



Children of the Andes

Building a better future for vulnerable children in Colombia

Autumn 2011

A School for Everyone



**Changing Attitudes,
Discovering Abilities**

School was not seen as an option for Ana for many years. She is bright and friendly, but she also has a disability and lives in poverty. Ana's mother, Maria, did not know that Ana could attend school; and Maria received no support from the government or local schools. So, for 13 years, Ana was kept at home, hidden away from the world. Because of this, she was unable to talk, let alone read. It seemed she would never have the opportunity to fulfil her potential.

Then, one day, Maria heard about COTA's partner HRBC* which runs community outreach centres for children with and without disabilities. Maria and Ana went along to a session, and since then their lives have changed completely. At HRBC, Ana has discovered a love of learning and great *abilities*. Her speaking has improved rapidly, she is learning to read, write and count, and making friends. She is much happier and hopes to start school soon.

There are many children like Ana in Colombia. Just like everywhere else, disability is a normal part of life. But too many children with disabilities in Colombia are excluded from everyday opportunities such as healthcare, education and play. With COTA's support, HRBC is working to break down barriers that exclude these children.

Please make a donation today and help children like Ana have the opportunities, experiences and education they deserve.

A School for Everyone

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Improving quality of life

HRBC provides support to children with disabilities and their families in some of the poorest and least accessible areas of Cali. HRBC helps children learn, develop and go to school; and increases families' capacity to care for them.



HRBC runs four 'community outreach bases' from libraries and other public spaces, which are staffed by community volunteers. They are a life line for disabled children and their carers - providing advice, support and respite. They help children to gain vital life skills, access education, and become active members of their communities – often for the first time.

Changing attitudes

HRBC is also working to change negative attitudes towards disability in communities and schools. In many areas there is a

high level of stigma surrounding children with disabilities, leaving them ignored and 'invisible'. Even with the best intentions, parents often lack practical knowledge about how to care for their children. Children may be left at home all day, sometimes even tied to the bed 'for their own safety'.

HRBC works to help children show their communities that they are people with abilities, and fulfil their right to inclusion in all aspects of life, often through performances or workshops. Crucially, HRBC also gets the community to 'come to them', by inviting children without disabilities from nearby schools and their parents to join in the activities of the project. In this way the people who take part can learn about - and from - one another.

Getting children into school

A key area of HRBC's work is helping children with disabilities access mainstream education. Colombian law says that all children have the right to an education, without discrimination. However, in reality many schools



will find excuses for turning away a child with a disability. Many teachers are apprehensive about how to include children with disabilities, and parents do not know their rights. HRBC works intensively with teachers, parents, children and schools to ensure that schools do not turn children away and that children and parents know what their rights are.

HRBC is also working on this issue with Crecemos, a specialist education organisation in Cali. They are developing a new project that aims to overcome the barriers that keep many children, including those with disabilities, out of school. COTA is working with them to develop this joint project.



Ana's Story

As we saw on page one, Ana is a bright girl with a disability. She has a birth defect that left her with a deformed face, cleft palate, and webbed fingers and toes, which make it difficult for her to hold things. When she was little she had surgery on her hands to help her grip things a bit better, but the family could not afford the full operation she needed to be able to use her hands easily. Before last year, Ana had never been to school: her mother always kept her at home, unsure if she could go to school and afraid she would be ridiculed if she did. Because of this, for a long time Ana could not talk, and was only able to say a few words with great difficulty.

She lives with her mum, sister and grandmother in a slum area on the outskirts of Cali. There is extreme poverty in this area, and many families have been displaced

from other regions due to the armed conflict in Colombia.

In August 2010, Ana and her family joined the HRBC programme. Since then, there have been great changes in Ana's life. She is learning to read, write, speak and count – she is intelligent and is picking things up quickly. HRBC has provided specially adapted writing equipment for Ana to use – such as extra fat pencils for her to grip.

At the moment Ana is unwilling to go to school because she is very afraid of the rejection she may experience there. HRBC is working with Ana and her mother to show them that school would be a good next step for Ana. They are hoping that she will be

attending school before the end of 2011. Ana is beginning to integrate with children at HRBC, and this is starting to give her the confidence she needs to take the next step.

Ana's mother says "The children and staff at HRBC gave a very warm welcome to my Ana – they helped her with everything, and chatted to her like any of the others even though she looks different. It is a good place for us."

**Please donate today
and help more
young people like
Ana access the life-
changing support
they deserve.
Thank you**



New Partner, Corpolatin - A Child Helpline

According to a recent report published by the Colombian government, 11,000 children are abused at home or school each year, and nine children die a violent death in Colombia every day. Children living in the most disadvantaged communities are particularly vulnerable and unable to find sources of support. These children face multiple issues including physical and sexual abuse, exploitative work, neglect and family conflict. They need to have access to services that can help them, and also to know that someone is there to listen and support them.

A child helpline can be the first point of contact in such situations, helping children to know that they are not alone and that they can get help.

Corpolatin takes over 52,800 calls every year from children as young as five, on subjects ranging from family breakdown to suicide. Children or concerned adults can phone for free at any time by calling a simple 3 digit number – 106.

A new partner for COTA

Next year (2012), Children of the Andes are starting an exciting new partnership with Corpolatin in Cali. In addition to the helpline itself, this partnership will focus on two other essential aspects of the work that Corpolatin do – following up children who have



called the line, and tackling the root causes of problems that children frequently ring the helpline about.

Following up

Many child help lines only offer an isolated moment of support to a child who rings in, and do not provide follow up advice or help, but Corpolatin is different. With the child's consent, they will pass a child's details on to another organisation that can help them. They will then follow the child's progress with that organisation, and intervene again if necessary to ensure that the child's rights are fulfilled and they are safe.

One recent example is that of a 13-year-old boy called David whose teacher made sexual advances to him. He told the school, who reported the case to various institutions, including the police, education authorities, and the public prosecutor, all of whom

Why do children call Corpolatin?

- Abuse and violence
- Commercial exploitation of children
- Homelessness or running away from home
- Living with or worrying about HIV and Aids
- Relationships with friends
- Problems at school
- Drugs
- Disabilities or learning difficulties
- Sex and sexuality
- Family relationships
- Health: physical, mental and psycho-social
- Information
- Wanting someone to listen to and accept them
- Emergencies – Corpolatin will refer the call to the emergency services

said there was nothing they could do. The school then called Corpolatin, and finally the case was taken seriously. Corpolatin took the case to the Colombian Social Services who are now pursuing it, and David has been given counselling. Once the allegations came out into the open, the teacher disappeared and never returned to the school. Corpolatin are continuing to follow up with the police and social services to ensure that they fulfil their duty to protect David's rights and that they try to bring the teacher to trial.

The fact that Corpolatin aims to follow up every child's case requires them to be at the centre of a very well-developed and active network of children's organisations, schools and government institutions that they can refer children to. Part of COTA's funding in 2012 will go towards helping Corpolatin to develop this network of contacts, organising conferences, training days, talks and community events to raise awareness of the helpline service and increase referrals.

Tackling the root causes

Corpolatin also seeks to prevent the problems that children phone the helpline about, as they believe in addressing the causes, not just treating symptoms. They do this through a series of workshops and advice sessions for parents and children which cover topics such as good parenting, authority and child development. In this way the workshops tackle the root problems of family violence

and abuse by changing negative patterns of behaviour, strengthening relationships and improving emotional ties. The workshops also inform children and parents about the helpline and other sources of support which may be available to them.



COTA's always looking for new sources of support – Can you help?

Does your employer have a corporate social responsibility policy? Do you know anyone who works for, or sits on the board of, a charitable trust or foundation? Are you a member of a club or society that likes to support charities?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, the next question is – have you ever thought of putting COTA forward as a potential recipient of funding?

If so, we'd love to hear from you. Please ring Hannah on **020 7549 0225** or email **info@childrenoftheandes.org** Thank you!

Thank yous

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

Sports and Challenges



"Our two year old twins have filled our lives with love and happiness. We've made every possible effort to make their lives comfortable and safe. There are other children in Colombia that have not been as privileged as our children. We feel it's necessary to make an extra effort to help the lives of other little children in our beloved country to shine as well." **Nestor Mosquera** raised £100 through Lima's Half Marathon

A big thank you to the **Brayley family**, who have raised £1,465 by running 186 miles this year in memory of a much loved son and brother; Phil. The Brayleys also encouraged friends to join them, like **Michelle Pugh**, who raised £113 by running the Sheffield Half-Marathon.



Laura Harrington and **Nina Sellars** raised £875 by skydiving from 10,000 ft. That's more than 8p per foot - fantastic!



Joel Chippindale raised £440 by cycling 100km at night around London's landmarks, **Carlos Clavijo** raised £340 in the BUPA 10,000, **Tom Mooney** raised £2,073 through the London Marathon, **Conor Ryan** raised £601 in the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit and **Robert Sargent** raised £500 by cycling the length of South America! **Thank you!**

COTA has eight places for the Bupa London 10,000 on 27th May 2012 and the Nightrider on 9th June 2012. If you want to run the Olympic track or cycle through London's landmarks at night while fundraising for COTA's work, please contact Heidy@childrenoftheandes.org

Individuals

Phil Manzanera raised £190 through 60th birthday donations, **Juan Montoya** persuaded his company to donate £500, **Mr. Tagart-Adams** donated the profits of selling an old car (£69) through Give a Car. **Thank you all!**

Community

Thanks to churches and religious groups that have supported us recently, including: Alexandra Presbyterian Church (Belfast), Barnstaple Quakers, Beckenham Methodist Church, St Botolph Lullingstone (Orpington), St Joseph's Catholic Church (South Molton), St Leonard's Toddler Group (Teignmouth), Southdown Methodist Church (Harpenden), and Park End Presbyterian Church (Cardiff).

A big thank you to everyone at Magdalene House Preparatory School (Wisbech) who raised £711.

Finally, thanks to those of you who donated to our Mothers Day Appeal. We hope your Mums had a lovely day!

News

Thames Walk



Film Screenings

Thanks to everyone who attended the screenings of **My Kidnapper** in London and Harrogate. We raised over £1,300.

Thanks to all the supporters who participated in the COTA Thames Walk 2011. It was a beautiful blend of Colombian and English solidarity and fun, and we managed to raise over £5,500.

Make sure you join us for the next COTA Thames Walk on Sunday 6th May 2012.

Letter from our Head of Programmes

Dear Friends,

Nearly half of all Colombians live below the government's official poverty line¹. That's around 20 million people. With so many children living in poverty, not to mention those at risk from abuse and neglect, how does COTA decide who to support?

Well, we have three guiding principles. We support:

- Children whose problems are not being addressed by others
- Work that will have a lasting impact on children's lives

- Partners we can learn from and who can learn from us

Along with COTA's 20 years of experience in Colombia, these help us decide who to support. But we also rely on the expertise of our partner organisations.

Recently, we told our partners about COTA's plans for the next two years and asked their opinion. They made some very constructive suggestions and told us that we are on the right track.

Our partners are committed to listening to the children they work with, finding out what's important to them, and enabling them to

take part in decisions that affect their lives. Few people understand the children they work with better than they do. So their approval means a lot to us.

Thanks to your support, we can continue to do the work that children, and the professionals who understand them, value most.

Thank you.

Duncan Millar
Acting Director

Our Director, Rachel Joseph, is on maternity leave and will be back in January 2012

¹ Mesep 2011: www.dnp.gov.co

Regular Giving

Autumn 2011

Remember: a standing order is the most cost effective way for us to administer your contribution

Instructions to the Manager

Your account:

Name of the Bank or Building Society: _____
Address: _____ Postcode: _____ / _____
Account No.: ____ / ____ / ____ / ____ Sort Code: ____ / ____ / ____

Your donation:

Please pay **Children of the Andes** (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)

Gift Aid Declaration

I would like Children of the Andes to reclaim tax on any donations I have made over the last 4 years and all future donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Please let us know if you change your address or if you no longer pay an amount of income tax or capital gains equal to the tax we will reclaim on your donation (currently 25p for every £1 you give).

Please return completed form to Children of the Andes, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, EC2A 4LT

Thank you!



Field Office Diary

Going home By Gina Ortiz

As COTA's Bogota Field Officer, I hear some amazing stories about how children's lives have been turned around thanks to the intervention of our partner projects.

Take Carlos. Many years ago Carlos had to leave his family home. His mother was a single parent. She was not cruel or unfeeling, she was simply unable to support all ten of her children. So Carlos ended up living on the street. Fortunately, the Albergue Infantil Foundation – now a COTA partner - found him a safe place to live, where he could play and go to school. Carlos is now working for the Albergue as a fully qualified psychologist, helping former street children in the same way that he was helped. This story shows how positive intervention in a child's life can make a huge difference to their future and even the future of others.

The Albergue have been operating for over 50 years now, and in that time they have seen many children like Carlos arrive with very little hope; and leave with self-esteem, education and the chance of a much brighter future.

One of the most positive things they can do with a child is to reconnect them with their families and work to get them back home. However, many children who return home find that nothing has changed, and often end up back on the streets. So in 2008 the Albergue began a programme of counselling and support for families which aimed to ensure that children can return to safe and caring family homes.

This Post-Institutional Care (PIC) programme has been so successful that the Albergue has decided to expand the programme and work with children at other institutions facing similar family problems. It also aims to generate greater interest from the government in financing this type of work.

My job is to accompany our partners in developing ideas like the PIC programme, and to help find the funding to make them happen. I am delighted to report



that we have just secured funding from Comic Relief for the PIC programme in 2011-13. This will help at least 270 more children return safely to their families. I hope to be able to share some of their stories with you too!

Gina Ortiz

To read about a child who is currently benefiting from the Albergue's programme, please see our blog at

www.childrenoftheandes.org

All photos have been taken with the children's permission and full consent has been given for their use in COTA publications. All names have been changed and photos carefully chosen to protect the child's identity.

Children of the Andes: Keeping children safe, defending children's rights and strengthening children's organisations in Colombia

Please donate now

Your donation:

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

Payment details:

Cheque (Please make cheques payable to

Children of the Andes)

Visa Mastercard CAF Charitycard.

Card No.:

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Expiry Date: ___/___/___ (mm/yy)

Signed: _____

Date: ___/___/___ (dd/mm/yy)

Donor details:

We won't share your details with anyone else.

Title: _____ First name: _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____/_____

Tel: (_____) _____

E-mail: _____

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

Gift Aid Declaration

I would like Children of the Andes to reclaim tax on any donations I have made over the last 4 years and all future donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature: _____

Date: ___/___/___

Please let us know if you change your address or if you no longer pay an amount of income tax or capital gains equal to the tax we will reclaim on your donation (currently 25p for every £1 you give).

Please send me a COTA fundraising pack

Thank you!

Children of the Andes, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, London, EC2A 4LT
t: 020 7549 0225 e: info@childrenoftheandes.org w: www.childrenoftheandes.org

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