

YOUR ANNUAL UPDATE FROM COLUMBIA

We wanted to share some exciting progress made possible in Columbia thanks to support from you!

Many children in Columbia live in rural areas. Accessing health care can be difficult. Girls often grow up without learning about menstruation, and a lack of private and hygienic spaces in schools means that many girls miss out on education while on their period. Young people have limited opportunities for higher education or for skilled employment. The effects of historical violence in Colombia are still prevalent in the region, and some youth are forcibly recruited by armed groups.

Throughout fiscal year 2020, with the help of your sponsorship, we were able to provide communication and peace-building skills to young people affected by armed violence in their communities. We were able to offer vocational and technical training to young people so they can earn a living within their communities. Through educational workshops, girls and young women are now aware of their sexual and reproductive rights and have gained confidence. As a result, they can hygienically manage their periods.

We are grateful to you for making these changes possible. We know you will enjoy reading on to see how your generosity is changing the lives of children, like your sponsored child, across this region.



OUR IMPACT

10,000 PEOPLE ATTENDED
EVENTS PROMOTING CHILD
PROTECTION IN CAUCA-VALLE

1,626 GIRLS AND WOMEN IN
CAUCA-VALLE TRAINED ON
SEXUAL AND
REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

549 CHILDREN INCREASED
THEIR READING AND WRITING
SKILLS IN REGION CARIBE

1,153 PEOPLE IN REGION
CARIBE TRAINED ON
FINANCIAL EDUCATION



PLAN INTERNATIONAL COVID-19 RESPONSE

COVID-19 is having devastating impacts all over the world. It is not only a health emergency, it is an education and protection emergency. Since girls are often worse affected during a crisis, Plan International is putting them at the heart of our response and long-term outlook. We have scaled up healthcare systems, food security, access to clean water, handwashing and awareness campaigns, and keep education in children's lives via radio broadcasts.

STORYTELLING FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Cauca-Valle is one of the regions most affected by the history of armed conflict in Colombia. This has serious psychosocial implications for children and youth, and

many young people are at risk of exploitation from illegal armed groups.

Young people do not have opportunities to express and share their personal and family experiences of violence. Without communication skills and a culture of dialogue, young people cannot resolve conflict and rebuild relationships.

We organised storytelling workshops in which 30 youth gained narrative and communication skills. This helped them start a reparations process to promote peace-building within their families and their communities. After the workshops, the young people started to produce two magazines, acknowledging and reflecting their traditions, habits and customs as part of their creative storytelling. This has helped the girls and boys increase their resilience and learn to build relationships with others.



WE HELD 5 WORKSHOPS USING PRACTICAL EXERCISES FOR YOUTH TO TELL THEIR LIFE STORIES AS TOOLS TO BUILD PEACE

IMPROVING MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

More than 34% of girls in Cauca-Valle were not taught anything about menstruation. This lack of knowledge has serious health implications, as girls do not know how to safely use menstrual products. Limited access to private and hygienic toilets in schools means that many girls miss out on education while on their periods.

To improve girls' knowledge about menstruation, we have held 43 menstrual hygiene workshops in 37 communities. At these workshops, girls and young women learned about their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We also distributed sanitary towel kits to 1,626 girls and young women, so they can effectively and hygienically manage their periods.

"I attended a menstrual hygiene workshop, where they gave me 12 packets of sanitary towels. I also learnt more about my menstrual cycle, my physical changes and hygiene. This made me happy and I thank Plan for giving me the chance to learn more about this stage of my life."

Aliana, 11 years old



INVESTING IN SAFE WATER

In Region Caribe, 70% of the water pipelines are made of asbestos cement in poor condition. Most families have been consuming this unpurified water, causing serious

health issues. Children are most at risk from a lack of safe water. They often suffer from waterborne diseases which keep them from going to school.



To help improve access to safe and clean drinking water, we provided 36 water filters to families in a sponsored community. These water filters will help more than 280 people access clean water for the next ten years.

Within six months of using these water filters, cases of diarrhoea diseases reduced significantly. Families also experienced an economic benefit as they do not need to spend so much money on gas anymore which they previously used to boil water before drinking. Since the families have easy access to safe and clean water, they no longer have to use or purchase plastic bottles - this also reduces the amount of plastic waste they produce.

ALL FAMILY MEMBERS FOUND THE FILTERS EASY TO USE, INCLUDING CHILDREN, SO THEY WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER FOR YEARS TO COME

PROTECTING REFUGEE CHILDREN

With the ongoing socio-economic and political crisis in Venezuela, many refugees arrive in Colombia to seek protection and economic opportunities. They urgently need humanitarian aid, in particular regarding health, food, water and sanitation. Having entered the country unofficially, many people are not registered and therefore have no access to the health and protection system.

With the support of grants and other sources of funding, we strengthened local institutions responsible for refugees. We trained the staff of local and national authorities on their rights and responsibilities. To support the migrants and communities where sponsored children live, we provided guidance on human rights and protection, as well as health and hygiene. We also created safe spaces for children where they are being taken care of while their parents work.

"I'm very grateful to you for protecting us and teaching us so many good things every day. Thank you for everything."

Yeili, 10, refugee and project participant



YOUR SUPPORT IS CHANGING LIVES

With your support, we will continue to protect children's rights so they are able to thrive.

In the coming year, we will continue to work with the children, families and partners across Columbia:



- Educating girls on menstrual hygiene and providing sanitary products so girls and young women can safely manage their periods with dignity.



- Improving the economic opportunities for young people by organising vocational training and providing support to make sure that young people can earn a living within their communities.



- Providing peaceful conflict resolution workshops so children and young people can continue to build peace and strengthen relationships after so many years of armed conflict.



- Implementing leadership training activities with children and youth to strengthen their public advocacy on issues that matter to them.

These are just some of the many ways your kindness will continue to touch the life of your sponsored child and other children. We would not be able to do this without supporters like you!



MESSAGE FROM **MARTHA ESPINOSA**

Programme Area Manager,
Cauca-Valle

"Thank you so much for the support you give to children and their families through Plan. Over the past fiscal year, we have managed to improve the conditions and environments that they live and grow up in."

MESSAGE FROM **SHIRLEY NAVARRO**

Programme Area Manager,
Region Caribe

"Thanks to your contribution, the projects implemented in this region had a significant impact on the lives of children and adolescents through the transfer of knowledge to promote and demand their rights, generating processes that encouraged inclusion and gender equality."

