



VIOLENCE, SECURITY AND PEACE (VSP) NETWORK

VIRTUAL WORKSHOP

FINAL REPORT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
UN	United Nations
UKRI	United Kingdom Research and Innovation
GIGA	German Institute for Global and Area Studies.
FSFB	Fundación Santa Fe de Bogotá

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KEY POINTS

About the Violence, Security and Peace (VSP) Network

The VSP Network is a meeting point for civil society organisations, research centres, government entities, and populations affected by conflicts that lead the generation of knowledge in the areas of violence, security, and peace. It focuses on Latin America and the Caribbean region as part of the global south.

The VSP Network proposes a debate and in-depth examination of the relationship between trust, violence, security, and peace in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean. Resulting from this, the VSP Network hopes to offer recommendations on the construction, restoration, and sustainability of interpersonal and inter-institutional trust within violence prevention programs, security provision, and peacebuilding initiatives in the region.

About the relationship between violence and trust

Considering the ongoing nature of conflict and the diversity of violence patterns that accompany it, building trust requires:

- addressing the opacity of government action.
- discouraging the population from seeking justice by their own means.
- capitalising on experiences of reconstructing and interpreting violent events (e.g., the Truth Commission in Colombia).

About the relationship between security and trust

From a human security perspective where the law and order are only one component, building trust requires a strategy that:

- recognises the competition between state and non-state actors for citizen trust.
- reinforces citizen commitment to government security initiatives.
- demands a permanent adherence to democratic values that contrasts with the predominant militaristic approach.

About the relationship between peacebuilding and trust

Since peacebuilding is conceived as a process of social transformation and is multidimensional and multileveled in nature, establishing trust implies:

- a dedicated effort to rebuild social fabric, with a focus on the role of women.
- an integrated approach combining participatory processes enhancing role of non-governmental organisations, initiatives that guarantee security and human rights and endeavours addressing the roots of mutual distrust between the citizenry, armed actors, the state, and the mental health problems of the population involved.



About the VSP Network in the short and medium term

- the network is expected to have a major impact on violence prevention and security and peacebuilding policies in Latin America and the global south, with a focus on fostering citizen trust.
- it is recommended that the collaborative and inter-sectoral work carried out by the VSP Network aims at constructive and binding dialogue procedures that seek to change structural inertia.
- the work of the VSP network should focus on supporting actors in their daily commitments to violence prevention and the promotion of peace and security. The network's function is to provide these actors with advice on the (re)construction of the state and the rethinking of its leadership as a tool to generate and restore citizen trust.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first virtual workshop of the Violence, Security, and Peace (VSP) Network served as a platform for relaunching this intersectoral research enterprise, which has been in operation since 2018. After being introduced to the VSP network, workshop participants focused on a theoretical and conceptual discussion of the network's themes (Violence, Security, and Peace) and explored their relationship with building trust in the context of Latin American societies that have experienced social and armed conflicts in recent decades.

The discussion group on **Violence and Trust** argued that a more productive way to analyse violent settings is to trace the socio-historical dynamics that shape, in turn, dynamics of violence. This contrasts with traditional ways of examining violence in more categorical terms (e.g., gang violence, insurgent violence, cartel violence). Additionally, the boundaries between organisations, institutions, and individuals involved in the production of violence are fuzzy: cartels collaborate with state actors, states of emergency result in exceptional violence against the civilian population, and cooperation between local public forces and armed actors can result in substantive changes or transformations of governance structures, to name just a few modalities.

Due to this, the participants in this group recommended moving from examining violence as "conflict" to conceiving it as the analysis of "conflictuality", considering that the first approach implies establishing fixed boundaries that are not sufficiently illustrative of the experience lived by the protagonists of conflictual processes. The division between "a before" and "an after" the conflict are artificial or forced characterisations, while "conflictuality" allows for a continuous, relational, and ecological approach that allows understanding how a whole constellation of actors and forces emerges in a specific context. Recognising this complexity also serves to analyse not "violence" in the singular but "violences" given the infinity and variety of actors and relationships that shape the course of violent events.

Building trust in contexts of conflictuality that contain diverse violences faces multiple challenges. First, the opacity of state institutions can undermine or erode vertical trust, that is, the trust of citizens in the government agencies and entities that intervene upon them and through them. Second, experiences lived through conflictuality can generate new reasons for distrust (e.g., victimisation) and reinforce existing patterns of distrust through an amplifying mechanism (e.g., using armed actors to resolve personal grudges). Third, interventions aimed at facilitating violence reduction have the potential to foster the construction of interpersonal trust. Emerging organisations such as the Truth Commission (CEV) in Colombia after the 2016 Peace Agreement constitute an invaluable contribution to repairing trust relationships between citizens and trust of citizens towards state institutions.

The discussion group on **Security and Trust** defined security in terms of the level where it is generated and the domains it encompasses. First, because security depends on the context, analytical perspectives on security should consider a focus on the individual to understand how individuals in a specific context experience security. Second, although law and order continue to be the traditional pillars in the discussion on security, it is pertinent to start conceiving security from a rights protection, welfare, and access to basic public goods approach. This group



emphasised that security does not necessarily have positive connotations. Latin America is abundant in experiences of systematic human rights violations in the name of security provision.

For this group, the relationship between security and trust can be causal or correlational. It may be a causal relationship as public accordance with security measures adopted by state institutions can lead to an increase in citizen trust in them. But it can also be correlational, since the more competition in security provision there is among state and non-state violent actors, the more competition there is among them to obtain citizen trust. Similarly, the more the state promotes a greater adherence to democratic values by the military, the greater the trust in the state. Insistence on the adoption of militaristic approaches has led citizens to demand alternative, more human and more democratic sources of security. Finally, the group pointed out the need for a deeper reflection on the relationship between security and justice, as there is a potential interaction between them in explaining interpersonal and institutional trust.

The discussion group on **Peace and Trust** synthesised the following definition of peace: "Peace is an intersectional and transformative process that requires clear goals in the short, medium and long term. Peace is a physical, social, personal, state, organisational and intergenerational process (it is related to family trajectories and overall well-being in the future)." Building peace includes geographical aspects (rural and urban), each of which presents different challenges. For this group, peace is understood differently by different actors (for example, elites vs non-elites) and has multiple attributes: the (re)construction of trust, long-term accompaniment of some populations, and the resolution of structural problems in a given society. Therefore, peace is multidimensional and unfinished – it is constantly under construction. In that sense, gender considerations, procedural justice, non-repetition, and various scales (individual, family, group, social) come to the forefront. In this discussion, social capital takes a central place in terms of what is necessary to build peace and rebuild the social fabric of societies impacted by violence and insecurity.

For this group, actions and initiatives that can contribute both to peace and to building trust to varying degrees, depending on the particularities of the context, require: sustained activities over time, processes that articulate the participation of non-governmental organisations (especially when there are high levels of distrust in the state), security guarantees, and defence of human rights, explicit attention to rebuilding trust – especially after experiences with betrayals of trust – inclusive processes, and attention to emotions, feelings, and motives. Social dynamics that can undermine peace and trust-building include the non-compliance by state institutions, lack of trust and transparency, and at the interpersonal level, lack of knowledge and empathy towards the other.

Based on the discussions and explorations carried out by the discussion groups, the workshop ended with an outlook on the VSP Network's activity in the short and medium term. The network's impact on violence prevention alongside security and peace building policies in Latin America and the global south is projected to increase over time. The collaborative and intersectoral work carried out by the VSP Network aims to encourage constructive and binding dialogue procedures among its members to identify early accomplishments of the network. The network seeks to modify structural inertias by accompanying relevant actors during their efforts to prevent violence and build security and peace. The contribution that the VSP Network can



make consists in (re)building the state and rethinking its institutional leadership as a mechanism to re-establish citizen trust in it.



PREFACE

Omar D. Peña-Niño and Erin McFee, Investigators, Trust after Betrayal Project

LSE LACC This report presents the results of the **Virtual Workshop of the Trust and Peacebuilding Project of the AHRC-UKRI**, the first conversation between directors of violence prevention and peacebuilding programs and initiatives within the framework of the Violence, Security and Peace (VSP) Network. The workshop was held in Bogotá on June 21, 2022, and was supported by the School of Administration at the University of Los Andes (Colombia), the Latin America and Caribbean Centre (LACC) at LSE and the "Trust after Betrayal: Global Development Interventions in Fragile Contexts" project at the same university.

During the event, there was an exchange of knowledge and experiences on violence prevention, peacebuilding and security in regions affected by armed conflicts and in insecure rural/urban areas of Latin America, the Caribbean, and the global south in general. The workshop brought together academics, executives, and professionals from non-governmental organisations, public servants, program beneficiaries and ex-combatants who work as program and initiative managers in the field.

The workshop advanced in the construction of minimum consensuses on the most appropriate approaches to understanding the concepts of Violence, Security and Peace. The conversations explored the relationship between these concepts and the construction of trust as a key impact factor in intervention programs in conflict and post-conflict zones. The agreements reached with this workshop allow the VSP Network to articulate its work in the medium and long term. Through them, the VSP Network can more effectively impact discussions of public policy, programmes and initiatives for violence prevention, peacebuilding and security in its geographical regions of influence.

The organisers thank the valuable contributions made by participants in the plenary sessions and discussion groups (see list of attendees - appendix 1 - and project details - appendix 2) and commend their willingness to join forces to dynamise the work of the VSP Network. The results of this workshop allow identifying the first guidelines for the **First VSP Network Summit**, which will be held in May 2023 in Bogotá.

The summit next year is designated as a highly participatory global conversation in which the construction and restoration of trust will be established as a recognised success factor in violence prevention and peacebuilding and security programs and initiatives. Given the variety of collaborative networks with different scopes and dialogue dynamics, the VSP Network proposes itself as a more effective interlocutor to a) identify and connect with research centres in these areas that lead the production of knowledge with an emphasis on the global south and b) bring knowledge to public policy decisions in critical areas such as security, violence prevention and peacebuilding in the coming years.



01. BACKGROUND OF THE VSP NETWORK

Gareth Jones, Director, LSE LACC

The Violence, Security and Peace Network (VSP Network) began its activities in 2018 as a collaborative research alliance between the LSE Latin American and Caribbean Centre (LACC), the GIGA Institute for Latin America Studies, the Centre on Conflict, Development, and Peacebuilding (CCDP, Graduate Institute Geneva), and the Núcleo de Estudos da Violência at the University of São Paulo (NEV-USP).

The VSP Network addresses the need to integrate issues such as violence, security and peace, which are usually treated separately in academia, but overlap in practice and society. To fill this gap, the VSP Network aims to create an accessible language for people in the field to facilitate dialogue with them about the issues related to violence, peacebuilding and security. The VSP Network was also created to bring together the most representative European research centres on the subject, initially from London, Hamburg and Geneva, in order to create a research ecosystem where they could share their studies and strengthen academic collaboration ties.

During its first stage, until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, workshops on the themes of violence, security and peace with researchers from participating organisations were held in Bogotá (2018), and in Barcelona, São Paulo, San Salvador and London (2019). Likewise, the academic collaboration resulted in a special issue edited by Jenny Pearce and Carlos Mario Perea in the Journal of Peacebuilding (2019), to which some members of the network contributed with their research articles. A very important milestone for the VSP Network was the 2019 workshop in São Paulo on Governance, Crime and International Security that introduced Brazilian researchers and doctoral students to these research fields and to the areas of interest of the network.

The COVID-19 health emergency has had particularly severe consequences for the way civil society and donor organisations operate in terms of funding schemes and in the methodologies used to reach wider audiences. Despite the scarcity of resources, more cost-efficient ways of funding have emerged, which allow for better articulation and multi-sectoral dialogues despite the physical distance between participants. The AHRC (UKRI) scholarship invests in revitalising existing research networks that have accumulated initial knowledge and human capital with experience in analysing the problem of violence, security and peace. While taking advantage of capabilities acquired by the VSP Network to date, this investment also aims to redirect its efforts by increasing collaborations in the global south that will lead to greater influence on the modification of public policies.

The pandemic has also contributed to rethinking the priorities in global affairs and reconfiguring intervention programs to address post-pandemic social issues. Likewise, the pandemic provoked a modification of the approaches to the network's areas of interest, particularly in relation to building trust. This is an opportunity to reshape the purpose of the network and make it even more dynamic in responding to these global changes.

The first workshop of the network, within the framework of the AHRC-UKRI Trust and Peace Building project, consisted of a relaunch of the VSP Network. The workshop was used as a space



to formulate the first guidelines for a multisectoral summit that is expected to be held in Bogota in 2023. The summit is planned to focus on examining the relationships between trust building, violence prevention, and peace and security in the global south and to provide the network's beneficiaries with a series of recommendations to position trust building in local, regional, and national intervention programs.



02. METHODOLOGY

For the relaunch of the VSP Network, a virtual meeting was organised between managers and beneficiaries of programs and initiatives for the prevention of violence and the construction of peace and security. Participants belonged to the academic sector, civil society (executives and professionals), public sector (public servants) and people who were involved in legal and illegal armed organisations or were affected by them. 47 people attended, 24 women and 23 men, among participants (35, 17 women and 18 men), hosts (5 people from the Trust after Betrayal project), co-organisers (4 from GIGA and LSE-LACC) and collaborators (3). During this first session, the participation of executives and professionals from civil society organisations (16 people) predominated, followed by the academic sector (13) and the population affected by violence (6).

Academics and leaders from civil society organisations from Latin America and the Caribbean, China, the United States, and England were summoned, as well as beneficiaries from interventions in Latin American countries facing critical situations in terms of human rights violations (El Salvador, Brazil, and Mexico) or that are experiencing a reconfiguration of armed and social conflicts after the signing of peace agreements (Colombia).

After a contextualisation and background on the VSP Network by Professor Gareth Jones (Director LSE LACC), three discussion groups were organised: a) Violence and Trust, b) Security and Trust, and c) Peace and Trust. These groups addressed the proposed questions to clarify the concepts of violence, security, and peacebuilding (see Table 1). In the end, each discussion group focused on examining the interaction of building trust with their assigned concept, i.e., violence, security, or peacebuilding. In the plenary session, a representative from each group shared the agreements, central questions, and discussions that emerged in their respective conversation.

Finally, Professor Jenny Pearce presented some final reflections on the consensuses and debates presented in each group and proposed some recommendations to give a new dynamic to the work of the VSP Network in the future.



TABLE 1: PROGRAMME OF THE WORKSHOP

[Watch the workshop's Zoom broadcast](#)

<p>Opening (7:30 AM - 8:00 AM)</p>	<p>Welcome and opening address Gareth Jones, director LSE LACC</p> <p>Participant questions – (10 minutes)</p>
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Part One: Developing a Common Language

Parallel Discussion Groups

"Our Experience"

<p>Working session 1.1</p> <p>Focus Group on Violence and Trust</p> <p>(8:00 AM - 10:00 AM)</p> <p>Facilitator: Omar D. Peña-Niño</p>	<p>VIOLENCE (WAR VS. NON-WAR)</p> <p>To what extent is there a false dichotomy between violence in armed conflict and violence in a non-conflict context? What can we learn about this dichotomy when looking at the armed confrontations between irregular armed groups and the Venezuelan Armed Forces on the Colombian-Venezuelan border or from the coordination of armed actions between these groups in other cases? What are the current reconfiguration patterns of violence in urban contexts?</p> <p>The relationship between trust and violence prevention</p> <p>What is or could be the meaning of trust in violence prevention programs? What dimensions of trust can be considered and built in the context of violence prevention programmes? To what extent is trust a success factor in the analysis and evaluation of violence prevention programs?</p>
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<p>Working session 1.2</p> <p>Violence and Security Focus Group</p> <p>(8:00 AM - 10:00 AM)</p> <p>Facilitator: Alexandra Abello-Colak</p>	<p>SECURITY</p> <p>How to (re)define security in the recent resurgence of urban and rural violence? To what extent should current security approaches be redefined taking into account the so-called "new cold war" in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine? How to balance and ensure internal and external security simultaneously? What are the security challenges in the context of urban violence following peace processes? What lessons can be learned from urban conflicts after peace agreements (e.g., Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala) compared to urban conflicts in political transitions from dictatorship or hegemony to democracy (e.g. Chile, Brazil, Mexico)?</p>
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	<p>The relationship between trust and security</p> <p>What is or could be the meaning of trust in security programs? What dimensions of trust can be considered and built in the context of security programmes (e.g. in the relationship between police and citizens)? How much trust is a success factor in the analysis and evaluation of security programs?</p>
<p>Working session 1.3</p> <p>Discussion Group on Peace and Trust</p> <p>(8:00 AM - 10:00 AM)</p> <p>Facilitator: Erin McFee</p>	<p>PEACEBUILDING</p> <p>What meanings and interpretations emerge from various peacebuilding experiences and programmes? What are the consequences of these interpretations for the analysis and evaluation of programmes and initiatives implemented in peacebuilding? What kind of confusion and misunderstanding can arise when characterising the conflict of one country through the experience of another one with a different cultural context (e.g., "Colombianise," or "Mexicanise")? What are the implications of using these characterisations for the analysis and evaluation of peacebuilding programmes and initiatives?</p> <p>The relationship between trust and peacebuilding</p> <p>What is or could be the meaning of trust in peacebuilding programs? What dimensions of trust can be considered and built in the context of peacebuilding programmes? To what extent is trust a success factor in the analysis and evaluation of peacebuilding programs?</p>
<p>Break (10:00 AM – 10:15 AM)</p>	
<p>Plenary</p> <p>(10:15 AM - 11:30 AM)</p>	<p>Report of the discussion groups</p> <p>20 minutes per group</p>
<p>Summary and final comments</p> <p>(11:30 AM – 11:45 AM)</p>	<p>Key Topics Route to follow Date of the Summit Preliminary Evaluation of the Workshop</p> <p>Final Thoughts by Jenny Pearce, LSE LACC Research Professor</p>



03. VIOLENCE AND TRUST

Report by Alejandra Marín Buitrago, Research Consultant, Trust after Betrayal Project, LSE LACC

In the discussion group on Violence and Trust, the concept of violence in armed conflicts and non-conflict settings was explored. The difference between the two contexts was examined through the case of the Colombian-Venezuelan border and its diversity of conflicts. Based on this, wider implications for conflict analysis were discovered. Moreover, the reconfiguration of conflicts in the last decade in Latin America and the Caribbean was analysed, and the contexts in which the relationship between (prevention of) violence and trust can be observed were discussed.

The false dichotomy between armed conflict and non-armed conflict violence

The group believes that the various characterisations of violence, such as political violence, criminal violence, urban or rural violence, established to trace differences in reality have many points of convergence. Instead of exploring their similarities, divisions have been made. These similarities are well captured in the case of intervention programs for ex-combatants and populations from ordinary criminal violence. No matter the type of population in question, programs tend to have common elements or components. Similarly, the impacts tend to be similar regardless of the type of conflict that caused them. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the conflict in a more holistic and general way. These common points between the various forms in which violence manifests itself are better interpreted and understood when they are analysed from a historical perspective.

Another discussion revolved around the convenience of characterising the problem as *conflictuality* instead of conflict, to account for the continuity of the processes and not establish rigid boundaries between during-conflict and post-conflict or post-agreement, especially because the levels of violence tend to be similar regardless of the delimitation of supposed phases. The notion of conflictuality captures the problem better in that it captures multiple sources of conflict that occur simultaneously or overlap.

Understanding the phenomena of violence in a more flexible way also leads to questioning of the conventional idea that conflicts are caused by the absence of the state or because it disengages from the community by emphasising military approaches for it. The cases of Sinaloa in Mexico and Venezuela demonstrate that there is more complexity to consider in dealing with the role of the state. These cases show that the State allies itself or becomes part of criminal structures associated with drug trafficking. This is similar to armed capture dynamics of the state that have been found in the Colombian case, where there were dynamics of co-opted reconfiguration of the state, for example, as a result of alliances between the Armed Forces and criminal groups (Garay et. al, 2008). These dynamics would be impacting the growing distrust of the State that exists in Latin America and the Caribbean.

These Latin American cases are defined by fundamental questions regarding the scope of the conflict. The conflict cannot be pigeonholed into fixed concepts such as the exclusive confrontation with armed groups, like in the notion of a "war on drugs." In practice, there is a continuum of relationships between the state and criminal groups that range from direct conflict



to coordination and cooperation, with the possibility of transforming the state itself. Conflicts in the peripheral urban areas in Brazilian cities, where the state is largely absent, capture this complexity, as disputes between elites are dealt with through their own parallel private armies.

The plasticity of the Colombian-Venezuelan border conflict

The hybrid nature of conflict is embodied in confrontations within border contexts. In some areas of the Colombian-Venezuelan border (mainly in Arauca and Norte de Santander), there are patterns of coordination between criminal groups and the Venezuelan Armed Forces, and confrontations between them in other cases. The multiplicity of interactions and local conflicts gives rise to a dynamic space of detailed interests with changing conjunctures.

The dynamic reflects a great plasticity in the characterisation of conflict, which reinforces the idea that violence is converging. For example, in the Brazilian case, the multiplicity of interests flows between satisfying the objectives of the drug market, capital and generating violence by the state [to provide "security"]. This reinforces the idea of an absent state, not understood as lacking "militarisation", but as its absence in the provision of basic goods and services. In summary, the ambiguity and plasticity of the conflict ends up being associated with a general weakening of the state. The absence of the state promotes the formation of alliances between criminal groups, which cherish the state as a common enemy. The loss of legitimacy is reinforced even more as the state also forms alliances with some criminal groups.

Reconfiguration of violence and organisational innovations

In parallel to these new dynamics of conflict, other niches, or hotspots of conflictivity are emerging that create the impression of a reconfiguration of violence. At the local level, this was observed in Colombia in the context of the social tensions in 2018, 2019, and 2021. The marches and mobilisations, apart from representing essential social demands of the young, also consisted of new protagonists who demanded recognition as political subjects. In this topic, a discussion worth expanding is to what extent the emergence of these urban conflicts was facilitated by the signing of the peace agreement in Colombia in 2016.

At the general level, the state's hardline policies relate to the reconfiguration of criminal organisations, which, by forming more hierarchical coordination arrangements can reach the status of territorial governance schemes that are also characterized by strong paternalism. These patterns are already present in Venezuela and Brazil and in part in Colombia. Criminal organisations continue to be influential from prison, countering the effectiveness of mass detention policies implemented by the state – a situation observed in El Salvador's recent measures such as the state of exception in March 2022. Moreover, criminal organisations are already becoming involved in the country's infrastructure construction (Brazil). A topic that is being left aside in the understanding of these phenomena are the international ties that these organisations have been weaving over time and that can explain how they have developed organisational innovations that make them more sustainable.

New forms of vertical trust without abandoning horizontal trust

This group addressed the relationship between building trust and violence prevention initiatives. New ways of conceiving institutional or vertical trust were identified. In Colombia, for example,



there is a dynamic of distrust with transitional justice, especially with the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), which can't be ignored. This is a topic that can shed light on the building of trust with new institutions within the framework of the implementation of peace agreements.

Based on the experiences of Colombia and Venezuela, the role of women in building trust is highlighted. In initiatives supported by the local church, women have led the process of rebuilding the social fabric. This same pattern has been identified, for example, in the coordination that women, local authorities and the church have achieved in housing programs for areas affected by the conflict (e.g., the free housing program in El Salado). The Salvadoran case reveals that there is a loss of institutional trust in coordination between levels of government. The national government, by exercising its hegemony, hinders the work of local authorities with communities. At the end of the day, there may be a general loss of institutional trust.

However, there is still a need to foster interpersonal trust. Among the actors involved in the reintegration processes of the Sinaí Community in Mexico, it is important that empathy is fostered in the patient-counsel relationship as well as a trusting connection to the family. Trust in civil society organisations and trust in the family are also central aspects for young ex-offenders in San Salvador, much more than trust in state institutions (Workshop on Sharing Experiences between the Sinaí Community and Contexts, 2022).



04. SECURITY AND TRUST

Report by Alexandra Abello-Colak, Leverhulme Early Career Fellow, LSE LACC

In the discussion group on Security and Trust, the concept of security was explored, its relationship with the notion of trust was discussed, and steps to move forward on the VSP Network from this topic were reflected upon.

Security: a flexible concept

Based on the various roles and experiences of participants in this group, it was agreed that security is a controversial, flexible, and problematic concept, due to its abuse in the social contexts of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the stigmatisations and violations of rights that have been justified in its name. Regardless of the distortions it has suffered, security remains a necessary concept, as it is part of the individual's daily life, in interactions with the state, and in interpersonal relationships in the community to which the citizen belongs. Security is a necessary concept because it allows building expectations for the future and planning life projects, especially for young people.

The definition of security depends on the context. What we understand by security is marked by the scope in which the individual is located, i.e., the social actor that absorbs and attaches meaning to it, the objectives pursued with security, and the presence of power relations in the same context where security is sought to be understood. These power relations make control and order predominate as dimensions of security, contrary to a much broader notion of security that emerges from relationships with vulnerable communities and populations, in which young people are the main victims of violence. In these spaces, security is conceived in a more comprehensive way and is understood not so much as control, but as protection of rights, protection of well-being, and access to fundamental public goods.

The group identified a series of dilemmas that arise with respect to security. At times, security is understood and justified through violent protection. In response to violent actions by the state, violent reactions by criminal groups are also being justified. There is a paradox stemming from the use of security as violent protection as it ends up reproducing patterns of violence, which, in the long run, provoke violations of human rights and ultimately insecurity.

The relationship between security and trust: competition between the state, criminal Groups, and civil society organisations

To identify the relationship between security and trust, it is important to first define the social actor subject to protection and security. This is key in a context of significant trust deficits in society and in state institutions whose function is to protect the citizenry. Trust is often placed in criminal actors, which reflects a paradox that deserves further exploration. The state and criminal groups compete as providers of security. This competition between alternative sources of security also generates a competition in who obtains more or less trust. A dilemma arises: greater distrust towards the state can coexist with more trust in criminal groups.



Trust is also related to the effectiveness in providing security. This effectiveness has to do with the leadership of state institutions in the sense that they have the ability to open spaces for dialogue with the community and with the populations most affected by violence. In addition to the willingness to dialogue, technical capabilities of the state are required to effectively protect society, especially the most vulnerable groups. In summary, more participation of communities in the provision of security by state institutions is related to more trust in them.

The timing in addressing citizens' security demands by state institutions is related to trust in them. The longer authorities take to resolve problems, the lower the trust towards them. If the State is inefficient, and is not able to resolve everyday problems, that need for immediate attention causes trust to be placed in actors who offer another option for security.

The values that state actors promote in providing security also matter in explaining trust. The democratic values that state authorities profess can be determinant (e.g., procedural justice). If values are perceived as more inclined towards militarisation, institutional trust tends to decrease. Again, this has the potential to relocate trust in other actors that are not necessarily willing to provide security in a democratic and humane way. This would paradoxically result in more insecurity.

In contexts of insecurity, for example, due to injustices in the actions of the state, citizens replace it and generate networks of trust with other actors, even beyond their community. There are alternative spaces of trust that generate contexts of security. For example, initiatives of community reconciliation processes, or processes within organisations that work with street youth, where spaces of trust are generated that eventually become associated with processes that provide security and protection.

Thematic agenda: an exploration of the relationships between trust, security, and justice

For the group, the following questions can be addressed by the VSP Network in the immediate future:

- a. To what extent is the relationship between trust and security mediated/moderated by the provision of justice?
- b. To what extent is the relationship between trust and security mediated/moderated by the provision of restorative justice?

Examining the relationship between trust, security, and justice, it is important to visualise and recognise personal stories, especially those of victims and populations who experience violence more acutely. Visibility of these experiences can also generate more trust and more security. In the same sense, the construction of other narratives and other truths about the problems facing society in Latin America can also play a crucial role.



In the context of militarisation that the region has experienced in recent years, it is worth further investigating the relationship between coexistence and restorative justice.



05. PEACE AND TRUST

Report by Gabriela Pérez, President, Comunidad de Sinaí (México)

The discussion group on Peace and Trust concentrated on examining the concept of peace and offered a range of dimensions to consider in order to construct a more holistic definition. Subsequently, the discussion focused on the paradoxes and level differences that emerge in the relationship between trust and peacebuilding.

Implications of peace as a process

The group emphasised peace as a process, not as an end goal. Peace as a process is built in the midst of the complexity of conflicts. If peace is conceived as a goal in itself, it is possible to fall into a pacification approach, i.e., a negative, militaristic peace. As real human beings are involved in the processes, it must be developed to its full extent, in the sense that individuals can fulfil their potential. Furthermore, the process must be inclusive. For the group, peace as a process implies a qualitative and quality improvement that is never-ending.

Peace as a process rests on three pillars or dimensions: a) reduction of violence, b) realisation or materialisation of human rights, and c) the adoption of formal and informal institutions that can help resolve conflicts. In this conceptualisation, it is important to keep in mind that peace can mean something very different for elites compared to citizens. Peace is more than the absence of war, a common and voluntaristic conception among elites. Citizens' conceptions of peace have a wide range, from peace as respect to peace as tranquillity, passing through a meaning of peace that associates it with notions of justice. As observed, peace is a flexible concept. At this moment in Europe, the concept of peace is being rethought due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The classic distinction between war and non-war state has been exhausted.

In practice, peace demands an effort of rebuilding trust (Brazil), permanent accompaniment to those who are reinserted into society (El Salvador), or giving voice to those involved and affected, or resolving structural problems (Colombia). In São Paulo's context of extreme violence and institutionalised promotion of hatred, the construction of peace with ex-prisoner populations has been understood as a multidimensional process. In São Paulo, peace is difficult to achieve, since the Bolsonaro government's repression targets people already captured by hate narratives that fuel the institutional distrust existing at the moment.

In the Salvadorian context of managing ex-offenders, peace is seen as a situation in which both parties reach a mutual agreement. Therefore, there must be monitoring, accompaniment, and guidance in the process. For a participant in this population, this support often exists in the places of confinement, but upon leaving prison it needs to be complemented with psychological support and work with the family, so that conflicts can be more effectively resolved. Peace must be built from family and community dynamics that interact with each other. For a young participant in the Pioneros programme in San Salvador, there is also work to be done to counteract the very marked social stereotypes that prevent dignified treatment for ex-offenders. In this context, an integral and permanent approach is appropriate.



In Colombia, it is important to give voice to the people and understand peace as the guarantee that the same conflict will not be repeated. According to analysis on the mental health of ex-combatants, it has been found that it is necessary to support women more due to the violence exercised against them. Women have borne the greatest burden of violence in the Colombian armed conflict, especially Afro-descendant women. There is an emphasis on sexual violence that has left physical and psychological marks on women.

In addition to these aspects of gender and procedural justice, peace is still seen as a process in which structural problems are resolved. In rural areas, for peace it is necessary to lose the fear of recurrent violence and to guarantee quality education for children. For a signatory of the old FARC-EP peace agreement in the 1990s, these objectives were not clear while peace was understood as something that reduced poverty and attended to the needs of rural communities in education – a problem that was exacerbated by the dynamics of displacement.

Today, to talk about peace, it is relevant to address structural inequalities (education, for example) and to resolve the emotional impacts at the individual and collective level. There is a fundamental tension relating to the concept of peace, whether it should be seen as a transformation ("if there is no transformation there is no peace") or as a set of gradual improvements at the individual or group level.

Towards a decolonial conception of peace

Peace is still understood as a process to resolve structural rifts. However, this group believes that life experiences of the parties involved should not be overlooked as they are valuable in themselves. It is important to construct a notion of peace beyond a liberal conception (Diana Gómez, CIDER). Peace is built considering simultaneously its cultural, emotional and ontological dimensions. Talking about peace not only means talking about tranquillity but also the possibility of building diverse visions of the world. In this sense, the decolonisation of peace implies building on its plurality, not a "singular peace", which is a homogeneous approach. Among the dimensions discussed, it is possible to think about developing the possibilities that open up with the coexistence and intersectionality of peace.

Considerations for an integral concept of peace

In light of the above, the group proposed the terms and conditions for a preliminary concept of peace:

"Peace is a process, it is intersectional, transformative that requires clear goals and objectives in the short, medium and long term. Peace is a physical, social, personal, state, organisational and intergenerational process (related to the lives of the children of the actors of the conflicts around a future life, a general well-being). The construction of peace includes geographical aspects (rural and urban), which implies different challenges for the implementation of peace agreements."



Multiple levels of trust in peace building

The group's final reflection focused on identifying the different roles and obstacles during the construction of trust. The reconstruction of trust has two axes: vertical (institutional) and horizontal (interpersonal). There must be specific solutions for restoring trust depending on the specific sectors and groups involved. To build that trust, one must start from differences at multiple levels. For example, there may be distrust towards institutions while there is trust in families.

Building peace goes hand in hand with building trust, towards different social groups and towards institutions. It is important to conceive building trust from the social capital perspective, i.e., as a form of restoring the social fabric. Social capital manifests itself in the territory, in the communities of conflict areas. For example, there is no trust in one's neighbours and vertical social capital is non-existent in Colombia. Narratives of building this type of trust must be changed, for example, through mechanisms that rebuild trust in the state. This is even more difficult in a context of remote rural areas characterised by institutional apartheid, where the very absence of the state leads to a situation in which the population does not have state support to enforce their rights. There are no reasonable minimums in which trust can be anchored.

The loss of trust has occurred in the Latin American context. Interpersonal trust and trust in institutions have decreased in recent years. In 11 Latin American countries, between 2009 and 2020, interpersonal trust has dropped from 23% to 12% (percentage of citizens who say that you can trust others). This scenario is not easy to alter because leaders and elites change either nothing or *something* to effectively change nothing – after the principle “the same old wine is presented in new bottles.” Sweden is an example of permanent construction of vertical trust (towards the state and its institutions). That is, it is possible to build this type of trust, there are indications that it works and has been achieved in other social contexts.

Although there is a consensus on the "what", there is a lack of discussion about the "how" of restoring trust. In this sense, the group suggests:

- a. Sustained actions over time that give certainty, and consequences in the case of non-compliance.
- b. In situations like those of mothers who have lost their children in urban violence, trust building is derived more from social organisations than from the state. In this case, the responsibility rather falls under citizen control.
- c. A key factor lies in social, political and citizen communication, in defending social rights and guarantees, in building a policy that does not re-victimise and in appealing to international organisations in the hope of enforcing rights.
- d. Trust is built through daily and permanent actions. The state can build trust given it keeps its promises. This highlights the importance of a trust-building approach after betrayal,



after successive stories of non-compliance by the state. It is important to ask what building trust entails in the midst of successive setbacks.

- e. Trust also has to do with materialising the rights of victims, it is built within a society that attends and hears victims. In fact, social movements tend to advance these conversations the most.
- f. Trust also has to do with emotions and reasons. There is intense debate as to what prevails between the two or if they interact with each other. It is important to change emotionality, that is, the way in which the emotions of others and oneself are addressed. Trust cannot be built if the other is demonised. There are different levels of trust to work on and re-think agendas to listen to and learn from the other.

Finally, some obstacles in building trust were outlined:

- a. Non-compliance with agreements.
- b. Absence of truth or attempts to impose lies – trust isn't built on the truth.
- c. Lack of knowledge about the interests or the agency of the other.

To overcome these obstacles, trust-building requires dialogue with the closest enemy, with those who think they are different (heterophilia). Trust-building involves the creation of new connections or bonds, which can arise from more qualified dialogue (Gabriela Jiménez, C. Sinaí).

For the group, a relevant factor in this discussion has to do with power and who holds it. Elites need to know what they are using power for in the proposed dialogues, taking into account an ethic of responsibility and care. The role of elites in the case of the armed conflict in Colombia is a sociological factor highlighted by Pearce and Velasco (2022), given the usual reluctance of Colombian elites to support peace processes, but also their divisions and occasional flexibilities that are important for advancing conflict resolution.



06. CONCLUSION

Where can the VSP Network be heading in the short and medium term?

Jenny Pearce, Research Professor, LSE LACC

Before the VSP Network can have a greater impact on violence prevention policies, security and peacebuilding in Latin America and the global south, it is necessary to build a common language and clarify the meaning of violence, security, and peace in these contexts. There is a lack of minimum consensus on these themes. This first workshop to relaunch the VSP Network represented a significant step towards this goal.

In order to consolidate the VSP Network as a focal point for applicable knowledge and public impact, it is necessary to examine beforehand how the three conceptual pillars of the network relate or combine. From this, it will be possible to define the network's sphere of influence to make it more effective in practice. If there is clarity on the mechanisms that potentially link greater security with less violence and this with more peaceful social interactions, we will be able to understand why peace is more than the absence of war or conflict. The VSP Network will have a more solid foundation as it builds a minimum consensus that serves as a frame of reference and clarifies its scope.

During the discussions that took place in the workshop, three main threads were identified between the concepts of Violence, Security, and Peace:

- a. The task has a procedural character. It is not about having a project and then measuring its effectiveness with respect to previously established goals. It is suggested to think about what the objectives are of a process in itself. It is important to define what is intended to be co-created or built in a shared way from the network as a meeting point between the actors and the sectors they represent in that process.
- b. There are temporalities that must be put on the table. What early successes do we expect from the Network? There are pressing realities that require a quick and effective response, given the fact that young people in Latin America have a 1 in 50 chance of dying before the age of 30. How will the network respond to this so that these patterns cease to reproduce?
- c. Structural problems are faced. There are everyday expressions of violence and insecurity, and, at the same time, social schemes constructed by the elite that prevent these structures from changing. You can't keep managing the present without transforming the future. This is another challenge. We have to be in the everyday lives of the affected population, for example, accompanying the present of young gang members while at the same time thinking about how to transform their future.¹

The Network must focus its efforts on how to respond to the tension and transition between the present and the future. How to structure now to transform in the future

¹ Prior to the 2023 summit, interviews will be conducted with executives of civil society organizations that have engaged with their beneficiary populations and that have managed to transform their daily lives.



becomes the most relevant question. For example, in the present, you can't comprehensively transform gender relations, but you do have to act against femicides.

Points a) and b) can serve as a guide to the activities that will be developed within the framework of the VSP Network Summit in May 2023.

It is important to recognise that there are sequels and traumas faced by violence-affected populations and that solving this is not like constructing a building. You are engaging with people's pain. This task requires working on human relationships. It does not consist of installing a project independently from the people who participate in it.

Although in some discussion groups the idea of providing public goods such as security to reduce the incidence of violence was raised, it is necessary to insist on better balancing public and market-based security provision. It should not be forgotten that there is more private security in Latin America than police. The idea is to expand the range of possibilities for the individual to enjoy their life and develop what they propose as reasonable goals, in the manner of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach.

Trust as a transversal axis of the VSP Network: the state and social relations

Albeit in the discussion groups similar views developed on the construction of interpersonal and institutional trust, it is important to better understand the effort required in the reconstruction of the latter. The deterioration of trust in the state is acute. The recovery of interpersonal trust is insufficient if the state dimension of trust is not fully understood.

For example, in the discussion about what respect for others entails, it is important to approach respect as non-domination by the state, in the sense of avoiding the supremacy of one group over another. In the case of indigenous rights, this reflection is relevant. The issue is that there is a *common* social space, which is not an empty set, but is made up of social relations with the state that deserve to be (re)constructed. To do this, it is important to articulate notions such as respect, tranquillity and justice.

The absence of social relationships can explain the prison problem in some Latin American countries. In El Salvador, high incarceration may be related to higher mortality among prisoners. In the construction of social relationships, it is also necessary to think about a space where a dialogue is established between rural and urban areas or between the periphery and the centre. The role of the state is paramount in the formation and stabilisation of these social relationships.

For the VSP Network, the construction of social relationships in all spaces where participants co-construct is proposed as a leitmotif. Although participants simultaneously undertake permanent actions, there is a vacuum of what the state is and how we contribute to its formation. We cannot talk about a VSP Network without understanding how the state is formed and without thinking about how institutionalisation is built. Due to these vacuums, people look for anything outside of the state and institutionalisation and end up creating ties of trust with violent actors such as drug traffickers or gangs, which can be more unstable and problematic.

For the formation of the state and its institutional framework through trust, dialogue with those who compete in that field is necessary. This dialogue implies rethinking justice, in the sense of



not always seeing the other as the one to be killed, executed or condemned. The punitive approach does not aim at the construction of the state. Dialogue is more effective in a restorative justice manner. The case of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia offers a series of lessons in this sense that is very informative for other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This demands a specific type of leadership. A leadership that exercises non-violent policy is needed to build peace. Reducing violence through the provision of a non-repressive security makes it possible for the individual to plan the life they consider just. The VSP Network, in addition to putting all its pillars into joint action, must reflect on what type of policy and leadership facilitates the prevention of violence and the construction of security and peace.



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ANNEX 1: LIST OF ATTENDEES

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ANNEX 2: GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT

Resumen Proyecto TaB/ AHRC (UKRI) Trust and Peacebuilding Grant

Generalidades Red Violencia, Seguridad y Paz (Red VSP)



Objetivos

- Atraer el ecosistema de actores involucrados en la construcción de paz y reducción de la violencia en contextos vulnerables e inseguros.
- Generar nuevo conocimiento dirigido a beneficiarios y servidores públicos, a través de redes de colaboración multisituada, intersectorial e interdisciplinaria.
- Ubicar al LSE LACC y a la Red VSP en una conversación permanente con académicos de otras partes del mundo que hayan hecho aportes significativos en la materia.



Etapas

- **Etapa 1:** Lanzamiento del equipo de trabajo definición del alcance del proyecto (marzo 10 de 2022)
- **Etapa 2:** Taller Virtual para la conformación de la red VSP y compromisos para la Cumbre de 2023 (Equipo de trabajo + Invitados) (Propuesta: 21 de junio de 2022)
- **Etapa 3:** Cumbre de la red VSP en Bogotá, Colombia (Red VSP completa) (Tentativamente en mayo de 2023)
- **Etapa 4:** Proceso de divulgación e impacto (Durante julio y agosto de 2023)



Productos y Resultados Esperados

Académicos:

- Un volumen editado sobre Confianza y Construcción de Paz
- Paneles, seminarios y conferencias a cargo de invitados

Divulgativos:

- Documentos y Resúmenes Ejecutivos de Políticas
- Gira de divulgación que incluye a los beneficiarios del proyecto
- Guías y manuales sobre construcción de equipos de trabajo y diseño de trabajo colaborativo
- Campaña de medios
- Acceso a datos abiertos (cuando sea posible)



Impactos para nuestros Beneficiarios

Académicos: Contribuir a la generación de nuevo conocimiento y al desarrollo de carreras académicas mediante la colaboración entre académicos de diversas disciplinas en las artes, las humanidades y las ciencias sociales orientados al tema de la confianza y la construcción de paz, y la vinculación con expertos que centran su trabajo en regiones distintas a América Latina y el Caribe.

Formuladores de política y servidores: Enganchar desde el principio a formuladores de política y servidores públicos para garantizar que los hallazgos de investigación se transmitan efectivamente a las políticas públicas a su cargo, desarrollar sus habilidades de hacer un aporte significativo en su trabajo, y construir una red global de profesionales interesados en esta materia.

Actores afectados por la Violencia: Incorporar a los principales beneficiarios de los programas sociales y de desarrollo en materia de construcción de paz como colaboradores en vez de sujetos pasivos, con el fin de asegurar que los resultados de la red sean relevantes y validados por sus protagonistas, y de abrir la oportunidad para que quienes ya están inmersos en procesos de cambio complejo a nivel local conversen en el ámbito global y se conecten con otros líderes en esta materia.

