



# LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!®

LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS  
FOR CHILDREN IN COLOMBIA

Charity registered with the Charity Commission No. 1159113



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## AGGREGATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

**31st DECEMBER 2022**

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# **LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!**

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

COMPANY NUMBER:	07140869
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBERS:	1159113 1159113-1
DIRECTORS:	Miss P. Brown (Chairman) Fr S. Goodman Mrs G. Prosser
COMPANY SECRETARY:	Miss P. Allan
REGISTERED OFFICE:	2, Roberts Road Doncaster DN4 0JW
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INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:	David Hoose FCA Mazars LLP 2, Chamberlain Square Birmingham B3 3AX

# **LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!**

## **REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS**

The Directors/Trustees present their Report for the year ended 31st December 2022.

### **Introduction**

**Let The Children Live!** is a Charitable Company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, incorporated on 20th January 2010 and registered as a Charity on 6th November 2014. The Company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the Charitable Company; and it is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the Company being wound up the Members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1. The Directors of the Company are also its Trustees for the purposes of charity law.

**Let The Children Live!** was set up by the Trustees of the Charitable Trust of the same name (Registered Charity No. 1159113-1, originally 1013634), which was founded by Father Peter Walters at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, Norfolk, in 1992. The same people are the Trustees of both charities.

Fr Peter asked the Trustees of the Trust to set up the Company in order:

- to consolidate and extend the work he had begun through the Trust;
- to make the specifically Christian principles and nature of this work more explicit and secure; and
- to provide this work with an incorporated structure in which the liability of the Trustees would be limited.

Although Fr Peter is recognised as being the Founder of both charities, he is not a Trustee of either of them. He was employed by the Trust as its Executive Director until 31st December 2016; and the following day he became employed as the Executive Director of the Company.

When the Company was established, it was agreed that this new body should gradually take over the work of the Trust, and that once all of the assets and liabilities of the latter had been transferred to the former, the Trust would eventually be wound up in order to avoid the unnecessary expenditure of time and money involved in running two charities for the same purpose.

By the end of 2016 the Company was ready to take over the operational responsibilities of the Trust; and it duly did this on 1st January 2017. The Company then became the workhorse in the partnership between the two “related undertakings”.

The employees of the Trust agreed that their contracts of employment should be transferred to the Company as from 1st January 2017. The Trustees decided that the tangible assets of the Trust should be made over to the Company on that day; and they arranged for the leases of the three properties rented by the Trust to be taken over by the Company on the same date. Consequently, thenceforward the Trust has no longer had any employees, tangible assets or leased premises of its own: but it has been able to benefit, free of charge, from those of the Company.

Although, as has been mentioned above, the Trustees had initially expected to be able to wind up the Trust within a quite limited timespan, they found that some regular donors had set up their Standing Orders without giving their contact details to the Trust, so it was not possible to contact them to ask them to transfer their Standing Orders from the Trust to the Company. Others simply ignored repeated requests to make this transfer.

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The Trustees feared that the income from these donors would be lost if the Trust were to be wound up, so they allowed it to remain in existence year after year in a semi-dormant state, simply serving as the recipient of this income. However, on 14th December 2020 the Charity Commission told the Trustees that they “should review all available options by 31 May 2021 for effectively winding up the Trust by an appropriate time and transferring all assets/donations to the Charity, taking into account any appropriate professional advice.”

The Trustees therefore consulted their Solicitor, who said that in view of the net annual income of more than £10,000 in standing orders and Gift Aid that was likely to be lost if the Trust were to be wound up, he did not consider that this would be in its best interests. He therefore suggested that the Trustees should instead apply to the Charity Commission for the Trust to be “linked” to the Company. The Trustees accepted this advice, and made the necessary application.

On 26th July 2021 the Charity Commission agreed that the Trust (No. 1013634) should be linked to the Company (No. 1159113) for the purposes of Part 4 (registration) and Part 8 (accounting) of the Charities Act 2011. The Commission also decided that the number of the Trust should be changed to 1159113-1.

In order to avoid confusion, hereafter in this Report, the *Company* will be referred to as the “Reporting Charity”, and the *Trust* will be referred to as the “Linked Charity”. When the linked charities are referred to *jointly*, they will simply be called either “**Let The Children Live!**” or “the charity”.

### Partner Organisation

The charity’s operational Partner Organisation in Colombia is **Fundación ¡Vivan Los Niños! (Funvini)** a Charitable Foundation that the Trustees asked Fr Peter to set up in 1994 to serve this purpose. It is, however, a separate organisation, subject to Colombian law, and with its own *Junta Directiva* (Board of Trustees) to manage its affairs.

In order to promote transparency and cooperation between **Funvini** and **Let The Children Live!**, an important part of Fr Peter’s work is to act as the non-voting Permanent Representative of the British charity on the *Junta Directiva* of the Colombian one. He is therefore usually based in Medellín for more than half of the year. Further contact is provided by occasional visits made to **Funvini** by the Trustees of **Let The Children Live!** For example, the Chairman of the Trustees made such visits in 2013, 2014 and 2017; She had planned to make her next visit in August 2020, but unfortunately this was not possible because of the Covid pandemic. The ongoing complications in intercontinental travel prevented her from going in 2021 or 2022; but she was at last able to go in August 2023.

The accounts of **Funvini** for 2022 were subjected to a full Audit by an independent *Revisora Fiscal* in 2023, and were certified to be in order. **Funvini**’s Child Protection Officer confirmed that its Child Protection Policy had continued to work satisfactorily in 2022, and that no irregularities had come to her notice.

# LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!

## REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

### Objects

The Objects of the Linked Charity are: “to relieve children and young persons anywhere in the world but particularly in Colombia who are in conditions of sickness, need, hardship and distress by the provision of medical supplies, clothing, food, shelter and in such other charitable ways the Trustees may determine.”

Similarly, the Objects of the Reporting Charity are:

(i) to relieve street-children and young persons anywhere in the world particularly (but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing) in the Republic of Colombia who are in conditions of sickness, need, hardship and distress by the provision of medical supplies, clothing, food, shelter and in such other Charitable ways as the Trustees may determine;

(ii) to advance the education of the public by the following:

- the provision of education and training of such children and young persons, and to advance their formation within the doctrines and principles of the Christian faith;
- furthering research into the causes and nature of the conditions and behaviour of such children and young people, and into the means of their improvement; and the dissemination of the useful results of such research for the benefit of the public; and
- the provision of Development Education (education on social, health and economic issues), in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in relation to the conditions and behaviour of such children and young people, in particular but not exclusively through delivery of education in schools.

(iii) to preserve and protect the health of such children and young people by assisting in the prevention of substance abuse and delinquency; and in their protection from violence, cruelty, danger or exploitation and other violations of their human rights.

### Mission and Vision

In accordance with these Objects and the Founder’s intentions, the Trustees defined the charity’s Mission as being “to promote the welfare and education of street-children and other young people who are in conditions of hardship, danger or distress, in the Republic of Colombia or elsewhere, so that they ‘may have life and have it to the full’, by means of obtaining and providing financial and technical support for the work of **Fundación ¡Vivan Los Niños! (Funvini)** and of other similar organisations.”

In their Vision Statement, the Trustees proclaimed that the charity would aspire “to develop the expertise and capacity to obtain and provide the financial and technical resources required to enable **Fundación ¡Vivan Los Niños! (Funvini)** to become a leading developer in the Republic of Colombia of innovative, reproducible, small-scale, high-quality programmes, designed and conducted in accordance with Christian teaching and principles, and intended to assist, educate and protect street-children and other young people at high social risk, to prevent their falling into delinquency and substance-abuse, and to facilitate their reintegration into the family, school and society; and also to obtain and provide resources to help other organisations to develop programmes of a similar nature elsewhere.”

## LET THE CHILDREN LIVE! REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

As their very names proclaim, both **Let The Children Live!** and **Fundación ¡Vivan Los Niños!** are staunchly pro-life organisations, firmly committed to the protection of the lives and well-being of children from the moment of their conception until the time of their natural death. In traditional Christian moral teaching, certain acts - including abortion, euthanasia and suicide - have been, and continue to be, considered to be intrinsically wrong in all cases, and can never be morally justifiable under any circumstances. This teaching received its clearest modern expression in St John Paul II's great Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (1993). No matter how superficially attractive, benign or advantageous they may appear, it can never really be in a person's true interest to commit, participate in, consent to, or be the subject of, acts that are intrinsically wrong.

These moral principles are the basis of the policies of both **Let The Children Live!** and **Funvini**. As the British charity's Solicitor has confirmed, these views are not extremist: they are perfectly moderate and legitimate expressions of deeply-held and rationally justifiable convictions that are not anti-anyone, or anything-phobic. Like those of their benefactors, they are just pro-Christian, pro-life and pro-children. Any attempt to impose any other interpretation on the contents of this Report would constitute a misunderstanding of the Trustees' intentions, and a wilful misrepresentation of their views.

### The Context of the Charity's Activities

In 2022 the work of **Let The Children Live!** was focused on supporting that of **Fundación ¡Vivan Los Niños! (Funvini)** with street-children and other children and young people at high social risk in the city of Medellín. A total of 425 children were helped by **Funvini** during the year. Of these, 263 benefitted directly from the charity's programmes; and a further 162 children - mostly younger brothers and sisters of the main group - also received indirect benefits of various kinds.

For both **Let The Children Live!** and **Funvini**, every year since 2007 has been impacted by the fluctuations in the value of Sterling against the Colombian Peso (C\$). At the beginning of July 2006, £1 was worth C\$5,030: and in 2022 the average exchange rate received by **Funvini** was £1+ C\$5,059.34. This represented a slight decrease of 1.1% on the average rate in 2021; and it left the pound worth only 0.6% more than it had been in 2006. On 22 February 2023, the mid-market rate for the pound rose to £1=C\$6,009.81: but unfortunately by 1st August 2023 it had fallen back to only £1=C\$5,035.55. The average rate received by **Funvini** in the first seven months of 2023 was £1=C\$5,497.93.

The damage caused by the many years of a weak pound has been made worse by the effect of inflation in Colombia. The peso had an average inflation rate of 4.37% per year between 2006 and 2023, producing a cumulative price increase of 123.84% in that period. The annual inflation rate in June 2023 was 12.1%. The failure of the pound to rise proportionately against the peso between 2006 and 2023 therefore represents a fall of about the same amount as inflation in the purchasing power of the charity's donations to **Funvini**. In 2006 the charity donated a total of £423,595. In order to have the same purchasing power in Colombia in 2023 as that sum had in 2006, the charity would need to donate £948,175 to **Funvini** this year.

According to the most recent version of the *End of Childhood Index*, a statistical survey of 180 countries published by Save The Children in its *Global Children Report 2021*, Colombia ranked 132nd in terms of the best places in which to be a child. The United Kingdom was ranked 28th. And

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whereas in a Gallup pole in 2021 Colombia was rated the happiest country in the world, in the World Happiness Index for 2023 Colombia was ranked only 72nd out of 137 countries. This was based on a three-year-average 2020-22. And in terms of the happiness gaps between the top and bottom halves of each country's population for the same period, Colombia was ranked 103rd.

According to an article in *El Tiempo* on 21st March 2023, among the factors that are considered to affect Colombia's ranking in the Index are the perception of corruption, security guarantees and defence of human rights, as well as expectations of life, health, work and decent living conditions. Medellín Citizen Perception Survey 2022 found that the percentage of families with children under six who reported that a member of the household ate fewer than three meals per day because they didn't have enough food had risen from 24% in 2017 and 2019 to 29% in 2022. This was the highest figure in the last 17 years. Similarly, 29% of the citizens stated that not only had the economic situation of their households not recovered to its pre-pandemic level, but that it had actually continued to deteriorate in the last year.

Fewer than half of Medellín's inhabitants felt safe in the city. Robberies in the street were perceived to be the worst problem. During 2022, a total 28,142 cases of theft from persons were reported in the city. This was a 20% increase over the previous year's total.

On the other hand, on 11th July 2022 *Time Out* published an article in which Medellín was ranked third in its list of *The 53 Best Cities in the World in 2022*. Medellín was only beaten by Edinburgh and Chicago. The article explained, "Every year, we quiz thousands of city-dwellers worldwide about life in their hometown right now. We want to know about the restaurant scene and the bar circuit. The theatre and the art galleries. The nightlife and the dating apps. What the neighbours are like and which neighbourhoods are actually cool. The idea is to create a global snapshot of city living, and point people in the direction of the places locals are really raving about."

Evidently, the survey that produced this very upbeat assessment of life in Medellín was only responded to by those fortunate few of its inhabitants who had the money to be involved in "the restaurant scene and the bar circuit" as customers rather than as waiters, cooks, washers-up or cleaners. The article is also unlikely to have reflected the views of the children who fell victim to sexual exploitation as a consequence of the city's "nightlife and the dating apps".

However, Medellín's annual Quality of Life Report *Medellín Cómo Vamos 2021* painted a much less rosey picture of the city than *Time Out*, based on more than 500 indicators, mostly taken from official sources. Luis Fernando Agudelo Henao, the Director of the Report, stated that it showed that since "the pandemic, the highest levels of poverty in the last decade were recorded. Although Medellín is not the city in Colombia with the most poverty, it is the one that has reduced it least after the pandemic." By the end of 2021 there had been a reduction of only 5.3 percentage points in the number of the city's inhabitants who were living in poverty (27.6%) compared to the 32.9% who were in that condition at the end of the lockdowns in 2020. These figures were the highest since 2013 (26%), and showed that all the ground gained in the intervening years had been lost.

Similarly, the number of people living in *extreme* poverty (5.1% of the city's population) was only 4 percentage points lower than it had been at the end of the lockdowns in 2020; and it was still higher than in any year since 2012. Nine years of progress had been lost, so if one is to begin to understand the social context in which the children cared for by **Funvini** live, one must first examine some recent developments in Colombia's political life.



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In 2022 Colombia held a Presidential election. President Duque, the incumbent, was ineligible to stand again because of the term-limit rules. There are no significant right-wing parties in Colombia, and the centre parties were divided, whereas the left united around the controversial figure of Gustavo Petro. The election was held in two rounds, with a run off between the two candidates who had obtained most votes in the first round. These were Gustavo Petro and Rodolfo Hernández. The former emerged as the victor in the second round with 50.42% of the votes, and has become the first far-left President in Colombia's history. In spite of the enthusiastic support of Medellín's mayor, Petro was decisively defeated by a margin of 30.89% in Antioquia, the Department of which Medellín is the capital.

When the new President took office in August 2022 he immediately began to implement a policy known as *Paz Total* (Total Peace). This required the initiation of simultaneous processes of negotiation or submission to justice in order to try to demobilise Colombia's various guerrilla groups and criminal gangs.

Sadly, violence is still all too frequent in the country. The situation has certainly improved over the last twenty years, and the number of murders in the country has fallen from 69,448 in 2002 to 13,442 in 2022. This figure was 1.9% lower than the 2021 total. However, in comparison there were 710 recorded homicides in England and Wales in the year ending 31st March 2022. The homicide rate in Colombia has been stable since 2014, with the numbers varying between 24 and 26.1 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2022 it fell from 2.8 to 26.1 per 100,000 inhabitants. In England and Wales in 2022-23 the homicide rate was 1.1 per 100,000 inhabitants.

President Petro is a controversial figure because he is a former member of the M-19 guerrilla group, which he joined at the age of 17. Second only in size and notoriety to the FARC guerrillas, the M-19 was responsible for such outrages as the kidnap and murder of the union leader José Raquel Mercado (1976); the siege of the Dominican Republic Embassy in Bogotá (1980), in which 14 Ambassadors were taken hostage; and the siege of the Palace of Justice (1985), in which some 300 lawyers were taken hostage, and more than 100 people - including 11 Justices of the Supreme Court - were killed in the cross-fire when the army stormed the building. It is suspected that M-19 also had links with the Medellín drug cartel. After its demobilisation, the M-19 evolved into a political party called the M-19 Democratic Alliance.

In his election campaign, Señor Petro made many promises of social investment, but he gave scanty details of how these were to be paid for. However, his election caused alarm in many quarters because he aims to convert Colombia into a socialist state. He has friendly links with the regime of Hugo Chávez and Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, which has effectively wrecked the economy of that petrol-rich country, and has caused millions of its citizens to seek refuge in Colombia.

Maduro rode roughshod over the victory of his opponents - by 109 seats to 55 - in the National Assembly elections of 2015; and on 4th February the following year he proclaimed that he would "stop by hook or by crook the opposition coming to power, whatever the costs, in any way." Britain therefore does not accept the legitimacy of Maduro's regime, and since 2019 it has recognised Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's legitimate interim President, following his appointment by the National Assembly.

Colombia and Venezuela broke off diplomatic relations in 2019, and according to an article published by *La Silla Llena* on 5th May 2022, the left-wing ELN guerrillas took advantage of this

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situation to transfer the bulk of its senior command to Venezuela, where they would be safe. In Venezuela, the ELN behaved like a paramilitary organization, since it supported the government of Nicolás Maduro, and is believed to have influenced elections in favour of the ruling party, and to have coordinated its actions with different government bodies. However, one of President Petro's first acts was to restore diplomatic ties with Venezuela, and these were resumed on 28th August 2022. It still remains to be seen to what extent Venezuela will now be willing to curtail the ELN's presence and activities in its territory.

As a former guerrilla, President Petro has long had an antagonistic relationship with the Colombian armed forces. Since coming to power, he has intensified the series of cuts in the military budget that President Duque had justified as a sort of peace bonus of the 2016 accord with the left-wing FARC guerrillas. President Petro has also weakened the operational effectiveness of the armed forces by steps such as halving the number of their tactical intelligence units, and ordering the third reshuffle of their commanders in less than a year.

These measures are unlikely to do anything to motivate the ELN to negotiate in earnest - particularly in view of the fact that they still have ample funds, weapons and manpower. The only time when a guerrilla group has entered serious negotiations was when the aggressive policies of President Uribe (2002-2010) brought them FARC to the verge of military defeat, and thereby compelled them to do so.

Since 2004 the ELN seem to have accepted that they will not be able to take control of the whole of Colombia by force, as the FARC sought to do. Instead, in 2017 they have opted for a policy of strengthening their hold on the areas they already controlled, and of expanding into others where a power vacuum had been created by the demilitarisation of the FARC the previous year. The cease-fire agreement enables the ELN to continue to do this whilst participating in a dialogue - rather than actual negotiations - with a government that largely shares their political aspirations for the transformation of Colombia into a socialist state like Venezuela.

The negotiations with the FARC adhered to the principle that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" in order to give both sides an incentive to reach a comprehensive agreement. But the ELN has persuaded the government to accept the idea that this time there should be dialogue to produce a series of partial agreements that the government will have to implement whilst the guerrillas maintain an armed oversight of the government's compliance. Only then will substantive negotiations begin about an agreement for the ELN to lay down its arms. Although the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland was signed in April 1998, the IRA did not finally decommission its weapons until September 2005; and the ELN appears to want the current peace process to follow this model.

Both President Petro and the ELN want the process to end with a Constituent Assembly to write a new Constitution along socialist lines. The present very liberal Constitution only came into force in 1991, replacing the more conservative one of 1886. However, its provisions have hindered the implementation of a socialist agenda, so during his unsuccessful bid for the Presidency in 2018, Señor Petro said that if he were to be elected, his first act would be to convoke a Constituent Assembly.

In May 2023 he said that although he did not now propose to convoke an Assembly himself, he would be happy for the Congress to do so. The ELN are maintaining a prudent silence about what

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they intend to do if the Congress eventually fails to call an Assembly, or if the people reject either the holding of the Assembly, or the adoption of whatever new Constitution such an Assembly might draw up.

It is clear that President Petro's cease-fire agreement with the ELN has placed nearly all of the initial obligations on the government's side whilst making few demands on that of the guerrillas. Most notably, it carefully avoided making any mention of cocaine or other illegal drugs. Officially, of course, the drugs-trade remains illegal: but because the ELN's participation in it is not specifically prohibited by the agreement, the guerrillas have been left free to continue this without fear of provoking any intervention by the armed forces. As Eduardo Pizarro, an expert in conflicts and negotiations, has pointed out, the ELN now has an incentive to prolong the initial 180 day cease-fire indefinitely, and thus convert the peace negotiations into a "parallel parliament."

In October 2022 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that in 2021 the area of land in Colombia devoted to illicit coca plantations had increased by 43% to 204,000 hectares. That is equivalent to about 788 square miles - an area about 3% larger than Warwickshire. The amount of coca produced per hectare increased by 14%, so experts believe that Colombia has been producing more cocaine than ever in its history. UNDOC said that in many rural areas the production of coca and cocaine had become the only form of economic activity during pandemic lockdowns as markets and agricultural routes had shut down and farmers switched from food crops to coca.

Stefano Pozzebon discussed UNDOC's report in an article that was published on CNN's website on 22nd November 2002. He reported on a worrying trend of children dropping out of rural schools because "they were being pressed into service by criminal organisations for menial tasks around the production of narcotics." For these they could earn up to C\$75,000 (about £17.22) per day. In 2022, this was more than twice the daily minimum wage for an adult, so it was an attractive inducement for rural children and their families.

The coca bush can produce a harvest up to six times a year. It requires minimal care because it is an invasive plant that can grow even in unfavourable conditions. The drug cartels who buy the coca are willing to pay in advance for the harvest, and they will also provide transport to collect it from the farms. These are significant incentives for farmers who live hours of unpaved roads away from the main market towns, so government crop-replacement initiatives have never been very successful in Colombia.

On the other hand, the *campesinos* in the drug-growing areas are always at risk of getting caught up in violent confrontations between the drug-cartels, the guerrillas and the army. According to the Red Cross, in 2022 more than 123,000 people had to flee from their homes in rural areas, and 515 people were injured by landmines and other explosive devices. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) estimates that in 2023 more than half a million Colombians are being affected by the presence of landmines - an increase of 93% on the figure for 2021.

Landmines have become a tool used by the drug-cartels and the guerrillas to assert their claims over drug-trafficking routes. Pablo Parra, the Director of UNMAS in Bogotá, said that mines placed near farms, schools and roads that lead to hospitals "create an environment of terror. With just one land mine that causes an accident, the community is already terrified and stops using the land."

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The *campesinos* are also afraid that their children may be recruited by the guerrillas or other armed groups. According to the report War Without Quarter produced by Human Rights Watch in 1998, the guerrillas call such child soldiers as *abejitas* (little bees) because they are able to sting their targets before they realise that they are under attack. Other groups call them *campanitas* (little bells), referring to the children's usefulness as an early-warning system against attacks by the army or other enemies.

The children are given camouflage uniforms and weapons, and placed in a command hierarchy. As well as serving as guides, messengers and guards, children as young as 12 have been deployed in combat and assigned such dangerous tasks as planting and clearing mines in order to relieve their older, more experienced comrades from these tasks. They are regarded as more valuable assets than the children, who are evidently expendable. Sometimes, the children's involvement is even reinforced or legitimised by the consent of their parents, who may receive money or protection in return. However, these children also serve as hostages in order to ensure the compliance of their families.

According to a report by Colombia's Truth Commission, more than 16,000 - and possibly as many as 40,000 - minors were recruited by armed groups in Colombia between 1985 and 2019. The closure of schools during the Covid crisis seem to have created ideal conditions for the recruitment of children, and COALICIO recorded 190 cases in just the first six months of 2020, whereas in 2019 they had recorded 200 in the whole year.

Colombia's child welfare agency (ICBF) reported that at least 70 minors had been recovered by Colombia's armed forces during the first five months of President Petro's government. Moreover, in February 2023 the International Crisis Group told Reuters that child recruitment had actually increased since the announcement of the President's Total Peace initiative. Then, on 13th June 2023, the New York Times reported that the four children who had been dramatically rescued after their plane had crashed in the Colombian jungle had made their flight in order to escape from this threat.

A joint report by UNICEF and the ICBF that was also published in 2023 found that recruited children were living in conditions where their rights were being violated, and that this was a determining factor in their recruitment. The armed groups were using social media as recruitment tools, presenting a romanticised view of their members' lives. They were also hosting parties in order to involve themselves in events and places attractive to adolescents.

In the middle of April 2023 the Mayor of Yarumal, Antioquia, reported that a dozen minors had been forcibly recruited by the ELN; and on 2nd May Israel Ramírez Pineda, one of its leaders, admitted that they recruited youngsters from the age of 16 upwards.

On 3rd August 2023 Save The Children Colombia denounced the terms of President Petro's cease-fire with the ELN because although Article 2(vi) of the Presidential Decree 1117 of 2023 does make a passing mention of the recruitment of minors, it only does so with reference to the Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions. Article 4(3)(c) of that Protocol states that "Children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities." The fact that the cease-fire agreement therefore contains no prohibition of the continued recruitment by the ELN of minors aged 15 or over seems likely to be a very dangerous loophole.

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It therefore appears that the Total Peace process has yet to yield significant benefits for many of the children of the countryside. This is confirmed by the fact 339,000 cases of forced displacement were recorded in Colombia in 2022; and at least 8,629 of these people sought refuge in Medellín. Moreover, on 13th July 2023 the city's *Personería* (Ombudsman's Office) announced that in the first six months of the year a further 3,430 refugees from other parts of Antioquia had fled to Medellín. However, their escape from rural violence then exposed them to the urban variety.

When Fr Peter chose Medellín as his base when he went to live in Colombia in 1994, he did so because at that time that was where the violence was worst, and he had lost count of the number of children whom he had known who had been killed in the city. It seemed to him that the need for the work he was hoping to do was greatest there.

Antioquia, the Department of which Medellín is the capital, is the area that has historically had the most victims of armed conflict in Colombia. Between 1958–2019, 20% of the country's conflict-affected victims lived there. The Department is strategically important because it connects the South of the Departments of Bolívar and Córdoba, which have historically been coca-growing areas, with the Gulf of Urabá, an exit point to the Caribbean and the Atlantic.

Medellín is no longer ranked as one of the world's fifty most dangerous cities. In 2023 it ranks 145th out of 333 cities in the Safety Index on the *Numbo* platform. However, the city is still a nucleus of national and transnational crime. The authorities estimate that about 43% of the *Grupos de Delincuencia Organizada* (Organised Crime Groups) in Colombia are based in Medellín, and the degree of their organisation and coordination is greater than that of the criminal gangs in any other Colombian city.

In 2020 there were about 350 criminal gangs in Medellín's metropolitan area, according to the Peace and Reconciliation Foundation (PARES). These armed groups use drug-trafficking, arms sales, extortion and human trafficking as the main bases of their illegal economy, and in many poorer *barrios* they also decide which companies are allowed to sell dairy products and meat, and which may distribute the cylinders of natural gas many people use for cooking.

Like the guerrillas and other armed groups in the countryside, the urban gangs are always seeking to recruit minors into their ranks. A common tactic is to provide them with free drugs until they become addicted, and then to force them to become active members of the gang. For example, on 12th August 2023 the magazine *Semana* carried a report about the arrest of a group of 11 minors in Itagüí, a municipality at the southern end of Medellín's metropolitan area. The crimes of which these youngsters were accused included contract killings, grievous bodily harm, extortion, forced displacement, theft and drug-trafficking. These are the sort of groups with which **Funvini's** youngsters are always in danger of getting involved.

Although most of the blocs of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) - the paramilitary groups who fought the guerrillas for control of the cultivation, production, transport and sale of drugs between 1997 and 2006 - have demobilised, some residual groups - such as *La Oficina* and the *Clan del Golfo* (also known as the AGC) - are still very much in business. Corporación Jurídica Libertad states that the AGC are active in 90% of Antioquia's municipalities; and PARES reports that *La Oficina* controls about half of the gangs in Medellín's Metropolitan Area. However, their power extends far beyond that, and they are organised in a kind of collegiate body, with tentacles throughout Colombia.

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According to a report on Caracol Radio on 8th August 2022, there were 10 Organised Crime Groups (GDOs) like *La Oficina*, the *Clan del Golfo* and *La Terraza* that exercise varying degrees of control over 83 Organised Common Crime Groups (GDCOs) in the Medellín area. On 13th April 2023 Reteurs reported that, according to intelligence documents they had seen, more than 17,600 people currently belong to the four major armed groups and 23 gangs that are hoping to benefit from President Petro's Total Peace plan. However, some of these gang-members have already gone through the process of laying down their arms only to proceed to take them up again in order to resume their criminal activities.

The gangs want to be accorded "political" status like that granted to the ELN and the FARC. This would effectively give them immunity from prosecution for their crimes, and would protect them from the risk of being extradited to the United States. However, Alfonso Prada, who was Minister of the Interior at the time when the Colombian Congress authorised President Petro to start his initiative, made it clear that the only benefits on offer to the leaders and members of the gangs would be reductions in their criminal penalties if they provided information about the drug-trafficking routes and the whereabouts of their funds.

However, on 22 January 2023 *El País* published a statement by the spokesman for one of these gangs in which he said that they would refuse "to participate in anything that has to do with subjugation," and that they proposed instead that there should be a "respectful dialogue ...that allows reaching a cooperative agreement, rather than a negotiation." In order to force the government to grant them the "political" status they are seeking, they resort to such tactics as *paros armados* - armed strikes which involve movement bans on people and goods and market closures for several days in the areas under their control. During these, people cannot go out to work, and children cannot go to school. Those who defy the bans are likely to be killed.

The gangs may well adopt even more extreme measures against the civilian population if their demands are not met. Nevertheless, on 19th March 2023 President Petro decreed the suspension of the cease-fire with the AGC that had been announced on 31st December 2022. He said that he had ordered the resumption of military operations against this group because it had violated the terms of the cease-fire. Any "cooperative agreement" between the government and the criminal gangs therefore seems unlikely either to be long-lasting or to inspire much public confidence.

On the other hand, if the gangs cannot be incorporated into President Petro's Total Peace, their interests will continue to conflict with those of the guerrillas because the territory controlled by the ELN includes some of the main corridors via which drugs are transported to the Caribbean and Central America or to the Venezuelan frontier, behind which they also control a number of clandestine airfields.

The cease-fire agreement does not prohibit the ELN from fighting with other armed groups, so such conflicts may not constitute grounds for the intervention of the Colombian military. On the contrary, one of the key points on the agenda agreed between the government and the ELN is "the eradication of all types of paramilitarism", so the ELN will not have to lay down its arms until the government has managed either to lock the gangs into a Total Peace, or to "eradicate" them by other means.

The term "paramilitary" refers here to both anti-communist self-defence groups and to ordinary criminal gangs; and indeed whatever they call themselves, they are very much of a muchness. Neither kind of paramilitary group is likely to take kindly to being presented by the government

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with a bald choice between total submission or “eradication”. Therefore, just as, in the past, some centre-right governments were tempted to enter into an informal alliance with the paramilitaries in the war against the guerrillas, now the possibility arises that the current hard-left government might be tempted to make an equally unholy alliance with the guerrillas in order to “eradicate” the paramilitaries.

The rural civilian population therefore remain in grave danger of being caught up in clashes between the guerrillas and the gangs. Juliette de Rivero, the representative in Colombia of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, has reported that in some country areas the guerrillas and other armed groups have such tight control over their territory that they are issuing ID cards that locals must carry in order to move between villages.

A similar from of “armed governance” is also found in cities like Medellín where local *combos* (criminal gangs) exercise great power in the *barrios populares* (slum neighbourhoods). There, the population are obliged to accept the gang’s monopoly of “legitimate” violence, and of the administration of “justice”. And just as, in the parts of countryside controlled by the guerrillas, the people are forced to pay them an *impuesto de guerra* (war tax), so in many of the *barrios populares* in the cities the inhabitants are compelled to pay *la vacuna* (the vaccination) to the local *combo*.

As an article dated 9th December 2022 on *La Silla Llena* explained, if such a situation of armed governance is prolonged, it gradually becomes legitimised. It is not sustained by violence alone, but also through such processes as the creation of social or political organisations, the provision of goods and services and the satisfaction of basic needs. Regardless of whether the groups imposing such armed governance are politically-motivated guerrilla groups or ordinary criminal gangs, in the rural or urban communities they control it is they, and not the Colombian state, that regulate community life, and determine everything from the hours during which businesses may open to the volume at which people may listen to music.

These are the circumstances that form the background to the daily lives of nearly all of the children who benefit from the various programmes that **Funvini** runs with the help of the funds provided by **Let The Children Live!** Moreover, having surmounted the hazards of the Covid lockdowns, when so many of the children’s parents had no income - and acquired debts - because they were not allowed to work, **Funvini**’s families are now being faced with the challenge of rampant inflation. By July 2022 consumer prices had risen by 10.21% from a year earlier: but the official figure for the poorest consumers was 11.9%.

In December 2022, monthly inflation in Colombia rose by 1.26%, and annual inflation reached 13.1% - the highest level for 23 years. Worse still, food price inflation that month stood at 27.81%. Although the rate of food price inflations has declined so far in 2023, in July the monthly rate was still over 14%; and the annual general inflation rate was over 12%. On the interbank rate, the Colombian peso fell against the US dollar from US\$1=C\$4,019.2 on 1st January 2022 to US\$1=5,116.84 on 8th November: but by 31st July 2023 it had risen again to US\$1=C\$3,915.1. Indeed, in April 2023 the peso was one of the world’s top three currencies for appreciation.

According to the site *tradingeconomics.com*, food prices in general in Colombia were 24.6% higher at the end of July 2022 than they had been twelve months previously. At the end of the year they were 27.8% higher, but by June 2023 the rate of increase had fallen back to 14.31%. Moreover, the rise in prices has increased the burden of Value Added Tax (VAT). Although many staple food items

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such as rice, potatoes, beans, fresh fruit, meat and eggs are exempt from VAT in Colombia, others are not. Pasta, chocolate and coffee are rated at 5%; and cold meats, cereals, soups, dried fruit and tinned vegetables at 19%. And whereas, in the UK, baby clothes, nappies, children's clothes and children's shoes are zero-rated, in Colombia these items are all subject to 19% VAT.

The cost of borrowing in Colombia has increased even more than it has in the UK. At the end of September 2020, the key rate in Colombia was 1.75%, but by the beginning of May 2023 the key rate had risen to 13.25%. In contrast, the Bank of England's highest base rate since the beginning of the Covid crisis has been 5.25% in August 2023. People on low incomes are often unable to provide the security required for formal loans from banks. They therefore have to resort to informal, unsecured, *gota a gota* (drop to drop) loans of small amounts.

Such loans are easily available, but they are often subject to compound interest rates of between 20% and 40% *per month*. Repayments must be made in daily quotas, so the interest payable may very soon greatly exceed the amount of the capital borrowed. If the debtor fails to pay, the creditor - who is likely to be linked to one of the gangs - will then refer the matter to the gang for *enforced* payment either in cash or in service to be rendered to the gang.

In view of these very difficult economic conditions, it was surprising that a report in *El Tiempo* on 13th April 2023 said that the number of paid working children in Colombia aged between 5 and 17 was believed to have fallen by 27.4% in 2022. However, the National Administrative Department for Statistics (DANE) estimated that these still numbered about 369,000. About 108,000 (29.3%) of these children were paid by private businesses; 151,000 (40.9%) worked in businesses run by their families; and the remaining 110,000 (29.8%) were doing some sort of independent work on their own account. Most of the working children (55.6%) were to be found in rural areas or small country towns, but the other 44.4% were in major cities like Medellín.

DANE emphasised that it was important to take into account also the number of children who were having to do *unpaid* work at home *for at least 15 hours per day*. This was estimated to have risen in 2022 by about 834,000 (160.1%) to 1,355,000. The total number of working children in Colombia was therefore about 1,724,000 - which was about 16.1% of all those in their age group. In 2023, 40 of **Funvini's** children are having to work. Of these, 18 work with their parents; 4 are surviving by begging with their parents; and 22 work on their own account. Some of these sell sweets, others clean car windscreens at the traffic lights; and others unload the large lorries that deliver food and other merchandise to the Minorista retail market.

According to information released by the Mayor's office, it appears that the sexual exploitation of children in Medellín has increased with post-Covid upsurge in international tourism to the city. In the period between January and November 2022, the authorities dealt with 14 cases of such exploitation per month: but it is clear that these cases represented only a small fraction of the total number of the children involved. The majority of the children involved were girls; and although their ages ranged from 4 to 17, the average age was 13.

On 20th June 2023 there was a particularly disturbing report in *Semana* that a tourist from the US, who had made more than 35 visits to Colombia, had been arrested for the sexual exploitation of under-aged girls in Medellín and Bogotá. He has been accused of requiring at least three of his victims to have his first name *tattooed* on their arms like cattle before he would pay them.



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The city's authorities are making some efforts to stamp out this problem. In the latter part of 2022 a curfew was imposed in the main tourist areas of Medellín, prohibiting minors from going to them without their parents between 7:00pm and 5:00am; and the reward for information about those involved in this form of exploitation has been raised to C\$100,000,000 (about £19,000).

The article in *Semana* also reported that the Directorate of Protection and Special Services of the National Police (DIPRO) said that between 1st January and 15th June 2023 a total of 30,707 crimes of various kinds against children had been recorded. This was a decrease of 5.920 (16.2%) from the equivalent period the previous year.

In an article in *El Tiempo* on 25th April 2021, José Alberto Mojica Patiño reported that between 1st January 2015 and 28th February 2021 a total of 688 children had been murdered in Medellín. In contrast, according to the Office of National Statistics, in the whole of England and Wales - with a total population about 26 times greater than that of Medellín - in the eleven years from April 2009 and March 2020 there were 513 homicides of children under the age of 16.

If the murder rate of children in England and Wales had been similar to that in Medellín, there would have been 32,604 child victims over the 11 year period. Conversely, if the rate in Medellín had been that of England and Wales, there would only have been about 10 child victims in the city - instead of 688 - over the six year period.

According to the November 2020 Bulletin of the Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal, a total of 511 children were murdered in Colombia in the first eleven months of 2020. Colombia's Child Homicide Rate per 100,000 inhabitants aged 0-19 was 20.6, which meant that it was the third worst in the world, exceeded only by Lesotho (21.9) and Venezuela (25.1). The Child Homicide Rate in the United Kingdom was 0.6. This means that a child in Colombia was 34.3 times more likely to be the victim of homicide than a child in the United Kingdom. In the first four months of 2022 a further 214 minors were murdered in Colombia. That meant that at least one child had been killed every 14 hours.

According to DIPRO, 214 children were victims of murder in Colombia between 1st January and 15th June 2023. That was an average of 9 per week. However, that was 47 (18%) fewer than in the same period in 2022, when the total had been 261 - an average of 11 per week.

In 2022, the authorities claimed that the previous year - for the first time in at least 40 years - no child under the age of 14 had been murdered in Medellín. However, 9 youngsters between the ages of 14 and 17 had been killed in the city that year. This represented a fall of 49% in comparison with the total for 2020. In 2019 five young people with connections to **Funvini** were killed: two of these were minors. The Trustees are very thankful to be able to report that no more of **Funvini**'s children have been killed since then.

### Principal Activities

In 2022, a total of 158 families (97 Colombian and 61 Venezuelan) families received help from **Funvini**. Up to the middle of August 2023, the total for the present year was 105 families (55 Colombian and 50 Venezuelan). The number of children who regularly took part in **Funvini**'s programmes in 2022 was 173: but an additional 90 children participated on an occas-

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-ional basis: and a further 162 children - most of whom were younger brothers or sisters of those who were involved in **Funvini**'s programmes - also received benefits of various kinds. The fluctuations in the numbers of the children was mostly due to the fact the Venezuelan refugee population in Medellín was - and still is - very unstable because families tend to move from *barrio* to *barrio*, from city to city - and , indeed, from country to country - as they attempt to find a better place in which to live, and a better way with which to try to scratch a living.

As in previous years, the 257 children who were admitted to **Funvini**'s programmes in January 2022 were selected on the basis of a "traffic light" system based on their characteristics and their perceived degree of deprivation and vulnerability, according to various criteria. In the red category of greatest need or danger were 48.2% of the children; 43.2% of them were in the amber category; and only 8.6% were in the green category. Some children were re-categorised during the course of the year in response to changes in their situation, and the total population of the programmes gradually increased during the year.

The same system was used in January 2023, when 48.2% of the children were in the red category, 32.1% were in the amber category, and 19.7% were in the green category. However, it is important to understand that, in both years, *all* of the children were deprived and at high social risk. The "traffic light" system was only indicative of the *relative degree* of their deprivation and of the risk to which they were exposed. It has proved useful in prioritising the use of **Funvini**'s limited resources to benefit most the children whose need or danger is considered to be greatest.

**Funvini** arranged 18 *talleres* (workshops) for the children's parents, and a total of 100 individuals took part in these. The *talleres* were designed to provide the parents with a forum in which common problems can be discussed, and at which classes could be given about such matters as parenting skills and budgeting. Those who were in particular difficulty were able to receive additional support in private from the charity's social-workers and psychologists; and those with legal problems can be referred to its lawyers.

In August 2023, the number of children regularly taking part in **Funvini**'s programmes was 146; an additional 28 children were in the process of being admitted to these programmes; and a further 22 were participating in them occasionally. Of this population, 98 were Colombian and 98 were Venezuelan. However, such exact parity was only a matter of chance: **Funvini** does not have a fixed quota of places for each nationality. A further 124 younger children were benefitting from food-parcels. In total, 320 children were therefore being helped.

**Funvini** helped to matriculate, or re-matriculate, a total of 213 children in local schools in 2022. In order to keep their school places, pupils in Colombia have to be re-matriculated every year. With support from **Funvini**'s teachers 195 (91.5%) of these children completed the year successfully, and were promoted to the next grade. In view of the characteristics of this population, this was a very good result. Indeed, it was rather better than the average the previous year for all of Medellín's schools, which had been only 90.3%.

However, **Funvini**'s staff have reported that they are concerned at the way in which many of the teachers in the local schools are continuing to overload their pupils with homework whilst managing to teach them very little in class. In English and mathematics, for example, many children gain promotion to the next grade year after year without having mastered even the present tense of the verb *to be*, or the basic principles of multiplication and division. Similarly, many of the

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pupils in higher grades have not become fluent in reading, and actually have a deep aversion to reading. **Funvini** is therefore engaged in a constant battle to try to remedy these defects, and to change this attitude.

In order to maximise classroom use, state schools in Colombia have traditionally had a shift in the morning and another in the afternoon, thereby enabling two separate populations of teachers and pupils to use the same buildings every day. However, the Colombian government decided to phase this system out, and to require all of its schools to change to a single, longer shift which is called the *jornada única*.

The introduction of the *jornada única* was already having a considerable impact on **Funvini** well before the Covid pandemic. The great majority of the charity's children go to school, and in former years they had always been able to attend its programmes during the shift when they were not at school. But in recent years an increasing number of the children have been unable to take part in **Funvini**'s activities at all on weekdays because the new school day begins too early for them to come before it starts, and finishes too late for them to come once it is over.

In order to accommodate in the *jornada única* the children who hitherto studied in two separate shifts, the construction of an additional 50,000 classrooms in Colombia's schools would be necessary. To help with this, in 2016 the government signed contracts for the construction of 55 "mega-colleges" in Antioquia. Although building work on some of these started so long ago, a report on *Hora 13 Noticias* on 3rd August 2022 stated that 35 of the mega-colleges were still not ready. Unsurprisingly, this has resulted in considerable overcrowding in many existing schools, and extra pressure on their facilities.

The average number of pupils in Medellín's primary schools is now 40 per class; and in the city's secondary schools it is 35. The average class size in the secondary schools attended by the choristers is 39.5. However, one of the choristers currently has 51 other children in his class! These average figures are 50% higher than in British state schools, where the figures are currently 26.6 and 22.3, respectively.

With such large numbers, the teachers in Colombian state schools are unable to provide their pupils with much individual support. Worse still, the present Mayor of Medellín is ceasing to fund special education posts in the city's schools. Instead, he has created a single Integral Attention Unit (UAI) to provide support for all 144 of the state schools in the city. The idea is that children with special needs should be referred to the UAI for diagnosis only, and then simply returned to their schools with guidelines to help the ordinary teachers there to deal with each case. According to a very critical report in *El Colombiano* on 18th July 2023, this has left 14,000 children who have special educational needs without the support that they need.

Because of this lack of proper provision for such children, **Funvini** continues to make its own small contribution in the *Sala VIP* at *Casa Walsingham*. This is run a dedicated special needs teacher, who is also a psychologist. Thanks to the extra support that she and her colleagues gave them, 36 children with special educational needs were able to complete the year successfully, and were promoted to the next grade. Without this help, however, it is unlikely that *any* of them would have done so.

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The local educational authorities in Medellín have for years been urging **Funvini** to set up its own school, with a flexible time-table and special teaching methods specifically designed for the particular talents and needs of its children. They said that **Funvini** was already doing much of what would be required in a school, and in September 2019 the planning authorities granted outline permission for *Casa Walsingham* to be used officially as a school. However, the process of preparing to open the school had taken several years, and during this time the Education Ministry had imposed regulations requiring newly-licensed schools to have a certain minimum area for physical education and sport available on site.

Unfortunately, *Casa Walsingham* has no such area of its own, and its sporting activities have also had to take place in local public parks and sports grounds. This means that in order to be able to obtain a licence for its own school, it will have to buy or rent additional premises which include an adequate space for physical education and sport. Lack of funds to cover the very considerable expense that this would involve has therefore forced **Funvini** to suspend its plans to apply for its own licence. The Trustees very much hope that the necessary extra funds will eventually be obtained.

**Funvini** hopes that the *School of the Children of the Holy House of Our Lady of Walsingham* - or the *Holy House School*, for short - will eventually include three elements:

- primary for children aged between 10 and 15 with special educational needs;
- secondary for older children from the street programme; and
- primary for choristers of *Cor Vidents*.

In the meanwhile, however, the local educational authorities arranged for **Funvini** to enter into an alliance with an existing, fully-licensed school to provide an ‘umbrella’ structure under which the charity is allowed to continue to run pilot programmes for a small number of its youngsters without actually having a licence of its own. The regulations restrict this to pupils who are aged at least 15. Some of their lessons take place in *Casa Walsingham* and are taught partly by teachers from the ‘umbrella’ school, and partly by those of **Funvini**: and their Grade Certificates are issued by the ‘umbrella’ schools.

In December 2022 a party was held in *Casa Bannatyne* to celebrate the graduation from High School of 11 members of **Funvini**’s School Project (7 boys and 4 girls) and of 5 young mothers of the St María Goretti Group. It is hoped that a further 8 pupils ( 6 girls and 2 boys) will graduate from High School in 2023. This will bring the total of number of students who have graduated through the School Project since 2017 to 35, (19 girls and 16 nine boys). None of these young people would, in all probability, have managed to complete their secondary education without this help. Small though the scale of the Project may be, the Trustees consider these results to be very encouraging.

Many of **Funvini**’s beneficiaries reach the age of 18 before they have completed their secondary education, and would stand little chance of finding honest employment if they were forced to leave school and go out looking for work without any qualifications. In 2022 ten such young adults received support from **Funvini**’s *Extension* group to enable them to continue with their vocational training or their courses at university.

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Three of these were girls had belonged to **Funvini**'s School Project, and who were admitted to the *Extension* group when they graduated from High School. They then began vocational training: one as a nursing auxiliary; one as an administrative auxiliary; and the other as a beautician. Another two girls joined the *Extension* group in 2023, and have also begun vocational training. Two of the male members of the group continued their vocational training in sport technology and cooking in 2022, and completed this in 2023. Two other boys, who had completed their university courses in 2021, received their degree in 2022: one in law, and the other in international commerce. A boy who started a degree in zootechnics in 2022 sadly dropped out of the course at the end of his first year; and another boy also dropped out of the group.

Another member of the *Extension* group in 2022 was a boy who was in his final year of a degree course in plastic arts. He graduated at the end of the year, and then wanted to undertake additional studies in Argentina and the United States, but unfortunately **Funvini** was unable to help to finance these. However, he was eventually able to sell enough of his works to pay for a six month course in Argentina.

Five young adults - four girls and one boy - joined the *Extension* group in 2023 to undertake vocational training. They all came from families with very restricted means, and it is unlikely that any of them would be able to fulfil their potential without **Funvini**'s help.

In June 2022 **Funvini**'s children and staff celebrated The Queen's Platinum Jubilee with as much enthusiasm as they had done for the Golden and Diamond Jubilees. Once again, they didn't see why British children should have all the fun; and in a country that has suffered so much from political corruption, the example of a Head of State who had devoted so many years of selfless service to her people seemed something worth studying and celebrating. *Casa Walsingham* was bedecked with Colombian and British flags, and with images of the Her Majesty, rather to the bemusement of the neighbours.

However this was very much a *Colombian* celebration: Fr Peter was in Britain, and no British people planned or took part in it. Those involved simply wanted to express their grateful solidarity with their British benefactors. And, of course, in Colombia no excuse for a party could be allowed to go to waste.

The children spent some time learning about the Coronation Service and all the symbolism it involved. They then prepared to re-enact on 2nd June the principal ceremonies of the Coronation - complete with a Queen, Bishops, train-bearers, choristers, soldiers and cheering crowds. There were separate performances for the morning and afternoon shifts, which largely involved separate 'casts', who also enjoyed a special meal, a cake and toasts. To round off the celebrations, the following day 70 children went on an outing to *Los Tamarindos* water park, and they were all given a new pair of shoes in Her Majesty's honour.

The Trustees and staff of **Let The Children Live!** received with the greatest sorrow the news of The Queen's death on 8th September 2022.

All 263 youngsters who belonged to **Funvini**'s programmes in December 2022 were given presents of toys, clothing and sweets by the charity over the Christmas period. An additional 44 children who came along in the hope of presents were not sent away disappointed. In many cases, these were the only presents the children received, so it is easy to imagine how much excitement and pleasure

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they generated. Once again, all of the funds needed to fund the festivities and to buy the presents were raised in Scotland by Mr George McAleenan. The Trustees are most grateful for this.

During 2022, more than 19,500 lunches were served at *Casa Walsingham*, and a further 9,400 lunches were served at *Casa Bannatyne*. The children who stayed there were also provided with breakfast and dinner. For many of these children, their lunch at *Casa Walsingham* - together with the healthy snack they are given either in the morning or the late afternoon - was and is their main source of nourishment. As a result of the alarming rise in food prices since the pandemic, the children have become even more reliant on the food provided by **Funvini**.

In the course of 2022, the charity assisted 104 boys and girls to receive various types of medical attention. These included general practitioner and paediatric appointments, nutritional evaluations, dental treatment and eye tests.

Additionally, **Funvini** paid insurance policies to provide a total of 168 children with accident and emergency health cover for all or part of the year. The policy covered 154 children at any one time, but the departure of some children - when they entered other institutions, moved to distant barrios, or left the city altogether - meant that their places could then be assigned to new arrivals. So far in 2023, a total of 136 children have benefitted from this cover. The cover of a further 10 has been delayed because their families have not yet been able to provide all of the documents that the insurer requires.

By the end of 2022, the Colombian authorities had given anti-Covid inoculations to 84.8% of **Funvini**'s children, and all of **Funvini**'s employees had received three doses. However, 33.3% of those aged over 50 have opted not to receive a fourth dose in 2023.

In 2022 **Funvini** also paid for vaccinations against influenza for 125 children; and 28 of its staff were also vaccinated. **Funvini** has arranged to provide the current vaccine for 100 children and 30 staff in September 2023. These vaccinations are particularly necessary in Medellín because the high level of pollution in the air in the city causes many respiratory problems amongst the children, and a bad bout of influenza could seriously aggravate these. The authorities sometimes have to declare amber or red alerts about the air quality in Medellín. On these occasion emergency measures have to be implemented to try to reduce the smog by which the inhabitants is threatened.

Between June and August 2023, Dr Jhon Esneider Dávila held five clinics at *Casa Walsingham* in order to provide basic preliminary health checks for children there. A total of 92 children attended these, and the doctor found that 44 of them required treatment for parasitic infections; 17 needed eye tests; 4 were malnourished; and 1 was overweight. He referred 1 child for psychological assessment and ordered laboratory tests for 5 of the children

Because of his family's circumstances, Dr Dávila had received support from **Funvini** all the way from his schooldays to his graduation from Medical School. The Trustees were very pleased to hear that he had now kindly volunteered provide this important service to children from similarly disadvantaged backgrounds.

Unlike **Let The Children Live!**, **Funvini** is an explicitly Roman Catholic organisation. Although it certainly does not exclude non-Catholics, and it provides its services on the basis of need rather than creed, the great majority of its children - in common with the majority of the population of

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Medellín in general - are Catholics. **Funvini** considers that enabling them to participate in the sacramental life of the Church is an integral and very important part of the charity's work. It therefore provides Catechism classes for those who wish to be prepared for the Sacraments, and who for one reason or another are not able to attend catechism classes in their own parishes.

In 2022, 22 such children were prepared for their First Communion. Unfortunately, four of these candidates were Venezuelans who returned to their country before completing the process. Six of the remaining children made their First Communion at the Easter Vigil, and the other eight did so on Christmas Day. Both of these Masses were celebrated in the Chapel of *Casa Walsingham*. It is expected that 11 children will be ready to make their First Communion at Christmas 2023.

In August 2023, the Forty Hours Devotion of continuous prayer before the Blessed Sacrament was held again in the Chapel at *Casa Walsingham* for the first time since the Covid pandemic. This is normally a high point in **Funvini**'s spiritual calendar; and although it was rather tiring, the event was as well-supported as ever both by the children and by the staff. The girls took it in turns to keep the adoration going throughout the first night, and the boys did the same on the second night.

**Let The Children Live!** receives the support of all sorts of people of good will. Most of them are Christians of one kind or another, but some are of different religious persuasions. The Trustees are most grateful for the spiritual support of all the individuals and groups who prayed for the children in response to the charity's intercession list.

In accordance with its Catholic principles, **Funvini** fully shares the commitment of **Let The Children Live!** to safeguard the lives of children from the time of their conception onwards. When young girls belonging to any of its programmes become pregnant - or other pregnant teenagers turn to it for help - **Funvini** therefore does all it can to provide care for them and their babies both before and after the birth.

The charity ensures that these girls are given the necessary medical checks; it gives them basic training in child care; and it helps with supplies of food, nappies and other essentials. **Funvini** also encourages the girls to continue with their education; and it gives them the chance to meet together regularly for recreation and mutual support. In 2022 the beneficiaries of the St Maria Goretti group included 12 of these young mothers and their babies. All of these girls were aged under 18, and the youngest was 14. Three babies were born to members of the group in the course of the year. As of August 2023, there were 11 mothers and babies in the group. Three of the babies were born this year. Once again, the youngest mother in the group was 14.

With **Funvini**'s help, all of these girls were enabled to continue with their secondary schooling, or to begin vocational training. Four of the girls belonged to **Funvini**'s School Project. Of these, two completed their *Bachillerato* (High School Diploma), in 2021, and another is hoping to do so in December 2023.

Unfortunately, only a tiny minority of the children cared for by **Funvini** benefit from the advantages of a stable and non-conflictual marital home. The overwhelming majority of them were born outside wedlock and live with their mothers, often accompanied by the mother's current *novio* (boy-friend), and with little - if any - contact with, or support from, their biological fathers. In such families, skills in verbal communication and the articulation of emotions tend to be limited, and anger and stress tend to express themselves in violence. Instances of physical and sexual abuse by

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the “stepfathers” are rife. Criminal gangs sometimes serve as substitute families for youngsters who can no longer tolerate life at home.

A study of 177 of **Funvini**’s children conducted in 2022 showed that only *one* of these children - a chorister - was currently living with parents who had been married in Church. The parents of three other choristers had been married in Church, but were not currently living together. The parents of four of the Venezuelan children had had civil weddings. Only 38 of the children lived with both parents, whether married or not. A total of 96 children lived in households with adults who were in unmarried relationships; 73 of the children were being brought up by their mothers alone; and just two by the father alone. A “stepfather” figure was living with the mothers of 42 of the children; and a “stepmother” was living with the fathers of 6 children. A total of 30 children were living with grandparents or other members of their extended families.

In comparison with the census of 2005, the census of 2018 shows an increase from 29.9% to 40.7% in the proportion of Colombian homes headed by a woman, who is usually the mother. Most such single mothers strive to do the best they can in very difficult circumstances. They are not only the main bread-winners but also have to assume the main responsibility for running their homes and caring for their families. These additional tasks tend to limit both the hours that they can work, and the sort of jobs that they can do.

Many of the mothers became pregnant at a young age, and some of them are involved in prostitution. They therefore have little moral authority with which to try to dissuade their daughters from doing the same. This leaves them ill-placed to teach their children about the value of modesty, virginity, chastity and fidelity. Indeed, in some cases it was the *mother herself* who inducted her daughter into prostitution. One thirteen-year-old girl who turned to **Funvini** for help had been rebuked by her mother for refusing to accept an expensive cellphone from an adult gang-leader as an inducement to become his live-in girlfriend. Apparently, the mother hoped that if her daughter accepted this offer, the gang-leader would soon give her a house.

In the case of the boys, they mostly lack satisfactory role-models to help them learn how to behave as a man, a husband or a father. They are rarely taught to prepare themselves for the responsibilities of marriage, or about the inseparable bond that ought to exist between the unitive and procreative aspects of matrimony. On the contrary, all too often they become perpetual adolescents, unwilling or unable to make and fulfil long-lasting commitments; and alienated from the values of their religion, their culture and their society. This is probably reflected in the increase in the proportion of single-occupant homes, which increased from 11.1% in 2005 to 18.5% in 2018.

Moreover, the boys not infrequently become resentful of maternal authority, which they interpret as nagging; and they react by becoming violent towards their mothers, their girlfriends or their children. One of **Funvini**’s main objectives is to try to break the cycle in which an abused or abandoned child grows up to be an abusive or abandoning adult.

**Funvini** seeks to prepare some of its youngsters to assume leadership roles in their local communities, to equip them to resist what St John Paul called the “culture of death”, and what Pope Benedict XVI referred to as “the tyranny of relativism”. However, one of the greatest challenges it faces is recruiting staff who are themselves living in accordance with these principles, and who are able to share them with cheerful conviction.



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Unfortunately, only a small proportion of **Funvini**'s employees who are parents are also married; and those who are married are all male. This means that even when the children are taking part in the charity's activities, they very rarely come into contact with a married woman. This makes it more difficult for them to learn to consider marriage as normal, and as a state to which they should aspire. This is a subject that has to be handled with great delicacy because nothing will be achieved if the children gain the impression that their parents or families are being criticised.

The Trustees continue to be very concerned about the impact that the continuing crisis in Venezuela is having in Colombia. Three countries - Colombia, Brazil and Guyana - share land borders with Venezuela, but at 1,378 miles its longest border is that with Colombia; and it is Colombia that has received the greatest number of the 7,000,000 or so refugees and migrants who have left Venezuela.

According to a report in *El Colombiano* on 9th February 2022, Migración Colombia, the official border agency, estimated that at that stage there were currently 1,842,390 Venezuelan citizens in Colombia; and that 264,000 (14.3%) of these people were in Antioquia. This meant that the Department where Medellín is located was second only to Bogotá in the number of Venezuelans it had received. On 19th July 2022 Migración Colombia estimated that the number of Venezuelans in the country had risen by 34.5% to 2,477,588. Then, on 23rd September 2022 *El Colombiano* reported that about 344,000 of them were to be found in Antioquia, with about 190,000 in Medellín alone.

Some of the Venezuelan adults have been able to enter training programmes for professions and trades ranging from public administration and commerce to manufacturing and utilities such as gas and water. Nevertheless, many of the refugees/migrants are having to survive by "*el rebusque*" - a very broad term which could cover taking part in any form of unofficial economic activity from labouring or begging to prostitution or delinquency.

On 30th July 2021 Caracol Radio reported on the number of Venezuelan children who were being forced by poverty to work in the streets of Medellín, selling sweets or cleaning car windscreens; and on the number of Venezuelan mothers who were engaging in similar activities accompanied by babies or toddlers. The children of families who have to live like this are obviously in very great danger of every type of exploitation and abuse.

A total of 55 Venezuelan refugee/migrant children were regular members of **Funvini**'s programmes in 2022; and a further 90 Venezuelan children were helped by **Funvini** on an occasional basis. They ranged from 6 to 18 years of age, and school places were obtained for 92 of them. The Trustees were pleased to note that 86 (93.5%) of those who went to school succeeded in gaining promotion to the next grade. Another 98 Venezuelan children - who were mostly younger brothers and sisters of the other children - benefitted from **Funvini**'s help in various ways, but were not formally admitted to its programmes.

The families of many of the Venezuelan children had to make frequent changes of their lodgings. Sometimes they were forced to move because they were unable to pay the rent; and sometimes they opted to move because they had managed to find cheaper accommodation in a more remote *barrio*. It was often difficult for them to obtain places in schools close to their new temporary abodes, so their education was interrupted; and if their move had taken them too far from *Casa Walsingham*, they were unable to continue going there in the meanwhile. Some of **Funvini**'s Colombian children experienced similar problems.

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By August of 2023, a total of 100 Venezuelan children had been admitted to **Funvini**'s programmes. It has been possible to obtain school places for all but 8 of them because the access of children to education is classed as a human right, even of those who have no identification papers. However, on 23rd June 2023, UNICEF said that it estimated that 135,000 of the Venezuelan boys and girls in Colombia were not going to school. The number of Venezuelan children who are currently being helped on an occasional basis stands at 10; and a further 47 younger brothers and sisters are also receiving indirect benefits.

In order to help Venezuelan families to "regularise" their status in Colombia, and so get access to education and health care, **Funvini** made an agreement with several statutory and charitable organisations to hold 4 "Legalisation Days" at *Casa Walsingham* between December 2021 and May 2022. Officials took the details, photographs and blood-types of the refugees, and social-workers explained their rights under - and the procedures of - the Colombian health and education systems.

A total of 619 Venezuelans took part in these events: (126 children who were already enrolled in **Funvini**'s programmes; a further 184 children from outside **Funvini**; and 435 of their adult family members). As a result of their participation, the situation of all these refugees has now been "regularised": they can remain legally in Colombia for up to ten years; the adults can seek legal employment; and the families can be admitted to Colombia's health and education systems. The Trustees consider this timely and relatively inexpensive initiative to have been a great success because it has made such a valuable contribution to the future welfare of so many children and their families.

In 2022 Migración Colombia claimed that 96% of the Venezuelans - who are now officially referred to as "migrants" rather than "refugees" - had "regularised" their status: but that still left at least 4% of them (around 100,000 people) in an "irregular" state. If 4% of the Venezuelans in Antioquia were in that category, that would mean that around 14,000 people there remained "irregular" and undocumented. **Funvini** is worried that there are still many Venezuelan children in Antioquia - and in Medellín itself - who have limited access to education and proper health care, and whose parents are unable to work legally.

In August 2022, **Funvini** was working with 16 children who were in this "irregular" situation. **Funvini** referred their cases to *Intégrate*, a network of NGOs that liaise with the Mayor's office and Migración Colombia in order to try to resolve such problems. Thanks to this initiative, the situation of these 16 children was eventually "regularised". So far in 2023 another 6 of **Funvini**'s children were also being helped in this way. However, during the first year of President Petro's administration, the "regularisation" process has been markedly slower and more complicated, so the families of these children currently have no idea when - or if - they will obtain *el plástico*, the vital plastic Temporary Protection Permit (PPT) card that shows that their status has been regularised. In the meanwhile, they are unable to take advantage of job opportunities, and they have no access to basic services.

Since 2009, *Casa Bannatyne* has served mainly as the base of **Funvini**'s choir, *Cor Videns*. This was formed in 2004 in the hope that it would develop into a first-class children's choir which would give the city's invisible, forgotten children, whose cries so often go unheeded, a voice that would eventually be heard around the world. Although it was originally a mixed group, the choir is now only for boys because there are plenty of other choirs that are either mixed or only for girls.

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The name *Cor Videns - the Seeing Heart Choir* - was inspired by a passage by Pope Benedict XVI in his Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (31,b) in which he said, “The Christian’s programme—the programme of the Good Samaritan, the programme of Jesus—is ‘a heart which sees’. This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.” The Trustees hope that *Cor Videns* will help its hearers to develop such a “seeing heart”, and to respond generously to the charity’s appeals.

Although most of the choristers who are admitted as full members of the choir stay for at least five years, it is inevitable that each year some of them should leave. In some cases, this is because they grow up and leave school and no longer have the time; in others because they have competing interests, such as football; and in others it is for family reasons, such as a move to another town. Some of the Probationers also leave because they are not willing to make the necessary commitment, or because they fail to reach the required standard. In order to maintain a balance between a strong top line and a stable nucleus of experienced singers it is clear that *Cor Videns* will eventually need to have at least 20 fully-fledged choristers and a similar number of Probationers.

Because there are no other choirs like *Cor Videns* in Medellín, it often takes quite some time for the children and their parents to appreciate fully all the advantages of belonging to the choir. These normally include travel to other cities or abroad; opportunities to learn to play musical instruments; and attractive educational and recreational activities. These elements will have an important part to play in promoting the future stability of the choir.

On school days, the admitted choristers normally stay on in *Casa Bannatyne* after choir practice and spend the night there. This arrangement has proved very popular both with the children and with their parents, and it provides the choristers with valuable extra time not only for additional musical and recreational activities, but also for them to receive help from **Funvini**’s teachers with their school homework.

For some of these children, the stays at *Casa Bannatyne* provide a much-needed respite from hunger, neglect or mistreatment at home. It is important to note that many of the children in the choir suffer from the same socio-economic and family problems as most of the other children in **Funvini**’s care. Some have required medical care or therapies which their families would not have been able to afford.

When Fr Peter is in Colombia, the choristers normally go home on Friday evening and come back into residence at *Casa Bannatyne* on Sunday morning in time to sing at Mass there at noon. The Oratory is too small to accommodate everyone, so the dining-room has to be converted into a temporary Chapel. On the other hand, when Fr Peter is away, the choristers remain in residence until Saturday afternoon. They then go home, and do not return until after school on Monday. However, it often happens that one or more of the choristers asks *not* to go home for the weekend for some reason; and, if their parents agree, they are allowed to remain in residence.

Two boys left the choir at the end of 2021, so in 2022 the choir year began with only ten admitted members. It is therefore only at half its normal strength, because auditions had to be suspended until the schools starting working normally again after the pandemic. Three boys with unbroken voices were admitted at the beginning of 2023. A further six boys were still Aspirants in August 2023,. Five of these are expected to become Probationers in September, but it is likely that the other one will not continue the selection process. It is hoped that at least four of the new Probationers will be ready to become Admitted member of the choir at the end of the year.

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It has not yet been possible to arrange for auditions to be held in schools again after their suspension during the Covid crisis. Instead, the Choir Director has given brief presentations about the choir at the end of Sunday Masses in three parishes. As a result of these, 13 boys began the selection process, and all of the current Aspirants were recruited in this manner. Although the total number of participants in the auditions has there decreased dramatically, the proportion of the boys auditioned who have gone on to join the choir has also increased dramatically, so this new method of recruitment seems to be proving more cost-effective. The Choir Director hopes to be able to arrange to hold auditions in four more parishes before the end of the year.

Five of the boys whose voices broke during the year left the choir at its end. However, four of these, together with a boy who had left the choir in 2021, were formed into an auxiliary group in order both to enable them to continue to develop their musical talent and to retain their skill and experience for the service for the choir.

In May 2022 *Cor Videns* was one of the choirs chosen to take part in the 10th annual festival *El Canto Nos Une* (Singing Unites Us). This is always held in Medellín, but choirs from all over Colombia were invited to provide a video recording of an item from their repertoire in order to compete for an invitation to take part. It was therefore quite a feather in *Cor Videns*'s cap that they were among the 12 choirs who were selected. The repertoire was intended to provide a musical journey around the world, so the choirs had to learn pieces in six different languages, and in a wide variety of styles. This required a good deal of intensive preparation and rehearsal.

The concert took place on 16th August, and about 400 young singers took part. Although some of the other choirs included a few boys, the great majority of the choristers were girls. *Cor Videns* was the sole boys' choir at the event. The singers were accompanied by the Symphony Orchestra of EAFIT university, and the Principal Conductor of the concert was Kirlianit Cortés, Director of the Vienna Boys' Choir. The Trustees were delighted to hear that he singled out *Cor Videns* for special praise, and said that the purity of their voices was similar to that of his own choristers in Vienna. The event was a great success, and the *Cor Videns* has been invited to take part in the next concert in September 2023.

Two of the older choristers were invited to take part in professional performances in Medellín's Metropolitan Theatre of Mendelssohn's Second Symphony in 2022; and of *La Traviata*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Mendelssohn's Second Symphony. in 2023. The choir also took part in the annual José María Bravo Márquez Festival and in the University of Medellín's Carol Festival. One seventeen year-old member of the choir hopes to be able to start a music degree in 2024. Four former members are currently doing music degrees: three in singing and one in piano. Another former member has earned a degree in orchestral conducting and is now Assistant Director of a choir called *Estudio Polifónico*, a choir that specialises in the performance of choral music with symphonic accompaniment.

In February 2021, **Funvini** started opening *Casa Walsingham* on Saturdays as well as during the week in order to maximise the number of children who could attend its programmes. It continued to do this in term-time until the end of 2022. Unfortunately, since then the need for cost-saving measures has forced *Casa Walsingham* to remain closed on Saturdays, except on a few special occasions.

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Although shortage of funds has resulted in painful reductions in **Funvini**'s population, both *Casa Walsingham* and *Casa Bannatyne* are still acutely short of *space*. Both houses need more space in which to provide children with more access to books and to the computers they use for their homework. The Chapel at *Casa Walsingham* needs more space in which to accommodate the children at Mass. More dormitory space is needed at *Casa Bannatyne* in order to allow more choristers to stay there during the week when they are in residence, and more children from **Funvini**'s other programmes to stay there at the weekend and when the choristers are away.

More space is needed in both houses for the storage of equipment, materials and archives in easily-accessible but secure and damp-free conditions. And the children need more space in which to play and exercise safely: *Casa Walsingham* does not have a playground, and neither house has an area in which ball-games can be played.

Because *Casa Walsingham* is in a conservation area, there is little that can be done there, although **Funvini** hopes to be allowed to enlarge the Chapel by extending the pitched roof over a wing that currently has a flat roof. This was in the plans when approval for the construction of that wing was granted; but that was back in 2007, so fresh permission will now be needed. This wing already contains a well for a lift, and if planning permission is granted, this would be extended to make all five floors accessible to the disabled, as and when funds become available for the purchase of the lift itself.

Plans for the extension of *Casa Bannatyne* have now been drawn up, and planning permission has been granted. This permission is valid for two years, and if construction has not started, permission must be sought again. The approved plans provide for the building of an additional floor over about two-thirds of the house. This will provide a library, a multi-purpose class-room/ performance space; two offices; two loos; storage space for the choir's vestments, uniforms and instruments; and a central control point for the electronic and tele-communications system. Although the plans show how all this is to be done, they do not cover the necessary alterations to the existing structure because planning permission will not be required for these. Plans for these alterations will also have to be drawn up, as will those for the new electricity and water networks.

The extension will involve roofing over an internal utility patio, and the partial covering of another internal patio. However this will enable the construction of an additional dormitory and bathroom on the ground floor, and of an extension to the dining-room and the Oratory on the second floor. Provision will also be made for the installation of a lift in order to make all three floors accessible to the disabled. It is hoped that it may also be possible to gain some space between the kitchen on the ground floor and the new third floor.

Unfortunately, the cost of building materials has been increasing so rapidly in 2022 that architects are now unable to provide reliable estimates. All that they could say in 2022 was that the planned extension would cost more than £100,000. Unfortunately construction cost and materials have continued to rise rapidly in 2023, so the construction of this project will be very much more expensive than they had indicated originally. The only thing that is clear is that the longer this work is postponed, the greater the eventual cost will be. However, although this extra space is so urgently needed, the extension will not be built until this cost can be borne without harming **Funvini**'s operational budget.

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When *Casa Bannatyne* was purchased in 2004, Pilarica, the *barrio* in which it is situated, was an oasis of calm because it was composed of a fairly small number of substantial houses set in large gardens. Then the *barrio* was re-zoned, and the construction of high-rise buildings was permitted. Nowadays, *Casa Bannatyne* is almost surrounded by blocks of flats; and where formerly one family lived with one car, now there are 50 families and 50 vehicles.

Unfortunately, the *barrios* road, water and electrical networks have not been expanded and upgraded proportionately. They are overloaded, and traffic-jams, interruptions in the water supply, and surges, drops and cuts in the electricity supply are all too common. When the water supply comes on again, the mains have to be flushed through under high pressure in order to remove the build up of contaminants. Some of this debris then gets into the domestic water system, clogging up the pipe-work and reducing the hot-water pressure.

The children at *Casa Bannatyne* have to get up shortly after 4:00am on schooldays, so they did not much relish the frequent occasions when they had to shower in cold water. This problem has now been solved by the installation of special external filter. Similarly, the purchase of an emergency generator is now enabling essential systems to continue to function at the property during most power cuts.

The area where *Casa Bannatyne* is located now forms an uncomfortably narrow island between the territories of two of the city's gangs. An armed guard has always been necessary at the property throughout the day and night, but the steep rise in the local population has been accompanied by a worrying increase in street-crime and muggings; and on two occasions in June 2023 attempted robberies leading to exchanges of gunfire took place within yards of *Casa Bannatyne's* front gate. Fortunately, no children were entering or leaving it at the time.

Between January 2021 and August 2022 **Funvini** upgraded 13 of its computers and bought six new machines thereby greatly improving the technology available to its children and staff. Fortunately, this process took place before the recent sharp rise in prices. However, in some cases, two or three members of staff still have to share a single computer; and children doing their homework often have a lengthy wait until a machine becomes free: so the number of computers is still far from sufficient, and more will have to be bought when funds are available.

Other future projects include:

- building and equipping the extension at *Casa Bannatyne*;
- extending the Chapel at *Casa Walsingham*;
- improving the air-conditioning in the Chapel at *Casa Walsingham*;
- installing a lift at *Casa Walsingham*;
- providing regular dental care for all the children at *Casa Walsingham*;
- installing sound-insulating windows in the dormitories and bedrooms at *Casa Bannatyne*;
- providing more amplification and lighting equipment for the Choir;
- designing and buying a definitive uniform for the Choir;
- enabling **Funvini** to buy a minibus to transport the Choir;
- helping **Funvini** to provide more vocational training, tertiary education and employment opportunities for its young adults; and
- changing the telephone systems at both *Casa Walsingham* and *Casa Bannatyne* from analogue to digital to prevent them from being interrupted for weeks at a time by the repeated theft of sections of the copper analogue cables in their respective parts of the city.

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If sufficient funds were ever to become available, *Casa Bannatyne* would be sold and replaced by a larger building and sufficient land for a school somewhere in the *Oriente Antioqueño*, the large plateau outside and above Medellin where the international airport is located. However, **Funvini** has been hoping and praying for this for many years, and the shortage of space is so acute that it is clear that the extension of *Casa Bannatyne* cannot be postponed indefinitely in the hope that the dream of a completely new home may eventually become a reality.

### Finance

In 2022 the charity met its objects by making donations in cash and in kind to a total value of £397,489 to support **Funvini's** work in Colombia. This sum was £84,938 (17.6%) less than the total that it had donated to **Funvini** in 2021; but £5,773 (1.5%) more than the total donated in 2020. The 2022 figure represented 63.9% of total expenditure. A further £86,911 was expended on fieldwork in Colombia, which was 11.2% more than in 2021. Thus a total of £484,400 - which was 77.8% of all expenditure - was devoted to **Funvini's** activities.

For the third year in succession, the charity was not able to make any investment in Development Education in Britain because of the difficulty in gaining access to schools. Fortunately, it has been possible for some such talks to be given in 2023.

In accordance with the Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), the charity's administrative expenditure is classified under the heading of 'Support Costs', and included in the total for Charitable Activities. In 2022, these Support Costs amounted to £105,907, which was 12.4% more than the previous year, and represented 17% of all expenditure. This brought the total spent on Charitable Activities to £590,307 (94.8% of all expenditure). This was quite a satisfactory result, but the Trustees emphasise that it is most unlikely that **Let The Children Live!** will be able to continue indefinitely this feat of devoting nearly 95 pence in every pound of expenditure to its Charitable Activities.

Moreover, the Trustees realise that many of the charity's donors are unlikely to consider that Support Costs - no matter how necessary they may be - actually constitute expenditure on the charity's *objects*. The Trustees always preserve a clear distinction in their own minds between the *ends* for which the charity exists and the *means* which have to be adopted to achieve them; and they will continue to endeavour to keep all administrative expenditure - and any bureaucratic procedures that tend to engender it - to a minimum.

None of the Trustees received any remuneration or were repaid for any expenses during the year, so the only expenses to be classified under the heading of Governance were the aggregated Independent Examination fees, which were £5,670 (0.9% of total expenditure). Under the present SORP, these expenses are classified under Support Costs, because Governance is counted as a Charitable Activity. It must be noted, however, that in 2022 the Governance costs were 45.8% greater than in 2021. Mazars have attributed this very substantial increase to the extra work involved in helping to present the accounts of the two charities in the aggregated format that is required now that they have been linked. The Trustees hope that, now that this new pattern has been established, the cost of the Independent Examination of the aggregated accounts will, in future, be less than the total of cost of the examination of two separate sets of accounts would have been.

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In accordance with the SORP, the money the charity spends on generating funds is classified as 'Expenditure on Raising Funds'. In 2022 this amounted to £32,099, which was 22.1% more than the previous year, and was 5.2% of total expenditure. The Trustees regret the size of this increase but consider it was an unavoidable reflection of the high rate of inflation combined with the increased difficulty in raising funds after the pandemic.

In particular, the steep rises in the cost of transport have been aggravated by the fact that competition amongst good causes for the opportunity to make appeals is now so intense that the charity has to accept invitations virtually whenever they are offered, thus making it much harder to cluster appeals in order to obviate the need for multiple journeys to the same area.

As the Trustees have warned repeatedly, it is unlikely that the charity will be able to maintain the very low level of expenditure on fund-generation that it has sustained for many years. The figures for 2022 show that this is, indeed, the case because last year fund-generation required 6.8% of its income, whereas in 2021 it had only needed 4.0%. Similarly, in 2021 the cost of income-generation was 3.9% of total expenditure, but in 2022 it rose to 5.2%. The Trustees think that, unfortunately, it is very probable that in future the proportion of both income and expenditure taken up by fund-generation will have to continue to increase considerably.

In the last seventeen years fund-generation has never taken up more than 5.5 pence in each pound that the charity has expended. This compares very favourably with the proportion spent on fund-raising by most other charities. In the *UK Civil Society Almanac 2015* the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) estimated that 11.6% of the charity sector's overall expenditure was spent on fund-raising in 2013/14.

The survey *Top 100 Fundraisers Spotlight*, which was published in March 2018 by Charity Financials, produced similar findings. In 2016/17 "across the top 100 fundraisers, average fundraising costs were 17% as a proportion of fundraising income"; and "as a proportion of total income fundraising costs were 10%". One charity actually spent 38% of its total income on fundraising!

Although, quite naturally, the Trustees are pleased that these figures show that a small charity like **Let The Children Live!** is so much more efficient than many of these large bodies, they are concerned that the profligacy of some of them tends to tarnish the image of charities in general, and may lead to calls for yet more regulation.

The Trustees were therefore pleased to see that the Charity Commission includes charitable spending ratios in the new version of its information about each charity. However, this information is not immediately obvious, and requires an extra click to come up. The Trustees suggest this vital information should be displayed very much more prominently - as prominently, for example, as the details about the number of employees with total benefits over £60,000 - a figure which they consider to be misleading because this could be interpreted as referring to employee salaries *alone*, whereas it actually includes the cost of employer's pension contributions as well.

The Trustees note what the Commission says about the need to put the charitable spending ratios in context and they are very much aware that any charity may experience a difficult year - or a series of difficult years - when the results of its fund-raising campaigns are not very good, or when the cost of fund-generation increases sharply. Consequently, they think that it would be helpful if the



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Commission were to include these ratios for the *previous five years*, as is done with the charity's financial and compliance histories. The Commission already has this information in its system, so this could easily be calculated automatically, without involving charities in any extra work.

It would also be helpful if the Charity Commission were also to publish on each charity's page the average fund-generation ratios for the previous five years of *all charities of similar size*, dividing them into bands by income. This would put pressure on less efficient charities to improve their performance, and make it easier for prospective donors to find charities that are particularly efficient.

The weight of any additional bureaucratic burden tends to fall disproportionately on smaller charities, and to make them less efficient. Any further tinkering with the SORP and other regulations is also especially injurious to them. Like increased health and safety requirements, Net Zero and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), *increased accountability, transparency and social responsibility requirements come at a cost*, and it should not simply be assumed that this cost is always justified.

In the case of the GDPR, for example, although the public may have benefited if the excessive persistence of some charities - particularly the larger ones - in badgering people for money has been curtailed, it should also be recognised that the GDPR now prevents small charities like **Let The Children Live!** from asking former donors for renewed help in times of crisis, unless the donors have previously given their explicit consent. The benefits brought by the GDPR in terms of increased donor privacy therefore need to be weighed against the harm caused to beneficiaries when charities are no longer able to help them in an emergency. The Trustees therefore hope that the government will take advantage of the opportunity offered by Brexit to adjust the GDPR in order to reduce their negative impact on charities.

The Trustees also believe that the Charity Commission should be required to monitor and publish details of the effect on *small charities* of any regulatory change in order to ensure that the benefits actually obtained really are proportional to the extra cost imposed on them in time, money and efficiency. An important element and indicator of good Governance is the elimination of all non-essential bureaucratic costs and activity, and the Commission could do much more to promote this both by simplifying its own procedures and demands, and by giving this matter greater prominence in the advice it gives to Trustees and to the government.

Excluding internal transfers between the two charities, their total aggregated income in 2022 was £676,518. This was a fall of £206,569 (30.5%) in comparison to the total aggregated income, net of internal transfers, that had been received in 2021.

The £30,041 that the charity received from legacies in 2022 was £53,645 (64.1%) less than the legacy income the previous year. That, in turn, had been in £125,887 (60.1%) less than the £209,573 received in 2020. The last comparable year was 2018, when the legacy income was £36,579. The charity's income from Trusts in 2022 fell by £14,998 (52.6%) to £13,525. Its income from these two extraordinary sources in 2022 was therefore £43,566, which was £68,643 (61.2%) less than the previous year, and constituted only 9.3% of its total income. Although most welcome, such extraordinary income is completely unpredictable, and the dramatic fall in the income from legacies reinforces the Trustees' conviction that it would be unwise for the charity to rely too heavily on these sources of income.

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Traditionally, most of the charities' income has been generated by appeals in Roman Catholic parishes. However, the Trustees realise that some parishioners have not returned to Mass after the Covid lockdowns, and that, combined with the cost-of-living crisis, has hit the income of many parishes very hard. All this is tending in turn, to diminish the income that dioceses receive from their parishes, and some Bishops are banning charities from making appeals at Mass in their territory.

Even in ordinary times, Parish Priests tend to be inundated by requests for appeals by charities, and they are also required to hold quite a number of collections for causes chosen by their Bishops. Competition amongst charities for limited parish collection 'slots' is therefore now more acute than ever. The Trustees therefore feared that the charity's income from general donations might be substantially reduced.

Fortunately, however, although income from ordinary donations fell by £26,419 in 2022, this was a reduction of only 6.4%. compared to 2021. Indeed, it was only 10.3% less than such income in 2020. The Trustees consider that this indicates that the public's response to the charity's appeals is holding up reasonably well under the prevailing financial conditions. They therefore conclude that it is a combination of a shortage of disposable income and the acute competition from other worthy causes, rather than a lack of confidence in the charity, or of sympathy for its cause, that is responsible for the decline in the charity's income from general donations.

The Trustees are very grateful for the generosity of those who kindly donated goods for the charity's shop in Walsingham to sell. Thanks to Mrs Seals and her team of faithful volunteers, in 2022 the income from sales there rose by £3,394 (29.6%) to £14,869. A further £2,414 was received in donations made at the shop, bringing its total income to £17,283.

The running-costs of the shop amounted to £15,628, so it made a net profit of £1,655. Moreover, the Trustees recognise that the shop continues to be an important point of contact with the charity's supporters. It also helps **Let The Children Live!** to retain its identity as Walsingham's own special charity. Nevertheless, the viability of the shop will have to remain under annual review.

In 2021, the charity had received a total of £12,946 from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and from the North Norfolk District Council. As intended, this statutory income provided some relief during the pandemic; but it naturally came to an end once the pandemic was over, so no further income from these sources was received in 2022.

Unless the charity receives more substantial windfalls from Trusts and legacies - which is very uncertain - they will not be able to meet the whole of **Funvini**'s future funding needs. If these are to be met, additional regular income will be required from other sources. It had been hoped that one such source would be **Let The Children Live! Inc.**, the charity's independent offshoot in the United States. This is recognised by the Inland Revenue Service (IRS) as a 501(3)(C) not-for-profit charitable corporation, so its benefactors are able to offset their donations to it against tax.

The Trustees are extremely grateful to both of their American colleagues for all their work in setting-up and running **Let The Children Live! Inc.**. Unfortunately, however, these ladies are now able to devote only a limited amount of time to their charity's affairs, and unless they are able to recruit some new members to its Board, the future of the American charity seems very uncertain. If it were to close, the income **Funvini** receives from the United States would probably be lost

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because Americans tend to be reluctant to make donations that are not tax-deductible. This loss would obviously be a serious blow.

In the last few years legacies to the British charity have played a vital part in enabling it to fund most of **Funvini**'s work. A substantial legacy can make an enormous difference to a charity like **Let The Children Live!** It is therefore unfortunate that benefactors who wish to leave most of their property to charity so often decide to divide it amongst *several* good causes, instead of maximising the impact of their legacy by leaving the lion's share to *one* small charity.

The Trustees are deeply grateful to those who have remembered the charity in their Wills. The additional income from this source has been especially important during the months when normal fund-raising activities have been impeded by the Covid lockdown regulations. The children in *Casa Walsingham* remember their deceased benefactors every working day at the noon Angelus. They are also remembered at various special Masses in the Chapel there.

The Trustees also wish to express their gratitude to everyone who has requested that, when they die, donations should be sent to the charity in lieu of flowers; and to all those who have made this request after the death of a loved one.

Most of the money received by the charity in 2022 was the fruit of the generosity of a large number of individual donors and of parishes and other groups. It is not possible to name them all here, but the Trustees wish to express their warmest thanks to all of them.

The Trustees are also most grateful to:

- Caring and Sharing for continuing to support to **Funvini**'s educational project;
- and for unrestricted donations from:
- The de Vitre Fund;
  - The Di Paola Trust; and
  - The C & K Sommer Trust.

In 2010 a benefactor made a loan of £200,000 to the Trust; and in 2011 he increased this loan to £225,000. The benefactor has asked to remain anonymous, but he is not a Trustee; and the Trustees, the Independent Examiners and the Charity Commission are aware both of his identity and of the source of the money. With the benefactor's agreement, this sum was subsequently loaned to **Funvini** in order to mitigate the effects of the fall in its income caused by the recession.

As security for the loan, **Funvini** pledged *Casa Bannatyne*, the smaller of its two properties in Medellín. The property cannot now be sold without the consent of **Let The Children Live!** Whether the value of this property goes up or down, the benefactor has agreed with the Trustees that whatever its market value may happen to be at the time of repayment shall be the amount that is to be repaid to him. Because it is interest-free, the Trustees consider that this is the best way to try to ensure that it retains its value in real terms, without endangering the liquidity either of **Let The Children Live!** or of **Funvini**.

All being well, the loan will not have to be repaid until September 2029, but under certain circumstances **Let The Children Live!** would have to make earlier repayment to its benefactor. In

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that event, it would be necessary for **Funvini** to repay its loan early, too. The mortgage therefore stipulates that **Funvini** must repay its loan at any stage at the charity's request, within a maximum of one year.

On 13th June 2019 the Trustees of the Linked Charity and the Directors of the Reporting Charity signed the necessary documents to transfer to the latter the liability of the benefactor's loan to the Linked Charity, and the mortgage securing the Linked Charity's loan to **Funvini**.

#### **Property**

**Let The Children Live!** itself does not own any land or buildings. In 2018 the Reporting Charity took over from the Linked Charity the leases of a three-room office in Doncaster and of a small shop in Walsingham. It also took over responsibility for the rental of a flat near Oxford to serve as a base for Fr Peter and his colleagues during their fund-raising visits to Britain. The five-year lease of this property expired in February 2019, but fortunately the landlord has generously agreed to allow the tenancy to continue at the existing rent

#### **Human Resources**

The Trustees are most grateful for the continued devoted service of its four employees:

- Fr Peter Walters, the Executive Director;
- Miss Pauline Allan, the Administrator;
- Mrs Shirley Davies, the Book-keeper; and
- Mrs Jackie Seals, the Manageress of the charity's shop in Walsingham.

In accordance with the provisions of the 2014 Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) Regulations, the employees whose contracts were transferred from the Linked Charity to the Reporting Charity were entitled to continue to enjoy the same terms and conditions of employment with the Reporting Charity as they had had with the Trust. The basis on which their salaries had been established when they entered the employment of the Linked Charity was therefore not subject to any review or benchmarking when they entered that of the Reporting Charity. The same applied to the non-contributory pension scheme on a sliding scale according to age which the Linked Charity had established for personnel normally based in Colombia, in view of the additional risks involved in living and working there.

However, the Trustees are aware that because, in particularly difficult years - and again in both 2020 and 2021 - the charity's Key Management Personnel refused to accept any increase in pay, their salaries had not always kept pace with inflation. Although the annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) in April 2022 stood at 9.0%, they accepted an increase of 5%. Inflation reached 11.1% in October 2022. In March 2023 the CPI stood at 10.1%, Once again, the charity's Key Management Personnel accepted an increase of only 5%, so although by July 2023 the CPI had fallen to 6.8%, it is clear that theses salaries are not keeping pace with inflation or the benchmarks that the Linked Charity originally adopted.

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When funds permit, the Trustees therefore intend to raise the salaries of its existing Key Management Personnel to a level closer to those currently paid to those with similar experience and responsibilities in other charities of comparable size. The terms and conditions of any new Key Management Personnel will be decided on a similar basis, and consideration will be given to the possibility of awarding them a compensatory Golden Handshake if they eventually retire.

Sums of money were often given to the charity without any indication as to whether they were straight donations or the results of fund-raising activities. It is therefore impossible to estimate how many volunteers may have been involved in one way or another. The Trustees are very grateful to them all.

The Trustees wish to express their special gratitude to:

- Miss Pauline Allan, Mr Brian Coogan, Mr Slade Baylis and Micron 21 for updating and managing the charity's web site; and to
- all the members of the charity's informal support groups.

The Trustees also wish to pay tribute to the tremendous voluntary work done in promoting the charity in Scotland by Mr George McAleenan and Mr Peter Lavery.

#### **Public Benefit**

The Trustees have taken account of the Charity Commission's general guidance relating to public benefit when reviewing the charities' achievements and performance.

#### **Risk Management**

The success or otherwise of **Let The Children Live!** is evaluated by the Trustees in terms of the extent to which they manage:

- to sustain or increase the charity's income;
- to send funds to Colombia that fulfil or exceed the budget agreed with **Funvini**;
- to enable **Funvini** to maintain or increase the numbers of children in its programmes;
- to enable **Funvini** to maintain or improve the quality of care it provides;
- to raise public awareness and understanding of the situation of the street-children;
- to control and cover the charity's fund-raising costs; and
- to maintain a prudent level of reserves.

The charity continued to try to raise public awareness and understanding during the year, but - as has been mentioned already - the post-Covid situation prevented the charity's staff from making many visits to schools.

In spite of their best efforts, the total funds available to the Trustees at the end of 2022 was £152,457 (41.8%) less than the sum available at the end of 2021, although, in order to protect the charity's reserves, the charity's donations to **Funvini** in 2022 had to be reduced by £84,938 in comparison with the previous year's total, they were still £5,773 more than the total for 2021. The Trustees consider this to have been an acceptable result in such difficult circumstances.

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It is always frustrating that many of the factors that have a negative impact on the charity's work are beyond the power of the Trustees to control. However, they remain very conscious of their duty to try to evaluate and monitor the various risks to which the charity is exposed, and to take what measures they can to try to reduce or manage them. Amongst these risks and measures, they wish to draw particular attention to the following:

- a) Although neither the Linked Charity nor the Reporting Charity had any children directly in its care, the Trustees' prime concern continued to be to ensure the well-being of the children who benefitted from the services of the institutions which they helped to fund. It therefore remained their policy that they would only consider applications for funding from organisations that were duly constituted according to local law and which had implemented, or were actively in the process of implementing, a child protection policy that was in general accord with that of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, adapted to the local circumstances and culture.

In order to minimise the risk both of child-abuse and of financial mismanagement it remained the Trustees' policy to restrict the charity's activities to geographical areas of which they had a fair degree of knowledge and in which they could exercise a reasonable degree of oversight. This meant making donations only to Colombia, and concentrating them on the city of Medellín, where **Funvini** is based.

**Funvini** was one of the first charities in Colombia to implement a proper Child Protection Policy in all of its programmes. This policy is subject to frequent review, and **Funvini's** designated Child Protection Officer confirmed that the provisions of the Policy had been adhered to properly in 2022, and were continuing to be so in 2023.

- b) In May 2018, Medellín's health and safety authorities made very detailed inspections of *Casa Walsingham* and *Casa Bannatyne*. They found the facilities in both buildings to be up to the required standards, and renewed their operating licences for two years. In March 2020 **Funvini** applied for another inspection in order to renew the licences for both buildings, but because of the backlog caused by the Covid emergency, by the middle of August 2023 neither property had yet been inspected. However, the existing licences remain valid in the meanwhile.

Colombian health-and-safety-at-work regulations are now so complex and extensive that even a small organisation like **Funvini** has to employ a full-time, qualified officer to supervise their implementation. All of its staff have to attend numerous safety workshops; and emergency evacuation drills are held with the children both in the daytime and at the dead of night.

- c) In order to reduce the charity's exposure to the risk of bank failure, the Trustees decided in 2006 to open an account with the Charities Aid Foundation Bank (CAF Bank), in addition to the charity's existing accounts with Barclays. The new account functioned smoothly until 2017 when the CAF Bank suddenly informed the Trustees, without any explanation, that it was to be closed. There was no question of any discussion or appeal, so the Trustees reluctantly accepted this decision, and a balance of £40,000 was returned to Barclays. In view of the extreme difficulty that many charities and small business now experience in trying to open new accounts, Barclays have remained the charity's sole banker ever since.

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When the Trustees, in conversations with representatives of the Charity Commission in 2020, mentioned what the CAF Bank had done, they were told that they ought to have mentioned this in their Annual Return to the Commission. However, the representatives of the Charity Commission did not explain to the Trustees why what appeared to be a commercial decision ought to have been reported to them; and their guidance notes for the Return had made no mention of any such necessity.

The Trustees therefore imagined that this incident was an isolated and unusual one. However, their attention has now been drawn to an article in *Third Force News* dated 28th July 2017 (<https://tfn.scot/news/revealed-hundreds-of-charity-accounts-being-closed-by-banks>) that revealed that “Hundreds of UK charities have had their bank accounts closed due to draconian money laundering laws. ...Some banks are responding to the problem, but other institutions are taking the easy option and steering clear of allowing aid charities to set up new accounts or simply closing existing accounts with no warning.”

In the light of this article, the reasons for both the CAF Bank’s action and the Charity Commission’s concern about it are now more apparent. A charity like **Let The Children Live!** that regularly sends considerable sums of money to Colombia could be exposed to the risk of abuse by money-launderers, and would therefore be bound to attract the attention of the authorities. However, as a spokesperson for Save the Children was quoted as saying in the same article, “A more aligned approach between governments, regulators, and NGOs will help to reduce financial crime, whilst ensuring critical and life-saving humanitarian work continues.”

In the wake of the scandal provoked in the Summer of 2023 by the closure of Mr Nigel Farage’s accounts with Coutts Bank for purely political reasons, it has come to light that the accounts of thousands of other individuals and businesses have also been closed without explanation by other banks, including Barclays; and the suspicion has been aroused that in some cases this may have been done for political rather than purely commercial motives. The banks appear to have taken advantage of the same anti-money-laundering regulations to hide these motives.

Although they are perfectly legal, the Christian motivation of **Let The Children Live!**, and the pro-life and morally conservative work it supports, might be considered to be objectionable by some of the individuals or groups with different philosophies that are involved in defining the policies of the banks. There therefore exists the risk that Barclays might decide to follow the CAF Bank’s example and suddenly close the charity’s accounts.

The Trustees consider this to be a very real risk because for many months the Know Your Customer department have been badgering the charity for more and more information. The Trustees have, naturally, made every effort to comply with these requests, but Barclays have repeatedly lost documents or failed to give their staff in local branches proper training about what needs to be done with them, with the result that in June 2023 the charity’s deposit cards were temporarily frozen as a compliance enforcement measure. So badly has this whole matter been mishandled that on 19th July 2023 Barclays made a donation of £200 to the charity, with their apologies.

As Mr Farage discovered, if one’s business or personal accounts are closed by one bank, it is now virtually impossible to open a new account with another UK bank. The consequences for **Let The Children Live!**, and for the children who rely on its support in Colombia, would be

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disastrous if Barclays decided to close the charity's account. These would be the same whether the decision to close the account were taken for political reasons or fear of the mere *possibility* of involvement in a breach of the draconian anti-money-laundering regulations: without a bank account, the charity would be unable to function, and might well have to be wound up.

The Trustees therefore call upon the Charity Commission to pressure the government into taking urgent action to protect charities from the existential threat posed to them both by politically-motivated de-banking, and by the unintended consequences of the current anti-money-laundering regulations.

Moreover, the Trustees hope that the Commission is aware of the implications for charities of a report by Nick Gutteridge in the *Daily Telegraph* on 6th August 2023 that NatWest had granted itself "sweeping new powers" to limit daily and annual cash deposits and withdrawals. Although NatWest claimed that it was doing this in order to protect its customers from the risk of fraud, its action has increased concerns that the banks may be using anti-fraud and anti money-laundering policies as pretexts for trying to force customers into accepting moves towards the creation of a "cashless society".

Although the charity itself receives very few donations in cash, a very considerable amount of its income is received in cash by the parishes that take collections on its behalf; by groups and individuals who hold fund-raising events for it; and by its shop in Walsingham. Many of its donors do not wish to give by credit or debit card, and some of them do not hold such cards. And on many occasions people who have heard the charity's appeals, and who are not carrying much cash, have hurried off to make a cash withdrawal from an ATM even if they could have used the same card to give to the charity directly. Any significant limitation on the daily and annual amounts of cash deposits would therefore pose a direct threat to the income of charities like **Let The Children Live!**

The lowest denomination Sterling banknote currently in circulation in the United Kingdom is worth £5. Many people - children and the elderly, in particular - who contribute to collections for charities are unable to give as much as that, so they donate their small change. Individually, these may be very small amounts - too small to be worth giving by card, even if the donor has a card: but accumulatively they often form a significant part of the collection. The loss of this income would therefore be a considerable blow to the charities. Moreover, the loss of the ability to donate small change would either deprive these potential donors of the dignity of making their own limited but much appreciated contributions, or put them in the invidious position of having to place on record the small amount of their donations.

The Trustees believe that donors should retain the right to give to charity anonymously, provided that the amount of their donations is not so large as to constitute a serious risk of money-laundering. For all these reasons, they hope that the Charity Commission will urge the government to take steps to protect charities from the negative effects of any moves towards the creation of a "cashless society".

- d) Although Medellín no longer appears in the list of the world's 50 most violent cities, the issue of safety continues to be one of the greatest importance for the Trustees. They have therefore continued their policy of not inviting foreign volunteers to work in Colombia on its behalf. On the other hand, when foreigners who in any case intend to visit Colombia - entirely at their own



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initiative and risk - ask if they may visit *Casa Walsingham* or help with the work there, they are always referred directly to **Funvini**.

In such cases **Let The Children Live!** can, of course, accept no liability for their conduct or their welfare. For its part, **Funvini** requires any foreign volunteers it accepts to provide a current International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC) or equivalent clearance document, and to agree to abide by the terms of its Child Protection Policy .

- e) The unrestricted funds held by the Linked Charity effectively serve as a reserve for the Reporting Charity. The Trustees aim to maintain reserves in unrestricted funds which, when combined with those of the Reporting Charity, amount to at least £150,000. This is equivalent to about three months of the Reporting Charity's unrestricted charitable expenditure. They provide a buffer in case of fluctuations in the charity's income and in the value of the pound against the peso.

The Trustees consider that, in normal circumstances, this level of reserves would provide sufficient funds for both charities to continue to operate, although they hope to maintain a higher level of reserves in order to ensure greater stability in the funding of **Funvini**'s work. They realise, however, that this will not be possible in years when the charities' income is below target.

Although the Trustees are under no *contractual* obligation to provide any particular level of support to **Funvini**, they are acutely aware that the welfare of hundreds of children in Medellín depends on the funds sent by **Let The Children Live!** The Trustees do not believe that the charity's supporters would wish it to maintain a rigid policy of maintaining any particular level of reserves above that required to comply with its legal obligations if **Funvini**'s children were to be exposed to danger or hardship in consequence of this.

Moreover, they suspect that if really substantial reserves were to be maintained, some donors might decide to switch their giving to charities that appeared to be in more immediate need of their support. The charity's reserves policy must therefore remain a very flexible one.

The charity's aggregated balance of unrestricted funds on 31st December 2022 was £212,113. Although this sum was in excess of their normal reserves policy, the Trustees considered it to be appropriate in view of the impact of the continued high rate of inflation both on the disposable income of its donors and on its own costs.

- f) The charity does not possess any investments. The Trustees have done their best to protect the charity's funds against the fluctuations of the currency markets by keeping these in a mixture of pounds, US dollars and euros in order to spread the risk. However, the fate of the euro has become so uncertain that reserves are not now being kept in this currency, and the account is only being kept open to receive the donations that are occasionally received in it. In view of the fact that the high street banks now charge customers for the use of their current accounts, even if these remain in credit, the Trustees consider it to be particularly reprehensible for those banks to have been so dilatory in passing on to their customers the benefits to their deposit accounts of the repeated rises in interest rates.

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**Funvini** maintains an account in US dollars at its bank's branch in Panama so that donations sent from Britain can be converted into Colombian pesos when the exchange rate is favourable, rather than being converted automatically into pesos, regardless of the exchange rate, as has to happen when donations are sent direct to Colombia.

- g) Since 2010, **Let The Children Live!** has sent its donations to **Funvini** via foreign exchange companies such as Custom House, Western Union and Moneycorp. The Trustees initially decided to do this because these companies offered more favourable exchange rates and lower transfer fees than Barclays provided. In more recent years, however, the use of these companies became the only practical means to send its donations because Barclays no longer permitted the transfer form to be signed by two authorised signatories in their own homes, but required them to come in together to sign the form in one of their branches. This was not practical, because the signatories live more than 180 miles - and more than three hours' drive - apart. Unfortunately, Barclays does not permit its customers to make transfers to Colombia via electronic banking.

Over the years, a total of more than £5,500,000 has been transferred to **Funvini** by means of these foreign exchange companies. This has involved more than 130 individual transactions, and these have been made with no difficulties and no losses. However, the Charity Commission has become concerned about the use of foreign exchange companies because - although their use by charities is perfectly legal - they are outside the regulated banking system, and their use involves a greater element of risk than transfers effected through the regulated banking system.

In 2019 the Charity Commission asked charities that used foreign exchange companies to mention this in their Annual Return; and this the charity duly did. As a result, the Commission summoned the Trustees to a virtual Compliance Meeting, which took place on 23rd June 2020. The representatives of the Commission expressed their concerns about the possible risks involved in the making of transfers to Colombia outside the regulated banking system.

The Trustees, for their part, explained why they considered this practice to be necessary in their case, and the steps they had taken to try to manage the risks involved. They also showed that a proper paper-trail existed for each transaction, and that no funds had ever been lost. Neither at the meeting nor subsequently was the Commission able to suggest a more practical way to effect these transfers.

The Trustees consulted their Solicitor about this practice, and he confirmed that it was legal, and that it was still within their powers to employ it. They therefore informed the Commission that whilst this continues to be the case they would continue to make use of foreign exchange companies to make transfer to **Funvini** until an alternative that is practical in their circumstances becomes available.

The Trustees reviewed this policy at their meeting on 14th June 2023. They decided that in view of the fact that it had continued to work perfectly satisfactorily, and that they had not become aware of any better alternative options, it would remain in force until it was reviewed again at their Summer meeting in 2024, unless there had been any significant developments in the meanwhile.

- h) The cost-of-living crisis in the United Kingdom in 2022 had - and is still having - a very severe effect on the charity. Its total income in 2022 was £202,047 (30.6%) lower than it had been in

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2021. In the first five months of 2023, the two charities' combined income - excluding Gift Aid recovered - was only £3,512 (2.1%) more than in the same period the previous year. However, its total income in the five months until 31st May 2023 was boosted by an increase of £61,446 (800%) in the amount of tax recovered through Gift Aid. This was because it is the Trustee's policy only to claim every few years the Gift Aid on donations made by Standing Orders.

The impact of inflation is being aggravated by the implementation of the Net Zero policies supported by all the major parties both at Westminster and in Edinburgh. Unless these are substantially changed, they will continue to have a very negative impact both on the charity's income and on its costs - particularly, of course, on its transport costs - even if inflation is otherwise considerably reduced. The Trustees therefore suggest that the Charity Commission should encourage the government to take steps to minimise the negative impact of Net Zero policies on charities by, for example, exempting charities from VAT and from Air Passenger Duty.

The position is therefore difficult enough as it is, but the Trustees are concerned that if those who advocate even more drastic Net Zero measures have their way, the impact of Net Zero on the charity - and on the children in Colombia who rely on it - will be even more severe. There is a danger that the spending of gigantic sums on decarbonising the British economy will lead both to a reduction in the aid budget that helps to pay for things like vaccines and schooling in developing countries, and to the attaching of green strings to international aid and loans in a sort of 'green imperialism'. Moreover, it is evident that Britain's drive for Net Zero has already had a considerable impact on its trade with Colombia.

The United Kingdom used to be a major importer of coal from Colombia. This trade peaked in 2012 at 11.7 million metric tons: but by 2021 it had declined by 98.6% to a mere 167,000 metric tons. Whilst this reflected a significant reduction in carbon-generated energy in the UK, it also deprived Colombia of a significant source of employment and foreign exchange, thereby making it harder for Colombia to grow its economy and to improve the lot of its poor. The United Kingdom's gain was therefore achieved at the cost of Colombia's loss. The environmental benefits of the reduction in Colombia's coal trade with the United Kingdom need to be weighed not only against the increased energy costs it has caused for the public in Britain, but also against the damage it has caused to the Colombian economy.

It appears that this damage is being compounded by the policies of Colombia's President Petro, who took office in August 2022. On 23rd March 2023 a report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that crude oil and coal had accounted for 55% of Colombia's export revenue in 2022. But on 20th January 2023, an article by Luke Taylor in *The Guardian* stated that "Colombia's leftwing government has announced that it will not approve any new oil and gas exploration projects as it seeks to shift away from fossil fuels and toward a new sustainable economy ....the policy has been met with criticism from economic analysts who say that halting oil exploration will not affect the global demand for fossil fuels while hurting Colombia's economy. ...The policy has also been criticised by environmental experts who say the move does not address the country's key environmental issues ... nor will it have any significant effect on the global climate crisis."

In an interview published in the *New Statesman* magazine on 18th July 2023, Sir Anthony Blair, the former Labour Prime Minister, said, "Don't ask us to do a huge amount when frankly

## LET THE CHILDREN LIVE! REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

whatever we do in Britain is not really going to impact climate change....Because, basically, the developed world's emissions are going down, but the developing world's are going up. These countries have got to grow, so how do you finance the transition? Secondly, how do you accelerate the technology?"

The Trustees hope that interventions of this nature will stimulate a more nuanced debate on Net Zero issues, in which the full costs and wider international and humanitarian ramifications of trying to achieve Net Zero are specified and considered in much greater detail. If developing countries are to be encouraged to leave resources like coal and oil underground, developed countries will have to compensate them for doing so, and to help them to transition to the alternative technologies they will need in order to develop their economies. If this does not happen, the headline drive for Net Zero will be a catastrophe for the poor in countries like Colombia.

- i) In December 2012 the charity introduced the facility for credit card donations to be made online. In order to do this, the charity registered with the charity donation system CharityCheckout - now known as Enthuse - which continues to handle the whole process of taking credit card donations, and of paying them into the charity's bank account. No sensitive information now has to be handled by, or to pass through, the charity's web site.
- j) The Trustees have implemented an anti-money-laundering policy in order to reduce the risk that anyone might try to make use of the charity for that purpose. There are no indications that any such attempt has ever been made.
- k) Most of the funds raised by the charity are the results of appeals made in Catholic parishes, so it is clear that Christianity is the force that motivates the great majority of the charity's donors, but an increasingly - and sometimes aggressively - secular society is not conducive to the flourishing of charities that, like both **Let The Children Live!** and **Funvini**, remain firmly Christian in their ethos. The officials from the Charity Commission who attended the Compliance Meeting readily admitted that they had little experience of dealing with Christian charities; and they obviously had no real understanding of their particular ethos. There is a danger that such a lack of understanding could result in misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

The charity's Solicitor confirmed that he considers that the moral views that the charity and its supporters uphold "might be conservative but they are not radical". These views are not universally popular, and the Trustees are aware that they have a duty to "consider the charity's reputation". They know that the charity could fall victim to the 'cancel culture' because the era in which Christians could disagree with some of the conventions and assumptions of secular thinking and still expect to be respected as decent members of society at large seems to be drawing to an end.

However, the Trustees believe that the damage that would be caused to the charity's reputation among its supporters by being perceived to have abandoned or diluted its Christian principles would heavily outweigh any possible advantages of such action, even in merely prudential terms. Moreover, this would threaten the future existence of **Funvini** - and hence the welfare of the children who depend on it - because, as a specially Catholic charity, **Funvini** would not be able to accept funding from a source that was not in sympathy with its own moral views.

## LET THE CHILDREN LIVE! REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

The Trustees are therefore concerned that there is a danger that their duty to “consider the charity’s reputation” may be interpreted in some quarters as a duty not to express views, or to fund activities, which - even though they are perfectly legal - are currently *unfashionable*. This, in turn, is likely to result in a tendency towards excessive caution and self-censorship by charity Trustees who became afraid of being considered ‘politically incorrect’ or insufficiently ‘woke’.

- l) The Charity Commission also expressed their views about the reporting by the charity of the criticisms expressed by Venezuelan refugees in Medellín of the policies and failures of the extremely socialist Venezuelan government, which they blamed for the events and conditions that had obliged them to seek refuge in Colombia. However, it is hardly to be expected that many admirers of the present Venezuelan regime will be found amongst those who have had to flee from it or from the consequences of its policies.

The Trustees consulted their Solicitor on this point, and he said: “The Commission’s guidance is clear that charities can campaign for a change in the law, policy or decisions where such change would support the charity’s purposes. Charities can also campaign to ensure that existing laws are observed.” Therefore if the charity “identified government policy that negatively impacted on your beneficiaries then ‘speaking out’ on such an issue would be acceptable”.

Although the Trustees certainly do not consider it to be the charity’s mission to campaign on political issues, they therefore reserve the right to criticise - and to publish comments by third parties that are critical of - the Venezuelan government, the Colombian government, or the British government, or any other body that they believe to be wholly or partly responsible for any policy, decision or situation they consider to be prejudicial to the welfare of the children - born or unborn - whom **Funvini** serves.

- m) It has yet to be seen how extreme the policies that President Petro’s socialist government are going to be. However, if these were to be considered hostile to western interests - perhaps involving the nationalisation without adequate compensation of private companies in which there had been a considerable level of foreign investment - Colombia could become the target of sanctions that would make it difficult or impossible to send funds there from the United Kingdom or the United States. Such sanctions would obviously have an immediate and disastrous effect on **Funvini**. The Trustees will therefore continue to monitor developments in Colombia with close attention.
- n) Another cause for possible concern is the way that the attitude of the Colombian authorities towards the Venezuelan migrants has changed for the worse since President Petro came to power and restored diplomatic relations with Venezuela

**Funvini**’s employees have reported that it is extremely rare to hear the Venezuelans in Medellín saying anything positive about the Maduro regime, whereas harsh criticisms of it are common. Many of these Venezuelans were really refugees more than migrants, and they are therefore deeply suspicious of the *rapprochement* between Bogotá and Caracas. They fear that this may lead to them being forced to return to the clutches of the very regime from which they sought refuge in Colombia. The authoritarian Venezuelan government does not look kindly on any form of dissidence, and some of the refugees are alarmed about the risk of reprisals if they go home. So, although the Maduro regime is promoting a “Return to the Motherland” campaign, many of the exiles remain highly sceptical about this.

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### REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

However, on 14th July 2023, *BBC Mundo* published an article by Daniel Pardo, its correspondent in Colombia, that describes the change that many Venezuelans in Colombia have noted in the way that they are being treated by the Colombian authorities. Whereas the two previous administrations did a great deal to facilitate the regularisation of the Venezuelans' status in order to legalise their access to employment, education and health-care, this process has stalled under President Petro's government. The BBC asked Migración Colombia, the national border agency, for exact figures of regularisations during the last year, but received no response.

Although President Petro has not announced a formal policy of interrupting the "regularisations", he has stated that wants to promote the "voluntary return" of Venezuelans. It remains to be seen how much pressure he will be willing to apply to encourage them to make this "voluntary" move. One reason for which he is adopting this policy may be that he hopes to strengthen his links with the Maduro regime in order to persuade it to restrict the activities of the ELN in its territory. If that is the case, there is a danger that the Colombian government may forget about the best interests of the Venezuelan exiles, and that they may become mere pawns in a diplomatic chess game between the two regimes.

Moreover, if the Venezuelan exiles who do not want to return home feel that they cannot remain in Colombia they may well be tempted to risk their lives by making a 60 mile trek through the jungle, swamps and mountains of the Darién Gap - where there are no roads. This can take up to ten days, and the objective is to reach Central America - and, eventually to try to enter the United States illegally. From Yaviza in Panama to the US border is a further 2,700 miles, and another six international borders must be crossed on the way. Nevertheless, according to the Panamanian government, more than 248,000 people crossed the Gap during 2022. The flow has increased since then: by July 2023 more than 251,000 people had made the crossing; and this year's total may well reach 400,000.

The terrain is extremely hazardous, and the whole journey from Colombia to the US border is expensive and dangerous because it is controlled by the *Clan del Golfo* and other criminal gangs of drug-smugglers and *coyotes* (people-smugglers). Those who cannot pay them in cash may have to do so in sexual services. In July 2023 one of the Colombian security guards at *Casa Bannatyne* decided to take this gamble; and the following month a Venezuelan cleaning lady at *Casa Walsingham* left with the same intention, accompanied by her boyfriend and her three children, aged seventeen, nine and two. She has promised to let her friends at *Casa Walsingham* know how they get on. The Trustees await this news with the gravest misgivings.

- o) The long-term loan of £225,000 made to the charity will eventually have to be paid back. As has been explained above, this money has now been loaned to **Funvini**, and the Trustees have therefore had to consider the risk that the Colombian charity might fail to return it. However, the Trustees are satisfied that the terms of the mortgage on *Casa Bannatyne* by which the loan has been secured have reduced this risk to the minimum. If the worst came to the worst, and **Funvini** failed to meet - or were to be prevented from meeting - its obligations, the Trustees could reduce their annual grant to **Funvini** by £225,000, and the charity would therefore still be able to meet its own obligations to the benefactor.
- p) In 2003 the Linked Charity established a notional benchmark for the salary of its Executive Director, with those of other Key Management Personnel being determined in reference to this.

## **LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS**

The Trustees did this by consulting the press to see what other charities were then offering for the posts that they were advertising.

For example, they noted that on 11th August 2003 The Children's Society advertised for a Youth Campaign Coordinator in London, with a maximum salary of £25,536. Applicants had to be under the ages of 25, and would therefore have had neither experience nor responsibilities commensurate with those of the Executive Director of **Let The Children Live!** At the other end of the spectrum, World Vision, a very much larger charity, advertised on 14th March 2003 for a Chief Executive with an annual salary of £70,000.

The Trustees therefore considered that a notional benchmark figure of £30,000 of basic salary would be appropriate, and they hoped to be able to sustain this at least in line with inflation. According to the CPI UK Inflation Calculator ([www.officialdata.org](http://www.officialdata.org)), £30,000 in 2003 would be the equivalent of £60,685.89 in August 2023 - without any increments in recognition of increased experience and responsibility - but the Trustees regret that the financial circumstances of the Linked Charity did not permit the salaries of the Key Management Personnel who are now employed by the Reporting Charity to be increased to that extent.

According to the 2022 Pay and Equalities Survey of almost 900 charity leaders published by the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), the average annual basic salary reported by charity C.E.O.s in 2022 was £56,000. The Trustees therefore realise that if it ever became necessary to seek to replace the charity's Executive Director, it is probable that the present terms of remuneration would have to be improved considerably, and that this would require painful adjustments to its budget.

- q) The constant intensification of the competition for funds is placing increasingly heavy burdens of work and stress on the charity's employees. The Trustees realise that an excessive work-load poses a risk to the charity's efficiency, and limits the possibilities for its expansion. Some extra help was provided in 2018 by an Office Trainee, but she left the charity's employment at the end of the year; and it is clear that a more experienced - and therefore more expensive - person will be required when funds permit a replacement to be appointed.
- r) If Fr Peter were to be incapacitated for a prolonged period, the Trustees know that it would not be easy for them to find a suitable replacement. Indeed, in such an eventuality, it might well be necessary to wind up the charity. For that reason they continued to ensure that it did not incur any debts or contractual obligations which could not be met from its reserves.
- s) The salaries of **Funvini's** team of psychologists, social-workers, teachers and other staff constitute by far the largest item in the Colombian charity's monthly budget. It can do little to control these because they are calculated in terms of multiples of the Colombian National Minimum Wage, which is increased every year by government decree.

The outgoing Colombian government had enacted a reduction of the working-week by two hours to 38 hours, which came into force in 2023. Moreover, the new Colombian government has decreed that the extra night-time payments now have to be made to those who work after 6:00pm, rather than after 9:00pm, as had previously been the case. The government also decreed that the National Minimum Wage would rise by 16% as from January 2023, and the salaries of **Funvini's** employees all increased accordingly.

## **LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS**

The new Colombian government has also announced that it intends to bring an end to the ability of employers to contract the services of self-employed professionals and technicians who normally provide a number of different clients with a specific service that they only require for a particular project, or on a limited number of occasions (such as one day or week per month), or at certain times of the year. Being self-employed, such people are free to undertake such work as they wish, when they wish: but they are responsible for the payment of their own social security and pension dues because they are treated as independent contractors rather than ordinary employees.

In **Funvini**'s case, this applies to such people as its computer-technician and its nutritionist, who provide the charity with vital services on an occasional basis. It is not yet clear how they will be able to continue to function, or in what way employers will be able to contract their services. The only thing that is certain is that it will be more expensive for employers.

According to a report in *El Colombiano* on 16th August 2022, the new Minister of Work, Gloria Inés Ramírez, had announced in an interview on *Blue Radio*, that “employers must guarantee stability of employment.” She maintained that instead of providing three or four people with unstable posts, employers must create a single “good” post. The danger of this, however, is that this policy will merely guarantee the permanent *unemployment* of the other three people, who - together with their dependant family members - will then also be deprived of most of their social-security benefits because people are only “affiliated” to the system while they or close family members are working.

The combination of all these factors is constantly increasing **Funvini**'s employment costs. At present, **Let The Children Live!** is not in a position to provide the extra funding needed to cover these, but any reduction in its work force necessitates a corresponding reduction in the number of children who can be cared for safely in its various programmes. The Trustees very much regret that the statutory improvements in the working conditions of **Funvini**'s staff are having to be implemented at the cost of the suffering of the children for whom the Colombian charity can no longer provide services.

- t) As the competition for donations becomes ever-more intense, **Let The Children Live!** faces an increasing need to develop new ways of appealing for the public's sympathy. There are constant appeals in the media for the victims of disaster, and stories and images of children who are being enabled to go to school and to avoid catastrophe tend to have less emotional impact than those that feature children who have fallen victim to it.

The charity may well need professional help to surmount this public-relations hurdle. In the meanwhile, the Trustees believe that the best way to retain the confidence of the charity's supporters is to be completely transparent about this problem, and to explain both what is happening and why it is happening.

In particular, the Trustees think that it is very important to stress what a very small proportion of the United Kingdom's Overseas Aid Programme is devoted to helping children in Colombia, in marked contrast to the enormous sums that British drug-users squander each year on Colombian cocaine and heroin. The money they spend on their 'recreational habit' helps significantly to fuel the violence and corruption in Colombia to which so many children there continue to fall victim.



## LET THE CHILDREN LIVE! REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

Supporting charities like **Let The Children Live!** is one way by which people in Britain can help to undo some of this harm. Unfortunately, however, some people regard drug-consumers as innocent victims of their habit. They fail to recognise that the *purchase* of illegal drugs is *not* a ‘victimless crime’; so they take offence when the charity maintains that drug-users ought to accept responsibility for the part that they each play in sustaining the drug-trade with countries like Colombia through their purchases. The Trustees call on the government to a great deal more to educate the public about this in order to make the *purchase* of illegal drugs as socially unacceptable as the purchase of child pornography or of items made of ivory or animal fur.

- u) As has been made clear above, the Trustees are very much aware of problems caused by the charity’s dependence on the income it receives from such unpredictable sources as Trusts and legacies. Attempts to reverse this trend are likely to require a significant increase in both the overall amount that the charity spends on fund-generation, and in the proportion of the charity’s expenditure that is used for this purpose.
- v) The Trustees are also concerned about the impact on **Funvini** of the indefinite presence in Medellín of such large numbers of Venezuelan migrants. In terms of religion, culture, history and language, Colombia has much in common with Venezuela. It ought not, therefore, to be too difficult for Venezuelans to adapt to the Colombian life-style, or for them to be assimilated into Colombian society. Unfortunately, however, the extra competition for limited resources in the areas of healthcare, education, housing and employment has started to generate resentment in some sections of Colombian society.

The assimilation of the migrants continues to present Colombia with an enormous challenge that is not widely recognised and understood abroad, and for which she is not receiving anything like sufficient international aid. **Let The Children Live!** must do what such a small charity can to help with both of these aspects of the problem.

**Funvini** is monitoring the situation closely because the children it serves are drawn from the stratum of the population that has been most adversely affected by competition from the Venezuelan refugees. **Funvini** will continue to reach out to help as many of the Venezuelan children as it can. However, as the number of these children increases, **Funvini** is having to take care to show that it is not favouring the refugees over the local population.

So far, overt hostility towards the refugees has, fortunately, not become widespread. Nevertheless, according to a report in *El Tiempo* on 18th May 2022, between January 2017 and March 2022, a total of 2,558 Venezuelan citizens were murdered in Colombia. However, the article did not suggest that many of the victims were killed specifically because of their nationality.

Inevitably, not all of the Venezuelans who have come to Colombia have done so for innocent motives. Some had - or have developed - links with organised crime; and some have committed acts of violence. The report in *El Tiempo* stated that in recent years the proportion of Venezuelan citizens amongst all those arrested for criminal offences in Colombia had risen from 0.3% in 2016 to 9.7% in the first months of 2022. The implication was that these two sets of figures were related, and that a considerable number of the Venezuelans who had been murdered may themselves have been criminals. On the other hand, the report emphasised that the figures indicated that fewer than 1% of the Venezuelans in Colombia were involved in criminal activity.

## LET THE CHILDREN LIVE! REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS

Reports such as this are likely to have some influence on the way in which the Venezuelan migrants are perceived by the Colombian public. In July 2022 the *Barómetro de Xenofobia* (Xenophobia Barometer) the Colombian Twitter analysis platform, reported that the incidence of remarks about Venezuelans on Twitter that it considered to be xenophobic had increased to 12% from 3% in 2021. Although this increase is certainly cause for some concern, the fact that - in spite of the vast influx of Venezuelans into Colombia - 88% of the remarks about them on Twitter were *not* xenophobic constitutes a remarkable tribute to the solidarity and tolerance that the great majority of Colombians were continuing to display towards their Venezuelan guests.

However, the *Barómetro de Xenofobia* reported that after the reopening of the Colombo-Venezuelan border on 26th September 2022, the incidence of anti-Venezuelan remarks and articles on the Colombian internet was 169% higher than the monthly average. If the attitude of the Colombian public towards the Venezuelan migrants were to deteriorate further, there would be a real danger that they could become the targets of violence. In that case, there might even be problems between the Colombian and Venezuelan children in **Funvini**'s programmes. There might also be a risk that charities like **Funvini** could be targeted if they were perceived as being too sympathetic to the refugees.

The Trustees of **Let The Children Live!** fully support the measures being taken by **Funvini** in response to all these problems, and they will do their best to raise extra funds to help the Colombian charity to meet these grave and continuing challenges. However, it must be accepted that the outlook both for the remainder of 2023 and for 2024 is not at all encouraging.

### Governance

**Let The Children Live!** is governed by a Board of Trustees/Directors, who usually meet twice a year. They are a small, well-integrated group of non-executive volunteers, who share the Christian principles upon which the charity was founded, and who are motivated by a commitment to the welfare of the children whom the charity exists to serve. The Trustees were delighted to welcome Mrs Gill Prosser to their ranks in 2022. She had been a faithful supporter of the charity ever since it was founded. On the other hand, the Trustees were saddened by the retirement at the end of 2022 of their colleague Mr George Ireland. He had indicated his wish to retire several years previously, but had loyally hung on until a replacement had been found and well-installed. The Trustees are most grateful for his many years of service.

The day-to-day conduct of the charity's affairs are managed by Fr Peter Walters, as its Executive Director. None of the Trustees have any personal interests to declare, and all of them have signed the Trustees' Code of Conduct, which includes provisions to manage any potential conflicts of interest.

There must always be a minimum of *three* Trustees and there may be a maximum of *five*. The policy of the Trustees in relation to potential candidates for election to the Board is that in addition to being legally qualified to serve, the person concerned should be one:

- of whose integrity and other qualities at least either one of the existing Trustees or the Founder has considerable personal knowledge;
- who has an established history of support for and interest in the charity;

## **LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS**

- who would be willing to subscribe to the charity's Mission and Vision Statements, and to the Trustees' Code of Conduct, which contains a conflict of interest policy;
- who is likely to inspire the confidence of the charity's supporters;
- who is likely to be able to devote to the charity the time necessary to be an effective Trustee;
- and
- who would be able to attend the Trustees' meetings without undue inconvenience or expense.

It is the Trustees' policy to try to keep the affairs of the charity as simple as possible, and to conduct them with the minimum of formality and bureaucratic procedures compatible with efficiency and compliance with the law; and that such professional expertise and advice as may be necessary should normally be obtained externally.

Because a new Trustee must already have some knowledge of the charity, and because the governance of its affairs has been designed to be so straightforward, the process of induction normally consists of a briefing by the Director and the other Trustees, and the reading of the Charity Commission's publication *The Essential Trustee*. The Trustees may subsequently undertake such further reading or training as they deem necessary.

However, as has been mentioned above, the Trustees continue to regard with grave concern the failure of the Government and of the Charity Commission to value and protect the essentially 'amateur' status of the Trustees of small charities. They suspect that part of the problem here may stem from the lack of a distinction in law between Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and charities.

Each of these types of not-for-profit body has a valuable role to play in contemporary society, but although they have elements in common, their regulatory needs and, indeed, their whole ethos tends to be very different. NGOs require detailed regulation and considerable formality in their structures and procedures, particularly if their funding depends on grants from - or contracts with - statutory bodies.

In the case of small charities, however, any excess of regulation or formality may prove stifling. They rely for their governance upon the good will and enthusiasm of part-time, non-specialist volunteers whose mentality reflects that of the private donors upon whose generosity their income chiefly depends.

The Trustees remain firmly of the opinion that the tendency towards over-regulation poses a real threat to the survival of small charities like **Let The Children Live!** because the greater the administrative burden, the harder it will be to attract new Trustees; and the more disproportionate the administrative costs, the more difficult it will become to inspire the generosity of donors who wish their money to be used for the benefit of children, not for the funding of bureaucracy. Every aspect of the regulation of charities ought always itself to be subject to strict and clear 'public benefit' criteria, including the regular evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of any public reporting burden that it imposes on smaller charities.

# **LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!**

## **REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS**

### **Responsibilities of the Trustees**

The Charities Act 2011 requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of its income and expenditure for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the Trustees are required:

- to select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- to make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- to comply with applicable accounting standards subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- to prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue its operations.

The Trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the charity's assets, and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

### **Independent Examination**

The Trustees share the view expressed in *The Government Response to the Consultation on Charity Audit and Independent Examination* (2015) that, except in special circumstances, "professional independent examination is a more proportionate form of scrutiny" than a full Audit for a charity with an annual income below the government's threshold of £1,000,000.

In preparing this Report, the Directors have taken advantage of the small companies exemption provided by section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

A resolution to re-appoint Mazars LLP as Independent Examiners was passed by the Trustees at their meeting on 14th June 2023.

Approved by the Trustees, and signed on 12th September 2023 on their behalf by



Paulette Brown,  
Chairman

Let The Children Live!  
2, Roberts Road  
Doncaster  
DN4 0JW

## **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!**

I report on the Financial Statements of **Let The Children Live!** for the year ended 31st December 2022, which are set out on pages 53 to 64.

### **Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner**

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of the Reporting Charity for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the Financial Statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the Financial Statements of the charity are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for Independent Examination, I report in respect of my Examination of the charity's Financial Statements as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). In carrying out my Examination I have followed the directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(b) of the 2011 Act.

This Report, including my Statement, has been prepared for and only for the charity's Trustees as a body. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's Trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiner's Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's Trustees as a body for my Examination work, for this Report, or for the statements I have made.

### **Basis of Independent Examiner's Report**

My Examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission. An Examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the Financial Statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the Financial Statements, and seeking explanations from you as Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an Audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the Financial Statements present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

### **Independent Examiner's Statement**

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000, your Examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales which is one of the listed bodies.

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT  
TO THE TRUSTEES OF LET THE CHILDREN LIVE!**

In connection with my Examination, which is complete, no matters have come to my attention which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in respect of **Let The Children Live!** in accordance with section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
- the Financial Statements do not accord with those records; or
- the Financial Statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the Financial Statements give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an Independent Examination; or
- the Financial Statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principals of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the Examination to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the Financial Statements to be reached.

  
David Hoose (Sep 14, 2023 11:21 GMT+1)

David Hoose FCA

Mazars LLP  
2, Chamberlain Square  
Birmingham  
B3 3AX

Sep 14, 2023

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES**  
**AGGREGATED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	Notes	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2021 £
<b>INCOME</b>					
<b>Voluntary Income</b>					
General Donations		389,152	0	<b>389,152</b>	415,971
Shop Donations		2,414	0	<b>2,414</b>	2,134
Trust Donations		8,100	5,425	<b>13,525</b>	28,523
Legacies		30,041	0	<b>30,041</b>	83,686
Income Tax Recovered		18,940	0	<b>18,940</b>	122,069
		<u>448,647</u>	<u>5,425</u>	<b><u>454,072</u></b>	<u>652,383</u>
<b>Trading Activities</b>					
Sales - Mail Order		41	0	<b>41</b>	115
Sales - Walsingham Shop		<u>14,869</u>	<u>0</u>	<b><u>14,869</u></b>	<u>11,475</u>
<b>Investment Income</b>					
Interest Receivable		0	0	<b>0</b>	78
Foreign Currency Valuation		<u>967</u>	<u>0</u>	<b><u>967</u></b>	<u>0</u>
<b>Other Income</b>					
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme		0	0	<b>0</b>	1,705
Government Grants		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<b><u>0</u></b>	<u>11,240</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<u>464,524</u>	<u>5,425</u>	<b><u>469,949</u></b>	<u>676,996</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
Raising Funds		32,099	0	<b>32,099</b>	26,280
Charitable Activities		<u>584,882</u>	<u>5,425</u>	<b><u>590,307</u></b>	<u>654,851</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<u>616,981</u>	<u>5,425</u>	<b><u>622,406</u></b>	<u>681,131</u>
<b>NET (EXPENDITURE) / INCOME</b>		(152,457)	0	<b>(152,457)</b>	(4,135)
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:</b>					
<b>TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD</b>		<u>364,570</u>	<u>0</u>	<b><u>364,570</u></b>	<u>368,705</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<u><u>212,113</u></u>	<u><u>0</u></u>	<b><u><u>212,113</u></u></b>	<u><u>364,570</u></u>

**AGGREGATED BALANCE SHEET  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	Notes	<b>Total Funds 2022</b>	<b>Total Funds 2021</b>
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Tangible Assets	7	<u>1,745</u>	<u>2,327</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors (amounts falling due within one year)	8	<b>594</b>	6,626
Debtors (amounts falling due after more than one year)	9	<b>225,000</b>	225,000
Bank and Cash		<u>221,163</u>	<u>365,958</u>
		<u><b>446,757</b></u>	<u>597,584</u>
<b>CREDITORS - AMOUNTS DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR</b>	10	<u><b>(11,389)</b></u>	<u>(10,341)</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>435,368</b>	587,243
<b>CREDITORS - AMOUNTS DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR</b>	11	<u><b>(225,000)</b></u>	<u>(225,000)</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u><u><b>212,113</b></u></u>	<u><u>364,570</u></u>
<b>UNRESTRICTED FUNDS</b>	13	<b>212,113</b>	364,570
<b>RESTRICTED FUNDS</b>	13	<u><b>0</b></u>	<u>0</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<u><u><b>212,113</b></u></u>	<u><u>364,570</u></u>

For the year ending 31st December 2022 the Company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The Directors have not required the Company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476, and they acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

These Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).



Paulette Brown,  
Chairman  
12 September 2023



**BALANCE SHEETS OF REPORTING CHARITY 1159113 AND LINKED CHARITY 1159113-1  
31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	Notes	2022 £	2021 £
<b>BALANCE SHEET - REPORTING CHARITY 1159113</b>			
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Tangible Assets	7	<u>1,745</u>	<u>2,327</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors (amounts falling due within one year)	8	2,646	6,512
Debtors (amounts falling due after more than one year)	9	225,000	225,000
Bank and Cash		<u>111,477</u>	<u>268,554</u>
		<u>339,123</u>	<u>500,066</u>
<b>CREDITORS - AMOUNTS DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR</b>	10	<u>(8,824)</u>	<u>(12,856)</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>330,299</b>	<b>487,210</b>
<b>CREDITORS - AMOUNTS DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR</b>	11	<u>(225,000)</u>	<u>(225,000)</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u><u>107,044</u></u>	<u><u>264,537</u></u>
<b>UNRESTRICTED FUNDS</b>			
	13	<b>107,044</b>	<b>266,589</b>
<b>RESTRICTED FUNDS</b>			
	13	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<u><u>107,044</u></u>	<u><u>266,589</u></u>
<b>BALANCE SHEET - LINKED CHARITY 1159113-1</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors (amounts falling due within one year)	8	<u>0</u>	<u>4,681</u>
Bank and Cash		<u>109,686</u>	<u>97,404</u>
		<u>109,686</u>	<u>102,085</u>
<b>CREDITORS - AMOUNTS DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR</b>	10	<u>(2,565)</u>	<u>(4,104)</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>107,121</u>	<u>97,981</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u><u>107,121</u></u>	<u><u>97,981</u></u>
<b>UNRESTRICTED FUNDS</b>			
	13	<b>105,069</b>	<b>97,981</b>
<b>RESTRICTED FUNDS</b>			
	13	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<u><u>105,069</u></u>	<u><u>97,981</u></u>

**AGGREGATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

		<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
	Note		
<b>Cash flows from operating activities:</b>			
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	A	(145,762)	(3,750)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities		967	78
Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities		0	0
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		0	0
<b>Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities</b>		<b>(144,795)</b>	<b>(3,672)</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		365,958	369,630
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period</b>	B	<b>221,163</b>	<b>365,958</b>

**NOTE A - Reconciliation of Net Expenditure to Cash Flow from Operating Activities:**

Net movement in funds	(152,457)	(4,135)
Less interest receivable	(967)	(78)
Decrease/(Increase) in debtors	3,980	(858)
(Decrease)/Increase in creditors	3,100	544
Add back depreciation	582	777
<b>Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities</b>	<b>(145,762)</b>	<b>(3,750)</b>

**NOTE B - Analysis of cash and cash equivalents:**

Cash in hand	221,163	365,958
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b>221,163</b>	<b>365,958</b>

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

## **1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

### **Basis of preparation**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities, applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The Charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

After considering the future potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trustees consider that the Charity has sufficient reserves available to it to secure its immediate future for the next 12 to 18 months; and on that basis the Charity is a going concern.

### **Income**

Income is recognised once the Charity has entitlement to the resources, it is probable that the resources will be received and their monetary value can be measured with sufficient reliability.

### **Expenditure**

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and is recognised when there is a legal or constructive obligation to pay the expenditure. All costs have been directly attributed to one of the functional categories of expenditure in the SOFA. The charity is not registered for VAT and accordingly expenditure is shown gross of irrecoverable VAT.

### **Expenditure on charitable activities**

The expenditure on charitable activities includes payments to related undertakings, support costs and governance costs.

### **Restricted Funds**

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or through the terms of an appeal.

### **Unrestricted Funds**

The Designated Fund represents the proportion of the unrestricted funds which the Trustees consider is immediately available to them for the purpose of assisting children and young people in Colombia in accordance with the policy agreed by the Trustees. The remainder is held to protect the charity against fluctuations in income.

### **Fixed Assets and Depreciation**

Items of a capital nature costing in excess of £200, or with an economic life of more than 4 years, are included in fixed assets. Depreciation is calculated to write off the cost less estimated residual value of fixed assets on a reducing balance basis over their estimated useful lives.

## **2 LEGAL STATUS OF THE CHARITY**

The charity is a company registered in England Wales (No. 07140869). It is limited by guarantee, and has no share capital. In the event of the company being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of its registered Office is: 2, Roberts Road, Doncaster DN4 0JW.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	2022 £	2021 £
<b>3 AGGREGATED EXPENDITURE ON RAISING FUNDS</b>		
Appeals	7,735	3,649
Shop	3,736	3,611
Staff costs	20,628	19,020
	<u>32,099</u>	<u>26,280</u>
<b>4 AGGREGATED CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES</b>		
* Donations made to Funvini	<u>397,489</u>	<u>482,427</u>
<b>Fieldwork costs:</b>		
General	25,756	20,334
Staff costs	61,155	57,824
	<u>86,911</u>	<u>78,158</u>
<b>Support Costs:</b>		
General	65,317	59,069
Governance	5,670	3,888
** Staff costs	34,920	31,308
	<u>105,907</u>	<u>94,265</u>
<b>Total Charitable Activities:</b>	<u><u>590,307</u></u>	<u><u>654,850</u></u>

**\* Funvini**

Let The Children Live! has the right to nominate a member of the Board of the Colombian charity Fundación ¡Vivan Los Niños! (Funvini). This representative has a voice but not a vote. In 2022 the representative nominated was Fr Peter Walters.

**\*\* Support Costs — Staff**

No person was paid more than £60,000 in either year.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

		<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>5 AGGREGATED NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>			
<b>The net movement in funds is after charging:</b>			
Independent Examiner's fees		<b>5,670</b>	3,888
Employment costs	6	<b>116,703</b>	108,152
Depreciation of owned tangible assets	7	<b>582</b>	777
		<b>=====</b>	<b>=====</b>

**6 STAFF COSTS**

Salaries		<b>93,239</b>	88,639
National Insurance		<b>4,440</b>	1,752
Pension		<b>19,024</b>	17,761
		<b>=====</b>	<b>=====</b>
		<b>116,703</b>	108,152
		<b>=====</b>	<b>=====</b>

**The average number of persons employed  
by the Charity during the year was as follows:**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Number</b>
Administration & Shop	<b>3</b>	3
Field-work & Appeals	<b>1</b>	1
	<b>=====</b>	<b>=====</b>

The Charity considers that its key management personnel comprise the Trustees, the Executive Director and the Administrator. No Trustees received any remuneration or were repaid any expenses for either year. The total employment benefits - including employer National Insurance and pension contributions - of the key management personnel were £92,005 (2021: £88,054). No employees had salaries in excess of £60,000 in either year.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

**7 FIXED ASSETS**

	Plant and Equipment £
<b>COST</b>	
At 1 January 2022	7,044
Additions	0
	<hr/>
At 31st December 2022	7,044
	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>DEPRECIATION</b>	
At 1 January 2022	4,717
Charge for year	582
	<hr/>
At 31st December 2022	5,299
	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>NET BOOK VALUE</b>	
At 31st December 2022	1,745
	<hr/> <hr/>
At 31 December 2021	2,327
	<hr/> <hr/>
Depreciation Rate	25% RB

2022  
£

2021  
£

**8 AGGREGATED. DEBTORS -  
AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

Gift Aid receivable	594	6,626
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	<b>2022</b>	2021
	<b>£</b>	£
<b>8 REPORTING CHARITY DEBTORS</b>		
<b>- AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR</b>		
Gift Aid receivable	<b>594</b>	6,512
	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

**8 LINKED CHARITY DEBTORS**  
**- AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

Gift Aid receivable	<b>0</b>	114
	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

**9 DEBTORS - AMOUNTS FALLING DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR \***

Loan to Funvini	<b>225,000</b>	225,000
The Reporting Charity's loan is secured against a property owned by <b>Funvini</b> , is interest-free, and is repayable in 2029.	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

\* The Linked Charity did not - in either year - have any Debtors with amounts falling due after more than one year.

**10 AGGREGATED CREDITORS - AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

Trade Creditors	<b>2,762</b>	3,585
Other Creditors	<b>3,125</b>	7,302
Accruals	<b>5,502</b>	4,021
	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	<b>11,389</b>	14,908
	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

**10 REPORTING CHARITY CREDITORS**  
**- AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

Trade Creditors	<b>2,762</b>	3,585
Other Creditors	<b>3,125</b>	7,302
Accruals	<b>2,937</b>	1,969
	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	<b>8,824</b>	12,856
	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

**10 LINKED CHARITY CREDITORS**  
**- AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR**

Accruals	<b>2,565</b>	4,104
	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	<b>2022</b> £	2021 £
<b>11 REPORTING CHARITY CREDITORS</b>		
<b>- AMOUNTS FALLING DUE AFTER MORE THAN ONE YEAR *</b>		
<b>Loan from Benefactor</b>	<b>225,000</b>	225,000
The loan is interest free and repayable in 2029.	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>

\* The Linked Charity did not - in either year - have any Creditors with amounts falling due after more than one year.

**12 REPORTING CHARITY PENSION COMMITMENTS \***

The Reporting Charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the Company in an independently administered fund. The pension cost charge represents contributions payable by the Company to the fund, and amounted to £19,024 (2021: £17,760). Contributions totalling £1,180 were payable to the fund at the balance sheet date (2021: £NIL).

\* The Linked Charity did not have any Pension Commitments in either year.

**13 AGGREGATED ANALYSIS OF FUNDS**

	<b>2022</b>			
	Unrestricted General fund £	Designated fund £	Restricted Funvini fund £	Total £
<b>Income</b>	464,524	0	5,425	<b>469,949</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	616,981	0	5,425	<b>622,406</b>
	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
<b>Net inflow/(outflow) of funds</b>	(152,457)	0	0	<b>(152,457)</b>
<b>Transfer between funds</b>	152,457	(152,457)	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Balances at beginning of year</b>	50,000	314,570	0	<b>364,570</b>
	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
<b>Balances at end of year</b>	50,000	162,113	0	<b>212,113</b>
	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>

The Trustees designate funds held at the year end in excess of their reserve policy for the benefit of **Funvini** because of fluctuations in the rate of exchange between the pound and the Colombian peso.



**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

**13 REPORTING CHARITY -  
ANALYSIS OF FUNDS**

**2022**

	Unrestricted General fund £	Designated fund £	Restricted Funvini fund £	Total £
<b>Income</b>	454,601	0	5,425	<b>460,026</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	614,146	0	5,425	<b>619,571</b>
<b>Net inflow/(outflow) of funds</b>	(159,545)	0	0	<b>(159,545)</b>
<b>Transfer between funds</b>	159,545	(159,545)	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Balances at beginning of year</b>	50,000	216,589	0	<b>266,589</b>
<b>Balances at end of year</b>	50,000	57,044	0	<b>107,044</b>

**13 LINKED CHARITY -  
ANALYSIS OF FUNDS**

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fund £	Total funds £
<b>Income</b>	9,923	0	<b>9,923</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	2,835	0	<b>2,835</b>
<b>Net inflow/(outflow) of funds</b>	7,088	0	<b>7,088</b>
<b>Balances at beginning of year</b>	97,981	0	<b>97,981</b>
<b>Balances at end of year</b>	105,069	0	<b>105,069</b>

**14 CORPORATION TAX**

The charity is exempt from tax on income to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects.

**15 RELATED PARTIES**

Included within creditors - amounts falling due after one year (Note 11) is an interest-free loan of £225,000. This was made by a related party to the reporting charity, and is repayable in 2029.

**16 LINKING OF ACCOUNTS**

On 26th July 2021 the Charity Commission confirmed that the Reporting Charity should be linked to the charity Let the Children Live! (charity registered with the Charity Commission No. 1159113-1, originally 1013634) for the purposes of Part 4 (registration) and Part 8 (accounting) of the Charities Act 2011.

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
AGGREGATED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

**17 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2021**

	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Unrestricted funds 2021 £</b>	<b>Restricted funds 2021 £</b>	<b>Total Funds 2021 £</b>
<b>INCOME</b>				
<b>Voluntary Income</b>				
General Donations		415,871	100	<b>415,971</b>
Shop Donations		2,134	0	<b>2,134</b>
Trust Donations		20,548	7,975	<b>28,523</b>
Legacies		83,686	0	<b>83,686</b>
Income Tax Recovered		122,069	0	<b>122,069</b>
		<u>644,308</u>	<u>8,075</u>	<u><b>652,383</b></u>
<b>Trading Activities</b>				
Sales - Mail Order		115	0	<b>115</b>
Sales - Walsingham Shop		<u>11,475</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>11,475</u>
<b>Investment Income</b>				
Interest Receivable		<u>78</u>	<u>0</u>	<u><b>78</b></u>
<b>Other Income</b>				
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme		1,705	0	<b>1,705</b>
Government Grants		<u>11,240</u>	<u>0</u>	<u><b>11,240</b></u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<u>668,921</u>	<u>8,075</u>	<u><b>676,996</b></u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
Raising Funds		26,280	0	<b>26,280</b>
Charitable Activities		<u>646,776</u>	<u>0</u>	<u><b>654,851</b></u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<u>673,056</u>	<u>8,075</u>	<u>681,131</u>
<b>NET (EXPENDITURE) / INCOME</b>		(4,135)	0	<b>(4,135)</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS: TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD</b>		<u>368,705</u>	<u>0</u>	<u><b>368,705</b></u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<u><u>364,570</u></u>	<u><u>0</u></u>	<u><u><b>364,570</b></u></u>