

CHILDREN IN MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA, CREATE THEIR OWN LAND AND PLANT A TREE FOR PEACE

December 9th 2008

“Tierra de Niños” or Children’s Land, was created by the Association for Childhood and their Environment (ANIA), in Peru, and has been implemented there for over 10 years. “The program is a tool designed to stimulate and recognize the contribution made by children to the development of the country as well as to global well-being. The concept lies on the idea that any boy or girl that grows life and diversity in his/her own piece of land, is contributing to sustainable development and should be recognized for it. The land which can be as small as one square meter should be managed with the main and voluntary participation of the children. A Land of Children can be developed at home, in school, or in the community; in the coast, the mountains or the jungle; in urban as well as in rural areas. The only requirement to implement a TINI is will, love, a child and a piece of land. This tool is designed to be implemented by children of any cultural background and socio-economic stratum. The environmental problems and value crisis are issues that concern and affect us all; hence, a TiNi is an ideal tool to be implemented by children with the help of their relatives, their teachers and other actors of local development.” (www.mundodeania.org)

This methodology has been successfully replicated in Brazil, Bolivia and Portugal; AMICHOCO is pioneer in its replica in Colombia. 120 children from underserved neighborhoods in Medellin (Antioquia) and Tado (Chocó) are currently establishing two Children’s Lands.

On December 9th over 50 of the children from Medellín celebrated this endeavor by planting “a tree for peace”. On this day, children expressed their willingness to protect the environment in their own land and they welcomed an environmentally responsible Christmas.



This one-day celebration included two main sessions. A first session in which children planted and adopted trees and a second session in which they participated in a workshop to recycle and build ecological mangers.

1. Planting and Adopting Trees

Groups of children were formed and named voluntarily. Each group was given a tree to care for and forms to fill-in over time to register its progresses. Children in these groups described the main attributes and functions of the tree they were given; they registered this information in one of the forms they were given and then shared it with the other children.



To finalize the morning session, children made a solemn commitment to care for their tree. Planting it is just the beginning of their responsibility; they vowed to nurture it so that it will grow strong and healthy under their care.

The first form that children filled-in to register the progress of their trees



Trees that were adopted by the groups "Small Creations" and "Shinning"

2. Recycling and Creating an Ecological Manger

Children gathered around the instructor to hear about one of our planets great problems; on to which we contribute every day! This is more or less what she had to say:

*Appearances are deceptive... not everything we consider trash **is** trash! We must learn to differentiate materials before we discard them, because we might be able to reuse some of them.*

Our planet is ailing; human beings have mistreated it by overexploiting its natural resources and polluting it in many ways. One of our planet's weaknesses is the huge amount of waste we produce; these residues pollute its rivers, lakes and oceans, soil its parks and produce nasty smells.

But today we can think about aiding ourselves, our neighbors and our planet by recycling! Gathering some of our waste and giving them a different use can be a solution!



After a long conversation about this problem, the instructor talked about recycled materials and products; where they came from and how we could use them. She then chose several residues that had been gathered; she used a styrofoam ball for a head, a bottle for the body, a napkin for a cape, eyes hair and beard. All of a sudden, she had created one of the characters for the manger: a Christmas Wiseman!

This gave children an example to create their own characters for the community's manger. They were again divided into groups; some were responsible for creating the scenery, others worked on the characters and others created the infrastructure.





For several hours children worked on putting the manger together, and then they celebrated the final result with a warm plate of a typical Christmas dish.

