

Peace Education Comes to Ecuador



Paul Murtha, Ecuadorian Director of the [Vibrant Village Foundation](#), sat down with Linda Hurst, a TPRF volunteer visiting Peru, and talked about his involvement with the evolution of PEP in Ecuador. Paul was instrumental in putting together an event with Prem Rawat in Ibarra called, “Latin American Launch of the [Peace Education Program](#).”

LH: Please tell us how the event with Prem Rawat in Ibarra, Ecuador, came to be titled, “The Latin American Launch of the PEP program?”

PM: A succession of events led up to the launch of PEP in Ibarra. Monthly public programs over the past year introduced Prem Rawat’s message of peace. Over five hundred citizens from Ibarra, a majority being teachers and administrators from the educational community, attended these intro events.



Interest in the message of peace began to grow in the community, even to the point where some of the teachers began arranging events and inviting me to show videos. With the awareness of PEP growing as a possible means to learn more about the message, twenty-five people signed up to participate in the new PEP curriculum as soon as it became available in Spanish American. All of this activity inspired me to title the event in Ibarra, “The Latin American Launch of the PEP program.”

Now there is a strong interest in applying PEP across the community. The format of the Peace Education Program lends itself to use by a diversity of groups in educational, health, and retirement communities, for example. Since the curriculum has become available in Spanish American, the original group of twenty-five participants is on week five of the ten-week program. They were so enthusiastic that they helped set up and staff the special launch event with [Prem Rawat](#).

LH: The Ibarra event featured the collaboration of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. How did this special involvement develop?

PM: I was invited to a workshop with Dr. Augusto Espinosa, who was at that time the Director of the Ministry of Knowledge and Human Talent. He gave a wonderful presentation, speaking about the importance of having a true source of inner contentment as a foundation in one’s life.

I was quite taken to hear someone of Dr. Espinosa’s stature speaking in such simple terms. I was also touched to learn that the Ecuadorian government places vital importance on human dignity, referred to as “[Buen Vivir](#)” or good living.

Dr. Espinosa gave an example using a diagram of a triangle, each corner representing a value that an individual ideally holds. One corner represented the value “To have, in a good way.” The second corner represents the value “To do, in a good way.” And the third corner represents the value “To be, in a good way.” Dr. Espinosa made the point that we well know how “to have” and “to do,” but we don’t know how “to be.”

After the workshop, I showed Dr. Espinosa a [TPRE](#) kit focusing on the Peace Education Program. After briefly looking at the literature, he turned to me and said, “This is my dream.”

A few months later, Dr. Espinosa became the Minister of Education for Ecuador. Their interest in the PEP curriculum culminated in the Ministry’s co-sponsorship of the special forum event in Ibarra, “The Latin American Launch of the Peace Education Program.” Celine Andres, a talented and enthusiastic spokesperson for the Ministry, sat on the forum panel next to Prem Rawat.

The Ministry has expressed their interest in exploring the possibility of integrating the PEP program into teacher training on a national level. We do not know yet how this idea will play out, but I appreciate their acknowledgement that education about one’s inner resources needs to be a part of a well-rounded curriculum.

LH: How do you see the development and application of PEP in Ecuador?

PM: PEP has the flexibility to fit the needs of a variety of groups. In Ecuador, volunteer facilitators will present PEP to teachers, students, administrators, civic groups, even gang leaders. However, there is a need to help finance the PEP materials in Ecuador. The booklet and certificate will cost about \$10 per participant, which is prohibitive for many. It is possible we will ask for contributions. The PEP booklets that participants receive will be treasures to refer to throughout their lives.

The next step will be to prepare the facilitators. Preparation involves a one-hour training, studying the facilitator manual, and viewing all the materials and videos in the course. By the end of 2013, our vision is to have at least five hundred people in Ecuador complete the course.

This program is so heart felt. Two of the current PEP participants spoke with Prem Rawat at the Ibarra event. One of them said, “What I feel from this course is changing all aspects of my life.”

We see a wonderful future for PEP in Ecuador and hope to help establish models of participation that can benefit PEP in other parts of the world. This is a new platform and I am hoping, as Prem Rawat remarked, there will soon be a “wildfire” in Ecuador, a wildfire of those thirsting for peace in their lives.