



EL RIO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2023

INTRO: EL RIO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

1. AIMS OF PROGRAMME:

To address the huge gaps in knowledge in our local area, we will teach environmental education to inspire positive and pro-active climate action from 500+ young people and their families. This will be achieved by integrating environmental learning into all of our lead community programmes for 2023: namely Tutoring, in local schools (thanks to our Community English programme); Little Kid's Activities, at our 25 sports and arts clubs; and our Indigenous community programme. We will also run large community events every three months to celebrate our progress and promote key environmental messages throughout the year.

2. WHO ARE WE?

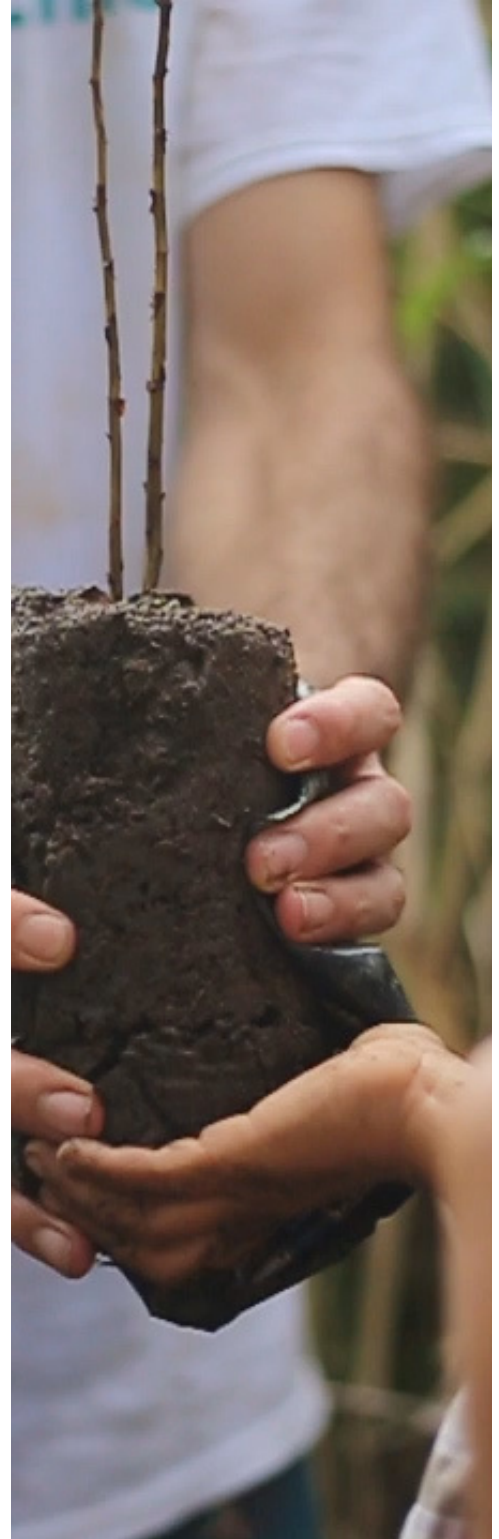
El Rio Hostel, Buritaca is an award-winning hostel (voted 2nd best in Latin America and best in Colombia) with a large community outreach programme. Our charity arm, the El Rio Foundation runs educational, sporting and environmental projects to positively impact our local community.

El Rio Hostel has a proud history of environmental action. When Ben and Guy (the owners) were building El Rio in 2016 and asked what they should do with the recyclable material they produced, they were told to 'burn it, bury it, or leave it in the street and wait for the rain to wash it away.' Appalled by this answer, they set up a small waste and recycling project which has grown to include the majority of local businesses and hotels on the coast and still runs to this day.

We are also a signatory member of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, making the hostel an active participant in the process of transforming the tourism sector through climate action.

The El Rio Foundation has also promoted environmentally conscious ways of living in our local area since our inception including 30+ environmental activities for 125 children last year. Now that we have grown to working with 500+ children every week, we have an excellent opportunity to transform local attitudes to climate change and inspire positive climate action within our local community.

Our environmental education programme, as with all our other projects, will align with our Foundation's values of being fun, inclusive, impactful and reliable.



3. CURRENT SITUATION:

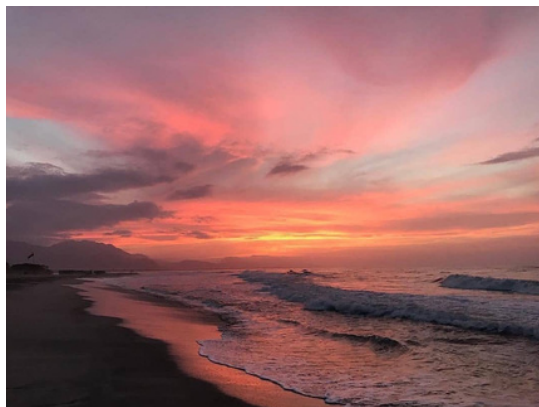
In April 2023, we held a community consultation to help identify the key environmental problems in our local area and the reasons for this. Our conclusions are set out below:

- The 55 year Colombian Civil war that raged in this area combined with ongoing socio-economic conditions have led to a total disregard for environmental issues.
- There is very little sense of belonging or linkage between the local population and their environment. There is therefore no perceived link between actions and consequences e.g deforestation and the subsequent massive flooding (2021 and 2022).
- The complete absence of a waste management system up until a few years ago, together with a lack of knowledge about the need to recycle, leaves the area littered with waste, endangering health and damaging ecosystems.
- Parents are often very bad role models for children. Throwing litter out of bus windows is commonplace.
- Lifestyles and cultural backgrounds have also normalised a massive daily consumption of single-use plastics which accounts for most of the waste produced that is not collected and reused.
- The large banana plantations (the big employer on the coast) are often a major source of contamination in water courses, always with total impunity.
- Recent tourism development in the area has brought about a change in people's lifestyles, shifting much of the responsibility onto hospitality owners, who are leading the way in sustainable tourism and inspiring others through good practice.

From our consultations, it is clear that the key problem is the complete lack of knowledge around environmental issues and disconnection between people and their local environment.

The good news is our local town, Buritaca, is situated in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, which is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and so there are many places we can take local children to inspire a deeper connection with nature.

We also work week in week out with 500+ children and we have built strong and trusting relationships over the last four years. We have six thriving community programmes. We will therefore use this strong base and structure to teach Environmental education, transform attitudes and inspire positive climate action across the community.



4. OVERVIEW OF EL RIO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME:

To combat this almost total apathy and disregard for the environment in our local area, it is clear our programme must first address the huge gaps in environmental education in the community.

Our programme will be based on the [new environmental education guide for Latin America](#), launched by the Environmental Education Network in cooperation with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

The guide has ten environmental themes that every child in Latin America should know about. Each month, we will focus on and teach a different theme through all our programmes to build the knowledge base needed before we can hope for widespread behaviour change.

The ten environmental themes are:

1. Environmental education
2. Water
3. Biodiversity
4. Soil
5. Air
6. Climate change
7. Sustainable consumption
8. Energy
9. Waste Management
10. Ecosystem Restoration.

Every 5 months, we will take a month to recap the previous months of learning and organise large, inspiring eco-focused whole community events to draw attention to critical environmental issues and strengthen the relationship between young people and their local and global environment.



5. EL RIO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION LEAD ROLE:

To lead the programme, we will hire an environmental education expert. His/her role will be to teach the environmental theme of the month every month through fun, interactive and tailored content through each of our community programmes:

1. At our monthly meetings for all Foundation Staff – we will train our staff so they feel confident discussing each environmental theme at the start of every club, tutoring and school session. This will include all 25 of our Sports and Arts clubs.
 - a. In our circus skills, arts and dance clubs especially, the environmental programme lead will work with our teachers to come up with their own creative ways of promoting each theme (this has gone very well in our pilot project).
2. At Tutoring - to up to 100 children.
3. In five local schools - through whole school assemblies and interactive learning experiences in classrooms along the Troncal del Caribe (our area). We will also encourage all schools and teachers to join us in promoting our eco-week messages every 3 months.
4. In the Indigenous Community of Q. del Sol - to 190 primary and secondary children at our Indigenous Games Festival days.
5. At Little Kid's Activities – to 10+ 3 – 5 year olds.
6. Through our social networks - the teacher will also create content about each theme to share with our 2,000+ Instagram followers, and to all parents through our community Whatsapp groups. We will also put up posters in classrooms in all five participating schools as a daily reminder of the key environmental learning themes throughout the year.

To inspire a love of nature and positive climate action, the programme lead will also:

7. Organise and run trips to beautiful local places to encourage a greater connection to nature and the local area.
8. Run large community events once every 3 months to inspire positive environmental action
9. Organise outdoor cinema nights (during the dry season) – including David Attenborough's documentaries to inspire a love of nature.

The role will also include:

10. Continuing to support El Rio Hostel to adopt the best practices for businesses working in the Tourism industry and be visibly and pro-actively environmentally conscious with their 1400+ monthly guests.
11. Pro-actively supporting local community initiatives as opportunities arrive, with a big focus on reducing the use of single use plastics.
12. Invite external partners and experts to support our programme throughout the year.



6. MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- Number of participants: 500+ children
- Number of Hours of teaching each month:
 - To Foundation staff: 2+ hours
 - At Tutoring: 10 hours
 - In Schools: 8 - 12 hours
 - In Indigenous Community: 6 hours
 - Little Kids Activities: 6 hours
 - At our sports and arts clubs: 12 - 20 hours
 - At additional events: 5 hours
 - Total: Around 60 hours environmental teaching a month
- Number of large community events: 4+
- Number of communities engaged: 6+
- Before and after questionnaires about environmental awareness across all 10 themes (100+ questionnaires) – increased knowledge of basic environmental concepts – +50% across all themes.
- Average Enjoyment of sessions – 8+/10
- Noticeably less rubbish in communal spaces in the town.
- Number of posters created to promote environmental themes: 10.
- Case studies from children, tutors, teachers, sports coaches, art teachers, parents, external experts and hostel management.



7. BREAKDOWN OF COSTS OF PROGRAMME (6 MONTHS):

- Full time lead Environmental teacher – £450 per month x 6 months = £2,700
- Teaching and Classroom materials (including printing monthly posters) – £300
- Transport for teacher along Troncal:
 - 4 journeys x £1 = £4 per week
 - 4 journeys x £2 = £8 per week
 - Total: £12 X 20 weeks = £240
- Transport for teach to Q. del Sol:
 - Return Journey to Q.del Sol: £12 X 3 journeys = £36
- Trips to beautiful local places to inspire love of nature – £400
- Large community events to promote key environmental messages to whole community – £800 (£400 per whole community event – 150+ participants)
- Budget for supporting external experts to support the programme: £500

Total: £4,976

8. CONTACT INFORMATION:

If you would like any more information about the programme or any other El Rio Foundation Projects, please contact Felix Sullivan at foundation@elriohostel.com or call +447956863661.

