



Sanitation for Millions - Colombia

REACHING VULNERABLE GROUPS WITH SAFE SANITATION

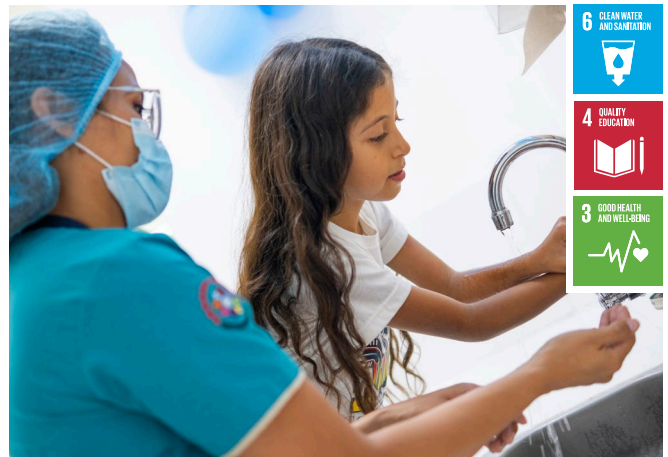
Background

Sanitation for Millions is a global programme improving access to safe sanitation and hygiene with a focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. More than two million people have already benefitted directly from the project's measures. *Sanitation for Millions* builds female-friendly and inclusive sanitary facilities at schools, healthcare facilities, and faith-based institutions, trains local professionals to operate and maintain them, and promotes safe hygiene practices through targeted campaigns and knowledge transfer.

Sanitation for Millions was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in 2016. With the BMZ as the lead donor, *Sanitation for Millions* has received additional funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Water Unite, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, the Inter-American Development Bank, and share GmbH. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH executes the global programme in close cooperation with local partners in Colombia, Jordan, Pakistan, and Uganda.

Sanitation Challenges in Colombia

Since 2010, access to safe sanitation is a human right. However, in Colombia, only 18% of the population has access to safely managed sanitary facilities, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Nationally, 30% of people lack access to a handwashing facility with soap and water at home, and in rural areas, 67% of the population do not have access to handwashing facilities with soap and water. Girls and women often lack information about safe menstrual hygiene practices and face social stigma related to their period. At the same time, according to the UNHCR, Colombia also hosts the third-largest number of refugees in the world. Concerning wastewater treatment, Colombia is lagging behind comparable Latin American countries, with only 19% of the flow being treated safely. There is a shortage of caretakers and a lack of knowledge regarding the operation and maintenance of sanitary facilities and decentralized water treatment systems. Many school principals do not know the minimum requirements or how to operate these facilities, so they do not allocate resources or staff to these activities. In addition, hygiene practices are not promoted within the institutions nor included in the educational curriculum.



Girl being taught proper hand hygiene

Intervention of Sanitation for Millions in Colombia

After over two years of co-executing the GEF CRew+ project in Colombia, *Sanitation for Millions* launched a separate intervention in October 2022. The programme aims to enhance access to safe and adequate sanitation and hygiene in the peri-urban area of Cúcuta close to the Venezuelan border, which hosts a high number of refugees and migrants, as well as in Bogotá. The programme's main local partner is the Colombian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, but *Sanitation for Millions* also works closely with the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Education, the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF), and at the local level with the municipal and departmental Secretariats of Education and Health, the Mayor's Office of Cúcuta, and the public enterprise IMSALUD.

Sanitation for Millions Colombia aims at improving access to safe sanitation along these lines of intervention:

- Improvement of safe and barrier-free sanitary facilities, mainly in schools
- Building hygiene routines among the target group with special attention to hand hygiene and menstrual hygiene management (MHM)
- Running the 'Toilets Making the Grade® (TMG)' school competitions

- Staff trainings to ensure long-term operation and maintenance of facilities
- Advisory services to political stakeholders to create enabling framework conditions for delivering sustainable sanitation services
- Support to private service providers for the improvement of services along the sanitation chain.

Colombia Highlights 2022 - 2023

- In collaboration with local and national stakeholders, key gaps in sanitation have been analysed and interventions and activities have been prioritised.
- *Sanitation for Millions* has become a member of the WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) cluster where international cooperation organisations share insights and practices in the region, applying them to a broader scope of interventions.
- Six schools have been prioritized for the improvement of access to safe sanitation through construction or rehabilitation measures, benefitting a minimum of 2000 students.
- On the occasion of Menstrual Hygiene Day and Global Handwashing Day, *Sanitation for Millions* developed education materials and organized workshops and awareness sessions for approximately 864 individuals.



Awareness sessions on the Global Handwashing Day



A family who participated in awareness sessions on hygiene topics

Outlook

Sanitation for Millions will continue to improve access to safe sanitation in Colombia, with a focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, through knowledge-sharing activities and awareness campaigns on menstrual health and hygiene as well as promotion of hand hygiene in schools, child development centers, and basic health units. *Sanitation for Millions* aims to anchor safe hygiene practices among the target group. *Sanitation for Millions* will also work to develop local sanitation infrastructure by rehabilitating or constructing sanitary facilities, with a focus on schools in the peri-urban area of Cúcuta, accompanied by staff trainings to ensure long-term operation and maintenance.



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