



CHILDREN
CHANGE
COLOMBIA

SPRING NEWSLETTER

2024

New scholarships program

p. 2-3

Humanitarian shelter

p. 5

Sexual exploitation project

p. 8-11

First project in London

p. 12

Events

p. 14-15



NEW SCHOLARSHIPS PROGRAM IN COLOMBIA

New Scholarships Program in Colombia

Children Change Colombia is committed to supporting rural education and we have been working in this area during the last five years in Chocó and la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. We are delighted to announce that this year we have decided to go even further and extend our programmes to University level.

According to the OECD, in Colombia you need 11 generations (330 years) to get out of poverty, in the United Kingdom it takes 5¹. The best way to break the cycles of poverty is to equip young people with the knowledge they need to access better-paid jobs, and this is now one of the educational goals of Children Change Colombia.

New alliances

Last February, thanks to our alliances with the Politecnico Gran Colombiano and Fundación Universitaria del Area Andina, two of the most brilliant students of the Caribbean Project (which supports 500 children and young people in four rural schools in la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta) got full scholarships to study bachelor's degrees in Law and Psychology. CCC is providing personal computers, an Internet allowance, money to visit the University campus, and psychosocial support to help them to succeed through their five years of study.

We are looking for more alliances to provide this kind opportunity to more rural young people and already have two more candidates.

How to become an Educational Angel

We are looking for 16 sponsor Angels to support our first four students from rural areas to have access to university degrees. The sponsors have to commit to support a student with £30 a month, ideally for the full 5 years of their studies, and will receive a progress report every semester. They will also have the opportunity to mentor the young person if that appeals to them. Four Angels will make it possible that a new student from a disadvantaged community can go to university and become a professional – a near impossible dream for most people in their context at present.

"I have worked at CCC for four years now, and yet I cried with happiness for the first time in this job when we announced to Keiner and his granny that he got a full scholarship, we believe that these are the real life changing opportunities that we strive for and hope that more people will join us to make them a reality."

Ángela Carreño, CCC's Executive Director

1. A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility. OECD Published on June 15, 2018

MEET OUR FIRST SCHOLARS

Keiner and Gizeth grew up in la Sierra Nevada and attended rural schools in the area, which Children Change Colombia works with to provide a wide range of opportunities for children to develop skills and psychological support. They both have big dreams and through the support they have received from the 'Education, Livelihoods, and Entrepreneurship' project, they are one step closer to achieving their goals.



KEINER, 17 years old

Keiner's life was disrupted from a very young age by conflict in the region. His dad was killed when Keiner was 3 years old, and his mother abandoned him and his siblings, who were all taken in by their grandmother. He grew up with a lack of opportunities to expand on his skills and interests, yet he never stopped dreaming big.

"Living in a rural area so far away from the city meant that his access and chances to new opportunities were limited"

When we met Keiner, he was 16 years old, and attending a school supported by Children Change Colombia through our 'Education, Livelihoods, and Entrepreneurship' project in the Caribbean coast. As part of his involvement in the project, Keiner was able to go on field

trips where he learned about coffee and cacao, fueling his dream of one day starting his own coffee business in la Sierra Nevada by developing his entrepreneurship skills. Keiner has also been taking English classes and learning how to create podcasts, edit videos, and other employability skills that would broaden his chances to pursue further education and a professional career. Alongside this growing passion, he also received crucial psychological assistance that has helped him process traumatic events of his childhood and develop new self-help and interpersonal skills.

In addition to wanting to be an entrepreneur, Keiner has always wanted to pursue a professional career at university. Through CCC's partnership with Politecnico GranColombiano University, he has been chosen as the beneficiary of a full scholarship for the duration of his career to start a Law degree. He hopes to become an amazing lawyer that can use his skills to help and advocate for his community.



GIZETH, 17 years old

Gizeth grew up in La Sierra Nevada, and she describes how the area felt like a space where one could be free, surrounded by nature. She is very thankful for how people in her community have always protected the biodiversity of her home, and has grown up with a big interest in environmental awareness and helping others. However, living in a rural community has limited her chances of exploring more of the world as she would like, which is why she joined the 'Education, Livelihoods, and Entrepreneurship' project by Children Change Colombia in 2022.

Through the workshops and classes in the project, Gizeth notes that she feels she has learned to better express herself and advocate for her needs, as well as develop interpersonal skills through working in teams and expanding on her leadership skills. The psychological support she has received has helped her deal with difficult situations in her life, and awakened an interest in her to do the same for others. She always wanted to become a professional psychologist due to her curiosity of human behaviour and why people act the way they do, but now she also believes that due to conflict and hard conditions, many people in her area could benefit from more psychosocial services around them.

Gizeth has been chosen by Children Change Colombia and Fundación Universitaria del Área Andinató to pursue her psychology degree with her whole career paid for through the new CCC Scholarship Programme. She was told the news on Christmas Day 2023, and she shares that it felt like the best Christmas gift of her life. Her experience in the 'Education, Livelihoods, and Entrepreneurship' project has helped her

develop research and communication skills that she believes will help her succeed in her higher education journey, and she also shares that the support from the Children Change Colombia staff within the project has restored her self-confidence.

"Wilson and Liliana have taught me to be resilient and responsible, and I thank them for believing in me every step of the way"

Gizeth believes that mental health is the most important thing, because if a person is not okay, nothing else can be alright. By studying her career through a virtual modality, she also shares that she is developing new technological skills that she once found daunting, which she believes will help her become a more rounded professional with additional skills to those of her immediate career, such as better management of softwares and online teamworking. She hopes to bring her professional skills and knowledge to her community once she has completed her degree, as her passion for advancing mental health in la Sierra Nevada is her main motivator for becoming 'the best psychologist I can be for my people'.



If you want to become an angel set up a direct debit here or send an email to

angela.carreno@childrenchange colombia.org

NEW SHELTER



New Humanitarian Project

In Chocó, Colombia, continual armed conflict has accelerated a dire humanitarian crisis, with local communities confronted with displacement, insecurity and the pressing need for fulfilling their basic requirements.

CCC has been working for 5 years in the valley of San Juan River with 72 afro colombian communities in ethno-education and peacebuilding projects. But due to the difficulties of the armed conflict in the region CCC has joined efforts with the Association of Community Councils of the San Juan River Basin (ACADESAN), and spearheaded a groundbreaking project with the goal of providing emergency humanitarian assistance to the families impacted by the armed conflict in the region.

This new humanitarian project seeks to address the immediate needs of displaced and confined communities while also establishing the groundwork for long-term support and resilience in Chocó.

We will build a multipurpose hall that will act as a makeshift haven for those who have been uprooted from their communities by the conflict or other emergencies. Many families have been compelled to leave their homes in search of safety and refuge due to the increase in armed conflicts and violence in the area. With the new shelter under construction, these vulnerable groups will have a safe haven with crucial services and support available during emergencies.



In addition, the construction of the multipurpose hall will not only serve as a temporary refuge but also as a community centre for various activities, such as sports practices and local meetings. Hence, the shelter will offer a space for social cohesion and community engagement, fostering resilience and empowerment among the displaced populations of Chocó.

The project will also provide emergency humanitarian assistance to families in need. Through the provision of food and hygiene kits, CCC aims to ensure that displaced and confined communities have access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, and sanitation. These kits, tailored to meet the immediate needs of affected families, will be distributed swiftly to ensure a rapid response to the cases of displacement in the area. Through collaborative efforts and innovative solutions, this project seeks to provide essential support to those affected by the ongoing conflict, offering hope and assistance in their time of need.



WORKSHOPS

New tools to help children overcomes trauma

As part of our Building Capacity strategy, last December in a joint effort with our strategic partner ACTI (Action for Child Trauma International) we held an intensive three-day training in Accelerated Child Trauma Treatment (CATT) for our staff and partners in Colombia in December 2023. A group of 20 people between psychologists, social workers and educators from our partners that work directly with the children and young people in the projects participated in this space to learn techniques to help children in their communities to recover from trauma.

Developed by ACTI over ten years in collaboration with children and young people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, CATT is a cognitive therapy programme that uses specific child-centred techniques, based on play and art, to help them process and rewrite traumatic memories in a child-friendly and age-appropriate way.

During this training the partners were able to share their experiences and get feedback and recommendations from their peers based on their own circumstances. This was also a space to reflect on the importance of caring for the caregiver. Through exercises and reflections, spaces for self-care were created, including tips and recommendations that can help to decompress and separate the work from personal lives, so that the high emotional toll of work does not overwhelm the personal dimension of the professionals.

In 2024 we're continuing this work with a smaller group that successfully finished the CATT training. They started a new training to become instructors of the CATT protocol, and at the end of their training they will be certified by ACTI to train people in this methodology. With this, we're leaving installed capacity in the territories and ensuring replication processes for future teams. By the end of 2024 we hope to have around 10 CATT certified instructors across Colombia that will have additional tools to help the children in their communities to thrive.



A learning day at the media for change workshop!

From the banks of the San Juan River in Chocó, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and the coffee mountains in Antioquia, directors, project coordinators, and communication experts gathered at the Universidad Politécnico Gran Colombiano in Bogotá to strengthen our capabilities and explore new ways to maximise the impact of our organisations. The Media for Change Workshop was held on February 20th, 2024.

Throughout the day, we delved into various topics, from strategic communication for foundations to the effective use of digital tools and the integration of artificial intelligence into our communication processes. Each foundation had different needs and resources, leading us to identify specific strategic issues and work on solutions through communication.

In this process, our ally, the digital agency Iridian, played a fundamental role by sharing their knowledge of digital marketing principles

for foundations and introducing us to tools such as Microsoft Bing, Canva, Capcut, and of course, ChatGPT, to optimise our communications and maximise our impact.

At the end of the day, all participants left inspired, equipped with new ideas, and with the design of a marketing campaign for their respective foundations. From Children Change Colombia, we are immensely proud to find a space each year to strengthen the capacities of our partner foundations in Colombia and help them enhance the impact of their work.

Beyond that, it nourishes our soul to bring together several leaders from the country who are fighting to defend at-risk children in Colombia, so they can exchange experiences, knowledge, and stories. It is inspiring to listen to those who dedicate their lives every day to safeguard the rights and protect the future of Colombia's next generations.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PROJECT



Combating Sexual Violence and Exploitation: Empowering Children for a Safer Future

In downtown Bogota's Santa Fe neighbourhood, a red-light district thrives with unregulated sexual services, drug trade, and other illicit activities. Women and LGBTQ+ individuals, including minors, offer their bodies for £5 to £10, amidst small drug traffickers and protected by gangs. Some work with their children nearby. Amidst this darkness, a small oasis exists where children, often offspring of sex workers, find refuge to play, learn, eat, and receive psychological support. We've partnered with ACJ, a local organisation, to sustain this haven. Our efforts have expanded to Cartagena and Quibdo, collaborating with Círculo de Estudios to combat sexual violence and exploitation. Through workshops, we empower parents, carers, and their children to transform their lives and advocate for their rights. This is just a glimpse of the immense challenge we tackle at Children Change Colombia.

Our determination at CCC

The prevention of sexual and gender-based violence continues to be a key priority for CCC as we head forward into 2024. We launched our three year project "Reducing conflict-related sexual violence and commercial sexual exploitation against children and young people" (hereafter referred to as "the project") in 2021 to support children affected by and/or at risk of these issues across Colombia. It finished in

February 2024 and we would like to share with you its main achievements.

The project was carried out in collaboration with two partners: ACJ (Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes - Young People's Christian Association), an international community-focused non-profit established in 1844 which offers recreational programmes and services for all ages to the kids of the red district in Bogota, and CDE (Círculo de Estudios - Circle of Cultural and Political Studies), a civil society organisation with more than 13 years of experience in the design, implementation, and evaluation of strategies for claiming and defending human rights.

Along with ACJ and CDE, we worked in three cities that witnessed particularly high rates of sexual violence and exploitation: Bogota the capital, with the highest rates of sexual violence and sexual exploitation amongst children, in Quibdó, the capital of the poorest state in Colombia that has seen an increase in presence of armed groups, and Cartagena, where high rates of poverty and a large sex industry due to tourism increase the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Initially, we had hoped that we could benefit around 700 children through this project. So far, this figure stands at over 1,000, with more than 400 direct beneficiaries across all three regions. We have also involved over 400 parents and carers, and nearly 100 community leaders, teachers, and public servants

Meet Daniela and Ana

Daniela, aged 14 years old, lives in Bogota with her family. She shares that her father's sexist attitudes create tension in the household and have affected her self-worth, making her feel inferior. Through the workshops of the project, CCC and ACJ have helped Daniela become a leader, as she learns to advocate for herself and her needs, she also inspires younger girls in the project to do the same. Daniela shares that: "I have come to see this project as a safe space where I know that I can talk to teachers and address situations that make me feel bad in a space that makes me feel protected and calm".

Just like Daniela, Ana has also learned to speak up for her needs and protect herself in difficult situations. Ana, aged 13, lives in Cartagena and was a victim of sexual violence by a family member. Since joining the project, CCC and CDE have supported Ana to strengthen her psychosocial skills and equipped her with the tools to advocate for her rights.

Daniela and Ana's stories echo a sadly familiar refrain. According to Colombia's National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, there were an average of 118 cases of child sexual abuse reported daily in 2019. These reprehensible acts not only violate children's fundamental rights, such as their dignity and personal integrity, but also inflict lasting harm on their health, well-being, and development, rendering them more susceptible to further abuse.

The trauma inflicted by such abuse can hinder children's ability to forge healthy relationships and increases the likelihood that they may perpetuate the cycle of abuse into adulthood. In Colombia, it also heightens the risk of their involvement with armed groups, seeking solace or protection. Similarly, children born as a result of sexual violence often endure rejection and alienation at home, stemming from the psychological trauma experienced by their mothers.

Girls from the leadership programme strengthening their skills

Our goals

To combat conflict-related sexual violence and commercial sexual exploitation, we aimed at training children and young people in self-care and self-protection practices to prevent the risks of commercial sexual exploitation, support parents and carers to be able to identify and prevent any type of high-risk situations in which children's rights could be affected. Additionally, we equipped community leaders, teachers and public servants with the psychosocial tools and skills that allow them to address children's needs.

Three years on since the launch of the project, we are pleased to share that it has been extremely successful in all three objectives. Through our hard work with our partners ACJ and CDE, the project has been able to show through real-life stories, how children, parents and carers and community leaders have expanded their awareness and took actions to prevent sexual child abuse and exploitation.

"I have been able to speak about my experience and express how I feel, and to identify my rights in order to ensure that they are not violated".





Girls participating in a leadership workshop

Bogotá

Outcomes and Achievements

- **Children and young people**, who were part of the program, broaden their understanding of issues such as the recognition and identification of their rights and tools to advocate for their needs.
- **Parents and carers**, who have been shown how to transform their parenting from permissive to positive, developed coping mechanisms to deal with different risk factors, and to identify care routes.
- **Community leaders** in the three target areas of the project, are now able to participate in inter-institutional spaces and to promote actions for the protection of human rights.

Additionally, we are delighted to share some of the highlights from each region.

In Bogotá, CCC partnered with ACJ to facilitate a series of engaging workshops for children and young adults. These sessions provided a platform for participants to introspect on their life experiences and dissect the complex dynamics of power and violence within their communities. Additionally, they were equipped with valuable life skills and financial education to craft robust life plans tailored to their aspirations. Meanwhile, parents and caregivers were invited to join discussions on gender roles, sexual and reproductive rights, and gender diversity. Together, families culminated their journey by mapping out their collective progress, highlighting newfound strengths in their relationships and interpersonal dynamics.

The project has also formed a group of young community leaders who are developing their leadership skills and have been working to implement a workshop about fundamental rights. They now have the tools necessary to support children in their communities and coordinate advocacy actions with governmental and non-governmental collaborators. They helped to coordinate two events in Bogotá: the #WeAreYoung movement, an artistic takeover in Santa Fe where exhibitions from young people were used to promote ideas to prevent violence, encourage equal treatment of the community, and protect the environment, and the Transforming Conflict into Art event.



May 2023: Ambassador George Hodgson visit the project

📍 Quibdó and Cartagena

In Quibdó and Cartagena, CCC has supported the CDE-run workshops on music, dance, and arts, through which the children and young people address topics relating to cultural rights, regional traditions, artistic expression, and emotions. The kids also participated in training on human rights, which focused on psychosocial support and the strengthening their capacities to prevent the risk of sexual violence. They have shown significant progress in self-protection, and have put various self-care tools into practice by understanding how to act in high-risk situations.

Parents and carers joined their children to create a newspaper called Communities in Movement to spread news regarding human rights and high-risk situations, current socio-political realities, and other relevant issues in each city. Various psychosocial meetings were also held to promote the comprehensive development of the children and young people, and to reduce and mitigate the effects of violence, abuse, and neglect. Parents and carers in Quibdó are part of a "school for parents" group where they receive the necessary training to promote healthy dynamics at home, to prevent sexual assault, and to reduce violence. In Cartagena, there is a support network where carers receive training and are in constant contact with staff via a WhatsApp group and face-to-face meetings.

Female leaders in both regions were invited to participate in leadership sessions, where they strengthened their skills in social management, citizen participation, and understanding alternative options in the construction of their life projects. This initiative is expanding opportunities for young people in both regions and is strengthening new leadership and social innovation.

What's next?

As the first quarter of the year comes to a close, we are extremely excited for what the future holds for this initiative. We soon hope to launch a second project, which will expand our work in Bogotá, Santa Marta and Barranquilla. We aim to emphasise the importance of early childhood development and education to prevent sexual violence and exploitation, and to foster the bonds between children and their parents or carers.

It has been amazing to witness the outreach of this project and the impact that we have been able to achieve in shaping a positive future for children and young people in Colombia.



May 2023: Ambassador George Hodgson visit the project

COLOMBIA COLORES



Invite for Summer Cycle Colombia Colores

Our first UK-based project, 'Colombia Colores' has been an amazing opportunity to bring children from the Colombian diaspora closer to their Colombian roots and culture. In November, we launched the project in London, in partnership with the Consulate of Colombia in London and fully funded by City Bridge Trust, and welcomed 120 children from ages 5 to 12 years old.

The Autumn Cycle, which ran from November to February taught kids about Colombian art and music, and concluded with a showcase to parents and other family members of the work the children had done so far, such as their drawings and a live performance of the songs and dances they had learned. These workshops were held in Elephant and Castle, where a big Colombian population resides in London, to facilitate children's attendance in these workshops.

We then continued with the Spring Cycle which ran from February 24 to April 3 2024 teaching children about nature and environmental awareness. Children learned about Colombia's ecosystem, the flora and fauna of the country, and ways in which to be more environmentally aware in their everyday lives. These sessions were held in the Seven Sisters area, where a

high number of Colombians live in the north of London. This change in location allows us to facilitate access to 'Colombia Colores' workshops to more people from the Colombian diaspora in London.

In addition to connecting more with their Colombian heritage, children are also practising their Spanish and making new friends from the Colombian diaspora, which allows them to build a community with others they can relate to. Parents have also expressed how these workshops have made their children more keen to speak Spanish at home and grown their curiosity to learn more about Colombia and the history, traditions, and culture of their family.

Our last cycle of the year, the Summer Cycle, will be commencing on April 30th 2024 until July 20th 2024. In this cycle, children will be taught about Language and Culture, particularly indigenous communities in Colombia, festivities, food, myths, and games from the Colombian culture. If this is of interest to you, please scan the QR code below or visit <https://bit.ly/colombiacolores> to sign up today!



SUPPORT OUR FUNDRAISING CHAMPIONS

This year, we have some amazing Champions looking to raise funds to support children in Colombia.

London Marathon - Isabella

Isabella will be running the London Marathon to raise funds for Children Change Colombia and support our Education, Livelihood, and Entrepreneurship project in la Sierra Nevada. Isa shares: "I lived my childhood in Medellín, Colombia where I witnessed the lack of resources for education and how some children had to work to help their families' financial burden. For many of them, their education couldn't become their priority, and had to entirely quit it. Sadly, education has become a privilege rather than a right, but I also believe change is possible by redirecting funding to the right places.". Support her here:

Nurturing Hope - Sandy

Sandy is raising funds throughout this year to go to Colombia and support one of our projects to teach Nurturing Touch techniques to parents and caregivers. Sandy explains "These funds will support specialist training for key community leaders in Colombia, enabling them to facilitate groups teaching nurturing touch techniques that will empower parents to build stronger bonds with their children. For children not with their biological parents for any reason, it will provide caregivers with new tools for a more respectful upbringing, I believe it is possible to shift past violent treatments and foster nurturing care instead". Support her here:





Colombia team in their teambuilding day in Montserrat



Colombian team meets with our partners, TDJ and CRAN, in Colombia



Visit to the Tower Bridge for London CCC staff and volunteers



CCC team at the project Talk 2023



UKCOL Fashion Peace and Sustainability at the British Embassy in Bogotá



Executive Director, Angela Carreno, presenting CCC's impact at the Project Talk 2023



Christmas Party 2023 at Charles Dickens Pub in London



Christmas newsletter day 2023



Colombian Embassy meeting with Colombian executives in the UK



Executive Director, Angela Carreno has been nominated to the Women Changing The World Awards

INVITE



Pizzaton - Spring Festival

Sunday the 21st of April

Join us for an afternoon filled with activities for the whole family to enjoy! We will be at Heroica Pizza Lounge from 1:00pm to 5:00pm. Sales from pizzas during this time will be donated to Children Change Colombia, and we will be holding activities throughout the afternoon for children and adults, come along to support and enjoy! You can find our tentative schedule for the day below:



PROGRAMME

13:00-14:30

Pintacaritas - face painting for children

14:30-15:00 and 16:00 - 16:30

Salsa classes with Superb Salsa

15:00 - 16:00

Language Exchange with Spanghlish

Thames Walk

Saturday the 29th of June

Join us for a fantastic summer's day out as we complete a 10-mile walk along the Thames followed by a picnic in the beautiful Richmond Park. Help us raise funds to support children in Colombia and build lasting peace in communities affected by violence, conflict, and bring opportunities to children affected by exclusion of education. Meet new people who share your passion for Colombia as much as you do, try some delicious empanadas and coffee, and practise your Spanish or English or both! There will be plenty of music, dancing as well as walking and the chance to do this trial as a running challenge.



WHEN

29th June 2024

10:00am - 4:00pm (the walk will take at least 4 hours).

WHERE

Richmond Station is the meeting point for the walk. Picnic in Richmond Park

PRICE

£15 minimum per person which includes a CCC t-shirt (children under 12 go free)



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