



# Children of the Andes

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Bringing hope to street children and children at risk in Colombia

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*In September, we said good-bye to Director Marilise Turnbull who left us to co-ordinate OXFAM's emergency relief programme in Colombia. Her three years' dedicated, enthusiastic and successful contribution will be remembered with much affection and we all wish her well in her new life. As her successor we warmly welcome Jackie Reiter, whose many years in Central and South America and experience of charity fundraising in the UK will enable us to help more children at risk in Colombia.*



Dear Friends ,

As I write, I am coming to the end of my first week as Director of Children of the Andes. It has been a busy and exciting time as I learn about the organisation and the vital work it is doing for the dispossessed children of Colombia.

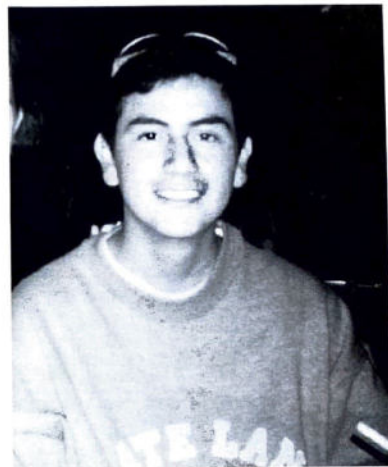
Ever since I went to Colombia some twenty years ago to do research for my Master of Philosophy in Colombian Literature, I have wanted to return. I fell in love with the country, its physical beauty and rich varieties of culture - a mix of Indian, Spanish and African - and the warmth of the people. I had planned to stay for four months and ended up staying for sixteen.

I had my first encounter with street children during my stay. What I thought was a pile of rags on the pavement turned out to be children sleeping rough, huddled up together for warmth - Bogotá can get very cold at night. It was a real shock to see that even small children are forced to live in the harshest of conditions with no adult to protect them or give them love. I now have a thirteen year old son, Camilo, and being a mother brings home to me that children cannot survive without love and protection.

Christmas is upon us, a special time particularly for children. I think of the children in Colombia who have nobody to make them feel special. But you and other supporters of Children of the Andes have shown that someone does care. Your help has had a transformative effect as you will see from the stories inside. And these are only a fraction of the stories we hear.

In the short time since I took up my post I have been moved by the generosity of people sending in money and caring thoughts. A heartfelt thank you to you all. I wish you every happiness this Christmas and for 1999. I look forward to a year of challenges and great satisfaction working for Children of the Andes.

Jackie Reiter



Success story! Former street child awarded university place. More information inside.

## In 1998 your donations have funded:

- 21 Flying Doctor missions to children in remote areas of Colombia.
- The building of a new home for 60 children in Manizales.
- Running costs of a nursery providing therapy and education for 90 severely traumatised child victims of violence.
- Workshops for 50 children in Chinchiná, providing training in carpentry, upholstery & baking.
- A nutritious daily meal for 80 nursery children in a poor area of Bogotá.
- Daily meals for 30 teenage girls at a home in Bogotá.
- Community circus clubs for children in poor neighbourhoods in Cali.
- Educational materials, training and rehabilitation for 90 children in Subachoque.
- Part-funding of a youth centre, providing arts training for over 1000 children in Bogotá.

Our support in Colombia goes to the rescue and rehabilitation of street children, preventative work in shanty towns providing alternatives to children who might otherwise resort to the streets, and the provision of health care.

# NEWS FROM COLOMBIA

A report by freelance journalist Sorrel Downer



Since taking office in August, President Andres Pastrana has been struggling to find a peaceful solution to the violent conflict between left and right-wing factions that has plagued the country for fifty years. But reports continue to reach us of the terrible torture, intimidation and massacre of those who stand for peace. In the last ten years 1.2 million people have fled their homes and families continue to flood into the cities in search of protection, work and shelter.

Travelling through the overcrowded shanty towns and poor neighbour-

hoods of Bogotá and Cali, I saw that all most find is humiliation and despair. Whole families share rooms in a sprawl of thousands of shacks cobbled together from corrugated iron, boxes and concrete breeze blocks, perched precariously on muddy banks of rivers, erected below highway bridges, and clinging to hillsides. Few find work, but some find an escape in drugs and alcohol. Domestic violence and abuse is commonplace. The atmosphere is explosive.

It is hard to conceive how people, many of whom have worked hard

to build the decent lives and homes they were forced to abandon in the country, can find the strength to carry on. From these neighbourhoods, a whole generation of children is attempting to fend for itself. During morning rush hour in Bogotá I saw child prostitutes, small girls no more than 11 or 12, soliciting clients, and groups of children begging outside cafés and by traffic lights. I saw children, wrapped in filthy blankets on the pavements of the shopping district, sniffing glue, watching the traffic with glazed eyes, and others, no more than 5 or 6 years old, helping their mothers by selling chewing gum or rifling through the bins.

But there is hope. The children who are given a chance to rise out of poverty are reaching back to help the next generation get on their feet. I met young doctors, social workers, teachers and psychologists working with street children who had all been street children or brought up in homes themselves. And talking to children at the homes and projects supported by Children of the Andes, I heard again and again how they planned to give back to the community and to help other children escape the suffering they had experienced.

© photograph Liam Regan

## Jaime Jaramillo on TV

You will be able to see some of the children helped by *Fundación Niños de los Andes*, as well as the new home in Manizales built with your support, in an ITV documentary to be shown early next year. Desmond Wilcox's team returns to Bogotá in Colombia, eight years after their first visit, to see how successful the attempts have been to keep the children off the streets.

'Children of the Sewers' revisits the street children of Bogotá and catches up with Jaime Jaramillo, a petroleum engineer whose dream of providing safe housing for the children who had taken refuge in the stink and disease of the sewers turned into a reality. The programme examines the success stories among the youngsters who were rescued by Jaime from the sewers and streets of Bogotá.

# THE CHILDREN

*The goal of Children of the Andes is to give children in Colombia the security, support, good health and education they need to lead happy, independent and fruitful adult lives.*

This year *Fundación Niños de los Andes* (FNA) celebrated its tenth anniversary. Many children whose futures seemed bleak have enjoyed happy, settled childhoods at FNA, cured their addictions and benefited from a good education thanks to your support. There's **Victor**, rescued after 8 years on the streets, now working for an American oil company and able to support his mother; **Hernando**, working as a warehouse administrator and giving back to the community by volunteering with FNA on the night patrols of Bogotá; **Andres**, the 10 year old drug addict rescued from the sewers who went to the USA on a tennis scholarship and is now happily married with a child of his own, and **Ana Patricia Lopez** who, despite spending four years on the streets, has done so well at school that she is now preparing to start university.



The happy faces of children rescued from the streets.

1998 has also been an outstanding year for **Luis Alberto Granada** who arrived at FNA, aged 10, after surviving for three years on the streets of Bogotá. He not only won a scholarship to study in France, but was invited to London in July, along with 17 other

teenagers from all over the world, to help edit a Peace Child International book on human rights due for publication next year. And his achievements do not stop there. We have just received a letter from him:

Dear Friends,

I returned to Colombia filled with hope and plans for the future and went back to the home in Subachoque where I settled without any problem. The other children were full of questions about my experiences in Europe. Afterwards I went to visit my family who were very proud of my achievements and all that I had done in the pursuit of my dreams. Because of that, I am now more determined than ever to achieve my ambition.

Every morning for the past two and a half months I have got up at dawn and gone to school in Bogotá so that I can finish my studies at the end of the year.

I study from 8am to 11am then go home to the Fundación to spend time with the children, to be close to them, tell them what I've been up to, and to help out where needed.

A big part of my dream is now coming true thanks to a grant I was awarded to study law at the University Javeriana. I have also been invited to speak about my own experiences at conferences on leadership, arranged by Jaime Jaramillo. I hope you have enjoyed reading my news.

Best wishes,  
Luis Alberto Granada

## STOP PRESS...

### The Disposable Ones

Despite efforts to protect Colombia's street children, the recent discovery of two mass graves show that the children are still "disposable", and still very much at risk. A total of 25 bodies - mainly skeletons - were found in two graves in Pereira, a city 110 miles from

Bogotá, in mid-November. Investigators said they were considering all possibilities, including that the children had been killed by vigilantes as part of a "social cleansing" campaign of suspected juvenile delinquents.

# FLYING DOCTORS



Just before Christmas Colombia's flying doctors, *Patrulla Aérea Colombiana*, will carry out its 21st mission since last October for Children of the Andes. The patrol will take doctors and medical supplies to the children of the remote rainforest. Since Children of the Andes began funding the service in 1992, the team of 10 pilots and 50 doctors have helped thousands of children, many of whom have received life-saving surgery and, as British pilot, Ed Harrison, told Phil Davison in an interview for *The Scotsman*, they have had many adventures along the way. "Mr Harrison has crashed twice, on takeoff and landing, on makeshift airstrips. The group has lost three pilots to the mountainous terrain surrounding its base in

Medellín, most notorious for its cocaine cartel and drug-related violence. The group's planes have been shot at and set fire to, it has had a pilot kidnapped and been threatened by drug lords, but its members continue to bring badly needed assistance to the several million people in Colombia's combat zones. 'It sounds dramatic but half the time your main problem is getting enough lift to get you out of this valley and over these mountains...Other times you are circling in a sensitive area waiting for cows or other animals to get off the airstrip.' "

Ed fulfilled a lifelong ambition of getting his pilot's licence and flew his first plane at the age of 50. He has been flying surgeons, plastic surgeons, dentists and general practitioners into danger zones ever since, on a volunteer basis. For Ed and the rest of the team the results - healthy children - far outweigh the risks. *Patrulla Aérea Colombiana* hopes to be able to extend the service to benefit a further 3000 children by the year 2000; children who would otherwise have no help and, in some cases, die from diseases common to the area such as malaria and dysentery.

## TRAINING FOR LIFE

*Circo para Todos* is not only a professional circus school, but an outreach project, offering circus training to children in homes and poor communities in Cali. These community workshops are run by circus school students who have received the training to teach basic circus skills. The outreach programme is funded by Children of the Andes and on a visit to Cali we had the opportunity to see a workshop at a girls home on the outskirts of the city.

The crowd in the car park was a clear indication of how important the weekly sessions are for the girls, many of whom are recovering from physical and mental abuse and neglect. The trainers, all teenagers and some no strangers to problems and suffering themselves, worked miracles, imposing order while enthusing the girls. The children were encouraged to work together as teams, to support each other, to take turns and to try, try and try again. The best will be offered a place at the circus school but for many it is a chance to let off steam and feel pride in themselves.

Achievements in the circus workshops have become a metaphor for achievements in life. "If you make the effort, if you are determined and really want something, you can make it happen", the trainers tell the entranced group.



The Director of *Circo* told us: "The circus workshops have helped so much. We've seen children turn their lives around. There is one girl who was very badly treated and wouldn't go out in public but now she is participating with the circus. And the older ones who have the opportunity to go on to the circus school and train there, start to feel really positive about their future."

# OPENING OF NEW HOME

Marilise Turnbull, our previous Director, attended the opening of the new home in Manizales.

Dear Children of the Andes supporters,

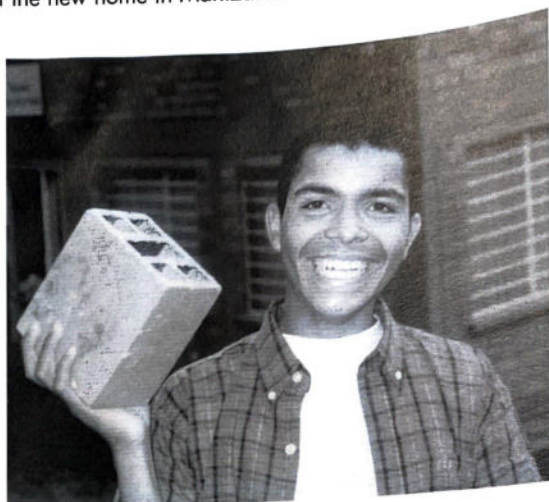
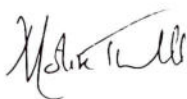
This weekend we officially opened the *Fundación Niños de los Andes'* new home for street children in Manizales. It was an emotional occasion, not least for the children who have been eagerly watching the building rise, brick by brick, since February this year.

Flying in from the war-torn Urabá regions where I am now working, I made it just in time for the beginning of the celebrations. The children put on a stunning show at the University of Manizales - a musical written, choreographed and acted by themselves. The songs, energetic dances and sheer enjoyment of the young performers had everyone on their feet. There were poignant moments too, when Jaime spoke about the origins of the *Fundación* and reminded all those present of the need to continue to fight for a better life for Colombia's street children.

The following day was the highlight of the event. Over two hundred guests attended a special mass in the park where the new home has been built. Then came the long-awaited cutting of the ribbon! I was invited to 'do the honours' on behalf of all those supporters in Britain who 'bought a brick' and together built this beautiful new rehabilitation centre.

The children and staff then gave thanks to everyone who has helped to make this project a reality - from the Colombian benefactor who bequeathed the land, to the architect who donated her time and expertise, to the hundreds of Children of the Andes supporters whose donations and events raised the funds needed.

I would just like to add my thanks to theirs, and to the Clothworkers' Foundation which most generously donated £20,000. It was a real privilege to be in Colombia for the opening, and I promise to keep you in touch with the children's progress.



Marilise with former street children at the opening of their new home.

## UK Government backs project

Children of the Andes has matched the National Lottery Charities Board's grant which we obtained last year for *Cedavida* - an organisation helping Colombia's

conflict-torn families - with funding from the UK Government's Department for International Development. This 2-year grant is a major endorsement of our work.

## FUNDRAISERS NEEDED!

Would you be interested in holding a fundraising event in your area or in giving a talk? Help us spread the word about Colombia's children in need, and the work of Children of the Andes. If you are planning an event, let us know. We can provide posters, leaflets and information packs and can even come along to give a talk if you wish.

### KIND HEARTS AND SOFT SKIN

We all know that giving to a worthy cause can make you feel good, but one group of women in Buckinghamshire left a recent fundraising event not only feeling good but looking fabulous! Organised and hosted by Mary Clancy of Farnham Royal, the Clarins Women of Influence event involved skincare demonstrations and makeovers by a team of four beauticians from the skincare and cosmetics company Clarins, and raised £1200 for Children of the Andes. Mary, who had attended a Clarins event some years ago and heard a talk about the work of Children of the Andes at her church, put the two together, added a lunch, sold tickets and created a fun-filled event which she is hoping to repeat next year. If you would like to raise money for Children of the Andes by hosting a Clarins demonstration, please contact us for further information.

### COLOMBIAN ARTISTS RAISE FUNDS AND AWARENESS

Our thanks to the 55 students of the Andes University Choir and their distinguished Director, Amalia Samper. Their joyful programme of folk, secular and sacred music - much of it Colombian - held at Westminster Cathedral Hall on July 4th raised almost £3000 for the charity.

*Raices*, a dance performance given by *Danza Colombia* at the Bloomsbury Theatre on November 1st, raised nearly £1000 for Children of the Andes. The sell-out show brought together the choreographers and dancers of Colombia's *Danza Experimental de Cali* and London's Latin American Dance Project in an exploration of Colombia's rich and diverse cultural heritage.

### YOU MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Thank you to all our donors - individuals, groups, companies and trusts - who supported us so generously this year both through financial donations and gifts in kind, and the many people who volunteered their time, helping in administration, in the production of publications and in co-ordinating fundraising events.

### SUPPORTERS GET INVENTIVE

A lot of imagination has gone into raising money for Children of the Andes this year. Max Wood took our 'Walk the Andes' appeal literally and flew to Buenos Aires to walk from there to Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. The latest report on his progress is that he has walked an amazing 700 miles so far. If you would like to sponsor Max, please contact the Children of the Andes office for details.

Back in the UK, 7 year old Laurie-Ann Smith from Cambridgeshire walked ten miles through two hailstorms, accompanied by her Mum and Dad, and raised £101. Thanks, too, to all walkers in the UK who took part in 'Walk the Andes 98' - their efforts are much appreciated.

Elsewhere good food has prompted people to give generously.

Parishioners of St Joseph's RC Church in South Molton, Devon, organised their 4th Lamb Roast in aid of Children of the Andes, bringing their total donations over three years to £1246, while Gabriela Daniel

cooked *Ajiaco*, a delicious Colombian dish, to a packed hall of friends and neighbours. Gabriela has raised over £4000 for us through fun events since 1991.



### GIFTS IN KIND

These are always much appreciated. We desperately need a flatbed scanner, video and digital camera equipment as well as a PC with internal modem. Folders for information packs and prizes for raffles would also be very useful. If you are able to help in any way, please contact us.

The money you donate is making a real difference to the lives of children in Colombia  
PLEASE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT US