



Twenty-four years on the same hillside

Free education, nutrition and the arts for children in Ciudad Bolívar,
Bogotá.

Fundación Cigarra · Colombia TEL: 330.121.170-4 · United States 501(c)(3) EIN 68-0505337
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WHERE WE WORK

Ciudad Bolívar, on the southern edge of Bogotá

A district of steep hillsides built largely by families displaced by Colombia's armed conflict. Public services arrived late and unevenly.

Parents work informally — construction, street vending, domestic work, piecework sewing. Households have one to four children. Around fifteen of the families we serve are headed by a single mother.

District schools run half-day shifts. For most children here, the school day ends at midday and nothing follows it.



2002 — Puertas del Paraíso when Cigarra opened.



Today — the same hillside.

THE PROBLEM

What happens behind

- **Unsupportive home environment.** Lack of guidance, presence, recruitment and early schooling ending.
- **Undernutrition.** 15% of children are undernourished — Bogotá Health Secretariat, Salud Urbana.
- **No margin for expansion.** Social and psychological care are out of reach, and are not public.
- **A hard transition at adolescence.** Adolescents who finish school often lack both the funds and the information to go further.

THE ORGANIZATION

Cigarra occupies the other half of the day

Founded in 2002 by Dr. Carolyn Acosta Allen, we have worked without interruption in the same neighbourhood ever since — free of charge, with no means test, from age one to eighteen.

Every building on the site was added because the community asked for it. More than a hundred jobs have gone to local residents, several teachers are former participants, and alumni are now bringing their own children through the same gate.

2,049

CHILDREN REACHED SINCE 2002

1,240

FAMILIES SUPPORTED

218

PARTICIPANTS TODAY

40

STAFF, 65% WOMEN

24

YEARS WITHOUT CLOSING

One continuous path, not a series of interventions

PITUFOS · 1–2 15 Nursery, full time	ANGELITOS · 2–3 30 Early stimulation	TIGRILLOS · 3–4 18 Pre-school	FRUTICAS · 4–5 40 Pre-school	SAN JORGE · 6–11 64 Alternate shift	MALALA · 12–17 23 Alternate shift	OLDER ADULTS 28 Weekly, with the children
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Children aged 1 to 5 attend full time. From age 6 they come in the shift opposite their school day. **Most stay for a decade or more** — which is why our alumni are traceable and why teachers know every family.

190 children and young people, plus 28 older adults who meet weekly and exchange skills and stories with them. With 40 staff, 258 people are on site each week.

Next expansion. Dividing the San Jorge room to give around 30 children aged 6 to 12 a space of their own.

What happens here every weekday



Early childhood



Three meals a day



Technology and robotics



Music

Care

Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack for 192 children ·
psychosocial support with our psychologist · monthly parenting
workshops · community clothing centre for families in acute
need

Learning

Early childhood care and pre-school · school reinforcement in
literacy and numeracy · English · technology, robotics and an
introduction to programming as a Microsoft partner · library

Expression and sport

A 60-member youth symphony orchestra founded in 2015 ·
dance, visual arts and an annual musical · sport organised
around four houses — Jaguar, Tiburón, Caimán and Cóndor

A young musician in a light blue shirt is seated on a blue chair, playing a digital keyboard. The keyboard is placed on a grey stand. The musician's hands are positioned on the keys. In the background, another person is partially visible, and there are some musical instruments and equipment on the ground. The scene is outdoors on a paved surface.

THE ORCHESTRA

Sixty young musicians from Ciudad Bolívar

The music programme began in 2015 with a three-storey building raised for it. In 2022 a Colombian NGO funded the instruments. In June 2023 the youth symphony orchestra gave its first concert.

Strings, wind and percussion — and a route that has taken alumni into Fine Arts at UNIMINUTO and Performing Arts at Universidad Sergio Arboleda.

Ciudad also composed and recorded its own anthem in 2022 with the group *Ciudadina*, written by its own music teachers from what the children said the foundation meant to them.

Who is here, and who looks after them

Participants

Group	Age	Programme	Children
Pitufos	1–2 years	Early childhood	15
Angelitos A & B	2–3 years	Early childhood	30
Tigrillos	3–4 years	Early childhood	18
Fruticas A & B	4–5 years	Early childhood	40
San Jorge	6–11 years	Alternate shift	64
Malala	12–17 years	Alternate shift	23
Older adults	60+ years	Community	28

218 participants — 190 children and young people plus 28 older adults.

Staff

Area	Men	Women	Total
Administration	3	11	14
Teaching staff	6	10	16
Maintenance	2	0	2
General services	1	1	2
Food service	0	4	4
Security	2	0	2

40 staff, 26 of them women. Several are former participants; many have served more than ten years — continuity that matters to children who need adults who stay.

OUTCOMES

What happened to the children who grew up here

We track 46 *ex-Malalas* — young people who passed through the adolescent programme and stay in contact with Cigarra.

80.4%

STUDIED OR ARE STUDYING

19.6%

DID NOT CONTINUE

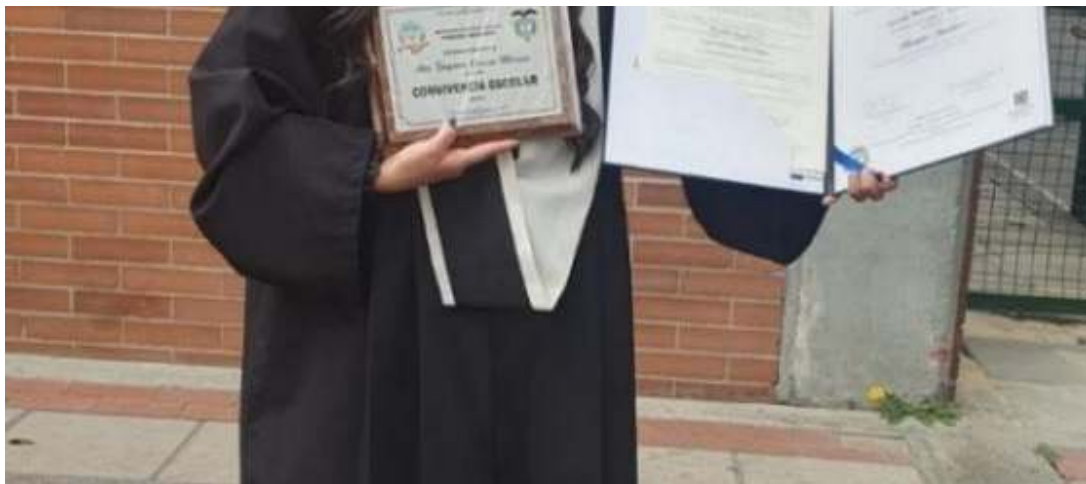
Self-reported by alumni in contact with the foundation, 2026. A partial cohort, not a controlled study — we report it because it is the most honest measure we hold, and strengthening this tracking is one of our priorities.

Highest level reached, among those who continued



More than a hundred jobs have gone to neighbourhood residents over 24 years, and a second generation has begun to arrive — alumni bringing their own children through the same gate.

Four of the 2,049



I joined in 2008, a six-month-old baby. I learned the violin and the piano, and there I discovered theatre and singing. In 2025 I won a scholarship to study Performing Arts.

Alisson Damara Zapata Melgar · 2008–2024

I arrived in 2006, aged two. Music is where I found meaning. I failed the university entrance exam the first time and did not give up. Today I am in my third semester of Fine Arts at UNIMINUTO.

Edwin Santiago Chávez Romero · 2006–2022

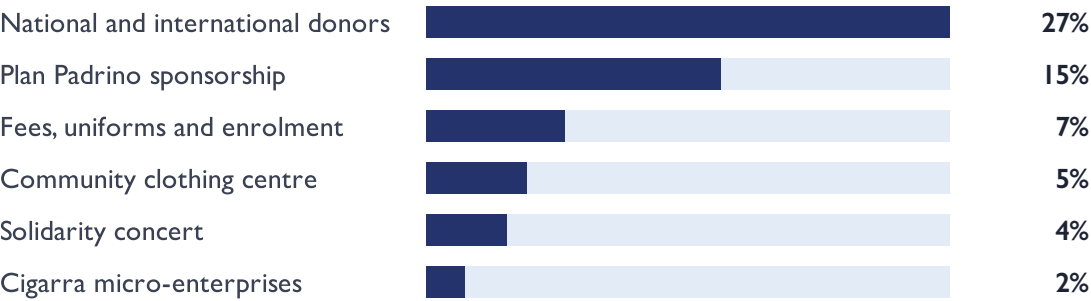
Cigarra was, is and will remain a fundamental part of my story. The day we have children, we will bring them here too.

Yorlandis Paredes García · joined 2004, now a nurse

If I had not passed through the foundation, my life would not hold the learning it holds today. Cigarra gave my path meaning.

José David Paredes García · former Malala participant

Recurring income covers 60% of what it costs to run Cigarra



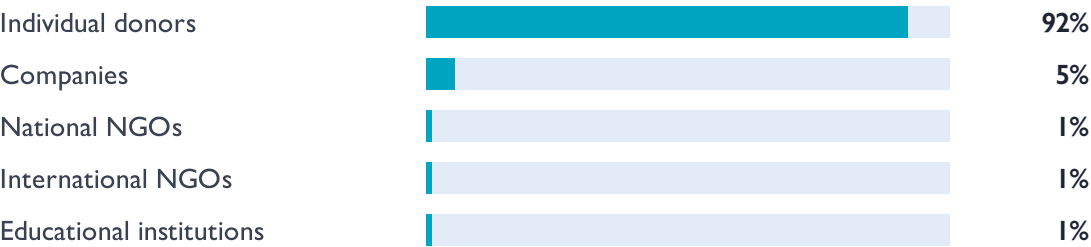
The other 40% is what we are asking funders to help solve

It has been covered year after year by extraordinary, non-recurring support — a one-off gift, an unusually good year at the clothing centre, a single concert. It has kept the doors open. It is not a financial base.

Our priority is not to grow quickly. It is to move a meaningful share of that 40% onto recurring footing, so that a hard year does not become a year in which children lose their place.

Cigarra charges no family for a place. Everything is financed by donations and by the small enterprises the foundation runs itself.

Broad at the base, thin at the institutional end



92% of our allies are individuals, most of them Plan Padrino sponsors. That breadth is a real strength — and a concentration risk. Institutional and corporate funding is where we are deliberately under-built, and it is why we are here.

Current partners

Microsoft · Saint George School · Almacenes Éxito · Permoda · Makro · Aqualogic · Opperar · ABACO food bank

Networks

Bogotá District Secretariat for Social Integration · Fundación Éxito alliance network for early-childhood nutrition and development

Historic supporters

World Food Programme · Servivienda · IRT, United Kingdom · FUMDIR · Médecins Sans Frontières · TECHO · an anonymous international donor giving continuously since 2003

Recognition and standing

2013 FUMDIR–SENA award · 2009 community recognition · Candid Platinum Seal #8056671 · Charity Navigator · Benevity ID 840-680505337

Six projects, fully costed

#	Project	What it delivers	USD	Type
1	Balanced nutrition	Breakfast, lunch and a snack for 192 children	\$101,360 / year	Recurring
2	Facility repairs and safety	Three classroom roofs, paint, corner guards, railings	\$11,683	One-off
3	A second floor	72 m²: library, English room, art room, bakery	\$68,565	Capital
4	Covered court and theatre	Year-round space for sport, orchestra and assemblies	\$71,344	Capital
5	Community mural	Painted by the adolescents with a professional artist	\$2,498	One-off
6	Plan Padrino	One child's education, meals and materials	\$203 / child / year	Recurring

Converted at COP 3,202.79 per US dollar, the official Colombian rate on 30 August 2026. Peso amounts come from contractor quotations held by the foundation; quotations are re-tendered before submission, as most funders require them to be under 30 days old. Each project has its own budget, deliverables and reporting plan in our Project Portfolio.

Feeding 192 children, three times a day

Our single largest annual cost, and the one least covered by stable income. There is no means test and no waiting list for food.

Meal	Per child / day	192 children / month
Breakfast	\$0.58	\$2,216
Lunch	\$1.19	\$4,569
Afternoon snack	\$0.43	\$1,662
Total	\$2.20	\$8,447



What a funder can take

\$101,360 — a full year of meals for all 192 children

\$8,447 — one month for all 192 children

\$528 — one child fed for a year

\$44 — one child fed for a month

A Plan Padrino sponsorship of \$20 a month covers roughly 46% of what it costs to feed one child. We say so plainly, because funders check.

Space and safety



Repairs and safety · \$11,683

Three classroom roofs — including the technology room with its donated computers — plus paint, impact-absorbing corner guards and stair railings. Each line can be funded separately; the roof replacement (\$6,192) stands alone and is the most urgent.



A second floor · \$68,565

72 m² above an existing structure, for four programmes with no room of their own: the library *Cigarra, creator of dreams*, a dedicated English classroom, an art room, and the bakery — a playful space for the youngest and a trade for adolescents. Buildable in phases.



Covered court and theatre · \$71,344

Bogotá sits at 2,600 metres and it rains most of the year. Roofing the existing stage turns it into a year-round court and theatre — sport, dance, orchestra performances, assemblies and the annual musical stop losing their space at the same time.



Community mural · \$2,498

The wall beside the music department, seen from the road into the neighbourhood, painted by the adolescents alongside a professional artist. The smallest project here and the one the children make most directly their own.

Four ways in

Sponsor children

Plan	USD	Covers
Monthly	\$20	1 child
Annual	\$203	1 child
Gold	\$375	2 children
Platinum	\$515	3 children
Ultra	\$656	4 children

Sponsors receive a six-monthly progress report on the child they support, a six-monthly activity bulletin and an annual donation certificate, valid for tax in Colombia and the United States.

Fund a project

Any of the six, in whole or in part, with quotations, deliverables and a reporting plan. We track restricted funds in a dedicated cost centre and accept disbursement in tranches released against approved reports.

Corporate partnership

Employee giving and matching — we are registered with Benevity, **ID 840-680505337**, and hold a US 501 (c)(3), **EIN 68-0505337**, so most corporate portals can match employee gifts. Workplace volunteering, in-kind donations, and our children's Christmas *novena* repertoire performed at your offices.

Volunteer

On site: medical consultations, teaching, social work, gardening and trades. Remotely: translation, design, data and grant writing.



Thank you for letting us believe that it can be done

Esperanza Duque Castro, Administrator

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Gifts are tax-deductible in Colombia and in the United States.

El resurgir de una esperanza.

