

PROTECTION POLICY TO CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE



ECOCEANOS
FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

The Ecoceanos Foundation is a non-profit organization based in Colombia, committed to the protection of the environment and the sustainable development of vulnerable communities. Our work is aimed at improving the quality of life of vulnerable populations through projects that integrate the conservation of natural resources, environmental education and the promotion of human rights. In this context, we recognize the importance of protecting children and adolescents, ensuring that all children and adolescents we work with have access to safe, inclusive and violence-free environments.

Childhood and adolescence are crucial stages in the development of any person, since during these periods the foundations for physical, emotional and social well-being in adulthood are built. However, children in many communities face significant risks due to poverty, social exclusion, lack of access to basic services, armed conflict, and gender-based violence. These factors can affect their integral development and compromise their future. As an organization that works directly with communities in vulnerable situations, we assume the responsibility of promoting and guaranteeing the protection of their rights in all our projects and activities.

The Ecoceanos Foundation has implemented this Child and Adolescent Protection Policy as a framework of reference to establish prevention, detection and response measures to any situation of risk or abuse that may affect the minors with whom we work. This document seeks to raise awareness among all collaborators, volunteers and allies of the Foundation about the importance of creating safe environments and strengthening a culture of protection that guarantees the well-being and development of children.

Our protection policy is based on a rights-based approach, recognizing children and adolescents as subjects of rights and not simply as passive beneficiaries of social assistance. We align ourselves with the principles established in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Law 1098 of 2006 (Colombia's Code of Childhood and Adolescence) and other international and national regulatory frameworks that establish the obligation to guarantee the protection and well-being of children.

OBJECTIVES

1. **To protect children and adolescents** from any form of abuse, violence, neglect or aggression within the scope of action of the Foundation. To this end, we implement prevention, early identification and immediate response protocols to any risk situation. Specific measures will be established to ensure safe spaces in each of the Foundation's programmes and projects.
2. **Guarantee the rights** of children and adolescents through awareness-raising and community training. Through educational campaigns, workshops and pedagogical activities, we work to ensure that minors know their rights and fully exercise them. In addition, we seek to empower communities to take an active role in the defense of the rights of children and adolescents.
3. **To promote spaces for participation** for children and adolescents in the Foundation's socio-environmental projects. Child participation is a fundamental pillar of our policy, as we believe in the value of the voice of minors in the construction of sustainable and effective solutions. We encourage the creation of childhood and adolescence committees within our initiatives so that they can express their opinions themselves and actively contribute to the development of their communities.
4. **To promote community awareness** of the rights of children and adolescents, generating support and prevention networks. Our strategy includes strengthening partnerships with local organizations, schools, and government authorities to promote joint actions in child protection. In addition, we carry out awareness campaigns aimed at parents, caregivers and teachers to reduce the risk factors that may affect children and adolescents.

5. **Comply with the national and international legal framework** related to the protection of children. We align ourselves with the conventions and laws that guarantee children's rights, ensuring compliance with regulations in each of our programs. This involves the constant training of our team in child protection legislation and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to verify that safety and welfare standards for children and adolescents are met.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Childhood and Adolescence

In accordance with the Code of Childhood and Adolescence (Law 1098 of 2006), the following are considered:

- **Childhood:** From birth to 12 years old.
- **Adolescence:** From 12 to 18 years old.

However, in indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, transitions between stages may be marked by cultural rites. The Ecoceanos Foundation respects these worldviews, as long as they do not violate fundamental rights.

Comprehensive Protection

Comprehensive protection is a principle that involves:

- **Prevention:** Actions to avoid violations of the rights of children and adolescents.
- **Protection:** Mechanisms to guarantee their physical and emotional safety.
- **Restoration of rights:** When these have been violated.

This approach is based on the **Best Interests of the Child** (Art. 44, Political Constitution of Colombia), which prioritizes their well-being in all decisions.

Violence against Children and Adolescents

PROTECTION POLICY TO CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

According to **Law 1146 of 2007**, violence includes:

1. **Physical and psychological abuse** (beatings, humiliation, neglect).
2. **Sexual abuse and exploitation** (including child marriage and genital mutilation).
3. **Symbolic violence** (discrimination based on ethnicity, gender or social status).
4. **Structural violence** (lack of access to education, health or food).

In indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, some traditional practices can be considered violent under international law (example: corporal punishment). The Foundation works in dialogue with community leaders to promote culturally relevant alternatives.

Good Deal

Good treatment refers to:

1. Relationships based on respect, dignity and participation of children.
2. Environments free of violence, where their integral development is encouraged.
3. Recognition of their cultural identity and progressive autonomy.

This concept is key in ethnic communities, where collective upbringing and ancestral knowledge play a fundamental role.

Best Interests of the Child

This principle is recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and Law 1098 of 2006, which implies:

1. Prioritize the well-being of children and adolescents in policies, programs, and judicial decisions.
2. Consider their opinion on matters that affect them (according to age and maturity).
3. To guarantee their survival, development, protection and participation.

In indigenous contexts, this principle must be harmonized with self-justice and traditional normative systems.

Differential Approach

It recognizes that the needs of children and adolescents vary according to:

1. **Ethnicity:** Indigenous, Afro-descendant, Raizal and Roma peoples.
2. **Gender:** Specific risks for girls (teenage pregnancy, sexual violence).
3. **Territory:** Challenges in rural, border or conflict-affected areas.

The Ecoceanos Foundation adapts its interventions to respond to these realities, avoiding cultural impositions.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework that supports this policy for the protection of children and adolescents is based on international treaties, Colombian national legislation and specific regulations that guarantee the rights of children and adolescents.

1. International Legislation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is the main international treaty that recognizes children and adolescents as full subjects of rights. This document establishes fundamental principles such as the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, the right to life, survival and development, as well as children's participation in decision-making that affects them. Colombia ratified this Convention in 1991, integrating it into its legal system.

In addition, there are optional protocols to the Convention that strengthen the protection of children in specific areas:

The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000), which Colombia has adopted to strengthen the fight against

child exploitation.

Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000), which protects children from being recruited by illegal armed groups.

ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999), which Colombia ratified to eradicate hazardous child labour.

2. National Legislation in Colombia

The Colombian legal framework establishes clear regulations for the protection of children and adolescents, guaranteeing their well-being and respect for their fundamental rights.

1. Political Constitution of Colombia (1991): Article 44 recognizes that the rights of children take precedence over the rights of others, establishing the duty of the State, the family and society to protect them from any form of abandonment, violence or exploitation.
2. Code of Childhood and Adolescence (Law 1098 of 2006): This is the main law on child protection in Colombia. It defines the rights and guarantees of minors under 18 years of age, regulates measures for the restoration of rights and establishes sanctions for those who violate their rights.
3. Law 1295 of 2009: Establishes mechanisms for the protection and comprehensive reparation of children and adolescents who are victims of the armed conflict.
4. Law 1732 of 2014: Creates the Chair of Peace, promoting the teaching of human rights, coexistence and peaceful resolution of conflicts in all educational institutions in the country.
5. Law 1878 of 2018: Reinforces the system of comprehensive protection of children and adolescents, establishing guidelines for the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) in the prevention and care of violence against minors.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE AND SOCIETY

The Colombian State has the constitutional and legal obligation to guarantee the fundamental rights of children and adolescents through public policies, specialized institutions and protection mechanisms. Among his main responsibilities are:

Institutional Framework

Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF):

1. He leads the National Family Welfare System (SNBF).
2. It provides comprehensive care to children and adolescents in vulnerable situations.
3. It operates programs such as Foster Families and Family Ombudsmen's Offices.

Ombudsman's Office:

1. Ensures compliance with the human rights of children and adolescents.
2. It supervises the guarantee of rights in rural and conflict-ridden areas.

Office of the Attorney General of the Nation:

1. It monitors the performance of public officials in the protection of children and adolescents.
2. Investigate possible negligence in the care of minors.

Child and Adolescent Police:

1. It prevents and acts in cases of violence, exploitation or trafficking of minors.
2. It works in coordination with the ICBF and the Prosecutor's Office.

Key Actions of the State Prevention:

PROTECTION POLICY TO CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

1. Educational campaigns against child abuse and sexual abuse.
2. Implementation of Law 2089 of 2021, which prohibits corporal punishment.

Protection:

1. Care routes for children and adolescents who are victims of violence (ICBF Line 141).
2. Restoration of rights in cases of violation.

Sanction:

1. Investigation and prosecution of those responsible (Attorney General's Office).
2. Application of Law 1915 of 2018 against child sexual violence.

Liability of the Company

Civil society, including families, communities, organizations and the media, plays a fundamental role in the protection of children. Their responsibilities include:

Role of Families and Communities

1. To provide safe and affective environments for the integral development of children and adolescents.
2. Report cases of violence or negligence to the competent authorities.
3. Promote parenting practices based on good treatment and dialogue.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Ecoceanos Foundation and other CSOs contribute through:

1. Education and awareness-raising: Workshops on children's rights in schools and communities.
2. Psychosocial accompaniment: Care for children and adolescents who are victims of violence in rural areas.
3. Political advocacy: Proposals to strengthen public policies with an ethnic and gender approach.

Citizen surveillance:

1. Monitoring of compliance with the State's obligations.
2. Promotion of children's participation in community decisions.

Stocking

1. Responsible dissemination of information on children and adolescents.
2. Promotion of campaigns against child labour, sexual exploitation and forced recruitment.

State-Society Articulation

Effective protection of children and adolescents requires a permanent articulation between:

1. The State: Guaranteeing public policies with sufficient resources.
2. CSOs: Implementing local programs with a differential approach.
3. Communities: Strengthening support and early warning networks.

Examples of this articulation:

1. Childhood and Adolescence Roundtables: Spaces where authorities, CSOs and community leaders coordinate actions.
2. Projects with an Ethnic Focus: The Ecoceanos Foundation works with indigenous councils and community councils to adapt the protection routes to their cultural contexts.

ACTION PROCEDURE

To guarantee the protection of children and adolescents within the framework of our actions, the Ecoceanos Foundation has defined an action procedure that details the steps to be taken in the prevention, detection, reporting and monitoring of any case of violation of the rights of children and adolescents.

Prevention and Awareness

The first line of action is to generate an organizational culture based on child protection. To this end, the following strategies will be developed:

1. Continuous training of staff, volunteers and collaborators on issues of children's rights, prevention of child abuse and reporting protocols.
2. Preparation and dissemination of information material for children and adolescents, as well as their families, on their rights and protection mechanisms.
3. Creation of safe spaces within the Foundation's projects where minors can freely express their concerns and concerns.
4. Implementing codes of conduct for staff and volunteers who work directly with minors, ensuring safe and appropriate interactions.

Detection of Risk Situations

It is essential to identify any signs of violation of children's rights. To this end, the following mechanisms will be applied:

1. Active observation of physical or emotional behaviors and signs that may indicate abuse, maltreatment, or neglect.
2. Establishment of safe and confidential communication channels so that children and adolescents can report any situation of risk.
3. Coordination with educational institutions and community centers for the exchange of information on possible cases of violence or abuse.

Complaint and Attention Protocol

In the event of the detection of a case of violation of rights, the Ecoceanos Foundation

will follow the following protocol:

1. Registration and documentation: All cases detected will be recorded in detail, ensuring the confidentiality of the information.
2. Activation of the protective team: A specialized team within the Foundation will assess the seriousness of the situation and determine the actions to be taken.
3. Communication with the authorities: In cases of child abuse, mistreatment or exploitation, the competent authorities, such as the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF), the Ombudsman's Office and the Child and Adolescent Police, will be informed.
4. Victim care: Psychosocial support and guidance will be provided to affected children and adolescents, facilitating their access to specialized protection and psychological care services.
5. Notification to the family: If the situation allows it and does not pose an additional risk to the child, their family or caregivers will be contacted to ensure their protection and well-being.

EVALUACIÓN, MEJORA CONTINUA Y ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to carry out an effective evaluation process, it has been decided to establish an evaluation process in three axes:

- 1. Continuous evaluation of the policy for the protection of children and adolescents**

It has been considered necessary to establish a continuous evaluation axis for the policy of protection of children and adolescents of the entity, this will allow us to constantly monitor and evaluate the impact and results of this document.

It will be carried out in one of the quarterly team evaluation meetings to assess by the staff whether the document is useful, assess its degree of effectiveness, whether the entire team is aware of the entity's child and adolescent protection policy and knows where it can be found.

This will help identify possible improvements and adjustments needed to ensure that the objectives set are being achieved. In addition, this axis of continuous evaluation will allow us to make evidence-based decisions to improve the quality of the services and programs aimed at children and adolescents that we manage from our entity.

2. Accountability:

Accountability will be carried out in two different aspects. On the one hand, with the work team, to review the direct and indirect actions developed towards the protection of children and adolescents in the projects in which they work. This accountability implies transparency and the responsibility of the entity towards citizens in the care of children and adolescents. Through this accountability, the results of each intervention project are shared and progress and results are reported. The quarterly evaluation meeting will be used to make this accountability, where each technical person responsible for each intervention group will present a small report with what has been said above. This will allow us to make adjustments and improvements depending on the needs detected.

On the other hand, a small dissemination of the policy for the protection of children and adolescents (objectives, procedures, etc.) will be sought in order to disseminate information about it. It will be done through the entity's digital platforms, contacts, networks and families with whom it works directly. This promotional exercise seeks to promote their use, highlight the importance of protecting children and adolescents and raise awareness about it.

3. Annual evaluation and table of indicators by established objectives:

An annual evaluation by objective indicators will allow us to measure and evaluate the degree of compliance with the objectives established in the policy for the protection of children and adolescents. These indicators will provide quantitative

PROTECTION POLICY TO CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

and qualitative information on progress and achievements. In this way, it is intended to strengthen the policy and guarantee the protection of children and adolescents from the socio-educational actions developed by the entity.

Once a year, in the Annual Evaluation and Planning of the Ecoceanos Foundation, carried out at the beginning of each school year, this evaluation process will be carried out , which will allow us to analyze the degree of effectiveness of the policies for the protection of children and adolescents established through a series of indicators marked by each objective established in this document. to collect any deficiency or inefficiency in them and solve them.

At the same time, the policy for the protection of children and adolescents carried out by the entity will be reviewed, to update the conceptual framework, the legislative framework, procedures and resources.

With all this, it is hoped to achieve a balance of the results obtained in this regard and to seek comprehensive protection of the rights of children and adolescents.

