
SITE VISIT: Colombia's Bienestar Programme— An Innovative Approach to Childcare

Excerpted from the Coordinators' Notebook No. 7, 1989

Bienestar ("Wellbeing") is an innovative programme designed to reach young children in the poorest sections of Colombia. According to the latest census, seventeen percent of Colombia's population is children under seven years of age. Of these, two million are malnourished. Bienestar, which was initiated in 1987, is a community-level response to the need to provide day care services for working women. Unlike traditional "centres," the Bienestar programme selects mothers within the children's neighborhood community to care for up to fifteen children within their own homes. The programme helps these daycare mothers to obtain funds to upgrade their homes and provide a percentage of their salary. In addition to providing eighty percent of each child's daily nutritional requirements, the programme provides a stimulating environment for enhanced child development; a source of income for day care mothers; and a relief from childrearing for working mothers of young children.

At present more than 30,000 children have been enrolled in approximately 2,000 homes around the country. Under the supervision of the National Institute for Family Wellbeing, the Colombian Social Service, and the Colombian Institute for Family Health, the programme hopes to increase enrollment by 300,000 each year, until the entire preschool population is covered.

For additional information contact Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar, Avenida 68, No. 64-01, Bogota, Colombia.

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Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.
CD-ROM. The Consultative Group on ECCD. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1999.