

OUR IMPACT

2020

Children Change Colombia



**We ensure that the most
at risk children can claim
their right to a safe and
happy childhood**

**CHILDREN
CHANGE
COLOMBIA**

Overview: Understanding our impact

Children Change Colombia works with the most at-risk children in Colombia to keep them safe and defend their rights in the long term.

We want to help children create a society where their rights are respected and they are included in important decisions that affect their lives now and in the future.

To do this, we work in partnership with Colombian children's organisations that have a proven record in defending children's rights and helping them demand change.

Our 30 years of working with children have convinced us that giving children the ability to speak up for their own rights is a powerful way to ensure that children's rights are protected in a lasting and effective way.

In order to back-up this conviction with evidence, we have developed a system that enables us to effectively measure and understand the impact of our work each year.

The information presented in this report has been collated by our partners and assessed against a set of overarching indicators – verifiable changes that show we are achieving our key strategic aims of:

- 1) Protecting children from immediate harm and defending their rights in the long term.**
- 2) Tackling neglected issues that threaten children's rights.**
- 3) Strengthening children's organisations in Colombia.**

The following report pulls together our overall organisational impact in 2020 in these three areas.



Overview:

2020 in numbers

The people

In 2020 we worked with **1,408** children and young people. As a result of this work, we also indirectly impacted the lives of a further **660** children – siblings, peers and neighbours of the children who participated in our project activities.

We also worked with adults - parents, teachers, policy makers – to encourage and help them to keep children safe now and in the long-term. In 2020, **367** adults participated in our project activities or attended forums, performances and campaigns led by children from our projects. We also impacted the lives of a further **592** adults.

That's **959** people who are better equipped to protect children's rights as a result of our work in 2020!

The issues

We work to tackle the most neglected issues facing Colombian society. These issues jeopardise the wellbeing of children and young people across Colombia and pose a considerable

threat to the long-term development of the next generation, and paradoxically they are widely disregarded or under addressed. In 2020 we worked on three neglected issues:

- exclusion from education
- sexual and gender-based violence
- forced recruitment into armed groups or criminal exploitation and reintegration into society



Covid-19 Pandemic

In response to the effects of the pandemic on the communities we support, we launched the Help Colombia Covid-19 Campaign on the 1st of April 2020 and activities were implemented until the end of February 2021. Through the campaign we supported:



Overview: 2020 in numbers

The partners

We worked with these 5 inspiring organisations in 2020, providing much-needed funding to run their programmes but also technical support to help them become stronger organisations, better able to defend the rights of at-risk children in the long-term:



Other impact numbers:

Number of unique visitors on CCC website:

➤ 26,349 new website visitors

➤ 5,899 returning visitors

➤ 32,248 user sessions

Number of active Facebook members:

➤ 2,823 active Facebook members



8 CCC events:

➤ 1 in the UK

➤ 7 virtual



Protecting children's rights

In 2020 we protected the rights of:*

901

children against
discrimination

961

children to
protection from
harmful drugs

789

children to family
guidance as they
develop

743

children to the
prevention of
sale and
trafficking

1,007

children to the
respect for their
views

1,007

children to
protection from
exploitation

743

children to their
protection from
harmful work

218

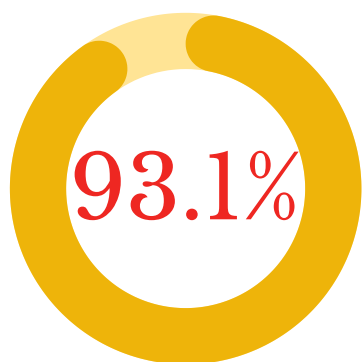
children in
detention

1,064

children to recovery
and reintegration

**These rights are defined within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

Protecting children's rights



93.1% of children we worked with in 2020 reported better knowledge of their rights

80% of the projects we carried out in 2020 included positive leadership activities with children and young people



In 2020 our 5 partners:



led 53 activities where children could implement and develop their leadership skills



shared their learnings with **18** other organisations



participated in **3** reflection and learning events

The neglected issue: Exclusion from education

Education is every child's right. If children in Colombia are to break free from the poverty cycle, education is crucial. Not only does education give children opportunities to build independent and fulfilling lives, but it is also a joy that should be experienced by every child.

Situation

According to the Ministry of Education around 102,000 children and adolescents in schools and nursery schools in Colombia abandoned their studies during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Children in rural Colombia are far more likely to drop out of school early than students in urban settings, and illiteracy rates in the countryside are much higher.

Solution

Due to the lockdown and episodic armed strikes by illegal armed groups, the 2020 phase of our project tackling exclusion from education was not implemented. Nonetheless, our partner ACADESAN was supported with a Covid-19 mitigation project which provided toiletries and personal protection equipment to communities. Additionally, ACADESAN received 80 tablets to help 400 children and young people access schooling digitally. The teachers involved were trained to use the devices. In 2021, children and young people will use the devices to access quality ethno-education through an offline learning platform, the O-Lab app.



The project, which aims to tackle exclusion from education, will begin its implementation in 2021.

Workshops will teach children about their Afro-Colombian heritage, how to protect themselves from forced recruitment into armed groups and from harmful labour, and how to protect the natural environment. There will be a strong focus on strengthening children's socio-emotional skills.



The armed conflict is causing us problems, we need better schools, otherwise children will keep joining armed groups or move away to the city – our local culture and traditions will be lost forever.

Cristina*, 12 years old



The neglected issue: Sexual and gender-based violence

Sexual violence, sex tourism and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) violates children's rights, harms their health, welfare and development, and increases their vulnerability to further violence. Experiencing sexual and gender-based violence can jeopardise children's relationships, their ability and freedom to express sexual orientation, access to education, and chance for a positive future.

Situation

According to Colombian newspaper *El Nuevo Siglo*, an estimated 35,000 children in Colombia are affected by CSEC, with girls aged 14 to 17, being those most affected. In 2019 1,541 victims of CSEC were reported in Colombia; official cases decreased to 1,375 in 2020. However, it is difficult to give precise figures as the stigma attached to CSEC means that cases largely go unreported.

The so-called 'sexual tourism industry' is a structural problem faced by Colombian youth which, unfortunately, is present in all of the territorial and administrative units (departments) in the country.

Solution

In 2020 we worked with partners Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes (ACJ) and Círculo de Estudios (CDE) in Bogotá and Cartagena to teach children about



“

The relationships in my family are better now, we know our rights and we know what to do if they are violated.

Arelyn*, 15 years old, CDE

”

their sexual and reproductive rights to help them protect themselves, and their friends, families and neighbours from abuse or discrimination. Our partners also worked with parents, schools, police and other adults to help create a protective environment for children and to identify and work with at-risk children before they experience sexual abuse.

ACJ works to increase children's protection and provide those who have experienced sexual exploitation with support to recover from their trauma. In 2020 the project helped 270 children, 490 pupils from 2 schools, 149 families and 91 young adults.

Our partner CDE runs programmes to tackle sexual violence, offer support to survivors, and help women to report violence. Between 2018-2020, CDE gave support to 169 children, 57 community leaders, 12 teachers and more indirect beneficiaries.

The neglected issue: Forced recruitment into armed groups or criminal exploitation and reintegration into society

Protracted violence and poverty have led thousands of children to be recruited into armed groups and gangs, by force or under the impression that membership will offer an escape from poverty. Armed groups forcibly brutalise the children they recruit. Children formerly affiliated with these groups face severe stigmatisation, receive ineffective support from the state and face countless obstacles upon their reintegration into society.



Situation

According COALICO, 222 cases of child recruitment were registered between January and June - and at least 5,742 children were forcibly displaced in 2020. Additionally, there were over 4,000 children and young people in the juvenile justice system in Colombia in 2020; several thousand more were placed in protection facilities. This is unsurprising given that between 2002 and 2020, 5,524 boys and girls were demobilised from armed groups.

Solution

CCC helped local partners, Fundación CRAN and Tiempo de Juego (TDJ), to make communities safer places for children to grow up in. Our partners developed programmes to keep children off the streets, away from violence and the threat of recruitment, and support their reintegration into society.

TDJ works to prevent the recruitment of young people into armed groups and

“

I plan to go to TDJ to learn new things because I want to be a teacher and work in foundations with children involved with drugs, with teenagers like me.

Ana, 16, youth leader, TDJ*

”

tackles sexual and gender-based violence against children and young people by empowering youth leaders through workshops and assisting young people in being leaders of their own learning and transformation. In 2020, the project helped 218 girls and boys and 85 adults (teachers, caregivers) in two communities.

CRAN aims to protect demobilised young people at risk of (re)recruitment into armed groups and organised crime by helping them to create better relationships with family and friends and by developing their life skills in order to build a positive future for themselves. In 2020, the project worked to break down the barriers to social inclusion. CRAN reported that 85% of children in the programme strengthened their socio-emotional skills and 9 governmental staff members increased their awareness of the need to promote more protective environments.

Cross-cutting issues

There are three cross-cutting topics involved in our projects that could evolve to become higher priorities in the future. In 2020 we addressed these issues as additional concerns within our main neglected areas. We worked to raise awareness about the following:

Young people and the environment

The current climate change situation encourages all of our projects to be aware of the natural environment and of making choices that benefit the Earth. Some of the ways our partners practiced environmental awareness in 2020 include; conserving energy and water, recycling and activism.

Children and young people on the move

In 2020 Colombia hosted around 1.7 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants according to the UNHCR annual report. The 2020 Global Annual Report on Internal Displacement indicates that Colombia has the second highest number of internally displaced people (IDPs).

Among these figures there are many children and young people. CCC worked with some Venezuelan families that live in the “Zona de Tolerancia” (Red Light District) in Bogotá. Additionally, most of the children that participated in the CDE project in Quibdó come from families of internally displaced people.

Pandemic

Covid-19 affected all the projects we implemented in 2020 and was a key



factor to consider when preparing the 2021 projects. The pandemic will be an important cross-cutting issue that will have an impact on our projects for years to come.

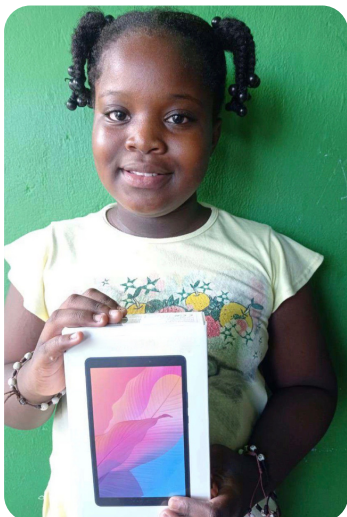
Colombia went into lockdown from March until September 2020, exacerbating many already-existing problems. The basic needs of the at-risk people that we work with were not being met (food, rent, toiletries); many faced multiple new challenges, including health risks, family confinement, school closures, and economic vulnerability. Additionally, the rates of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect also increased during this crisis.

We launched “Campaign Help Colombia Covid-19” in April, in which we delivered emergency relief distributions over 10 months. The campaign supported 27,000 people with emergency food packages, toiletries, housing support, PPE and first aid kits, dignity kits and tablets.

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020

Covid-19 affected all the projects we implemented in 2020 and was a key factor to consider when preparing the 2021 projects. The pandemic will be an important cross-cutting issue that will have an impact on our projects for years to come.

Colombia went into lockdown from March until September 2020, exacerbating many already-existing problems. The basic needs of the people that we work with were not being met (food, rent, toiletries); many faced multiple new challenges, including health risks, family confinement, school closures, and economic vulnerability. Additionally, the rates of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect also increased during this crisis.



We launched “Campaign Help Colombia Covid-19” in April, in which we delivered emergency relief distributions over 10 months. The campaign supported 27,000 people and provided:

- **Housing support** to 42 families
- **Biosecurity kits** for 107 families
- **323 food and toiletries packages**
- **625 dignity kits** including sanitary items
- **PPE and first aid kits** for 72 rural communities
- **PPE** for 95 community leaders and staff members
- **120 tablets** for students

Capacity building activities

A significant part of our work, and what differentiates us from many other UK-based NGOs, is the extent and permanence of the support that we are able to offer to our partners, thanks to the presence of our permanent project officer in Bogotá.

Resilience skills in a time of uncertainty

We aim to provide on-going support to our partners and the communities we work with. In August, we had our first webinar, on 'Resilience Skills in Times of Uncertainty'.

The webinar was hosted by Marianne Focke, a psychologist with a background working with children and adolescents to combat depression and anxiety, by using mindfulness techniques, meditation, and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). This webinar shared resilience tools and skills to use in professional and personal settings. We explored useful tools such as mental agility and optimism, as well as resilience interventions based on positive psychology and cognitive strategies to manage anxiety and increase positive emotions. We were delighted to share this with our partners and our incredible community in Colombia and the UK.

Building resilience in children and adolescents

In November, we held our second Webinar on 'Building resilience in Children and Adolescents', also hosted by Marianne Focke. As with the first one, this webinar was conducted both in English and Spanish.

Our expert spoke about the importance

of helping educate children on resilience in order to help them overcome the stress and pressures of daily life, which is more important than ever given the fast-paced environment we live in today. We had the exciting opportunity to share this with some of our partners.

Webinar with Action for Child Trauma (ACTI) and our local partners

In September, we had an amazing webinar with Action for Child Trauma (ACTI). ACTI has worked in 15 countries for the last 10 years. They provide free training for NGO staff who work closely with children who have experienced trauma due to war and violence.

The workshop introduced our partners to ACTI's work, and the needs of children who have experienced psychological trauma, including anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. It also allowed ACTI to learn more about the needs of the children our partners care for and the local context. ACJ, Acadesan, TDJ, CDE and CRAN will be part of the 2021 training to develop and sustain their expertise in treating children with mental health problems.



UK Office:

5 Richbell Place, Holborn, London,
WC1N 3LA

Phone: (+44) 07852 985 711

Email: info@childrenchangecolombia.org

www.childrenchangecolombia.org

Facebook: Children Change Colombia

Twitter: @ChildChangeCOL

Instagram: [childrenchangecolombia](https://www.instagram.com/childrenchangecolombia)

Colombia office:

Carrera 5 # 67 - 84, Oficina 302,
Bogotá

Teléfono: (+57) 312 298 8980

Email: colombia@childrenchangecolombia.org

Report written by:

Juan Sebastian Londoño Bustos

Milo Winstone

Design:

Poppy Purvis

Children Change Colombia is a UK registered Charity, No. 1075037. Company Reg. No. 3731943

Cover photo: children involved in our project with Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes (ACJ)

Photographs show real participants in CCC-funded projects.

***Quote names:** All the children's names in case studies have been changed for safeguarding purposes.