



▲ Fundación El Refugio offers comprehensive training workshops to children and adolescents in two high risk areas of Bogota, Colombia. Many children living in these areas lack even the most basic necessities. They receive unsatisfactory health care and little or no education. Additionally, they face an abhorrent level of exploitation for labour, child prostitution, and as child workers for common criminals.

As an important alternative, El Refugio's project aims to prevent serious problems and offer viable solutions to those that already exist. The Foundation's care is directed at 7 to 18 year olds and involves 24 hours of education per week. Currently 200 young people are participating in the project, all of whom live in a condition of critical poverty in accommodation scarcely fit for human habitation.

HISTORY


Fundación El Refugio was established in 1995 by four women jewellers. As residents of a high risk area of Bogota, they worried about the risks and violence facing young people. Because of this, they decided to put their knowledge at the service of the community.

Fundación El Refugio has received financial support from the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, the British Embassy in Bogota as well as numerous other state entities. In 1996, The Department of Social Welfare granted the Fundación a room in a community centre, in recognition of its work.

PROGRAMS

- The initial activities of the program include: invitation, enrolment and registration of child and family. Children are given nutritional, educational, psychological, and health assessments and support. They are guided in drawing up a "life plan" and receive balanced snacks.
- El Refugio trains its students in jewellery making in an intensive 12 month course. At the end of it, children can join micro-enterprise workshops that are aimed at encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit.
- El Refugio has established agreements with private jewellery firms for well-paid employment for El Refugio graduates. Currently, the company FINAR S.A. (one of the largest jewellery manufacturing companies in Columbia) has taken on 10 young people and has an open-door policy towards El Refugio.
- Children participate in dance, music, and fine art workshops. These workshops raise awareness of traditional Columbian folklore. Additionally, dance and music performances raise funds for the participants.
- El Refugio's Youth Club offers democratic, participatory and fun learning. There is a Cine Club and library.
- Various field trips are offered, including trips to: craft training workshops, museums, the city library, art and jewellery exhibitions, nature locations and parks.
- Young people in the final stages of the training create "juvenile associative enterprises" and take part in commercial events such as festivals, exhibitions and advertising.

VISION

At present, El Refugio aims to generate enough funds to pay the professionals and other staff working with the project. In addition, the foundation hopes to strengthen various program activities and widen care to accommodate 100 more young people. 

CONTACT:

c/o Nury Elisabeth Bonilla Ruiz
Calle 13 No 2 - 87, Bogota, Colombia
Email: funrefugio@latinmail.com



Colombia

SUSILA DHARMA INTERNATIONAL

3500 Ash Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 3E7 Canada / Tel 1-604-728-7122 / Fax 1-604-728-7123 / Email: info@susiladharmainternational.org / Web: www.susiladharmainternational.org
In Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)