



PEACE INCENTIVE FUND 2024-2025 Final Report

March 2026

peace
IN OUR CITIES



7 CITIES



**\$70,000 TOTAL FUNDS
DISTRIBUTED**



**4 TRANSVERSAL AREAS
OF INTERVENTIONS**



7 AWARDS



7 COUNTRIES

PARTNERS AREAS OF INTERVENTION

- 1 City of Cali, Colombia
- 2 EFC, Bristol, UK
- 3 City of Guadalajara, Mexico
- 4 Life & Peace Institute Nairobi, Kenya
- 5 City of Mechelen, Belgium
- 6 Peace Initiative Network Kano, Nigeria
- 7 City of Rosario, Argentina

- 1 Gathering data and promoting evidence-based prevention
- 2 Empowering and protecting youth
- 3 Building trust through multistakeholder convening and dialogue
- 4 Developing partnerships and institutional architecture for urban violence prevention

If you are interested in investing in the future of the Peace Incentive Fund, please contact us.

Cover photo: Understanding dividers and connectors in conflict. Tuimarishe Amani Mjini – Peacebuilding and Resilience Workshop, April 2025, Nairobi, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

In September 2020, Peace in Our Cities (PiOC) launched the Peace Incentive Fund (PIF), a small-grant mechanism focused on bridging knowledge and action by supporting city partners in their efforts to invest in prevention backed by evidence and network research.

In its **first iteration**, PIF supported partners applying solutions to advance public health while simultaneously reinforcing public safety. These approaches were based on PiOC's research, *Peace in Our Cities in Time of Pandemic*. Nine partners from eight cities received small grants to advance city-based adaptations at that time, linking research to action during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Those resources reinforced not only capacity but also an ethos of grounding action with evidence.

As PiOC continued to grow, in the midst of a changing and ever-more-challenging global order, we kept tracking multiple, interrelated forms of urban violence and the range of effective strategies being pursued by a variety of local, national, and international actors. In this context, in 2024 we relaunched the Peace Incentive Fund (PIF 2.0) with a new round of financial resources to support efforts aligned with PiOC's 2022 flagship report, *Guiding Principles and Inspiring Actions: Operationalizing the Resolution to Reduce Urban Violence*.

PiOC selected seven partners for PIF 2.0 with work to be completed during 2025. The selected projects were action oriented and sought to adapt, complement, and/or shift current city investments related to violence prevention and reduction, or to introduce new programming to a city. The second round of PIF was supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The results from PIF projects presented in this report demonstrate that even a small investment can yield significant impact by planting the seeds for more-targeted and efficient policies, and by transforming the lives of those most vulnerable to violence and insecurity.

AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Most PIF 2.0 applications and selected projects generally fell into one or more of four broad areas of intervention, and several investments targeted multiple intersecting violence prevention challenges and forms of violence, stretching over the different areas, as summarized below. The areas were: (1) gathering data and promoting evidence-based prevention, (2) empowering and protecting youth, (3) building trust through multistakeholder convening and dialogue, and (4) developing partnerships and institutional architecture for urban violence prevention.

Efforts ranged from evidence gathering and scoping an Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) in Bristol (UK) to running targeted or universal victimization and perception surveys in Mechelen (Belgium) and Rosario (Argentina), convening multistakeholder forums in Nairobi (Kenya) and Abeokuta (Nigeria) to build trust among law enforcement, communities, and other actors, and delivering youth, school, and community interventions in Cali (Colombia) and Guadalajara (Mexico). These different interventions address multiple forms of violence, including youth and gang-related violence, gender-based violence, disappearances, political violence, and institutional violence.

This diversity reflects the fluid and multidimensional nature of urban violence, while four general categories showed that commonalities exist between cities in terms of the challenges they face. The nature of the projects reinforces the guiding principles promoted by Peace in Our Cities: that urban violence reduction requires approaches that are balanced, interrelated, legitimate, and focused on the most vulnerable places and people.

The Four Areas of Intervention and Their Specific PIF-Related Projects

1. Gathering Data and Promoting Evidence-Based Prevention

Several partners used the PIF to enhance their existing knowledge base. For example, by investing in citywide or targeted surveys to gather data on victimization, perceptions of safety, youth criminal recruitment, and violence trends to inform public policies; or by conducting interviews and focus group discussions to assess the institutionalization of an Office of Violence Prevention. Overall, these projects demonstrated the demand for and utility of greater knowledge production and analysis in the service of violence prevention. All these efforts also fostered crucial partnerships between different government agencies, law enforcement, civil society, and academia.

- **Mechelen:** The city government of Mechelen, in partnership with Ghent University, carried out a quantitative survey in area schools focused on youth criminal recruitment. Results are informing the updates of the Local Action Plan Against Organized Drug Crime.
- **Rosario:** The mayor's office of Rosario conducted a citywide survey on victimization and perception of safety to inform targeted violence prevention efforts and measure impacts of ongoing policies.
- **Life & Peace Institute (LPI), Nairobi:** Civil society organization LPI conducted expert/participant analysis of urban violence trends and election safety dynamics in the city's settlements to inform coordination frameworks.
- **Guadalajara:** The mayor's office, in partnership with CSO Delibera, implemented qualitative school-based diagnostics of existing risks of violence, recruitment, and disappearance to inform prevention policies and promote integrated responses.
- **Empire Fighting Chance (EFC), Bristol:** EFC completed a scoping analysis for the creation of a regional Office of Violence Prevention in Bristol focused on youth violence.

2. Empowering and Protecting Youth

Interventions directly targeted at youth helped increase understanding about risks of different forms of violence, change social norms around violent behavior, provide psychosocial support and dedicated care when needed, and offer livelihoods and other opportunities. These projects also helped promote trust between youth and government institutions.

- **Cali:** The city's secretary of security and justice launched a competitive youth fund that financed projects related to barbering, music, printing, dance/theater, and identity/cultural pride to help denormalize violence and build social cohesion through workshops and mentoring provided by community mediators.
- **Guadalajara:** School workshops carried out by the city and CSO Delibera activated peer care, access to support services, and referrals to reduce risks linked to youth disappearance and recruitment by criminal organizations.

3. Building Trust Through Multistakeholder Convening and Dialogue

Multistakeholder summits and peace seminars were conducted by different partners to bring together government officials, community members, traditional and religious leaders, law enforcement, youth, and civil society organizations. These forums provided safe spaces where they were previously lacking to discuss key issues of concern related to safety, peace and human rights concepts, trends, and violence dynamics, and to strengthen collaboration mechanisms among the different actors.

- **Peace Initiative Network (PIN), Abeokuta:** Civil society organization PIN implemented a series of advocacy and education initiatives aimed at strengthening peaceful coexistence and preventing violence in Abeokuta and surrounding communities, including peace summits that brought together government officials, security agencies, traditional rulers, community and religious leaders, youth and women's groups, and the media to discuss emerging security concerns, conflict drivers, and early warning responses.

- **Life & Peace Institute, Nairobi:** LPI carried out a multistakeholder dialogue forum, bringing together 30 diverse actors from Nairobi’s informal settlements and key institutions to reflect on emerging violence trends and election-related dynamics, and to strengthen collaboration through shared learning and coordinated approaches.

- **Peace Initiative Network (PIN), Abekouta:** To sustain the advocacy and education activities promoted by PIN under PIF 2.0, the project established a network of community “peace vanguards” (Ogun State peace stakeholders), composed of elders and youth leaders, to continue driving the project’s initiatives.

4. Developing Partnerships and Institutional Architecture for Urban Violence Prevention

Several initiatives strengthened the institutional foundations and collaborative mechanisms necessary for sustainable urban violence prevention. Partners built and leveraged multisectoral alliances, connecting government agencies, civil society organizations, academia, schools, and community leaders to design and implement coordinated strategies for safety and social cohesion. These efforts ranged from structured analyses to inform Offices of Violence Prevention to interagency youth-focused prevention partnerships, cross-government data and survey collaborations, and the establishment of community-anchored peace networks. Overall, each initiative demonstrated how robust partnerships and institutional architecture can enhance cities’ capacity to prevent violence through locally grounded, inclusive, and coordinated approaches.

- **Empire Fighting Chance (EFC), Bristol:** The analysis of city and regional structures that coordinate police, city councils, and community groups in the interest of creating a central Office of Violence Prevention was conducted by EFC in partnership with the University of the West of England and required collaboration and consultation with police and government actors.
- **Guadalajara:** The workshops and surveys carried out in schools about risk factors related to violence and disappearances required a crucial partnership between the city’s education system, different city government agencies in charge of care, civil society organizations, and law enforcement, all involved in the design of prevention policies targeted at youth.

OVERVIEW AND RESULTS OF INTERVENTIONS SUPPORTED BY PIF 2.0

Empire Fighting Chance (Bristol, UK): OVP Scoping and Evidence Gathering

This project aimed to inform the implementation of a region-wide Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) in Bristol, UK, aligning community groups, the police, and other public sector actors. PiOC partner Empire Fighting Chance (EFC) collaborated with the University of the West of England to conduct a literature review about the evidence base for the effectiveness of OVPs, with a specific focus on youth violence. The team also interviewed representatives of existing offices in the United States and Canada, and a range of key actors in Bristol (government, voluntary sector, and community members), with the goal of informing a region-wide OVP to be implemented in Bristol. The teams wanted to understand how the establishment of an OVP could help maximize the benefits from civil society efforts, not duplicate or replace the violence reduction partnerships within city councils or the police. The project also served as an investment in the knowledge base of communities impacted by violence, contributing to enhancing EFC and its partners’ ability to respond effectively to the underlying causes of violence.

The final report concluded that an effective application of an OVP model in Bristol would require alignment with the UK’s Serious Violence Duty under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022; integration with existing strategies such as Harm Outside the Home and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence; and collaboration through existing alliances such the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership. The OVP would act as a coordinating hub,

emphasizing community engagement, transparency, and inclusion of voices most affected by violence, supported by community anchor organizations and advisory boards. Sustainable multiyear funding, robust data integration from police, health, and education systems, and culturally competent approaches tailored to Bristol’s diverse population are essential. Bristol’s OVP would address a broad range of serious violence, such as homicide and attempted homicide, knife crime, and robbery, through a public health approach, prioritizing prevention, rehabilitation, and community empowerment.

City of Santiago de Cali (Colombia): En La Buena Youth Fund

PIF financed five youth-led cultural and livelihood initiatives, delivering 43 activities between August and November 2025 in high-risk communities that aimed to promote livelihoods, foster engagement in arts and culture, and strengthen social cohesion. Approximately 130 youth benefited directly from the project, with dozens more community members benefiting indirectly through participation in various activities. Interventions supported by the competitive youth fund included capacity building and financial support to implement a mobile barbershop led by youth; cultural processes focused on music, printing, and dance/theater; as well as identity-building workshops. These interventions were complemented by other activities that are already part of the city’s safety strategy, including the provision of psychosocial support for youth benefited by the En la Buena fund.

The program also contributed to strengthening the role of mediators, who led workshops aimed at denormalizing violence, raising awareness among youth about the risks associated with violent practices, and listening to young people discuss social norms they sought to transform through the project. The mediators are key figures in Cali’s violence prevention efforts and serve as bridges between institutions and the community by accompanying youth participants in all project activities. Community mediators are certified agents who promote dialogue and help sustain a peaceful coexistence in the city’s communities. Their support,

“The participatory approach of En la Buena allowed young people to be seen as active agents in prevention, which helped transform how their communities perceive them. This process reaffirms that prevention is not limited to mitigating risks, but also activating possibilities, expanding horizons, and strengthening the capacity to dream collectively.”

—Laura Prieto,
Methodology, Articulation and Cooperation Lead, Cali



En la Buena program cocreation workshop in Cali, Colombia. Photo: Santiago de Cali Mayor’s Office.

knowledge of neighborhood dynamics, and social legitimacy as community leaders were decisive in maintaining the continuity of processes, facilitating youth participation, and sustaining spaces of trust.

Another key element of the program was its cocreation with young people, who were central actors in the design and implementation of the initiatives financed. Involving them from the outset ensured that the proposals responded to their interests, narratives, and real needs, generating greater ownership, continuity in the processes, and a sense of shared responsibility. Four months after PIF was formally completed, all youth projects benefited have remained active. At least two foundations based in Cali and other international donors are now interested in replicating the methodology in a new round of funds to promote youth inclusion.

Peace Initiative Network (PIN) (Abeokuta, Nigeria): Partnering for Safer and Resilient Communities

The project aimed to reduce violence and promote peace by leveraging strong relationships with city officials and grassroots organizations. It convened a diverse group of stakeholders - including civil society, traditional rulers,

religious leaders, security agencies, government officials, and the media - to foster collaboration on public safety, gender-based violence, and human rights. Key activities included advocacy meetings with community leaders and government representatives, a peace summit with 150 participants, and a two-day peace education workshop for 50 young men and women. These efforts were complemented by a weekly radio program addressing issues such as gang violence, community policing, and hate speech, creating platforms for dialogue and awareness.

Through the initiative, community stakeholders gained knowledge and tools to prevent conflict and address grievances peacefully, while local groups affected by violence accessed opportunities for reconciliation and social harmony. Young people were empowered through leadership training, civic education, and peacebuilding practices, enabling them to become active promoters of nonviolence in their communities. The project aimed to strengthen community resilience and provide alternatives to gang involvement for youth. It underscored the importance of engaging high-risk groups and sustaining efforts through partnerships with government, private sector, and international actors.



Ogun State Peace Summit in Abeokuta, Nigeria. Photo: Peace Initiative Network.



LPI exercise in Nairobi on the identification of violence patterns and trends. Photo: LPI.

Life & Peace Institute (LPI) (Nairobi, Kenya): Tuimarishe Amani Mjini Dialogue Forum

The initiative gathered diverse actors from multiple informal settlements in Nairobi to identify emerging trends related to urban violence, hot-spot areas, and pre-/post-election- violence dynamics. The forum aimed to strengthen collaboration among peace actors and develop a coordination framework to address emerging violence trends. Using a gallery-walk approach, participants—including civil society, security agencies, government officials, and community leaders—shared insights on patterns of violence, hot-spot areas, and drivers of conflict. Discussions revealed the growing influence of gangs, often mobilized around political events, and highlighted factors such as economic hardship, political manipulation, social media distortion, and limited engagement by prevention actors. Participants also noted rising cases of sexual and gender-based violence and femicides, alongside structural violence like forced evictions and resource-based conflicts.

Violence in Nairobi’s informal settlements is cyclical and intensifies during election periods, driven by youth radicalization, political dynamics, and socioeconomic pressures. Social media was identified as both a catalyst and amplifier

of violence, normalizing harmful narratives. The forum underscored the urgent need for coordinated, inclusive approaches to prevention, recommending actions such as resource mobilization, legal frameworks for coordination, capacity building, standardized reporting tools, and community-driven planning. Participants agreed that similar forums should be expanded to engage a broader range of actors, ensuring sustained collaboration and preventing urban violence ahead of future elections.

City of Mechelen (Belgium): Youth Exposure to Criminal Recruitment Survey

PIF supported Mechelen’s efforts to prevent youth involvement in organized drug networks, a key goal of the city’s Local Action Plan Against Organized Drug Crime. With limited prior data on criminal recruitment, the project funded the design and implementation of Mechelen’s first anonymous, academically robust youth survey in partnership with Ghent University. Targeting 14-to-18-year-olds, the survey mapped exposure to recruitment for illegal activities such as drug transport and violence. This evidence-based approach enabled the city to refine preventive measures, inform school-based interventions, and strengthen interagency coordination. Schools were engaged as active partners, fostering trust and collaboration between education, law enforcement, and city administration.

“Victimization surveys have a very specific virtue: They return to us the voices of those who live in and move through the city without intermediaries or shortcuts. They allow us to understand what is happening—crimes suffered, everyday sacrifices, fears—but also what citizens imagine, expect, or question. In a city where the word “security” often carries the weight of urgency, listening carefully and without prejudice is a fundamental exercise of democratic responsibility.”

—Gonzalo Bonifazi, Director of Rosario’s
Violence Prevention Program

The survey revealed that 21 percent of respondents had been personally approached for tasks they believed were illegal, and 18 percent knew someone who had been approached, providing Mechelen with its first quantitative insight into the scale of the problem. While it is too early to measure direct reductions in violence, the project has laid a strong foundation for long-term prevention by generating actionable data, building partnerships, and creating a replicable methodology for other cities. The findings will inform updates to Mechelen’s action plan, guide awareness initiatives in schools, and support early prevention strategies. Beyond Mechelen, the project has sparked interest from other Belgian cities, demonstrating how small-scale, data-driven interventions can have a multiplier effect when embedded in broader prevention networks.

City of Rosario (Argentina): Victimization and Perception of Safety Survey 2025

PIF enabled the city of Rosario to conduct its first updated victimization survey since 2014, providing critical insights into citizens’ perceptions and experiences of violence and safety across the city’s six districts. This effort required significant technical work and collaboration with schools, civil society, and provincial institutions. The results show a significant rise in crime exposure in Rosario, with 37.3 percent of respondents reporting victimization and sharp increases in repeated and multi-victimization. Violence during crimes remains high, with over half of victims experiencing aggression and firearms used in more than a third of cases. Territorial disparities persist, with much higher levels of victimization being reported in the north of the city. Underreporting of all types of crime continues at 33.8 percent, driven by distrust in institutions. More than two-thirds of respondents who admitted to having underreported a crime said they did so because they knew “it would be useless.” In 2025, insecurity remained a top concern but had declined in the list of priorities for residents compared to 2014, as economic issues gained priority.

The survey is already being used to promote dialogue among key actors and will inform public dissemination, policy discussions, and strategic engagement with security agencies and justice institutions. The findings will help identify territorial priorities, guide resource allocation, and reorient local strategies based on real experiences rather than assumptions. Rosario is trying to institutionalize the survey as a biannual monitoring tool to be able to track changes in citizen perceptions over time and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention policies. The project also strengthened interagency coordination and academic partnerships, ensuring that future interventions are informed, inclusive, and responsive to community needs. According to the city government, this initiative marks a shift toward evidence-driven decision-making as a foundation for long-term violence reduction.

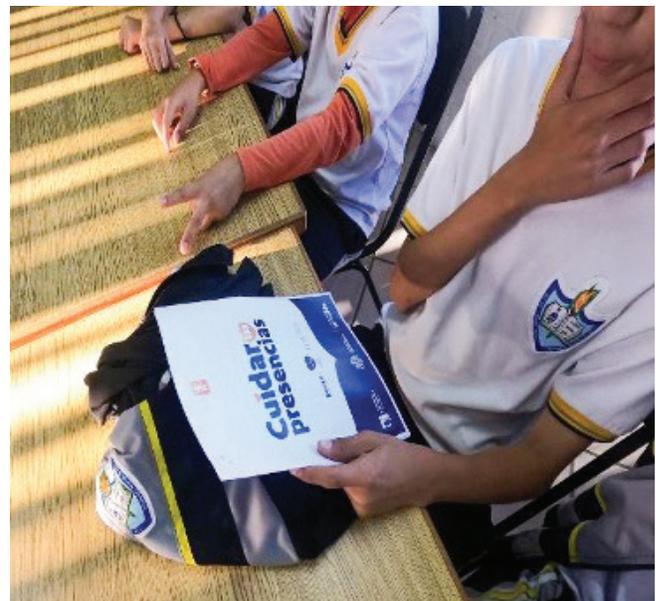
Guadalajara (Mexico): “Cuidar las Presencias” Social Prevention of Disappearances

There are 2,643 people currently missing in Guadalajara (1.4 million population), most of whom are young men aged 15–24. In response to such context, the PIF project aimed at laying the foundation for systematic, school-based prevention strategies that reduce vulnerability among young people. It sought to equip the city to design prevention programs addressing the disappearances, combining awareness raising and participatory diagnostics in high-risk areas. The project implemented school-based workshops, with protocols for referral to municipal/state services. The funding acted as a catalyst for collaboration between the Guadalajara municipal government, civil society organizations (Delibera A.C. and La Pinta), and state actors responsible for search, protection, and psychosocial care. It supported the development of a rights-based, gender-sensitive approach with strict data protection, informed consent, and antirevictimization protocols. It also introduced an innovative methodology combining guided reading, behavior analysis, and support pathways, generating diagnostic inputs directly from youth voices. Furthermore, the inclusion of the La Pinta collective in activities—a Guadalajara-based artistic group formed by young people with prison backgrounds, focused on social reintegration through art—allowed the project’s beneficiary

students to be exposed to young people who are examples of overcoming challenges and resilience.

Schools were positioned as key spaces for resilience and early help routes, while coordination among municipal agencies was strengthened through shared procedures. For example, when risk signals were detected among school participants (including signs of trauma or ongoing abuse, violence, or threats), they were referred to support services, ensuring confidentiality and proper follow-up between different support services.

The project resulted in a preliminary school-level diagnostic based on group reflection and ethics exercises; identification of vulnerability factors such as family tensions, digital risks, peer pressure, and neighborhood control dynamics; significant awareness among students and teachers about risks and help routes; and improved coordination among municipal actors. It also helped to build trust in support institutions, increased awareness among adolescents and educators, and provided a road map for early risk intervention. The project highlighted critical lessons, including that schools can function as protective factors even in high-risk areas; that adolescents have a nuanced understanding of risk; and that institutional systems must operate in a coordinated manner. They now intend to apply the same methodology in other schools with the same characteristics.



School workshop focused on care in Guadalajara, Mexico. Photo: Delibera.

LESSONS LEARNED



PIF 2.0 aimed at continuing to support PiOC members in their efforts to implement evidence-driven violence-prevention strategies that are actionable and aligned with global good principles and practices. From the seven projects, common elements of practice emerged that are in line with PiOC guiding principles, including the need to build trust across government, law enforcement, and nongovernment actors through participatory and collaborative approaches, as well as establishing institutional partnerships and mechanisms to sustain them; the importance of strengthening protective environments for youth through arts, culture, livelihoods, and care, and listening to their voices; and the crucial use of evidence and data to inform targeted urban violence prevention strategies.

Cities benefited from reliable, local data that replaced assumptions and anecdotal evidence and ultimately helped to improve policymaking. Both the process for and outcomes of improved knowledge also built legitimacy with schools, communities, and law enforcement and justice partners, emphasizing the multiple effects of generating local data and knowledge.

Projects also showed that cohesion and denormalization of violence can increase when adolescents engage in culturally resonant, livelihood-oriented, and gender-sensitive initiatives. Investing in practical skills for youth and in the creation of safe expression spaces can reduce risk exposure and stigma and improve their sense of empowerment and belonging within communities.

Forums and summits that include police, local government representatives, civil society organizations, educators, religious/traditional leaders, and media are also great tools that cities should consider to strengthen early warning, community policing, and response capacities. Creating standing bodies to support continuity of efforts discussed in those forums is also crucial to sustain efforts beyond project lifespans.

Local coordination plus civic education and youth engagement are crucial to mitigate cyclical violence. Coordination must be intentional, inclusive, and structured to be meaningful and sustained.

Finally, linking outputs produced by small initiatives such as those financed by PIF to city action plans or OVP offices/region-wide approaches, or institutionalizing biennial surveys or formal bodies to continue coordination and dialogue among different actors, have the potential to turn one-off projects into sustained prevention architectures.

Several partners emphasized the value of small, flexible funds in piloting or strengthening innovative ideas that can later be scaled and taken up by other partners and funders. We hope that initiatives supported by the Peace Incentive Fund will similarly evolve into durable, city-embedded systems for violence prevention.

peace IN OUR CITIES

About Peace in Our Cities

Peace in Our Cities (PiOC) is a unique global network of almost 30 cities and over 50 community-based and international partners with the ambitious goal to halve urban violence by 2030.

PiOC seeks to reduce and prevent urban violence worldwide—preserving lives and helping cities thrive. It does so by creating concrete, participatory, and evidence-based platform exchanges to reduce and prevent severe violence in member cities, while also building a global movement of urban-violence-reduction advocates.

The PiOC approach is based on three lines of action:

- **Amplify** policymaker awareness of the genuine scope and scale of urban violence and opportunities available to help cities address it.
- **Advance** evidence-informed, balanced policy solutions and peacebuilding approaches to reduce the most severe forms of violence in urban contexts.
- **Accompany** city leaders, community partners, and civil society through peer exchanges and information access to realize ambitious targets for violence reduction.

Peace in Our Cities is co-facilitated by two US-based independent institutions: the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies at New York University’s Center on International Cooperation and the Stanley Center for Peace and Security. For more, visit: peaceinourcities.org.