



Ready for school: improved pre-school education for children affected by poverty

Project background

Families in Soacha who were displaced and marginalised by the internal conflict in Colombia live in precarious conditions. The children show early developmental delays due to lack of stimulation and affection, as well as malnutrition. Although they are supervised by lay care givers during the day in state-funded neighbourhood day-care centres, their care rooms are not child-friendly and their care givers are poorly trained and unable to support the children in a loving and holistic manner. Many children start school late or with significantly delayed development. This leads to having to repeat a year or dropping out of school early.

Our solution approach

By providing the lay care givers of 75 neighbourhood day-care centres with training in early childhood care and education, we offer age-appropriate support to 1,200 children affected by poverty. The project team coaches the care givers in their daily routine at work and improves the infrastructure of the day-care centres together with them. Parents become aware of the importance of pre-school care and education. The project team works closely with the state office for children and youth affairs, ICBF. Consequently, we enable the children to develop in a stimulating environment and ensure the continued existence of pre-school facilities.

Project goals

- Of the 1,200 children supported in 75 day-care centres, 90% reach an age-appropriate level of development and are prepared for school enrolment.
- 75 care givers offer professional and qualitatively appropriate care.
- 780 parents and 75 care givers understand the importance of pre-school care and education and a non-violent upbringing and are committed to the needs of children.
- Through lobbying with the relevant authorities, our partner organisation ensures the preservation of the quality-improved neighbourhood day-care centres and develops a new institutional early-stage support strategy.

Project activities

Improvement of day-care facilities

We support the care givers in equipping their private homes that serve as day-care centres with child-friendly sanitary facilities and play areas. As a result, we create a better learning and play environment for the children.

Training of care givers

The care givers complete training in early childhood care and education at the National Training Service, SENA. Upon successful completion, they receive a nationally valid diploma. Simultaneously to the training, education-

Project location

Colombia, Metropolitan Region of Bogotá, Municipality of Soacha, Comunas 1 & 3

Topics

Promotion of pre-school, social inclusion, community organisation

Vivamos Mejor Programm

«Bridget to school»

Duration

2022 - 2024

Project costs

CHF 569,934

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Impact

A scientific study by the University of Lausanne, which was awarded a prize by the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) and ETH-Nadel (Center for Development and Cooperation at ETH Zurich), proved the lasting effect of our approach: young children from our project showed significantly better cognitive, psychosocial and psychomotor skills on starting school compared to children without project intervention and caught up with the national average. The positive effect was still significantly measurable four and a half years after the end of the intervention, the children achieved better grades and repeated the year less often.

This study and further information on the impact of our project work can be found at www.vivamosmejor.ch/en/impact

Our mission

With our "Bridge to School" programme, we enable children from precarious backgrounds to catch up on their cognitive, psychosocial and psychomotor developmental deficits compared to privileged children and ensure that they are prepared for the demands of school by the time they enter school.

Our vision

Our vision is that children, regardless of their social background, should have the same opportunities to successfully complete school and to have a dignified professional future.

We align our actions to the 2030 Agenda. With this project, we are making an active contribution to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal:



Ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

al project staff coach the care givers in a practical manner in their daily care and show them how to support the children in a way appropriate to their age. The project team also shows the care givers how to register the children for state school in good time.

Interns as assistants

The care givers also receive assistance from interns who are trained by the project team. We benefit from the fact that all high school students in Colombia have to complete a mandatory social work placement.

Raising awareness of non-violent parenting

Violence is widespread in families as a means of parenting. Consequently, the project team shows the care givers non-violent alternative ways of parenting and supports them in initiating the dialogue with parents. At regular parents' evenings, the care givers pass on their acquired knowledge to the parents, for example about early childhood development, child-friendly parenting methods and children's rights.

Lobbying and new early-stage support strategy

Thanks to the improved child-friendly infrastructure, the professional training of care givers and the negotiation undertaken with the relevant authorities, we guarantee the continuation of the neighbourhood day-care centres. Through the present project, we are successfully completing the improvement of all 349 neighbourhood day-care centres in the municipality of Soacha. We therefore support our partner organisation in developing a new institutional early-stage support strategy.

Project impressions



The child carers complete an Education in Early Childhood Education at the State Vocational Training Institute.



In workshops, we increase parents' awareness of non-violent parenting.

Beneficiaries

Direct: 1,200 children, 75 child carers, 780 parents and 75 interns

Indirect: 4,100 family members

Costs

The total planned project costs amount to CHF 569,934. To cover the costs, we will be applying for support from cantons, municipalities, companies, foundations and parishes in Switzerland. The project is co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), as part of their contribution to the programme

Personal/local contributions

The total costs do not include personal and local contributions worth CHF 1,030,790. Among other things, the ICBF finances the wages of the child carers as well as children's meals at the neighbourhood day-care centres. Child carers contribute 50% of the costs required for the renovation of their premises. The SENA educational institute covers all costs pertaining to those of child carers training to become early childhood educators.

Local partner vor Ort

Vivamos Mejor's direct project partner is the grass-roots, professional Colombian NPO, Fundación Apoyar. It employs local staff and is very familiar with the context. The team has many years of experience and proven skills in the fields of education, child psychology, community development and advocacy with authorities. Our partner organisation is recognised for its work in the project regions and is well connected.



The children are to receive age-appropriate support in the Neighbourhood day care centres



The child carer and her protégés from one of the project's Neighbourhood day-care centres introduce themselves.