

Colombia: Building peace and preventing violence through sport

Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Partners	Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Sport (Mindeporte), Talents Foundation (NGO), Social Group Foundation (NGO), German Football Association (DFB), German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), various local/education authorities and department governments
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This ‘sport for development’ approach has also been adopted in German development cooperation. Sport not only makes for healthier children and youths but also teaches them about responsibility, fair play and resolving conflicts peacefully. All of these are life skills that will make it easier for them to transition into professional life later. Working with local partners, experts from German development cooperation train ‘sport for development’ coaches. As role models and respected figures, their goal is to boost children and young people’s self-esteem, while helping them build a more promising future. The coaching involves talking about health issues such as HIV prevention and alcohol abuse. Besides improving fitness, the sessions have an educational purpose.

Together with local and international partners – policy-makers, civil society organisations, the private sector and the academic community – German development cooperation has created sustainable sports programmes that help strengthen the role of civil society and promote democracy. This innovative approach harnesses the power of sport to drive positive change and sustainable development – for each child and for society as a whole.

Sport for Development in Colombia

The Colombian Government already uses sport to promote development as part of its wider peace and reconciliation agenda, hence the country’s inclusion in the ‘sport for development’ programme set up by Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Building on steps already

Context

In recent decades, the people of Colombia have endured widespread violence, driven by conflicts and territorial struggles between guerrilla organisations, paramilitaries, criminal gangs and the army. The government signed a peace treaty with the FARC guerrilla movement in 2016. While this led to de-escalation in those regions affected by the conflict, it also created a power vacuum soon occupied by criminal gangs, triggering renewed tension and violence.

As a result of the armed conflict, around 14 per cent of Colombians were internally displaced. These more than 7 million persons have been affected and need immediate support. The situation has been exacerbated by a massive increase in the number of refugees from Venezuela, which to this day amount to 1.5 million. Children and youths are among the worst affected. Compared with other age groups, they are much more likely to use violence or suffer from it.

The Sport for Development approach

Sport has been internationally recognised by the UN as a “means to promote health, education, development and peace”.



The Sport with Principles approach is designed to build confidence in children and young people. It shows them how they can work together to solve problems and teaches them to accept responsibility for their choices and actions.

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taken by the Colombian Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the programme works closely with a range of partners, including policy-makers, the academic community and civil society organisations, to harness the full potential of sport. Through sport, the programme not only gives children and young people the knowledge and skills they need to live together in a democratic society – it also supports the social (re)integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs), with a focus on children and young adults. The programme works primarily in those regions worst affected by conflict, violence and forced migration. Reintegrating ex-combatants is an important element of the ongoing peace process.

The ‘sport with principles’ approach (in Spanish *‘Deporte con Principios’*) is a joint initiative. It was set up to teach children and young people values such as respect and team spirit, as well as social skills, through sport. The methodology is based on the concept of ‘peace football’ (*‘fútbol paz’*), which is well established in Colombia, international approaches to ‘sport for development’, modern sports pedagogy and research by youth psychologists. Over a period of several weeks, coaches, teachers and social workers follow a three-stage course covering the entire methodology. Through their subsequent work, the programme hopes to exert a positive influence on patterns of behaviour among young people.

The ‘sport for development’ programme is closely linked to other German development cooperation programmes already implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of BMZ, for example ‘Support for Peacebuilding in Colombia’ (PROPAZ) and ‘Participation of Internally Displaced Persons and Host Communities’ (PROINTCAME). It also works with the Colombian foreign ministry’s *‘Paz en Movimiento’* programme, in which former combatants are trained as coaches using the *‘Deporte con Principios’* approach.

Partners

German development cooperation experts work with several ‘sport for development’ partners in Colombia, including:

- Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Sport (Mindeporte)
- Talents Foundation
- Social Group Foundation
- German Football Association (DFB)
- German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB)
- various local & education authorities and department governments

Successes and results

To date, 1,664 teachers, coaches and social workers from various NGOs and public sector organisations have taken part in ‘sport for development’ training courses along with local community leaders. The courses were held at regional centres in collaboration with partner organisations. For the last two years, a quarter of participants have been women. After completing the course, the programme recruits went on to work with around 90,000 children and young people (as of September 2019), many of whom had experienced violence, for example as combatants in the country’s armed conflict.

After studying the *‘Deporte con Principios’* methodology, many course participants went on to get jobs with local and regional authorities, with NGOs as social workers and in sport.

To reinforce the ‘sport for development’ approach in Colombia, 121 of the course participants were selected for an additional three weeks of training to qualify as ‘master coaches’. They can be found all over Colombia in the role of multipliers, passing on what they have learned and helping to spread the ‘sport for development’ message.

The course materials developed in Colombia have been used in several ‘sport for development’ training programmes run in collaboration with DFB and DOSB as well as in schools and in other countries across Latin America.

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