

IN MINISTRY TO CHILDREN 2021–2022

Chairman's report

Colombia has been fighting fires on multiple fronts this year. The pandemic has continued to have a heavy toll on the economy and society, with many people unable simply to feed themselves. Poverty and malnutrition are rife among indigenous, migrant and other marginalised communities.

Despite the peace accord in 2016, conflict-related violence continues: 7.5 million people have been displaced in Colombia. Human rights defenders and community leaders are a particular target. Drug-related crime and violence are endemic, affecting all areas of the country.

Last April and May saw tens of thousands of Colombians take to the street to protest against inequality, increased taxes and corruption: this May, the country looks set to elect its first left-wing president, Gustavo Petro, a hugely divisive figure on a reformist ticket – and social tensions are high.

As in many places in the world, the economic impact of Covid has been devastating in Colombia. Almost half-a-million people fell into poverty in 2020, according to its government, and have stayed there. And as always, the poorest and marginalised – especially children – have been worst hit.

In Ministry to Children in Colombia, IMiC, have navigated difficult waters this year, with their usual commitment and determination. Despite intense pressures, they have supported 1,487 children and 818 adults in total – a considerable increase on the figures for previous year.

They continue to support four main project areas: Bogotá, including an informal settlement called Los Alpes in Ciudad Bolívar; Fusa; La Guajira;

and Tasajera. In each setting they work closely with local churches, to support families in four main ways:

- Essentials – eg food, medical care, access to education
- Training to strengthen families' resilience and prevent family breakdown – eg positive parenting, drug awareness
- Small business support – from bakeries to recycling projects
- Spiritual input – which is absolutely essential when material things and hope are in short supply

One area where work has developed particularly this year is in **Los Alpes**, a slum area of Bogota. It's a very poor, dangerous area with many social problems. Families here live in makeshifts shacks and they have no amenities such as toilets or running water. It's here that we now support a *comedor* or community hub, in collaboration with the local church. It is now feeding about 60 children three times a week, as well as providing help with schoolwork; parents too receive support and training. In a struggling community, it's a place of stability, affirmation and love.

Another area which remains a particular priority for IMiC is **La Guajira**, a drought-affected region in the far north-west of Colombia which is home to the Wayuu people. It's a very poor area, neglected by the state: food shortages linked to drought are exacerbated by hugely unjust water management which has allowed water courses to be diverted away from poor communities towards mines and wealthier areas. Malnutrition claims the life of one in every ten children under five in La Guajira, according to Human Rights Watch.

Necessarily, then, our work in La Guajira has focused mostly on providing food to people in seven *rancherías* or settlements, amid food shortages and rising prices. But also work has continued on building a new church building in El Brasil, which will also serve as a community hub and host a health clinic. We have also been investigating new ways to improve

communities' access to water and to strengthen local livelihoods, including local artisan crafts.

The school we helped rebuild a few years ago with the support of A2O has become so successful – with children coming from many different hamlets – that it is no longer able to house all 100 children on its register.

This past year, we also started working in an area called **Tasajera**, to the west of La Guajira. This area of coastal marshlands has been exploited by landowners and businesses to the detriment of the local environment and waterways, and of local livelihoods which are based on fishing. Tasajera's 30,000 residents now cannot earn a living wage. IMiC's has provided food and given children clothes and shoes for school. This year IMiC is seeking ways to increase help to the community and is looking for volunteers from environmental organisations and university students to work on livelihoods projects involving recycling, which would improve the environment and provide economic support to families.

And finally, IMiC continues to provide support to families in **Bogotá and Fusa** with whom it has long had connections. The work in Fusa is now focusing on supporting the poorest children with food and educational support in their homes rather than through a central community hub or *comedor*.

As trustees, our focus this year has been on supporting and communicating with Nancy and IMiC, and continuing to develop the ways we communicate with supporters, especially digital comms such as emails and social media. We continue to review our policies and practices, with a particular focus at the moment on child protection. Our limited capacity as a group this year means that we have not been able to organise fundraising events of our own – although several of us are currently involved in a sporty fundraiser with other supporters.

We continue to be in awe of the hard work and dedication of our Colombian colleagues, especially Director Nancy Centeno. She is ably supported by: Jennyfer, her administrator; Yan Carlos Rodriguez, who became IMiC

Deputy Director last year; Maicol, the IMiC social worker; and Sofia, who used to help run the Fusa comedor and who continues to support Fusa families. We're excited to see relationships and collaborations with local churches in Colombia growing.

And we continue to be amazed at the faithful generosity of our supporters, even throughout the pandemic and austere times in the UK. As ever, we're grateful to Life Church Petersfield for their administrative support, to those who distribute our newsletter, to our longstanding newsletter editor Martin Plowman, and to our patrons Joan and Terry Thraves for their ongoing enthusiasm and wisdom.

None of what this would be possible without the God who is at the heart and centre of this work. It's because of *his* heart for vulnerable children and their families that IMiC exists. We continue to seek his guidance and leading as we work to show vulnerable children that they are precious and their lives matter.

Seren Boyd, Chair of IMC trustees

May 2022

IN MINISTRY TO CHILDREN
ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2021

Income £81,594

Expenditure £80,138

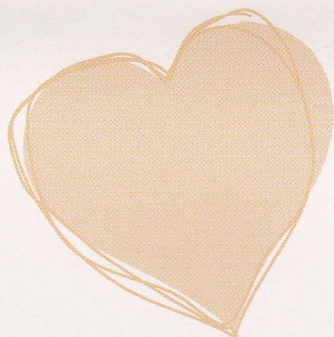
Comprising:-

Transfers to Colombia £76,000

Publicity Expenses £ 428

Financial Management £ 3,710

Active Accounts	Debit	Credit
3524 Personnel	£4,952.00	£5,048.00
3525 Child Sponsorship	£7,516.00	£7,446.00
3527 General Fund	£68,265.01	£67,180.17
3530 CIF	£1,920.00	£1,920.00



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INTERNATIONAL

To whom it may concern

This is to ascertain that all In Ministry to Children monies (Charity No. 1064690) are monitored and audited by ourselves, Links International Trust. Therefore, the accounts for In Ministry to Children are encompassed in our audit report which we submit to the Charity Commission each year.

Mandy Dukes

Accounts Manager