

Community development in *6 de Febrero*

INTRODUCTION

During the second half of 2007, the intervention in *6 de Febrero* consisted of a variety of activities related to the promotion and acknowledgement of the basic needs and issues that affect children directly. New options were found to involve children and youngsters in the active solution of the community problems.

Youth successfully participated in the development of the projects currently under implementation including:

1. Construction, restructuring and equipment of the Community Centre
2. Sexual and Reproductive Initiatives
3. Drug Consumption Prevention
4. Communication and Community Sponsorship.

Some of the early strategies addressed with the community have not had the expected results. Therefore it was necessary to involve other members of the community in the process and promote the central role and participation of the children in each project. Additionally, the project invited the new inhabitants in *6 de Febrero* to learn about the development process and to become part of it.

Apart from these changes, the project has made good progress since all the participants now have a global understanding of community needs and project management. The creation of a general assembly with representatives from each one of the committees that gather twice a month helps maintain the community informed about the development of each one of the projects.

Two of the projects have been delayed including the “Building Responsible Families” which will be implemented by the middle of 2008 and the “Income Generation” project that requires the participation of a consultant with capacity to implement an integral strategy. Meanwhile, Plan staff conducted with the community a survey to identify income earning activities, saving capacity and distribution of family expenses.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. Construction and equipment of the Community Centre

“Even if it was difficult to find a lot with the all the space for the construction of the community centre, thanks to the management of the Infrastructure Committee we have a lot with all the legalized procedures.” Tony, is a community leader from 6 de Febrero.

“We think that a library and a playroom should be built in the new lot, to offer a better and more secure space for the children of 6 de Febrero. It will be a pedestrian zone for the kids.” Betty lives in 6 de Febrero.

“I love the new design of the community centre. It is going to have a library where we are going to make our homework and learn many things while having fun.” Luis is a boy from 6 de Febrero.

The main objective of the project is to improve, enlarge and equip the Community Centre of 6 de Febrero. At this moment the members of the community congregate in a reduced space, where 40 persons fit maximum. As well, the centre lacks of adequate installations for the expansion and improvement of a dinning service for the elder and young children. Similarly, the limited space doesn't allow the gathering of children and youngsters of the community around educational and recreational activities.

It has been a year of great expectations where all the community has participated actively in the development of this project. Especially they were involved in the acquisition of the lot and the design of the centre.

The proposal is to remodel the current building into a two floor building. The first floor will have rooms for a tailor shop, a dinning room and a kitchen; a meeting room and an administration office in the second floor. Additionally, the recently acquired lot will be used exclusively for the construction of a play room and a library based on the ideas provided by the children.

In summary, the main action in this period was the purchase of the lot and the design of the centre. This process was conducted by Infrastructure Committee, which was trained by Plan to manage the resources and conduct all procedures for construction permits.

During the month of January the community members will get licenses for the construction of the new building and will post the bid for the construction consultant. The construction will begin on February and it is expected to last 4 months. (Please see pictures attached)

2. Initiative for the prevention of drug consumption

“...Not only we learned about the Hip- Hop culture, we also recognized the work some members of our community did to identify the main issues that affect 6 de Febrero and how we can help to solve them.” Memories of a Drug Consumption Prevention Workshop of 6 de Febrero.

The aim of the project is to organize the participation of the adolescents to promote healthy lifestyles among themselves and their families through educative activities.

Training and participation activities were implemented with the youngsters in recent months. These activities have been oriented to promote the sessions of the Hip-Hop group called “F 6 Breaker”. Art is a way to improve use of leisure time and an opportunity to spread the word against drug consumption.

The “F 6 Breaker” has notably improved its break dance and has been able to promote its activities not only in the community but all around other neighborhoods of Sincelejo. Additionally they have been finally accepted by the adults who felt skeptical at the beginning.

During the following period the project will focus its efforts on the following:

- Improved cultural offers to congregate more youngsters around the project.
- Prepare a proposal with “Sons of the Flower Mountain Foundation” to increase the scope of the hip-hop project within Sincelejo.
- Improved methodologies to attract youngsters to get involved in a research about the situation of drug consumption in the community.
- Develop a specific action plan with participation of youngsters.
- Conduct workshops to establish link between cultural activities and drug prevention initiatives.
- Seek an official alliance with the Sons of the Flower Mountain Foundation to reach agreements on expected results.

(Please see pictures attached).

3. Initiative of sexual and reproductive health

“For me, sexuality is an affectionate expression that the parents give to their sons and daughters. Also means to express love to others and to share moments playing and talking. Sexuality is not sex.” Cleider is 17 years old and lives in 6 de Febrero

“I think that it is not necessary for men to have many women to feel strong and masculine. Being a man does not mean to have many girlfriends. We should value our manhood no matter what others say it should be.” Fabio is 17 years old and lives in 6 de Febrero.

The project aims at generating knowledge, positive attitudes and adequate practices towards the sexual and reproductive health in adolescents 12 to 18 years of age.

During this period, a sexual and reproductive health survey was planned and applied in the community. This activity involved all the trained health young leaders who conducted the survey among 60 youngsters from 6 de Febrero. At this moment, the results of the survey are being systematized and analyzed for a better understanding of the sexual and reproductive health habits of the youngsters of 6 de Febrero.

Additionally, an action plan was built with the participation of all the youngsters from the committee. There were challenges related to the timing of the meetings considering that many of the youngsters work and study on different schedules. This action plan includes training and promotion activities that have already begun with sexuality and reproductive health workshops.

Actions scheduled for the following period include:

- Systematization and analysis of the sexuality and reproductive survey.
- Three training workshops for the 20 young leaders about gender, sexuality and reproductive rights and health.
- Accompany the replica process and elaboration of communication materials through weekly meetings.
- Meeting at the end of the period to conduct an evaluation with the participation of the 20 young leaders.

Plan and the community have established an alliance with local and international NGOs that support the preparation of training workshops. The World Fund Project – PFMC also supports the systematization and analysis of the survey results. (Please see pictures attached).

4. Generating income through solidarity

“In our neighborhood there is a lot of unemployment and it is really important that the young people be trained so that they can create their own job opportunity. It would be great to learn about beauty and tailor styling.” Omaira is 24 years old and lives in 6 de Febrero.

The project seeks the improvement of families' income through the creation and strengthening of small businesses and economic activities, guaranteeing a favorable environment for the development of their children.

The project also seeks the creation of community organizations around preferred activities and abilities of people. Additionally the project will strengthen capacities and abilities of small business owners through educational processes and technical consulting in management, financial and marketing skills.

During this period the *Family Income Survey* was applied in 6 de Febrero. This survey was designed by the members of the Income Committee with the help of Plan staff. The purpose of this survey was to establish unemployment rates in 6 de Febrero and learn about incomes and expenditures of families in 6 de Febrero. Additionally, the survey wanted to gather the opinion of the inhabitants of 6 de Febrero about the needs for skills and trainings to create their own income earning means.

The following results are based on responses provided by 122 families (69, 7% of the total amount):

- In average, each family from 6 de Febrero has 5 members. 77.4% of them have a masculine leadership. The men contribute 58% of the family income, the women 42% and the sons and daughters 9%. The main income activities of 6 de Febrero are informal jobs, like construction builders, street vendors; some are maids or motorcycle taxi drivers. Others have created their own income project, like small shops, carpentries or tailor shops. All of them try to generate their own income.
- The monthly average family income of 6 de Febrero is maximum of \$254 USD, while their expenses go up to \$258 USD. This shows that the families win almost the necessary money to cover their monthly expenses, without any money left for savings.
- The families' expenses are distributed as follows: 60% for food; 13% to pay the public services; 9% for education; 7% for other expenses; 6% for transportation; 3% for health; 1% for household payments and the other 1 % for recreation. Families in 6 de Febrero invest very little in health and recreation. Normally they have to ask for a loan to level their expenses.
- Most of the people think it would be useful to implement training workshops for women of 6 de Febrero; especially in beauty, tailor, nursing and computing skills. The men think it would be convenient to receive training in computing, electronics, automobile mechanics and construction skills.

The project is scheduled to begin in the first semester of 2008 with the support of the World Women Foundation, which recently established a formal alliance with Plan. At this moment, this proposal is under evaluation at the national level. The World Women Foundation is a non governmental entity that operates in many places of Colombia. It is dedicated to improve the lives of the women with very little income, through fast and easy credit opportunities.

The World Women Foundation will support one of the main objectives of this project which is the management of community credit funds. Additionally, the Foundation will be in charge of managing the financial services and give counseling in the creation of the Community Banks in each area where Plan is implementing this project.

According to the survey results, the project will study the possibility to give academic training in 6 de Febrero in topics of beauty, computing and other needed skills.

Additionally, it is still pending the visit of the members of the Committee to other communities of Sincelejo to learn about their operation and experience with a Community Bank. (Please see pictures attached).

5. Communication and community sponsorship

“The mural is incredible because many people can find out all the good things that happen in our community and promote a positive attitude on how we can improve” Elver is 14 years old and lives in 6 de Febrero.

“The way we are promoting the information about the development of the community, helps that others get involved in the process that is teaching us how to live” Liseth forms part of the Communication Committee.

The main purpose of this project is to promote a constant dialogue between the members of 6 de Febrero and the sponsors in Sweden, through a web page created by Plan Sweden. Specifically, the community is expected to communicate about their daily life as well as the development of the projects funded by Plan Sweden sponsors. Reciprocally, the sponsors send messages, questions and comments about their lives.

During this period, members of 6 de Febrero wrote 12 community articles and sent questions, answers and comments to the sponsors in Sweden. In general, the first contacts were established and each part talked about cultural issues and

their daily life. Additionally, the community addressed the development of the projects sponsored by Sweden and the general situation of 6 de Febrero.

The community mural newspaper was recently re-launched. The community obtains through Plan staff materials from the web to be published in this public newspaper. This mural which is located in the Community Centre is also a source of all kinds of useful information regarding community events.

For the next three years it is expected that 40 youngsters from the community improve their communication, creativity and writing skills, expressing the needs of the community to other cultures, like the Swedish. Additionally, children are planning to prepare a news brochure to circulate every quarter among the population of 6 de Febrero. Other ideas include the set up of a basic radio station once the community centre is completed. (Please see pictures attached).

CONCLUSIONS

This report was prepared based on the information provided by members of each one of the community committee. These committees have strengthened their abilities to manage the development of their community and the promotion of children rights. Adults, youths and children have participated along the process building upon the feedback received by different members of the community.

All the changes suggested to the project have been the result of identified needs and evaluations made by the committees with support from Plan staff.

The highlight of the period was the active participation of young people that expressed their commitment through their opinions in meetings where they had to share their views with adults from their community. The project needs to conduct further actions to achieve a more active involvement of young children in the development process.

The communication project has contributed to improve the internal and external processes of communication, making the community able to conduct the follow-up of the community development process and strengthening at the same time the link between 6 de Febrero and the sponsors in Sweden.