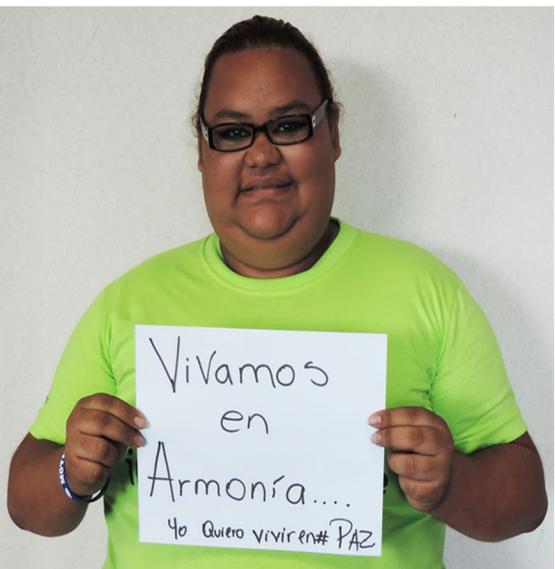
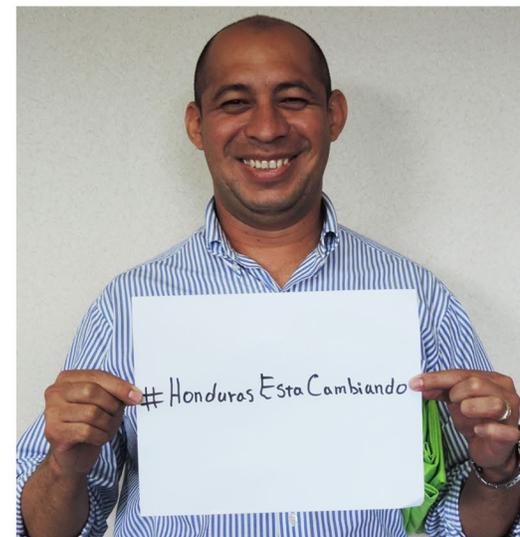
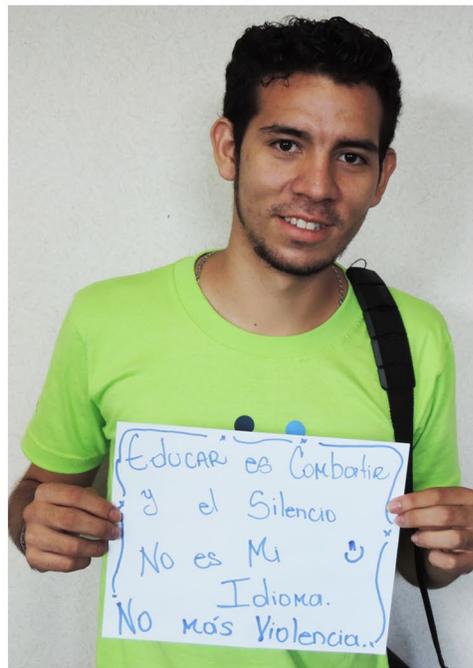
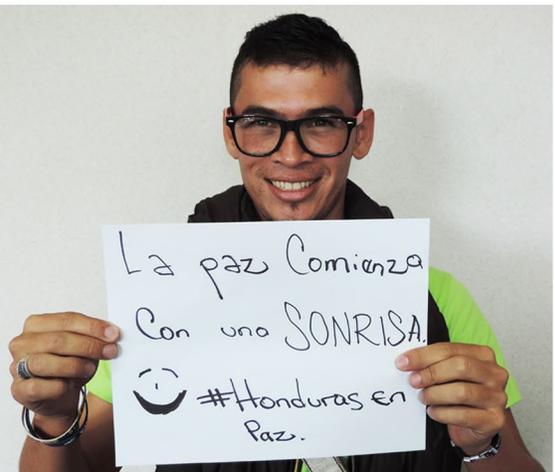
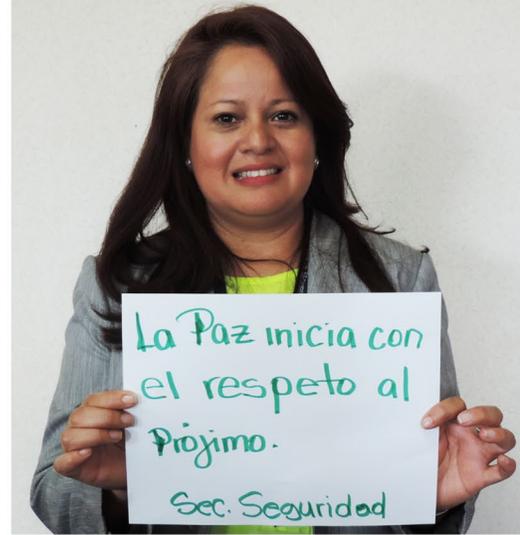


Sports Clubs for Peace



ii
interpeace

Members of Ultrafiel and Revolucionarios, with Government representatives, sending together a peace message for Peace Day

Sports Clubs for Peace

All Rights Reserved, Interpeace, 2014
Interpeace
Oficina Regional para América Latina
11 Avenida 14-75 zona 10
Guatemala, Guatemala, 01010
+502 2381 9700



With the support of



The Project

Youth as change makers in Honduras, Central America: sport clubs for peace

is supported by



Berghof Foundation

Photo Credits: Armando García for Interpeace.

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect those of the donor organizations. The ideas, reflexions, and commentaries contained herein are the exclusive responsibility of the authors. Total or partial reproduction is authorized provided attribution to the source document is properly acknowledged.

INTRODUCTION¹

From a world cup tournament to a friendly game in the middle of a street, football is the sport that brings together the largest number of people in the world. Its massive appeal – which, in addition to fans and players, is associated with large private investments, political interests, and a complex web of relationships among different levels of society – means that it is not limited to sports and becomes a social phenomenon. However, the place that football occupies and its impact depend on the general social context and the substance which society give it.

It is easy to observe that within the football phenomenon, for example, episodes of violence occur that range from conflicts linked to team preferences to those motivated by extreme nationalism and racism. In societies where social and institutional mechanisms are in place to reduce risk factors² that lead to violence, violent expressions surrounding football can erupt and die down within the stadium itself. But in societies where those mechanisms are absent, the violence that arises from the natural rivalry between two football teams can spill over the perimeter of the stadium and become a social problem.

How is it that groups that confront each other over rivalries between two teams (an apparently superficial cause) can become a battleground that polarizes large social groupings to the extent that the result can be homicidal violence? This is the question that, in the case of sports clubs (barras deportivas) in Honduras, requires an answer that will help to address one of the causes that underpins the generalized situation of violence that engulfs the country.

Sports clubs in Honduras are groups of young fans of a local football team that have moved on from a natural rivalry between their teams to violent

1. This document is based on a set of interviews held with members of the two main sports clubs in Honduras (Ultra Fiel and Revolucionarios) as well as other key actors involved in the process supported by Interpeace in that country.

2. We understand risk factors as “a set of circumstances in the environment that increase the possibilities that a person might be a victim of violence or may be involved in violent events. Risk factors are varied and operate at different levels.” (Interpeace, 2011).

confrontations in the streets. Violence between sports clubs evolved from fights and fisticuffs in the stadiums to open armed confrontations in their communities. Furthermore, the very characteristics of the social context and the levels of organization they developed led them to assume roles aimed at protecting their members. Among the most popular sports clubs are the “Ultra Fiel” linked to the Club Olimpia football team; the “Revolucionarios” of the Club Motagua team; the “Mega Barra” of the Real España team; and the “Furia Verde” of the Maratón team. To belong to a sports club in Honduras is a matter of assuming an identity, a way of life, and a search for spaces of cohesion that would otherwise be impossible to find.

If sports clubs ended up in violent confrontations, their collective nature and levels of organization are also opportunities for peace. This effort to transform that is involved is the process that Interpeace supports through the project called “Youth Leadership in Honduras: Sports Clubs for Peace” with funds from the Berghof Foundation. By means of a training programme to transform conflicts and build peace, Interpeace has contributed to reduce and prevent violence between the two main sports clubs in Honduras.

This document seeks to provide inputs for an understanding of the sports clubs phenomenon in Honduras and the nature of the conflict among them. We underscore that the problem must to be placed within a wider context in which multiple actors (private sector, sports teams, police, and government in general) influence, directly or indirectly, the current situation of the sports clubs in the country. This document also describes the potential for transforming the sports clubs, their willingness to reduce violence, and the necessary conditions so that the effort can be sustained and expanded into other social environments.



1. Football in Honduras

In order to understand the phenomenon of the sports clubs in Honduras, we must first understand the role of football as a social phenomenon in a country like Honduras.

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Latin America¹ and, at the same time, one of the most violent in the world according to the number of homicides registered annually. Democratization in Honduras did not have the same forward push that the rest of Central American countries expe-

1. According to data for 2013 from the World Bank, 64.5% of the population in the country lived in conditions of poverty. According to estimates from the National Statistics Institute of Honduras, of the 8.5 million people in the country, approximately 6 million live in conditions of poverty, of which 4.2 million live in conditions of extreme poverty. The percentage of homes in poverty is 66.5%, of which 20.5% live in relative poverty and 46% in extreme poverty. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras> <http://www.ine.gob.hn/index.php/mapas-de-pobreza>

rienced in the 1990s. On the contrary, the permanent weakness of Honduran public institutions is the result of a historical disinterest by the economic and political elites to establish a State that would guarantee a social order in support of development, democracy, and economic growth.

The country achieved the minimum level of institutional development needed to guarantee, either through force or political clienteles, the stability required by the international interests installed in the country: the US banana companies during the first half of the 20th century and counterinsurgency struggles supported by the United States and Central American elites against guerrilla groups in El Salvador and Guatemala as well as the anti-Sandinista struggle in Nicaragua.

The three countries that share borders with Honduras were involved in armed conflicts during the 1970s and 1980s. Given its position in the middle of the continent, Honduras has a long coast on the Caribbean that provides easy access to the Atlantic Ocean as well as an access to the Pacific Ocean that connects with the Pacific coasts of Nicaragua and El Salvador. The geostrategic position of Honduras and the political collaboration of its elites have turned the country into the location of important US military bases that are justified under objectives: first, counterinsurgency and then drug trafficking.

All of this induced a profound neglect by the Honduran state of its social commitments, and gave priority to the growth of a powerful armed force and a client network of political parties to share access and control of the government. The police was turned over to corrupt groupings as a mechanism to guarantee the stability of a political system based on clientele.

Within this context, while Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua moved in the direction of democratization in the 1990s that involved, among other things, reforms of the security systems in each country, in Honduras the army and the police did not experience similar changes in any appreciable amount.

The democratic fragility of Honduras was evidenced in 2009 when a military coup undermined the institutional order and sent the government off in a different direction with the support of the armed forces. This created social polarization in short order that has led, up the present, to violations of human rights and the reestablishment of the army as a fundamental actor in the institutional stability of the country, especially with regards to public security.

Poverty, social exclusion, and marginality are complemented, in turn, by crime, an increase in drug trafficking, and the sophisticated violence and criminal activities of the gangs (Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18), all of which make for an everyday life in Honduras that is permeated by fear, hopelessness, and mistrust regarding possible solutions to the aforementioned problems.

One of the consequences of this situation is emigration to the United States, which since the 1990s has been the principal goal of large population groups that seek work opportunities in that country that are absent in Honduras. Emigration was also stimulated by the destruction wrought on the entire country by hurricane Mitch in 1998. Remittances that result from emigration are one of the main sources of foreign exchange and represent about 15% of GDP.

Within this context, there is an event that creates illusions and hopes for Honduran society: football. Honduras is the only Central American country that has participated in three world cup football meets. This awakens a sense of national pride that is impossible to achieve through other cultural and social means. A study by the UNDP in 2010 determined that approximately 40% of young males were members of a sports team and another 40% did so on an informal basis but would like to belong to a team (Interpeace 2011). For Honduran society, football is a ninety minute break of happiness in the midst of decades of anomie.

1.1. Sports clubs in the 1990s

As in any other part of the world, sports clubs in Honduras were born out of a commitment to provide unconditional support for a football team. During decades, fans expressed their preferences within the physical limits of a stadium by means of song, fireworks, drums, trumpets, and flags that related to a given team. Rivalry did not go beyond shouts, insults, and sporadic fights in the stands.

This situation changed during the 1990s when the first sports clubs appeared that were inspired by the more aggressive South American clubs or influenced by other forms of youthful

association such as rock groups and even political organizations. This new variant of sports clubs substituted the more traditional previous form of expressing support for the teams and introduced a new dynamic: the levels of internal organization increased, local area groups linked to each sport club were set up in departments and municipalities, sponsors and other forms of income were sought, songs were formally adopted, and large-scale fireworks and banners were introduced. The sports clubs of the 1990s sought to extend their presence over the entire country and not just limit themselves to the department which their team represented. In other words, the sports clubs began a process to build a more strict and expanded identity that aimed to highlight the differences with the sports club of the rival team and with other forms of social organization.

Two of the most important sports clubs are the Ultra Fiel and the Revolucionarios. The Ultra Fiel sports club was established in 1990 in San Pedro Sula, in the department of Cortés, in order to support the Olimpia football club, which has existed since 1912. The Ultra Fiel sports club was heavily influenced by the aggressive Argentine and Chilean sports clubs. Their territorial organization is based on peñas (local groups) and micropeñas (smaller local groups) which act as representatives of the Ultra Fiel in

the entire country. Estimates place this sports club's country-wide membership at around 15,000 (Aguilar 2014). On the other side is the Revolucionarios sports club set up in 1998 in Tegucigalpa to support the Motagua football team which was founded in 1928.² The Revolucionarios sports club was organized by a small group of young people who were dissatisfied with the way in which the previous sports club supported their team. Some of the founding members were influenced by politically-active students from the National Autonomous University of Honduras. Estimates place membership in the Revolucionarios sports club at 11,000 organized in comandos and sub-comandos (local and sub-local groups) in the entire country (Aguilar 2014).

From their very origins, both sports clubs emphasized their differences under the mantle of the rivalry between the two football teams. Songs, stories, and other forms of loyalty in support of the team evolved into various forms of aggression, each more violent, against the rival sports club. As will be seen in the following pages, the factors that influenced the increase in aggression are varied. Nonetheless, violence between the sports clubs picked up within a context of a generalized increase in violence in the country and of more radical expressions of youthful associations, such as gangs. The 1990s were a decade of a worsening social, political, and economic context in the Central American region. Honduras was no exception and the sports clubs should be placed within that context in order to understand their radicalization.

2. The Motagua Sport Club took its name from the Motagua River that was part of disputed territory with Guatemala that led to troop mobilizations by both countries along their frontier region in 1928. The conflict originated as a result of large concession of land made by the government of Guatemala to the United Fruit Company. The concession was disputed by the Cuyamel Fruit Company which had lands to the east of the Motagua River in Honduras. The dispute boiled down to two governments which supported the claims of two transnational banana companies (Orozco 2001).



2. The sports clubs: a family and a space for freedom in contexts of marginality

In Honduras, sports clubs represent much more than a group that provides unconditional support for a given football team. To understand this situation one must take into account two factors: the social context and the voice of the members of the sports clubs.

Sports clubs in Honduras are made up mostly of young people who live in slums and poor and marginal communities where the lack of basic public services such as education, health, and recreation facilities are exacerbated by high levels of unemployment and emigration, especially to the United States. These are social environments where violence is a structural part of social relations, either at the family or individual levels or as a strategy to generate income through illegal activities.

This context is worsened due to the effects of trafficking in drugs, weapons, and people. The negative effect produced by these activities – consistent with organized crime in populations that are marginalized and socially excluded – is not direct. It is in these subsidiary activities of organized crime (drug pushing, contract killings, internal transport of small amounts of drugs) that groups in the population at large are able to find means of generating greater income than available in legally-sanctioned activities. This leads to struggles for available resources which are reflected in high levels of horizontal violence, that is, among members of the same social group.

However, marginality and social exclusion do not of themselves explain the emergence of youth groups nor the violence which they ex-

press, but are part of their context (Savenije 2009). These youth groups (gangs, student and sports clubs, rock groups or other forms of youth associations) represent in this context a mechanism of cohesion, identity, and solidarity that becomes stronger and more radical due, on the one hand, to the excessive violence expressed by other forms of association and social integration (schools and families) and, on the other, by the repressive actions undertaken by agents of the State (police).

For the young sports club members who have been interviewed, the club is understood as a family, a space in which interpersonal relations are woven together based on solidarity, comprehension, and mutual support. Participants in a focus group of young women members of one of the sports clubs agreed that the club provides the opportunity for finding friends and support in the face of a variety of personal problems. In fact, there are some outstanding members who, as founders and older members of the club, provide council and support in critical situations within families or workplaces.

The focus group with women who belong to one of the sports clubs provided information on some of the aspects of the role they play within the club. Participants expressed that, in comparison with the male members of the

clubs, the number of women participants is small. According to the participants, in general terms women do the same tasks as the men, for example participating in the organization of income-generating activities for the club, attendance at the football matches, preparation of banners, and cheering the team during matches. At the same time, women have limited opportunities of leading groups of women within a section of a sports club in a given locality. There have even been cases of women within national leaderships groups although this has provoked resistance by the rest of the leadership under control of men. The participation of women has been a constant since the inception of the sports clubs since some women formed part of the founding group of some of the sports clubs or their local expressions.

When discussing the issue of violence, women participants expressed that, as is the case with men, they are potential victims of aggression by other rival sports clubs as well as by gangs and security forces for the only reason of belonging to one of the clubs. When necessary at certain moments, they too must confront rival sports clubs in the same manner as the male members. Thus, women are also at risk of becoming aggressors and can easily fall into the same cycles of vengeance and hatred of which the men are participants.

For some of the women members, the sports club is the only space under protection that they have found in a social context where violence against women predominates, as much in the family itself as in the workplace, at school, and in public spaces in general. In this sense, the protection offered by the sports club provides a minimum of security for the women who belong to the group.

Sports clubs also provide a collective identity and, thereby, a strong sense of belonging. When asked about the motives for joining a sports club, those interviewed expressed a diversity of problems for which identity and belonging provide an answer. Among the main reasons that motivate joining a sports club, other than supporting the football team, the following stand out:

Family tradition. For many of those interviewed, a family member such as a father, mother or brother is a fan of one of the teams. These family members transmit a strong sense of support for a team, which does not mean that they belong necessarily to the sports club. For the young members of the sports clubs, the identity provided by support for a team coincided with a family tradition. Nonetheless, given the high levels of violence of the sports clubs, families tend to reject belonging to a club in

view of the danger involved and the high levels of social stigma and criminal activities associated with those groups.

Sentimental considerations. For some of the women members of sports clubs, joining was the result of a romantic involvement with a member of the club. Even if in some cases the romantic partner objects to the woman joining the club, this is due, according to people interviewed, to concerns for protecting her from violence and the risks involved in belonging to a club. However, one of the women interviewed told how after her romantic partner was murdered the sports club offered to admit her as a means of providing protection and support.

Protection. In contexts of high levels of violence and of diverse rival groupings, admittance to a sports club becomes a mechanism for protection. Some of those interviewed told about how the sports club was the best option to belong to a group when the other option was seeking admittance to a gang, even though both groupings are not necessarily exclusive. The information gleaned by the project that Interpeace supports reveals cases of gang members who are, at the same time because of their support for a given team, members of a sports club. Along similar lines, belonging to a sports club means protection by the group in the face of at-

tacks by members of a rival sports club that live in the same space.

A space to exercise freedom. For the young sports club members who were interviewed, the club provides an arena of liberty and solace from the multiple pressures they face on a daily basis. The stadium, according to those interviewed, is the place where they can do all those things that are not allowed in other social contexts. Shouting, singing, jumping, dancing, walking back as group from the stadium to their homes after a football match, and celebrating victory or lamenting a defeat are part of the group activities that allow for the release of pressures built up in the home, at the work place, and in public spaces. According to one of those interviewed, the sports club provides the space “to get even”, that is, for young people to get rid of all those social pressures that they are unable to express through other channels.

The majority of sports club members who were interviewed coincided in that the freedom they find in the club includes consumption of drugs and alcohol. Although there is no data to estimate the levels of consumption of drugs and alcohol among members of sports clubs, those interviewed stated that they have reached critical levels. This situation has worsened during the last years due to the fact that Honduran

territory has become important for drug traffickers since the 1990s. As a consequence, the growth of small-scale drug pushing and associated income influences directly the availability of drugs and weapons at low prices.

2.1. The social function of sports clubs

Why do sports clubs, which are associations of young people set up to support a football team, end up as a mechanism to deal collectively with precarious social situations generated by marginality and exclusion?

One of the leaders of the sports clubs explains the responsibility entailed in seeking solutions to social problems that affect the members of the club: the commitment by the leaders to seek out all forms of support for the members of the club responds to a relationship of solidarity based on the unconditional support for the football team. Among the principal concerns are requests for employment, some minimum form of income in response to unforeseen expenses such as funerals and illness, and education.³

3. However, during the meetings held as part of the project supported by Interpeace, many young sports clubs members have expressed that they see no immediate benefits accruing from education. On the contrary, since education is a medium-term process that requires an important investment in time and energy, they see in it an

According to those interviewed, violence and the loss of family members, romantic partners, and friends provides cohesion for the group and suggests that the group is there for those individuals affected by violence.

The sports clubs take advantage of the existence of a wide support network among their members. The leaders of the clubs bring them under their authority and are the ones that are always informed of the needs that are required by the membership.

The social function of the sports clubs in Honduras is the result of the overall precarious economic and social conditions in the country. It is no coincidence that other forms of youthful associations, such as gangs, also end up committed to the social protection of their members. This is the context in which income generated through illicit activities becomes one of the mechanisms that allow for a certain level of collective redistribution of resources.

There have been no formal attempts by other actors to support the employment and productive initiatives proposed by the sports clubs. Even though there have been some attempts by the private sector that belongs to the Chamber

obstacle to receiving quick income which, in a country like Honduras with its very high unemployment rate, is only possible by joining the informal sector or by illegal means.

of Commerce and Industry of Tegucigalpa and the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise to support microenterprise initiatives for members of the sports clubs, these are quite exceptional and have not responded to a plan in support of the club but to individual initiatives where the leadership has played a key role.

As opposed to other forms of social groupings that have ended up involved in organized criminal activities, for the sports clubs acquiring income is geared fundamentally towards the purchase of the necessary materials to spruce up the activities in support of the football team: cloth to make banners for the team, fireworks, transport to take the club members to the venue, drums etc. The sports clubs set aside the residual funds for the social protection of their members with the understanding that these expenditures will only occur in exceptional circumstances. Illicit activities to generate income occur on an individual basis. Some of those interviewed mentioned that within the sports clubs the sale of drugs in small quantities occurs in isolated cases and is not part of its organization nor of its activities. In fact, as will be described later, this is one of the principal reasons for conflict between the gangs and the sports clubs in Honduras, given that the gangs control important segments of the small-scale drug market and put pressure on the sports

clubs to engage in retail drug sales in a formal sense. At the same time, although illicit activities are undertaken on an individual basis, according to interviews held by Interpeace during the execution of the project, the number of club members who engage in them to guarantee some income – and take advantage of the club’s organization to do so – is significant

One aspect identified by those interviewed as fundamental when they seek social support from the sports club is the high level of stigma and association with criminal activities under which they are perceived. This fact means that, in addition to the high levels of repression which they experience, they face another obstacle when trying to enter the job market. A group of those interviewed told how, when applying for a job, the employer investigated their e-mail and the contents of their digital social networks. When the applicants turn out to be sports club members, they are automatically excluded from all possibility of getting the job as they are considered criminals and gang members.



3. From rivals in sport to enemies to the death: violence among sports clubs

Sports clubs exist in many places in the world imbued with high levels of passion, euphoria, and unconditional commitment. In fact, in some countries like the United Kingdom, Argentina, and Chile, sports and fan clubs (with country-specific names) have reached high levels of violence that have even led to the death of some of their members. In Honduras, the absence of specific data does not allow for an estimate of the real quantitative dimensions of violence among sports clubs. However, this does not belittle the fact that sports clubs in that country have reached high levels of violent activities in which the use of firearms has resulted in numerous fatalities.

The levels of violence reached by the sports clubs in Honduras can only be understood on the basis of the generalized context of violence under

which social relations develop there. While taking into account the limitations of official data, the number of homicides in the country is an indicator of a complex situation of violence. In 2011, estimates place the number of homicides at 7,104 as reported by the police, which translate into a homicide rate of 91.6 per 100,000 inhabitants. That year was the high point of an upward-pointing tendency that began in 2004 when the homicide rate was 31.9 per 100,000 inhabitants (OEA 2012).⁴ Even though these figures have tended to fall (in 2013 the estimated homicide rate was 79 per 100,000 inhabitants),

4. The homicide rate per hundred thousand inhabitants is used to make temporal and spatial comparisons in addition to being a reference point for a recurrence of homicides in a given place and time. In order to have a basic reference from which to compare, the World Health Organization figured that an annual rate higher than 10 homicides per hundred thousand inhabitants is considered an epidemic of violence.

the level remain consistently high in comparative terms (Aguilar 2014).

In general terms, violence plays a fundamental role as a unifying force of a given group. The construction of an enemy is incorporated into the group's identity and sense of belonging and is enhanced by an interminable circle of revenge and hatred. Once the natural rival – the rival team in this case – is converted into the enemy, the immediate causes that motivate violence (the theft of a banner, an insult, a street fight, and even an unfavourable final score in the game or the decisions by the referee) are only justifications for social pressures to be channelled through violence.

When asked, those interviewed about the origins of violence among sports clubs gave different opinions but coincided in that a random event, such as the theft of banner or a drum, started a circle of violence that increased to the extreme of homicide.

From fisticuffs, sticks, and stones, aggression turned into armed ambushes of groups of fans walking along the streets to their homes after a football match. For those interviewed, violence increased due to the easy access to firearms which, combined with the euphoria and the hostility towards the rival club, ended up with the death of a rival club member, which in turn led

to numerous incidents fuelled by hatred and vengeance.

Violence also overflowed from the physical dimensions of the stadium and invaded public spaces. Women sports club members relate how they were beaten and even knifed on the street when identified as simply belonging to the other sports club. One of those interviewed told about the manner in which his home was subjected to multiple attacks by members of the rival sports club during which the rest of his family was at risk of being hurt. For this club member, having seen his family, and especially his mother, at risk when the attack took place was sufficient reason to justify a cycle of vengeance against the members of the rival sports club.

A common practice is to fire against the buses that transport club members from the stadium to their homes. Since members of rival clubs might move to and from the same neighbourhood, fear of a possible attack is compensated by planning a preventive or even bigger attack.

In the absence of institutional non-violent mechanisms to break these cycles of vengeance and hatred, sports club members refined their violent actions to such a degree that they began to plan attacks and increase their firepower (by using heavy calibre weapons).

Another element identified by those interviewed is the influence that the conflict with the gangs has had in promoting a higher level of organization and aggressiveness. Similarly, police repression and heightened stigma that has fallen on the sports clubs has pushed them to resort to violence as a means of group defence. In view of the fact that unconditional commitment to the football team and to the sports club is a fundamental component of club identity and belonging, all its members are potential victims of aggression by the rival sports club as well as the gangs and the security forces. However, this does not mean that committing extreme violent acts is the general rule of the sports clubs. Members who were interviewed underlined that the use of weapons can be explained, on the one hand, due to the incapacity of the club to control the violent actions of all its members, especially when they occur in isolated communities where the national leadership lose their capacity to direct. On the other hand, those interviewed argued that the influence and infiltration by gang members in the sports clubs stimulates aggressiveness among their members.

3.1. From the stadium to the streets: the environments of violence among sports clubs

It is not possible to isolate the incidence of homicidal violence among sports clubs from the total

number of homicides in the country. Criminal statistics in the country are unable to pinpoint the causes of the conflicts that lead to homicide. This limitation is part of the incapacity of those institutions charged with investigating crime and handing down justice that leads to high levels of impunity. A number of reports denounce a variety of violent events that annually remain unsolved in Honduras, including attacks on journalists, violence over territorial control, aggressions against specific social groups (such as members of the sexual diversity community), attacks against human rights advocates, and those violent acts linked to illegal activities such as theft, kidnappings, retail drug sales, trafficking in weapons, drugs, and people, etc. Between 2003 and 2013, thirty-six journalists have been murdered. More than 90 people have been murdered up to 2013 due to conflicts over territory in the region of the Lower Aguán River. Between 2009 and 2013, it is estimated that more than 90 lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and intersexual (LGBTI) have been assassinated (HRW 2014).

Although violence among sports clubs began in the stadiums, it spread to the streets where it joined up with a wider context of increased criminality and violence in the country.

Violence in the stadium. The stadium is a defined space which, if not controlled, offers the ideal

backdrop for confrontation among rival groups. Similarly, a stadium offered the best conditions for the control of violence among sports clubs after strict security measures were put in place. In addition, there was a strong interest by the private sector to improve security in the stadium due to low public attendance.⁵

On the other hand, the streets, as public spaces, amplified the violence due to the lack of structural mechanisms to prevent violence and transform conflicts. The private sector's interest in improving security in the public sphere did not exert the same levels of pressure to improve security conditions as in the case of the stadium. One of the most violent episodes occurred in the Tiburcio Carías Andino national stadium in February 2014 when a member of one of the sports clubs was brutally beaten by a group of followers of the rival club. The incident received wide national and international media attention. As a result, security measures were implemented that included cordoning off the sports clubs in specific and separate areas of the grandstands so that the general public would not enter into direct contact

with members of the sports clubs. At the same time, an exit time from the stadium was designated for each of the sports clubs and security and inspection circles were implemented at the moment of entry into the stadium.

The interviewed sports club members agreed that, even though violence between sports clubs is a factor that through the media has influenced the low attendance at the stadium, people have stopped going due to the generalized poverty that puts costs beyond their reach. This includes the price of tickets to see the game for the whole family, transport costs, and food which is consumed inside the stadium. It is the high poverty levels in Honduras that don't allow families to go to the stadium.

Saúl Buezo Mazariegos, National Commissioner for Games and an expert in security at sporting events, explains that stadiums in Honduras were built in a time when no security regulations for sporting events were in place. The Tiburcio Carías Andino national stadium was built in 1948 with a capacity for 34,000 spectators. As the city grew, the stadium ended up surrounded by neighbourhoods and streets. Buezo explains that at present the stadium is not up the standards of the of the International Federation of Football Associations (FIFA). To this must be added the low budget assigned for maintenance and improve-

5. It is important to underline that the boards of directors of the football teams, in addition to violence between sports clubs, attribute the worsening perception among the population regarding sports events to the negativism of the news media.

<http://www.elheraldo.hn/zonadeportiva/591743-215/los-aficionados-les-dieron-la-espalda-a-los-clubes-de-honduras>

ment of the installations. He explains that one of the principal motivations for improving security at the stadium was the risk that FIFA might sanction the National Football Federation and forbid international meets in the stadium.

Even though a certain level of coordination exists between sports club members and the security forces, which included certain commitments by the sports clubs to comply with security regulations, these are limited and their implementation is not comprehensive. An example of this is the prohibition to sell alcoholic beverages within the stadium during matches, as requested by the sports clubs. Nonetheless, an informal market exists for such drinks in the stadium and, furthermore, liquor sales have spread outside the stadium, which increases the risk of conflict at the moment of entering or leaving the installations.

There exists a tension between the private interests that sponsor the football teams and the public interest expressed by the State. The National Commissioner for Sports explains that the stadium is a public installation, but the sport event is private, so that the responsibility for security within the stadium lies with the organizer of the event. This requires better coordination mechanisms between the security forces and the organizers of the sport event.

The sports club members that were interviewed agree that controls by the police and the army have contributed to reduce confrontations during football matches. However, no security forces specialized in prevention of violence during public events exists in the country. Those interviewed explained that the police and the army sent to the stadium are armed with heavy weapons and employ violent and repressive methods to handle the entrance and exit of the sports clubs. "They treat us like cattle," says a sports club member to describe graphically how the security forces close the access points which results in large crowds of sports club members that increase the risk of accidents, annoyance, and anger by the general public.

Better security measures and commitments by the sports clubs to comply with regulations have contributed to a reduction in violence in the stadiums. However, violence persists in the streets and gets mixed up with other conflicts in the communities among different groups that fight for control of territory and illegal markets. To this must be added the repressive policies employed by the security forces on the streets which are characterized by impunity and arbitrariness.

Violence on the street. The sports club members interviewed state that it is not possible to estimate the number of people killed by the con-

frontation between sports clubs. This situation is complicated by the fact that in only some cases is there certainty that the death was caused by members of the rival club. The members of sports clubs claim that in a context where personal and community disputes easily turn into fatal attacks, it is easy to understand that sports club members might be involved in violent situations that are not necessarily related to antagonisms between clubs. For those sports club members who were interviewed, it is true that club members engage in collective fights in which on many occasions firearms are used, some of them homemade, but it is not the collective objective of the club to engage in violent actions. For many of them the use of firearms is explained, in the first place, by the easy access to weapons that exists in the entire country and which is not exclusive to the sports clubs. In the second place, members of the sports clubs have acquired weapons because they live in environments with high levels of violence that, among other reasons, requires that they seek protection against aggression by gangs and other criminal groups. Armed attacks, they say, happen sporadically and are out of the control of the national leadership of the sports clubs.

Most of the violent incidents occur on the streets where sports club members walk to the stadiums or to their homes. Other incidents occur in isolated form as a result of vengeance or cycles of

violence. When subsumed in the wider context of violence and absence of mechanisms for prevention and transformation of conflicts, joining a sports club only becomes a justification to commit violent acts that the social and institutional context allows. Along these lines, aggression among sports club members is part of the perverse cycle of interpersonal violence that affects a majority of the Honduran population.

Sports clubs and gangs: coincidences and differences. There exists a strong tendency to equate sports clubs and gangs. The media bear a heavy responsibility when they equate sports clubs and gangs and consider that both groups deserve, at the hands of the State, to receive the same kind of repressive treatment (Interpeace 2011). Honduras is no exception to those countries where the media do more than inform about a criminal incident: they attribute causes and motives. In this manner they construct a dominant public discourse about the supposed causes of crime in a country and influence the political and security agenda of the government, which in turn influences the manner in which the security forces act against those so stigmatized.

Since gangs in Honduras came to be considered by the media as the cause of the majority of criminal acts in the country, any act of collective violence, especially if perpetrated by a group

of young people, is associated with gangs. At the same time, the media and the government authorities attribute, with no substantial basis, other criminal acts to the sports clubs (Interpeace 2011:67).

As a social phenomenon, both sports clubs and gangs originated out the need of large groups of young people to build forms of association among peers. Their radicalization and the set of social responsibilities acquired by the group (protection of the members, economic support) can be explained by the generalized context of social and economic precariousness as well as the absence of institutional mechanisms for transforming conflicts and preventing violence. However, differences between the two are fundamental, both for the members of each of the groups as well as manner in which they address the problem of violence. For those sports club members who were interviewed, a number of fundamental differences exist between sports clubs and gangs:

Collective identity. While the construction of a defined identity that emerges from the differences with rival groups is a common element among sports clubs and gangs, the identity of sports clubs is linked to an unconditional commitment with a football team and the cohesion of the group is maintained by the activities organized to raise funds for the spectacle in the stadium. In the case

of gangs, construction of an identity responds not only to belonging to a specific gang but to a set of more complex elements such as, for example, the defence of specific territory. In this case, the collective identity goes beyond the simple difference with the other group and seeks its destruction. While it is true that a rival sports club became an enemy, this does not mean that its destruction constitutes a part of the identity which the group has constructed. For those sports club members interviewed, the existence of a rival club is necessary since it is part of the football spectacle.

Objectives and ends. The primary objective of the sports club is to gather together the largest number of fans in order to support the football team. The football match is the only excuse that justifies calling on the membership to mobilize and express solidarity. According to those interviewed, it is not possible to conceive of the sports club without the existence of the football team and the schedule of games of the national league. The fact is that an external element (the football team) generates ties of solidarity among the members of the sports clubs.

Territory. For the sports clubs, neither territories nor wars to extend or defend them have been an objective nor a constituent part of their identity and their activities. There does exist an internal zeal to defend certain spaces as belonging to

the club within communities and neighbourhoods but this does not constitute a problem for the community as a whole, which is the case with gangs.

The club members interviewed explain that territory is a key aspect of their relationship with gangs. The majority of neighbourhoods and communities where club members live are disputed territories by gangs. In answer to the question if the sports clubs have sought to compete with gangs over territory, they respond that, in the first place, the struggle for territory is not an objective of the sport club and, secondly, the capacity to organize and operate of the sports club is significantly less than that of the gang. The need to define territory for gangs is in response to the control of a set of illicit activities and they are controlled by means of a disciplined organization and a capacity to exercise force and violence which the sports gangs do not possess. Those club members who were interviewed explained that, to the contrary, the members of the sports clubs must submit to the rules set down by the gangs in their territories.

Nonetheless, there have been cases, such as the community of Los Pinos in Tegucigalpa, where its seven sectors were divided up and placed under control of both gangs and members of sports clubs. The same occurred with some streets in the city of Choluteca, where one sports club prohibited members of the rival club to pass through.

Illicit activities. Illicit activities, such as theft and retail drug sales by members of the sports clubs, occur on an individual basis and are not linked to the activities of the club itself. In other words, the earnings that these activities generate are limited to the individual sphere of those who undertake them and form part of the wider scenario of crime in the country. In the case of gangs, illicit activities are undertaken for the benefit of the gang which tries to exercise control over them. Individual profit in this case is secondary to the collective earnings of the gang.

One of the conflictive elements between sports clubs and gangs is precisely the intention of the latter to link the sports clubs organically to the illicit activities that the gang controls. According to those interviewed, this situation is the main source of tension between both groups. The sports clubs have been victims of constant attacks by gangs that seek to avoid conflicts between sports clubs in the neighbourhoods because they interfere with the gang's activities and call attention of the security forces. In some cases, gangs have prevented certain local sports club members – belonging to peñas or comandos – from leaving the neighbourhood for the stadiums. In these cases, the sports clubs have no choice but to obey since gangs threaten death to any who disobey. One sports club member recounted how, after a conflict with gangs, the group he led tried to resist their pressure. The result was the assassination of eleven members of the sports club.

A photograph showing a shirtless man climbing a barbed wire fence. The fence is made of several strands of barbed wire, with the man standing on the top strand. To the left, a large flag with red, white, and blue sections is visible. The background is a clear blue sky with some white clouds. The title '4. Other players in the game: indirect actors of violence among sports clubs' is overlaid on the bottom part of the image in white text.

4. Other players in the game: indirect actors of violence among sports clubs

Through football it is possible to observe the interaction of diverse social actors, their interests, their positive or negative influence upon violence among sports clubs, and their transforming potential.

While violence among sports clubs constitutes one level of analysis of the problem, it is not the only one. In order to understand the complexity of the phenomenon, it is necessary to describe the role of other actors involved with the sports clubs and which, directly or indirectly, influence the levels of violence they experience.

4.1. The private sector

Sports teams are highly-profitable private businesses. Their owners and share-holders expect that they will attract the largest number

of sponsors and the attention of the media. As a business, a sports team is another link in a cycle of income generation where shareholders and owners invest in different areas of said cycle: some shareholders of the sports teams are simultaneously shareholders of media concerns and of the sponsoring companies. In this regard, the team is very interested that attendance at the stadium be as massive as possible since this will benefit the sponsoring brand and, at the same time, the event will grab the attention of the media which also benefits by increasing the number of consumers.

What role does the sports club play in this cycle? Those club members who were interviewed explain that even though the number of club members at a stadium represent about 60% of total attendance, neither the owners of the

teams nor the sponsors or the majority of players on the teams express any interest in the sports clubs, their activities, and the problems of violence, poverty, and social needs that their members face. Club members explain that even though they have attempted at different moments and by different means to engage the directors of the teams, up to now there has been no formal relationship. The only link between the directors of the teams and sports club members occurs when the teams hand out a certain number of passes to a game to be distributed among the club membership. The leaders of the sports clubs explain that this practice allows the poorer members to attend the matches. The manner in which these passes are distributed among the club members is decided by its leader.

For those club members who were interviewed, there is clear difference between their support for the team, which is disinterested and unconditional, and the attitudes of the owners and sponsors of the teams. "With or without violence they [the owners and sponsors] always come out ahead, that is all they are concerned about," says one of the sports club leaders.

The media, in turn, developed a reporting style in which the events of violence are part of the reporting about the sport event. The sports

club members explain that when violence occurs in the stadium, it is covered by the sports reporter. When violence erupts outside the stadium, it is the crime reporters who cover the incident and it is then that the sports clubs are associated with other violent events that they have nothing to do with. In this regard, as was explained above, the sports club members consider that the media have been principally responsible for stigmatizing them. "They only say negative things. If there is an episode of violence, no matter which, it will always be the fault of the sports clubs. If there is final match without violence, they don't even mention the sports clubs," explains one of the members. The overall perception of those members who were interviewed is that the media has increased its profit margins through reports on violence inserted in the sports pages.

Along similar lines, although information is insufficient, the majority of those interviewed mentioned the interest by different private security companies to take over security at the stadiums, which would increase the number of those who benefit privately from football.

The members of sports clubs consider that the indifference of the teams is detrimental given that the clubs are made up of loyal fans of the team, who attend all the games and enliven the

match with their activities; they contribute the passion that football awakens. However, given the enormous profit margins that a team produces for its shareholders, the sports club members state that they could help out the sports clubs to improve the social precariousness under which most of their members live. For the sports club members, instead of demanding repression, the teams should be most interested in promoting efforts to prevent violence that the very sports clubs support in light of the arguments put forth by the teams that attendance has declined due to the violence among sports clubs.

4.2. Government and security forces

As of some years ago, a number of government initiatives have aimed to incorporate the sports clubs in programmes for the prevention of violence. In February 2014, the President of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández, met at the national stadium with two of the main leaders of the sports clubs to announce the programme “Sport is prevention, stadiums without violence” that sought to create violence committees in the stadiums, including the installation of closed circuit television cameras. The meetings was attended also by presidents of football teams, former players, sports leaders, members of sports clubs, sport reporters, and high

government officials. The result of the meeting was a commitment by those present to work for the development of football within a peaceful environment. This meeting took place after a violent confrontation between sports clubs in which a member of one of them was brutally attacked by numerous members of the other.

In March 2014 the “Committee and cabinet to prevent violence for a better life” was set up to bring together efforts by the government, civil society, sport people, artists, journalists, community leaders, and mayors in support of sports, culture, and moral and spiritual values among children and youth in the whole country. The leaders of the two principal sports clubs in the country, the Ultra Fiel and the Revolucionarios, are part of this committee. As part of the ceremonies, both leaders signed an agreement to request that the National Football League of Honduras (LINAH) stop the sale of alcoholic beverages in those spaces set aside for the sports clubs in the stadiums.

In July, the President of the Republic announced the programme “Breaking Down Barriers” aimed at young former gang members, members of the sports clubs, and individuals serving prison sentences. This initiative is implemented by the National Programme for Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Social Reinsertion (PNPRRS,

but known as PNP). According to the director of the PNP, Félix Alonzo, prevention of violence among sports clubs is one of the principal objectives of the PNP, which aims to strengthen youth organizations and groups, such as sports clubs, in order to consolidate peace and promote tolerance.

From the perspective of sports club members who were interviewed, they recognize that the PNP has implemented activities to engage and improve the situation of the clubs, but these are still limited and do not affect the root causes of the situation of precariousness in which most sports club members live.

For the sports club members who were interviewed, these actions have an important media and political impact. In their opinion, the problem is that after media coverage of these events and presentations, no concrete actions are forthcoming and, thus, the situation does not change significantly. The club members coincide that only two initiatives have materialized and produced immediate effects. The first was the prohibition of the sale of alcohol in the stands where the sports clubs are placed in the stadiums. The second was the coordination with the security forces before a football match that has led to a reduction of violence within the stadiums.

The sports club members believe that much work has still to be done, especially with regards to a change in attitudes by the security forces, that still consider sports club members as criminals or gang members. This change in attitude must extend beyond the confines of the stadiums and improve the conditions of security for the club members when they are on the streets.



Banners made by both clubs to celebrate Peace Day



5. Sports clubs for peace: an effort to transform

During the last years, the sports clubs have sought to identify different arenas and mechanisms to participate in processes aimed at the prevention of violence and the transformation of conflicts.

The first contacts between the sports clubs began in 2007 as part of the work of some local nongovernmental organizations. However, as mentioned by leaders of the Ultra Fiel and Revolucionarios sports clubs, these efforts were limited and short-lived.

The leaders of the sports clubs stated that the only moment in recent times when the sports clubs have agreed on a common objective was during the social protests that resulted from the military coup against the government in 2009. On this occasion, both sports clubs, in a spontaneous outpouring, marched together through the streets of Tegucigalpa demanding respect

for the institutional integrity of the state and for democracy.

For those sports club members who were interviewed, to seek and support peace and the reduction of violence has been a slow process but the results confirm the need to work for a change in the violent behaviour of the sports clubs. When asked about their motives to participate in the processes for the construction of peace, those interviewed agree that the extremes of violence that have been reached have placed sports club members in a situation of risk and vulnerability that is greater than that in which they found themselves socially. Criminalization and stigmatization have led the security forces to concentrate their repressive power on the members of the sports clubs. Furthermore, existing law proposals that would restrict the activities of the sports clubs have pushed them to seek significant transformations within the clubs. At

present, a “Law for the Prevention of Violence in the Stadiums of Honduras” is pending approval; this law contemplates a number of penal sanctions for those who engage in any kind of disturbance within a stadium. The law would also fine the organizers of sports meets if violence erupts among the fans present. This proposed law has been criticized because, according to the sports clubs and some social organizations, it tends to criminalize members of the sports clubs and opens the door for the introduction of private security companies during sport events.

5.1. Interpeace and sports clubs in Honduras

Contacts between the Ultra Fiel and Revolucionarios sports clubs and Interpeace began within the framework of a project called “Public Policies for the Prevention of Youth Violence (POL-JUVE) during 2007-2010 which was supported by the Centre for Research and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH). The implementation of this project in Honduras involved, as one of the key actors, the sports clubs as participants in a wide-reaching process that sought to devise proposals for a national youth policy in the country. As part of that project, members of both sports clubs participated in a variety of activities involving assessments, consultations, and dialogues with a number of Honduran so-

cial actors. One of the principal outcomes of these activities was the endorsement of a “National Policy for the Prevention of Violence among Children, Adolescents, and Young People.”

As a result of the above mentioned activities, representatives of the sports clubs participate in networks of youth organizations, both nationally and regionally, where they have had the opportunity to share with other organizations of young people in the Central American region and become acquainted with non-violent alternatives for conflict resolution. These networks, supported by the Interpeace Youth Programme, look to promote cohesion and dialogue among different networks of youth organizations in the Central American region and their influence among regional institutions in order to adopt comprehensive policies and strategies focused on the region’s youth.

5.2. Youth as change makers in Honduras: Sports Clubs for Peace

In February 2014, Interpeace initiated the project “Youth leadership in Honduras: sports clubs for peace” with the support of the Berghof Foundation. Under this project, Interpeace works to strengthen leadership capacities of the two principal sports clubs in the country, the Ultra Fiel and the Revolucionarios, to enable them

to address conflict in nonviolent and creative forms. In addition, Interpeace seeks to contribute to necessary social change from a positive perspective and the inclusion of the sports clubs as relevant actors in the construction of peace in Honduras. To achieve this objective, Interpeace has implemented a training programme in areas such as conflict transformation, peace culture, and mediation for young members of both sports clubs in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba, and Choluteca in order that the participants acquire the necessary tools to become agents for change towards nonviolence and peace in the country.

The training programme was designed under a participatory scheme so that the very same members of the sports clubs defined their training needs. As a result, five workshops were held to select a principal group of members of each sports club that would participate in the training. The workshops were held in four different localities selected by the sports club members. Another three workshops were held for the group of facilitators, followed by the implementation of the training plan that has included, up to now, six workshops on topics related to conflicts, violence, and peace. There have also been six similar workshops under the responsibility of the facilitators.

The work undertaken by Interpeace seeks to include all relevant actors in the processes that it supports. This includes establishing alliances with State institutions. In the case of Honduras, one of the needs identified by the sports clubs was to continue to broadcast the National Policy for the Prevention of Violence Against Children, Adolescents, and Youth.

According to the sports club members who were interviewed, the training processes not only have provided an opportunity to acquire new knowledge but, equally important, they are moments which enhance the internal cohesion of the group. While it is true that rivalries and hatreds between the two sports clubs still hinder joint activities, the possibility to mediate for conflict transformation has yielded positive results.

One of the more recent examples described as a moment of truth of the process by the sports club members who were interviewed took place during the last week of October of this year. The narrative of this incident underscores the potential for transformation of the sports clubs in the country, the role of Interpeace, and the positive effects of the training process in support of peace and conflict transformation.

The banner is defended with one's life

One of the most important symbols of the sports clubs is their banner. Banners can reach lengths of 200 metres and represent an investment of weeks and even months of work to produce. The colours, the mottos, and the symbols which they contain represent the fundamental values of the sports clubs and are exhibited with pride in the stadium in support of their team. "The banner is defended with one's life" is the expression used by sports club members to explain the importance that these have for the club.

Given the enormous value that a banner has for a sports club, one of the more provocative and aggressive actions is the theft of the banner by a rival club. Once stolen, the banner is exhibited upside down in the stadium by the rival club. The fights and aggressions involved in the theft of a banner include beatings and even shots that have left people injured and even dead. The loss of a banner is a symbol of humiliation and a provocation to employ violence.

A few days before the classic match between the Club Olimpia and the Club Motagua football teams that was held on October 26, a section of the biggest banner of one of the sports

clubs disappeared from the storeroom where it was being kept. Social networks served as channels to broadcast a number of suppositions that, almost automatically, singled out the rival sports club as the perpetrator of the theft. Declarations of war invaded the social networks that led the rival sports club to respond to the provocations by saying that there would be violence on the day of the football match given the seriousness of the supposed offense.

A police investigation was launched for the theft and destruction of the banner. Those involved in the sport event made known their concern about the possibility of confrontations on the day of the match. The leaders of both sports clubs were invited by the police to seek a solution to the problem and avoid violence. Thanks to dialogue and the first results of the investigation, both leaders established that the situation had originated from a misunderstanding that did not involve the rival sports club and, therefore, was not an act of aggression. Even though both leaders trusted that version of the events, the tension among the membership and the local leaders of both clubs continued to increase. In this context, both leaders agreed to turn to Interpeace to implement a fast-track mediation process between the leaders of both sports clubs to re-

solve, openly and non-violently, the conflict that still existed between the clubs.

After negotiating and agreeing to the necessary mechanisms to reduce tensions between the members of each sports club, the football match was held without any type of aggression or violence within the stadium. Aside from isolated acts of aggression on highways by members of one or the other club who acted out of the control of the national leadership, the match proceeded without violent incidents that, in another context, would not have been the case.

The leaders of the sports clubs who were interviewed agree that even though there is still a long road ahead to build trust among both groups, the example mentioned would not have been possible without the ongoing training and meeting process that, over the course of this year, has been carried out with both groups. If only sporadically, the media have underlined the tranquil nature of the football match; some media outlets even highlighted the colour and the enthusiasm that each sports club expressed for its football team.

The leaders of both clubs, in describing the event, claim that the week prior to the football match was the moment of truth for the results of the process in which they had participated over the current year. However, both agreed on the need to increase and expand the participation not only of other sports clubs but also of other relevant actors involved in the problem of violence among sports clubs.



#BarrasPorLaPaz

SEPTIEMBRE 21 DÍA DE LA PAZ



Fotografías tomadas el 18 de septiembre de 2014, en Tegucigalpa, Honduras, durante el foro #BarrasPorLaPaz, un encuentro entre miembros de las barras deportivas hondureñas Ultrafiel y Revolucionarios con representantes de medios de comunicación, gobierno e instancias deportivas.

El foro se llevó a cabo en el marco del proyecto "Protagonismo Juvenil en Honduras: barras deportivas por la paz", ejecutado por el programa juventud de Interpeace con el apoyo de la Fundación Berghof.



www.interpeace-lao.org

Interpeace, Oficina Regional para América latina
11 Avenida 15-15 zona 10, Guatemala, Guatemala, CA / +502 2381 9700



Postcard to celebrate Peace Day, with members of Ultra Fiel and Revolucionarios, Government and football league authorities.



6. Sports clubs and the challenges involved in building peace in Honduras

The sports clubs – a form of organization for youth in a general context of marginality and exclusion that became radicalized and assumed social functions for the group – is a window through which to observe the challenges that peace building imposes on Honduras. The principal expression of these challenges is the creation of conditions that are favourable for a reduction of violence, the strengthening of social cohesion, the social and political legitimacy of institutions, and the appropriation of processes of peace building by those actors who are directly involved.

In this sense, the potential for transformation of the sports clubs and their contribution to the processes of peace building and violence reduction still face important challenges.

Expansion and deepening of the process. As mentioned, the training process involving the sports clubs has shown that it is a useful resource both for acquiring new knowledge and tools for transforming conflicts and building peace and for providing opportunities to strengthen group cohesion, leadership legitimacy, and communication within the clubs as well as between them. The members of the sports clubs that have already experienced this process, agree on the need to extend this type of programme to other sports clubs (the Mega Barra and Furia Verde) that practice high levels of violence and influence the aggressive conduct of other sports clubs when they establish alliances in the midst of conflict.

In addition to its expansion, the process must also face the challenge of delving deeper, that

is, of improving the mechanisms for communication and dialogue among sports clubs, of strengthening the mediation mechanisms for the prevention of violent incidents, of learning to manage crises, and developing the capacity to provide nonviolent answers to them and interrupt the cycles of vengeance. Specifically, as their leaders say, the sports clubs need time and continuity of processes to overcome the challenge imposed by mistrust.

The political process with other key actors

The efforts by the sports clubs are insufficient if other actors, such as the police, the private sector, and the media do not contribute positively to transform – each from its specific sphere of action – the manner in which sports clubs are perceived by society. This involves a political process of dialogue and engagement that makes it clear that a reduction of violence results in benefits for everyone.

From the perspective of the members of the sports clubs who were interviewed, each of the key actors mentioned has a determining role to play in the reduction of violence and the transformation of conflict among the sports clubs. All depends on the willingness of these actors to overcome existing stigmatization and criminalization about the sports clubs and to begin a process of transformation regarding the importance that society attributes to the sports clubs as agents for change and peace building in Honduras.

References:

- Aguilar, I. (2014). *Hacia un nuevo campeonato*. En Revista de Aniversario, Interpeace.
- HRW 2014: *Informe Mundial. Capítulo Honduras*. Human Rights Watch.
- Organización de Estados Americanos – OEA (2012): *Información sobre Seguridad Ciudadana en las Américas*, Washington D.C.
- Orozco, M. (2001): *Conflictos fronterizos en América Central: Tendencias pasadas y sucesos actuales*. Buenos Aires: CRIES.