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In our Autumn newsletter, following a visit to Colombia by Marilise Turnbull, our Head of Fundraising, we are bringing you news of developments in education and youth projects at the *Fundación Niños de los Andes* and *Fe y Alegría*, two of the Colombian organisations to whom we have given financial support in 1996. We are especially glad to be able to bring you a report on Jaime Jaramillo's *Fundación Niños de los Andes* and congratulate them on recovering so well from the unfairness of the troubles they experienced last year.

News from Colombia

Marilise Turnbull writes:

Last month I returned from a visit to Colombia where I saw how your help has given so many children hope for the future. I felt privileged to meet young boys and girls whose tremendous spirit and courage is an inspiration to us all.

Sadly, I also attended the funeral of a young man who had spent his life on the street. He was shot dead by gunmen in a passing car. That night I accompanied the rescue patrol team to the street corner where his younger companions were still living, shocked by the day's events and fearful for their own lives. Thankfully, recent campaigns to raise social awareness about the plight of street children have brought about a significant reduction in the number of such killings. Nevertheless, the streets remain fraught with dangers for children vulnerable to all kinds of exploitation and abuse.



Street life for children in Bogotá

“... together we can make a real difference to the lives of children in Colombia”

Street children are not the only victims of violence. In shanty towns juvenile gangs take many young lives, while in the country guerrilla warfare is escalating. Power struggles at all levels of Colombian society take their toll on communities, families and particularly on the most vulnerable - the children. Through our friends and supporters, Children of the Andes is able to work in those areas where the problems are most acute.

Our Colombian colleagues face enormous challenges on a daily basis to bring about lasting change. It was wonderful to see their extraordinary dedication. Thanks to your generosity, together we can make a real difference to the lives of children in Colombia.

Education - A Gift For Life

Education has always been a priority at *Fundación Niños de los Andes*. In order to survive, street children acquire a knowledge of life and experience beyond their years, but many cannot read or write when they enter the homes. Adapting to a classroom environment is not easy, especially for those who have never attended school, or have a history of drug addiction and malnutrition. But they are eager to learn. Knowing that they will soon have the chance to go to school helps many through the first stages of their rehabilitation.

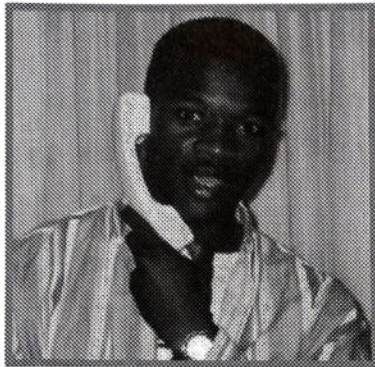
As well as schooling, children in the homes can participate in a variety of workshops and recreation activities. These are designed to be fun as well as providing vocational training. Through art, music, ceramics, car mechanics and sport, to name just a few, they discover new talents and, most importantly, build up the needed confidence and self-esteem to help them in the future.

Recently, the *Fundación Niños de los Andes* has taken a new step towards allowing the children in its care to reach their full potential. Twenty-seven boys and girls now



attend a secondary school outside the home at Subachoque where their behaviour and progress have impressed their teachers. Several are amongst the best in their class. By making new friends with very different backgrounds from their own, and taking part in all aspects of school-life, the children are truly on the way to integrating into society.

Many of the young adults who were once rescued and rehabilitated by the *Fundación* still 'come home' when they can, providing a wonderful example to the other children. Their visits are of immense value to the children and staff alike, acting as a source of motivation and a measure of success.

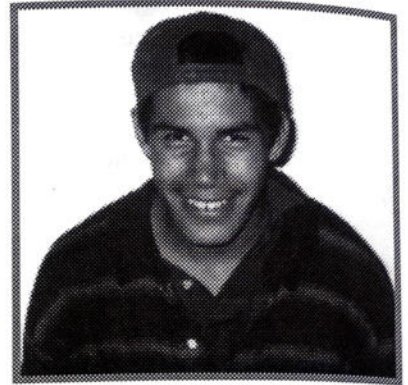


Hoobert was rescued from a sewer by Jaime Jaramillo at the age of 12. He spent 7 years in the Fundación, went on to study hotel management, and is now working in his first job.

Changing Lives



Dilia, aged 15, is doing a secretarial course and is looking forward to starting work in an office.

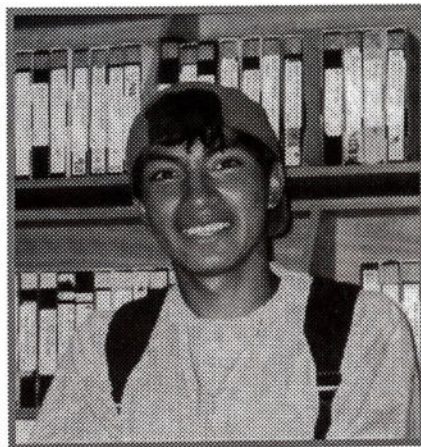


Jorge, who cannot hear and has little speech, has received special education and speech therapy to help him cope with his disabilities. At 18 years old, he will soon begin his training as a baker.

New children are welcomed into the *Fundación Niños de los Andes*' homes every week. Please help us to give them the chances they are hoping for.

One Boy's Own Story

By Pedro Mendoza, a former street boy



"I was born on 28th June, 1977. I lived with my family until I was six years old. We lived in a house made from four wooden posts, pieces of cardboard and plastic sheets. It was only about two and a half metres long and two metres wide. I had four brothers and sisters. My mother and stepfather tried to make ends meet by selling what they could at the market. I always hoped to go to school like other children and used to beg my mother and stepfather to let me go, but they said I had to help them work. So I decided to run away. Poor people never think about education; my mother only went to school for two years and just about learnt to read, write, add and subtract, and my stepfather didn't know much more.

I went onto the streets, not knowing where to head. I made some big mistakes. I started glue-sniffing to give me the courage to steal to buy food. I'd find a car and remove all the accessories to sell on to other people. That way I made enough money for me and my friends to eat. Sometimes I'd get a little job to earn money. I say 'little job' because at seven years old there's not much you can do. I spent three years living like that until one night when I

was asleep under a bridge, a tall man with a moustache and curly hair appeared. I would have run away, but I saw he had a kind face and had brought some food for us. He'd brought clothes and blankets too. It was Jaime Jaramillo."

Pedro was one of the first street children to be rescued by the Fundación Niños de los Andes. Since then hundreds of children have been helped by the organisation, and there are currently 100 former street children in residential care. Over the past eight years the Fundación has developed a rescue and rehabilitation programme for the children in its care, with a team of professional teachers, social workers and psychologists to give the children all the support and encouragement they need. Where possible, attempts are made to rebuild the children's relationships with their own families, as was the case for Pedro whose family has been helped to improve their living standards. With the Fundación's support his younger brothers and sisters have all been given the chance to go to school. In Pedro's own words:

"Since then I've learnt a lot, and I got on a student exchange programme which meant I could go to High School in the States for a year. I'm 18 now, I speak quite a bit of English, and I'd like to study computing in the future. I really want to make something of my life."

Building for the Future

In Colombia, life in the countryside is hard and, in some areas, plagued by violence. Many families flee to the cities from their homes and farms to escape violence caused by guerrilla and paramilitary conflict. Others search for better living conditions and employment, often in vain. These families usually end up swelling the shanty towns which sprawl haphazardly around Colombia's major cities, living in makeshift accommodation.



Typical dwelling in a shanty town

Family breakdown is common in such areas. Many children are brought up without a stable father-figure and their mothers are often forced by circumstances to leave their children alone for long periods, sometimes at night, while they work. Consequently, older children are made responsible for their younger brothers and sisters, inevitably missing the fun and freedom which childhood should bring. Although many are enrolled at a local school, their workload at home and lack of encouragement from their parents prevent them from making much progress.



In Santa Librada, a shanty town south of Bogotá, I visited a youth centre run by *Fe y Alegría* where children and teenagers participate in a great variety of educational and recreational activities.

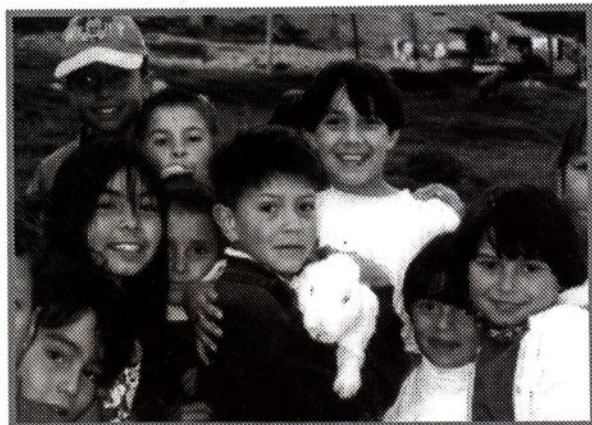
For these young people, the chance to join an art workshop, learn traditional colourful dances, and play a



musical instrument seems too good to be true, particularly as the Centre is the only recreational facility in the area. Each room in the building is filled with lively children enjoying materials such as paints, puppets and modelling clay. There is a book and games library too, where youth workers teach young children to read, write and count, and help older ones with their homework.

“With the right motivation, these teenagers can develop into responsible leaders of the community”

One of the most valuable contributions of the Centre to the community is through its work with teenagers. In poor communities such as Santa Librada, young people are very susceptible to the gang culture which feeds on their desire to earn money and feel important. Disillusioned by the lack of prospects, many resort to crime and violence. The Centre offers these youngsters a range of opportunities including a place to meet with friends and the chance to learn new skills. They are encouraged to voice their opinions and participate in the planning of the activities, learning to act with tolerance and respect. With the right motivation, these teenagers can develop into responsible leaders of the community.



Children learning through play

I greatly enjoyed an evening with the dedicated team of youth workers who not only grew up in Santa Librada, but attended the Centre themselves when they were younger. Now, many of them are university students or young professionals. They all share the same background and social problems as the children they are now leading, and want to give something back to the community. Their high level of commitment enables the Centre to continue bringing children and likeminded young people together in stimulating and safe surroundings, offering an alternative to crime, violence and drugs. By passing on their education, these young people of Santa Librada are building for the future.

Your donation, however small, can open up a world of opportunities for these children.

UK Fundraising News

Walk the Andes

Thank you to everyone who took part in our national summer event which raised £5000. Our target was to collectively cover the length of the Colombian Andes, but in fact we walked three times this distance - in other words the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Andes too!

Our supporters included a woman from Yeovil who, in convalescence after a hip operation, walked 24 laps around her garden. In Wales a Colombian supporter covered 30 miles, and at The Mount prison in Bovingdon 90 men clocked a total of 1000km around their recreation ground, sponsored by local churches, friends and families.

Others sponsored walks included a stroll through Buckinghamshire, a lakeside walk in Surrey, tramps across Hyde Park and Tooting Common and a quick dash around the school playing fields! Some supporters even went as far afield as Italy, Holland and Switzerland to 'Walk the Andes' during their summer holidays.

Christmas Fundraising



The Festive Season provides an ideal opportunity to help support our projects. Here are a few suggestions of ways you could help children in Colombia:

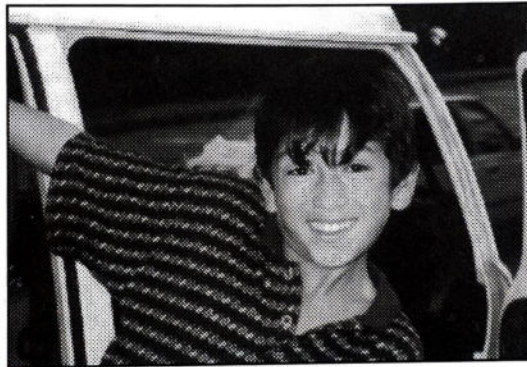
Christmas Message Board - instead of giving cards to colleagues at work, place a Greetings Board in a common area and donate the money saved to Children of the Andes.

Present Swap - do you really need another box of chocolates or pair of socks? Why not get together with others you give to and offer to swap your presents for a joint donation to children in Colombia.

Carol singing, concerts and

Christmas dances - these events are a great time to collect money for Children of the Andes. Either add a little to the ticket price to be given to the charity or hold a collection during the event.

Please let us know if you need any materials such as posters, collection boxes or leaflets to help your event.



Plans for the New Year

The New Year looks like being a very busy one for Children of the Andes with several new initiatives set to begin and others to continue. If you are interested in any of the following or have any further ideas, please contact us!

Talks - provide an ideal opportunity to spread the word about the work of Children of the Andes. If you would like to speak to a group in your area about the charity, or if you are part of a group which would like to know more about our work, we'd be pleased to hear from you!

Schools Initiative - we are seeking to increase the contact we have with schools and youth groups and can provide talks, a project booklet (for upper primary level) on Colombia and street children, and display material to anyone interested.

Volunteers - Children of the Andes could not exist without the invaluable help of volunteer organisers, fundraisers and helpers. In particular we would like to hear from people with an interest in setting up a support group, organising an event or, in London, from those able to provide general help in the office or at events.

Rotary support



Children of the Andes is grateful for the ongoing support of Rotary Clubs across the country, especially to District 1240, the Chertsey Club and the Inner Wheel London District, for adopting Children of the Andes as their International Project for this year.

Diary Dates

We look forward to meeting supporters at the following London events:

22-24 November -

Global Partnership Exhibition at the Barbican Centre, EC4 (11 am-7pm)

30 November - Third World Fair (10.30am-6pm) at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1.

15 February 1997 - Salsa Party at Conway Hall (above) with traditional Colombian food and live Latin music. All proceeds to Children of the Andes.

This year your donations have...

... purchased bunk-beds, bedding and equipment for a new dormitory in a home for former street children • funded outreach work and medical care through rescue patrols for children on the streets of Bogotá • purchased new dentistry equipment to provide full dental care for all the former street children in a home • paid for primary and secondary education for 100 former street children for one year • provided regular meals for 75 children attending a pre-school in a poor community in Bogotá • paid for workshop materials and training at a Youth Centre benefiting over 1000 children and teenagers in a shanty town • paid for a day-care centre to be built near Bogotá, giving pre-school education to 60 refugee children.

Children of the Andes would like to thank everyone who supported the charity throughout 1996. The education projects described in this newsletter need our long term commitment. We can only continue to give this with the continued support of our donors.

Thank you to all our donors