

Weaving Alliances: Implementation of the "Transformando Vidas" Playroom in Istmina, Chocó-Colombia

Deisy Lorena Galvis-Molano  

Master in Organization Management. Economist
Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios. Bogotá, Colombia
deisy.galvis@uniminuto.edu

Leidy Parra-Muñoz 

Master in Social Management. Social worker
Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios. Bogotá, Colombia
lparra@minutodedios.org

Abstract


This research was developed in the municipality of Istmina, Chocó, between 2021 and 2023, when the 'Transformando Vidas' playroom of the Corporación Organización el Minuto de Dios was established. The primary objective of the research was to implement a strategy to strengthen and expand collaboration networks and alliances in order to restructure the playroom, enhance the quality of the services offered, provide an optimal space for the beneficiaries, and ensure long-term sustainability. The Methodology used in the research has a qualitative approach, the method is inductive, and the design is based on action research. In the implementation of the research instrument, fieldwork was carried out in the territory to interview different actors to recognize the context and the needs of the population. In addition, the "alliance traffic light" tool was used to identify and subsequently establish networks and alliances with other organizations interested in contributing to the social project. Among the research results, it was possible to establish a strategy that includes twelve allies, which significantly strengthened the capacities and resources available to the playroom. The success achieved during the 'Transformando vidas' project is attributed mainly to the participatory and collaborative process with the community since the formulation and implementation of the project.

Keywords: Public-private alliance, educational environment, social inequality, armed conflict and sustainable development.

Received: 04/12/04/2024 | Evaluated: 07/12/2024 | Accepted: 07/26/2024 | Published: 03/03/2025



This work is under a Creative Commons License: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International.

 **Correspondence:** Deisy Lorena Galvis-Molano. Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios. Career 74 No. 81 C-05, Bogotá, Colombia. Email: deisy.galvis@uniminuto.edu

¿How to quote this article?

Galvis-Molano, D. L., & Parra-Muñoz, L. (2025). Weaving Alliances: Implementation of the "Transformando Vidas" Playroom in Istmina, Chocó-Colombia. *Prospectiva. Revista de Trabajo Social e intervención social*, (39), e20413799. <https://doi.org/10.25100/prts.v0i39.13799>

Tejiendo Alianzas: implementación de la Ludoteca "Transformando Vidas" en Istmina, Chocó-Colombia

Resumen

Esta investigación se desarrolló en el municipio de Istmina, Chocó, entre los años 2021 y 2023, cuando se estableció la Ludoteca Transformando Vidas de la Corporación Organización El Minuto de Dios. El objetivo primordial de la investigación fue implementar una estrategia para fortalecer y expandir redes de colaboración y alianzas, con el fin de reestructurar la Ludoteca, potencializando la calidad de los servicios ofrecidos, brindando un espacio óptimo para los beneficiarios y asegurando la sostenibilidad a largo plazo. La metodología utilizada en la investigación tiene un enfoque cualitativo, el método es inductivo y el diseño está basado en la investigación acción. En la implementación del instrumento de la investigación, se realizó trabajo de campo en territorio, para entrevistar a diferentes actores, y así reconocer el contexto y las necesidades de la población. Además, se utilizó la herramienta "semáforo de alianzas" para identificar y, posteriormente, establecer redes y alianzas con otras organizaciones interesadas en aportar al proyecto social. Entre los resultados de la investigación se logró establecer una estrategia que contempla doce aliados, lo que permitió fortalecer significativamente las capacidades y los recursos disponibles para la Ludoteca. El éxito alcanzado durante el proyecto Transformando Vidas se atribuye en gran medida al proceso participativo y colaborativo con la comunidad desde la formulación y ejecución del proyecto.

Palabras clave: Alianza público-privada; Entorno educacional; Desigualdad social; Conflicto armado; Desarrollo sostenible.

Sumario: 1. Introduction, 2. Methodology, 3. Findings, 4. Conclusions, 5. Bibliographic references.

1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents a series of challenges that countries must address through concrete goals and strategies to make significant progress in overcoming poverty, quality education, and environmental protection, among other things. Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal four focuses on achieving inclusive, equitable, and excellent education. This goal is critical in improving child and youth well-being by promoting an education system that caters to diversity and ensures better quality standards (United Nations, 2015).

Developing countries, such as Colombia, have experienced a significant lag in quality and access to education. This backwardness is particularly pronounced in communities historically affected by systematic discrimination, social exclusion, marginalization, and poverty. These conditions have perpetuated and exacerbated educational inequalities, limiting access to equitable and quality learning opportunities (Galvis-Molano et al., 2022). The persistence of these educational gaps not only affects the individual development of students but also has profound repercussions on the country's socioeconomic progress, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

Roemer and Trannoy (2013) mentioned that the causes of inequalities are determined by effort and circumstances. Effort comprises the set of actions under the person's control to achieve the goal. Inequalities arising from differences in the effort made are morally acceptable. On the other hand, circumstances are environmental factors, whether social or biological, that are outside the individual's responsibility. Therefore, when circumstances cause inequalities, they should be subject to compensation since this is an undesirable social problem in which individuals in unfavorable conditions do not achieve educational results that are on par with individuals with better conditions.

Historically, in Colombia, educational gaps have been present, affecting mainly the population in rural areas and members of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Among the departments with the most outstanding educational lags is Chocó, the department with the highest proportion of the Afro-Colombian population. According to the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE, 2021), 82.1% of its inhabitants are Afro-Colombian. However, according to data from the National Population and Housing Census (CNPV) conducted by DANE (2018), recorded that the department of Chocó is located among the poorest territories in Colombia, presenting an index of Unsatisfied Basic Needs (NBI) above 80%. The situation is deepened in municipalities such as Quibdó, Alto Baudó, Carmen del Darién, Lloró, Riosucio, and Istmina.

According to the Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN, 2023), the Chocó department has persistent educational inequalities that cause a marked territorial disparity compared to other regions of the country. These gaps are evident in the results of the Saber 11° tests, where the Andean region excels with averages exceeding 250 points, and in the Pacific region, specifically in the department of Chocó, the lowest average is recorded with a score of 193 in the standardized tests. Kessler (2019) argues that educational disparities in Chocó are due to a coexistence of social problems that intensify the gap in access and quality of education. Among the problems are structured poverty, lack of adequate infrastructure, armed conflict, scarcity of educational resources, and social exclusion of certain ethnic groups.

Regarding school dropouts, the Department of Chocó registered 6,019 students who abandoned their studies in basic education in 2022, and more than 54% of these cases occurred in the Istmina region (Secretaría Departamental de Educación, 2023). One of the leading causes of dropout is the internal armed conflict in the region, the increase in the forced displacement of families, and the continuous mobility restrictions. In addition, the risk of recruiting children and youth by groups outside the law (Mora-Madera & Sánchez-Arroyave, 2017). Therefore, the impacts of the armed conflict and various manifestations of inequality and poverty in Istmina have exposed children to a series of risks that affect their integral development.

4 Aware of this problem, Corporación Organización El Minuto de Dios, as a rights guarantor entity, has generated a model of attention to vulnerable populations, with which, in addition to the physical construction of the environment, the strengthening of the social fabric is achieved (Corporación Organización El Minuto de Dios, 2018). During the execution of and after the projects, it is crucial to establish citizen participation alliances so that channeling resources to the population -whether in financial, technical, or administrative aspects- promotes the creation of organized, self-sufficient communities committed to their own progress.

In the department of Chocó, specifically in the municipality of Istmina, the Corporación Organización El Minuto de Dios implemented two basic community toy libraries in 2018 through its 'Plan Padrinos' Program to promote the integral development of children in the area. However, these facilities deteriorated over time due to adverse environmental conditions and lack of space maintenance. For this reason, economic resources were obtained from international cooperation sources to improve the facilities and acquire the necessary furniture to guarantee optimal attention. Despite this progress, the participation of cooperating partners is required to strengthen the project and ensure its long-term sustainability.

This research aims to implement a network and alliances strategy to consolidate and double the number of donors and allies committed to the 'Transformando Vida' playroom in Istmina, Chocó, to increase the quality of life and well-being of children and adolescents. In addition, to reduce the environment's risk and violence to which they are exposed, guarantee their rights, and promote their integral development.



This document consists of five sections: the introduction, the Methodology used to respond to the main objective of the research, the results and the analysis from the voices of the actors interviewed, the conclusions of the research, and the bibliographical references used in the document.

2. Methodology

The research approach is qualitative, which allows us to delve into the complexity of social processes, analyze the interactions between individuals and social dynamics, and understand the cultural, historical, and political factors that influence the way each phenomenon is experienced and understood. By analyzing multiple subjective realities without following a linear sequence, interpretative richness and contextualization of the phenomena are generated.

The design for approaching the object of study is action research, the main objective of which is to provide information to guide decision-making for programs, processes, and structural reforms. Action research seeks to bring about social change and transform reality, making people aware of their role in this transformation process. In this sense, Elliot (1991, cited in Latorre, 2005) points out that action research is the study of a social situation to improve the quality of the action within it, while Montero and Leon (2002), it represents the study of a social context where, through a spiral process of inquiry, research is carried out at the same time as intervention.

This design allows the community to be active and participative in a way that is evident throughout the research process, from identifying the problem to developing the actions needed to solve it. The three essential phases of action research designs are observing (constructing an outline of the problem and collecting data), thinking (analyzing and interpreting), and acting (solving problems and implementing improvements), which occur in a cyclical manner, over and over again, until the problem is solved, change is achieved, or improvement is successfully introduced (Stringer, 1999, cited by Hernández-Sampieri *et al.*, 2010).

Within the framework of this design, various techniques were applied to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the community under study. For example, the participants' discourse will be analyzed to describe and understand the phenomenon from their points of view and jointly build a broader perspective. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used to collect information about the perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of the inhabitants of Istmina, Chocó. This was done to know the complexity of the environment, the context, and the particularities of the territory, detailing the problems identified to propose appropriate actions and solutions.

The study population for this research is located in the southeast of the department of Chocó, in the municipality of Istmina, specifically in the San Agustín neighborhood, where the 'Transformando Vidas' playroom is located, a project implemented by the Corporación

Organización El Minuto de Dios in partnership with Food for The Poor. The territory faces significant challenges; for example, the Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index corresponds to 84%, which means that about 8 out of 10 people living in this municipality do not have sufficient resources to meet their basic needs (DANE, 2021).

The problem is aggravated by the displacement of families affected by the armed conflict from the municipalities of Medio Baudó and Medio San Juan. In addition, essential services, infrastructure, social investment, and job opportunities are lacking. Children and young people do not have safe spaces for recreation. In addition, the local economy is highly linked to informality since 90.5% of its inhabitants are in this sector (World Bank, 2022).

The purpose of the playroom is to provide a protective environment for 50 children between 5 and 12 years of age who face economic and social vulnerability situations due to the adverse context. The playroom offers a variety of cultural, artistic, sports, nutritional, and academic activities designed to provide comprehensive care to this population. In addition, the benefits of the playroom extend to a broader level and contribute to strengthening the community's social fabric as a whole since it not only fulfills its function of caring for children but also becomes an engine for the development and strengthening of family and community relationships.

6 The sample is defined through a homogeneous convenience sampling; in this case, beneficiaries are selected from the same environment with similar characteristics and officials who work specifically in the COMD's Directorate of Children and Youth. Through this process, we seek to understand the elements that make up the beneficiaries' experience when interacting with the playroom, as well as to understand how this interaction influences their lives and needs (Hernández-Sampieri *et al.*, 2010).

The semi-structured interview was applied to 28 mothers and primary caregivers of the children attending the playroom. These women, belonging to the Afro-descendant ethnic group, have a fundamental role as caregivers in their homes. It is important to mention that their access to education is limited, reaching only up to the fifth grade of primary school. Furthermore, in terms of economic income, these families face monetary poverty and, in some cases, extreme monetary poverty.

On the other hand, of the 28 women, only 14 caregivers could attend the focus group exercise. Participation was motivated by interactive dynamics such as collective mapping, brainstorming, and social mapping. This enabled the identification of problems, ideas, and opinions that were not evident in the individual interviews. In addition, it facilitated a more profound and collective understanding of the caregivers' experiences and perceptions, thus enriching the research findings. Similarly, three additional interviews were conducted with members of COMD, given that it is the entity in charge of directing and materializing the playroom project. Two collaborators from the Diocese of Istmina, Chocó, who were facilitators in

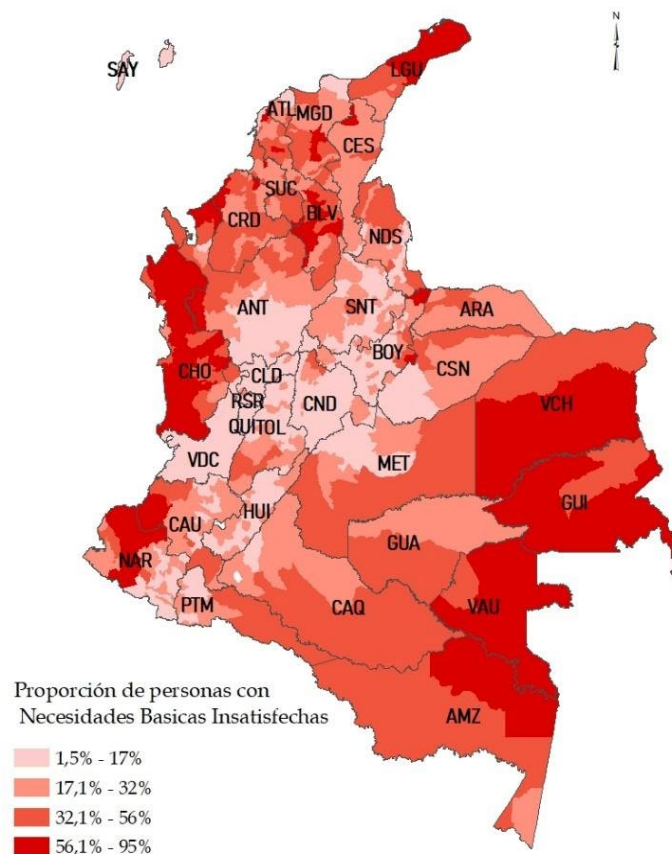
the execution of the project and are agents close to the community and the territory, were also interviewed. In this way, 33 interviews were carried out during the fieldwork.

3. Findings

Figure 1 shows the spatial distribution of the Unsatisfied Basic Needs indicator calculated by DANE. From a geospatial perspective, the proportion of people lacking resources to satisfy basic needs is concentrated in the most peripheral regions of Colombia, and it is precisely the department of Chocó that concentrates the highest proportion of people in this situation.

Thus, projects such as 'Transformando Vidas' become even more relevant in this territory that has suffered and continues to suffer the impacts of the armed conflict and various manifestations of inequality and poverty, which affect the integral development of children. These spaces not only provide a safe and stimulating environment for play and learning but also promote the emotional well-being of children. This creates a solid foundation for personal and academic growth, fostering the reconstruction of the social fabric in affected communities.

Figure 1. Spatial distribution of the Unmet Basic Needs indicator.



Source: own elaboration based on ArcMap 10.5 software. Unsatisfied Basic Needs -DANE (2018).

As mentioned in the Methodology, to get to know the beneficiaries' environment, fieldwork was undertaken in the municipality of Istmina, in the department of Chocó, specifically in the San Agustín neighborhood, where the 'Transformando Vidas' playroom is located. The primary purpose of this exploration was to analyze the beneficiaries' social, cultural, and geographical context, and an active interaction with the local community was established. In this way, we undertook the task of diagnosing the social and economic reality of the region, as well as the practices, beliefs, indigenous values, and needs of the territory.

Figure 2 shows the social and environmental setting in which the community's children live, where the scarcity of resources is a constant reality. Since the arrival to the territory, an environment of monetary and multidimensional poverty, unemployment, and lack of basic infrastructure, such as lack of access roads, health centers, and educational establishments, among others, can be observed. As well as the State's abandonment of welfare policies and programs, environmental and public health problems are also evident, and all these problems are aggravated by the presence of illegal groups in the territory.

Figure 2. Community outreach.



Source: own elaboration (2023). Photographer: Vanessa Quinto, psychosocial professional 'Transformando Vidas' playroom.

On the other hand, home visits were made to the homes of each of the beneficiaries (see Figure 3) to have a constructive dialogue with the families, recognize social processes, family dynamics, and symbolic beliefs, diagnose difficulties in access to education, educational permanence, and school dropout, and finally generate bonds of trust to build community processes.

Using the observation technique, we achieved a deeper understanding of people's real contexts, especially children, youth, and mothers. This allowed us to obtain a more complete and enriching vision of their daily practices, ensuring a more holistic and accurate understanding of life in this territory.

Figure 3. Home visits.



Source: own elaboration (2023). Photographer: Vanessa Quinto, psychosocial professional 'Transformando Vidas' playroom

Among the results of the fieldwork, it should be noted that the 28 mothers interviewed, that is, 100% of the target population, reported conditions of socioeconomic vulnerability, food insecurity, and complex family relationships. Seventy percent of the mothers reported the absence of a father figure in their homes. In addition, all of the mothers interviewed mentioned working in the informal sector, primarily in street vending, recycling, and general services in other homes. 100% have been direct victims of the armed conflict, and 80% have suffered forced displacement as a result of violence.

The following testimony reflects the social and geographic risk situations to which children, youth, and, in general, the entire community living in Istmina are exposed. These adverse conditions affect their physical and emotional well-being and hinder their opportunities for education and personal and social growth, creating a challenging environment for their development.

...as time has gone by, it has become the focus of many problems; for example, we live in many risk areas; on the one hand, the river is big, and we live pending landslides because we are between the river and the hills. Besides, it is the focus of delinquency and vice; we live in fear with our children; many times, we are in the street looking for sustenance, when suddenly they tell us that everyone should lock themselves in because there will be shooting, this has been very constant in the last months ... we live here out of necessity because we have nowhere else to go, but the neighborhood is complicated, difficult. (Testimony C03, personal communication, June 16, 2023)

The testimonies also show the difficulties in family relationships, where there is domestic violence, insecurity, and the absence of a stable home. The situation described in the following testimony points to the use of psychoactive substances in families and the vulnerability of women and children in the households as an aggravating factor.

...we couldn't even be in the house because my oldest son took us out of the house, and we and the girl slept on a mat at an aunt's house. We can't go back to the house. He says he is going to make an attempt on my life. My oldest son consumes vice, and to get our clothes out, he touches us when he is not there. (Testimony C08, personal communication, June 15, 2023)

On the other hand, the mothers interviewed mentioned the absence of protective environments as a determining factor in their children's educational process, as they often had to leave them alone at home while they worked. To exemplify the above, the following testimony of one of the beneficiaries is presented.

There are three girls and the baby because I am pregnant and I... well, with everything and the pregnancy, I am the only one who works, I have not received anything from the baby's father, well I work in a bingo or washing clothes, even if it is just a little, whatever works, we try to eat 2 times a day, just a little, but we try to eat at least twice.... Before the Ludoteca arrived, I had to leave my three girls alone so that I could go to work; one was not calm; one was always thinking about the bad things that could happen to them, but it was leaving them alone and at night being able to eat something or not eat at all. (Testimony C12, personal communication, June 16, 2023)

In contrast to the above, the interviewees emphasized the importance of playful and safe spaces in the territory as a fundamental factor contributing to transforming the realities of children and their families. These spaces not only offer opportunities for play and recreation but also promote social cohesion and strengthen community ties.

...it is nice to see the process with the toy library, to see the children participating in cultural scenarios, dancing, representing the municipality of Istmina, and transforming the collective imaginary that many people have of believing that here there is only violence and bad things, that these paradigms are changing are advances that are due to spaces such as the toy library and the people who lead this project... (Testimony C20, personal communication, June 16, 2023)

Likewise, the interviews mentioned the relevance of ensuring the sustainability of the playroom in the neighborhood, linking other companies interested in improving the reality of vulnerable children. This highlights the need to consolidate networks and strategic alliances to ensure the continuity of the community project and maximize its positive impact on the community.

If we do not work in a network from our areas, then it is difficult for this impact to generate a true transformation in the lives of the people we want to intervene, so teamwork in any scenario is fundamental to achieving the objectives... it is necessary to link new actors from different regions who know the impact that this can generate and want to contribute to the cause to guarantee sustainability. (Administrative testimony of the 'Transformando Vidas' playroom, personal communication, July 10, 2023)

It also highlights the importance of children being in a safe place with a staff that follows up on their school progress and the care of the minors. Quoting the interviewee coded as number 23, who mentioned the following:

The care of the child worried me because I go to work in the morning and arrive very late. She was left alone, as she is an imperative girl, so she came and went playing in the street. But with the toy library, where there is already a specific person to take care of her, I am more relaxed, hoping that the project will continue and benefit more people like me. (Testimony C14, personal communication, June 17, 2023)

When asked about the importance of the playroom, parents agreed on how valuable this space has been as a protective environment. During the interviews, they expressed their gratitude and mentioned that, for the first time, they received new supplies and equipment for their children. In addition, the community recognizes the neglect of the State, the absence of government entities, and the low interest of the business community. Therefore, projects such as the 'Transformando vidas' toy library contribute to dignifying the territory.

...The playroom is not only transforming the children's lives but also generating a positive change in the entire community, offering a vision of a more promising future amid the adversities they face. Its impact is truly significant, and its continuity is essential to continue improving the inhabitants' quality of life in this context...they could not have chosen a more appropriate name for that playroom because that is precisely what they are doing: Transforming Lives. (Testimony of collaborator Diocese of Istmina, personal communication, July 22, 2023)

Figure 4 presents an overall scheme visually representing the most recurrent words extracted from 33 interviews, 28 mothers of beneficiary children, and five officials and collaborators of COMD and the Diocese of Istmina. From the interviewees' perspective, there is a unanimous consensus on the crucial role played by children in the context of the 'Transformando Vidas' playroom in Istmina, Chocó. All interviewees emphasized this initiative's positive impact in transforming the lives of children in the community. In addition, its role in the prevention of school dropout was highlighted.

The importance of social marketing as a tool to make actions visible and promote specific campaigns related to children was mentioned. In addition, raising public awareness about the importance of education and protecting children's rights. On the other hand, it will establish effective partnership strategies with various entities to ensure the sustainability of the toy library, mobilize resources, raise awareness among the business community about the importance of investing in the future of children, and expand the project's scope.

Figure 4. Frequency of words from interviews.



Source: own elaboration. Frequency of words according to the interviews processed in NVIVO (2023).

“Alliance Traffic Light” Strengthening Strategy

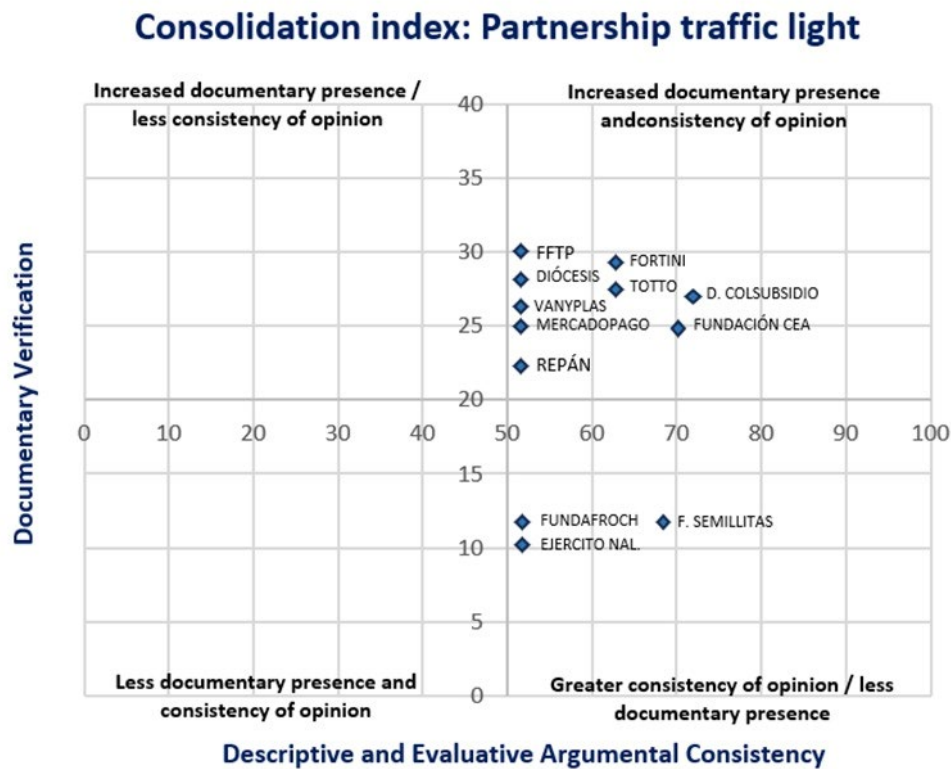
Using the Alliance Traffic Light as an analysis and evaluation tool facilitates the identification of strategic actors and enables an assessment of the suitability and effectiveness of the types of partnerships to be established (Ferreira & Gignoux, 2011). Consequently, once the allies were identified, a network management strategy was implemented to consolidate alliances with the new strategic actors.

The design of the Traffic Light is based on the notion that the building and consolidation of partnerships is a continuous process, so it is inappropriate to categorize partnerships as either successful or unsuccessful. Instead, it is recognized that, at different stages of the collaboration process, partnerships may exhibit different levels of robustness and face specific challenges. To assess partnership characteristics, scores are assigned on a Cartesian plane consisting of two axes:

the X-axis, representing consistency of opinion, and the Y-axis, reflecting the score obtained in the desk review.

The consolidation rate of the partnerships of the 'Transformando Vidas' playroom project is identified in Figure 5:

Figure 5. Partnership consolidation index - Alliance Traffic Light.



Source: own elaboration (2023).

This graphical representation helps evaluate the alliance and understand its relative position regarding strengths and weaknesses. In the specific context of this analysis, it is evident that most of the alliances (9 out of 12) are in the quadrant identified as having the highest documentary presence and consistency of opinion. This result highlights the strength and coherence within these collaborations, suggesting that the organizations that make up these partnerships are aligned with the project objectives and that there is documentation that supports their work with the project's needs.

In the first instance, coordination was established with the Diocese of Istmina to obtain a space in the San Agustín neighborhood to reconstruct the Ludoteca. This collaboration with the Diocese represented a significant contribution to the process since it implied obtaining adequate physical space and reflected the capacity to establish effective collaborative relationships in

search of a common objective. This achievement marked the starting point for the following stages of the project.

The next stage consisted of mobilizing resources to complete the building adjustments. However, unexpected challenges arose, such as an increase in the cost of materials and the need to make additional adjustments not contemplated in the budget of the leading funder, Food for The Poor (FFTP). In response to this situation, communication was established with Panaderías REPÁN, a donor recognized for its social commitment and its history of supporting initiatives of the Corporación Organización El Minuto de Dios. This network made it possible to raise the necessary resources, specifically to address budget shortfalls.

With the marketing team, an effort was made to secure the necessary resources to purchase teaching materials and provide snacks to the children who benefit from the playroom. In this context, the project was presented to Mercado Pago, and a positive response was obtained from the entity. This guaranteed the continuity of the playroom's operations for an additional six months beyond what was initially planned.

On the other hand, contact was established with the company Vanyplas, who donated part of the furniture needed for the toy library. At the same time, conversations were held with the Danone company, which contributed to Fortini nutritional supplements, which were used to implement the project's nutritional line. The company also collaborated with the CEA Foundation, which donated five computers. The company Tutto contributed school supplies, and Droguerías Colsubsidio donated school kits.

Once these strategic alliances were consolidated, dialogue was initiated with the National Army, specifically with the 14th Engineer Battalion, to facilitate the transportation of all the furniture from Bogota to Istmina Chocó. This institution provided a means of land transportation for this purpose. In addition, a specialized team was assigned to carry out the electrical installation and operation of the computers and other electronic equipment.

Finally, it is important to highlight that two local alliances were forged in addition to the collaboration with the Diocese, FUNDAFROCH, and the Semillitas de Amor Foundation. These alliances allowed the project to be developed on the ground, specifically with school and recreational activities for both the children attending the Ludoteca and their families.

Below are some of the testimonies that refer to the importance of the alliances managed for the project and the process to achieve them.

... The project presentation to the partners was always done with love and passion as if our children were the ones who would benefit from it. The partners ended up falling in love with the project. They recognized the need to reach this region with a high degree of vulnerability

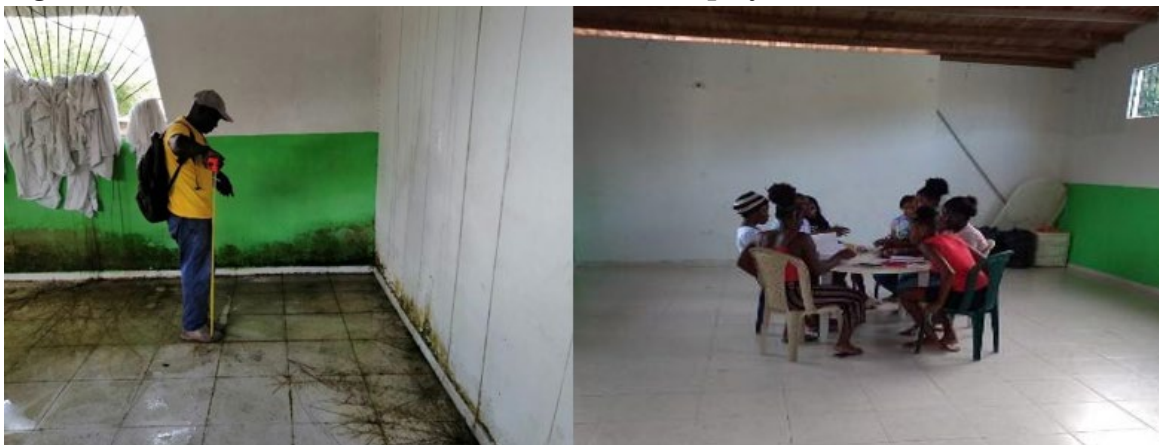
and marginalization, such as Istmina, and they felt proud to know that they could contribute to changing the reality of children and young people. Everyone has contributed, and it is precisely because of the love with which the idea is sold (COMD staff member, personal communication, July 18, 2023).

...the allies allow us to reach those places where only we can reach, and they allow us to minimize costs, if we take as an example the National Army that helped with the transfer of the furniture of the Istmina Playroom, it reduced our costs, we stopped paying for transportation, we were able to buy other items that were important for the children. So those allies who are in some way identified and committed to our mission add to our entity. (Administrative testimony of the 'Transformando Vidas' Playroom, personal communication, June 17, 2023)

Figures 6 and 7 show images that illustrate the physical space of the toy library, showing the State before and after the intervention carried out with the support of strategic allies. The implementation of this project has been fundamental since it has transformed the lives of many children by providing them with a safe and welcoming space where they can learn and play, as expressed by one of the volunteers in the playroom.

The parents are grateful and say that, for the first time, new things are for their children. There is no support from the government, no entities, no ombudsperson, no foundations; when they are told about here, they do not want to come, or when they get help, they always look for the cheapest or say they don't deserve it. On the other hand, with the playroom, they were impressed; everything came new and packed, and they realized that they had been given importance; it was like something from another world, like a paradise, and the playroom had come to bring hope for them... The importance of the playroom is right there, in their own words, the transformation of the lives of these children who had no hope. (Volunteer testimony from the 'Transformando Vidas,' personal communication, June 17, 2023)

Figure 6. Installations of the 'Transformando Vidas' playroom before the intervention.



Source: own elaboration (2021)

Figure 7. Completion of the 'Transformando Vidas' playroom project.



Source: own elaboration (2023). Photographer: Vanessa Quinto, psychosocial professional 'Transformando Vidas.'

4. Conclusions

The 'Transformando Vidas' playroom project acts as a protective and educational environment, with a transformational approach for the community and the environment. In addition, it contributes to mitigating school dropout rates and integrally developing the children of the San Agustín neighborhood. Its contribution to the community is invaluable; therefore, it is imperative to maintain existing institutional alliances and seek strategic expansions to ensure the long-term sustainability of the initiative.

16

Implementing the networking and alliance strategy has enhanced the effectiveness of COMD's fundraising and management, optimizing donor acquisition and retention and increasing donor involvement in the program. This approach has resulted in obtaining sufficient financial resources to extend the project for an additional year, thus broadening its scope and strengthening the services offered to children and their families.

Twelve strategic stakeholders were identified and involved in the project during the research process to comprehensively address the multidimensional needs that emerged in the target population. These stakeholders include Food for The Poor, the Diocese of Istmina, as well as entities such as Mercado Pago, Repán, Fortini, Fundación CEA, Vanyplas, the National Army, Totto, Droguerías Colsubsidio, Semillitas de Amor and FUNDAFROCH. Their participation was essential to the successful implementation of the project and contributed significantly to its sustainability.

Partnerships with different organizations marked a significant milestone in the project's development. Initially, the project depended on a single partner who assumed financial responsibility. However, through the implementation of this strategy, a diverse group of twelve partners was formed, each of whom contributed their expertise and resources in line with the playroom's mission. These partners not only contributed financially but also made available

resources in kind. This approach significantly enriched and diversified the playroom's capacity to provide comprehensive care to beneficiaries and their families.

The work carried out with the different stakeholders of the 'Transformando Vidas' playroom has enabled the acquisition of valuable resources, including 15 computers and furniture consisting of tables, chairs, organizers, and libraries. The project also provided elements such as television, easels for the painting club, artistic costumes for the dance group, and enough didactic material to cover all planned activities for a year and a half. In addition, nutritional supplements, school kits, backpacks, and other school supplies have been provided.

The success achieved by the 'Transformando Vidas project is primarily attributed to its approach to formulation, which was developed through a participatory and collaborative process with the community, prioritizing the voices and specific needs of children and adolescents as a fundamental starting point. Since its conception, the project has stood out for actively incorporating the opinions of this demographic group, thus ensuring the relevance and appropriateness of the interventions implemented.

Financing

The authors declare that they received no resources for the writing or publication of this article.

Authors' contributions

Deisy Lorena Galvis-Molano: formal analysis, research, methodology, validation, supervision, writing (draft review and revision/correction); Leidy Parra-Muñoz: conceptualization, resource acquisition, project management, resources, visualization, writing (original draft).

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in the writing or publication of this article.

Ethical implications

The authors have no ethical implications to declare in the writing and publication of this article.



5. Bibliographic references

- Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios. (2018). Our legacy remains alive.<https://minutodedios.org/quienes-somos>
- Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística [DANE]. (2018). National Population and Housing Census.<https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/censo-nacional-de-poblacion-y-vivenda-2018>
- Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística [DANE]. (2021). National multidimensional poverty information 2021.<https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/pobreza-multidimensional/pobreza-multidimensional-2021>
- Ferreira, F., & Gignoux, J. (2011). The measurement of inequality of opportunity: Theory and an application to Latin America. *Review of Income and Wealth*, 57(4), 622-657.<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4991.2011.00467.x>
- Galvis-Molano, DL, Silva-Arias, CA, & Sarmiento-Espinel, JA (2022). Educational achievement of institutions with ethnic minority students in Colombia. *Entramado Journal*, 18(1), 5-28.<https://doi.org/10.18041/1900-3803/entramado.1.7505>
- Hernandez-Sampieri, R., Fernandez Collado, C., & Baptista-Lucio, M. (2010). *Research methodology*. McGraw Hill.
- Kessler, G. (2019). Some reflections on the research agenda of inequalities in Latin America. *Desacatos*, 59, 86-95.<https://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/desacatos/n59/2448-5144-desacatos-59-86.pdf>
- Latorre, A. (2005). Action research. Knowing and changing educational practice. *Graó*.<https://www.uv.mx/rmipe/files/2019/07/La-investigacion-accion-conocer-y-cambiar-la-practica-educativa.pdf>
- Ministerio Nacional de Educación - Colombia [MEN]. (2023). Given the increase in school dropouts in recent years in Colombia, the Ministry of Education has implemented strategies to prevent students from dropping out of school. MEN. <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/salaprensa/Comunicados/415819:Ante-el-aumento-de-la-desercion-escolar-en-los-ultimos-anos-en-Colombia-el-Ministerio-of-Education-has-implemented-strategies-to-prevent-students-leaving-the-classrooms>
- Montero, I., and León, O. (2002). Classification and description of research methodologies in Psychology. *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*, 2(3), 503-508.http://www.aepc.es/ijchp/articulos_pdf/ijchp-53.pdf
- Mora-Madera, MJ, and Sánchez-Aroyave, M, L. (2017). Pedagogical strategies to strengthen Afro-Colombian ethno-educational processes from school. *Assensus*, 2(3), 78-98.<https://doi.org/10.21897/assensus.1331>
- Roemer, J., & Trannoy, A. (2013). Equality of opportunity. In *Handbook of income distribution* (Vol. 2, pp. 217-300). Elsevier.
- Secretaría de Educación Departamental. (2023). Report on dropout, permanence, and absorption indicators in the department of Chocó.<https://acortar.link/ICsJnm>

- United Nations. (2015). Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:ess:wpaper:id:7559>
- Wackernagel, M., Hanscom, L., & Lin, D. (2017). Making the Sustainable Development Goals consistent with sustainability. *Frontiers in Energy Research*, 5, Art. 18. <https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fenrg.2017.00018>
- World Bank. (2022). Chapter 1. The economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. In World Bank (Ed.), *World Development Report 2022* (pp. 49-73). <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/publication/wdr2022/brief/chapter-1-introduction-the-economic-impacts-of-the-covid-19-crisis>