

but as human beings they are also agents of change and factors of development.

3. Bottom up approaches to prevention and resolution of conflict.

No solution is sustainable when a third party imposes or instigates it. Change comes from “within” and not from outside. Healing efforts should come and be identified by the community itself with the support and coaching of third parties.

In our experience, displaced populations tend to live in isolated and impoverished areas in rural or urban settings with scarce access to public facilities and lack of presence of state and development institutions. Rather than waiting for the State and other external actors to be present and provide responses, the community needs to organize itself and look for solutions. This organization will attract the attention of other actors, including state institutions.

We need to start with a **bottom up approach**, rather than waiting for responses or solutions to come from outside or from a third party. By doing so, communities realize that they cannot expect change to come from abroad as an external factor. It can neither be an imposition nor a gift done by others. For real change to take place, it has to be done by them and for them, provided that they fully recognize that change is within them. They should understand that they are the agents of change. Healing efforts should be built upon this premise for reconciliation to be sustainable and durable.

In the case of Guatemalan refugees, this community based approach started in Mexico well before any voluntary repatriation movement became feasible. Individuals and communities learnt to depend on their own, through empowerment and community organization. Many of the infrastructure work needed for the returnee settlement was built directly by the community. Many health and education promoters, trained in Mexico, started to provide services to their communities, before any facilities were built or the Guatemalan government formally hired them. Following the establishment of new returnee settlement in different parts of the country, national and international institutions started to be present in those areas and to offer new programs.