



## SUCCESS STORY

# Painting Peace in Ciudad Arce

**USAID SolucionES Project provides youth with tools to become positive community leaders who make a difference.**



Photo: Loyda Salazar, FUNDE, 2014

***“Thanks to SolucionES we are now working on bringing peace to our communities.”***

—Xiomara Blanco, 17, youth leader from Ciudad Arce

The SolucionES Project helps communities in El Salvador unite and develop adult and youth leaders, an important element to stop violence from spreading and start promoting peaceful coexistence. To do this, SolucionES carries out leadership training for youth to improve their communication skills, project management, human rights, and other areas.

As a requirement for graduation, SolucionES asked the youth to design and carry out a project. So a group of 13 youth from Ciudad Arce, one of the SolucionES partner municipalities, decided to paint expressions of peace around their community center in Zapotitan, a rural community in Ciudad Arce.

The activity’s goal was to promote a peace culture among the inhabitants of Zapotitan, one of the communities with a high index of violence and crime. More than 100 people participated in painting murals with positive messages, making a call for peaceful coexistence. This activity generated citizen involvement and helped create a sense of belonging to a group.

“It gives me so much pride to see our youngsters focused on activities that promote peace in our communities,” says Hector Rodriguez, city council member in Ciudad Arce.

Ricardo Monroy, a representative of the village development association, encouraged participants to keep implementing these initiatives: “As a community organization, we enthusiastically support and participate in these efforts because together we can contribute to the development of our country and our community.”

Xiomara Blanco, 17, is one of the leaders trained by SolucionES and a key organizer of the event. “We appreciate the support of all the institutions. They have shown us they believe in us as young leaders of Ciudad Arce. We are now working to organize more cultural activities in our communities,” she says.

This group of leaders is making sure they make a difference because they do not want their lives to be dominated forever by violence. Together, they are painting a bright new future of peace for Ciudad Arce.

### Telling Our Story

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