

Servas Peace School Handbook



Created by Alexa Bailey with guidance from Mehmet Ates, Radha Radhakrishna, Francisco Salomon Luna and more, July 2025

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Executive Summary

The Servas Peace School Handbook is your practical guide to starting, participating in, or supporting a Peace School in a rural village anywhere in the world. Built on the belief that peace begins with people meeting, sharing, and listening to each other, Peace Schools create joyful, inclusive spaces where children and adults connect across cultures, without borders, classrooms, or pressure. Whether you are hosting a Peace School for the first time or travelling across the world to join one, this handbook offers tools, tips, and inspiration grounded in the lived experiences of past Peace Schools.



Introduction

Welcome Message

Welcome to the Servas Peace School movement!

We are so glad you're here. Since the first Peace School took place in Ekinci, a village in Turkey located about 50 km from the Syrian border, in 2009, this project has grown into a global grassroots effort rooted in community, creativity, and care. Together, we are building a more peaceful world: one child, one story, one village at a time.

Who This Handbook Is For

This handbook is designed for:

- **Local organizers and educators** interested in hosting a Peace School in their community
- **Workers, managers, and collaborators** of the schools and community. Everyone in the community is a part of the Peace School.
- **Facilitators** (international or local) who want to share their passions and learn from others
- **Servas members and friends** seeking ways to deepen their commitment to intercultural peace
- **Host families** welcoming facilitators into their homes
- **Anyone** dreaming of building bridges across borders through genuine human connection

No experience is required, just a willingness to show up, be present, and share who you are.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is divided into clear, easy-to-navigate sections depending on your role and interest. Be sure to start with the Background section then depending on your interest you can explore other relevant sections like below:

- If you're organizing a Peace School: start with **Setting Up A Peace School**
- If you're joining as an animator: read **Being a Facilitator** and **How to Sign Up**
- If you're looking for inspiration: check out the **Appendix** for photos, and activities

You don't have to read it all at once! Use it as a flexible resource before, during, and after the Peace School.

Acknowledgments

This handbook was created with the input, reflections, and stories of dozens of Peace School participants, organizers, children, and communities. Special thanks to Mehmet Ateş, founder of the first Peace School in Turkey, whose dedication continues to inspire this movement. Thank you to Radha Radhakrishna, president of Servas International, Esra Alev, Fransisco Salomon, Ana Maria Farjado, and all other facilitators who answered questions and shared their experiences along the way. We also extend our appreciation to all those who continue to grow this project with heart, creativity, and vision, bringing the dream of peace and cultural exchange to life in communities around the world.

With gratitude to every child who danced, asked questions, sang in many languages, and reminded us why peace work must always begin with friendship, laughter, and play.



Background

What is Servas?

Servas is an international, non-profit organization founded in 1949 by Bob Luitweiler in the aftermath of World War II. Its mission is to foster peace and understanding by encouraging meaningful cultural exchange. At the heart of Servas is a simple yet powerful idea: if people open their homes and hearts to one another, they are less likely to see each other as enemies.

Through travel, dialogue, and human connection, Servas promotes intercultural friendship, tolerance, and non-violence. Today, Servas operates in more than 100 countries, connecting thousands of members — hosts, travelers or supporters — who share the vision of a more peaceful world.

Servas promotes peace not only through one-to-one hosting but also through member-led activities that strengthen friendship and understanding. These include youth and family camps, artistic and cultural exchanges, environmental initiatives, tourism events, Peace Schools, hiking trips, and many other creative gatherings. Each of these activities offers opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect, learn from one another, and work together toward a culture of peace.

What is a Peace School?

Servas Peace Schools are grassroots, community-based learning experiences that bring together children, local communities, and international members. They are held in rural villages and built around the idea that **every person has something to teach, and something to learn**.

Peace Schools were born out of a simple but powerful idea: if children in rural areas cannot travel to see the world, we can bring the world to them. In many villages, families don't have the resources to travel internationally. Peace School opens a window to the world, offering children a chance to learn about different countries, languages, and ways of life through direct human connection.

This exchange is never one-sided. Travelers come to the village not just to teach, but to learn. They discover new perspectives, traditions, and ways of living that often challenge and enrich their own worldviews. As Fransisco, an international facilitator at the first Peace School in Uganda, shared, *"It's not the European's vision that will teach them; on the contrary, the traveler leaves with great lessons."*

Peace schools are different from traditional schools. They do not follow a fixed curriculum. Instead, they are shaped by the unique backgrounds, talents, and ideas of the facilitators and the children who participate. Whether through music, games, crafts, stories, science experiments, dance, or language, the goal is always the same: **to build peace through**

connection, creativity, and shared humanity. Peace Schools focus on human connection, creative expression, and learning with the resources available in the environment and thus use minimal technology. Attendance is optional, and children are free to choose whichever workshops interest them. The emphasis is on joy and exploration, not obligation. The Peace Schools also always take place outdoors. Peace Schools are often held under trees, in gardens, streets, or open spaces. Nature becomes part of the classroom and fosters creativity and play. Overall, the school fosters a culture of respect and global citizenship, reminding everyone that peace begins with understanding and friendship.

The first Servas Peace School was held in Ekinci village, Turkey in 2009. Since then, the initiative has grown to include communities in Uganda, Georgia, and soon, many more.

Why Peace Schools?

In a world where conflict often arises from misunderstanding and fear of the "other," Peace Schools create space for empathy, joy, and mutual discovery. They aim to:

- Introduce children to different cultures in a respectful, playful way
- Celebrate local knowledge while opening doors to global learning
- Encourage community cohesion and pride
- Empower facilitators to share their gifts and gain new perspectives
- Build sustainable bonds of friendship across borders

Peace Schools are about solidarity, exchange, and shared growth.

Our Principles and Values

The foundation of every Servas Peace School is built on shared principles and guided by values that shape the interactions, activities, and spirit of the program. These principles provide a framework for how each Peace School is organized, while the values inform how participants connect and grow together.

Five Core Principles of Servas Peace Schools

During an international meeting, Servas members agreed on **five essential principles** that define and guide every Peace School. These principles must be upheld by any new Peace School initiative around the world:

1. Peace at the Center

All activities and workshops revolve around the value of peace. The spirit of peace, rooted in respect, empathy, cooperation, and non-violence, must infuse every action and interaction with children.

2. Free of Charge

Servas Peace Schools are inclusive and accessible: no child, community member, or facilitator pays to participate. This ensures equal opportunity for all, regardless of financial means.

3. Outdoor Focus

Children thrive in open and natural environments. Most Peace School activities take place outdoors in gardens, fields, riverbanks, forests, or village streets where imagination, curiosity, and collaboration come naturally.

4. Homestays

Facilitators stay with local families, creating bridges of friendship, mutual understanding, and cultural exchange. These stays enrich both visitors and host communities and impact everyone positively.

5. Endless Topics

Peace School welcomes all life skills and subjects: cooking, sewing, planting, mathematics, languages, dance, human rights, children's rights, chess, art, and more. Every experience has value and can inspire curiosity and growth.

Any new Servas Peace School must commit to these five core principles.

Our Core Values

The values below inform how we interact, create, and learn together in every Peace School. They are the heart of what makes these spaces transformative.

Peace

We believe peace is built through relationships, through laughter, listening, and learning side by side. Peace is not a subject taught in a classroom; it's a way of living, interacting, and connecting every day.

Cultural Exchange

Peace Schools are spaces of mutual curiosity and respect. Children and facilitators share their traditions, languages, and worldviews. This exchange fosters empathy, wonder, and a deeper appreciation for the richness of human experience.

Community

Peace Schools are rooted in the strength and wisdom of local communities. We work hand-in-hand with families, elders, teachers, and children to build something meaningful together. We value inclusion, collaboration, and the belief that everyone belongs.

Global Citizenship

We encourage participants to think beyond borders. Through Peace School, children begin to see themselves not just as members of a village or a country, but as citizens of a shared planet.

Facilitators are inspired to act with compassion, humility, and responsibility in a connected world.

History

The idea of the **Servas Peace School** was born in 2009 in **Ekinci Village**, a small, bilingual (Turkish–Arabic) farming community in **Antakya**, southern Turkey. Antakya, known in ancient times as Antioch, has long stood at the crossroads of history and culture. Once a great center of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, it has been shaped by centuries of coexistence among Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Kurds, and other communities, as well as Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions. Ekinci reflects this diversity, with a population known for its open-minded and liberal lifestyle, visible in its relaxed approach to dress, relationships, and social interaction.

At the time, Servas member and educator **Mehmet Ateş**, inspired by Servas’s founding belief, that staying in each other’s homes can lead to peace among nations, he wondered: *What if we brought this idea to children? What if they grew up already knowing the world is bigger than borders? What if Servas guests could share their knowledge and skills with the village children, making each visit more meaningful and diverse?* “We gave it a try—and it worked beautifully. The community embraced both the idea and the Servas guests.” Read more about Mehmet and his initiatives here: [Bio](#).



Mehmet Ates,
Founder of Servas
Peace Schools

With the support of friends and local families, Mehmet invited international Servas members to volunteer in the school as facilitators and live in the village as temporary members of families. Instead of a formal curriculum, the “school” would be built around *living peace* through outdoor games, language exchanges, creative arts, music, and storytelling. Children could freely explore new ideas, facilitators could share their cultures, and the entire community could learn from one another.

What happened was beyond expectations. Children, parents, and facilitators connected quickly and deeply. Language barriers dissolved through play and music. People cooked and danced together. Workshops happened in backyards, gardens, streets, wherever felt alive. No one paid or charged money. There was no formal structure. And yet, something truly meaningful emerged: a shared sense of peace rooted in trust, curiosity, and care.

The Growth of Peace School in Ekinci and Beyond

Each summer after that, the Peace School returned to Ekinci. Over time, local teachers and youth became facilitators themselves, and former child participants began leading their own workshops. Even through difficult years, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating 2023 earthquake in southern Turkey, the school adapted and endured.

Today, Ekinci has a permanent Peace School campus. International Servas members visiting the village throughout the year continue to organize workshops, after-school activities, and weekend sessions with children. There are ongoing plans to transform Ekinci's Earth House into a Servas Earth Museum and Library—a potential global hub for the Servas community.



Left: the permanent Peace School campus in Ekinci. Right: Ekinci's Earth House and Library.

In 2024, after 15 years of running in Turkey, the idea of Servas Peace Schools began to spread globally. The first Peace Schools outside of Turkey were held in Buyoga, Uganda and Lamovani, Georgia, each shaped by local needs but guided by the same core principles. New destinations, including Colombia, are now inspired to start their own Peace Schools, spreading the message of peace to communities around the world.

Today, Servas Peace Schools continue to grow, not through centralized planning, but through community desire and human connection. Each one is a reminder that peace doesn't need a classroom or a policy, it needs people who are willing to listen, learn, and live together.

Mission

Servas Peace Schools aim to promote peace, empathy, and global citizenship by connecting children in rural villages with Servas members from around the world through shared learning, cultural exchange, and community living.



The Importance

Peace Schools matter because they create rare spaces where genuine connection, shared learning, and mutual respect thrive.

In many of the villages where Peace Schools take place, children and families may never have the opportunity to travel, meet people from different cultures, or experience life beyond their own region. Peace Schools help bridge this gap by bringing people from all over the world to the village. Through shared stories, games, crafts, music, and language, children discover the richness of the world, and realize their own unique place in it.

They also provide a space where:

- **Children feel seen, heard, and empowered.** They choose what to participate in and share their own talents, cultures, and ideas without judgment.
- **Local communities feel valued.** The skills, knowledge, and hospitality of village life are not only respected, but celebrated.
- **Cross-cultural friendships grow.** These connections build empathy, dismantle stereotypes, and plant seeds of peace that extend far beyond the week of the school.
- **International facilitators learn and grow.** Many arrive never having heard of these small villages, places that are rich in tradition, resilience, and community spirit. While their original motivation may be to share skills or cultural knowledge, they often leave with far more than they brought: a deeper understanding of local life, personal friendships, and a broader, more grounded view of the world.

Peace cannot be taught through textbooks, it must be lived and felt. Peace Schools give children a chance to experience peace not just as an idea, but as a way of being together in the world. In a world where distance and difference can create division, Peace Schools remind us that we are all part of one human family, and that peace is not just possible, it is already growing in the hearts of those who take part.

The Impact

Peace Schools leave a lasting imprint on everyone involved: children, local communities, and international facilitators alike.

For children, the impact is transformative. Through creative workshops, games, and cultural exchange, they gain new skills, expand their horizons, and build self-confidence. Many children discover talents and interests they might never have explored otherwise. The relationships they form with facilitators from around the world broaden their worldview and inspire dreams beyond their immediate environment.



One student from Lamovani, Georgia said:

“I want this kind of school every month.”

Yusuf, 12 years old; “This place is not like a school at all. No one gets angry with us. There is no homework. It’s like we are always on a break. We play games, learn languages, different countries and the people from Servas who come. They are very nice. Lorenzo, for example. (The kids nicknamed him Watermelon). They all love talking and playing with us. I want the Peace School to never end.”

For local communities, Peace Schools strengthen social bonds and foster a spirit of openness and inclusion. Hosting international facilitators promotes mutual understanding and respect, enriching community life culturally and socially. The schools often inspire local teachers, parents, and young people to continue nurturing peace and intercultural learning beyond the event.

A parent from Lamovani shared:

“I am very satisfied and I liked it very very much. During this week every day was better. Foreigners were very good people. Each of them was very joyful, active and friendly. It will be good to continue this kind of project, so that I can meet more new people and find out more about foreign cultures. They will tell us about their countries and we will learn about each country better.”

Teachers also appreciated the experience:

“Every day of the week was very important for me. Communicating with every person was connected to an interesting discovery. I am still in the emotions and I think for me and for every participant as well, those emotions will turn into unforgettable memories.”

For international facilitators, the experience challenges preconceived notions and deepens empathy. By living with host families and engaging directly with village life, facilitators gain authentic insight into rural cultures, lifestyles, and challenges. This expanded perspective influences their worldview long after the Peace School ends, often motivating ongoing involvement in peace-building and cultural exchange efforts.



One volunteer from Turkey reflected:

“Living in a small village and sharing daily life with a family opened my eyes to how much we have in common despite our differences.”



Selin, 2024 Peace School facilitator. “I had one of the most meaningful experiences of my life at the Servas Peace School... Every day started with smiles on the children's faces. We played games, drew pictures, and

shared stories together.” Read more about Selin’s experience in her post [here](#).

Ana Maria first fell in love with the Peace Schools in 2016 and has been involved ever since. She has participated as an international facilitator five times now. She says “The peace school and the people [in this village] are now parts of my life. We will live together throughout my life.”

Collectively, Peace Schools contribute to building a global network of peace-minded individuals and communities, united by shared experiences, values, and hopes for a more understanding and compassionate world.



For more stories, visit the Servas news page and read the posts by organizers and facilitators alike. Here are some links:

[Georgia Peace School, Unforgettable Life Experience](#), [Australia Couple Volunteering](#), [Nazire a Young Volunteer](#), [Volunteering Servas Peace School 2024](#)

[Georgia Peace School, A New Peace Seed on Earth](#), [Peace School through the Eyes of Mehmet](#), [Servas Video 1](#), [Servas Video 2](#), [Servas Peace School 2019](#)



Setting Up A Peace School (For Organisers)

So, you're thinking about starting a Peace School in a village near you? That's wonderful! Servas Peace Schools bring the world to local communities, offering children and families the chance to meet people from other cultures, hear new stories, and explore peace in action. But before you start, it's important to fully understand what's involved and put thoughtful planning into your idea.

This section walks you through everything you need to consider from location, logistics, facilitators, activities, and community engagement, so you're ready to create a meaningful and sustainable Peace School. Check out the Appendix for a printable checklist for organizers.

While this handbook may seem full of details, remember that you are never doing this alone. Local community members and the global Servas network come together to support and share the workload every step of the way.

Step 1: Understand the Servas Peace School Model

Before contacting Servas, read through this handbook carefully. Reflect on these key questions:

- Why do you want to start a Peace School in this village?
- Who in the community is ready to support the idea?
- What resources (homes, outdoor spaces, local facilitators) are available?
- When is the best time for children and families to participate?

The Peace School model is not a formal school; it is a community-led space for peace-building, cultural exchange, and creativity, rooted in Servas values. Everything (activities, lodging, meals) is offered voluntarily and free of charge.

Step 2: Connect with Servas (After Initial Planning)

Once you have a clear idea, reach out to Mehmet Ateş and his team to discuss your proposal.

Contact: peaceschool@servas.org

Important:

- If you are already a Servas member, inform your national or regional Servas committee. They will help keep the project aligned with Servas's values, support logistics, and help spread the news with national members.

- If you are not yet a member, consider joining and connecting with local Servas members who can help coordinate and act as your link to the global network.
- All Peace Schools must be approved and supported by Mehmet's team in collaboration with Servas International Executive Committee (SI Exco). This ensures consistent principles, safety for facilitators, and visibility within the global Servas community.
- Each project should also be organized in close cooperation with the Servas National Board. If the country has a Peace Secretary and Youth Coordinator, it would be ideal to work through them. It is also important to work with local Servas members since their support is important for the success of the project. This collaborative approach strengthens connections, ensures local relevance, and aligns each Peace School with Servas's broader mission.

Step 3: Choose the Location

Peace Schools are typically held in rural or semi-rural villages where children have fewer chances to experience other cultures or languages. Think about:

- **Community readiness:** Are local leaders, teachers, and families excited about the idea? Talk with local leaders, teachers, and families to see if they are interested and willing to support the project. Their active support is essential.
- **Hosting capacity:** Are there enough families to host international facilitators?
- **Outdoor spaces:** Peace Schools thrive outdoors: in gardens, fields, village streets, or open spaces.
- **Accessibility:** How will facilitators get there? Provide clear travel details (nearest airport, train station, bus route). Consider arranging a group transfer from the nearest city if public transport is limited.

Step 4: Timing & Duration

- **Length:** Peace Schools usually run for **6–10 days**, often during summer holidays or school breaks when children are free. While each peace school is unique, there are some activities that are common to every peace school. In order to make the most of the experience, the Peace School should be a minimum of 6 days. Depending on the time of year and the country, the time of day of the peace school may need to be adjusted. For example, in Turkiye, to avoid the intense heat of the afternoons in July, activities take place from 9:30am-12pm and 6pm-8pm. But in Georgia, the school took place in June so this was not an issue and the activities started at 10am and ended at 3pm. On average there should be about 5 hours of activities.
- **Preparation:** Plan at least **6 months ahead** to allow time for recruiting facilitators, engaging the community, and arranging logistics. Be sure to inform the team about the dates as early as possible such that the scheduling for all Peace Schools can be

indicated on the website.

Step 5: Promotion & Outreach

Start Early – Plan for Visibility and Engagement

Begin preparing your outreach strategy at least **5–6 months before the Peace School begins**. For summer events, if you are in the Northern hemisphere, this means launching your outreach efforts and announcing your Peace School by January at the latest.

Confirm Approval and Post the Event

Once your Peace School dates are finalized and your proposal is approved by Servas, you should:

- **Create a detailed event listing** on the Servas website, with an online application form for international facilitators.
- **Include the following information:**
 - Location (village/town name, region, country)
 - Population size
 - Climate and time zone
 - How many children live there and expected age range
 - Common livelihoods in the area
 - Natural and cultural highlights
 - Accessibility (e.g. nearest airport, public transport)
 - Any potential logistical challenges or considerations (limited Wi-Fi, language barriers, rural setting, dress code etc.)

Create Outreach and Promotional Materials

Prepare both international and local-facing promotional tools:

- **Posters for the village and neighboring communities** (print and digital)
- **A short video** introducing the location, culture, and people—this helps facilitators understand the context and get excited
- **Peace School logo:** Design a local version such as “Servas Peace School Georgia” or “Servas Peace School Uganda.” You can refer to the Servas Peace School Turkey logo for inspiration
- **Social Media Pages:** Set up dedicated Facebook and/or Instagram accounts to post updates and stories

- **Dedicated Email Address:** Use something simple and recognizable (e.g. servaspeaceschoolcolombia@gmail.com) for communications with Servas members and applicants
- **Send the poster and application form to Servas Exco** so they can support your outreach and share your initiative on global Servas channels

Reach Out to Local Communities

Your Peace School belongs to the whole community. Invite and engage local people early and often:

- **Invite local schools, teachers, artists, and cultural centers** to participate or co-host workshops. Prepare a document that includes the program activities to date, contact information for key organizers, and clear rules and guidelines for participation. This will help everyone understand their role, stay informed, and work together smoothly.
- **Reach out to neighboring villages** to share the opportunity with more children and volunteers
- **Engage local youth:** Include them in your organizing team from the beginning. Their energy and ideas are essential
- **Recruit local volunteers** of all ages. Everyone can contribute: cooking, music, translation, sports, storytelling, and more
- **Announce your Peace School** publicly in village meetings, on local noticeboards, and through word-of-mouth
- **Seek local sponsorship** to help cover material costs, food for volunteers, or logistics (e.g. local bakeries, farmers, community groups)

Step 6: Arranging Accommodation

International facilitators stay with host families in the village.

- **Find and prepare host families early.** Ask them about sleeping space, dietary restrictions, and any preferences for guests.
- **Explain cultural exchange:** Hosting is a two-way experience. Families share meals, traditions, and daily life.
- **Coordinate numbers:** Make sure you have enough host families before confirming facilitator applications.

Step 7: Participants (Children & Community)

Peace School is for everyone in the village, and beyond! While the main activities focus on children aged about 6 to 16, the entire community is welcome to participate. Parents, grandparents, teachers, local storytellers, artists, and musicians are all invited to share their time, skills, and culture.

You're also encouraged to reach out to neighbouring villages. Many children and families may want to take part once they hear about the opportunity. The more people who join, the richer and more meaningful the experience becomes.

Practical Tips:

- Spread the word through teachers, elders, and local leaders.
- **Inclusivity:** No child should be excluded for any reason. The Peace School is free of charge and open to all.
- **Neighboring villages:** Invite nearby communities to join. The broader the cultural exchange, the richer the experience.
- **Communication:** Share start/end times and let families know what children may need to bring (hats, sunscreen, water bottles).

No one is too young or too old to take part in creating peace. Everyone belongs.

Step 8: Facilitators (Local & International)

Peace Schools are brought to life by a diverse group of facilitators, both local and international, who voluntarily share their time, skills, and spirit of peace.

Local Facilitators:

- Usually older teenagers or young adults from the village.
- They help lead games, assist international facilitators, and offer informal translation.
- Even without language skills, they help bridge cultural gaps through gestures, smiles, and play.
- Encourage local youth to take leadership roles. This strengthens the village's ability to host future Peace Schools.

International Facilitators:

- Must be Servas members (or approved guests).

- They apply through the **Servas event page**. If the number of host families is limited, preference should be given to facilitators who have not participated in a Peace School before and who have never been to the Peace School location.
- These individuals bring their own talents, music, languages, storytelling, crafts, games, science, food traditions, and more, and offer a window into cultures that the children may have never encountered before.
- Their stay is deeply enriched by homestays with local families. Once the capacity of the host families is confirmed, a confirmation email should be sent to the international facilitators. Facilitators will be assigned to hosts by the organizing team. In some cases, and depending on the length of the Peace School and the number of available host families, facilitators may rotate between different hosts. This is recommended as it allows facilitators to experience the community from multiple perspectives while also giving more families the chance to share in the cultural exchange. The confirmation email should be sent 3–4 months before the start of the Peace School so facilitators can book flights and arrange their travel plans. Travelers will arrive and depart on the dates stipulated by the program organizers.

Both local and international facilitators bring something unique to the experience, and together, they create a vibrant, collaborative environment where learning, connection, and peace-building happen every day.

Step 9: Funding & Resources

- Peace Schools run on a **voluntary, self-funded model**.
- International facilitators **pay their own travel costs**.
- Keep activities **low-cost and eco-friendly** by using local or recycled materials. Most activities can be done with things you find around you in nature. Be creative!
- Seek **in-kind donations** from local businesses (snacks, paint, craft supplies).
- If needed, small grants may be available from Servas or community sponsors.

Step 10: Design the Program – Keep It Flexible!

Peace School thrives on spontaneity, creativity, and collaboration. There is no fixed curriculum; each program is shaped by the unique mix of facilitators, children, and community members who bring it to life.

While the spirit is open and responsive, there are also a few important elements to include:

Key guidelines:

- **Facilitator contributions:** Every international facilitator should lead or co-lead an activity. Whether it's a song, a science experiment, a language game, or a dance, each person brings something meaningful to share.
- **Local culture:** The local community should be given multiple opportunities to showcase their culture. This may include teaching a traditional song or craft, sharing stories or meals, or guiding the group through the village's history or landscape.
- **Let the program grow organically.** Start by identifying the skills and interests of the facilitators and children, and build the schedule around those. Keep plans open and adaptable,
- **Outdoor focus:** Most activities are outside, but prepare indoor spaces for rainy days etc.
- **Encourage a mix of activity types.** Games, storytelling, arts, music, language exchange, and hands-on workshops are all welcome.
- **Peace School traditions:**

- **Plan a trekking activity:** Organize a day hike with children, facilitators, and parents; nature builds peace and connection.

Peace School Nature Walk in Ekinci, 2025



- **Painting a Peace Wall:** A public mural created by children and facilitators to symbolize unity and peace.
- **Multilingual Choir:** Teach children songs in different languages to celebrate diversity and unity.
- **Final Night Show and Celebration:** A celebratory performance where children showcase what they've learned. Invite the whole community.





Kids presenting their poems at the final night celebration in the Peace School Campus in Ekinçi. Art they created throughout the week is displayed on the walls of the dome.

- **Prepare certificates:** Create and distribute certificates for volunteers and host families. See Sample Template in the Appendix.

These traditions not only bring joy and a sense of achievement but also leave a lasting symbol of peace in the village.

For a sample schedule and more ideas, see the Appendix.

Step 11: Reflect & Plan for Next Year

After the Peace School ends:

- Gather feedback from children, families, and facilitators (see the Appendix for templates).
- Document your experience with photos, drawings, and stories, these will inspire future Peace Schools. Share your experience with Servas; write blog posts and letters for the Servas website and newsletter.
- Start early conversations for next year's event.



Volunteering at a Peace School (For International Facilitators)

Being a Peace School Animator

As an international volunteer (called an *animator*), you'll step into a unique opportunity to connect, co-create, and grow. You'll be welcomed into a rural village community where you'll live with a host family, learn about daily life, and contribute to a child-centered, joy-filled week of workshops and peace education.

You do not need a teaching degree or formal qualifications, just curiosity, kindness, and a willingness to engage with others. Your presence and participation are the most valuable gifts you bring.

Are You the Right Fit?

You might love being a Peace School facilitator if you:

- Enjoy working with children in informal, creative ways
- Are adaptable and excited to learn from others
- Want a meaningful travel experience rooted in community and service
- Are comfortable stepping outside your comfort zone and into a new culture
- Believe peace starts with small, intentional acts and relationships



Typical Roles & Contributions

Your role as a facilitator will be flexible and shaped by your strengths.

Expect to:

- Spend your days outside, immersed in nature and community
- Leading or co-leading creative child-centered workshops (arts, games, music, storytelling, science, etc.)

- Collaborate with local youth facilitators in facilitation and planning
- Celebrate peace, play, and learning through shared experiences
- Navigate language differences using gestures, music, and smiles
- Helping with daily logistics (setup, cleanup, materials)
- Participating in cultural exchanges (sharing your country's traditions)
- Taking part in village life: cooking, dancing, visiting neighbors
- Helping organize special moments like the Peace Wall mural or the final day celebration
- Offering informal English conversation sessions or multilingual exchanges

At the end of the program, Servas members are asked to:

- Make a report for their national group.
- Share the experience in an in-person meeting in their local city with more Servas members.
- Post on social media or on the Servas website
- Contribute with the next edition of the Peace School supporting the organizing team and spreading the message.

See the Appendix for some examples of workshop activities.



Peaceful Morning Yoga led by Gül, from Türkiye.

What to Expect Logistically

- Most Peace Schools last 6-10 days, plus arrival and departure time.
- You'll stay with a local host family in the village.
- Meals are typically shared and home-cooked, and dietary restrictions can be accommodated.

International facilitators being taught to prepare Xinkali, a traditional Georgian meal.



- Expect basic living conditions; this is rural life! Electricity, Wi-Fi, or hot showers may be limited.
- Translators are not always available. Creativity and patience are key to communication.
- Daily programs usually run in the mornings and early afternoons. Afternoons/evenings include reflection, cultural exchange, and time with your host family.

Sharing Your Passions

Your passions are your best teaching tools. Whether you love:

- Art, crafts, or dance

- Languages or storytelling
- Sports or nature games
- Science experiments or musical traditions

...you are encouraged to share them! Your unique perspective enriches the experience for children and other volunteers alike. Every Peace School is different because the people involved bring their full selves. Each facilitator brings a unique piece of the world to the village.

What You'll Gain

Participating in a Peace School is a transformative experience, for the village, but also for you.

Personal Growth

You'll learn to lead with empathy, adapt quickly, and engage in deep listening and creative communication, especially in multilingual, multicultural settings.

Cultural Immersion

Living with a local family offers an authentic, unfiltered view of rural life, something most travelers never experience. You'll discover new ways of thinking, cooking, playing, and being.

Friendships & Lifelong Connections

You'll bond with people of all ages, from local children to fellow facilitators from around the world. These friendships often last far beyond the Peace School week.



How the Community Benefits

Skill Sharing

Children are exposed to new ideas, talents, and skills from around the world, whether it's learning a new game, building something with their hands, or trying words in a different language.

Exposure to New Cultures

Many children and families have never had the chance to travel. Peace School brings the world to them, fostering curiosity, empathy, and a broader worldview.

Uplifting Young Voices

Peace Schools prioritize creativity, spontaneity, and child-led learning. Children gain confidence in expressing themselves, collaborating with others, and dreaming big.



How to Sign Up

Application Process

To become an international animator, keep an eye out for upcoming Peace Schools listed on the Servas Events page. Each event typically includes a form where you can express your interest and share your ideas or skills. All ages are welcome: solo travelers, couples, retirees, students, and families with children. Spots are limited so apply and write thoughtfully.

The application form will include questions such as:

- Please introduce yourself
- What topics can you teach to children?
- Please write a few workshop ideas which you plan to do with children in detail. Include: the topic, duration, age group, how many children, materials needed, description of the activity, how many sessions, what time of the day is better etc.
- What activities can you organize with/for local/international volunteers? e.g. icebreaker games, cooking, cultural exchange
- What do you think you will contribute to Peace School and to the village?
- What do you think Peace School and the village will contribute to you?

Who to Contact

Each Peace School will have a local coordinator you can reach out to with questions about travel, accommodations, logistics, and expectations. Their contact may be listed on the form posted on the event page but if you're unsure where to begin, email: peaceschool@servas.org ...and someone will point you in the right direction.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Is it safe to travel to rural villages?

Yes, Peace Schools are hosted in welcoming communities where safety is a shared responsibility. Organizers work closely with local families and leaders to ensure everyone is cared for and supported.

Do I need to speak the local language?

Not at all! Language is not a barrier. Local facilitators and older children often assist with translation. Communication happens in many ways, through music, art, smiles, and games.

Is there Wi-Fi?

Possible but it is not guaranteed. If you are unsure you can reach out to the coordinators. However, the Peace school uses limited technology and it is an opportunity to disconnect and

be fully present. We recommend buying a local SIM card or an e-sim if you'll need occasional access.

Will there be electricity?

Homes may have electricity but power outages may also be common. You can check with the coordinators but it is always a good idea to bring a flashlight or headlamp just in case.

What about meals?

Facilitators stay with host families who will provide meals. Meals are a wonderful time to bond and share stories. Families always appreciate you cooking a meal for them to share your cultural cuisine.



Facilitators and local people enjoying breakfast together in Lamovani, Georgia, 2025.

What time of year are peace schools run?

Peace Schools are usually held during school holidays like summer, making outdoor activities more reliable.

Who can join a Peace School?

Peace Schools welcome people of all ages and backgrounds. Come solo, with a friend, or even with your children.



Appendix & Additional Resources

Sample Activities & Workshops

Song and Dance

Music is the universal language of Peace. What a great way to connect and share your culture!





Left: Volunteers and students dancing together. Right: Girl dancing with traditional dress from Georgia

Planting Trees and Seeds

Showing and teaching care for the environment. Our planet is the one thing we all share. What a gift to take care of it together.





Walks in Nature

You can learn a lot about the world around you if you take the time to observe. Walk with children and talk about how plants are food and medicine. Observe, listen, smell, feel, and taste what nature has to offer.



And cleaning up the neighbourhood. Learning to appreciate nature means learning to take care of it.



Creating Art

Elizabeth from Venezuela taught the kids to make natural paint from eucalyptus bark.





Alexa from Canada led an activity about nature and parks in Canada. Each child designed their own "Peace Park" with elements like benches for talking, playgrounds to play together, flowers of many colours and much more!



The kids painted bamboo sticks with the word "Peace" in different languages. At the end, they strung them all together to display. What a great way to show that peace is worldwide.



Ana Maria from Colombia taught weaving with bamboo leaves.



Learning traditional Georgian cross-stitching from Maka in Lamovani.



Tuna from Türkiye led a workshop on “An Ocean of Emotions” helping students identify and process emotions.

Mandala “god’s eye” , or “Ojo de dios” in Spanish, workshops led by Francisco Salomon Luna from Mexico. Francisco taught about its history and significance as a symbol of peace, protection, and a healthy life for children.





Sharing Stories



Alexa and Radha shared stories about collaboration and kindness.



Mehmet read stories about the world in the Ekinci Earth House.



Gabriel, who came from Spain, shared his travel diaries and life experiences, which he has been keeping for years, with everyone.



Mehmet talks about the books he wrote about his travels with the Peace Schools.

Cooking

Luigi from Italy baking bread.



Ana Maria from Colombia making Colombian food with the village children in Ekinci, Turkey.

Playing Games

Alexa from Canada teaching the kids "bubblegum" a fun game to learn the colours.



Teamwork makes the dreamwork



Playing street games with the children.

Templates & Printable Resources

Sample schedule

Lamovani summer camp 2025,

First day schedule

Day/number	Activity	Time/Resources
20 June - Friday		
I Opening of the camp.	Introducing participants and guests. ➤ Guest address to the participants. ➤ Explanation of the rules. introduction/testing of signal songs. ➤ introducing the camp agenda to the participants.	10-11 o'clock
II Getting to know Sakartvelo.	Presentation/dance/song.	
III Familiarization activities.	Games: Remembering names/Name and action/Playing with a psaid. Organizers: Ledi, Keli, Mehmed, Goga.	11-12 o'clock
IV Free time, preparation for the next activity.		12- 12:30 o'clock
V International presentation: Servas	Salomon Luna	12:30-13:30 o'clock

V lunch		13:30-14:30 o'clock
VI Reflection	summary of the day, introduction to the next agenda.	14:30- 15:00 o'clock

Day/number	Activity	Time/Resources
23 June - Monday		
I ➤ Morning invigorating exercises.	Solomon Luna or Mehmed exercises.	10:00-10:30 o'clock
II Anatolian street games.	Anatolian street game. Eda Pinat.	10:30-11:30 o'clock.(No resources required)
III Free time/Preparing for the next activity.	(optional, games, songs)	11:30-12:00 o'clock
IV	Maka Goguaдзе. Masterclass in art.	12:00-13:00 o'clock

international		
VI lunch		13:30-14:30 o'clock
VII Reflection/summary of the day, introduction to the next agenda.		14:30 - 15:00 o'clock

Lamovani summer camp 2025,

Second day schedule

Day/number	Activity	Time/Resources
21 June - Saturday		
I > Morning invigorating exercises.	Solomon Luna or Mehmed exercises.	10:00-10:30 o'clock
II > Sports games, fun starts.	Fun starts organized by Levan Dzebisashvili.	10:30-11:30 o'clock
III Free time/Preparing for the activity.	(optional, games, songs)	11:30-12:00 o'clock
IV Solomon Luna	handmade things	12:00-13:30 o'clock. (Luna brings the resources herself.)

Art		
V Planting plants in the school yard.	We are planting plants in the school yard/painting the walls and the room at the same time.	13:00-13:30 o'clock
VI Lunch		13:30-14:30 o'clock
VII Reflection	summary of the day, introduction to the next agenda.	14:30- 15:00 o'clock

Day/number	Activity	Time/Resources
24 June - Tuesday		
I Morning invigorating exercises.	Solomon Luna's exercises.	10:00-10:30 o'clock
II Tuna fish.	Making beads	10:30-11:30 o'clock
III Free time/Preparing for the next activity.	(optional, games, songs)	11:30-12:00 o'clock
IV	Dance-game	12:00-13:30 o'clock

Ezra Aleev		
V lunch		13:30-14:30 o'clock
VI Reflection	summary of the day, introduction to the next agenda.	14:30- 15:00 o'clock

Schedule for 2025 Peace School in Turkey: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DX-oDLUITBMvMrXj-l89fts0ijyhG_j4WRDjHOsc_yk/edit?usp=sharing

Organizer's Checklist (Printable Guide)

Before Contacting Servas

- Understand the Peace School concept and principles.
- Identify a supportive local community (teachers, families, youth).
- Identify possible outdoor/indoor spaces for activities.
- Check accommodation capacity (how many host families?).
- Consider transport options for facilitators.
- Draft an initial program idea and possible dates.

Planning Phase (4–6 Months Before)

- Contact Mehmet Ateş and your Servas national committee.
- Confirm location and dates.
- Create a short info sheet about the village (population, culture, natural beauty, challenges).
- Prepare promotional materials (poster + short video).
- Set up a dedicated email and/or social media accounts.
- Recruit local facilitators (older teens/youth).
- Launch international facilitator sign-ups on the Servas event page.
- Determine your homestay families and number of facilitators they can host.
- Finalize local sponsorships or material donations.
- Confirm travel details for facilitators (airport, bus connections).
- Arrange food/water for daily activities.

During the Peace School

- Organize a brief orientation for facilitators and host families.
- Keep the schedule flexible but include core traditions (Peace Wall, final performance).
- Document activities with photos, drawings, and stories.
- Encourage feedback and reflection circles with children and facilitators.
- On the last day, host a community celebration for the kids and thank host families.

After the Peace School

- Collect feedback forms (children, facilitators, families).
- Share highlights with Servas (photos, stories).
- Begin planning for next year!

Poster Examples



SERVAS BARIŞ OKULU BAŞLIYOR..

SERVAS PEACE SCHOOL IS STARTING..

**Yer: Ekinci, Aydiy - Antakya/Turkey
Atatürk Ortaokulu Bahçesi**

04-14 July 2025

Saatler: 09.30-11.30 / 18.00-20.00

Katılacak ülkeler:

**Kolombiya, Meksika, Türkiye, ABD
İtalya, Pakistan, Kanada**

@servaspeaceschool



Servas Barış Okulu Servas Peace School

7 July 2025 - Monday
Morning Program 9:30-11:30

- Warm up
- Traditional street games - Mehmet 🟢
- Human knot - Alexa 🏀

Workshops

- making Graffe with Luigi, Francisco 🥰
- totem polls with Alexa ▶️
- coaster with bamboo leaves with Ana Maria ☕
- life cycle of a butterfly with Nila 🦋



Certificate template

Here is a Canva link to a template for the certificate. Areas in red are for you to change and fill in with your Peace School's details. When editing the design, please go to file->make a copy (in the top right-hand corner) which will give you your own editable copy. This ensures that others will continue to have access to the red instruction template. Thank you for your cooperation in making this template accessible to all future Peace Schools. On your own copy, when you have finished filling in the details, you can change the colour of the font to match the rest of the text.

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGurFNO-QU/rikhaOH-3JjYkFHqk8PcNQ/edit?utm_content=DAGurFNO-QU&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

Collecting Feedback & Reflections

Feedback is vital for improving future Peace Schools and understanding the experience from every perspective. Organizers are encouraged to collect input from all involved: children, parents, host families, and facilitators. You can gather responses using Google Forms, paper surveys, audio interviews, informal group discussions, or creative activities like drawing or storytelling circles with the children.

Below is a customizable feedback form that you can adapt for your Peace School.

Servas Peace School – Feedback Form

Thank you for being part of the Servas Peace School! Your reflections help us improve and continue building peaceful, joyful spaces for children and communities. Please answer honestly. You can skip any questions you don't want to answer.

- Name (optional):
- Role (you can check more than one):
 - Facilitator(volunteer)
 - Parent or guardian
 - Host family
 - Local community member
 - Organizer
 - Other: _____
- Location of Peace School:
- Date(s) you participated:
- 1. What was your favorite part of the Peace School experience?
- 2. What did you or your child(ren) learn or gain from participating?
- 3. What is one moment that you will remember for a long time?
- 4. What part of the Peace School felt most meaningful to you, and why?
- 5. Were there any parts of the experience that were confusing, difficult, or disappointing? Please explain.
- 6. How did the Peace School affect your connection to your community or to people from other countries?
- 7. Did the Peace School feel welcoming and inclusive to everyone?
- 8. Do you have any ideas or suggestions for how to improve future Peace Schools?

9. Would you like to stay involved with Servas Peace Schools? If yes, how?

Short Ratings (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I felt welcomed and respected during my experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The activities were well-organized and meaningful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication before and during the event was clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt connected to the children and/or other participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe this Peace School had a positive impact on the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would recommend being involved in a Peace School to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is there anything else you'd like to share?
(Stories, quotes, suggestions, questions, etc.)

How to Use the Feedback

- Review common themes and areas of improvement with your organizing team.
- Share a short summary with the community and volunteers.
- Use the feedback to strengthen your proposal when applying for support from Servas in the future.
- Consider publishing testimonials (with permission) on the Servas website or social media to promote future Peace Schools.