



Children of the Andes

Building a better future for vulnerable children in Colombia

Autumn 2010

Growing pains

Growing up and leaving home can be tough for anyone. Imagine how tough it is if you don't have a home in the first place, but have spent most of your life in care.

Every year, thousands of Colombia's care-leavers find themselves thrust into the world on their own. They are considered "adults" and no longer eligible for state support. Many have no family or support network. What's more, having grown up in an institution, it has often been hard for them to develop the skills or confidence they need to make it on their own.

It's no surprise that so many go back to the only other life they know – the life they led before they were taken into care, when they may have been living on

the streets, in abusive relationships or involved with crime. Trapped between childhood and adulthood and deemed too old for sympathy or support, they struggle to survive on the margins of society.

COTA partner Formación d'Futuros (FFF) has taken the lead in giving a voice to this forgotten group of children and developing services to help them get a better start in life. Thanks to FFF's work with care leavers, care homes and the government, thousands of Colombia's most vulnerable young people have been given the support they need to believe in themselves – often for the very first time - and to build a dignified and fulfilling life.

“If it hadn't been for FFF I would have ended up on the street, like so many of my friends from the care home.” Please donate today.

Growing pains

Looking the future in the eye

The problem

There are nearly 50,000 children who spend long periods in care in Colombia. Most are there as a result of economic difficulties, threats of recruitment into illegal armed groups, displacement, violence, abuse and abandonment. Many have no family and spend much of their lives in care.

Care homes are often over-crowded with limited capacity to provide any kind of individualised support. Instead, children follow a daily regime with little opportunity to develop their own ideas or make decisions for themselves. Schooling is often on-site, leaving children even more isolated from the outside world.

When state support comes to an end at the age of 18, young care-leavers are thrust back into society lacking the skills or the confidence they need to build a life of their own.

FFF: Leading the way in services for care leavers

FFF was established in 2003 in response to the total absence of state support for care-leavers in Colombia – it was the first organisation of its kind in the country. Since then, with COTA's support, it has established a range of programmes to help care leavers and children still in care prepare for life on their own.

Halfway House: helping young people learn how to live on their own

Halfway House is a residential support programme that helps vulnerable young care-leavers manage the difficult transition into independent living. The young people live in two single-sex houses with space for up to eight residents each. Beneficiaries live at the house for a maximum of two years, and have the opportunity to continue with their studies, gain vocational skills and work experience, learn to manage their money and gain practical skills like cooking and cleaning.

Since there are limited spaces, priority in the house is given to the most vulnerable care leavers, particularly those who have spent several years in care and have no family they can turn to for support.

As well as providing direct support to care leavers, the Halfway House programme has given FFF valuable insight into the needs of care leavers in Colombia which has fed into the development of all of their services.

Recent follow up with previous beneficiaries has shown that Halfway House really is making a difference. Almost 70% of the young people who have been part of the programme since its establishment in 2003 are managing to cover their living costs and live in dignified housing, have a strong network of friends and a good relationship with their partner. Thanks to the educational and vocational support they received, they have managed to find employment as teachers, carpenters, waiters, chefs, care workers – and one girl has started up her own successful restaurant.

“The impact of Halfway House on the lives of the young people cannot be underestimated. The transformation is incredible to witness. When they arrive, they are withdrawn and hardly look you in the eye when they talk to you. They are totally lost as to what they can do with their lives – in their minds, their future is as bleak as their past.

“FFF’s approach of individual, and highly personalised support is key – it allows each young person to come out of their shell, to realise that they have the potential to build a successful and dignified future, contributing positively to society, and to take concrete steps towards this future.”

Barbara Inglin, COTA Field Officer

Leaving Care Resource Centre: Reference Point

Reference Point is a drop-in centre, which has enabled FFF to extend its support to care-leavers and children in care across Cali. Young people can take part in a range of workshops from CV writing to sexual health; access the internet and a library with information on jobs, training, housing and welfare; some may go to the centre for advice on a personal problem or just to relax and meet people.

Staff are always on hand to give advice or just to listen. For many the centre represents a real life-line, particularly in the early days of leaving care.

FFF has worked hard to gain the support of businesses and

educational institutions, which has enabled it to offer care leavers access to bursaries and work experience. Recently FFF linked up with Terpel, a major national petroleum company, to provide 148 care leavers intensive training and work experience. Several young people have already been employed by the company.

Improving support for care leavers in the long-term

FFF recognises that in order for care leavers to be better prepared for independent living in the long-term, the care system needs to provide better preparation *while* children are in care. For this reason, FFF is working with children and staff from care institutions throughout the country,

to help support the development of life skills. What's more, thanks in part to FFF's work, Colombian Social Services have now formally recognised that preparing children for leaving care should be part of its programme of support. FFF is working with Regional Social Services for the Valle region to help plan the development of their leaving care service.

Please donate today and help us support children leaving care as they become independent adults



“What future can a young person hope for without support and without a family?”
Gustavo

“My dream is to have my own house, my own family and the resources and skills I need to start my own business” Guillermo



“It fills us with fear to think about how things will be when we leave our care home... so many leave without graduating from school. How will they be able to make a living and support themselves?” Claudia



Standing by the children through hard times

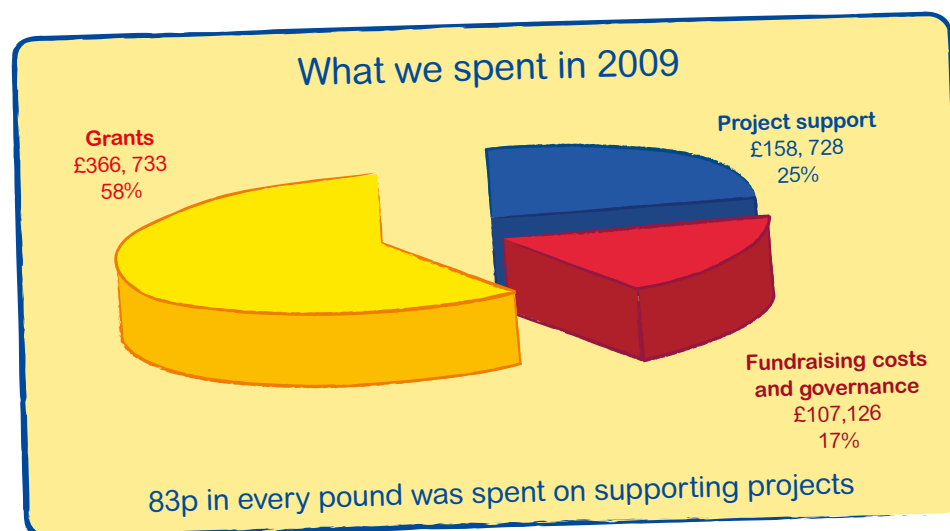
During these difficult financial times, a major focus of our work at COTA has been to continue to provide stable funding to our partners and to protect them – and the children they support – from the potentially destabilising effects of the down-turn.

Thanks to the dedication of the team and the overwhelming generosity of our supporters, we have not only been able to sustain our funding levels but have significantly increased our support.

During 2009 we sent £367,000 in grants to 12 partner projects, which was an increase of 28% on the previous year, and invested £159,000 in capacity building support, an increase of 29%. At the same time, we continued to be as efficient as possible, resulting in only 17p in every pound being spent on fundraising and governance and 83p spent on grants and project support.

This enabled our partners to work directly with over 3,000 vulnerable children, including many who face the dangers of life on the street or at work, have disabilities or are HIV positive, who are from displaced families or have suffered violence or abuse.

Many of these children arrive at our partner projects in desperate need of protection and immediate care for acute problems – malnourishment, ill health, or psychological trauma.



But our partners' work doesn't end there. In most cases, the emphasis of their work is on promoting the long-term development of the child, by helping them access education and training and working with their family to help them address some of the underlying issues that have contributed to the child's vulnerability.

It is this long-term support that really makes a difference to a child's life, enabling them to

overcome the harshest of challenges, develop their skills and confidence and shape the future they deserve.

In 2010, in an increasingly tough economic climate, we are working even harder to raise funds so that this vital work is not threatened.

We are rising to the challenge, but we can only do so with your support.

Thank you



Our new website!

After months deliberating its design and features, we are extremely excited about the launch of Children of the Andes' new website, which is now live!

If you use the internet, please take the time to visit our new site (same

address) and read the latest news from our projects and field officers in Colombia, as well as all the events and goings on here in the UK. You can also donate online, and discover all the other ways you can fundraise

for us from climbing Machu Picchu or joining us on our annual Thames Walk, to organising a simple Colombian coffee morning with friends. Please visit www.childrenoftheandes.org and find out more.



Email info@childrenoftheandes.org to receive updates about our events and news

News

In Memory of David Douglas

It is with great sadness that we report the passing away of David Douglas earlier this year.

David was a founding supporter of Children of the Andes and trustee from 1991-2003. He was very moved by his meeting with Jaime Jaramillo and was instrumental in getting the charity established. He was well known to many of our supporters through his active involvement in fundraising events and his tireless efforts to raise awareness of the charity's work. David's dedication to the cause of underprivileged children in Colombia was acknowledged in 1998 by the Colombian Government when he was awarded the National Order of San Carlos.

David will be sadly missed by all those who had the honour of working with him during his time at Children of the Andes.

The Chairman and Board of Trustees

Meet a new member of COTA's Team in Colombia!

"I'm Johanna Gaviria Torres, COTA's Administrative Assistant. I take care of office finance and admin so that Barbara and Gina, our Field Officers, can spend more time working directly with our partners, helping them get children's lives moving in a happier direction."



Recent events

Thames Walk

Thanks to all the supporters who participated in the COTA Thames Walk 2010. It was raining very heavily, but thanks to the committed walkers who traipsed through the mud and rain with us, we managed to smash our target by raising over £10,600. Our biggest total ever! The next COTA Thames Walk will be on Sunday 1st May 2011.

Colombia Fest

Colombia is celebrating 200 years of independence this year and Children of the Andes has joined the celebrations. On 20th July, COTA participated in Colombia Fest, a fun-filled celebration with true Latin spirit at Vinopolis (www.vinopolis.co.uk). We also took part in Colombianamente, and the Leamington Latin Festival.



Colombian Coffee Morning

If you are interested in celebrating Colombian independence, we are running a Colombian Coffee Morning campaign. We sold coffee and Colombian nibbles at our office last month and raised £125, inspiring some supporters in Northamptonshire to do likewise raising a further £94 and Ximena Ceron to organise a picnic with friends and raise £45. This is a great way to see friends and support COTA. For easy recipes and more info about how to host a small coffee morning for us please email us or see our new website!

Upcoming events

Charioke

Once again, COTA is busy preparing for one of our favourite fundraising events – the karaoke marathon. Bring out the singer in you and help us continue COTA's work by joining our team this year. Check out our website over the next few weeks for further details.

Speed dating

We organised a speed dating evening in June. It was an eye-opening night out for everybody! And, best of all, we raised £220. If you would like to organise a speed dating night to fundraise for our work, please contact us for advice.

Latin American Film Festival

This year's Festival will be held in November. Check out the fantastic programme on our new website and look out for our stall after the showings.

Thank yous

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

Community

Thanks to all the churches and religious groups that have supported us in recent months, including: Alexandra Presbyterian Church (Belfast), Carmelite Monastery (Preston), The Community of the Transfiguration (Loanhead), Didsbury United Reformed Church (Manchester), Southdown Methodist Church (Harpenden), St Andrews Clubmoor (Liverpool), St Botolph Lullingstone Parochial Church (Orpington), St Leonard's Toddler Group (Teignmouth), and St Michael at the North Gate (Oxford).

A big thank you to everyone at Magdalene House Preparatory School (Wisbech) who raised £787, The Treales CoE Primary School (Preston) who raised £90 through a non-uniform day, Colegio Villalkor (Madrid) for their €25 donation and St. Winefride's Convent School (Shrewsbury) for their donation of £30.

Thanks to the Bristol Spanish Circle who raised £83 at one of their monthly meetings, St George's, University of London, who raised £100 during RAG week and the LSE Colombian Society who donated £500 from their 2010 party.

Individuals

Thanks to Dermot Murphy who raised £205 at performances of his play *The Condor and the Maiden*, Niz Young, who raised £1,005 by organising a cookery demonstration and Jon and Vanessa Treers who raised £125 in celebration of their daughter Sofia's baptism.

Sports and Challenges

A big thank you to Eriko Miyazaki-Ross who raised £2,500 by trekking to Everest Base Camp, Katherine Fenner who raised £284 by running the Paris Marathon and Nilhan Jayasinghe who raised £510 running the Brighton Marathon.



For more info about participating in events and community fundraising please contact heidy@childrenoftheandes.org

Standing Order Appeal

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 28p for every £1 you give).

Please return completed form to Children of the Andes. For more information about Gift Aid, standing orders, legacies, payroll giving, greeting cards, alternative gifts or fundraising, please telephone our office on: 020 7549 0225

Thank you!

Field Office Diary

Barbara Inglin – Field Officer & Projects' Coordinator

Our partners know that the work they do makes a huge difference to the quality of children's lives. It can sometimes be difficult, though, to fully understand and describe all the positive changes they've made. So COTA helps our partners find ways to understand and describe their impact better.

As part of this effort, we recently organised a workshop for partners on a technique called 'Most Significant Change' (MSC). As the name suggests, MSC aims to enable the identification of a significant moment of change in a person's life as a result of their participation in a project.

I would like to share one mother's story, collected by our partner organisation ACJ, who help children away from work and into school. It illustrates well the essence of MSC and describes powerfully the sorts of changes COTA's work can make:



“ My house is small... so many of us live under the same roof. There are always problems – some days we have food and work, other days nothing. The money is never enough and this worries me constantly. I used to take all my frustrations out on my son and I would beat him. He would spend hours out on the street and I had no idea where he was. As soon as he got home, I would drag him in by his ears, and beat him terribly. I tried taking his clothes away to stop him going out, but it didn't work and he would go out in his underwear to beg for money at the traffic lights.

My son was invited by ACJ to join their project and I accepted because I hoped this would help him stay off the streets. I joined the parent workshops. I found myself thinking about how these



workshops try to help parents treat our children kindly and to understand that they are not to blame for our problems; to understand that there is nothing to be gained by beating our children and that if we respect them they will respect us.

I'm not nearly so bad tempered now. And now he is nicer to me – more affectionate and he listens to me more. Sometimes I hug him. ...I used to take the belt to my son 6 days out of 7, but no more, no more...”



Please donate now: 020 7549 0225

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.:

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 28p for every £1 you give).

For more information about Gift Aid, standing orders, legacies, payroll giving, greeting cards, alternative gifts or fundraising, please telephone our office on: 020 7549 0225

Thank you!

Children of the Andes, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, London, EC2A 4LT
t: 02075490225 e: info@childrenoftheandes.org w: www.childrenoftheandes.org

Children of the Andes is a UK registered charity, No 1075037.
A non-profit making company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No 3731943.

Children of the Andes