

[A Transformed Medellin: From Fear to Hope](#)

The theme of Partners' International Convention was brought to light during the morning plenary sessions on Wednesday. Through presentations by Federico Torres and Maria Elena Restrepo from the Municipality of Medellin, we learned not just how Medellin has changed over the last 20 years, but how this transformation was made possible.

The transformation of Medellin was more than strategic city planning--it incorporated a cultural transformation to bring citizens together. From a city that was divided, fractured, and filled with violence, the city worked to create citizen pride in their city and use public works to physically and spiritually bring people together. Medellin is not just a city of transformation, it is:

- A city of knowledge: public kindergartens, quality schools, library parks, and centers for entrepreneurship have opened up new educational opportunities for citizens and created a new sense of pride within divided and poor communities
- A city of Sports and Recreation: the city worked to not only provide public courts and fields, but also to reduce congestion and create pedestrian areas to encourage people to enjoy the city more
- A city of Family: while housing was an important issue, the city sought to not just build houses, but to build habitats where families could live comfortably
- A city of movement: Maria Elena's presentation showed how building the public transit system involved much more than figuring out how to move people from one place to another. The Metrocable system in Medellin was built to bring diverse people together and provide economic development for marginalized zones. The Metrocable is viewed as a thread, weaving the city and it's citizens together

The model in Medellin involves several components:

- Building confidence in the government and the political system that leads the transformation
- Citizen participation to define needs and values
- Transparency and careful allocation of public resources
- Creating social identity within the city

When asked what their secret is here in Medellin, Dr. Torres responded that they don't have secrets, they have convictions. They believe in the social fabric of the city and bringing people together to unite their voices for change. In Medellin, the soul of the transformation has been citizen participation, and the heart of transformation has been culture. These are the keys that have lead them from fear to hope and beyond.