



CHILDREN OF THE ANDES

Building a future for street children and children at risk in Colombia

NEWSLETTER No.16

DECEMBER 1999



This is our last newsletter of the millennium and we all at Children of the Andes join in thanking you for your support and in wishing you peace and joy for the new millennium. We have invited Jon Snow, who has a special interest in Latin America and is a Friend of Children of the Andes, to send you a message:

Dear Friends

As we head towards the new millennium we find ourselves in a world made smaller by technology and the media yet with a widening gulf between rich and poor, between those in the 'developed' world and those in the 'developing' world. In Britain we consider it every child's right to learn to use a computer and to do homework with the help of the internet; in Colombia over 50% of children live in absolute poverty and have little or no education much less access to a computer. As technology develops, their life expectations are dropping ever further behind that of their English counterparts.

Colombia reaches the millennium in a state of violent internal conflict where kidnappings, massacres and bombings are daily occurrences as armed groups fight for control of the country. For Colombians, like young Sandra and Arnold in this newsletter, it is like living in a state of war. They desperately want peace.

The most extreme form of violence is that which violates the rights of Colombia's poorest children, those which go hungry, live on the streets and do not know the meaning of security and love. In my line of work I talk to many politicians and at times I feel frustrated at their short sightedness. In their eagerness for power, they can forget the needs of the poorest children.

Yet, in relation to the millions that are spent on weapons, it doesn't take enormous sums of money to turn around the life of a child. What it takes is love and dedication on the part of the men and women who make it their lives' work to transform children's lives.

Children of the Andes knows this and has worked incredibly hard throughout the '90s to raise awareness in Britain of the problems facing Colombia's children and to support cutting edge projects. But Children of the Andes could not exist without you. Your donations make it possible for those dedicated men and women to carry out their work. Please give as generously as you can because it will help to change the life of a child. And that is no small thing.

Season's greetings

In 1999 your donations have funded:

- 17 Flying doctor missions to children in remote areas of the Pacific coast of Colombia.
- Building and running a nursery for 200 children who lost their homes in the earthquake.
- Running costs of a nursery providing therapy and education for 90 severely traumatised child victims of violence in Urabá, and training for their mothers.
- Construction costs to build a new nursery and community centre in Urabá for families who are internal refugees and victims of violence.
- A nutritious daily meal for 90 nursery children from poor homes in Bogotá.
- Running costs of residential home for 15 girls at risk in Bogotá.
- Part funding of a youth centre providing arts and recreational activities for 1500 children in poor neighbourhoods of Bogotá.
- Education and training for 60 working children and their families in Chinchiná.
- Education, training, health and rehabilitation for 80 former street children in Subachoque.

4 Bath Place, Rivington Street, London EC2A 3DR Tel. 0171 739 1328

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Colombian art in London

Our main fundraising event this year was the exhibition and auction of contemporary Colombian art to raise funds for the child victims of the January earthquake in Colombia. We were able to give priority to this emergency while continuing to support our ongoing projects. In fact by the end of 1999 we will have sent more money to our ongoing projects than in any of the past 6 years.

Leading Colombian artists donated works of the highest quality and we put together an impressive catalogue. We were delighted that BP Amoco and the Colombian Coffee Federation agreed to sponsor the event. Avianca, the Colombian airline, gave us very generous discounts on shipping costs.

We organised an exhibition and lectures at the Bolívar Hall of the Venezuelan Embassy where His Excellency the Colombian Ambassador, Humberto de la Calle, hosted a reception. A day of lectures highlighted the significance of the first ever collection of Colombian art to be sold outside Colombia and the first ever sale dedicated to Latin American art in Europe. Art critics and

curators were impressed with the quality of the works and agreed that this would be a landmark in the appreciation of Latin American art in Europe. A recurring opinion was that Colombian art is characterised by its use of irony. Shown here is *Idolo* by Nadín Ospina, which represents this very well and was used to promote the auction.



On the evening of the auction excitement ran high. The saleroom was packed, bidding was fast and furious and some of the works reached record prices. A total of £100,000 was raised on the night, a wonderful achievement for Children of the Andes. Since then we have continued selling the unsold lots and to date have reached a total net gain of £115,000.

This is very good news for the children of the earthquake-devastated region who will benefit from the money raised. It will be used to rebuild three schools in remote rural areas. We will also support community programmes helping the most severely affected children in the town of Armenia. In our next newsletter we will tell you about the progress of these projects.

Cristina, a UK volunteer



For most of my working life I have been involved in business either in Argentina, where I come from, or in England where I have lived for nearly thirty years. Understanding the complexity of the problem of street children is not easy but acknowledging that childhood itself is a matter of cultural definition is a starting point. In England children are seen as dependent well into their teenage years whereas in some South American countries there are 6-14 year olds registered as heads of households.

These were the thoughts in my mind when I started to look for work in a charity. What attracted me to Children of the Andes was the organisation's respect for local issues and that it supports projects which originate in Colombia rather than in England. All our projects are ample proof that both local needs and local people are paramount to their successful running.

Working at Children of the Andes gives me a sense of purpose and an overriding desire to try to alleviate the harshness of the children's lives. I have been heartened by the inventiveness of people in their fundraising efforts and moved by the spirit of generosity in others. A fundamental difference from my previous experience is the bottom line. In business the ultimate goal is to convert income into profit for the benefit of shareholders. At Children of the Andes income is used to give an opportunity to children in need and their well-being is our primordial consideration.

Street children have to make tough decisions. They are as capable as they are vulnerable and therefore they deserve our utmost respect. I have found my work at Children of the Andes exceptionally inspirational because it shows facets of people, such as the resilience of the children, which are not so evident in other areas of life. This gives an added dimension to what I do.

Hopes for the new millennium

During our Director's November visit to Colombia, she asked children at projects supported by Children of the Andes to tell us about themselves, what they want to do when they grow up and what changes they would like to see in the new millennium.



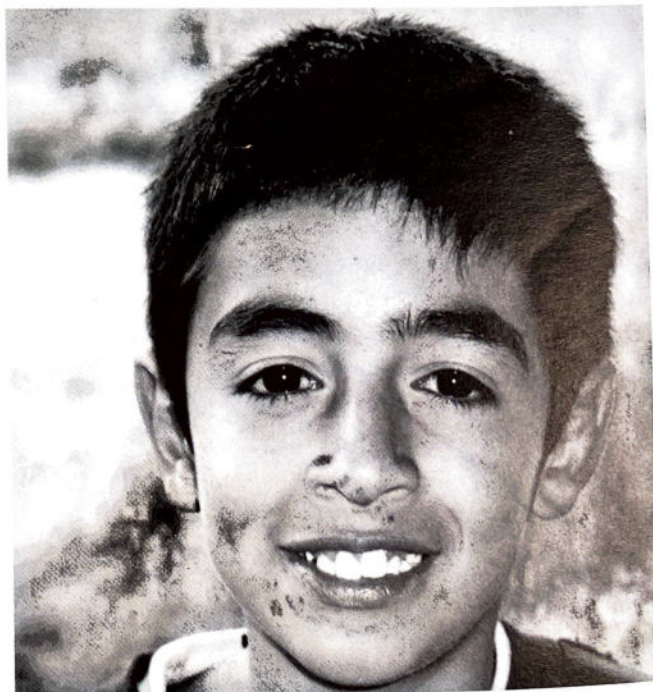
Sandra, 12: I was brought here because my mother drank and didn't look after me and my seven brothers and sisters. I am happy here because I've got a roof over my head, food and clothing and I can go to school. When I grow up I want to be a psychologist and help children sort out their problems. In the next millennium I would like the war to end. I want peace.

Gustavo, 9: I used to be on the streets, begging, and at night I'd go home to my mother's house. My father doesn't live with us and he got angry when he found out I was begging so he brought me here. When I grow up I want to be a doctor and earn enough to buy a house for my family. In the next millennium I'd like my brothers and sisters to be able to go to school.



Mayra, 12: I haven't been here long but I like it and I've got plenty of friends. What I want for the future is to see my boyfriend because I haven't seen him for a while. When I grow up I want to be a teacher.

Arnold, 10: My mother used to hit me so I left home and went to live on the streets. I was there for a year. I slept at the town hall. I used to guard cars and I earned quite a lot. I didn't take drugs, I spent every peso on food. I want to be a computer programmer when I grow up and buy a house and a computer factory and I'd give lots of presents to children. What I want for the next millennium is an end to the war. I'd like them to throw away their weapons, shake each other's hand and make peace.



Dates for your diary

December: Sound Music

Schools across the country are performing *This is the Christmas Story*, a musical composition by Peter Harrison in aid of Children of the Andes. We are very grateful to Peter for his generosity and wish all the schools a resounding success with their concerts. What fun it would be to attend every one!

February (date & venue to be confirmed):

Mass for Peace in Colombia

The Colombian community in London has organised a Mass to pray for peace in Colombia. It will be a good opportunity to show support for the peace initiative in Colombia.

March 13-24: Art Exhibition

Our link with art continues this spring when Spanish architect and artist Manuel Chabrera exhibits his latest works in London following a successful show at the United Nations in Geneva. All proceeds from the sales of his work will be donated to Children of the Andes.

Venue: Canning House, 2 Belgrave Square, London SW1.

March 18

Watch out for this day when **Children for Children**, a UK organisation, will be televising events taking place worldwide to celebrate children's creativity. Our circus children in Cali will be representing Colombia using the new circus tent that we will be funding.

Thank you for your support!

May 21: Exciting young musicians play in aid of children in Colombia

Join us for a concert by European Camerata, a group of players from 10 European countries who play with some of the world's finest ensembles. Their first CD will be released in early 2000. Wigmore Hall Director William Lyne MBE said after their debut in 1998, "Several of our regular patrons approached me after [the concert] to heap praise on this recently-formed chamber orchestra. 'Fantastic' was the adjective most frequently used." It's clearly not to be missed!

Venue: St. John's Smith Square, London SW1

**Our colourful new poster
is now available.
Request some if you are planning
an event!**

For more information
tel: 0171 739 1328
email: info@children-of-the-andes.org

Let us know
what you are planning.
We will include your events
in our listings.

Christmas shopping

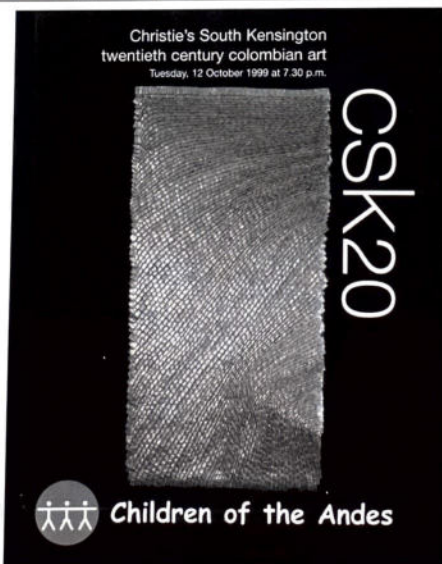
Postcard packs:

5 assorted beautiful black and white photographs of children in Colombia taken by Paula Cox. Some feature children from our projects. They are yours for only £3.00 (including p&p).



For the art collector:

You can still buy a magnificent full colour Christie's catalogue of the Colombian 20th Century Art auction. We are offering them at the reduced price of £10.00 (including p&p) --->



BUILDING FUTURES FOR THE NEXT MILLENIUM

I/We would like to make a donation to Children of the Andes of

£250 * £100 * £50 £25 £10

other

I do/do not require an acknowledgement

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Telephone number.....

Or we accept the following cards; Access, Visa,

Eurocard, Mastercard, CAF CharityCard

Please debit £.....*

from my.....(card type)

A/C no.....

Expiry date _ _ - _ _

Signed.....Date.....

***If your gift is over £100 (excluding CharityCard payments) we can reclaim the income tax. Please tick for further details**

FURTHER INFORMATION

Christie's I would likecatalogue(s) (£10 each inc. p&p) and I enclose £.....

Postcards I would likepack(s) of cards (£3 each, inc. p&p) and I enclose £.....

Fundraising Please send mepack(s)

Regular donations Please send me your tax effective regular donations form

We will be happy to continue to send you our newsletter, however to save our resources please tick if you no longer wish to receive it

TELL YOUR FRIENDS!

Do you know someone who would be interested in receiving a copy of this newsletter?

(Please obtain their consent before sending us their details)

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Children of the Andes NEVER gives supporters' details to other organisations

**Please return this coupon to
Children of the Andes, 4 Bath Place,
Rivington Street, London, EC2A 3DR.**

£50 buys teaching materials for three children at a special nursery which helps them overcome war traumas



£75 pays for an operation by the flying doctors



£260 pays for twelve rescue patrols to take medical attention, food and friendship to street children



£10 provides a nutritious meal for fifty children in a shanty town

Circus for Everyone

This year Children of the Andes will be giving a grant to Circus for Everyone towards a Big Top. It will be the home of a circus school for former street children and children at risk.

Circus for Everyone is a professional circus school based in Cali where Colombia's worst recession in history is biting particularly hard. In Cali unemployment levels are some of the highest in the country and there is little future for disaffected young people. Their sights are set on the thrills of gang life and a likely violent death.



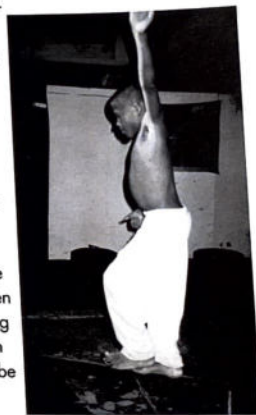
Former street children love the circus school. According to Director, Hector Fabio, they are well suited to taking risks on the high wire having taken plenty of risks living on the streets. Some of them leave the streets and enter children's homes just so they can join the school. Such is their enthusiasm, explains Hector, that he is having to get up earlier and earlier - the children arrive at 6 am although the school doesn't officially open until 8 am.

As soon as the doors open the children rush in and begin practising on the trapeze, the tightrope or the unicycle.

Classes in clowning, dance and music take place each day during the four-year course. The school has been running for three years and next year will see the first group of graduates. Hector sees careers for them not just as circus performers but as physical education teachers or in the tourist industry. Jesús Andres, aged 16, says of his experiences:

'My mother died and I have no family. I used to live on the streets. The circus school has helped me a lot. When I first came here I was aggressive but I've calmed down. I have friends who are still on the streets and take drugs but I've grown apart from them. If it wasn't for the circus school I'd be on the streets with them.' Jesús Andres even speaks some English: 'An English woman called Laura and her two daughters came to the circus school and I used to stay with them at weekends, when the other kids went to visit their families. They came from Liverpool and they used to tell me what it was like there. I'd love to go to Liverpool.'

Jesús Andres doesn't yet know that he may have a chance to visit Liverpool because Circus for Everyone is coming to the UK next summer. Children of the Andes is organising a performance in London which we hope you will be able to attend.



Your letters

We love to hear from you by letter, fax or e-mail. Welcome to our new column where you can share fundraising ideas and your thoughts about our work.

Dear Children of the Andes

I enclose a cheque for £40. I attended a class reunion from my old school last week and suggested that our collection should go to Children of the Andes only to learn that a friend was involved too. As we are all nearly seventy we go back such a long way and our reunions are very special.

I am on the committee of the Catholic church hall at Effingham and at our last meeting I suggested that we should send a donation to the Children of the Andes. You will be pleased to hear that they agreed. Having forwarded a cheque to you just a few weeks ago from my aerobics group, I am delighted to be spreading the word!

Yours

Ann McEntire

Fundraising achievements

In our last newsletter we encouraged you to participate in several fun events. Some of you joined in and would like to know how much was raised.

Book Launch

Colombian poet Juan José Pimienta donated the royalties from his book *La Puerta Abierta* at its launch on June 11, raising £270.

Salsa night at Bar Rumba on June 29 raised £900.

Marathon Run

Our ongoing 'Walk the Andes' events raised more money this summer. Eleanor Cheetham (below) raised the fantastic sum of £1010 in the London Marathon. Hilary Pape ran the Great North Run and raised £200.



Music for Colombian Children

Gabriela Daniel, a dedicated fundraiser, organised a concert with the Weybridge Male Voice Choir this autumn and raised an impressive £1200 for our projects in Colombia.

Rotary Clubs across the UK have donated a significant amount towards our work in Colombia. We would like to highlight the Rotary Club of Somer Valley's generous donation of £1500 and we are delighted with our ongoing Rotary partnership.



Graduation Party

Anne Marie Kearney decided to celebrate her graduation from Birkbeck College in London by throwing a charity party in aid of Children of the Andes. Anne Marie was very successful, raising £760 on the evening. Congratulations!

Springfield School in Portsmouth was very active this year raising funds for Children of the Andes. Gabrielle Prior, a pupil, watched the documentary *Children of the Sewers* and decided to do something to help. She raised £600 with the support of her friends and teachers. Well done!

Church Fundraising

We have received generous donations from several churches in the past few months and we would like to highlight in particular Churches Together in Chislehurst which sent us £1000 and the Parish Church of Chalfont St Peter which donated £500.

Colombian Art

The auction raised £115,000 for our projects with children in the earthquake-devastated region. The auction received wide press coverage in the UK and in Colombia. If you couldn't come to the exhibition or to the auction at Christie's these pictures will help you imagine what it was like.....

From left: Gabriela Bucher, fundraising manager;



Hugh Edmeades, Deputy Chairman, Christie's; His Excellency Humberto de la Calle, Colombian Ambassador; Benjamin Creutzfeldt, auction organizer.

Our support in Colombia goes to the rescue and rehabilitation of street children, rebuilding the lives of children & families displaced by political violence, health care for children in remote rain forest areas & preventive work with children at risk.