

WELCOME TO COLOMBIA

Colombia is in the far north of South America, with coastlines on the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Its varied geography ranges from tropical beaches, to the Amazon Rainforest, to the snow-capped Andes Mountains. Spanish is the official language of Colombia, but more than 60 indigenous languages are also spoken in this multi-ethnic and diverse country.



23°C

VARIED

CLIMATE

COOLER IN THE
MOUNTAINS

WARMER ON THE
COAST

YOUR SPONSORED CHILD'S COMMUNITY

Cauca-Valle is a valley in the western part of Colombia, known for its numerous rivers which drain into the Pacific Ocean. Most families make their living through farming, raising cattle, or tourism.

Children in Cauca-Valle live mainly in houses made of brick, cement, or tiles. Houses generally have two bedrooms, a dining room, a kitchen, and a bathroom. Food is very important in Colombia, and common dishes include tamales and arepas.

One in five adolescent girls aged 13 to 19 becomes pregnant in Cauca-Valle. This rate of early childbearing seriously impacts on the health of young mothers and their babies. It also prevents girls and young women from reaching their full potential, as teenage pregnancy is a common cause for girls to drop out of school.



WE STARTED WORKING IN
CAUCA-VALLE IN

1982



POPULATION

207,564

OUR PLAN TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S LIVES

13%

OF CHILDREN ARE NOT
ENROLLED AT A SCHOOL

21%

OF GIRLS BECOME PREGNANT
AS TEENAGERS

57%

OF RURAL PEOPLE HAVE NO
ACCESS TO SAFE WATER

PROTECTING CHILDREN

Children and families in Cauca-Valle are still suffering from the effects of the armed conflict. Peace and community reconciliation are important for all people to open the door to a future full of hope and possibility.

We have worked with community organisations to bring children together with fun activities that promote peace-building, conflict resolution, leadership skills, and respect for human rights.

IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS FOR YOUTH

Armed conflict has resulted in high unemployment for young people, especially in rural areas of Cauca-Valle. Young people will often migrate to the city to find work.

Plan International has trained young people on farming techniques. Youth have also learned financial and leadership skills, so they can earn a living and become leaders in their communities.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

In Cauca-Valle, it's common for girls to become pregnant as teenagers and to drop-out of school. Along with the health problems associated with early pregnancy, girls also lack of opportunities to support themselves and their babies.

To help empower girls to make informed choices about their lives and bodies, Plan International has been providing training to young people on sexual and reproductive health. Now they can stand up for their rights.

IMPROVED EDUCATION

Armed conflict, poor employment opportunities, poverty, and lack of quality supplies all prevent children from going to school.

We are working to strengthen the education system to ensure children have access to quality schooling in safe and gender-sensitive environments.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S COVID-19 RESPONSE IN COLOMBIA

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit children, and especially girls, particularly hard with schools closing and many parents losing income. Our work has focused on providing families with emergency cash support so they can afford to feed their families and delivering school supplies and books to help children continue learning at home. As vaccines become available, Plan International has a role in encouraging policies that help the most vulnerable people to get the vaccine first--regardless of income, race, or gender.

"I can't go to school because of COVID-19. I have distance classes now, but I do not have a computer. It has also affected my family financially because my parents could not work."

Yurian, 15, Sponsored Child



STORYTELLING FOR PEACE 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. 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



YOUR SUPPORT IS CHANGING LIVES

With your support, we will ensure that children's rights are respected, and they are able to thrive.



In the coming year, we will continue to educate girls on menstrual hygiene and provide sanitary products so girls and young women can safely manage their periods with dignity.



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



Improve 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.



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

These are just some of the many ways your kindness will touch the lives of your sponsored child and other children in Cauca-Valle.

Thank you for all that you do!



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."

