

Children`s Land

Project Profile presented by FUNDACIÓN AMICHOCÓ

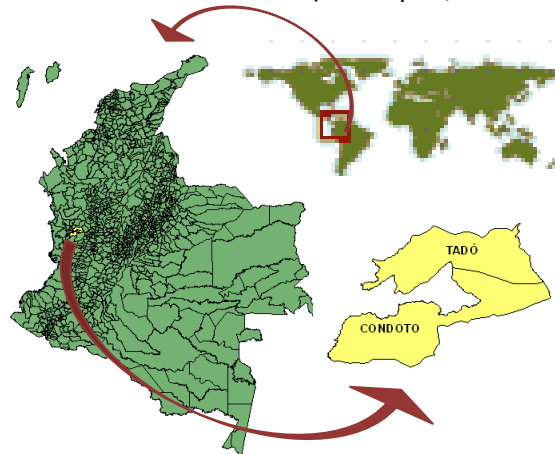
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Project Budget: 53.312,00 USD

Project Duration: 1 year

Project Location: Medellin and Tadó, Colombia

Children`s Land, was created by the Association for Childhood and its Environment (ANIA), in Peru, and has been implemented there for over 10 years. This methodology has been successfully replicated in Brazil, Bolivia and Portugal; AMICHOCO is pioneer in its replica in Colombia. We currently implement this methodology with 120 children in Medellin (Antioquia, Colombia) and Tado (Chocó, Colombia).



Chocó

Chocó is one of the most important eco-regions in the world due to its great biological and cultural diversity. Biogeographic Chocó is one of the world's 25 hotspots of biodiversity: representing only 1.4% of the Earth's surface, it holds 60% of the planet's species. The state of Chocó, in Colombia, holds great natural wealth, but it also presents the worst development indicators in the country. Life expectancy at birth is 7 years below the national average while school inattendance, infant mortality, and unsatisfied basic needs are three times the national average (with 79.15 of the population suffering from UBN).¹



Families in Tado have limited access to health, protection, educational, recreational and cultural services. Besides, the lack of employment opportunities is a cause of insufficient family income and of the overexploitation of natural resources. Such conditions result in intense workdays, abandonment of children and weakened families. Additionally, the organizations that work in the region and that could help improve this situation, are not articulated and they need to further develop their strategies to help to children's development.

60 children from Tadó, (Chocó) will participate in the Children`s Land project.

These municipalities have large extensions of land, and thus children have plenty of space for recreation. However, they lack real

¹ Official Census, DANE 2005.

opportunities to participate in the protection of the environment and in the development of their communities. Children's Planet seeks to offer children this opportunity and to prepare children to be future leaders and administrators of the collective lands of Afro-Colombian communities.² **Children's Land promotes the leadership that indigenous communities need to defend their territories and their rights; this is why it is of special interest for this region.**

Medellín

Medellín's 13th commune is located in the central-western area of the city. According to its 2005 development plan the commune holds 134.365 inhabitants, many of which have come to the city from rural areas of the country fleeing violence or looking for better income possibilities. This spontaneous migration provoked illegal construction and property invasion processes in the commune as well as the convergence of multiple cultures, traditions and customs. Additionally, the commune holds a privileged geographical position (it sits in the access corridor between Medellín and Urabá) that makes it prone to high violence and criminality levels, as well as the presence of illegal armed groups and drug trafficking.

Families in the 13th commune live in precarious situations: low incomes, high criminality and homicide rates, illiteracy, malnutrition and an overcrowded territory. Many organizations are currently working in this area of the city, and since the military incursion in 2002³ the commune has undergone a deep social transformation; nevertheless, there's a lack of appropriate spaces for recreation and adequate environmental education programs which are necessary for the natural development and growth of the children living there.

Children's Land seeks to offer these children an opportunity to grow as informed and conscious citizens, who understand their importance and impact in the conservation of the environment and are aware of their rights and responsibilities as active members of society,.



Panoramic view of Medellín from the 13th commune.

² In Colombia, the Afro-Colombian communities were given collective rights over their ancestral territories. These lands are administrated by the Community Councils; in the case of Tado and Condoto, ASOCASAN and COCOMACOIRO. These organizations promote the appropriation and sustainable use of the territories, as well as community development as the base of the ethnic process. Thus, these organizations seek to improve the quality of life of their communities; communities that have been historically excluded from political, social and economical processes in the region and in the country.

³ In 2002 national military forces were brought into the 13th commune to end a ongoing war between paramilitary groups and urban guerrillas. It was de only military incursion on urban territory in over a decade.



Two Children`s Lands will be created with this project, involving 120 children from Medellin and Tadó.

This project will formally give 120 children a piece of land. In it, children will be responsible for all decisions. We will organize learning activities to develop their knowledge in 4 main components: self-management, proper use of natural resources, environmental health and artistic and spiritual expression. Children will use their newly competencies to plan their land.

A group of volunteering adults from the community will help children in certain activities and will be responsible for defending their rights. Additionally, the project director will train a local coordinator in the use of this methodology; he/she will coordinate all the phases of the project.

The phases that group the activities in the project are: 1) Motivation: children will participate in activities and workshops, they will be formally given their land and they will design their governance model; 2) Support and self-management: children develop the four components that were previously mentioned and 3) Recognition: children will be rewarded for their work, engagement and performance in their land.

The first activity that will take place will be the construction of the baseline; this will be the starting point against which we will later evaluate the projects' impact. Then we will organize the first information meeting so that the community will learn about the project (there will be two subsequent meetings, one to make a mid-term evaluation and a final one to share results). Once the community knows about the Project, we will organize de motivation workshop in order to invite children to participate. Once the children have established their participation, we will proceed with the rest of the activities to organize the space in their land:

- Selection of the space that will be officially bestowed to childhood, selection of a support committee and ceremony to officially give children their land.
- Creation of an image of this Children's Land, children's fundraising, definition of areas in their land, creation of a government model, creation of their hymn and flag and realization of a festival.
- Breeding plants, animals and water, measuring their ecological footprint, creating a recycling system and carrying out activities to protect bodies of water.
- Organizing a place to meet and express their feelings and elaborating artistic expressions.

Throughout the project we will also carry out workshops on different subjects: children's rights, Law 70 of 1993 (it protects Afro-Colombian communities) and environmental education. Both the support committees and children actively plan, monitor and follow-up on every activity. The documentation of the project is the responsibility of the Project Director, with support from the local coordinator.

AMICHOCO is an NGO created in 1997 to promote the sustainable use of natural resources and the improvement of the quality of life of the population of the Biographic Choco through the implementation of projects of production, communications, environmental education and capacity building, articulating grassroots communities with the national and international communities. AMICHOCO has led social and environmental projects in Colombia's Pacific Region for almost a decade.



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