

Country strategic plan summary for 2006-2010

This document describes how Plan and its partners in Colombia will mobilize the different resources to improve the welfare and prospects of vulnerable children. It provides the strategic framework for consistent and continued action from 2006 to 2010.

About Colombia

Colombia is the second most populated country in South America, with 45 million inhabitants, of which 18 million are children. Colombia is a multi-cultural and bio-diverse country. It covers an area of more than 430,000 square miles; its capital city is Bogotá and its language Spanish. The nation is faced with a severe humanitarian crisis which is the result of an escalating armed conflict that has caused the forced displacement of more than 3 million people, the second highest number in the world.

Current issues affecting children

Problems were identified and prioritized with the direct participation of the children, youths and adults in the communities and based on the revision of previous programs. The situations that utmost violate children's rights in Colombia include:

- Lack of protection and the abuse and mistreatment of the children affected by forced displacement as a consequence of the armed conflict.
- The high number of deaths and diseases among young children, which may be prevented by means of vaccination and self-care.
- Lack of drinking water and drains in homes.
- Low quality and insufficient pre-school, primary and secondary education.
- Increased sexual exploitation and physical and psychological mistreatment of children and women.
- Drug addiction and high pregnancy rates among teenagers.



Families identified lack of water at home as one of the main issues.



Plan in Colombia

Plan arrived in Colombia in 1962 and at present it works in 40 municipalities in the departments of Nariño, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Chocó, Sucre, Atlántico, and Bolívar. Plan supports over 190 communities in the building of opportunities for the children. As promoters of children's rights we are firm believers in their capacities and, as such, our aim is to make their voices heard where matters that affect them are decided upon.

Program approach

Our programs promote children's rights and address problems resulting from the violation of such rights. We work with various communities, helping people to organize and to actively participate in the search for solutions and answers to problems. Activities are carried out directly with the children and adolescents by developing their skills to exercise and demand their rights. We also work with the guarantors of the rights, i.e. the parents, teachers, governments and the civil society responsible for the compliance of these rights.

Plan works through alliances allowing the communities to coordinate their development with other actors, both

institutional and social, thus obtaining sustainable results over time.

"In the different groups that contributed to the elaboration of the strategic plan, an excellent knowledge of the problems of the communities was perceived. They showed a great capacity to establish and analyze the causes and consequences of the problems identified as primary." Rafael Correa, member of Plan field staff.

How Plan will address these issues

Early childhood

We strengthen the skills of the adults responsible for the care and upbringing of children less than five years of age, by means of preventing the most frequent diseases occurring in these children. Likewise we work on improving the opportunities and the quality of preschool education programs, the access to drinking water and basic sanitation services.



Plan promotes the right to quality education for children.

Adolescents build life, community and a country

We promote the adolescents' participation in collective interest activities with their peers to generate among them a sense of solidarity, responsibility and autonomy. We also promote their taking part in organizations that will allow them to make decisions in the transformation of their social reality. At the same time we work with the schools in improving the development of basic competences that will encourage the adolescents to continue studying and to take active part in matters affecting their education. We also work with the health institutions to promote the access to quality sexual and reproductive health services.

Family, community and state: guarantors of rights

Work is being carried out with those responsible for children's and adolescents' rights (families, civil society organizations and local governments) to strengthen their

skills and thus achieve positive changes in terms of sexual and reproductive health, peaceful coexistence and livelihood.

Integral attention to displaced children

We work with people who have been displaced by the armed conflict and who are considered the most vulnerable population, because when forced to flee from their soil, they not only lose their belongings, but they also suffer from the effects of their uprooting. We provide social and psychological support so that the families may restart their lives in their new settlement, overcome the trauma of the conflict, improve their food conditions and have the opportunity of access education and sources of income.

Learning to live from school

With children between six and 12 years of age we work from the school, taking into consideration both their social and family settings, to promote their right to education and address issues of mistreatment at school and quality of teaching. The outcome is reflected in the number of children with opportunities to study, children who finish their schooling at an adequate age, as well as in the opportunities of formal and informal post-primary education.

Social mobilization for development

This program promotes solidarity and responsibility through the education of local and foreign audiences, so that they will assume an active role regarding poverty issues. It discloses the children's situation and facilitates the exchange of experiences between child groups. Likewise, it aims at positioning the children's rights in the public agenda, especially as regards those matters related to their protection and participation, to bring the national legislation closer to international agreements.



Children promote awareness about their rights during a local parade.

"I consider that the participation of youth and adults was positive for the identification of problems. The youth generated a discussion when commenting on domestic violence and drug addiction and by stating that children and youth are those most affected by this situation". Delcy Licero, member of Plan field staff in Colombia.