



Technology for Good

Life-Changing Education Access for Children in Colombia

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” – Nelson Mandela

The Colombian education sector faces increasingly complex challenges. While the Ministry of National Education has been working to extend education provision to more areas across the country, the system still faces glaring issues, such as high dropout rates, children frequently falling behind in class, and a lack of quality teaching. Of most concern, figures show that **54% of students in Colombia are receiving minimum or insufficient levels of education quality.**

Matters have been made worse by the pandemic. To amplify the situation, Colombia is only just beginning to recover from its third, and deadliest, wave of Covid-19. The pandemic has forced 53,717 education facilities to close. Of this astonishingly high number, 82% are state run schools attended by medium and low income children.

For the next five years, Children Change Colombia is placing access to education, for all children in Colombia, as one of its highest priorities. We are supporting and improving education programmes that promote high-quality, inclusive learning opportunities for children in rural and marginalised areas, taking into account their backgrounds and identities as indigenous or Afro-Colombian children. In this newsletter, we will set out how we are working to achieve this goal through using innovative, pioneering projects, which use technology to break down barriers to education access and place the needs of local children at the centre.

- Out of every 100 students who enter the first grade of school education, only 46 will reach grade 11 without repeating a year or dropping out entirely (MEN)
- 5 out of 10 children and adolescents consider that they only learn enough or little at school (UNICEF)
- 3 out of ten children consider that what they learn at school is not entirely useful (UNICEF)



Working with indigenous minorities and refugee children in La Guajira

At Children Change Colombia, we believe that not only do all children deserve an education, but all children deserve an education that is comprehensive, high quality, and which ensures that even the most disadvantaged children are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their ambitions.

That's why, of all the developments taking place at Children Change Colombia this year, one of the most exciting is our new project with El Origen. **El Origen is a leading young people's organisation in Colombia which works to improve access to education for marginalised ethnic communities through innovative technological solutions.** Specifically, it targets children living in La Guajira, who are often excluded from education due to a range of structural and societal factors.

La Guajira is a region in northeastern Colombia. Distinguished by desert

landscapes and remote fishing villages, it is inhabited mostly by the Wayuu, Colombia's largest indigenous group, alongside a growing Venezuelan migrant population. As one of Colombia's poorest regions, there are limited opportunities to access quality education for the children who live there.

The schools are few in number and spread far apart, and without appropriate transport services, children commute great distances to get to school each day. Most schools have limited equipment and learning resources, and without electricity,

cannot access technology such as computers and the internet. The influx of Venezuelan migrants due to the ongoing humanitarian crisis means already stretched schools are becoming overwhelmed, and lack the capacity or funding to support children in the way they deserve.

These issues mean that for many young people, education is simply not seen as a meaningful way to escape poverty or access opportunities for the future. Dropout rates are extremely high, and only 5% of students from the La Guajira region go on to attend higher education.

“Through our new project, 1,000 children and young people, across five educational centres in La Guajira will have access to education courses covering literature, science, mathematics, music, language and even life skills.”



The Solution: The O-Lab App

The pioneering O-Lab App is an offline learning platform that has been developed specifically to target children and young people in disadvantaged rural areas who are at risk of dropping out of school. It is designed to enable children to access educational resources in their local languages, and the curriculum incorporates content that is representative of the local community. For example, in La Guajira, children from the indigenous Wayuu community can find educational activities in both Spanish and Wayuunaiki, their local language.

The courses contain comprehensive lessons, engaging assignments and fun challenges that help children find genuine enjoyment in learning, alongside helping them to develop their technological literacy and independent learning skills. They also contain practical elements,

encouraging young people to take on ambitious science and engineering projects. Children have built hydroponic cultivation systems and solar panels using homemade items they can easily and affordably access.

The project works in partnership with the regional Department of Education and includes the participation of headteachers and educators. Teachers receive training on how to use the O-Lab app and integrate it into their lessons. They also receive reports each semester which measure the progress of the students allowing teachers to better understand where each student may be struggling so that they can offer the appropriate support.

We're so excited about the potential of this project to impact so many young people's lives over the next two years. **To help us ensure all children have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, donate today.**

La Guajira Fact Sheet

- La Guajira is one of Colombia's poorest regions
- Only 29% of students from La Guajira finish secondary school and only 5% go on to attend university
- Less than a quarter of children living in rural areas in La Guajira have access to smartphones or computers, and just 0.88% of the rural homes have access to the internet
- La Guajira has some of the highest illiteracy rates in the country
- 48% of La Guajira's population is indigenous, yet indigenous people make up only 7.7% of professional workers in the region



Case study: Leyder, from the indigenous community Poromana

"I have learned how to read, and thanks to the training from home I have learned a lot, I feel very happy for all the support I have received. Thanks to this wonderful mobile app I have learned a lot of things such as entrepreneurship. I have been able to develop my full potential. I am getting more knowledge and it feels great learning every day."



“Me and my friends dream of getting a better education.”

Ethno-education in Colombia’s Chocó province: How CCC is combating child labour in illegal gold mines and drug plantations.



As one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet, Chocó, Colombia’s westernmost department, is widely regarded as a lush tropical rainforest full of life. However, behind this paradisaical façade lies the clandestine domination of armed groups, who incite terror on local indigenous communities and exploit the land for its resources.

The main attraction for armed groups operating in the area is the widespread presence of one key mineral – gold.

Despite 90% of these mines being illegal, these gangs run well established operations extracting this resource, using child labour as the predominant work force.¹ Not only this, but armed groups carry huge influence and control

in the narcotics industry, where they recruit children to farm large cultivations of coca plants.

According to the Coalition Against the Involvement of Children and Young People in the Armed Conflict in Colombia Coalición contra la Vinculación de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes al Conflicto Armado en Colombia (Coalico) **between January and the 13th May 2020, forced recruitment of minors increased by more than 100% to 123 cases**, in comparison to the 67 that were recorded in 2019, making Chocó one of the worst affected regions in all of Colombia.²

As well as the obvious ramifications for children’s safety and human rights, the presence of armed groups has also had a detrimental

effect on both the environment and children’s education. **Limitations in the current education system mean that drop out rates are high, with children frequently leaving for the purpose of joining armed groups.** Indeed, many schools in the region are facing closure due to dwindling student attendance. Students simply do not feel education is a viable option for improving their material circumstances and thus it is often viewed as unimportant.

¹ <http://www.defensoria.gov.co/public/pdf/InformedeMinerla2016.pdf> P. 58.

² <http://hacemosmemoria.org/2020/05/29/reclutamiento-de-ninos-y-jovenes-afecta-a-los-indigenas-del-choco/>

What does the project do?

Our partner organisation, Acadesan, has been working for more than 20 years in the area, combating the issues that are preventing children from accessing high quality education, helping them stay in school and reach their full potential. Our current project with Acadesan works with schools in Chocó providing them with their own pedagogical model which combines ethno-education specific to Afro-Colombian culture with conventional teaching methods. These new strategies are designed to encourage children to stay in school and educate them on their ethnographic heritage.

The project provides engaging extracurricular educational workshops with teachers and students every month which focus on developing socio-emotional skills amongst children to prevent school dropouts and forced recruitment by illegal armed groups. CCC and Acadesan recognise conflict resolution, emotional management and acceptance of diverse opinions are vital skills for children to protect themselves and their communities in challenging situations. Additionally, the project will provide schools with the pioneering **O-Lab app**, an offline educational platform tailored to the needs and customs of local Afro-Colombian children. This is part of an exciting collaboration between our partners Acadesan El Origen which Children Change Colombia facilitated. Through establishing this partnership between innovative local organisations, we aim to keep children in school, mitigate the dangers of armed group presence, and protect children's rights.



Cristina's Story

"Me and my friends dream of getting a better education. It's beautiful where I live but there are lots of things we don't have – healthcare, good housing, education – and the armed conflict is causing us more and more problems. I want to learn how to overcome the problems we face in our region and to make the most of the resources our land has to offer. For this we need better schools, otherwise children like me will keep joining armed groups or move away to the city – we'll make our families sad and our local culture and traditions will be lost forever."

**Cristina's name has been changed for safeguarding purposes.*

Here at Children Change Colombia, we truly believe that this project has the potential to alleviate these issues and help give the children the future they deserve.

With your help we can make this a reality for young people like Cristina. Use the donation form on the back of this letter to support our work!



Events & Community

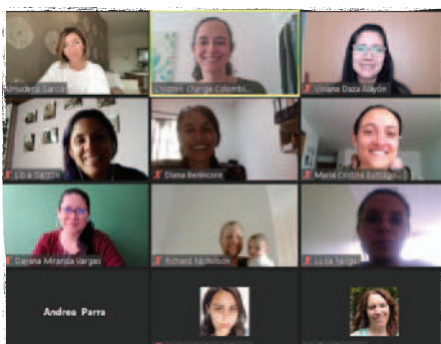


LatinoLife in the Park Festival

In late August, the UK team set off to Finsbury Park for LatinoLife in the Park, the UK's largest free Latin festival. We were grateful to be joined by our dedicated volunteers, who provided stewarding support and wonderful company throughout the day. Their support allowed us to set up a stand at the festival, collect donations, and connect with new supporters! Thank you to **Gabriella Fryatt, Laura Mitchell, Paola Galindo Uribe, Kay Mason, Clara Diaz, Peter Clifton, Patricia and Alastair Sturgis, Sandra Prada, Rod Long, Abjijit Kapadia, Roger Sturaro,** and **Gabi Bergmann-Chornik.**

Workshop with Action for Child Trauma International

Earlier this year, Children Change Colombia organised a series of workshops for our staff and local partners about child trauma. The workshops, provided by Action for Child Trauma International, provided training in Children's Accelerated Trauma Technique (CATT). The course covered therapeutic techniques to put in to practice with children who have experienced trauma, such as tools to manage anxiety, process difficult emotions, and deal with post-traumatic stress disorder.



Trust Law

Children Change Colombia is currently participating in a three-year project with the **Thomson Reuters Foundation TrustLaw** programme. In May, CCC was invited to an online event, Tackling Modern Slavery in Colombia, Malaysia and India. The presentation highlighted the way modern slavery is often hidden from view, meaning conviction rates are shockingly low. The crime is addressed in international and domestic law, but this legislation is often applied incorrectly or is near impossible to enforce. These events and training activities strengthen CCC's technical knowledge about how to address this complex issue facing Colombian society. Our Project Director, Juan, said of the programme, 'I consider this information crucial for it to be shared with our partners, for them to recognise and create awareness about this structural problem.'

30 Years Challenge

In August, we launched the 30-30 Challenge, in celebration of our 30th anniversary. We asked the CCC team and our amazing community of CCC supporters to join us in completing a challenge every day, for thirty days. From running, hiking, meditating, or cooking new recipes every day, it's amazing to see our supporters joining in unique and inspiring ways to raise money for our work. A special mention must go to the **Everett family** for their ongoing support. The challenge began on the 15th of August, but is still open for anyone to join! Visit www.childrenchange colombia.org for more details and help us raise £3000!

Become a regular donor. Just a few pounds a month will help us continue supporting at-risk children for many years to come. Use the 'Regular Giving' form or visit our website.

Thank you

We would like to extend a special thank you to our friends at **Alderney Quaker Meeting** (Channel Islands), **Alexandra Presbyterian Church** (Belfast), **The Carmelite Monastery** (Preston) and **St. Botolph Lullingstone Parochial Church** (Kent).

We'd also like to thank everyone who has donated their time and skills with administrative support, translations, and at events. Your continued support is what makes our work possible, and we are so grateful!

Meet our Corporate Partners

In Conversation with:
Maria Teresa Soliman



Soliman Travel is a family-owned tour operator, offering bespoke travel experiences in Latin America, the Middle East, and further afield. Soliman Travel was founded over 40 years ago by Colombian sociologist María Teresa Soliman, while she was completing her postgraduate education in the UK. For 30 of those years, Soliman Travel has been a dedicated supporter of Children Change Colombia.

In May, we had a chance to sit down with Maria Teresa herself, to ask her about what inspired Soliman Travel's decades long support of Children Change Colombia. She says, 'I have always been impressed by the great commitment and joy of all your team and supporters in the work you do, and of course, we've hugely enjoyed all the opportunities to get involved in so many of the wonderful fundraising events you organise'.

At its heart, Soliman Travel prioritises authenticity, culture and connecting communities. Maria Teresa explains, '**I believe that all societies are connected. Children Change Colombia gives young people the opportunity to grow up and participate in their communities and in society as a whole. As children are the pillars of our futures and our societies, this work is so important**'.

Soliman Travel is continuing its commitment to our work. For every booking made with the promotion code CCC2021, Soliman Travel will donate £5 per person booked to Children Change Colombia. Please email flights@solimantravel.com to make your booking, with the code.

No Name Just People & Casa Amacord



This year, we gained the support of the incredibly talented designers and creatives behind No Name Just People and Casa Amacord, who are striving to use design as an empowerment tool within local Colombian artisanal communities. Made with organic dyed cotton and 18k gold plated chains, the Ancestro bags are handmade by artisans in San Jacinto, Colombia. 20% of the proceeds from every Ancestro bag you purchase will be donated towards our work with at-risk children in Colombia.

Visit www.nonamejustpeople.com to get yours today.

Autumn 2021



Regular Giving

Instructions to the Manager

Your account

Name of bank or building society:

Address:

Postcode:

Account No. Sort Code - -

Your donation

Please pay **Children Change Colombia** (Account No.: **31623212**, Sort Code: **60-07-02**) at NatWest Bank plc, 14 High Street, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1AX,

The sum of £ on the day of / /20

(This date should be at least one month from today).

And the same sum Monthly Quarterly Yearly

Your details

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

Tel:

Signed:

Date: dd/mm/yy

Gift Aid Declaration

I am a UK Tax Payer and I would like Children Change Colombia to reclaim the tax on all qualifying donations I have made to them in the past 4 years as well as any future donations. I will notify them if I am no longer eligible or if I change address.

To qualify for gift aid I understand that I must have paid income / capital gains tax that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs I donate to will reclaim on my Gift Aid donations in the tax year in which they are received and that other taxes such as Council Tax and VAT do not count for this purpose.

Signed:

Date: dd/mm/yy

Please return completed form to **Children Change Colombia, Richbell House, 5 Richbell Place, London WC1N 3LA.**

For more information about Gift Aid, standing orders, legacies or payroll giving, please telephone our office on: +44 7852 985 711

Letter from the Director



Dear Friends,

We have seen in the last few months how the implications and consequences of Covid-19 reveal just how vulnerable educational systems around the world are. CCC has worked for 30 years to improve the lives of children at risk in Colombia, and guaranteeing their education is central to this. That is why, in our

five year strategy, we included access to education as one of our three key neglected issues of focus.

The situations that many Colombian children from rural areas and ethnic minorities must face in order to access education are shocking. As we describe in this newsletter, no matter if we look at a Wayuu boy in the Guajira desert or an Afro-Colombian girl in the Pacific rainforest, the barriers are similar. Long commutes, lack of infrastructure, no Internet access, education curricula that do not take into account their cultural origins and socio-economic difficulties that frequently push them to drop out of school to start working from a very early age.

"Inclusion essentially implies the removal of existing barriers from within and outside educational systems, enabling every learner to be given a real opportunity to be educated and learn" (UNESCO 2017).

We have partnerships with local grassroots such as El Origen and Acadesan to work on what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning in an inclusive way, and on the contributions of teachers as schools reopen, to provide children from ethnic minorities empathic and participatory curricula.

We are very proud to work shoulder to shoulder with such amazing local organisations in Chocó and la Guajira that share our common goal of education of quality for every child. This year we are supporting 1,200 children on our projects to improve access to education, and we have a project in the pipeline in the Magdalena that we hope will start in the coming months.

Thanks to all of you that make it possible to continue our work with the most at risk children, and thank you for believing with us that Children can Change Colombia.

Un abrazo,

Ángela María Carreño Malaver,
Executive Director

We are trying to reduce our waste by being more digital - please sign up to receive the online version of our newsletter from the homepage on [our website](#).

Please donate now

Donor details (We won't share your details with anyone else.)

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms	
Address:	
	Postcode:
Email:	Tel:

Your donation

I would like to make a donation of: £5 ; £10 ; £25 ; £50 ; £100 ; Other £

Payment details

(By BACS transfer: **Children Change Colombia**; Sort code **60-07-02**; Account no. **31623212**)

Cheque (Please make cheques payable to **Children Change Colombia**)

Visa; Mastercard;

CAF Charitycard Card No.

3 digit security number (on signature strip): Expiry Date: / (mm/yy)

Signed: Date:

Children Change Colombia, Richbell House, 5 Richbell Place, London WC1N 3LA.

t: +44 7852 985 711 e: info@childrenchange colombia.org w: childrenchange colombia.org

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All photos have been taken with the children's permission and full consent has been given for their use in Children Change Colombia publications.

All names have been changed and photos carefully chosen to protect the child's identity.

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I am a UK Tax Payer and I would like Children Change Colombia to reclaim the tax on all qualifying donations I have made to them in the past 4 years as well as any future donations. I will notify them if I am no longer eligible or if I change address.

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Signed:

Date:

Yes, I require an acknowledgement (please tick or we will assume you do not; this will help us save on administration costs).

Please send me a fundraising pack

Thank you!