

# (Re)Connecting Youth

*Exchanging Global Lessons*

## RED JUVENIL

*Ciudad Juárez, Mexico*

### THE CHALLENGE

From 2008 to 2012, **Ciudad Juárez, Mexico became known as the most dangerous place on earth.** Violence engulfed the city, located just across the border from El Paso, Texas, as rival drug cartels competed for access to the lucrative U.S. drug market. To help address the root causes of the violence, concerned youth began to mobilize but faced challenges shared by youth across the world: How to have their voices heard? How to work with government and other key stakeholders? How to build a movement?

### THE INITIATIVE

In response to the unprecedented violence in Ciudad Juárez, in 2010 a group of young leaders joined together in launching Red de Agrupaciones Juveniles (Network of Youth Groups), or the Red, for short. Beginning as a loose-knit collective of youth-led initiatives, the Red's membership gradually evolved into over 70 legally-registered, youth-run organizations. Each delivered much-needed services at the grassroots level, while engaging their peers in efforts to lead positive change.

While initially reluctant to engage youth voices, government leaders at the local and national level eventually came to support the Red's efforts. A shared priority was addressing the underlying causes of youth alienation and anger (e.g., poverty, poor quality education, and lack of recreational and employment opportunities) that often drove young people to join the ranks of narcotics traffickers. Red members excelled at pursuing creative strategies to engage their peers and to strengthen community ties through workshops and events that incorporated music, dance, film, graffiti, screen printing, poetry, painting, and more.

Building on the Red's success, in 2012 a national initiative was launched—Red Viral (Viral Youth Network)—to support and connect grassroots youth movements in other parts of Mexico. Today, Viral is active in 32 Mexican cities.

“We wanted to make a difference. It didn't matter if you worked with children, or worked with communities, we shared the same goal of making our city better.”

—Daniel Martinez

*Member, Red Juvenil*

*Founder, La City Ride*

### IMPACT

By 2012, more than 24,000 people had benefited directly from the efforts of the Red's 73 youth-led member organizations. In 2013, a Municipal Youth Committee was formed in Juarez to support local youth development and incorporate youth voices into related policy decisions. The committee continues its work to this day.

To learn more, visit: [iyfreconnectingyouth.org](http://iyfreconnectingyouth.org)



Support provided by

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

