



Children of the Andes

Building a better future for vulnerable children in Colombia

Spring 2011

A Working Life

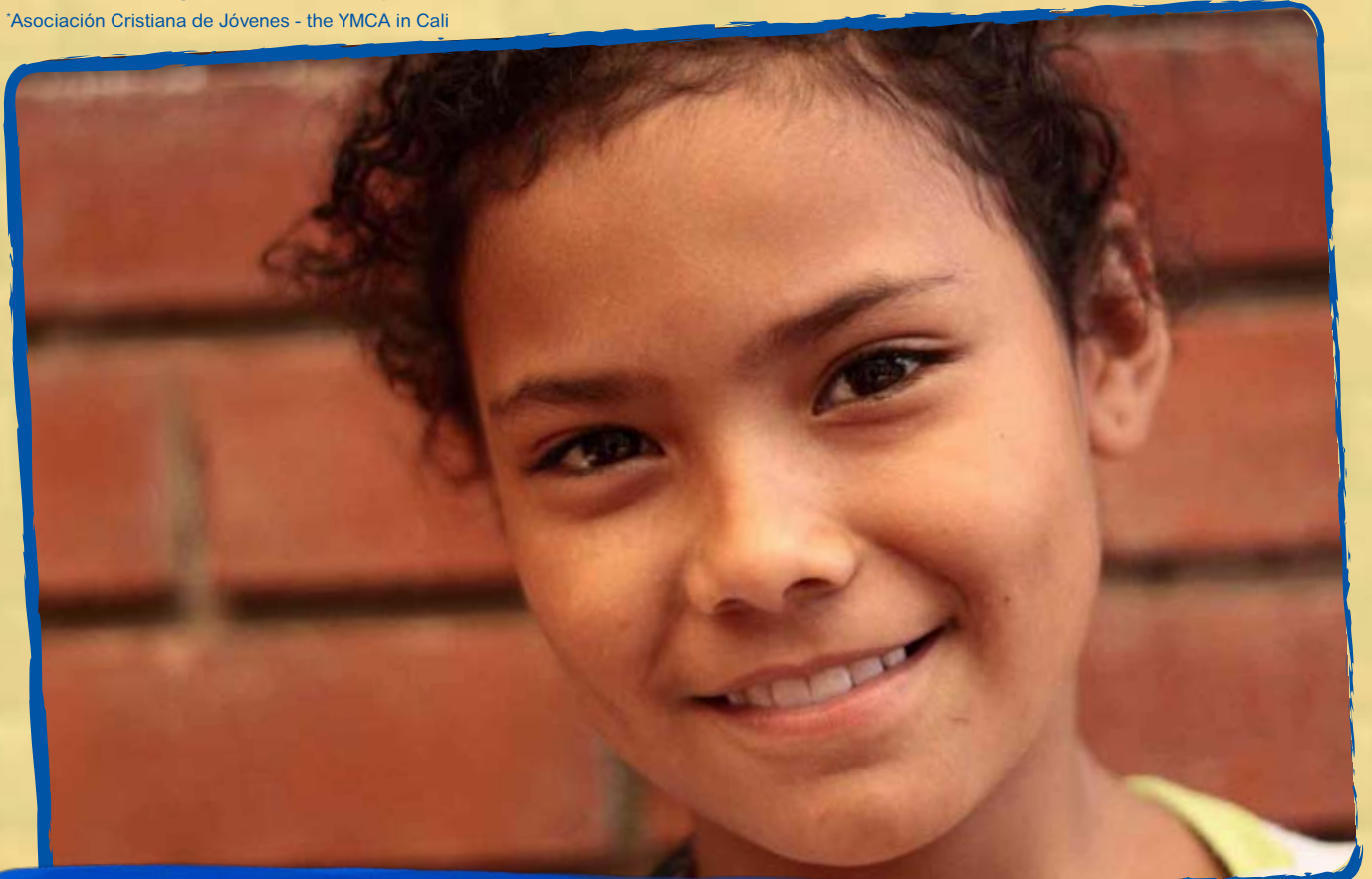
Clarisa can't remember when she started working, she was so young. Every day she would get up at 5am to start the long walk to the market place, and spend the day carrying heavy boxes of fruit. It didn't seem strange to her that she didn't have any friends of her own age, she'd never known any different.

Then, at the age of 11, Clarisa joined a street school set up by COTA partner ACJ* in the corner of the market place. Thanks to ACJ's support, she has now completed primary and secondary education and is looking forward to a career in tourism.

There are an estimated 2.5 million Colombian children like Clarisa who work. These children often work long hours in dangerous conditions, denied their right to play or to go to school. Deprived of a childhood and an education, they face an adult life of unskilled work and poverty.

ACJ has taken the lead in working with this forgotten group of children, helping them deal with problems at home, gain the skills and confidence they need to learn, and supporting them into formal education. ACJ's work has already helped to transform the lives of hundreds of working children. With COTA support, ACJ has been able to develop and formalise their experience so that it can be used to help thousands of child workers throughout the country.

*Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes - the YMCA in Cali



Please make a donation today, and help even more children like Clarisa discover the joys of learning.

A Working Life

(continued from front page)

What do working children do?

Working children do a variety of jobs from street selling, like Clarisa, to washing car windscreens, working as domestic servants or picking crops. A smaller proportion are used by gangs as drug runners or sexually exploited for commercial gain, but most working children are doing menial jobs in the informal sector. This work does not usually bring in much money.

children. A crucial part of ACJ's work involves working with parents and families to change attitudes and help them find practical ways to support their child's education. Some of the children who attend ACJ have even started to teach their parents to read, so the skills they are learning at the educational programme are spreading further.

Learning to Learn

ACJ is leading the way in responding to the needs of working children through a unique approach that they have developed over many years. Street educators go out into the community and befriend working children, gaining their trust on the streets and at home. The children are then invited to the ACJ Children's Centre, where the children can "learn to learn" through a non-formal education programme. At the Centre, specially trained teachers engage children who are not used to a



classroom environment. When they are ready, ACJ helps children to get a place at school, and continues to support them so they can complete their studies.

What next for ACJ?

Five years ago, COTA secured a Big Lottery grant to enable ACJ to develop this pioneering work into a formal methodology, that could be used to help child workers throughout Colombia. This work is now complete, and over the coming year ACJ will be working with schools to look at how their learning can be used to help child workers and vulnerable children flourish within the formal education system. We are looking forward to working in partnership with ACJ on this exciting next stage.

70% of children who attend ACJ have reduced their working hours since starting the programme, and 30% have stopped working altogether.

Helping parents help children

Many parents of working children never went to school either, and find it hard to understand the value of education for their



"I have seen firsthand how ACJ has succeeded in helping working children access education and leave the streets behind. It is never an easy process, but at the end of five years it is testimony to ACJ's hard work to see how children like Clarisa have broken through the barrier of child labour and are making strides towards a happier future." – Barbara Inglin, COTA Field Officer

Clarisa's Story



"I don't know how old I was when I started working. Ever since I can remember, I would wake at 5am, and walk with my Mum to the market place. Sometimes I would spend the day standing at our stall, other times I would carry a box of fruit through the streets. By the time I got back home, I was so tired I couldn't keep my eyes open. There was never time to play with other kids. It had always been like that.

enjoy it. Sometimes we played games and listened to stories, sometimes we practised writing - I found I was quite good at it.

After a while, one of the teachers asked if I would like to go along to the ACJ Children's Centre. At first my mum wasn't happy, she said I needed to work, but somehow the teacher convinced her and now my mum is glad I went.

Then one day, when I was 11, I heard there was a new street school just by the market. I wasn't interested in reading or writing - what good would it do me? But they gave out free food and my rumbling tummy has always been my weakness...

I had good days and bad days at ACJ. Sometimes it all felt too much. I would walk out the door, back to the market-place. But eventually I realised I didn't want to spend the rest of my life selling fruit. And I didn't want to lose my friends. I'd never had friends before.

So I started going along, mainly for the food, but began to quite

With the help of the teachers,

I managed to reach a level where I could go to primary school. I was so proud on my first day - I had never imagined that I would be good enough to go to school.

Eventually I went on to secondary school and graduated with honours! The ACJ teachers were by my side all the way, helping me believe that I could do it. Now I'm 21 and studying for a Diploma in Tourism, which I've almost finished. Soon I'll be starting work experience at a hotel.

Through all of this, I've realised that there are opportunities in life and that it's up to you to seize them. Sometimes things are tough, but you just have to keep going. Without the teachers from ACJ - who challenged, pushed and inspired me - I'd probably still be back in the market-place."



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Please donate today.

Remembering the children of Colombia

Every year, Children of the Andes receives many incredibly generous donations from supporters who have left a gift to us in their will, or who make a donation in memory of a loved one.

The memory of these people lives on in the lives of thousands of children who, thanks to those

gifts, have been able to move on from the traumas of the past and build the future they deserve.

Legacy donations have an enormous impact on our work with the most vulnerable children in Colombia, especially last year. 2010 was a potentially difficult year at COTA due to the economic down-turn. During

this time, legacies were a lifeline for the projects and for the thousands of vulnerable children who depend on our support.

Nine of COTA's partner projects benefitted from legacy donations last year. The examples below are just a few ways in which legacy gifts helped last year.

Carvajal

Carvajal works to get children with disabilities into school - and later employment - and to change attitudes towards people with disabilities. A legacy gift helped COTA to support their work in 2010, including the work they did with Freddy:

"Before I joined the Carvajal program, I was locked into my problems, very unhappy and thought I could not do anything. But since joining the programme, everything has changed. I have learnt that I can do things in my life. One day I will have a job and work. I now realise that just because I have a limitation, it does not mean that I am limited!" – Freddy, 16



Renacer

This vital project is addressing the serious and growing problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Cartagena, Colombia's major coastal resort. When COTA's application to Comic Relief for this project was unsuccessful at the final stage last year, legacy donations were an absolute lifeline. They enabled us to start work on the project, which will change hundreds of young lives. Without the generous legacies left to us in 2010 this would not have been possible.



Cer Mujer

Cer Mujer supports pregnant child victims of sexual abuse and their babies through a residential programme offering vital healthcare, emotional and educational support. The girls are aged 11 to 17. In 2010 Cer Mujer was supported with a grant from legacy donations, which has helped them to help children like Gina:

"I was living on the streets when I heard about Cer Mujer. I'd been kicked out by my Aunt, who never liked me anyway. She took me in when my Grandad died. He was the only one who ever took care of me.

I was five months pregnant, but you wouldn't have known – I was so thin. I spent all my money on drugs rather than food, it helped me forget how bad things were.

Arriving at Cer Mujer felt like coming home to the family I've never had – a place where I was accepted and cared for and where others really understood what I'd been through because so many had been through the same thing.

I now have a beautiful little girl, Johanna. She's so precious to me, I never want her to go through what I went through. I'm studying again for the first time in years and soon I'll be moving to a foster family who are going to help me take good care of Johanna. I'll be sad to leave, but I have friends now. We have all shared so much, nothing will take that away from us."

Gina, 15



Thank you for your dedication to our cause and for helping us to bring hope to the children of Colombia

If you are interested in leaving a gift to Children of the Andes in your will, please do get in touch: 020 7549 0225 info@childrenoftheandes.org

COTA Blog!

You may have read on our last newsletter that we have a new website. If you still haven't seen it, do take a look. We also have a blog now, which has stories from the children in Colombia, news from our office, and information about all our events and fundraising ideas.

Please visit www.childrenoftheandes.org for more.

Thames Walk 2010



Our annual Charity Walk returns on **Sunday 1st May 2011**. Last year, we managed to raise over £10K together through the 10-mile sponsored walk. So this spring we are counting on you to help us exceed our astonishing 2010 total! Join us with family and friends this May bank holiday and let's enjoy the beautiful scenery together. (If the weather allows, we will also have a picnic and some live music, in Latin American style.)

Volunteers needed

We urgently need volunteer stewards for this year's walk. Volunteers will need to participate in a "dummy walk" on April 16th as well as being available on 1st May.

If you would like to sign up as a steward, please contact Heidy at heidy@childrenoftheandes.org or 020 7549 0225 by April 5th.

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,
2011 looks set to be a busy year at Children of the Andes! As well as supporting all our ongoing partnerships, we are expanding our work in two important areas.

The first involves developing the support offered to vulnerable families and their children. Many families have to cope with the strains of poverty with little or no support. The stress can lead to neglect or abuse in the home, and to children being taken into care.

Colombian law now limits the time that a care institution can work with a child to around six months, at which point the child is generally returned home. It has become even more vital to provide family support to ensure the transition is a success and that the child doesn't remain at risk.

Over the last three years, our partner the Albergue has been working with children and their families to develop a family reintegration programme. Hundreds of street children have returned to more positive family environments, have remained at home and continue to develop well.

In 2011 the Albergue will be adapting this support programme to help other children and their families, including survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, working children and former child soldiers.

Our second area of expansion this year will be in the field of disability.

To date, much of our work has focused on enabling families with disabled children to be better



connected to one another as well as to support services. This year our partners will be focusing on helping disabled children gain better access to education, including access to mainstream schools, which will promote social inclusion and increase their opportunities for a fulfilling life.

We look forward to keeping you posted on progress on our website and in future newsletters.

Thank you, as ever, for your support which makes all this vital work possible.

With warm wishes,
Rachel

Thank yous

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

Amazing Individuals

We would like to thank Christiane Embleton, who raised £220, and Steve Henderson, who raised £467, through concerts.

Thanks to Camila Coulet and Maria Prieto (both aged 8) who raised £410 in December by asking for donations instead of birthday presents. Their donation will be matched by the company where Camila's dad works, taking the total raised to £820.

Thanks to John Madden who donated to celebrate a special birthday, to newly wed couples Richard & Kate Breminer and Jay & Rosamond Jacklin who made donations to celebrate their marriages, to Martin Díaz who held a World Cup Sweepstake.

A big thank you to Mr and Mrs Dankoff who raised £401 in a cake and toy sale at their church hall, to Eleanor Larby who raised £120 through a bring and buy sale for her classmates in year 6, to Mr and Mrs Ellis for collecting spare pennies, to Lynn Payne who raised £361 and to Verity King who raised £70 at her local fete.



Sports and Challenges

Thanks to Becky McKeivitt who raised £334 by participating in the British 10K run, to Carolina Bohorquez who raised £365 by completing the Run to the Beat Half Marathon and to Rey Aller and Martha Naranjo, who raised £700 by completing the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage.

Community

Thanks to the Swansea Latin American Association who support COTA through their annual festival.

Thanks to all the churches and religious groups that have supported us in recent months, including: Alexandra Presbyterian Church (Belfast), Church of the Immaculate Conception (Stroud), Guildford Cathedral, Highcliffe Methodist Church, Religious Society of Friends (Alderney), St Andrews Clubmoor (Liverpool), St Leonard's Toddler Group (Teignmouth) and St Margaret Clitheroe's Church.

Regular Giving

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

Hannah, COTA's blogger* visited Colombia in October 2010. Here she describes meeting an extraordinary young woman.

When I was a teenager, freedom and leaving home couldn't come soon enough. No fussing parents, no "are you home yet" or "we're eating as a family tonight". When I met Marcela in Colombia last October, I realised just how lucky I was that my parents cared enough to worry when I wasn't home, and actually wanted to eat at the same table as me.

After a day spent with the Forming Futures Foundation (FFF) – a COTA partner that supports young people leaving care so they can become independent adults – we went looking for a good dinner. We arrived at a lovely Italian restaurant (illuminated with beautiful grape vine fairy lights) and were greeted by a lively young woman and Chouchou, her dog.

Marcela, 22, runs the restaurant – writing the menu, managing staff and attending customers. She clearly loves her work and enjoys meeting people. I would never have guessed what had happened to this friendly, confident and professional woman during her childhood.

When Marcela was young, her mother had serious problems with drugs, to the point where she could not care for her children. As the eldest of four, Marcela took on the responsibility of looking after her three younger siblings. By the age of 12, Marcela was seriously behind at school. She eventually fled her family, and was taken into a care home.

After dinner, Marcela was kind enough to let me interview her. She told me about her experiences, which I am privileged to be able to share with you...

"Living in care is tough. But it allowed me to live as a child. I made friends, gained a good education, and found a life. If I'd stayed with my family, none of this could have happened. I remember thinking when I was 15 'In three years' time I will be on my own', which was a terrifying thought.

FFF were able to help me overcome this. I was 17 when I joined their "half-way house" for girls. While living there I worked hard - studying in the evening and working during the day. They

were always telling me to save my money! Thanks to FFF I enrolled on a cookery course, and loved it. That's what set me off on my career.

I felt much better prepared for independence when I left FFF. I knew I could always go back if I had questions, or needed advice – and I do.

The most important things to me now are my partner, my friends from FFF, my dog and my mum. She still matters so much to me despite her difficulties."

Meeting Marcela really moved me. I will never take my loving family for granted again. My thanks to Marcela for her time and for agreeing to share her story. I hope her restaurant goes from strength to strength and will definitely visit again next time I'm in Cali!

Please see our blog for more of Marcela's story.

*Hannah Punin Albarracin is Fundraising and Finance Assistant at COTA.



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.

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.:

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
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