



---

# OUR IMPACT 2018



# Overview: Understanding our impact

---



Children Change Colombia works with the most at risk children, 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 who have a proven record in defending children's rights and helping them demand change.

Our 25+ years of working with children have convinced us that when **children are able to speak up for their own rights**, this 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 2018 in these three areas.

Our 2018 figures reflect an anticipated reduction in the number of people worked with compared to 2017 because of a change in the projects we funded. In 2017 two of our partner projects came to a successful conclusion. They both incorporated large awareness-raising events and campaigns and therefore reached a large number of people.

Working with fewer children has real benefits – we aim to offer intensive, personalised, holistic support to children, families and community members to help them internalise what they learn through the project and use this to protect themselves and other children in the long-term. This kind of support can mean working with fewer young people.

# Overview: 2018 in numbers



## The people

In 2018 we worked with **2,066 children and young people**. As a result of this work, we also **indirectly impacted the lives of a further 1,856 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 2018, **1,162 adults** participated in our project activities or attended forums, performances and campaigns led by children from our projects. A further 940 adults benefited indirectly from our work.

We helped  
**3,922**  
children to change  
Colombia  
in 2018

**That's over 6,000 people who are better equipped to protect children's rights as a result of our work in 2018 alone!**

## The issues

We tackle the most neglected issues – issues that pose a serious threat to children's rights and well-being, but on which insufficient work is being done to counter the harm they cause.

In 2018, we worked on **4 neglected issues**:

- sexual and gender-based violence
- recruitment into armed groups and reintegration into society
- commercial sexual exploitation
- mining and children's rights

## The partners

We worked with these **7 inspiring organisations** in 2018, 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 vulnerable children in the long-term:



# Protecting children's rights:

In 2018 we protected the rights\* of:

2,066

children to freedom from violence, abuse and neglect.

1,490

children to protection from sexual exploitation.

2,444

children to freedom of expression.

1,919

children to recovery from trauma.

1,943

children to relax, play and participate in a range of cultural activities.

635

children to protection from involvement in war and armed conflict.

\* These rights are defined within the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. In total, in 2018 we protected 16 Rights of the Child.





# Protecting children's rights:

---



**83% of children** that we worked with in 2018 showed that they had learnt how to protect themselves from violence and abuse.



**84% adults** that we worked with in 2018 learnt how to make a more protective environment for children, keeping them safe in the long-term.

In 2018 our 7 partners:

- shared their experience of good practice with **90 organisations** working in the field of children's rights.
- **influenced at least 8 organisations** to improve their practices.
- trained **1 organisation** to successfully implement their model for protecting children's rights.



# The neglected issue: Sexual and gender-based violence

Sexual violence violates children's rights, damages their health, welfare and development, and increases their vulnerability to further violence.

In 2018, 22,800 cases of child sex abuse were registered in Colombia - that's one case every 22 minutes. Despite this, it continues to be a major 'silent' problem in Colombia. Sexual violence has also been used as a weapon of war during Colombia's prolonged civil conflict.

## Spotlight on: Putumayo

*With our partner Corporación Casa Amazonía, we're working to protect children and young people in remote indigenous communities from sexual violence and forced recruitment by armed groups by tackling taboos that keep these dangers invisible.*

### Children gain confidence to seek help

Regular therapy and rights education sessions helped 76 at risk children to develop an increased sense of self-worth, confidence and self-respect and to build open, protective relationships with their families.

### Children understand risks

65 children can identify the risks they face in their communities, including sexual violence. They understand that they have a right to be protected from these risks and where to turn for protection.

### Music spreads hope

All 76 took part in regular music lessons, learning instruments like the keyboard and violin - opportunities that they had never considered were an option for them in their remote villages.

### Parents promote gender equality

Parents have started making changes at home - ensuring their sons share domestic chores with their daughters, and including their children in family decision-making processes rather than leaving this to the father or another male relative.



**"We've discovered alternatives to the lives we were living before - we've changed the way we think about ourselves."**

**Melany, 15, Putumayo**

# The neglected issue: Sexual and gender-based violence

Sexual violence violates children's rights, damages their health, welfare and development, and increases their vulnerability to further violence.

In 2018, 22,800 cases of child sex abuse were registered in Colombia - that's one case every 22 minutes. Despite this, it continues to be a major 'silent' problem in Colombia. Sexual violence has also been used as a weapon of war during Colombia's prolonged civil conflict.

## Spotlight on: Quibdó

*With our partner Circulo de Estudios, we're working to reduce the risk of conflict-related sexual violence against children in the highest risk parts of Quibdó and to increase adults' ability to protect children from it.*

### Children understand their rights

59 children gained a strong, practical understanding of children's rights and spoke confidently about the social problems and opportunities that exist in their communities, linking these to the violation/ protection of rights.

The children have formed strong bonds of friendship, meeting to travel to the project together safely and discussing their fears and doubts with one another.

All 59 children also participated in the creation, rehearsal and presentation of a dance performance that highlighted the risks they face in their communities, which was attended by over 400 people in Quibdó.

***"Practically all the fear we have that something bad could happen to our children disappears when we know they are with the community leaders."***

***Parent of a participating child***

### Developing youth leadership

40 young people undertook youth leader training - learning the qualities of a good leader and practicing them by running activities with the younger children. They also took part in the city's annual Carnival parade with a campaign about children's rights.

### Adults listen to children

23 local adults, 'community leaders', helped run the project workshops and carried out home visits to every child's family. Now they are points of reference who the children and their parents turn to for support during or outside the project.



# The neglected issue: Recruitment into armed groups and reintegration into society

Tens of thousands of children have been recruited into Colombia's various illegal armed groups and gangs. Some are forced or indoctrinated, or are enticed with promises of money, status, or protection for their family. Young people who manage to escape face severe stigmatisation and insufficient support from the state to build a new life.



## Spotlight on: Bogotá

*We brought together the expertise of two of our long-term partners – Tiempo de Juego and Fundación Mamá Yolanda – to provide a holistic approach to tackling girls' involvement in gangs.*

### Building a new future

105 girls and young women at a residential care home took part in weekly arts activities combined with life skills and gender workshops. They have started putting their new skills, like conflict resolution and teamwork, into practice to help them achieve new, positive life goals. They have greater self-esteem too and understand they have a right to a life outside the gangs they see around them every day.



### Adults providing better care

We provided 85 parents with intensive support, including home visits and group workshops, to help them resolve family difficulties through dialogue rather than aggression, opening up opportunities to understand and protect their children from the risks they face.

We supported 11 staff from the care centre to provide better care to the girls and trained them to replicate project activities when our team are not there.

*With our partner CRAN, we are supporting young people in Bogotá who've left Colombia's guerrilla groups. We're also helping CRAN to build the capacity of children's organisations from other regions to support former child soldiers and other children who face a high risk of recruitment.*

### Redefining the past

62 demobilised young people and their 23 foster parents received intensive individual and group support in Bogotá. 50 of the young people no longer view themselves as passive victims - they recognise their capacity to lead change in their lives and they have clear ideas about their hopes and dreams for the future. Importantly, they also demonstrate the skills, confidence and determination they need to achieve their dreams.

### Building local capacity

CRAN worked with three community organisations, two near Bogotá and another in Putumayo, helping them to integrate new strategies for protecting local children from armed groups. Key to this was strengthening their work with parents. With CRAN's support, the three organisations worked with 247 children and 179 of their parents to increase the children's protection against recruitment.



# The neglected issue: Recruitment into armed groups and reintegration into society



## Spotlight on: Buenaventura

*With our partner Fundescodes, we're working to create safer communities, where children and young people are protected from threats such as forced recruitment, violence and discrimination.*

### Children promoting community coexistence

At four 'Peace and Reconciliation Schools' in Buenaventura's most conflict-affected communities, 100 children learnt about their rights and how these are threatened within the context in which they live. A particular focus was placed on mental health and peaceful coexistence and how decades of conflict have impacted negatively on these. The children devised and carried out interventions to improve coexistence in their communities such as a Hugathon and a campaign against music being played very loudly at all hours.

### Children leading change

The children, supported by youth leaders and local adults, ran a 1-day forum on children's rights which was attended by 100 people including members of local government. They presented video documentaries they had made which highlighted key risks in their neighbourhoods such as poor quality education and healthcare and a lack of safe spaces for children to play.

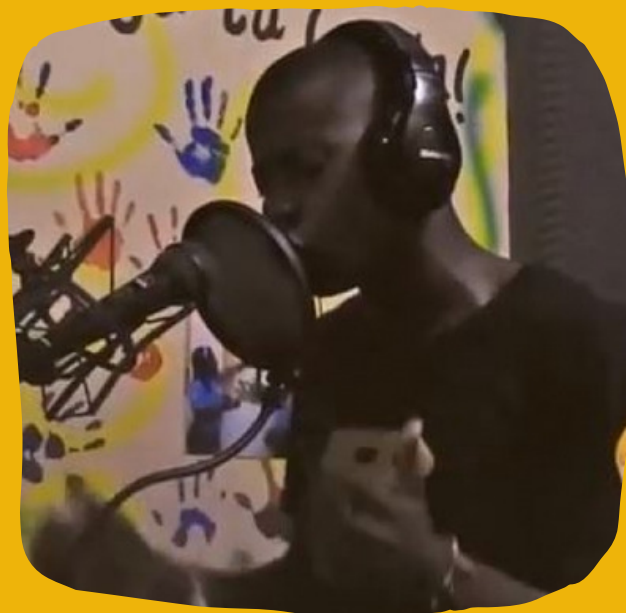
*"I've learnt what to do if someone offers me drugs or asks me to join a gang, and I know who to go to for help if they keep pushing me. I know now that I don't have to put up with being harassed." Diego, 14, Buenaventura*

### Youth leadership in action

28 youth leaders got involved in a wide range of advocacy activities, from making radio shows and videos to promote children's rights to joining city-wide campaigns in memory of victims of the Colombian conflict and promoting peace building. Adults involved in the campaigns expressed their pleasure at seeing the young people's dedication to much-needed social change.

### United communities

27 adult community leaders completed training in psychosocial support to become 'Peace Promoters'. Using their in-depth knowledge of the needs of their communities, they developed and delivered psychosocial 'interventions' to support victims of violence and promote women's and children's rights.



# The neglected issue: Commercial sexual exploitation of children and young people

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a hugely under-reported problem in Colombia, affecting an estimated 35,000 children. Since 2011 we've been working to protect children from experiencing this exploitation and the devastating impact it has on their physical and mental health.

## Spotlight on: Bogotá

*With our partner ACJ Bogotá, we work in a designated 'tolerance zone' in the Colombian capital where sex workers are permitted to operate without prosecution and can be seen on the street at all hours. Many children from the area have parents that are engaged in sex work. As a result, for many children, sexual exploitation is normalised.*

### Taking steps to stay safe

288 vulnerable children gained greater protection from CSEC through theatre, dance and music workshops that taught about the different forms CSEC can take. They also learned about the risks they can face online and committed to using social media in a safer way. Children who needed extra support received one-on-one counselling.

### Loving, protective families

181 family members of these children improved their parenting skills in areas such as positive and respectful communication, including children in family decision-making processes, showing affection, building bonds of trust and non-violent conflict resolution.

### Schools taking action

In 2 schools, 607 students, 177 of their parents, and 33 teachers learnt to identify signs that a child is experiencing CSEC and how to help them. Teachers have been devising ways to incorporate teaching about related issues - substance use prevention, sexuality, gender, self-care and CSEC awareness - into the regular school curriculum.

### Women redefining their lives

We provided 88 young women with a wide range of training and services to help them leave sex work/ commercial sexual exploitation and find safe, alternative employment. 12 female youth leaders, ex-sex workers, promoted the project in the local community and ran a series of events and Service Fairs to provide information and healthcare to sex workers.

### Institutions coordinating for change

The 'CSEC Committee' formed last year, comprising of representatives from local government, NGOs and universities, met 39 times to collaborate to research and develop effective care pathways for children experiencing or at risk of CSEC.

***"I've learnt to recognise the things I like and don't like and to think about what I want to do when I grow up. Now I really want to do my schoolwork and I understand that hanging around in the street wasn't doing me any favours." Tania, 14 years old***



# Strengthening children's organisations in Colombia:

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



## Developing a new partnership

In 2018, we began to develop a new project with a new partner organisation, to tackle a newly identified 'neglected issue' – mining and its impact on children's rights. This new partner is an Afro-Colombian Community Council called 'Acadesan', based in an extremely remote jungle region in western Colombia. The project aims to improve the quality of education in order to keep children in school and away from harmful child labour – including in unregulated mines – and recruitment into the illegal armed groups that operate openly in the area. We secured funding to start the project in January 2019.

## Raising awareness

We are committed to increasing the visibility of the issues we work on and to making sure that policy makers, funders and the public in Colombia and the UK are aware of our partners' work. We used our connections in the British Embassy in Colombia and the Colombian counterpart in the UK to draw attention to the urgent need for the Colombian government to provide suitable protection to threatened human rights defenders, including staff at our projects.

## Sharing expertise

Our Project Officers provided partners with ongoing support on issues that affect their projects, and helping them to share their expertise with one another. For instance, we arranged for Fundescodes' youth leaders to share their experiences with Circulo de Estudios, in order to help them strengthen their own youth leadership programme.

## Encouraging networking

We held two meetings of our 'Partner Network' in Bogotá, bringing together staff from each of our partners. The first focused on Child Safeguarding and the second on Care for Carers – all our partners work on very serious, often harrowing issues and we believe that giving their staff the tools to manage the psychological impact of their work is crucial to the success of a project.

## Building strong, equal partnerships

Our partner ACJ told us this year, *"We can speak openly with CCC about problems that arise in the knowledge that they will help us overcome them in the best possible way."*



**UK Office:**

The Green House  
244 - 254 Cambridge Heath Road  
London E2 9DA

Phone: (+44) 020 3559 6756

Email: [info@childrenchange colombia.org](mailto:info@childrenchange colombia.org)

**Colombia office:**

Carrera 5 # 67 - 84, Oficina 302,  
Bogotá

Teléfono: (+57) 5309110 / (+57) 3122988980

Email: [colombia@childrenchange colombia.org](mailto:colombia@childrenchange colombia.org)

**[www.childrenchange colombia.org](http://www.childrenchange colombia.org)**

Facebook: Children Change Colombia

Twitter: @ChildChangeCOL

Instagram: childrenchange colombia

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

Cover photo: Children at our partner ACJ's youth centre in Bogotá.

Names of children in the featured quotations have been changed for child protection reasons.

Photographs show real participants in CCC-funded projects.