



Children of the Andes

Building a better future for vulnerable children in Colombia

Spring 2012



The Whole Picture

Rafa had helped his dad pick coffee for as long as he could remember. Forced to move around to find work on farms, he was constantly changing schools. It was hard making new friends and keeping up with school work, and he soon dropped out altogether. With nowhere else to go, he started hanging out on the streets, taking drugs to numb the cold and the loneliness.

Worried about her son, Rafa's mum persuaded him to join La Rayuela – a support programme in the heart of the coffee region. La Rayuela helped Rafa's family to see he needed more stability and support. His dad now travels on his own for work and the family

have settled permanently into a new home. For the first time in years Rafa has been able to make friends again, and after several months of studying at La Rayuela, he feels ready to go back to school.

Like Rafa, the many 1000's of children we support every year face complex issues. At Children of the Andes we believe that to change these children's lives in the long-term we need to look at the whole picture – their relationship with family and with their community, as well as the child themselves. Our work focuses on four key areas, which we will explore in this issue: education, preparing for adult life, supporting families, and making communities safer.

**We cannot do this important work without your support
Please make a donation today**

Education

Education is the right of every child, and at COTA we believe that it is a crucial tool for children to break free of the cycle of poverty. Although Colombian law requires all children to attend school, according to the most recent figures approximately 21% of children in Colombia are not in school. All of our projects encourage and support the children and young people that they work with to return to or remain in education, helping them to fulfill their potential and achieve their dreams.



“ Now I know how to read and I know my numbers. Before I came here there was no-one to explain things to me and the teacher at school would get mad if I asked questions. Now that I can come to the centre I can ask things and there is always someone to explain and help me. ”
Camila, 10 years old



“ After my mum was killed I left school and was working on a farm. I always used to get into trouble, but now I'm at La Rayuela I like to study. They (the staff) love me and although I don't have a mum anymore, they make sure that I'm OK. Now I want to help other children so that they don't have to go through the same as I did. ”
Luis, 10 years old



“ My mum works selling juice on the streets. I always used to go with her to help, but now I don't because I'm in ACJ. Since I arrived at ACJ I've already got better at reading and writing, I can add and subtract and my pictures are prettier. This term I've passed all of my subjects and the teacher from ACJ is helping me; she makes me really happy because she always says nice things and tells me I can do anything. ”
Katherine, 9 years old



Preparing for Adult Life

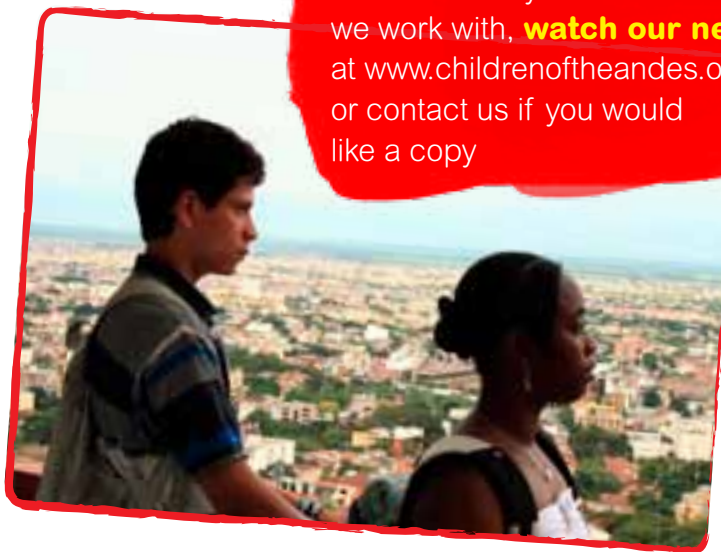
According to the latest figures almost 50,000 young people in Colombia are living in government supported care institutions, for reasons including abandonment, abuse, displacement or economic difficulties. These institutions do not prepare young people for life on their own, so the majority leave care at the age of 18 feeling overwhelmed and alone, and often end up in a similar vulnerable situation as they were in before; on the street, at risk of abuse, or excluded from society in some other way. COTA and our partners believe that with the right support and opportunities these young people can build positive futures for themselves and for their communities. At our projects they are supported to receive education, training and practical work experience, as well as gaining experience in the everyday skills they need to live independently.

“ Before starting here, I didn't have any opportunities to do many things. But now Fundamor encourage me to find my own way about – I know how to manage my time and my money, how to do grocery shopping, and I have learnt how to cook. Thanks to this programme I have been able to achieve and learn so much.
Alex, 15 years old

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To hear directly from children we work with, **watch our new video** at www.childrenoftheandes.org or contact us if you would like a copy



“ It's really cool to learn stuff that will be so useful in our lives. I'm so grateful for these activities and to be able to learn and to have had all these experiences, so thank you.
Mercedes, 17 years old

”

“ When I left care at 18 I didn't want to end up in the same conditions as my family, I didn't want to go through the hunger; I wanted to be able to survive in society. If I hadn't had the opportunity to be here I wouldn't be at University and helping other young people. Maybe I'd have a house full of children like many of my friends from the care home or I'd have got into drugs, because it was a very difficult time. If I hadn't come here, I don't know what would have happened to me.
Johanna, 25 years old

”



Supporting Families

The armed conflict and poverty in Colombia have left many people struggling to cope, and have contributed to the breakdown of family support structures. As a result, many children find themselves at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect, sometimes at the hands of those closest to them. COTA's partners are supporting parents and carers to provide a safe and protective environment for their children, reuniting children with families where possible and rebuilding family relationships. We believe this is the most effective way to keep children safe and protect their rights in the long term.

“ What I have learnt most during my time here is to value my family.
Daniel, 11 years old

Now there is more understanding, more love, more affection.
Zurlangie, mum

”



“ Thanks to the project I feel more confident as a wife and mother, I feel like there is a chance I can make something of my life, I've realised it is never too late to learn. I have learnt to appreciate people more, to love my children and not mistreat them but instead offer them support and to talk them instead of hitting them. I now see that they have more respect for my words than my fist.
Maria, mum

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“ I joined HRBC to learn more about how to support my own daughter, who has a disability. I've been able to meet other people who have children with disabilities, and they haven't given up – they've shown me that with support from my family and from HRBC my children can have more opportunities. It motivates me when I see how happy the mums that bring their children to the centre are, and how happy the children are too. With the support of HRBC I have learnt so much about disabilities and I'm going to help others the way they've helped me when I needed it.

Paula, mum

”

To find out more about HRBC or any of the other partners we have mentioned in this newsletter, have a look at our website, www.childrenoftheandes.org



Making Communities Safer for children

The vulnerable children and young people that COTA works with face danger from within their own communities every day of their lives. Children living in poverty on the margins of society are particularly susceptible to gang violence, forced recruitment into armed groups, commercial sexual exploitation, landmine injury, drug abuse and crime. COTA and our partners work both with these children and their communities to raise awareness of such dangers and to empower children and their communities to take action to reduce them.

“ If I see a landmine I know I have to go back the same way I came and tell an adult as soon as possible so they can deal with it. ”

10 year old girl



We can only continue our vital work in these areas with your support.

Please donate today



“ Some of the children came to us after one of the boys was shot in the foot by a policeman, when he tried to run away after being stopped. We arranged a meeting with the police and talked to them about the work that we do and our restorative justice methodology. The police agreed that they would improve their ways of dealing with the children and treat them respectfully if the children would also respect them in their work to keep the community safe. ”

Paz y Bien staff member

“ Some of the young people and staff from Paz y Bien cleared out a space near my street that was full of rubbish and junk. Before they cleaned it I was scared to walk past because thieves used to hide in there. They planted trees and plants and now it looks nice as well as being safer. When they were working I talked to the children and the staff and realized that I shouldn't just assume that all of them are bad. They've been through lots of difficult things and we should all respect each other and look out for each other – it makes the community a much safer place to live in if we all work together to protect each other. ”

Community member



News

Sponsored Walks

Help us spread the word!

Last year, our supporters helped to deliver over 700 COTA leaflets to their local churches, libraries, schools and work places. If you can help us deliver a small batch to places near you, please contact Heidi. We would especially like to hear from supporters who live outside London.



New Forest Walk

COTA held its first sponsored walk in the New Forest last September and raised over £900. Thanks to Helena Garzón who led this initiative. We plan on organising the walk again in the summer, so look for further details on our website in June.

Thames Walk

Our traditional Thames Walk returns on **Sunday 6th May 2012**. Invite your family and friends to join our walk along to the riverside and into Richmond Park this May bank holiday. Let's make it a fabulous day out! (If the weather allows, we

will also have a picnic and some live music, in Latin American style.)

We urgently need volunteer stewards for these walks. Thames Walk stewards will need to participate in a "dummy walk" on April 21st as well as being available on 6th May. If you would like to help, please contact Heidi by April 13th.

If you would like to organise a sponsored walk in your local area, please contact us.

Letter from our Director

Dear Friend,

I hope that this newsletter – and our accompanying film, "Voices from Colombia," which can be seen on our website – bring to life our four key areas of work and how we are transforming the lives of vulnerable children across Colombia.

None of this work would be possible without your support – and this year, more than ever, we need you to continue supporting our work. At Children of the Andes we do not have investments of our own to draw on, which means that every

penny we send to our project partners has to be fund-raised. With the economic outlook still uncertain and already impacting on some of our income sources, we urgently need your help to continue providing stable funding to our partner projects.

So this year, why not commit to doing one thing to raise funds for Children of the Andes? This could be setting up a standing order, or perhaps challenging yourself in a new and fun way and raising sponsorship. You can find loads of ideas and suggestions on our web-site and help us to transform children's lives.



On behalf of the COTA team and the 1000s of children who benefit from our work,

"Gracias!"

Rachel

For more info about participating in events and fundraising in your community contact

heidy@childrenoftheandes.org or **020 7549 0225**

Thank yous

Thanks to all our supporters whose generous donations make our work possible.

Sports and Challenges

Thanks to **Arron Pitman** who raised £222 through the Cardiff Half Marathon and **Juan Montoya** who raised £865 through Lands End 100 West Cornwall Cyclosporive.

We still have places for the Bupa London 10,000 on 27th May and the Nightrider on 9th June. Contact us to reserve one.



Community

Thanks to the **Inner Wheel Club** of Liverpool who supported us through their monthly lunch gatherings.

A big thank you to everyone at **Brompton College** for their generous support last year.

Thanks to religious groups that have supported us in recent months, including: **Alderney Religious Society of Friends, Alexandra Presbyterian Church (Belfast), Altrincham Methodist Church, Centering Prayer Group (London), Church of the Immaculate Conception (Stroud), St Albans' Religious Society of Friends, St Andrews Clubmoor (Liverpool), St John the Evangelist (Edinburgh) St Joseph's RC Church (South Molton), St Leonard's Toddler Group (Teignmouth), St Margaret Clitherow's Church (York), the Clandon Churches and Westminster Abbey.**

Individuals



We would like to thank **Alexandra Naranjo**, who raised £153 by organising a Christmas Gathering, **Felix Estupiñan** raised £285 by undergoing a sponsored haircut and **Shirley Mercer**, who donated £50 earned from dog-sitting.

Catherine Turner and **Helen Statham** asked for donations instead of birthday presents, **Anita Lalwan** made a collection at her work place, **Juan Carlos Arenas** persuaded his company to donate £400, and **Juan Montoya** persuaded his company to donate £500.

Regular Giving

Spring 2012

Remember: a standing order is the most cost effective way for us to administer your contribution

Instructions to the Manager

Your account:

Name of the Bank or Building Society: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____/_____/_____

Account No.: ____/____/____/____ Sort Code: ____/____/____

Your donation:

Please pay **Children of the Andes** (Account No.: **22052801**, 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 would like Children of the Andes to reclaim tax on any donations I have made over the last 4 years and all future donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Please let us know if you change your address or if you no longer pay an amount of income tax or capital gains equal to the tax we will reclaim on your donation (currently 25p for every £1 you give).

Please return completed form to Children of the Andes, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, EC2A 4LT

Thank you!



Field Office Diary

Susie, COTA's Finance Manager, recently went to Colombia. Here she describes her impressions of some of the children we support.

One of the stories that touched me most on my visit was from our partner Forming Futures Foundation (FFF). FFF works with young people in care to help them prepare for adult life and has a drop in centre where, once they've left, the youngsters can come back any time for a chat, a moan, advice, or just a friendly face after a tough day.



For many who don't have families they can turn to, this is a small island of stability in their lives. I was upset then, to hear that this was jeopardised because FFF was having trouble paying their rent. Whilst we provide financial support to our partners, we always have to balance how much they need and how much we can give. I know that we encourage and support partners to raise their own funds to cover this difference, but

since FFF supports care leavers, for whom the state offers no support, this task is particularly difficult.

Chatting to one of the young boys who dropped in, I was inspired to hear that he and a group of other care leavers were donating COP\$12,000 (approx. £4) each month to



help FFF. It really brought it home to me how much this support means to these young people; they care so much about helping FFF during these difficult times.

Whether they are in work, studying, or looking for work, all of the care leavers I met are different; but one thing they have in common is that they need this link that gives them some support, someone to share their day with – a link that so many of us take for granted. As a mother, these are all young people that I would be proud to call my children.

Please see our blog for more stories from Susie's visit at www.childrenoftheandes.org

All photos have been taken with the children's permission and full consent has been given for their use in COTA publications. All names have been changed and photos carefully chosen to protect the child's identity.

Children of the Andes: Keeping children safe, defending children's rights and strengthening children's organisations in Colombia

Please donate now

Your donation:

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

Payment details:

Cheque (Please make cheques payable to **Children of the Andes**)

Visa Mastercard CAF Charitycard.

Card No.:

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Expiry Date: ___/___/___ (mm/yy)

Signed: _____

Date: ___/___/___ (dd/mm/yy)

Donor details:

We won't share your details with anyone else.

Title: _____ First name: _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ / _____

Tel: (_____) _____

E-mail: _____

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

Gift Aid Declaration

I would like Children of the Andes to reclaim tax on any donations I have made over the last 4 years and all future donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature: _____

Date: ___/___/___

Please let us know if you change your address or if you no longer pay an amount of income tax or capital gains equal to the tax we will reclaim on your donation (currently 25p for every £1 you give).

Please send me a COTA fundraising pack

Thank you!

Children of the Andes, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, London, EC2A 4LT
 t: 020 7549 0225 e: info@childrenoftheandes.org w: www.childrenoftheandes.org

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