



Breaking Down Barriers Through Theatre

Our partner Circulo de Estudios (CDE) and the company Théâtre du Bout du Monde in Nanterre, Paris have been collaborating on an artistic and cultural exchange project. After two years of hard work on both sides of the Atlantic, we managed, last November, to bring together the group of 20 Colombian and French young people in Paris to present the play “El Bunde del Agua” (“The Bunde of Water”). The project aimed to facilitate understanding, empathy and intercultural communication between the groups, **achieving respect for diversity and breaking down barriers of prejudice, racism and discrimination** through reflecting on their socio-political similarities and differences. These are some of the key aims of our partner CDE, with whom we have **worked together for the past 4 years tackling sexual exploitation in the city of Quibdó.**

The performance drew upon their common experience of having water characterise their everyday lives, as both Quibdó and Nanterre are situated by a river. The water

acted as a symbol for their daily lives, their dreams, thoughts and emotions, as well as the joys and terrors of their neighbourhoods.

It was a very moving experience for both groups and they were promised they could meet again, this time in Colombia! In April, their wishes came true as **they went on to perform “El Bunde del Agua” at the well-renowned Ibero-American Theatre Festival in Bogotá!**

The exchange has been a life-changing opportunity for these young Colombians, who are primarily from vulnerable and under-resourced communities, and who had never before travelled out of Colombia, or some even Quibdó. **The group had previously undergone 4 years of psychosocial support, as well as dance, art and theatre workshops teaching them about their human rights, cultural heritage and how to protect their communities,** so this was the culmination and reward at the end of a long journey.



Colombia's Silent Problem

Sexual exploitation, abuse, and trafficking persist as critical issues within Colombia. We have identified the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) as one of the most pressing dangers facing vulnerable children throughout the country, particularly in Bogotá, Quibdó, and Cartagena. As such, it is in these three key areas where CCC conducts our crucial work alongside our local partners *Círculo de Estudios* and *Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes*.

The issue of child sexual exploitation is not new to Colombia, however, like many other pre-existing social issues, the COVID pandemic has aggravated it. With children spending the majority of their time at home and online, there has been notable increase in domestic and online sexual abuse, specifically child pornography.

For many families, **sexual exploitation and trauma is generational**. Many children, especially in regions where sex work is common and/or 'tolerated', grow up with family members that are engaged in sex work, thereby normalizing it. Economic strains exacerbated by the pandemic has led some desperate families to put their own children into sex work.

In recent years, Colombia has experienced an influx in Venezuelan migrants. **Sadly, sexual violence and exploitation, fuelled by xenophobia, towards migrant women and children has increased**. This increase is particularly visible on the Venezuela-Colombia border and Bogotá.

The exact statistics surrounding the sexual exploitation of children in Colombia are unknown due to an enduring culture of silence fuelled by a normalisation of sexual violence and fear of speaking up against such abuses. However, the Colombian government estimates that a staggering **200,000 children in Colombia are sexually abused each year**. Similarly, it is believed that over **35,000 children are involved in CSEC in Colombia annually**. Moreover, more than **13,000 people reported incidents of sexual violence between January and August of 2021**. These statistics reiterate

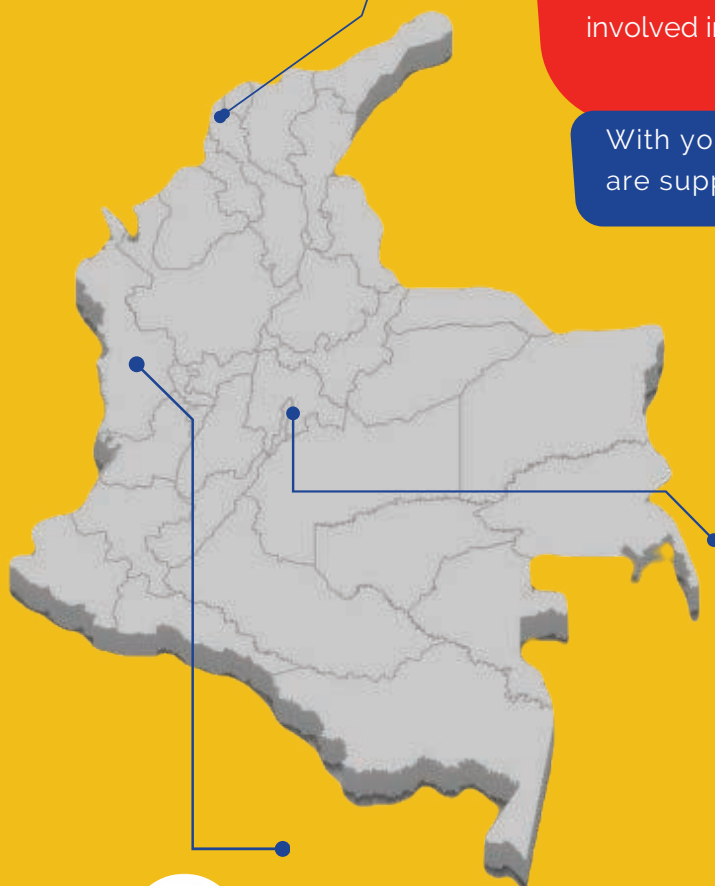
the importance and the urgency of addressing the problem of sexual violence and exploitation in Colombia, particularly against children.

Many children are silenced by their abusers and few abusers are brought to justice by the criminal justice system. It is estimated that **between 2005 and 2018, only 6,000 out of more than 80,000 cases of sexual abuse against children ended in conviction**. As such, there is still a lack of urgency on the part of police and legal systems.

CCC is dedicated to helping children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation or have survived such trauma by equipping them with the skills, confidence, and knowledge they need to protect themselves and create rich and fulfilling futures.

The deep-rooted culture of desensitizing, silence, and impunity surrounding sexual violence make it a difficult problem to tackle

Where are we working to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children?



Cartagena

The sexual tourism, CSEC and sexual abuse of children are common in this city. Such abuse is largely exacerbated by the profound levels of poverty. It is estimated that about 1000 minors are systematically involved in sexual exploitation in the city every year.

With your help we are supporting **52 children & 74 adults**



Bogotá

The district of Santa Fe is one of the hot-spot zones of CSEC in Bogota. As Bogotá's third biggest locality, it is a designated 'tolerance zone', meaning that sex work is permitted and sex workers are allowed to operate without fear of prosecution. This has made the district quite popular, and it is common to see sex workers of all ages walking the streets at all hours of the day. As a result, the CSEC of minors has become quite normalized, therefore encouraging cycles of child exploitation and abuse to continue.

With your help we are supporting **243 children & 419 adults**



Quibdó

The capital city of the Chocó region is also characterised by poverty and sexual abuse. There was a reported increase in the amount of sexual violence experienced in the region as a result of the pandemic. This issue is further exacerbated due to the presence of armed groups and gangs, which often use sexual violence as a means to exert dominance and control.

With your help we are supporting **52 children & 74 adults**



Using the Arts as a Transformative Tool

Our partner *Círculo de Estudios (CDE)* work to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the regions of Cartagena & Quibdó. Workshops are run to teach young people about their rights and psychological support is provided to survivors and their families. The children learn how to overcome the trauma they suffer as a result of their experiences, and how to protect themselves from future violence.

Much of CDE's work centres around music, theatre and dance workshops. These art forms enable young people to express themselves, and at the same time **reclaim ownership of their bodies in a positive way, as vessels for beauty rather than of exploitation and pain.** Furthermore, it is one of the only opportunities they have to play and behave as children, in a community where they are more likely to be valued as a means of bringing in more income for their family or for carrying out tasks for an armed group.

All these things help the recovery process, helping to shape brighter, healthier futures.

During the project, groups of children from Cartagena interacted with those from Chocó for the first time. They also identified and recognized rights throughout storytelling: the right to life, the right to education, the right to health, etc

Jairo's Story*

12-year-old Jairo has attended the project for two years. His mother was the victim of rape at 16, and as a result, suffered severe psychological trauma preventing her from providing the love or care her son needed. Jairo, struggling, soon dropped out of school and began running errands for a local armed group. Fortunately, CDE invited him to one of their projects. At first he struggled both socially and with his aggressive behaviour, however he soon learned to change and made many friends. Jairo is now back in school, enjoys playing music and is seen as a leader by his peers. His mother is also receiving help for her trauma.



*name changed for safeguarding purposes

Tackling Sexual Exploitation in Colombia's 'Tolerance Zone'



"Paza la paz mi hermanx" was an event held on August 28th in the Santa Fe neighborhood, where 300 people attended. The festival aimed to unite the locals around the prevention of violence through artistic expressions and other activities of interest to the community. Adolescents and young people joined the event as protagonists; they led the troupe that toured the Santa Fe neighborhood and, through various expressions (dance, theatre, music and stilts), they sent the community a powerful message rejecting violence.

Our partner Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes (ACJ) works in Bogotá combating child sexual exploitation at a youth centre in Santa Fe, in the middle of the 'tolerance zone', a particularly vulnerable zone where sex work, gangs and drugs are rife. In this youth centre, ACJ runs recreational workshops for children and adolescents, as well as providing psychological support for them and their families. Through this they are able to learn about their rights and gain skills to protect themselves from exploitation. ACJ also helps sex

workers and informal workers to find alternative employment routes which are better for their wellbeing.

The project not only includes children but also adult members of the community as well as public officials to help them to identify and prevent sexual violence and CSEC, and to create protective environments. The teachers' role was essential to carry out the necessary activities towards the development of the project. Teachers on behalf of Jorge Soto del Corral IED School (in the Santafé

neighbourhood) and República Bolivariana de Venezuela IED School (in Los Martires neighbourhood) joined the project. Additionally, teachers and directors of the participated in dialogues with the school governors and established links with our project partners in order to carry out workshops, campaigns, advocacy activities, and other spaces of participation.

Sandra's Story*

Having suffered from sexual abuse, drug dealing, and struggling as a single mother of two, Sandra turned to sex work, given no other option to earn her livelihood. However, as she began with ACJ, things began to improve for her. She received help to come out of sex work, and enrolled her children in ACJ's workshops, helping to lift a weight off her shoulders and regain her life. Sandra was able to start studying and care for her children again. She is looking forward to a brighter future for her family.



*name changed for safeguarding purposes

Events & Community

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.

www.childrenchange colombia.org



Our intern Natalie at the Blue Latino Market in November



Members of our partner organisations upon completion of their CATT training

Celebrating 30 years of CCC!

Last year was a very special year for CCC, marking 30 years of supporting and empowering children. To celebrate this milestone we held a lunch with staff, donors, supporters and trustees. It was lovely to see so many faces, both old and new, and to share ideas of how we can work together in support of our common goal - to protect and empower the children of Colombia. Over the past 3 decades we've raised over 13 million to support 52 partner projects which have supported over 65,000 children, enabling them to build more positive futures for themselves, their communities and Colombia itself.

CCC's Christmas markets

Last Christmas, the CCC team took part in three different Christmas Markets around London and Kent. Our staff and volunteers braved the cold in order to take advantage of such an incredible opportunity to both raise funds and network with other businesses and organisations. CCC was present at The Blue Latino Market, Colombian Little Candle celebration at Cafe Hermanos in London and the St Mary's Church, in Greenhithe, Kent. We sold a variety of precious toys and traditional Colombian jewellery that had been generously donated to us. We were proud to share our story, values, and mission with customers and we raised £230!

Child Trauma Training

At the end of February 2022, CCC in partnership with Action for Child Trauma International (ACTI) provided the staff of our partners a three day workshop on the Accelerated Trauma Technique for Children (CATT). This is the first time that this methodology, already applied in Africa and Middle East, has been taught in Las Americas and we are very proud to make this happen.

We had online sessions in 2021 and in 2022 carried out workshops in person taught by instructors Pilu Rivas and Almudena García, who travelled with the Operations Manager of ACTI, Zara Bracegirdle, from Spain and the UK to Bogotá to deliver the course.

CCC staff and 19 representatives from our partner organisations came together from several regions of Colombia including Quibdó, Cartagena, Santa Marta and La Guajira.

The three days of workshops were a space full of shared experiences and enriching stories that served to equip us with the necessary skills to treat children and young people who have suffered traumatic experiences, as well as to understand how the brain of children who have suffered psychological trauma works and how to help them regulate post-traumatic stress. Thank you very much ACTI!



Jeremy Thorp, UK Former Ambassador in Colombia; Ricardo Lozano, Colombian Consul in London and CCC long time supporters María teresa Soliman, Yvone Velasquez and Marco Franco with our Executive Director Angela Carreño

“El viaje de la Anaconda” Concert in ACJ Bogotá

In February, CCC organised a concert for the children of the project we have with ACJ. Our friend and supporter María Mónica, known as “La Montañera” performed in the Hogar AmaneSer, a care centre led by our partner organisation ACJ that helps children who live in difficult conditions in the Santa Fe district in Bogotá. This neighbourhood is known as the “tolerance zone” in Bogotá due to the high volume of issues such as sex work, drug commerce and delinquency.

The “Anaconda trip” is a concert that focuses on story telling the cultural richness and biodiversity of Colombia. Its lyrics are specifically designed for children in Colombia, reflecting on family, diversity, animals, geographic locations, typical Colombian food and in general, interesting topics for children while raising awareness of our cultural, environmental and social context. After this incredible performance, we had the chance to talk with María Mónica. This is what she told us:

What do you think is the role of music and arts in the process of transforming the lives of children?

I think the role of art is to give us a voice in a context where having a voice is hard, complicated, and at times dangerous. So arts provide a safe platform where to express ourselves and release our emotions.

How was your experience singing for the first time for children in the AmaneSer Centre?

The experience was powerful. I have been in contact with vulnerable populations before but singing for children is always a very touching and nourishing experience. To be able to share emotions with the children was very intense and moving. It puts me in the reality of Colombia and the various realities of many people that face difficult circumstances.

What does it mean to you to support the work of Children Change Colombia?

For me it's very relevant because I'm Colombian and I'm always looking for ways to connect with my country and share my music with people that probably don't have access to art or usually don't have the chance to have these moments of joy, music and relaxation.

We'd like to thank La Montañera for sharing with us this beautiful concert!

Schools supporting CCC

Children from all over the UK have run different activities to support children in Colombia. From all of us at CCC we want to say a big thank you! CCC's outreach team and Angela Carreño, our Executive Director, have visited some of the schools and given talks in English and Spanish about our work in Colombia to improve access to education in rural areas.

Ackworth School in Yorkshire held a fundraising event called 'Colombia Day'. Pupils and teachers wore the colours of the Colombian flag and wrote letters to send to children in Colombia. Some pupils chose to write their letters in Spanish and wrote heartwarming messages of love and support.

St Alban's Primary School in London sold pancakes on Pancake day. Students also attended a presentation and the most extraordinary coincidence is that one of the teachers had actually been to the school in Chocó when she was a teacher in Hong Kong.

Kingston Grammar School in London has also been raising funds during this academic year, holding performances and challenges. Angela provided a lecture to the A-Level students about working in the developing sector as an option for their professional future.

If you know a school that would like to be part of our outreach activities please send us a message at info@childrenchange colombia.org



Montañera performance at our project with ACJ in Santa Fe, Bogotá



Visit to St. Albans School in March

Join us for the Thames Walk! Saturday the 11th June 2022

Fancy picking up the pace? Please let us know if you'd be interested in joining our friendly group of runners to run the route instead of walking.



- **Tickets:** £15, including a free CCC T-shirt (children under 12 go free)
- **Email:** events@childrenchange colombia.org or call us on +44 (0) 2080502735
- **Date:** Saturday the 11th June 2022
- **Time:** 10:00am - 4:00pm (the walk will take at least 4 hours)
- **Location:** Richmond Park, London

Join us for a fantastic summer's day out - a 10-mile walk along the Thames with a picnic in the beautiful Richmond Park! Help us raise funds and help children build lasting peace and opportunity in Colombia. Meet new people who care about Colombia as much as you do, try some delicious empanadas, and practise your Spanish or your English or both! Invite friends and family - everyone is welcome!

We have a new website!



We're excited to announce the launch of our new website which features:

- a timeline of our 30-year history
- an interactive map showcasing the areas in which our partners work as well as the key issues we work on.
- a blog with articles about our work on the ground in Colombia
- a films page where you can learn about our projects and hear from the children we work with.

Yes, I want to help transform the lives of children in Colombia

Title Name
 Address
 Postcode
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Make a single donation

Here is my gift of: £10 £25 £80 £100 Other

Please make cheques payable to Children Change Colombia
 OR make a BACS transfer to Children Change Colombia: Sort code 60-07-02, Account no. 31623212
 We accept the following cards: Visa, Mastercard, CAF Charitycard.

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Gift Aid Declaration *giftaid it*

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 if I pay less income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Signature
 Date

- I require an acknowledgement (please tick or we will assume you do not; this will help us save on administration costs).
- I would also like to receive email updates about your work protecting children's rights in Colombia, your fundraising events and campaigns, and how I can get involved.

You can change the ways you hear from us at any time using the contact details below.

You can also donate online at
www.childrenchange colombia.org/donate
Thank you so much for your support!

T 020 8050 2735
 E info@childrenchange colombia.org

Please return this form to
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