



Children of the Andes

Building a future for street children and child victims of violence in Colombia
Summer 2004

At the age of 10, Viridiana was forced to flee her home after her father was killed and her mother's office burned down. With no work and little money, her family moved to a shanty town on the edge of Cartagena where Viridiana joined a local dance programme, *Colegio del Cuerpo* (The Body School).

In the turmoil of the years that followed, Viridiana found increasing solace in dance. It gave her a space for herself, away from the conflicts and demands of daily life - a space where she could develop her natural talent and believe in herself.

Like so many young girls, Viridiana dreamed of travelling the world and performing on stage. In March of this year, at the age of 16, her dream came true. Along with 17 other dancers from the *Colegio del Cuerpo* programme, Viridiana performed in sell-out shows in Paris and London. The group's production, based on improvisation and inspired by the life experiences of all the dancers, gave audiences an unforgettable glimpse into the reality of young people in Colombia today.

Viridiana is one of hundreds of displaced and disadvantaged children who have benefited from the *Colegio del Cuerpo* programme. This ground-breaking initiative uses dance to explore the difficult issues that have affected these children's lives, allowing them to develop a greater sense of self-worth.

With funding from Children of the Andes' supporters, Viridiana is now teaching other children in the programme, using her experience to give them a renewed sense of hope for the future.

Warmest thanks to everyone who attended *Colegio del Cuerpo*'s performance and supported the programme with donations.

Viridiana's Dream





Colegio del Cuerpo

Colegio del Cuerpo was set up by Alvaro Restrepo (Colombia's leading contemporary dancer) and Marie France Delieuvin (Director of Studies, Centre for Contemporary Dance, Angers) in 1997. It is the only project in Colombia that uses "Body Education" - combining dance, movement and education on anatomy, physiology, nutrition, sex education, substance abuse and conflict resolution - to help disadvantaged children deal with issues affecting their development.

Many of the children involved with the project have grown up in an environment of conflict, due to the ongoing civil war and deep social divisions caused by racial, ethnic and socio-economic differences. This combined with poor quality education and limited employment opportunities, means that drug-abuse, violence and crime are real threats for children and young people in the area.

Helena
 "The trip to London moved something inside me. It gave me a renewed sense of hope and an understanding that, even though we're materially poor, we're rich in spirit. And with spirit and hope we can achieve anything."

Follow-up research on the effectiveness of *Colegio del Cuerpo* has shown that the programme improves school attendance levels, behaviour, academic performance and the ability to deal with family and school conflicts. In addition, many of the students have used the skills gained at *Colegio del Cuerpo* to pursue new career opportunities.

Children of the Andes: Funding outreach with displaced Children

Children of the Andes (COTA) has been working with *Colegio del Cuerpo* since 2000, providing funding for the school's outreach programme, *Mi Cuerpo Mi Casa* (My Body, My Home). This initiative is targeted at displaced children aged 6-15, from the Nelson Mandela settlement on the outskirts of Cartagena. Many have had to flee their homes as a result of the war and struggle to build a new life in the face of poverty, poor access to healthcare and education, and high levels of insecurity.

Around 100 children are invited to join the programme each year,

selected from schools in the area according to their ability and level of interest. They attend dance workshops three times a week and receive classes on health and social education. All children receive a light meal, basic clothing and a monthly health check as part of the programme.

Once they have completed the programme, students with ability and an interest in pursuing dance are given the opportunity to follow a full-time professional dance course at the school.

The future

Colegio del Cuerpo's "Body Education" programme has been so successful that the founders, Alvaro and Marie-France, are developing a pedagogical model based on their work. Once the model has been approved by local and national education authorities, it is hoped that it will be used to benefit children in other areas of Colombia.

The programme has already been nominated for a UNESCO award and is supported by the municipality of Cartagena, Colombia's Ministry of Culture and international NGOs.

Arley

"The work I've done at Colegio del Cuerpo has influenced my role within the family. I am now more autonomous, and much more involved in family decisions"



Ingrid
 "Dance has had such a positive effect on my life. I've learnt to really understand and value my body - the way I think, the way I talk, the way I behave... the body is all we have, it's our only "instrument" in life."

How Children of the Andes made a difference in 2003

During 2003, Children of the Andes (COTA) invested £328,000 in projects reaching Colombia's most needy boys and girls. Of this amount, £241,000 was spent on providing direct services to the children, £69,000 on project capacity-building and £18,000 on management and administration.



Working Children

Thousands of children in Colombia are forced to work as a result of poverty, losing their right to be a child. Many work long hours in dangerous conditions and are forced to abandon education. *Fundacion Niños de los Andes* and *La Rayuela*, both in Colombia's coffee region, are helping to address this situation by providing children with education and an opportunity to improve their lives. Two hundred working children are benefiting from the £24,000 sent.

Child Victims of War

Colombia's bloody civil war has forced millions of people from their homes: 70% are young children and their mothers. From an early age many children witness mass killings, grow up in fear of an attack from either one of the fighting groups, and learn to use violence as a means to resolve conflicts. The emotional and physical scars left by the war are difficult to erase and if left unattended can be the seed of further violence. COTA understands the gravity of the situation and in 2003 sent £153,000 to nine different programmes, helping 9000 child victims of war.

Aproinfante in Pamplona, Eastern Colombia, and *Formemos*, in the rural village of San Antonio de Tena, have set up residential programmes providing agricultural vocational training for almost 300 war-affected boys and girls. The hope is that once peace returns to the countryside, these children will be able to return to their homelands and build a livelihood. COTA sent £16,000 to help make this a reality.

Colegio del Cuerpo and *Fe y Alegria* both use dance and the arts as a tool to help displaced children deal with the changes that have affected their lives. These innovative projects, which work with over 2000 displaced children in Bogota and Cartagena, have proven to be effective in improving academic performance and self esteem as well as offering a vocational alternative for those wishing to pursue the arts.

With the support of the Princess Diana Fund, £65,000 was sent to *Fundacion Restrepo Barco* to develop a mine awareness programme, that will allow children living in highly mined zones to learn how to protect themselves and avoid accidents with landmines.

Fifteen medical missions to war-torn areas of the Colombian rainforest were also funded, providing aid to at least 1000 children through the work of the flying doctors, *Patrulla Aerea Colombiana*.

In partnership with the British Embassy, £40,000 was raised to build a school for 400 displaced children in the small town of Villanueva Bolivar, an area of high paramilitary and guerrilla activity.

Malnourishment is one of the most severe consequences of displacement - 80% of young children who have fled their homes are malnourished. In partnership with *Colombo-Britanica* and *Nutrinfantil*, COTA was able to offer balanced and nutritious daily meals to 2000 boys and girls.

Children with Special Needs

During 2003 £28,000 was sent to two organisations in Cali that address the needs of children living with HIV/AIDS and with physical, visual and hearing disabilities.

Fundamor is home to 34 orphaned and abandoned children with HIV/AIDS, providing a loving environment, medical care and education.

With the support of COTA, *Fundacion Carvajal* has set up a pilot educational resource centre for children with disabilities. Five thousand disabled boys and girls now have access to the latest specialist equipment, which will enable them to integrate successfully into mainstream education and the community.



Street Children

In Colombia there are hundreds of thousands of boys and girls living on the streets, as a result of war, natural disasters, poverty and abuse. No one knows exactly how many there are, but you can see them sleeping under bridges, collecting rubbish from bins and begging for coins by the street lights of every major city. During 2003 COTA donated £44,000 to five organisations that reached more than 2,000 street children.

In Bogotá both *Fundacion Niños de los Andes* and *Ponte en mi Lugar* are running landmark programmes. They carry out "street missions," taking warm food, clothing and basic medical aid to the little ones for whom the pavement is their only bed. Their residential programmes provide a loving home, education and hope for the future. COTA sent £28,000 to support their work during 2003. *Hogar San Francisco*, in the outskirts of Bogotá, is also home to 100 street boys and girls. Last year £6000 was sent to support this initiative.

In Cali, *Hogares Maria Goretti* and *Formacion d'Futuros* are working with two very needy groups of street children: young girls who due to sexual and physical abuse have fled their homes and sought refuge in the streets, and young people who have just left residential care. These children have had to cope with the trauma of abandonment, abuse and loneliness. COTA is committed to helping them prepare for a better future, and sent £4800 and six computers.



During 2003 COTA was able to bring hope to more than 16,000 children. This year will be a far greater challenge. In addition to developing all our current projects, we have more than forty new projects requesting our aid. We are optimistic that, with your help, we will be able to extend a helping hand.

Pilar
Pilar Arango Ribbeck, Chief Executive

FundraisingNews

Dear friends

Welcome to our new-look Fundraising News section, packed with great ideas on how to raise funds for Children of the Andes and have fun!

This year we have the challenge of raising £500,000, needed to develop our current projects and meet the massive increase in demand for our support. To do this we need your help. If each of

our 5,000 supporters raised just £100 this year our target would be achieved. It could be as easy as that! Since we are a small, tightly run organisation every penny you raise will make a tangible difference to our work in the field.

Don't forget, we're here to help you! As the "new girl" at COTA, I hope to meet and speak to as

many of you as possible in the coming months. So, if you would like to discuss any ideas please don't hesitate to give me a call or drop into the office for a coffee!

With warmest wishes,

Rachel McFadzean-Ferguson
Head of Development



Community Support

Warmest thanks to all our community supporters who have raised funds since our last newsletter

St Mary's School Ascot Upper 6th students raised over £525 this year through a non uniform day and cabaret.

Gabriela Daniel, a longstanding COTA supporter, recently raised £142 through a collection. Marta Hatfield organised a story-telling evening, "The Magic of Story," which raised £160. Look out for the *Fiesta Latina*, with Marta and friends in the Easingwold area in July. Emma Illingworth took part in a triathlon raising £912.

Victor Lohle ran the London Marathon and raised over £2,600.

Joyce Murdock raised £80 through a collection on a coach trip with St Andrews Church Clubmoor, Liverpool. Rosemary Pasmore ran a spinning demonstration at a WI meeting and raised £58. Rugby School raised £300 this school year at several events. Jenny Stone raised £568 through jazz concerts at Cambridge University.



The Magic of Story

Colombian Film Festival which will be held at the Riverside Studios. Thames Walk (date tbc): Gabriela Daniel will be organising this annual fundraising walk, which runs from Walton-on-Thames to Hampton Court. All supporters are welcome.

November COTA Xmas Concert (date tbc): An evening of music and Xmas carols, followed by mince pies and mulled wine at one of London's most stunning livery halls.

Dates for your diary

June Celebrating Sanctuary (13th): a day of live world music at St. Gabriel's Wharf, Southbank to launch National Refugee Week. COTA will have a stall at the event. September Flora Light (5th): Opportunity to run or "stroll" this women's 5km challenge (London and Birmingham) and raise funds to support COTA's work. Colombian Film Festival (date tbc): Look out for COTA's first

Beat the Xmas Rush and buy your COTA greetings cards now!

Although we will not be producing new cards this year, we will be selling our surplus. With limited availability, we advise you to get your orders in as soon as possible! Designs include the "My Beautiful Colombia" children's drawings range, the "Picasso Dove" and "Christmas Drawings by Children". All cards come in packs of ten and cost £5 plus 50p postage per pack. For orders, send a cheque with a note stating which design and how many packs you would like to the COTA offices.

Sky diving

Imagine standing at the edge of an open doorway in an aircraft flying at 10,000ft - the noise of the engines and the wind ringing in your ears, with only the outline of distant fields below. Now imagine leaning forward out of that doorway and letting go - falling forward into the clouds and diving through the air at over 120 mph!

By raising sponsorship of just £350 you could have this unforgettable experience for free, while also providing vital funds for our work. Children of the Andes is offering supporters a range of options, from Tandem Skydives for



those who are new to parachute jumping to Accelerated Freefall for those who are more experienced. Supporters will be able to choose from over 20 BPA registered parachute centres around the UK.

With the good weather and clear skies, summer is the best time to do this. So why not give us a call today and book yourself in for a parachute adventure of a lifetime!



International Treks



Cycle Cuba

05 November-14 November, 2004

Children of the Andes will be launching its trek initiative with the Havana to Trinidad bike ride in Cuba. This ten-day expedition starts in Cuba's vibrant capital

If none of these treks appeals, we'd be happy to arrange for you to take part in a charity trek elsewhere - just let us know.

FundraisingNews



White Water Rafting

If water sports are more your thing, why not get a group of friends together and race the rapids for Children of the Andes? Over the summer COTA will be organising trips down Whitewater Rafting courses across the UK, to raise funds for our work. Once again this requires no previous experience and all participants will be given training.

Explore the Inca Trail

15 April-24 April, 2005

Last year trekking the Inca Trail was voted number 11 in a BBC list of "50 things to do before you die," beating visits to the Great Wall of China, Mount Everest and the Grand Canyon. In April 2005 supporters will have the opportunity to scale the Peruvian Andes in aid of Children of the Andes. The route will pass through tropical Andean rainforest and high desert plateaus, with visits to many of the most important sites of the ancient Inca Empire including Cusco, the Sacred Valley of the Incas and "The Lost City" of Machu Pichu itself.



For further information on any of the above events, please contact the COTA office



FIELD OFFICE DIARY



Barbara Inglin, Field Officer

This time last year, when I looked out my office window at COTA, I saw the hustle and bustle of Kentish Town Road and the pigeon-crowded rooftops of NW5. Now, as Field Officer for COTA in Colombia, pigeons have been replaced by humming birds

and the view from my desk is of an endlessly blue sky and lush tropical plants in the patio outside. The chant of the cicadas in the mango tree next door grows ever more furious as the day gets hotter and hotter... Yes, I've come a long way from NW5.

It's been four months since I took up my post as COTA's first Field Officer in Colombia. Four months of challenges, inspiration, excitement and hard work. The Field Office is based in Cali, a large city in the southwest of Colombia, where COTA supports 5 projects. Cali is an amazing city full of colour, sunshine, and incredibly warm-hearted people who go out of their way to make you feel welcome.

One of my first tasks as Field Officer was to conduct a three-week monitoring visit. My trip took me to projects in Cali, the Coffee Region and Bogotá. Without fail, I was met by groups of excited children, brimming with curiosity at the prospect of meeting an "extranjera". They served as my guides, proudly showing me around and explaining what life was like for them on the project.

I was treated to fresh bread baked by the children at *La Rayuela*, given a delightful presentation by children at *FNA Manizales*, joined children at *Formemos*



La Rayuela

for a sing-along round a bonfire, and explored a Cloud Forest with the children from *Escuela Rural*. It was wonderful to be surrounded by so many happy faces and see for myself the benefits of the work of these projects.

Each of the regions I visited was very different. Cali, a big city set in the heart of the Cauca Valley, where the humidity and hot sun make you realise why many Caleños still indulge in a mid-day siesta. Manizales and Chinchiná, small towns in the Coffee Region, surrounded by mountains, the beautiful, deep green of coffee plantations and a refreshingly cool breeze. And finally, Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, "2,600 meters closer to the stars" and as hectic and fast-paced as London.



Escuela Rural

Since then, I've been busy updating project information, meeting staff from projects in Cali to discuss funding proposals, keeping my colleagues up to date on changes and developments in the field, and re-visiting projects in Bogotá. Even in Colombia, where time is much more "generous", there never seem to be enough hours in a day!

I feel enormously privileged to be able to work for COTA in the field, and hope that my work here will help build our capacity to respond to the needs of our partner organisations and the children in their care, and bring COTA supporters and the children on the projects closer together.

Barbara Inglin,
Field Officer

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