

ACTIVITY REPORT – FULL VERSION

- a. Name of organization:** Corporación Orquesta Filarmónica de Medellín
- b. Project name:** Coro Reconciliación 2021
- c. Code Number:** 20-A-193
- d. Project periods:** April, 2021 to March, 2022
- e. Aim of the project:**

The purpose of the project is to promote joint work, peace and cooperation between former members from insurgent armed groups and victims of the country's armed conflict through a joint community choir, to set an example for peaceful coexistence amidst a heavily divided country. It has been proven that choral singing processes accelerates social cohesion and develops a sense of mutual trust and reciprocity among strangers. This initiative is an effort to simultaneously incentivize dialogue and teamwork towards a common goal among victims and victimaries of the Colombian armed conflict through choral music, granting its members conflict resolution tools. It also serves as a visibility platform at a regional and national level in order to reduce negative preconceptions towards reincorporated populations, improving their prospects of professional, financial and social reincorporation in society and reducing recidivism.

f. Implemented activity, and its method

The activities of Coro Reconciliación 2021 consisted of weekly choir rehearsals for former guerrilla members and victims of Colombia's armed conflict, where all choir members had the opportunity to work on breathing, vocal technique, and ensemble work. Throughout these rehearsals, choir members learned and practiced new repertoire. Through this focus in ensemble work and joint practice towards a common goal, the work of Coro Reconciliación resignifies the relationships between choir members, creating a spirit of collaboration, unity and comraderie.

At the end of the year, the choir is generally joined by Medellín's Philharmonic Orchestra for a final concert in December. In 2021, however, the choir had the opportunity to offer two performances: one in September, for the UN's celebration of the International Day of Peace, and its traditional concert in December, where Christmas music brings the choir, orchestra and audience together in a collective singalong. The visibility of these concerts and their subsequent news coverage works to increase the trust towards reincorporated populations, enabling the creation of an environment of mutual trust and support among these members as well as their families.

g. General Process about implemented activity

At the beginning of 2021, Orquesta Filarmónica de Medellín was allowed to use the City of Medellín's CEPAR Centro de Formación para la Paz y la Reconciliación (Center of education for Peace and Reconciliation) to hold the choir's rehearsals. With this authorization, the choir was informed of the return to in-person activities, which were resumed in February. In April, however, a rise in COVID cases forced the choir to go back to virtual encounters to adhere to biosecurity measures. In May, live rehearsals were gradually resumed. However, the age and health conditions of some of the members forced them to stay at home. Attendance levels to rehearsal grew at a slow pace given the apprehension of its members and slow rate of vaccinations in Colombia in the first half of 2021. Peak attendance numbers were achieved in August through December, given the prospect of the performance at the UN's celebration in September, and the final end-of-year performance.

Rehearsals were divided in three parts: a physical warm-up, where participants performed breathing exercises and body stretches to release any and all tension to begin singing with a relaxed voice and

disposition. After this activity and with a heightened conscience about the state of mind and body's sensation, the rehearsal focused on the voice: singing scales, syllables, glissando notes and other exercises to improve projection and intonation. Lastly, after a brief introductory reflection on the pieces, the choir would begin practicing the songs chosen for that specific date.

Every single rehearsal was accompanied by a member of Filarmed's administrative staff to ensure all technical and additional performance needs were met, and so both the choir and conductor felt a better cohesion with the organization.

The final rehearsals before the December concert were held at the orchestra's rehearsal space in Palermo Cultural during the morning hours, and the dress rehearsal was held on the same day of the concert in the afternoon. The concert took place at the Teatro Universidad de Medellín and was attended by 300 people.

h. Achievement

2021 was a definite rebirth of the choir after a full year of virtual activities. Despite the initial hesitance of members due to the COVID19 pandemic, there was a re-consolidation of the ensemble, and a renewed interest on behalf of the press and general audience in its activities throughout the year. This was evidenced by the media coverage received by the choir in this period: it was featured 11 times on the press: 6 times on electronic media, 2 times in printed press, 3 times on the radio and once on television. Additionally, the concert was featured in the UN's celebration of the International Day of Peace in September 21, which was attended by 400 people, and the final end-of-year concert was attended by 300 people. High attendance numbers considering venue capacity restrictions and attendance trends at a time where COVID cases were still a great concern for the city.

This choir is a tangible proof of the way in which music can contribute to a person and a community's transformation and become a vehicle for peace. Besides giving these members the opportunity to sing as part of a group, it has given them the possibility of belonging to a collective, and to gain a new self-perception of their relation with others and their community.







i. Future tasks

While in-person rehearsals and concerts brought a renewed interest to current choir members, some members who began with the choir in 2019 stopped participating, due to work commitments and health conditions. Therefore, Filarmed will recruit new choir members with the support of its partner organizations: the Agency for Reconciliation and Normalization (ARN) and the Victim's Unit (UV). Additionally, the current electoral climate in the country, have triggered some tensions among choir members, allowing Filarmed the opportunity to identify the need to hold and mediate open conversations and find new avenues for coexistence among political differences.