

P O S T C A R D

72. Increasing childhood equality in cities: a practical intervention through policy, research and advocacy

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All of us are different, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't all have the same opportunities.

Amanda, 9 years old¹

By 2050, nine out of ten Latin Americans will live in cities characterized by increasing social inequalities, a deteriorating environment, and a growing number of people living in irregular settlements (UN-Habitat, 2012). Intra-urban inequalities are also growing. Three out of every four Latin American children are growing up in cities, but many lack access to the 'urban advantage'. Almost three out of every ten Latin American children live in highly deprived households (Born and Manujin, 2015). Everything is available – just not for them.

Malnutrition in urban areas, and the number of children without birth registration, are both nearly three times greater for children from deprived households. Save the Children's ninety-one-country Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) research shows inequality increasing in forty-five of those countries (2015).

In 2014 the Colombian government legislated to improve the situation of disadvantaged young children through a national programme called 'From Zero to Forever'. In this context, Equity for Children, the Corona Foundation and Como Vamos conducted a research and advocacy project to increase early childhood well-being in Bogotá and six other Colombian cities, where 30 per cent of all Colombian children reside.

The project team analysed existing government data, augmented by qualitative information provided by NGO networks, to mobilize local authorities and civil society. Collaborators included leaders of municipal and local initiatives who are concerned with early childhood well-being, and stakeholders such as local

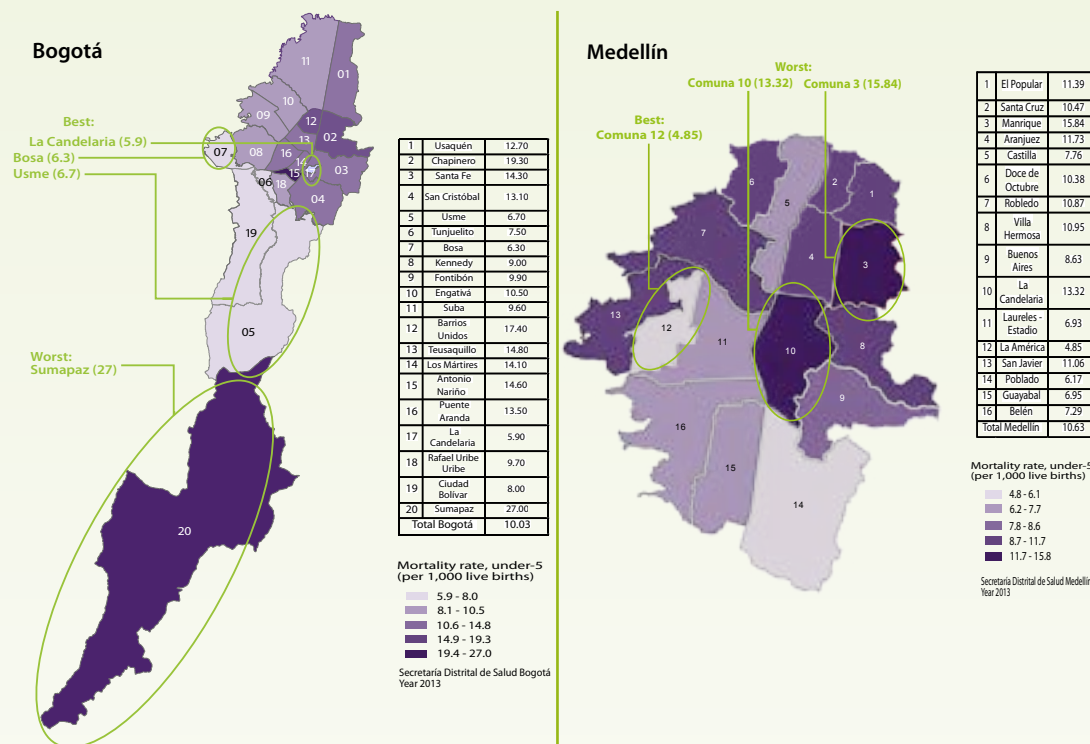
community groups, citizens, young people, policy-makers and government officials. Each believed that urban inequalities, which exist in situations where available resources exist for all, must be addressed and eliminated, especially in light of Colombia's nationally legislated programme mandating resource distribution to all small children.

The project had a number of important findings. For instance, the under-5 mortality rate maps by locality in Bogotá and Medellín show that the probability of dying before the age of 5 is almost five times more in the most disadvantaged areas of Bogotá, and almost four times in Medellín, than in the least disadvantaged areas. In Cali, children from the county where the Embera Katio indigenous community live had a seventeen times greater chance of dying before the age of 5 than those in areas without an indigenous population.

Equally important was how the research process helped to generate awareness and action on inequality. The project also involved:

- translating the evidence into simple, user-friendly social media materials and posting them online to promote information broadly
- disseminating findings continuously to media and social networks and discussing them in the context of available policies for young children
- working with local committees to develop action plans linked to national and municipal policies, such as prevention and protection, in areas with a high prevalence of adolescent mothers
- promoting civil action committees in some deprived communities of Bogotá

Figure 72.1 Under 5 mortality rate: local inequities



Source: Minujin et al. (2014).

- creating a public debate with the mayoral candidates for the October 2015 election, recommending strategies for inequality reduction
- monitoring progress annually in order to highlight previously invisible living situations for children.

The project team will replicate this action research approach in other Latin American cities, actively including the voice and participation of children and young people to resolve the inequities that affect them.

Notes

1. Pers. comm., June 2015.

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