



The power of music for connecting young people globally

Written by [Dr. Edwar Calderón](#)

Music can overcome violence and marginalization. The language of music is able to transcend physical and non-tangible barriers to connect people including those at the urban margins. Co-created music during our project [¿Cuál es la verdad?](#) not only allowed us to understand and to disclose local realities of the group of young people involved in the project but to stimulate connectivity with peer young fellows locally and internationally. Our experience in Quibdó, Colombia has shown us that music is able to break down some of the invisible frontiers between neighbourhoods in conflict. Through music, young people in Quibdó have discovered a common channel of communication in an accessible language to express their emotions, fears, and hopes. Writing, producing and performing music collaboratively has enabled a strong sense of connectivity and better understanding of each other. In [¿Cuál es la verdad?](#), the final co-produced music theme [“La Verdad”](#) reaffirms the desire of young vulnerable people to overcome marginal-induced conditions and to be seen and heard.

In our previous project, [The Three Rs of Peace](#), when more than 60 young people -from around 7 neighbourhoods that never imagined being able to gather together due to gangs' territorial disputes- in one voice sang loudly in the streets of Quibdó lyrics such as: “mi barrio es tú barrio; mi calle es tu calle! ¿Por qué? Porque en Quibdó todos somos hermanos!” (“my neighbourhood is your neighbourhood; my street is your street! Why? Because in Quibdó we all are brothers!”), we began to understand that music in one way (or perhaps is it the way in this context?) for togetherness, and deconstruction of collective imaginaries of violence and peacebuilding.

Recently, we took a challenge: connecting marginalised young people in Colombia with peer young people in the UK. The challenge was not only geographical but linguistic. Amazingly, again, music showed us that such barriers are not obstacles to connect young populations. In this way, the La Verdad song, of which the original version was produced by our partner, Colombian music group Mr Klaje, in Spanish, has been extended to include an interwoven English version from [World Heart Beat](#) musicians in London. A virtual performance was produced in collaboration between Mr Klaje and the [World Heart Beat Music Academy](#) (1), as part of [World Make Music Day](#)- the world's largest, annual music event on 21 June. It is the UK's largest single-day music festival, encouraging musicians, producers, promoters and music lovers to collaborate and organise in-person and online performances in, with and for their communities. Since beginning as Fête de la Musique in France in 1982, Make Music Day has grown into a global phenomenon that takes place annually in 125 countries.

According to Sahana Gero, Founder and Creative Director, [World Heart Beat Music Academy](#),

“the collaboration between musicians from two different sides of the world, many of whom live in challenging circumstances, was an opportunity to work together virtually resulting in an energetic and unified version of La Verdad”

The enriching experience of both organisations left an expectation of working together again on future collaborations to help young people unite and find positivity and meaning through music learning and education. Gero continues,

“La Verdad project helped generate dialogue and interest and a sense of collaboration, unity and awareness of each organisation across the globe. It gave the opportunity for young musicians to come together, despite their physical separation, through the language of music with harmonious and uplifting results”

Ultimately, music has the power, for young populations immersed in violence, to connect and together be able to Change their Stories!

References

(1) Award-winning World Heart Beat Music Academy, based in Wandsworth, London envisions a world where non-selective, richly diverse music programmes are accessible to everyone. “We know that music education can be a powerful tool for positive change for young people, their families and their communities.” World Heart Beat provides high-quality music education and fulfilling personal development opportunities to over 370 children and young people each week, many of whom are from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds. The young musicians take part in a rich programme of early grass roots through to early career level music opportunities, as well as workshops with schools and community groups, and performances at local festivals and music venues – all of which provides a vital lifeline and sense of self-worth, purpose and achievement. For further information, please visit www.worldheartbeat.org

TAGS: CO-PRODUCTION COLOMBIA MUSIC PARTICIPATORY ARTS QUIBDÓ YOUTH

