

Stories of change

“ I grew up in a family with four brothers, who are all involved with drugs. This would sometimes cause escalation and violence at home. I didn't know how to communicate clearly and was shy to tell my family that this was hurting me. Through the project I have learned how to approach these types of situations and moved on from being shy. I am now rehearsing for a theatre play about young people and their families' vulnerabilities like drugs, alcohol and violence to show other families things can change. ”

Mateo, 21, Bosa

“ The project has changed my life. I used to have problems at home and was always hanging on the streets. The project gave me a safe place to go to and I could avoid the risks of being on the streets. I attended training on drugs, pregnancy prevention and violence and found my passion- to dance. ”

Alba, 16, Bosa

“ Before the project I was involved with a gang and addicted to drugs. The loss of friends led me to get in touch with YMCA. I trusted them, mainly because they weren't judgemental about my past. Through different activities I became a youth leader in my community. For the first time in my life I felt proud and empowered. ”

Rogelio, 18, Bosa

“ The project has helped me to create my life goals. I always wanted to become a Systems Engineer, but now I want to support and help others in the community. Therefore, I have decided to start and study Social Work. I'd like to inspire young people and show them it is possible to transform your life and you can achieve anything you want. ”

Xiomara, 17, Bosa

Project dashboard: Supporting young people at risk of involvement in drugs, crime and violence through sustainable livelihoods in Bosa, Bogota

Goal

To contribute to reducing juvenile crime rates, consumption of narcotics, school dropout rates, and domestic abuse in Bosa, Bogota, Colombia

Implementing partners:



Funders:

Medicor Foundation
Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar
Charlbury and Overseas Community Projects LTD
Lotex Foundation
Thoolen Foundation

Duration:

May 2015 to September 2018

Cost:

£232,039

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Y Care International creates opportunities for vulnerable young people across the globe to change their lives for the better. Inspired by and faithful to our Christian values, we work with people of all faiths and none to build a more just world, free from poverty.



Securing sustainable livelihoods for young people at risk in Bosa, Bogota

Between 2015 and 2018 Y Care International and YMCA Bogota supported young women and men at risk of involvement with drugs, crime and violence to develop sustainable livelihoods in the neighbourhood of Bosa, Bogota.

We worked with young people and their families to set life goals, improve livelihoods opportunities, build stronger family relationships and empower young people to become agents of change.

YMCA

The results

The Context

Bosa, a deprived neighbourhood in Bogota, is one of the poorest areas in Colombia. High levels of crime and violence together with limited educational and employment opportunities make it extremely difficult for young people to grow up in a safe and supporting environment.

Young people living in Bosa are affected by complex social, familial, education and economic challenges. A focus on daily survival impacts on young people's aspiration and ambition. Many young people in Bosa are highly vulnerable to involvement in criminal activity, violence and drugs, and rates of teenage pregnancy are high. These challenges directly impact the ability of young people to make positive life choices and change their own reality.

The project

Our project aimed at reducing rates of juvenile crime, drug abuse, school dropout and domestic abuse in Bosa. Our approach combined direct support for young people to build sustainable livelihoods, as well as providing psychosocial support and life skills development. In addition, families and community members were directly engaged to promote awareness of young people's challenges and improve their ability to prevent young people from becoming involved in crime, drugs and violence.

Improving young people's access to sustainable economic opportunities

The final evaluation found that at the end of the project, 61% of young project participants were in education and 35% in employment. Whilst small business development was not a primary goal, 212 people were supported with entrepreneurship skills training (52% of them were young people). By the end of the project, 6% were inspired to start their own businesses and reported that with their increased income, they can now sustain themselves and their families. Overall, 67% of the young project participants reported improvements in their skills and their capacity to financially support themselves and their families, with 43% showing an increase in their level of income.

Young people becoming role models in their communities

We trained 255 young people at risk of becoming involved in, or already engaged in, drugs, crime or violence to empower them as social and economic

agents of change in their community. The project focused on building up self-esteem and self-efficacy to encourage young people to fulfil their aspirations. All participants reported that they now feel they have found a sense of belonging and identity, and are actively supporting one another.

These young people established themselves as role models for other young people in the community and are contributing to addressing the challenges of daily life in Bosa. By the end of the project, 93% of young people stated that they have clear goals for their lives. 82% now felt they could positively influence other youth in their community and motivate them to make informed decisions.

Transforming relationships at home and in the community

By the end of the project, young people reported feeling more supported by their community and their family. The project was able to inspire increased trust and self-confidence in the young participants which has contributed to more open methods of communication and increased young people's sense of safety in Bosa.

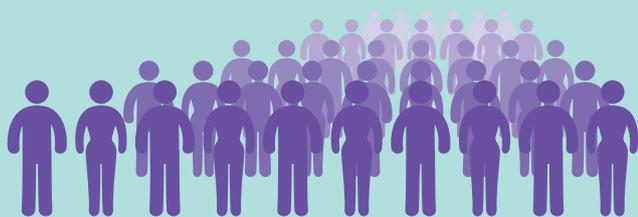
91% of community members surveyed spoke of a positive change in the community since the project commenced. They perceived a decrease in drug consumption, and a change in the rate of crime and the dynamics of violence in the community. This change has also led to more understanding of the difficulties young people face in Bosa, and improved perceptions of young people themselves.

YMCA's Footprint Model: improving family relationships

120 of the most vulnerable families identified in Bosa were selected to participate in YMCA's Footprint Model: improving family relationships. This model is a tried and tested holistic approach that aims to create a positive and nurturing environment in the household, improving the relationships between parents and their children. After taking part in Footprints activities, both parents and their children reported having a more positive perspective on their relationship, with increased trust and respect. 99% of the parents stated that they have not seen any signs of their children being involved with drugs, crime or violence since they engaged in the project.

What changed?

Our project in numbers



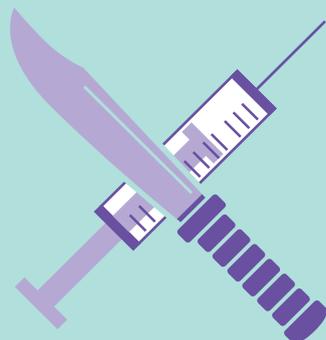
258 family and community members were supported by local government institutions to access health, education, employment or legal services



93% of young participants reported that they now have clear, more positive life goals

92%

of young people who engaged with the programme are now employed



98%

of project participants are no longer involved with drugs or violence

65%



of young participants believe that they have improved their skills and abilities to meet their own needs, and those of their family

What next?

Involvement with drugs, crime and violence remains a major area of risk amongst young people living in Bosa. We will continue to invest in building technical and life skills, assets and support for young people that empower young people to make positive life choices and work towards fulfilling their ambitions.

We will seek investment to strengthen the enterprise and employability component to increase economic resilience and challenge structural causes

of the high levels of drug abuse, crime and violence experienced by communities living in Bosa.

In this project, the direct support provided to the families has proven instrumental in creating a positive, nurturing and safe environment in which young people can thrive and gain confidence. This approach has proven successful and it will be replicated in future interventions.