


A yellow circular logo with the text "CHILDREN CHANGE COLOMBIA" in red and blue.

CHILDREN
CHANGE
COLOMBIA

SPRING NEWSLETTER

No 65 / 2025

A young woman and a young man are standing in a large, open plaza paved with cobblestones. In the background is a grand, multi-story building with many columns, likely a government or historical building. Other people are visible in the background, some walking and some standing. The sky is blue with some clouds.

**Read on to
discover how,
together, we're
breaking cycles
of poverty and
opening doors to
opportunity—
one classroom,
one child at a
time.**

www.childrenchangecolombia.org



Education in Colombia:

The Problem we are Tackling

Access to quality education in Colombia remains a significant and persistent challenge, especially for children and young people living in rural and marginalised communities. Despite efforts to improve the education system in recent years, deep-rooted inequalities continue to prevent thousands of children from receiving the education they deserve.

These challenges are driven by a combination of socioeconomic disparities, geographical barriers, inadequate infrastructure, and the lingering effects of armed conflict. In many rural territories, many children lack access to schools or are forced to prioritise work over school to support their families, contributing to high dropout rates and low academic achievement.

The COVID-19 pandemic further deepened these challenges. Colombia experienced one of the world's longest periods of school closures, affecting more than 13 million students nationwide. With limited access to digital tools and internet connectivity, remote learning was out of reach for many. This digital divide was especially stark in rural areas, where only 7% of students had access to internet-enabled computers. Government-led attempts to bridge the digital divide—such as distributing tablets or expanding broadband—have largely failed to reach the most remote communities. As a result, many children are left behind, unable to catch up with their peers in urban centres.

According to Colombia's Ministry of Education, as of 2022, over 200,000 children aged 5 to 16 were out of school, with the highest concentrations in rural and conflict-affected areas. National assessments reveal that more than 50% of students in rural schools fail to meet minimum competency levels in mathematics and reading by the end of primary school. These educational gaps are not just academic—they carry long-term consequences: according to a 2021 report by the National Planning Department, young people who do not complete secondary education are three times more likely to be unemployed and twice as likely to remain in poverty compared to their peers who finish school.

Additionally, the lack of training and education in relevant skills prevents young people from benefiting from emerging economic sectors. Without access to education that equips them for the future, children and youth remain trapped in cycles of poverty and exclusion, unable to realise their full potential.

That is why Children Change Colombia started working four years ago in rural areas on bilingualism, vocational training, ecotourism, university scholarships. In this newsletter you can find information of some of our educational projects.

●● ‘Education, Livelihoods, and Entrepreneurship’ in La Sierra Nevada



To address these pressing issues, Children Change Colombia is implementing a transformative initiative called Education, Livelihoods, and Young Entrepreneurship in the Caribbean. This project started in 2022 with the objective to provide educational support and economic empowerment to children and youth in Magdalena. The project focuses on improving access to education, developing vocational skills, and creating sustainable livelihoods in key rural communities.

The project targets some of the most disadvantaged areas in Colombia. Only last year the project supported more than 1,500 children and young people and seeks to directly benefit 510 children, 35 teachers, and 620 teachers and parents across four rural schools. It is built on four key pillars: enhancing education quality, providing vocational training, empowering teachers, and delivering psychosocial support.

Enhancing Education

To combat low academic performance and limited access to quality learning, the project introduces extracurricular programmes that focus on core subjects, STEM education, and English.

These initiatives are delivered through interactive projects, practical exercises, and one-on-one mentorship to keep students engaged and motivated. By strengthening foundational skills and broadening students' horizons to better academic and professional opportunities.

Vocational Training

Recognising the untapped potential of Colombia's tourism and green economy sectors, the project provides young people with hands-on vocational training in entrepreneurship, ecotourism, and environmental sustainability. Through internships, field visits, and real-world business experiences, young participants gain the skills and confidence they need to enter the workforce or start their own enterprises. This approach not only prepares them for meaningful careers but also supports the development of sustainable local economies.

Teacher Development

A crucial part of the project is the training of teachers in innovative, student-centred teaching methods. Teachers are introduced to techniques such as gamification, digital tools, and interactive learning strategies to help foster greater classroom engagement. With this training, teachers are better equipped to create supportive, inclusive, and stimulating learning environments that inspire their students to succeed.

Psychosocial Support

Recognising the emotional and psychological challenges many children face, the project also offers vital mental health support. Children, along with parents and teachers, participate in workshops focused on building resilience, confidence, and healthy social relationships. These sessions help improve students' well-being, reduce school dropout rates, and strengthen the sense of community within schools.

By addressing both educational and economic barriers, this project offers a holistic response to the challenges facing youth in Colombia's Caribbean region. It not only equips children with academic and practical skills but also empowers them to take control of their futures.

Update on Our Scholars: Trip to Bogota and New Students

Last year we launched our scholarship program and thanks to the amazing support we have been able to provide scholarships to six young people, Keiner (Law), Gizeth (Psychology), María, (Finances and International Business), Dennis (Agribusiness Management) and Alejandra (Nursing) and Alice (Business Administration).

Thanks to all the Angels that have joined the program. We have already had two online sessions and in February, Oren and Felicity were able to visit Dennis in la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and see other educational projects we have there.

All the scholars are doing social work too in different CCC projects. María and Alice are supporting the Girl Research Lead program that teaches young women to use their voice to defend their rights and change their context. We are also very happy to announce that Keiner and Gizeth are working for CCC. Gizeth recently joined Children Change Colombia staff in our project "Preventing sexual and gender-based violence". Keiner has also found a unique way to give back to his community by participating in the "Sé" project as a music teacher, honing his musical talents while simultaneously learning how to teach and inspire others.



Some of the students have also had the opportunity to travel by plane for the first time and go to Bogota. Gizeth went last December to take training on education for families with preschool children and babies and Keiner and Dennis went last month to attend an event in their University, Politécnico Gran Colombiano and visit our project on prevention on sexual exploitation in Bogota. They were able to talk with other young people and tell them live story to and how they have been able to reach their goals.



If you want to read more about the project and watch the documentary about Dennis and Keiner trip to Bogota check it out on our website or by scanning the QR Code below.



Thanks to all the Angels that make this possible, and if you would like to join the program please write to our Executive Director to angela.carreno@childrenchange colombia.org

Empowering Youth in Santander

In rural Santander, young people face major challenges in accessing quality education and securing job opportunities. Limited resources in schools and homes, low connectivity, and a belief that opportunities don't exist in their region are key barriers.

Our first project in Santander gathers the learnings of past experiences and adapts it to the local context to tackle these issues. We are supporting 500 public school students with training in English, financial literacy, employability and entrepreneurship with a focus on sustainability. All students participate in weekly English sessions, designed to boost their communication skills through practical learning. Around 300 students are receive financial literacy workshops.

They learn how money "works" early on, a crucial and an often-overlooked skill in schools to foster economic growth. Finally, 150 students in upper grades will receive specialized training in entrepreneurship and employability, preparing them for the job market or to develop feasible business ideas.

By leveraging their skills and the region's growing potential in eco-tourism, agribusiness, and traditional crafts, we aim to help them build confidence and see the opportunities within their own communities.

We are excited to witness these youngsters take bold steps toward a brighter, self-sustained future.

PazA La Mochila 12 locations and counting

The "Mochilas" are backpacks equipped with engaging, high-quality materials, designed to adapt to various territories and age groups. They integrate creativity and symbolism, serving as bridges to address challenging topics such as violence, conflict, and personal experiences, while fostering resilience and the potential for positive change.

"Paz a la Mochila" has travelled across Colombia, reaching over 12 cities and delivering 27 backpacks. Through direct workshop sessions, it has positively impacted more than 200 teachers, professionals, and community leaders, as well as approximately 400 children. Follow-up sessions have revealed that the kit is also being effectively used within families and communities, further extending its reach and amplifying its impact. Moreover, we made London workshops, in connection with Saint Gabriel's School and Colombia Colores, where we had an amazing family session!

At its heart, this initiative seeks to empower children and adolescents to cultivate empathy and create meaningful, tangible changes in their daily interactions with themselves, their peers, and their communities

We aim to provide teachers and students with tools to promote conflict resolution, gender equality, and critical thinking, that is why we are happy to announce that we will start working in alliance with Bogotá Municipal Government.



Our New Coding Projects

Children Change Colombia is thrilled to announce that we have started work on two new initiatives designed to help young people from low-income backgrounds break into the tech industry. Many young people in Colombia are eager to pursue careers in web development, UX design, cybersecurity, and data science, but accessing quality training remains a significant barrier. Traditional education can be expensive, and without the right connections, finding a job in tech feels out of reach.

The first program changes that through fully funded training, mentorship, and career support. Motivated individuals will receive hands-on learning from top boot camps. Students from 16 to 25 years old will also receive English courses and job application support, ensuring they have everything they need to succeed in the tech sector.

The second project works with young children (5-12) to integrate computational thinking concepts and practices into their classrooms through a modifiable and multilingual educational robot that introduces young learners to sequencing and programming out of the box.

By working closely with experienced professionals and learning from real-world projects, students gain the confidence to navigate the job market and build a sustainable future in technology. With demand for digital skills continuing to grow, initiatives like this are key to creating long-term opportunities for young talent.

In the months ahead, we'll be sharing more details about these projects, and we're thrilled about the potential impact these initiatives can have on young people's futures.

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Education in Crisis: Catatumbo and Chocó

Emergency situations always have a direct impact on children's access to education. Either natural disasters, such as the massive flooding in Colombia at the end of 2024, or the escalation of conflict in places like Catatumbo, where a huge escalation of armed conflict in January led to massive displacement, or Chocó, which has witnessed a continuous escalation of conflict with communities constantly temporarily displaced or confined over the last few years, are some cases. School closures and high desertion rates are tangible consequences that affect already vulnerable communities, where opportunities are lacking and children yearn for safe spaces to learn, play and just be children.

The emergency projects we are implementing include activities that support children's access to education. In Catatumbo, we are supporting 50 displaced families with food and hygiene kits and basic psychosocial support, while 100 children are taking part in psycho-educational workshops integrating art and music.

In Chocó, we are providing basic food and hygiene kits to 600 families affected by the floods and conflict who have lost their livelihoods, and will distribute 900 school kits to children, giving them the basic tools to continue their education and help them stay in the classroom. While the outlook is challenging, we are committed to helping communities create safe spaces for learning and healing.

EVENTS

Angela at the United Nations in Geneva

Children Change Colombia was invited by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to participate in the pre-session working group of Colombia in Geneva. Our Executive Director Angela Carreño attended the session and presented the situation of forced recruitment of Children in Colombia.



Call for Change: Conference in UCL

The panel provided an insightful conversation on the challenges and opportunities for peace in Colombia, featuring experts in the field. Academics and field workers presented findings from their research and projects related to conflict and peace in Colombia.



PazALaMochila in London

This was an amazing opportunity to teach young Colombian children from the 'Colombia Colores' project about peacebuilding and resilience.



Lili and Patricia in London

Some of our Colombian staff visited London to participate in various activities and bring some of our initiatives in Colombia to the children in the United Kingdom.



Price Forbes Conference in Colombia

We had the great opportunity to be invited to Priceforbes LatAm Airline & Operators Forum event in Colombia to present our work to potential corporate partners.



Tower Bridge Integration Day

Our Tower Bridge Integration Day was a great opportunity for our network of dedicated volunteers and some of our UK and Colombian staff to collaborate and enjoy a day together.





Thames Walk 2025

Save the Date

Join us for a 10-mile walk along the Thames, ending with a Colombian picnic in Richmond Park, all to raise funds for children in Colombia. Your support will help provide education, peace, and opportunities for children affected by violence and exclusion.

WHEN: Saturday 17th of May 2025 | 10:00am - 4:00pm (the walk will take at least 4 hours). You can also join us for a shorter route (4.5 miles) or take on the route as a run! Get in touch with us for details.

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)

Scan to get
your tickets!



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Gift Aid Declaration

giftaid it

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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!

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