all we do and help challenge discrimination.

Some young leaders have been able to use their new skills to help access work, such as coordinating sports and games in schools. We would, however, like to ensure that future work includes a stronger enterprise and employability component to increase young people’s skills, assets, and networks to improve economic resilience.

The young leaders made significant progress in building their relationships with decision makers.

However, it took time to build up the relationships and create influence. Future work should continue to build the capacity of young advocates through continual training and coaching and strengthen relationships with local decision makers.

Teachers and school bodies were positive about the impact of the Change the Game Methodology on their work and their students’ engagement and some free schools have already integrated the approach into their curriculum. Future work should develop the relationship with the Ministry of Education and lobby for the institutionalisation of the approach into the curriculum.
Stories of change

“Many things need to change in my community but I know the young people we’ve reached will start this change. They will show others how to change. Sport is our weapon to fight violence, it is helping each person to be better.”

Carmen, 19, Female, Quetzal City

“My mind becomes clear when I take part in the activities. I’ve been able to share a lot and have realised the damage that machismo can have in school. Though it can be challenging to change someone’s behaviour, it’s important that I try.”

Andres, 15, Male, Guatemala City

“Now I run workshops at my school and in my community. I love seeing the children smile when we go out stilt walking and knowing that I’m helping them. I’m getting to know more people in my community and realise that I’m not working alone.”

Carlos, 15, Male, Peronia

“Before, I spent a lot of time alone but I understand now that there are many people who will help you in your life, give you support and you can help them too! I am capable of achieving so many things that I never thought possible.”

Maria, 15, Female, Quetzal City

Project dashboard: Change the Game: engaging marginalised young people through sport and play in Guatemala

Goal
Inclusion of vulnerable young women and young men into Guatemalan society.

Implementing partners:
Young Men’s Christian Association of Guatemala, Caja Lúdica, Peronia Adolescente

Funders:
Comic Relief

Duration:
February 2013-January 2016

Cost:
£ 318,051

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Y Care International creates opportunities for vulnerable young people across the globe to change their lives for the better. Inspired by and faithful to our Christian values, we work with people of all faiths and none to build a more just world, free from poverty.