



# CHILDREN OF THE ANDES

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

Newsletter no.18, December 2000

## A circus student's testimony



Juan

I was born in Putumayo and until I was six I lived with my mother, I never met my father. I used to help her in the fields. One day a friend of my mother's took me with her to Cali. I stayed with her for a while and then the police took me to a children's home. I asked why my mother hadn't come for me because I missed her. But she didn't come. I didn't see her till I was 16.

When I was eight, I ran away from the home and went to live on the streets. I begged and washed windscreens. I got into a gang and the other children made me steal for them. I didn't want to do it but I was frightened.

On the streets, I smoked marijuana and slept rough. The police kept taking me to different homes but each time I ran away. One day Circo para Todos came to the home. They put on a performance and said we could learn circus skills. I learnt to do acrobatics and to juggle. But the classes stopped for holidays and I ran away from the home again. When the circus classes started again, they said I could join the professional circus school and I agreed. I went back to the children's home and I have stayed ever since - three and a half years now.

I've changed a lot. I don't want to be in a gang any more, I want to be independent. I've been made a monitor at school and I enjoy teaching circus skills to other children. I worry about the other children who take drugs because I don't want to get into that again. I want to look after my health.

## Dear Friend,

In this newsletter we focus on Cali, Colombia's second largest city. You will read about the context of the problems it faces and some of the solutions that have been put forward. In Cali, Children of the Andes supports Circo para Todos, an innovative project offering street children alternatives to a life on the streets. The project is the first professional school for street children in the world. This summer 15 final year students visited the UK. (Read more about this in Fundraising News.) On this page you can read Juan's touching testimony about his life in the streets and how everything has changed thanks to Circo para Todos.

During the past three years increasing numbers of children have ended up on the streets of the main cities of Colombia. This is often a consequence of displacement of the family due to political violence in rural areas. This problem is addressed by CedaVida, an organisation Children of the Andes has supported since 1995. (Read more about it on page 3.) Most displaced children have experienced violence and it is a major concern of ours to focus on this problem and help children overcome their traumas.

During the past two years we have been funding projects in the Quindío region affected by the earthquake in 1999. The rural schools we are re-building will be ready soon. Read about what we are doing to support children who are still suffering from the consequences of the earthquake. Thank you for your help in making all this happen. Your support has meant that thousands of children are finding an alternative to neglect and violence. With your help we will reach out to many more.

Best wishes for a peaceful and happy Christmas for you and your family,

**From all of us at Children of the Andes**

### Circo para Todos developments

Since September, the new Big Top funded by Children of the Andes with the support of the Reuters Foundation has welcomed 80 first-year students. We are now raising further funds to build the school amenities on the plot of land donated by the local Cali authorities in recognition of the school's growing value to the area. The money raised at the Children of the Andes gala performance and raffle in September will be used to build a kitchen and canteen.

#### Plans for the future:

- Build the school amenities
- Help to change public attitudes to marginalised children and encourage more effective prevention and support.
- July 2001: Completion of the first four year cycle of the professional course
- September 2001: Open a specific instructor training course programme
- 2002: Open workshop programme in Manizales or Medellín
- 2004: Open workshop programme in Bogotá

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# REDUCING POVERTY IN CALI

## How YOUR donations have helped since June 2000

- Considerable progress has been made in the reconstruction of 3 schools destroyed by the earthquake in early 1999. We will show you pictures of the schools in our next newsletter.
- Pre-school education and therapy has been provided to deeply traumatised children whose families have fled from political violence in rural areas.
- 80 former street children on the outskirts of Bogotá have received education, training, health and rehabilitation.
- 90 nursery children from poor homes in Bogotá now receive a nutritious daily meal.



Enjoying lunch at Fundación Niños de los Andes.



## The work of non-profit organisations

Cali had long been a relatively prosperous city, unfortunately its economy has been much affected by an economic downturn since the mid-1990s. By 1998, a fifth of its economically active population were unemployed and more than a quarter of households fell below the poverty line. As in many cities in the third world, there are striking contrasts between poor and rich areas, with much of the poverty concentrated in a few districts like Aguablanca and Siloe.

The city is unusual in Latin America in having a long-established, non-profit sector, most of it funded by local businesses. This has been active since the 1960s in social development programmes which have reached a significant proportion of the city's poorer families.

One area where private foundations have worked are improvements to basic services and housing in poor neighbourhoods. In the late 1960s, one fifth of the city's health services were run by volunteers and staff attached to the Catholic Church with support from the Carvajal Foundation, funded by the printing house of the same name. As the municipality's capacity to run services, including basic health, improved, the Foundation turned its attention to housing programmes, community service centres and specialised services in micro-enterprise development in Aguablanca.

Another area involves community services and recreation. Before it was forced to cut down due to the recession, FES Foundation supported innovative primary health programmes. The Corporation for Popular Recreation, set up as an initiative of the Mayor in 1978, operates as a mixed enterprise with 70% private and 30% public funds to set up and manage park and neighbourhood recreational units. It has helped to create 43 parks in the city, including the showcase 15-hectare Parque de la Caña, partially funded by the sugar cane producers association on land donated by the municipality.

A third area includes income generation, training and entrepreneurship. Although Carvajal's programme is no doubt the best known in Latin America, other, smaller, organisations have also provided support to similar programmes. These have helped tens of thousands of small-scale entrepreneurs to run their businesses more efficiently and profitably, thus raising living standards for their families.

Cali's private foundations have a remarkable record of innovation, hard work and effectiveness in providing the kind of support and social services that an underfunded government was unable to provide from the 1960s to the 1980s. In so doing, they helped improve the lives of tens of thousands of children from poor families.

Their success is in part due to the fact that they are run by members of the city's small, closed elite. **However, their social welfare programmes are to a great extent dependent on the good will and management of private organisations which, with the economic downturn, have had to severely cut back on the resources they can transfer to foundations.** And yet, their valuable work is still much needed in a city where poverty and the violence that it often engenders still affect large numbers of Cali's inhabitants.

NB: The report on which this note is based was funded by the Department for International Development and is available from Julio Davila (e-mail [j.davila@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:j.davila@ucl.ac.uk); fax 020 7387 4541).





## EARTHQUAKE PROJECT



Curious observers.

### PARQUE URIBE IN ARMENIA

This urban area, located at the south of the town in Armenia, inhabited by poor people, was heavily affected by the earthquake in January 1999. Some 650 people still live in temporary camps around the park. Problems of overcrowding and lack of sanitation have been complicated by the prolonged provisional conditions in which people have been forced to live. There are now more serious problems like child abuse, unemployment, alcoholism, drug abuse and prostitution. Children of the Andes provided funds to equip and run a childcare centre

attended by 160 children. The centre offers preschool activities, help with homework, personal development and psychosocial support. The project has employed a psychologist and a teacher who are training 7 people (3 mothers, 4 students) to work with the children. They have also been running workshops for young people and parents on sex education and drug prevention.

Children of the Andes is now purchasing a vehicle to bring children from outlying areas to the centre and to take children on outings and to clinics. The number of children benefiting will rise to 400.

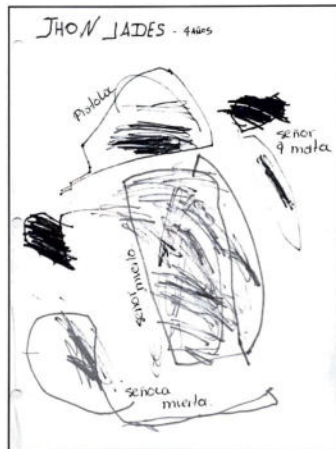
## THE MAGNITUDE OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN COLOMBIA

"About 392,000 households which make up an estimated 1,900,000 people of which 1,000,000 are minors have been forcibly displaced between 1985 and 1999 in Colombia. At least 450,000 boys, girls and teenagers experienced uprooting and violence between 1985 and 1994 while over 50,000 have faced this situation since 1995. In 1998, of the total estimated displaced population (308,000), 172,480 were minors below the age of 18. In 1999 forced displacement affected 272,000 people, of which nearly 176,800 were young children and minors."\*

Behind these statistics, there are countless cases of traumatised children. Many children may never get over the trauma of seeing family members killed or tortured in front of them. They need a vehicle to express their feelings. Through therapy, children are able to express what they are not able to talk about. Their drawings sometimes reveal the horrors they have lived through. This drawing was done by a 4 year old child at the Peace Building Community in Apartadó which is supported by Children of the Andes.

Children of the Andes is working to fund programmes to support child victims of the conflict. The funds we raise are providing food, therapy, education, and a safe place to play and learn for displaced children in shanty towns.

\*Source: "This is not our war" Children and forced displacement in Colombia. Published by the Information Bureau for forced displacement and human rights - CODHES and Unicef area office for Colombia and Venezuela. Bogotá, 2000.



Poignant drawing from Jhon Jades, aged 4. A killer, his gun, dead man and dead woman.

## REGULAR GIVING

In our last newsletter we encouraged you to take up standing orders as a way of ensuring a regular income for Children of the Andes. We would like to thank all those supporters who have decided to give in this way. Standing orders provide us with vital regular income and allow us to plan ahead. A regular income means that Children of the Andes is able to give the children a more stable future. If you would like to receive information on standing orders please tick the relevant box on the coupon.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our donors for their continued support of our work. We rely on you to achieve our aims in Colombia.

If you would like to receive more regular updates on our work, please let us know by ticking the relevant box on the coupon.

## BUILDING FUTURES FOR THE MILLENNIUM

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

£250  £100  £50  £25  £10

other.....

I do/do not require an acknowledgement (delete as appropriate)

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

Address

Postcode

Tel no.

Or we accept the following cards; Access, Visa, Eurocard, Mastercard, CAF CharityCard

Please debit £

from my  (card type)

Account no.

Expiry date

Signed

Date

Please tick box if you are a tax payer and want Children of the Andes to claim the tax on your donations.

Please tick box if you would like to receive further information on regular donations.

Please tick box if you would like to receive a fundraising pack.

Please tick box if you would like to receive a flyer about the Cirque du Soleil show and other events.

Please tick box if you would like to receive more regular updates on our work.

Please tick box if you would like to receive a copy of our Annual Review.

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.



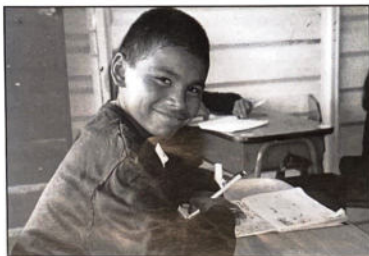
A friendly exchange between soldiers and the displaced children at the Peace Building Community.

£1,067 pays for a medical mission by the Flying Doctors.



The Flying Doctors medical team with a patient.

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



Hard at work at Fundación Niños de los Andes and still time for a beaming smile.

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

## FUNDRAISING NEWS

### CIRCO PARA TODOS IN THE UK



A special performance organised by Children of the Andes was the culmination of a successful UK tour by 15 final year students of the Circo para Todos school this summer. They performed at the Thames Festival and at the Edinburgh fringe. Their performance at the South Bank made the front pages of the Independent and the Guardian! The experience they gained has been most enriching in personal and professional terms and the students have returned to Cali to complete the last year of their circus skills degree.

The fundraising evening took place at Circus Space in the City. The event was sponsored by British Airways and Billiton. The British & Colombian Chamber of Commerce co-hosted the pre-show reception which was very well attended. The evening was a sell-out and we raised £10,000 for the project.

British Airways donated a pair of return flights to New York which were an excellent raffle prize. We raised almost £5,000 with the raffle.

### VOICES FROM COLOMBIA

In collaboration with the Colombian Embassy, Children of the Andes organised an evening of Colombian music and poetry with best-selling author Louis de Bernières. St James' Church, Piccadilly was the venue for this special evening. Louis de Bernières read translations of Colombian poems in English while Patricia Díaz read the Spanish version. They were accompanied by Alison Stephens and Craig Ogden who played traditional folkloric music. Australian born Craig has been called 'a worthy successor to Julian Bream' by BBC Magazine. Alison is considered to be the leading classical mandolin player in the UK.

The event was sponsored by N.M. Rothschild & Sons and Control Risks Group for which we are very grateful. We raised £4,000 on the night. Please contact us if you would like a copy of the programme which contains parallel Spanish/English texts of the poems selected by de Bernières.

### OUR NEXT EVENT

Following their sell-out Saltimbanco and Alegría shows at the Albert Hall in London, world famous Cirque du Soleil is coming to London, bringing its extraordinary show Quidam for the first time ever.

A unique performance on the 11th of January is in aid of Circo Para Todos, the first professional school for street children in the world. As well as having a wonderful night out, your presence on the 11th of January will ensure the continued success of this project.

Do remember that in previous years, performances by Cirque du Soleil have sold out. Ticket prices range from £15 to £48.50. To avoid disappointment, we advise you to book early. You can call our special line on 020 7413 1779. Groups of 20, booked at the same time, will get an additional free ticket. Contact Children of the Andes directly on 020 7739 1328 for more information.

A ticket to this amazing performance would make a wonderful Christmas present!

