

Step report *Colombia*

The end of our time in northern Colombia- Arjona

We spent some time with members of Fundación Doulos that have ministries based in Arjona (a small town outside of Cartagena) as well as Cartagena itself.

On the Friday, half of the team helped at a Christian school day-camp at a Finca in Turbaco. They led activities and participated in Bible dramas with the children, this was followed by a short time to relax in the pool before heading on a bus to Arjona, where we all slept during our stay. The other half of the team remained in Barranquilla for a bit longer to help deliver English activities at Boston International School.

The building of the foundation (owned by Andre and Marcela) hosts Somos Arte, an initiative in Arjona designed to bring the gospel to children through various forms of art (drama, music, drawing, painting...). It originally started with Marcela, who was born and raised in Arjona, she recognised the need for a creative focused ministry, an area she could bring her expertise in (as she is an actress alongside her work with the foundation). A year later, Andre joined the project and they have been working together on the ministry for the last four years. As time has gone on, they have prioritised sharing the gospel to the young people they work with, as well as providing a space where they can embrace their creativity.

On Saturday, four of the team (Samuelito, Zoë, Lucita & Emily) got involved with the Somos Arte project. They told a bible story through drama, and then each ran a station. Zoë became a welder for the morning, Emily lead a music session, Samuelito showed the kids how to build tents and Lucy ran a photography station.



Fundacion Doulos

I wanted to add in also some notes I made when our team talked to the founder of Fundación Dolous, Daniel Bravo. I hope people reading this can gain a deeper understanding of what the work they're doing is, why it started and what the motive behind it is.

- The foundation started 15yrs ago.
- Daniel majored in business with a good salary and well paying job.
- When starting Dolous he was in his 20s, and volunteers dedicated their time originally, but there are now full time members.
- It's called Doulos because it's a greek word for those who serve others! And it provides a support network for other smaller foundations, ministries and resources.

It was originally started because they weren't satisfied with how things were, so they decided to change them. People there were alone in mission, so they changed it to something for people do in community. They were dissatisfied about how the church was, they aspired for something better. Instead of sitting and complaining, or getting further away, they decided to be active. They started to do things that weren't usually in a church - eg using sport to evangelise.

There are now about 15 staff members and more than 200 churches!

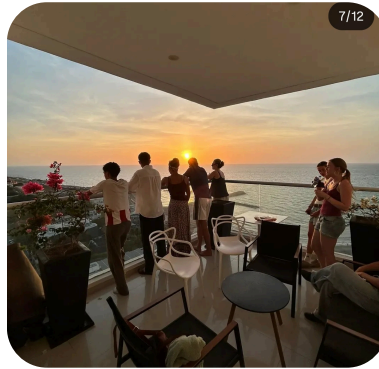
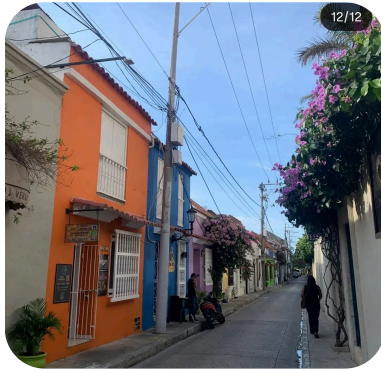
Something that impacted Daniel, was how God's love was shown through the water that was brought to one of the poorest regions in Colombia. One woman said she had been hearing that God loved her for years, but after the clean, permanent water was brought in, she said she can now drink his love too. And this impacted Daniel because he realised this is how things should be done, if they can, within the church. Everything is a way to show God's love - sport, water and food, craft, quality time, etc.



Cartagena

The other group (Sam, Beech, Betania & Kaleb) travelled into Cartagena with Ronald and Issys to their 4.24 Fundación. They assisted with ice breakers and games at the start of the English lesson, (a newly set up project seeking to provide higher quality opportunities to youth from generally less privileged backgrounds). After this, they lead discussion groups in the conversation club relating to travel and culture. The cost collected from the people participating in the conversation club goes towards funding the English class, (which was being run for the first time when they attended). They are aiming to make the English lessons fully financially sustainable from the conversation club fees, so they don't have to rely on external funding.

After the ministry work, both sub-teams enjoyed a dip in a pool! One in the accommodation of Andre & Marcela in Turbaco, and the other on a rooftop apartment building in Cartagena, which we were kindly allowed to use (by friends of Ronald and Issys).



Later in the evening, the team reunited and were led on a tour of Cartagena old town by Ronald. It was gorgeous - from the architecture, to the evening lights, to the overall energy of the city. We enjoyed the opportunity to be tourists and see the city from a visitors perspective. We have a lot of gratitude to the Lord for the people we met and spent time with in Cartagena, as well as the chance we got to spend seeing more of Colombia!



A varied few days!

On the Sunday, we had our second birthday girl on the team - Lucy!! Marcela and Andre & Marcela's parents prepared a brunch with much love and care. It was beautifully presented and consisted of fresh fruit, eggs, and cake at the end! We then had a small service within the group, with Marcela translating for her parents. We learnt more about their vision for the community in Arjona - to be bringing people into God's kingdom through building relationships and showing the love of Jesus to the people of Arjona. It was really interesting to hear about Mission Halls, one of the earlier ways churches were formed in the UK. Andre explained their vision of building multiple strong relationships, and inviting those people into a space where they could learn more about scripture. This would later transform the community into a church, rather than making a church and attempting to invite people in.

On Sunday evening, we went to a corn festival in the town centre. There was strong music and good food, an enjoyable time spent as a team and with our friends of Cartagena.

Monday started fairly early again with a school visit from 7.30-9.30am. We then had a (less smooth) journey to Cartagena in the afternoon. Some of the team spent time in the old town (Emily, Betania & Marcela), walking around the city and watching the dancing. The others stayed on the beach (the rest of the team & Andre) and had a great time swimming in water where they could see their legs (unlike Puerto Mucho in Barranquilla!).

We were then fortunate enough to be generously hosted by Road, one of Andre's friends, for some pizza. We got to watch the sunset on a balcony with an amazing view of Cartagena. It was a very surreal evening and a notable highlight for many of us in the team.



Mom's Moments

We had our final Mom's Moments session on Wednesday, where we said our 'despedidas' (goodbyes) to the community of El Cerrito. We led the Mom's and small kids session, followed by the English class, with a review of what we had done with the kids over the last 5 weeks, (days of the week, months of the year, family members, colours and songs we have taught them). After the class, we shared a wholesome time together, where Sandra and Fernando (the pastors at El Cerrito, and the representatives for Fundación Entrénate para la Vida) shared with us their gratitude for the time we had spent with the ministry. We then shared with the mums our reflections on how much they have encouraged and taught us throughout our time with them. During this time, Fernando also washed our feet as a sign of servant heartedness. They gave us all photos in frames and a card with a Bible verse in, as a leaving gift. We wrote out a post card (from England!) to both Sandra and Fernando, as well as the community of El Cerrito, with a Bible verse and a message on how much they have driven and inspired us.



Los Angeles Camp Day

We ran a kids camp on the Saturday for the children from ministries we have been working with in Los Angeles, Juan Mina and Iglesia Comunidad P.A.S. We had a Bible study in the morning -many of the kids aren't Christians, so it was great to be able to give them the opportunity to talk and ask more questions about the Bible! We split into coloured groups led by two English leaders and one Colombian each. We then ran some activities such as football, beading hair, English conversation, dance etc.

The children and teens that were there have been so good with including us in their friendships and lives, and we have really enjoyed getting to know them, and hopefully we will stay in touch with what they are up to!

Football ministry

We said our final goodbyes to the football ministry as well, one of the ministries people on the team have felt most connection with. It was such pleasure getting to know Rafael and Gizette a bit more, an amazing couple that have been our main contact with Fundación Horeb y Hersed.

Santa Marta holiday



We enjoyed a week of rest from volunteering in Santa Marta, which is a gorgeous city on the coast, about a two hour drive from Barranquilla. Whilst there, we stayed in a quaint hostel close to the beach and savoured walking around the historic areas of the city, as well as lots of time on the beach. We especially loved watching the incredible sunsets. We also took the opportunity to go for a hike in the mountainous region around Minca and we found a lush waterfall for a much needed cool off and swim after the walk. Towards the end of the week, we visited a secluded little beach called Playa Inca Inca, which involved a little hike due to no road access. However, we were well rewarded for our efforts, as it was much quieter than the more touristy beaches, and the sea was so much clearer. We even managed to go snorkelling and saw some awesome marine life such as pufferfish, angelfish, sea urchins and an eel, along with lots of vibrant corals. All in all, it was a much needed break and helped us to prepare for the next location of volunteering in Medellín!

We would be grateful for prayer:

- For encouragement of the youth, mums and kids that we built relationships with in Barranquilla that God would continue to work in their lives and be a comfort to them in tough moments and would bring many moments of joy as well.
- To give thanks for all the relationships we have made with all the people we have met and the opportunities we have had to share the gospel and our love for Jesus with them.
- To give thanks for our time off in Santa Marta where we were able to relax and be restored ready for our time in Medellín. The scenery was incredible and we all had such an awesome time!
- For Campfire Colombia, the ministry founded and run by Jessie JD Judah, the missionaries we were with in Barranquilla, that it would continue to reach new people and through the English learning they would have the opportunity to encounter Jesus.
- That as we start our time in Medellín we would get stuck into all the new ministries and be a blessing to everyone we are working with there.

Thanks for reading and praying!



Wholehearted mission

Our verse of the year is from Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord..." Our 'whatever' can only happen because of your support. Please consider donating to help keep us serving: www.latinlink.org.uk/donate