

Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) Latin America's Peace Designers seminar

Samuel Ota Linhares
May 25, 2020



In-soung Kwon, a youth missionary for Latin America, gave a speech

Before social distancing became necessary for safeguarding our health, Youth and Students for Peace offered a full-day seminar called "Peace Designers" that teaches service project planning to young people. Participants emerge with a fresh perspective on how they can promote sustainable peace and identify personal strengths and passions within themselves that they can use to help address problems present in their communities. The seminar takes students through step-by-step discussions and planning to make a project a reality within a team. At the end, they give a presentation on their project and have action steps ready for when they leave the seminar.

S!nergy (students x ideas x energy) is a type of presentation that IAYSP- Japan initiated. Students exhibit their projects and initiatives through s!nergy and distinguished leaders in society as well audience members vote on the most impressive concept and speech.

Our primary motivation for holding Peace Designer Online 2020 and S!nergy Online 2020 was to give joy to True Parents and make them proud of us through the activities and projects we as young people are carrying out in this age. We desired to help young people gain skills and experiences that will help them become pioneers of national restoration through their activities. We also wanted to raise awareness of Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) as an organization that is concerned with educating and supporting young people in the hope that they improve society.

Coming together in a safe space

Our theme for these programs was "Youth Who Take Action." Through these two online programs, which we held with the support of FFWPU-Latin America, CARP-Brazil and the Universal Peace Federation, we wished to inspire young people to develop a more collective consciousness and encourage them to develop solutions to society's problems. The best projects received a monetary prize as an incentive to implement those projects. Furthermore, we invited influential people to act as judges and in the hope that they connect with the young, public-minded contestants and perhaps take an interest in their projects.

We held the Peace Designer 2020 conference and S!nergy 2020 on May 9, 16, 23 and 25, completely online for the first time ever. More than four hundred young people subscribed to the event, from many Latin American countries, Europe and even Asia. The whole IAYSP leadership in Latin American countries cooperated for the success of the event, which included speeches by Rev. In-soung Kwon, a youth emissary for Latin America; Koji Matsuda, the IAYSP international president; and Jae-hyun Kim, the IAYSP international vice-president.

Connecting with each other and with True Parents

In the beginning, participants divided into eighty-four teams, and participated in the Peace Designer Workshop on May 9 and May 16, from 1:30 to 4:30 pm BRT (Brasília Time), enabling them to elaborate on their projects and the projects' expected social impact as well as on their entrepreneurship. On the first day, almost three hundred people connected through Zoom [cloud based video conferencing software],

while others watched through Facebook. All the lectures took place through Zoom in both the Portuguese and Spanish languages (with live broadcasting on IAYSP's Latin America's Facebook page). Interaction with and expressions of support for the groups came through WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, in addition to IAYSP-Latin America's official website.

The events were also able to bring together some young people who had become distant from Heavenly Parent's Holy Community, but who found in the Peace Designer program a way to bring their hearts back to the True Parents through the creation of projects that benefit others. In addition, about 30 percent of the participants were non-members, who also had a terrific chance to develop initiatives that can contribute to their community and thereby practice True Parents' teaching of living for the sake of others.



A large congregation On Saturday, May 23 at 1:30 pm (BRT), IAYSP Latin America (in connection with the Peace Designer Online workshop) held S!nergy Online. This was a precious opportunity for the participants to present their social entrepreneurship projects. Two hundred people attended the event directly through Zoom; more than two thousand users viewed S!nergy Online via Facebook. The event lasted more than six hours, and continued on Monday, May 25, at 10 am.

Overall, young people from eighteen countries attended the Peace Designer Online program—Brazil (165), Peru (52), Bolivia (35), Argentina (28), Nicaragua (22), Dominican Republic (20), Costa Rica (5), Panama (4), Uruguay (3), Colombia (3), Honduras (2) and one person each from South Korea, Paraguay, Portugal, France, Ecuador, Germany and Spain.

During s!nergy, thirty-one teams presented projects on Saturday and Monday and fifteen teams presented projects on other days, totaling forty- six social entrepreneurship initiatives. Among the projects presented were proposals for school gardens, financial education, the prevention of violence against women, beach cleaning, support for people suffering from COVID-19, education on healthy eating, recycling and support for the elderly.

On Monday, May 25, at 7 pm (BRT), we announced the winning projects. Among the evaluators were members of IAYSP Latin America, young peace ambassadors, university and high school educators (UPF peace ambassadors), and businesspeople.

The evaluation criteria

1) The project details -- its creativity, possibility of implementation, prospect of a social impact, possibility of application in the medium term, and low cost of implementation. 2) How widely popular it was; that is, how many "likes" it got on Facebook and how many times viewers shared it on Facebook and Instagram 3) How great a social impact it might have.

Eleven prominent figures in society took on the role of judges and selected twelve projects as winners. Each project received an incentive award worth approximately \$100.00. In addition, the IAYSP's Latin America Facebook page broadcast the events. The first day of the Peace Designer Online Seminar garnered more than 1,400 views, reaching about 3,200 people; the second day it reached 1,300 views and more than 2,600 users. Finally, s!nergy had over 2,500 views and reached 5,900 people.

IAYSP national leaders have committed to supporting Peace Designer participants in putting the winning projects into practice. Even those who did not win but wish to execute their projects will receive support from IAYSP Latin America in doing so.

Through this three-week online Peace Designer event, the purpose of IAYSP was realized: to empower young people to build a world of peace centered on true love.

Impressions from Participants

Cláudia Vieira: Undoubtedly, this S!nergy event was the biggest project about social entrepreneurship using a new platform, completely online and presenting so many projects at the same time. Seeing the engagement of youth is amazing, not only university students but also high school students, committed people with good ideas and with such creativity! During Peru's presentation, when they had technical problems, a group from Nicaragua offered to support them. The interaction that they created, the energy of everyone being connected with the same purpose and supporting one another was wonderful.

I was able to observe the growth of the event, and although we have a lot to improve on, now we have a standard. Because I believe you need references and there had definitely been none. My regards to the whole team that went to great lengths to make this possible, to everyone who supported it and mainly to President Samuel, because we have a person who had the idea and believed it would be possible, who orchestrated the teamwork from a distance. That was something audacious.

This process was like a school. I thank Heavenly Parent for this time and wish many blessings to IAYSP Latin America.

Martin Garcia: I thank Heavenly Parent and the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind for the opportunity to have participated in Peace Designer Online and S!nergy Online. I worked on the organizing committee. It was a great experience, both internally and externally. On the one hand, there were many interesting and innovative projects, which mainly sought to serve society and live for the sake of others, as True Parents taught us. In addition, it integrated people from many parts of Brazil and Latin America, allowing us to meet and interact with different people. Knowing that the Peace Designer program gave joy and motivation to many youth was incredible.

On the other hand, it was an unbelievable chance to learn even more about how to purify my motivation, because at any moment we are susceptible to tests, and it isn't always easy to recognize. I was able to feel both my foundation of faith and of substance (especially at the end) and clung to the concept of centralization. Finally, this was an offering to True Mother, for national restoration. So every moment I had to concentrate not to do my will in this activity but fulfill the God's will through my central figure.

Selena Teodoro: From the beginning, I was happy to participate in the organization of the event. With the present interruption of our church's activities, I was looking for ways to get involved in everything that was available online. I was even watching sermons from other countries. So when I had the chance to participate more actively and in an IAYSP project, which to me seems to be one of the closest organization to True Mother's heart, I felt this was an opportunity from Heavenly Parent for me to make an offering during this quarantine time.

At first I was a little stressed by the lack of time for planning and the slow pace of performing some tasks in my department. However, I tried to focus on doing my best, instead of worrying about it not being an ideal situation. In the way things were happening, I was able to learn internally and externally, and the results were positive and rewarding. From my point of view, although we tried hard, the result obtained is a product of heavenly fortune. I would say that our job was basically not to disturb Heavenly Parent's work.

At the end of the event, the atmosphere was light and everyone on the staff team was happy and felt a sense of accomplishment. The participants were happy and deeply committed to achieving their projects, which makes me think that individually we made good offerings, and these added together, can become a report of victory that will make True Mother happy and help her to maintain hope in Heavenly Latin America.