

The importance of good education

And the role of Children of Medellín



At Children of Medellín, education is the most important thing. The foundation is committed to supporting disadvantaged children in the suburbs of Medellín and providing them with opportunities that lead to a better future. Education is crucial in this process. Education is important for every child. Within education children develop in many areas, increase their knowledge and skills, learn to play together and discover their interests. It is therefore of great importance that every child has access to (good) education, because it is the basis of a child's development.

In many countries in Europe it is normal for every child to go to school and get a good education. Unfortunately, this is not the reality in all countries. There are countries where children cannot go to school or where education is of insufficient quality. This is a danger to a child's development and society. After all, good education contributes to the development of society as a whole.

Colombia is one of the countries where the quality and accessibility of education leaves much to be desired. The country has endured much violence and insecurity due to political instability, drug wars and conflicts with paramilitaries and guerrilla movements. This has resulted in a poor impact on the quality and accessibility of education in Colombia.



Since 2016, the situation in Colombia has greatly improved and the political situation has stabilized more. However, there is still little progress in improving the quality of education. Therefore, the children and thereby society continue to suffer from the insufficient attention paid to the school system.

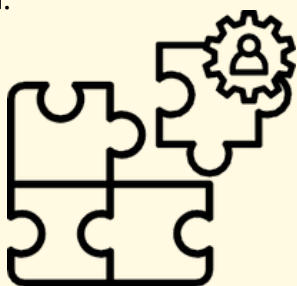
The importance of (good) education

According to UNICEF (s.d.), education is the key to a child's development as well as that of a society because a child who receives a good education will have opportunities for the future. According to research (Al-Shuaibi, Abdulghani, 2014), education contributes to knowledge, skills, norms and values. Moreover, it encourages critical thinking and trains children for careers.

In addition to the benefits for children, society also benefits from (good) education (Al- Shuaibi, Abdulghani, 2014). In fact, (good) education contributes to a country's economy and innovation. Finally, education increases opportunities and improves health. The benefits of (good) education are briefly explained below.

1 - Knowledge

Good education provides children with general and concrete knowledge. For example, children learn about language, history, math and English. This knowledge is important because it contributes to a child's personal growth.



2 - Skills

Skills, such as sports, crafts and music making are important for children because they allow them to express themselves both creatively and physically and explore their interests.

3- Standards and values

Schooling teaches children to understand the world by introducing them to the norms and values that are important in society.

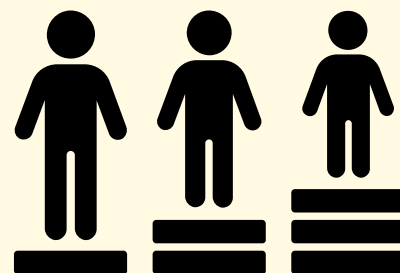


4 - Personal development

All knowledge, skills, norms and values contribute to a child's personal development. As a result, children learn critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving skills, self-awareness and responsibility. Furthermore, children develop emotionally, socially and professionally.

5- Equality and access to opportunities

Education plays a crucial role in reducing inequality. It allows children to develop and get ahead in life. As a result, with good education, all children have access to opportunities.



6- Health and wellness

According to UNESCO (2024), education provides the skills, values and behaviors to live a healthy life. Research (Institute of Labor Economics, 2020) shows that more educated people live healthier lives. They are better informed about health risks and make healthier decisions.

7- Strengthening the economy and innovation

An educated population is important for economic growth. Through good education, societies develop more prosperity and innovation.



The danger of no education

When children do not attend school or receive poor quality education, they logically miss out on the benefits of a good education. This results, for example, in learning delays, limitations in personal development and less access to opportunities. Later, this contributes to poorer (mental) health and less economic growth for society as a whole. In addition to these consequences, there are more disadvantages to children and society when children do not attend school. For example, lack of education increases the risk of crime, prostitution, poverty and opportunity inequality. The disadvantages of not getting an education are briefly explained below.

1- Learning disabilities

By not attending school, children do not learn certain important knowledge and skills. This results in learning deficits and the likelihood of illiteracy, dyscalculia and not being able to use computers, among others, causing greater disadvantages for job opportunities and the future.

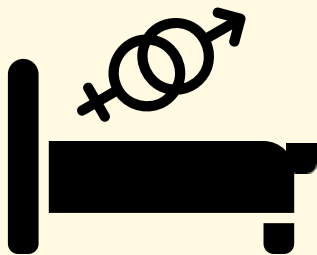


2- Limitations in personal development

Emotional, social and professional development is severely limited when children do not attend school. Crucial skills are not taught and children cannot develop fully personally as a result.

3- Increasing likelihood of crime

According to Jaitman (2019), less education increases the likelihood of crime. This is because school keeps children off the streets, making them less likely to encounter crime and gangs. Furthermore, the limitation in personal development reduces confidence in the future, causing children to look for other ways out of poverty.

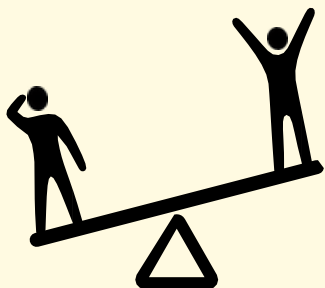


4- Increasing likelihood of prostitution

The poverty caused by the lack of education increases the likelihood of child prostitution. Children are more likely to be found on the streets, become more vulnerable and more quickly recruited as prostitutes.

5 - Poverty

According to Unitedwaycolombia (2023), poverty is a consequence of not getting an education. Children do not learn a trade, which prevents them from getting a (formal) job later on who can help them stay out of poverty.



6 - Opportunity inequality

Unitedwaycolombia (2023) also argues that not attending school leads to opportunity inequality. In fact, education contributes to knowledge and skills, making children more likely to get well-paying jobs later.

The current situation in Medellín

Despite the improved political situation in Medellín, it is still not optimal. There are still many other illegal groups and there is still a lot of insecurity and violence in some parts of the city. Furthermore, the quality and accessibility of education in Colombia and thus Medellín, especially in the poorer neighborhoods, is a major problem for children and society.

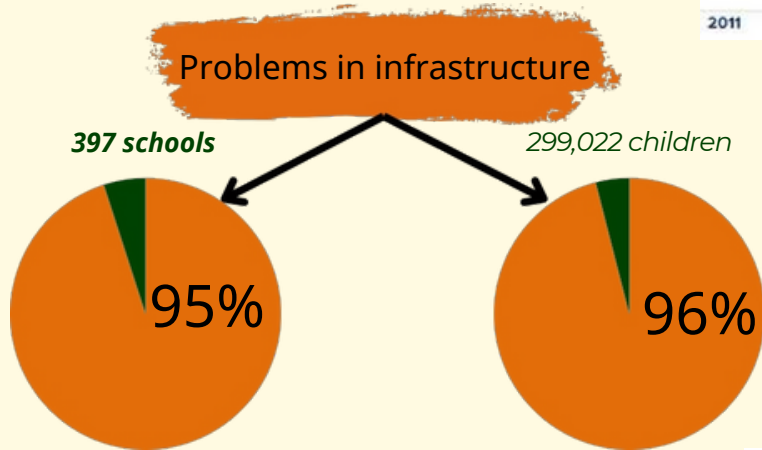
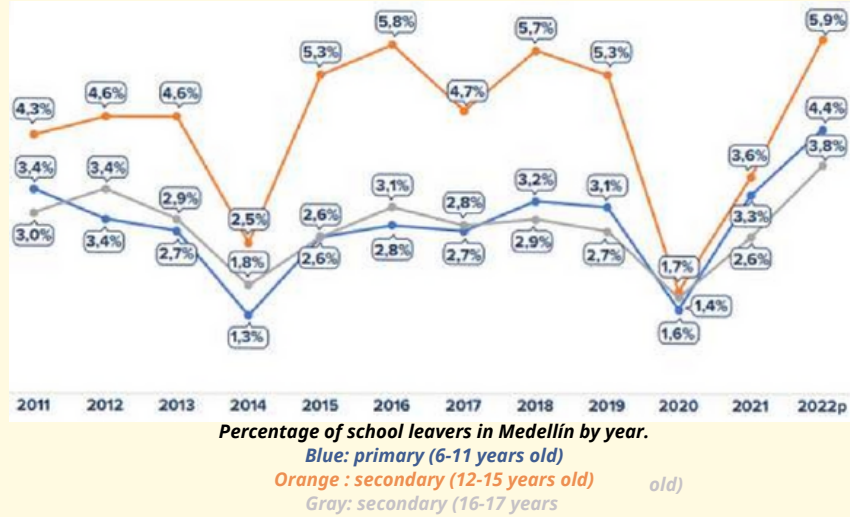
According to research by Alcaldía de Medellín (2024), there are more than 30,000 children and adolescents who are outside the education system. This is a worrying number because it is almost 10% of all children and youth who should be attending school.

Other key figures from 2022 from a study by MedellínCómovamos (2023) can be seen below:

1 - Record high in school dropout

In 2022, Medellín had the highest number of school dropouts in the past 11 years.

- On average, 4.9% of students left school early.



2 - Huge problems in infrastructure

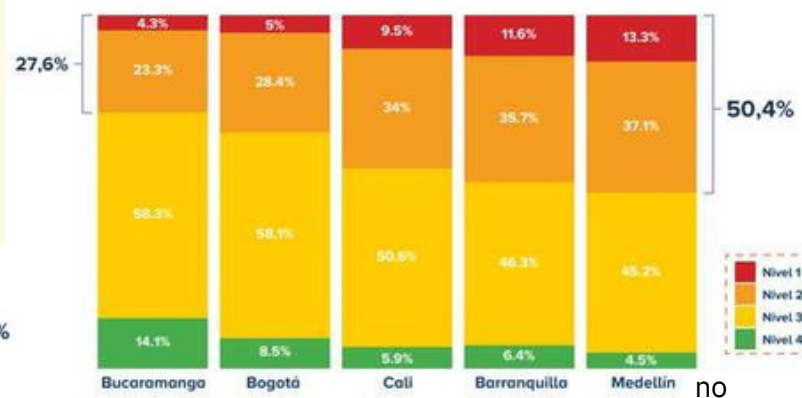
95% of schools in Medellín has flaws in their infrastructure.

- As a result, nearly 300 thousand children are affected.

3 - Missing basic skills in math

More than half of students scored inadequately on a math test.

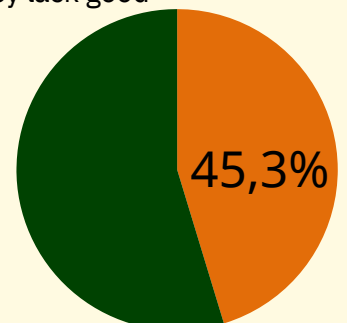
- As a result, they lack the basic skills to perform well in higher education.



4 - Poor reading skills

More than 38% of children scored the very lowest levels in reading

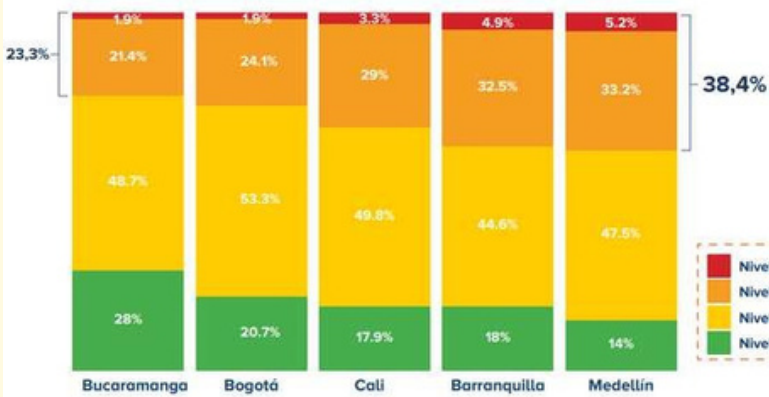
- Because of this, they lack good reading skills



5 - Few move on to further education or university

Only 45.3% of children move on to training or studies.

- As a result, there is a large number of children who later become less chance of getting a (well-paying) job.



The Bello Oriente district - Carambolas

Medellín is a large city with more than 2.6 million inhabitants (Telencuestas, 2024). The metropolis has 16 "comunas," a type of urban district, and 249 neighborhoods. The Bello Oriente - Carambolas neighborhood is located in comuna 3: Manrique. In Colombia, neighborhoods are divided into "estratos." Estratos are the socioeconomic classes of residents in Colombia, ranging from 1 (poorest) to 6 (richest). Comuna 3 has neighborhoods with estratos 1, 2 or 3, but Bello Oriente and Carambolas are estrato 1.

This neighborhood therefore differs greatly from other neighborhoods of Medellín, such as El Poblado, Laureles - Estadio and Belén. In these neighborhoods live the wealthiest of Medellín, which means that the quality and accessibility of education is also better. Therefore, the previously mentioned figures will most likely be a lot higher in neighborhoods located in estratos 1, 2 and 3, resulting in a lower quality of education in such disadvantaged neighborhoods.

1 - What is the quality of teachers in the school?

Karen: Bad. There are a lot of kids who tell me they had to watch a movie and make a summary of it. Then they get a grade for that and that's it.
Castro: Terrible. Some teachers cannot teach and have not had a good education themselves, so the quality is very basic and the children do not learn much.



"There are children who are in upper class who still cannot read or write."

2- What do you think education is like in this district?

Do you have any examples of this?

Karen: Bad. There are children who are in the upper grades and still cannot read or write. Here at the foundation, there are many examples of these children.
Robinson: Very bad, the children, the transportation, the teachers, the education is not good enough.

3- How many children are in the class?

Castro: It's way too busy for the teachers and they can't teach. Many kids are just sent to the next year, even though they get bad grades. Not everyone can stay on because otherwise there are too many kids in one class.
Robinson: There are way too many kids per teacher, about 40 kids are in the class.



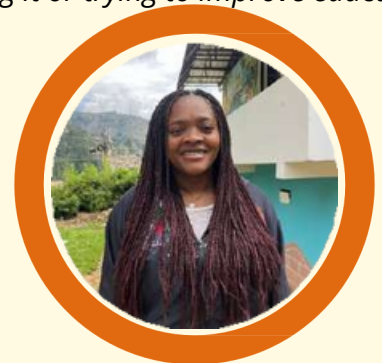
"The neighborhood, Bello Oriente, is not in Medellín's development plan..."

4- What differences do you notice between education in this district and districts with higher estratos?

Karen: There are more private schools in higher estratos, where the quality of education is just better. Kids learn more because there is more control, but also because they pay more.
Robinson: The district, Bello Oriente, is not in Medellín's development plan, so the municipality is not claiming it or trying to improve education.

5- What is the level of children going to school? What are they learning?

Karen: Very basic, most kids only learn the basics because the teachers themselves don't know much and can't teach. They get English in school, but can't speak English at all, for example.
Castro: The kids have very poor grades, but are just passed if they behave well in class. They don't learn much, especially in this district.



The role of Children of Medellín

Children of Medellín is located in the neighborhood of Bello Oriente - Carambolas. Children from this disadvantaged neighborhood are supported by the foundation to develop despite the inferior quality of education. With 15 different classes and activities, children in this neighborhood also get the chance to increase their knowledge and skills, discover their talents, learn values and personal development.

Mission

It is our belief that every child should have the opportunity to develop, pursue his or her dreams and set the course of their own future. Unfortunately, this opportunity does not come naturally to many children. The foundation is actively committed to supporting and encouraging these children to take responsibility for themselves, so that regardless of their background or circumstances, they are given the opportunities they deserve.

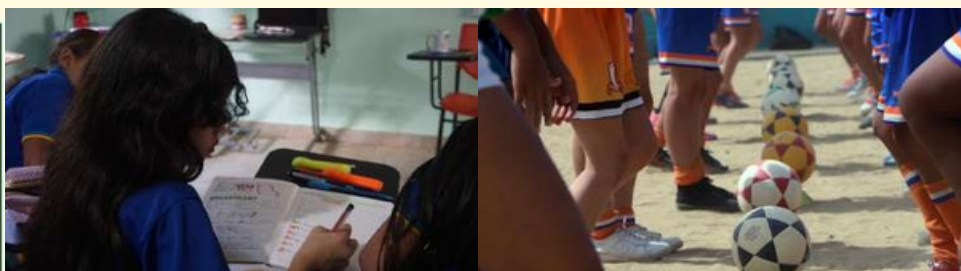


Vision

It is our belief that children are the key to a thriving future. We strive to create a future where children not only flourish in their personal development, but also serve as drivers of positive change in their immediate environment. By investing in the strength and potential of children, we aim to inspire a community in which they, as essential participants, have a lasting impact on improving quality of life and enhancing their own environment.

Our activities

Sport, recreatie en cultuur	La Naranja Mecánica (voetbal) Fundancing (dans) CoCo (recreatie) Saráre (muziek) Bordspelen
Educatie	Journalistiek Entendámonos Engelse les Lees en schrijf les Informatica
Begeleiding	Caminos al Máximo Leiderschap in mijn wijk Studie en werk
Empowerment families	Ouder bijeenkomsten Moestuinen Bazaar



The effects

Thanks to the efforts of Children of Medellín, since its creation, more than 3,000 children have been able to benefit from the foundation's activities, of which 473 are supported this year. Furthermore, 17 young people are undergoing vocational training with the help of the foundation and more than 30 have graduated with the foundation's support. Finally, more than 40 youth have found formal employment thanks to Children of Medellín.

In addition, the impact of the foundation is visible in the knowledge learned, such as English, reading and writing, computer skills and social skills such as cooperation, dealing with winning and losing and recognizing emotions. The foundation's children have been able to develop tremendously thanks to the efforts of Children of Medellín.

