

**CHILDREN
CHANGE
COLOMBIA**

Formerly Children of the Andes

We have a new name, but you don't need to change the way you make donations.

MORE ON PAGE 7.

Children are changing Colombia!

In Putumayo, a rural region at the centre of Colombia's conflict, children are caught in the crossfire between armed groups. Every day they face the risk of violence, forced recruitment, and sexual exploitation.

Lucia is one of these children, but with the support of our new partner, Casa Amazonía, she and her friends are learning how to make adults understand the threats they face and take action to protect them.

**"I felt hopeless and alone.
Now I feel strong.
I've learnt so much."**

"I used to be really shy, I didn't like telling people about things that happened to me, and I was focused on my own problems instead of thinking about others. I felt hopeless and alone. Now I feel strong. I've learnt so much. I've learnt that it's important to speak out when something isn't right.

I've learnt that we can't achieve anything alone; to make changes and protect ourselves we have to work together and support each other. These days my friends and I speak out together. We've learnt to tell people about the bad things that happen. We've learnt that we can't keep quiet about these things, because if we do, nothing will ever change.

I've also tried to change the image that others have of my community. People think of us only as violent and dangerous. It's true there's a lot of conflict here, but no-one focuses on the positive things; the kindness of the people, the potential that we have to be a peaceful community. That's why it's important for me to defend myself, to defend my community, and for us to speak out together so we don't keep being trampled on and ignored."

PLEASE DONATE TODAY
With your support, children like Lucia can change their communities.

This is a real story. Only the name and photo have been changed for child protection reasons.



Children changing Putumayo and Buenaventura

This year **CHILDREN CHANGE COLOMBIA** begins work with two exciting new partners, which exemplify our belief that, with the right support from adults, children can change Colombia.

Casa Amazonia works in Putumayo, on Colombia's border with Ecuador, and FUNDESCODES works in Buenaventura, on the Pacific coast.

Putumayo is a key strategic area for the armed actors in Colombia's conflict – government forces, guerrillas and other illegal armed groups. As a result, the largely indigenous population experiences high levels of violence and forced displacement. Children and young people are at particular risk of sexual violence by armed actors, or of being recruited as messengers, informants, combatants or drug traffickers. Guerrillas often target children in schools, where they ask them to

'volunteer'. They promise regular food, money for their families, and a better quality of life. In the context of extreme poverty and the daily struggle with hunger and violence, children sometimes see these groups as a positive alternative.

Buenaventura is battling similar issues, although the key actors here are not the guerrillas but other illegal armed groups. High levels of child recruitment lead many to assume that all children from certain neighbourhoods must be members of armed groups. When they are recruited, children are forced to commit atrocities as a way of proving their loyalty. This, combined with the

armed groups' frequent use of torture and violence as methods of control, has created a culture of silence and fear, where people are too scared to speak about what's happening in their community. Community spaces, like playgrounds or community centres, are too dangerous for children to enter. As a result, children have nowhere to go to be safe from the violence surrounding them or to think about what their life and future could be outside the conflict.

In both Putumayo and Buenaventura, these problems are accompanied by weak public institutions, unable to fulfil their responsibility to prevent, and protect children from, these issues. People tend not to challenge this because there is a lack of confidence in these institutions; they are often perceived as weak and corrupt, and even sometimes in league with the armed groups. In order to create greater protection for children and build more peaceful communities, our partners have found

that it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of community actors to demand that state institutions fulfil their obligations to protect communities, and especially children.

Children demanding adults protect their rights

These projects will both work to protect children and young people by:

- Making the dangers faced by children visible to others in the community
- Helping children to develop skills to protect themselves, and to demand that those responsible for protecting their rights (parents, teachers, community leaders etc) do so.

In our experience, once children become aware of their rights and develop the capacity to make demands on adults and institutions responsible for protecting them, these children are better protected from the risks they face.

To ensure this is successful, both projects will work alongside parents and community members. They will help them to overcome their own traumas and to develop the tools to better listen to, support and protect children. In this way adults and children will work together to build a safer community.

Children changing children

Once children have developed the skills and self-confidence to speak out, they will be encouraged to think about ways they can share what they are learning with their peers. In Casa Amazonia's project this might mean creating a radio station in their school where they can talk about the different types of violence in their communities and how to protect themselves. In FUNDESCODES' project it might mean developing a participative drama performance about threats in their neighbourhood and touring this around communities in Buenaventura to highlight the risks that children and young people face,

thereby challenging the culture of silence surrounding this.

Making young people's voices heard

Once children and young people have been participating in project activities for some months, they will be supported to share their experiences with the relevant local authorities. With backing from the organisations and adults in their community, children can demand that these authorities take concrete actions to protect them, such as setting up clear rules about protecting children in the neighbourhood and speaking publicly about sexual violence and assuming responsibility for children's protection.

The aim is that this will re-invigorate existing but ineffective institutions in their protective roles. Importantly, this will be an opportunity for children and young people who are excluded from discussions that affect their daily lives, to make their voices heard among these decision makers and demand that their rights be protected.



What do we mean “Children Change Colombia”?

This year our annual **PROJECT TALK** focused on how we believe children are changing Colombia.

Thank you to all who attended and contributed to making the evening a great success!

We began by showing our new film, made by four young people at our partner Tiempo de Juego. It offers an insight into how, by building their self-esteem and developing an understanding of their rights, Tiempo de Juego has helped these young people transform their way of thinking about themselves and has inspired them to start spreading change throughout their neighbourhood.

Watch our new film online at childrenchangecolombia.org or contact us for a copy.

Building on the film, Heidi, our Cali Officer and Jennifer, Programmes Manager, explained how the young people in it encapsulate our idea of how children can change Colombia. We believe that children can make changes that make them safer and happier on different levels in their life, from changes in their own relationships right through to government policy. The first changes that our partners support children to make are almost always personal ones. However, we have seen that as children grow in confidence, they often begin to encourage their friends, family, neighbours or teachers to make changes that can make their communities better places to live, such as helping young people resolve conflict peacefully, or adults to understand the danger of sexual exploitation.

Young people can also work with local institutions to push for change. Our new partner Casa Amazonía helped young people lobby the local Education Department to provide full secondary education in their region. As a direct result of their activism, education is now provided to Grade 11, as in the rest of Colombia, rather than the previous Grade 9 level.

Other children are taking their demands for change to national government. Recently a 17 year old from our partner Si Mujer spoke to the Ministry of Health, encouraging health providers across the country to learn from their example on teaching sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The responsibility for change, though, cannot be left to children. Our partners also work with adults to ensure they listen to children and fulfil their duty to protect children’s rights. We believe that children and adults have to work together to make changes in children’s lives. We have seen the positive change that young people’s energy and fresh perspectives can achieve. This is why we think that if real change is to be attained in Colombia then children cannot be left out of the process.

What changes can children make?



How you've helped children change Colombia

CHILDREN CHANGE COLOMBIA is a new name, but the idea it expresses is not new to us. We have long believed that in order to change children's lives for the better, for good, children themselves must play a big part in bringing about this change.

Whether it is changes in their families, their communities or in government policy, we have been helping children and young people learn that they can do a lot to create the world they want to live in.

Here are just some of the ways that you have been helping children change Colombia over the years:



2003–2014 Speaking up for young people leaving care (FFF)

As part of the first dedicated programme for care leavers, young people tell it like it is to social services and policy makers at a local and national level, and push for improved services for all young people in care.

"Being at FFF has helped me to develop skills I never thought possible, like my creativity and my leadership spirit." CATALINA, 20

2003–2007 Protecting people from landmines (Restrepo Barco Foundation and Princess Diana Fund)

Children teach their communities how to stay safe from landmines. After over 50 years of armed conflict, landmines remain a serious threat to life in many areas of Colombia. This project saw landmines from a child's point of view – and enabled children to teach their whole community how to stay safe.



2007–2012 Armed groups and gang violence in Cali (Paz y Bien)

Young people at risk from violence in Cali lead a drive for restorative justice and the rebuilding of community life, and challenge the neglect and discrimination their communities face.



"It's not easy being young and living in this neighbourhood. People think it means we're bad, but we aren't. There are fantastic people here. People discriminate against us a lot, and only concentrate on the bad things, not the good. At Paz y Bien I've learnt to express myself better. People think I've got important things to say." JUAN, 17

Preventing Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cartagena (Renacer)

Children at risk of exploitation take the lead in raising awareness about this hidden issue, training children, families, teachers, police and courts in how to prevent CSEC and how to care for those who experience it.

Thank you

Thanks to all our supporters whose generous donations make our work possible

Individuals



Diana Guzman and Stefan Fischerfeier asked for donations instead of wedding presents. Cathy McIlwaine asked for donations in lieu of birthday presents. Luisa Fulcher donated Spanish classes in return for donations. Aruna Patel & Sonia Rojas fundraised through work. Leslie Duff donated in lieu of Christmas cards for her colleagues. Lyn Payne donated proceeds from a meal with her running group and Carmen Pinto donated proceeds from her birthday dinner. Adriana Warren

sold her homemade granola, Hola Granola. Clemencia Corradine (ALAF Fair), Martin Diaz Plata (Capital International), Lora Krasteva (CASA Theatre Festival) and Rod Long invited us to have fundraising stalls at their events. Friends and family of our long-standing supporter, Magdalena del Carmen Brown donated in her memory. Hilda Charlton Hill and the STUMBLES restaurant collected in their local community in South Molton to support our work.

Community

A big thank you to everyone at City & Islington College, Kingston Grammar School and Magdalene House Preparatory School (Wisbech Grammar School).

Thanks to religious groups that have supported our work in recent months, including: Alderney Quaker Meeting, Alexandra Presbyterian Church (Belfast), Church Of The Immaculate Conception (Stroud), The Parochial Church Council of East Clandon, St Albans' Religious Society of Friends, St Edward the Confessor (Golders Green), St Johns Hyde Park, St Joseph Catholic Church (South Molton) St Margaret Clitherow's RC Church (York)



Sports Challenges

Thanks to everyone who has raised funds through sporting challenges, including: Daniela Hadden, Nestor Mosquera and Yuly Sandoval. The 2015 Run to the Beat team: Rachel Joseph, Manab Roy, Alex Robinson and Fredrik Sundstrom who raised over £1,100.



Upcoming events

Thames Walk and Run Saturday 11th June 2016

Join us and invite your friends and family to come along to help us raise funds and show off our new name! We will begin along the riverside and then venture into beautiful Richmond Park. Don't miss it! the riverside and into the beautiful Richmond Park.

Stewards needed

We urgently need volunteer stewards for the Thames Walk. Stewards will need to be available for a "Dummy Walk" on 28th May, as well as the actual walk on 11th June. If you'd like to volunteer please contact Victoria victoria@childrenchangecolombia.org by 23th May.

Help us spread the word!

By distributing Children Change Colombia leaflets around your local community, whether it is your school, church, library or workplace, you are helping us tell more people about what we do! Please contact Victoria victoria@childrenchangecolombia.org if you would like to help.

If you would like to organise an event to fundraise for to support our work or for more info about fundraising challenges please contact victoria@childrenchangecolombia.org or 020 7549 0225.

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends

This is a crucial time of opportunity and optimism for Colombia. There has been a reduction in overall poverty levels in recent years and we may be on the verge of a peace accord with the FARC guerrillas. I hope you agree with me that our logo reflects this spirit of optimism and promise!

Yet we also have a duty to be cautious and, particularly now, to make sure we are speaking up for those who still need our support. Millions of children still live in poverty and remain excluded from the secure existence that some others enjoy. Children all over Colombia are at risk of recruitment into armed groups and face high levels of sexual violence.

There is rightly much buzz about the promise of a 'post-conflict' Colombia, but if there is a peace accord it will not solve Colombia's problems of violence, poverty and inequality overnight.

We believe that Colombia can only truly overcome these problems if opportunities for peace and prosperity can be grasped by every single one of its young people, not just some of them.

This year our partner CRAN's work in Bogota with young people demobilised from the FARC will continue leading the way in the urgent task of finding effective approaches to reintegrating ex-child combatants into civilian life. We will begin working with children at risk from conflict-related sexual violence in Putumayo, with Casa Amazonía; and we will expand our work in Buenaventura, in a new partnership with FUNDESCODES, who are striving to prevent recruitment of young people into the armed groups that still have a grip on the city.

We believe that, if we can work with the children who are most at risk and help them seize the opportunities arising from this moment of optimism, then they are not only going to change their own lives, they are going to change Colombia.

Thank you for helping us do this.



Duncan Millar,
Executive Director

Spring 2016



Regular Giving

Instructions to the Manager

Your account

Name of bank or building society:	
Address:	Postcode:
Account No. <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	Sort Code <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/>

Your donation

Please pay **Children Change Colombia** (Account No.: **22052801**, Sort Code: **60-07-02**) at NatWest Bank plc, 14 High Street, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1AX,

The sum of £ on the day of / /20
(This date should be at least one month from today).

And the same sum Monthly Quarterly Yearly

Your details

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms	
Address:	
	Postcode:
Email:	Tel:
Signed:	Date: dd/mm/yy

NOTE: Our change of name has not affected how we receive your donations. Our bank details have remained the same, so you do not need to make any changes to your standing order and cheque donations to 'Children of the Andes' have still reached us.

Gift Aid Declaration

I am a UK Tax Payer and I would like Children Change Colombia to reclaim the tax on all qualifying donations I have made to them in the past 4 years as well as any future donations. I will notify them if I am no longer eligible or if I change address.

To qualify for gift aid I understand that I must have paid income / capital gains tax that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs I donate to will reclaim on my Gift Aid donations in the tax year in which they are received and that other taxes such as Council Tax and VAT do not count for this purpose.

Signed: _____

Date: dd/mm/yy

Please return completed form to **Children Change Colombia, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, EC2A 4LT.**

For more information about Gift Aid, standing orders, legacies or payroll giving, please telephone our office on: 0207 549 0225

Colombia Diary

On her recent trip to Colombia our Programmes Manager, Jennifer visited a potential new partner in Cali

After strolling through the narrow streets for only 15 minutes, we had already crossed 3 'invisible borders' – the lines that demarcate the territory of different armed groups. We were able to pass through safely thanks to the staff accompanying us, who are well known to everyone in the neighbourhood and appreciated by many locals. For others however, crossing these borders can be the difference between life and death.

As we walked along, a nine year old boy flew past us on his bike, slowing down a few metres ahead to say "hi" and chat. Once we left him, we learnt that in 2014 he had been attacked and stabbed nine times. An armed group had tried to kill him in retaliation for 'jobs' that a rival group had paid him to do. He was asked to call certain people out of their houses, and once they were outside, the group murdered them. Thankfully he survived, but 'invisible borders' now confine him to a mere 2 blocks of his neighbourhood. If he leaves these blocks he will be attacked again and might not survive next time. The local school is visible from the streets he is 'allowed' to be in, but he can't walk down the road to attend.

Hearing this harrowing story it really struck me how crucial it is to continue working in neighbourhoods like this one, which will see minimal changes after any peace agreement with the FARC. Many of our partners work in neighbourhoods controlled by armed groups that have no qualms about using children for their criminal activities. We have to continue supporting our partners to make children and young people less vulnerable to these kinds of risks, to help them develop the skills to make safer decisions in the face of these threats, and to create role models that show children that they can have a positive future.



Please donate now

Donor details (We won't share your details with anyone else.)

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

Tel:

Your donation

I would like to make a donation of: £5 ; £10 ; £25 ; £50 ; £100 ; Other £

Payment details

(By BACS transfer: **Children Change Colombia**; Sort code **60-07-02**; Account no. **31623212**)

Cheque (Please make cheques payable to **Children Change Colombia**)

Visa; Mastercard;

CAF Charitycard Card No.

3 digit security number (on signature strip): Expiry Date: / (mm/yy)

Signed:

Date:

Gift Aid Declaration

I am a UK Tax Payer and I would like Children Change Colombia to reclaim the tax on all qualifying donations I have made to them in the past 4 years as well as any future donations. I will notify them if I am no longer eligible or if I change address.

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Signed: _____

Date:

Yes, I require an acknowledgement (please tick or we will assume you do not; this will help us save on administration costs).

Please send me a fundraising pack

Children Change Colombia, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, London, EC2A 4LT
t: 02075490225 e: info@childrenchangecolombia.org w: childrenchangecolombia.org

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Thank you!