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Soccer Tournaments Promote Peaceful Coexistence



Photo: USAID CIMIENTOS

Children in Chocó try on their new soccer jerseys for the first time right before they begin a soccer game.

The most popular sport in Colombia among children, adolescents and adults including women is soccer. The World Cup which took place this past summer, caused soccer fever among Colombians and all though women are also interested in the sport, it is predominantly played only by males.

Often times, in the most violence stricken regions like Chocó, because of its history of armed conflict, children and adolescence resort to negative and illicit behavior because municipalities lack recreational facilities that promote positive activities.

Sports are a positive alternative to substance abuse, street fights, domestic violence and school bullying. CIMIENTOS is taking advantage of this soccer fever to promote positive use of spare time among the citizens of Chocó and La Sierra. Tournaments will be played with people of all ages including women which will improve the community's participation and in turn strengthen peaceful coexistence. The rules of the games differ from a normal match because they are focused on creating social pacts between citizens and their ability to respect these pacts and other players. As an example, the rules of each game are determined before the match start. Each team contributes to establishing certain rules during the game, and the team who adheres to the rules the best wins. Points do not determine a victory and there is no referee to enforce the rules; each player is responsible for following them.

During August and September, tournaments began in the municipalities of El Tarra, Tibu, Convencion, Cienaga, Dibulla, El Carmen de Atrato and Acandí with the official initiation being the handover of the team's soccer jerseys. These activities are in line with CIMIENTOS' strategy to improve governance by strengthening social capital, promoting closer bonds between communities and authorities, creating models that promote the participation of women and learning to develop rules and abide by them as a means to improve social awareness and social pacts.