



LEADING FOR PEACE IN COLOMBIA

Final Report, November 2021

FUNDRAISER MESSAGE

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WHO WE ARE

Plan International Canada is part of a global organization that strives for a just world by advancing children's rights and equality for girls. We work for and with children, community members and governments to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and remove barriers that keep children, especially girls, from reaching their full potential. Plan International has been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years and is now active in more than 75 countries.

Our programs integrate a range of projects, focusing on:



**CHILD
PROTECTION**



HEALTH



**ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT**



EDUCATION



**EMERGENCY
ASSISTANCE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past four years, we have made tremendous strides in achieving the outcomes of the Leading for Peace project in Colombia. Thanks to your incredible commitment, we have strengthened supports, facilitated peacebuilding activities and advocacy, and promoted entrepreneurship for thousands of children and adolescents affected by conflict across the Chocó, Valle del Cauca and Nariño districts.

The Leading for Peace project was enthusiastically received by the communities where we were active, allowing us to surpass many of our targets to reach an impressive **155,065 individuals**, including:

76,134 youth trained as Citizens for Peace,

8,264 youth and adult participants in economic empowerment activities and workshops, and

2,347 teachers and public servants trained to strengthen institutional processes.

In this final report, we are thrilled to reflect on the project's resounding successes. We hope you take pride in reading the following stories and figures of impact, made possible by your generosity.



COUNTRY CONTEXT

For over fifty years, armed conflict and unrest has subjected youth and their families in Colombia to violence, exploitation and displacement. The resulting trauma and economic impacts have deprived youth of the psychosocial, financial and skill-building tools and opportunities necessary to exercise their full potential.

Thanks to the Leading for Peace project, children, youth, their families and communities are working together to establish safe and stable environments to reclaim their power and strive for brighter futures. By strengthening reparations processes, providing life-skills and entrepreneurial training, and promoting peacebuilding activities, your support has been instrumental in helping thousands of youth break free of barriers to achieving their dreams.

COVID-19 IN COLOMBIA

Due to restrictions necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to adapt many of our activities to suit digital learning. Using tools like WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube, we were able to connect with members of youth groups and workshops, so they didn't miss out on valuable information, resources and peer-to-peer engagement.



YOUR IMPACT

OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS, your commitment has helped empower over **155,000 children, adolescents, families and community members** to build peace within themselves, and their communities. As the project has been extended until December 2021, some activities are still ongoing but are on track to reach—and, in some cases, surpass—their initial goals. We hope you take pride in the incredible accomplishments made possible by your support.

THANKS TO YOUR GENEROSITY, WE HAVE: IMPROVED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR YOUTH

YETIZ, 24, lives in the department of Chocó and is now **fulfilling her dream of being an entrepreneur** as she grows her condiment business, Condirio. Condirio is the invention of Yetiz, her sister Celenny, 19, and their brother Luvin, 21, borne of the realization that their region of Chocó has many undiscovered culinary gifts. The family transforms river herbs—spices local to Chocó, such as specific types of cilantro, basil and oregano—into delicious condiments which they hope will encourage the consumption of regional foods and preserve their cultural traditions.

Although they had the drive and innovation, Yetiz and her siblings didn't know how to turn their vision into a venture. When their younger sister told them about the entrepreneurship training as part of the Leading for Peace project, they enrolled right away. They knew the process would be helpful, but they never imagined it would make their dream a reality.

Throughout the Leading for Peace project, **over 3,500 youth participated in entrepreneurship trainings**, which guided them in developing business plans complete with costing, budget and marketing designs. Yetiz, Celenny and Luvin's plan for Condirio was one of the **300 selected to receive additional support, including digital tools, mentorship and financial assistance**, turning their bright idea into a business!

Looking towards Condirio's future, Yetiz, Celenny and Luvin intend to grow their business to make Chocó cuisine known to other parts of Colombia. "The idea is to expand not only locally but also nationally," says Yetiz, "Currently, the traditions are being lost. People are not consuming Chocó cilantro and we want our seasoning to have the same smell as our cilantro."

Not only will the family have a sustainable source of income, but Condirio will also support the local herb growers who make their product possible.

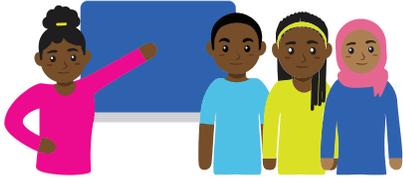


Yetiz, co-founder of Condirio

“THIS ENTIRE PROCESS HAS TAUGHT ME THAT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS POSSIBLE. PLAN INTERNATIONAL COLOMBIA HELPED US TAKE RISKS AND MAKE OUR DREAMS COME TRUE. THIS INITIATIVE WILL NOT ONLY HELP US FINANCIALLY, BUT IT WILL HELP RIVER HERB GROWERS IN THE REGION.”

– Yetiz

LEADING FOR PEACE IN COLOMBIA HAS IMPROVED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR YOUTH BY...



Providing training for 3,000 youth in life skills, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and business planning

COMPLETE ✓

We reached **112%** of our target to train over **3,500 youth!**

This year, we adapted our Entrepreneurship Training to be available remotely. In groups of 10–15, participants received key content via WhatsApp and had constant access to advice from their group facilitator.



Providing technical, material and financial support for 300 youth to launch their own business ventures

COMPLETE ✓

The Entrepreneurship Training allowed over **3,500 bright minds** to come up with business plans. From these, **300** were selected to receive professional support and tools to turn their innovative ideas into real ventures—just like Yetiz, Celenny and Yuvín's Condirio!

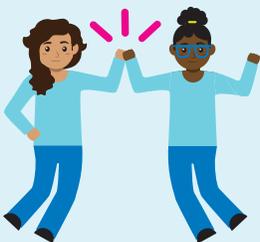


Establishing 480 Village Savings and Loan (VSLA) groups to help over 8,000 youth grow their savings

IN PROGRESS →

We've established **404 VSLA groups** and improved the financial literacy and economic opportunities for **6,351 members!**

Establishing new groups is paused due to COVID-19 but will resume when public health restrictions allow.



Thanks to your support,
3,500 YOUTH
received training in life skills,
financial literacy and business planning!



YOUR IMPACT

THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT, WE HAVE: STRENGTHENED VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICES

IN THE CITY OF BUENAVENTURA stands a community centre, full of hope and promise for bright futures. Long ago, the building hosted lively social activities and community care programs but, until recently, was disheveled and neglected; a site of danger and violence for 30 years. Rather than being an inviting, friendly place, the physical structure was immensely damaged from heavy rainfall; the roof had nearly collapsed. Community members feared even walking past the centre after sundown because of the armed groups who would try and lure children inside. The centre had ceased to be a protective environment for girls, boys and adolescents as was its purpose.



Buenaventura residents attend a workshop for “Dreaming the shelter” to help recovery efforts

“WITHOUT A DOUBT THE SHELTER IS ON ITS WAY TO BECOMING A SAFE SPACE. I’M NO LONGER AFRAID, THERE IS A SENSE OF SECURITY THERE... WE BELIEVE THAT PLAN INTERNATIONAL COLOMBIA ARRIVED AT A GOOD TIME TO HELP US. GOD WILLING, WE WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE.”

– Evaristo, neighbourhood resident

Three years ago, **Plan International began working with community leaders to develop a community action plan** for the neighbourhood where the centre lives. Included in the plan was the intention to recover the physical space and function of the centre to create peace and trust among the community.

Thanks to this joint effort, the building has been restored so that it can be used by the community again. Leaders in the community are developing plans for regular recreational and learning activities to take place in the center, with child protection, resilience, gender-transformative and peacebuilding frameworks in mind – putting into practice what they’ve learned through trainings as part of the Leading for Peace project. They are also working with the local police to ensure the security of the centre and have recruited volunteers from the community to serve as staff at the centre.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic made regular in-person programming impossible, soccer and music events were held outdoors at the centre when social distancing measures were more flexible, as well as workshops on violence prevention and community-building in the neighbourhood.

Thanks to support from Plan International’s Leading for Peace project, the community has come together and are well on their way to restoring the venue to its cheerful beginnings, **providing a safe space for children, adolescents and community members to play, learn and grow.**

LEADING FOR PEACE IN COLOMBIA HAS STRENGTHENED EXISTING VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICES BY...

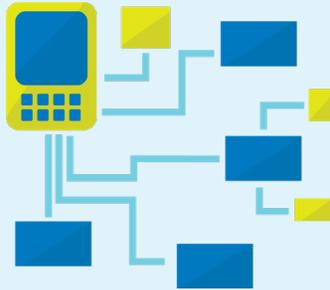


Supporting communities to develop their own action plans to create protective environments for young people

COMPLETE ✓

We reached **200%** of our target to support **18 community protection plans!** Protection plans serve the particular needs of each community, including the recovery of physical spaces—like the community centre in Buenaventura!

We've also provided training and support for **1,365 people to lead 71 community initiatives.**



Working with government institutions to improve coordination, tracking, efficiency and effective service delivery

COMPLETE ✓

To ensure victims of armed conflict receive reparations and support, we've provided trainings to **2,347 teachers and public servants** focused on children's rights and gender responsiveness.

We've also hosted **50 technical assistance sessions** with government institutions and **33 sessions** with victims' rights organizations so they can implement these processes.



Supporting national victims' support services to develop a scalable care model

COMPLETE ✓

We provided training and technical assistance to **52 representatives** from government bodies and victims' support centres to develop and implement care plans for victims of armed conflict. These plans will be replicated across municipalities in schools and community programs.

YOUR IMPACT

LEADING FOR PEACE IN COLOMBIA HAS

BUILT SAFE, PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN BY...



Providing reconciliation and peacebuilding activities for youth

COMPLETE ✓

Due to limitations on in-person activities caused by COVID-19, we reached 91% of our initial target.

We have conducted a range of activities for over **76,000 youth** to promote their learning, build confidence, and foster peace within their communities. Activities have included leadership and advocacy training, sports with a focus on gender equality and peacebuilding, and STEM-focused robotics workshops.

Over **5,600 participants** returned after their initial training to deepen their engagement!



You have helped over
76,000 YOUTH

participate in activities to promote their learning,
build confidence and foster peace within their communities!

PROJECT FEATURE

MENTAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES BUILD PEACE WITHIN

Over the past four years, we've integrated mental health training into many project activities to build the resilience of individuals and communities. Thanks to your support, we've reached **over 7,800 youth, community leaders and parents** through discussion groups and workshops focused on child protection, stress reduction and wellness. Here are some of the change-making activities made possible by you:

- In “Juntanza” gatherings, families learned parenting skills to foster love and communication with their children to ultimately strengthen protection amongst communities.
- “Respira” (breathe) for Reconciliation is a mindfulness program which provides a space for parents, teachers and community leaders to discover positive coping mechanisms for feelings of stress and insecurity. For the **152 participants**, these techniques contribute to better emotion management and stress reduction to avoid violent and detrimental behaviours, in turn strengthening their abilities to provide leadership and care in their communities.
- In the fourth year of the project, virtual mental health training was introduced to address the urgent need for child and adolescent mental health care following a rise in suicides during the pandemic. The training included practices of self-care and conflict resolution and served to strengthen community protection methods for children and youth. Currently, **220 participants** are registered.

The workshops have been transformative for participants, including one community leader in Tumaco, who says: “Our knowledge and learning has strengthened us as leaders, and also strengthens our communities, so children and adolescents feel protected from all the difficulties that arise in daily life.”





THANK YOU!

Your commitment has contributed to tremendous outcomes from the Leading for Peace project. Thanks to your support, we have empowered thousands of youth in Colombia to know and assert their rights, fostered care and protection amongst communities and advanced advocacy to create long-lasting change. None of this incredible progress would be possible without you. **Thank you for your extraordinary generosity.**



Learn more and get involved at plancanada.ca



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