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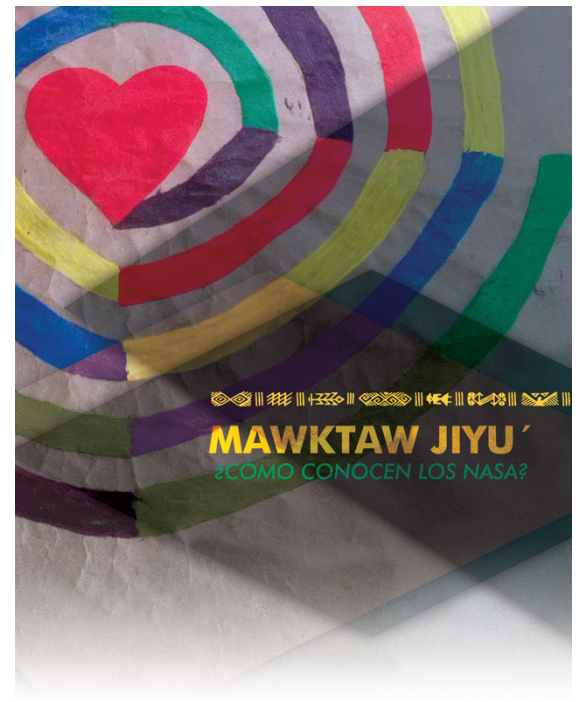
Indigenous Childhood Observatory of Northern Cauca

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International Organization for Migration

What is the general context in which the story takes place?

In Colombia, the International Organization for Migration has been working with USAID financial and technical support for more than 10 years to support the Government of Colombia to deal with different problems, especially those related to the internal armed conflict. As one of the activities carried out with this goal, the International Organization for Migration supported the creation of the Indigenous Childhood Observatory of Northern Cauca with information production and knowledge management capabilities. Technical assistance from the Child Wellbeing Observatory of the Colombia Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) enabled progress to be made in the structuring and registration of data collection, databases, and forms of analysis. Finally, working hand-in-hand with the Center for Education, Training and Research for Comprehensive Community Development, an indigenous organization, allowed us to ground the learning in the community and ensure that perspectives addressed came from the Nasa community itself. (The Nasa community is one of Colombia's indigenous groups, specifically in the Cauca department).



What was the main challenge or opportunity you were addressing with this CLA approach or activity?

These efforts to strengthen the Indigenous Childhood Observatory of Northern Cauca, together with ICBF and indigenous communities, facilitated the design and implementation of timely and preventative actions to effectively guarantee the rights of children, adolescents, and their families, and ensure sustainable monitoring of some of the problems affecting the well-being of indigenous children, adolescents, and their families. The efforts also supported identification of the most recurrent problems and related behaviors, and provided technical advice to ICBF related to support for children and adolescents in the context of a post-conflict environment and of reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The initiative, by focusing on the community itself and its own children and adolescents, is a step forward in efforts to recognize local voices and opinions, and to give them a voice using a participative approach that recognizes children and adolescents as subjects of rights, not merely as objects of protection.

Given that the Observatory is continually producing information specific to the local reality and context, there is a growing body of knowledge and lessons learned that can provide important tools for future efforts to protect children and adolescents and promote their rights.

Describe the CLA approach or activity, explaining how the activity integrated collaborating, learning, adapting culture, processes, and/or resources as applicable.

The technical support provided to the Observatory was based on recognition of Nasa indigenous culture and an affirmation of the value of Nasa when carrying out situational analysis of children and adolescents in that community. The synergy between these ethnic and territorial components and the initiative's operational plan and structure was, therefore, a fundamental element, given that the initiative's objectives were to support the consolidation of the Indigenous Childhood Observatory of Northern Cauca and develop a sustainability plan to support knowledge management and decision-making associated with guaranteeing the rights of indigenous children and adolescents.

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, a strategic partnership approach enabled the development of inter-institutional projects; processes to share and complement existing information; strengthening of spaces for participation; generation of specific information related to prevention; carrying out relevant comparisons; and channeling the investments needed to enable spaces such as the Indigenous Childhood Observatory of Northern Cauca to continue to operate and fulfill its objectives, namely to support knowledge management and development of public policies aimed at preventing violations of the rights of children and adolescents at the local, regional, and national levels. These partnerships facilitate the transfer of technology and information through processes that support timely, consistent, and reliable data, methodologies, indicators, and variables.



In this sense, efforts are focused on developing cooperative agreements with actors that participate in and are interested in the protection of children and adolescents, and that are working to influence the development of public policies for children and adolescents, thereby strengthening inter-institutional and inter-sectoral coordination and ensuring the operation of the Observatory within its defined mission and institutional architecture.

Were there any special considerations during implementation (e.g., necessary resources, implementation challenges or obstacles, and enabling factors)?

This initiative involved a crosscutting ethnic component. One thing that should be considered when planning a joint initiative with ethnic communities and traditional authorities is to base it on the community's own worldview and vision of reality. This is in the interest of achieving results that respond to the reality of each community, and which are generated, accepted, and recognized by the communities participating in the process. Each community knows its territory, problems, local needs, and the interpretation of local dynamics, and this should form the basis for any analysis.

An important lesson learned is the need to consider the different implementation timelines of each community, and the importance of harmonizing those timelines with program requirements. Doing so will avoid imposing timelines that conflict the natural rhythms of the community, which could create problems or obstacles for carrying out the planned activities.

In addition, it is important to achieve a balance between the language of each indigenous community, based on its own interpretations of the analyzed situations, and the language needed to transmit that information to key actors who will use it in decision-making and public policy development processes. In fact, if what is achieved, developed, and collected in the work with the community is not effectively expressed, then the work will remain incomplete, because it will not have been received and understood by those who are directly involved in protection of populations within each community—in this case the protection of indigenous children and adolescents.

With your initial challenge/opportunity in mind, what have been the most significant outcomes, results, or impacts of the activity or approach to date?

The joint efforts by international donors and Colombian institutions are aimed at supporting consolidation of the Indigenous Childhood Observatory of Northern Cauca and developing a sustainability plan to support knowledge management and decision-making processes around issues related to guaranteeing the rights of indigenous children and adolescents in order to ensure the continued operation of the Observatory.

One important result of the actions of the Observatory, with the technical support provided, was the development and publication of an analytical bulletin, "MAWKTAW JIYU: How Do the Nasa Know?" The objective of this bulletin was to identify, characterize, and deepen understanding of the situation of children and adolescents, and through this, undertake joint, coordinated actions to



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prevent and address the problems affecting child development and well-being. Now that we have this tool, the challenge is to ensure that it is used by the actors involved in the design of public policies to protect children and adolescents and promote their rights.

A second result, which goes hand-in-hand with the bulletin and which emerged from the same investigative and statistical processes, was the creation of an information system and database with relevant data about children and adolescents in Northern Cauca, all within a framework of guaranteeing rights and with a plan for sustainability. This system constitutes important progress because it provides a repository of specific information for indigenous children and adolescents in Cauca, with a level of specificity and precision that is important when conducting territorial diagnostics for the design of public policies.

A final significant result is the local-level coordination that has been generated around this issue, which facilitates coordinated implementation of policies and joint efforts with communities and works toward the same objectives, helping to increase synergies and complementarities between the institutions involved.

What were the most important lessons learned?

A key lesson learned is the necessity to coordinate these kinds of local actions with the work of national-level entities. If this is not done, then the ability to affect decision-making will be limited. In fact, it is fundamental to avoid the atomization of these kinds of initiatives to avoid the duplication of efforts. A focus should be placed on ensuring complementarity supported by inter-institutional coordination at the national and local levels in order to enhance results and address a greater amount of the needs, dynamics, and elements that each initiative aims to address.

Another important lesson, based on the experience of collecting information and working with people in the community, is the need to recognize the relationship that exists between each indigenous community and the more macro and global dynamics that occur in broader contexts. The communities should not be treated like isolated population groups when, in fact, they are affected by changes and processes that may initially seem disconnected or irrelevant. In this sense, these multiple levels should all be connected when carrying out context analysis and making decisions that concern the community.

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