

Fundación

Mi Historia

Entender el pasado Desafiar el presente Construir el futuro

Transforming narratives among socially excluded youth



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Message from the executive director

¡Welcome to our first annual report!

At Fundación Mi Historia, we begin from a simple but profound conviction: the stories young people tell about themselves shape the futures they believe are possible. In contexts of violence, exclusion and stigma, those stories are often imposed from the outside — reduced to labels, case files or headlines that flatten complexity and erase agency. Our work exists to challenge that reduction and to support young people in reclaiming narrative control over their own lives, including the parts of their stories that are difficult, painful or unresolved.

This annual report, **Transforming Narratives Among Socially Excluded Youth**, reflects not only what we do, but how and why we do it. Across Colombia, we work with children, adolescents and young people who are frequently spoken about but rarely listened to — young people involved in the juvenile justice system, affected by armed conflict, living in marginalised territories, or navigating lives shaped by poverty, discrimination and violence. Many carry complex pasts marked by harm, loss or responsibility, yet are rarely offered safe spaces to reflect on those experiences with honesty and dignity.

Our approach is rooted in narrative. **We understand storytelling not as a communication tool alone, but as a psychosocial, ethical and civic process.** Through journalism, creative media and participatory methods, young people are supported to name their pasts, make sense of their present, and imagine futures beyond the limits imposed upon them. Importantly, for those involved in the juvenile justice system, this does not mean denying harm or avoiding accountability. On the contrary, narrative work allows young people to confront their experiences — including the consequences of their actions — in ways that move beyond punishment toward understanding, responsibility and repair.

This is where our commitment to restorative justice is central. We believe that transformation is possible when young people are recognised not as victims or offenders, but as moral agents capable of reflection, responsibility and change. By combining narrative practices with restorative approaches, we support processes in which young people can acknowledge harm, rebuild relationships and re-establish a sense of belonging within their communities. These processes are not quick or linear, but they are essential for genuine reintegration and long-term peace.

In 2024, this narrative and restorative approach was visible across all our programmes. **From youth-led journalism and digital radio to peace journalism training, community storytelling and restorative accompaniment**, young people produced content that did more than inform. They reframed how their pasts and their communities are understood, challenging stigma while opening conversations about prevention, accountability and collective responsibility.

Our work is inherently collaborative. We do not arrive with pre-written scripts or simplified messages. Instead, we build trust-based partnerships with young people, communities and institutions, creating the conditions for narratives to emerge authentically and ethically. At a time when armed and criminal groups continue to recruit young people by offering seductive but destructive stories of power, belonging and wealth, narrative work is not optional — it is preventive. Supporting young people to develop voice, self-efficacy and critical reflection strengthens their capacity to resist harmful narratives and to construct alternatives rooted in dignity, responsibility and connection.

This commitment to narrative, rights and restorative practice was recognised this year, when **Fundación Mi Historia was awarded the Premio para la Niñez (Childhood Award) by Bogotá's City Hall.** This recognition of our work with young people in conflict with the law affirms the value of youth-led journalism and narrative work as tools for protection, participation and social inclusion, and strengthens our resolve to continue challenging punitive approaches that silence young people rather than support their transformation.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to the young people who trusted us with their stories, to our partners who share this commitment, and to the team and collaborators who made this work possible. As you read this report, I invite you to listen not only to outputs and outcomes, but to the quieter transformations that occur when young people are given the space to face their pasts, take responsibility, and author new futures.

That is the change we seek.

Mathew H. Charles, PhD
Executive Director
Fundación Mi Historia





About Us



Fundación
Mi Historia
Entender el pasado Desafiar el presente Construir el futuro

Fundación Mi Historia is a Colombian non-profit organisation working with children, adolescents and young people affected by violence, armed conflict, crime and social exclusion. Through participatory journalism, creative storytelling and psychosocial education, we support young people to understand their past, challenge their present and build future life projects grounded in dignity, responsibility and peace.

Our work is rooted in the belief that young people are not passive victims of violence, nor problems to be solved, but social actors with voice, memory and potential. By placing narrative at the centre of education, justice and prevention, Fundación Mi Historia creates spaces where young people can reflect on their experiences, strengthen psychosocial skills and contribute meaningfully to public debate.

Governance

Fundación Mi Historia is led by an Executive Director and a Financial and Administrative Director. Strategic guidance and ethical oversight are supported through senior advisors and institutional partners, ensuring accountability, safeguarding and responsible programme delivery. Programme teams are project-based, bringing together professionals with expertise in journalism, education and psychosocial practice to advance youth participation, narrative justice and peacebuilding.

Our executive director

Mathew H. Charles, PhD, is the Executive Director of Fundación Mi Historia. He is a journalist, researcher and practitioner with extensive experience working with children, adolescents and young people affected by violence, armed conflict and social exclusion in Colombia and Latin America. His work focuses on narrative-based prevention, restorative justice and youth participation, combining participatory journalism, psychosocial education and policy engagement. Mathew has collaborated with academic institutions, international organisations and media outlets, and regularly contributes to public debate on youth justice, violence prevention and children's rights.





**Our
mission, vision
and values**

Mission

To use storytelling and journalism as tools for personal and social transformation, promoting narrative processes that strengthen the voice, identity and social inclusion of children, adolescents and young people in contexts of violence, conflict and exclusion.



Vision

To be a reference organisation in Colombia and Latin America in promoting social inclusion and personal transformation among children, adolescents and young people in contexts of exclusion, juvenile justice and incarceration or disengagement from armed groups, through storytelling and participatory journalism.



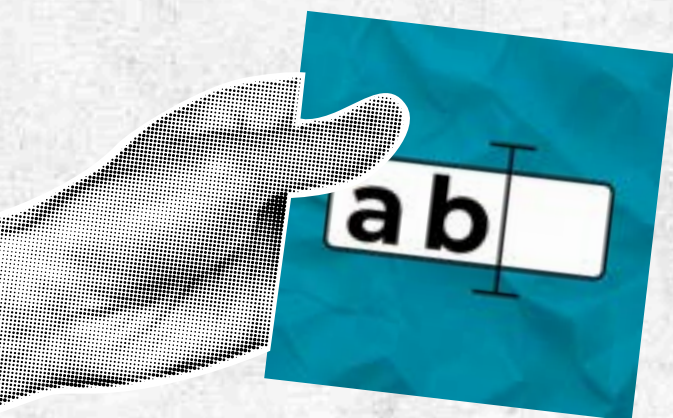
**Understand the past –
Challenge the present –
Construct the future**

Values

Our work is guided by a set of narrative values that shape not only what we do, but how we listen, create and intervene. We understand **narrative as a shared process** through which young people make sense of their lives, negotiate responsibility and imagine futures beyond violence.

This requires recognising young people as agents and co-creators of meaning; upholding dignity and human rights in every stage of storytelling; and practising narrative justice by ensuring stories are told ethically, with care for context, consequences and power. **Participation, for us, is never extractive:** young people are not sources of content, but authors of knowledge. Underpinning all of this is a commitment to care, safeguarding and responsibility, *recognising that narrative work in contexts of violence is itself a form of protection.*

Our values are narrative-based because stories are how people make sense of who they are and what they have lived. **Naming experiences, listening without judgement,** and telling one's own story are not just acts of expression — **they are acts of dignity, identity, and social inclusion.** Through narrative, young people move from being spoken about to becoming protagonists of their own lives.

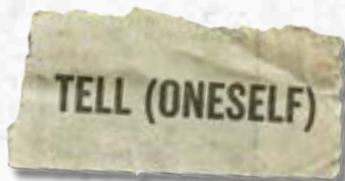


Recognising and naming one's own experience is the first step toward dignity.



LISTEN

Listening with care and without judgement creates the conditions for narrative transformation.



TELL (ONESELF)

Telling one's own story is an act of resistance, memory and identity construction.



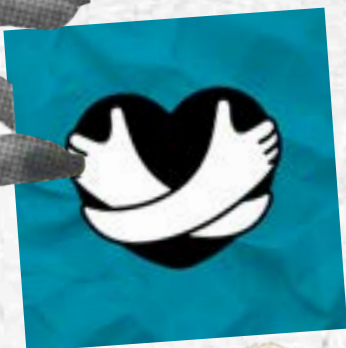
BECOME THE PROTAGONIST

Every young person has the right to be the author of their own story



REIMAGINE

Imagining possible futures is a tool for personal and social transformation.



RECONNECT

Identity is reconstructed in relationship with others.

Why our work matters

In Colombia, many young people grow up in contexts marked by armed conflict, organised crime, territorial control and structural exclusion. These conditions shape everyday life, limiting opportunities and exposing young people to violence, criminalization and recruitment or use/utilization by non-state armed groups and gangs.

For those who enter the juvenile justice system, responses often prioritise control and punishment over reflection, voice and re-entry. As a result, **young people are frequently silenced, stigmatised and excluded** from conversations about their own lives and futures.

Fundación Mi Historia responds to this gap by creating participatory, educational and media-based processes that centre young people's narratives. ***Through journalism, audio, video and interactive storytelling, we support young people to make sense of their experiences***, develop peace skills and imagine alternative life paths.





In total, there are more than

1.200

children and teenagers recruited into conflict and organized crime between 2019-2024 according to UNICEF Colombia

Also...

541

verified cases of recruitment, use/utilization in 2024, a 64% increase on 2023 according to the Defensoría del Pueblo



What we do?



Our work combines psychosocial education, participatory media production and youth-led journalism. Across all programmes, we use narrative as a tool for learning, accountability, prevention and social inclusion.

Core methodologies include:

- Peace Skills: five psychosocial competencies (self-awareness, self-regulation, relationship management, social conscience and responsible decision-making);
- Creative Autobiography: a participatory narrative method that uses storytelling and creative media to help young people reflect on their experiences, reconstruct identity, and imagine alternative futures in contexts of violence and exclusion;
- Youth-led participatory journalism and media production: a practice in which young people create and publish stories about their own realities, strengthening voice, critical thinking and social inclusion through ethical, collaborative media work.

We work primarily with:

- Young people in the juvenile justice system;
- Young people disengaged from armed/organised criminal groups and gangs;
- Young people exposed to the risks of structural exclusion and involvement in organised crime and/or conflict.





What we did in 2024?



Sueños Sonoros: Mi voz, mi historia, mi libertad



As part of our Peace Journalism School, Sueños Sonoros is a national diploma programme in peace journalism and audiovisual production. **It works with young people in the juvenile justice system** providing structured training that combines technical media skills with psychosocial reflection and peace education to promote restorative justice.

During 2024, Sueños Sonoros:

- **Trained 205 young people in 15 cities across Colombia;**
- Delivered a certified diploma in alliance with Universidad del Rosario;
- **Culminated in The Festival of Youth Journalism with events held in 15 cities**
- Produced hours of audiovisual content created by youth participants in the juvenile justice system.





The programme supported participants to **reinterpret their experiences and reconstruct their self-narratives**, strengthening self-awareness, emotional regulation, critical reflection and future orientation, while providing a recognised educational pathway and a public platform through which **their voices could be heard on their own terms**.

Mi voz, mi historia, mi comunidad

Mi Historia, Mi Voz, Mi Comunidad **was a youth-led peace journalism project implemented in Juan José, Puerto Libertador (Córdoba)**, designed to support narrative transformation at the individual and community levels. The initiative trained 20 children, adolescents and young people in peace journalism and audiovisual production through a practical, learning-by-doing approach that enabled participants to reflect on their lived experiences, strengthen self-efficacy and reposition themselves as legitimate narrators of their territory.

Participants produced written journalism, podcasts and short videos, culminating in a four-episode podcast series on environmental protection and peace. By linking narrative-based journalism with psychosocial skill development, the project supported young people to construct alternative narratives to those promoted by armed groups, contributing to recruitment prevention while foregrounding the connections between environmental sustainability, peacebuilding and social inclusion.



Puerto Libertador



Radio Trompo: La voz juvenil



Radio Trompo is Fundación Mi Historia's youth-led digital journalism platform. **It produces podcasts, news coverage, live programmes and investigative series** created by and with **young people**.

In 2024, Radio Trompo:

- Published multiple podcast series and special reports;
- Produced live radio programmes;
- Trained 20 young journalists in ethical reporting and storytelling in Tierralta (Córdoba);
- Reached national and regional audiences.

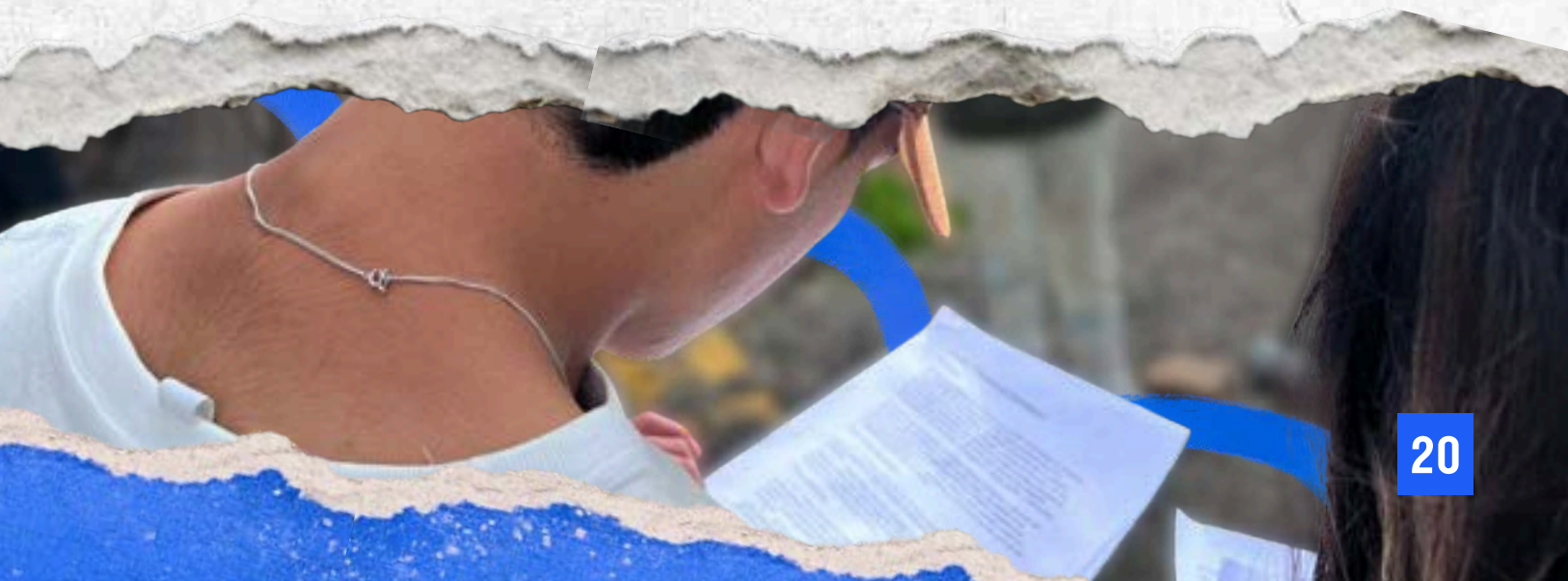




Yo decido mi futuro

Yo Decido Mi Futuro was a participatory journalism project that brought together 12 non-incarcerated justice-involved teenagers and students from the Communication and Journalism programmes at Universidad Externado de Colombia. Through collaborative training in journalism and audiovisual production, the project created shared spaces for dialogue, reflection and co-authorship across social and institutional boundaries.

By engaging in narrative-based reporting and peer interviewing, participants were supported to reflect on their life trajectories, reframe experiences of justice involvement and articulate future-oriented self-narratives grounded in agency and responsibility. **The process resulted in a series of podcasts and video interviews that foreground youth perspectives** and challenge simplified or punitive representations, **demonstrating how narrative transformation can occur through collaboration**, ethical storytelling and public dialogue.





Our impact

257

young people trained in journalism and audiovisual production



An estimated

5.000

people reached through the Youth Journalism and Film Festival

Children's awards 2024





Impact

In 2025, Fundación Mi Historia strengthened youth voice and protection through journalism, narrative education and public engagement at scale:

- 257 young people trained in journalism and media production, including 217 young journalists within Colombia's juvenile justice system and 40 young people in Córdoba, strengthening psychosocial skills, ethical storytelling and future orientation in contexts of violence and exclusion;
- An estimated 5,000 people reached through the Festival de Periodismo Juvenil, held across 15 cities, creating public spaces where youth-produced journalism challenged stigma and reshaped how young people affected by violence are seen and heard;
- Public recognition for impact and innovation, with Fundación Mi Historia awarded the Premio para la Niñez by the Alcaldía de Bogotá, acknowledging our contribution to the protection, participation and rights of children, adolescents and young people





Partnerships and other platforms



Partnerships



Fundación Mi Historia works through collaboration and trust-based partnerships. In 2024, key partners included **Universidad del Rosario**, **ICBF** and the **Ministry of Culture**. These alliances are essential to scaling impact while maintaining ethical and participatory principles.



At the territorial level, **Fundación Picachos** enabled the creation of a Radio Trompo studio within the CAE Samanes for incarcerated youth in Neiva (Huila), providing a vital space for youth-led journalism and narrative expression. **Benposta Caribe** was a valued partner in training young journalists within the Radio Trompo Caribe bureau in Tierralta (Córdoba) and Forjar Restaurativo was a key partner in advancing restorative justice processes with non-incarcerated young people involved in the juvenile justice system, supporting pathways of accountability, dialogue and social inclusion.

International presence

In 2024, the Director of Fundación Mi Historia was invited to speak at the **NATO Centre of Excellence – Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT) Counter Terrorism Executive Conference**, where he presented the Foundation’s work on preventing the recruitment of children, adolescents and young people into armed and extremist groups. The intervention highlighted Fundación Mi Historia’s narrative-based, youth-led approaches, including peace journalism, psychosocial skills development and counter-narratives, positioning the organisation as a reference point in international discussions on prevention, youth resilience and non-militarised responses to recruitment.

The Executive Director was also interviewed by **Swedish national television** to share expertise on cultural and narrative interventions in violence dynamics, highlighting the role of storytelling, media and participatory practices in violence prevention and social inclusion. The interview contributed to international public debate on non-punitive, culturally grounded approaches to prevention.



In the media...

In 2024, Sueños Sonoros received regional and national media coverage highlighting its impact on youth participation, peace journalism and creative storytelling. The project was featured on **Canal TRO** (20 March) and covered by **Vanguardia** in Bucaramanga (18 March) under the headline “Festival de Periodismo y Cine Juvenil: voces que transforman realidades a través del cine y el sonido”.

Radio coverage included **Radio Fantástica** in Leticia (14 March) and **Radio Todelar** in Pasto (7 March), amplifying the voices of participating young people across diverse territories. The project was also featured in **Diario del Sur** (Nariño) and in **Proclama del Pacífico** (Popayán), with a focus on how young people use journalism to narrate their futures and strengthen community dialogue.





**Transparency,
lessons learned and
challenges faced**



Lessons learned

This year reinforced several key lessons:

- Narrative work strengthens responsibility and growth, not avoidance
- Youth-led journalism builds self-efficacy and social belonging
- Prevention is most effective when young people lead the message
- Ethical care and safeguarding must underpin all participatory work

Challenges

Challenges included operating in high-risk contexts, navigating institutional resistance to youth voice and ensuring the sustainability of long-term processes.

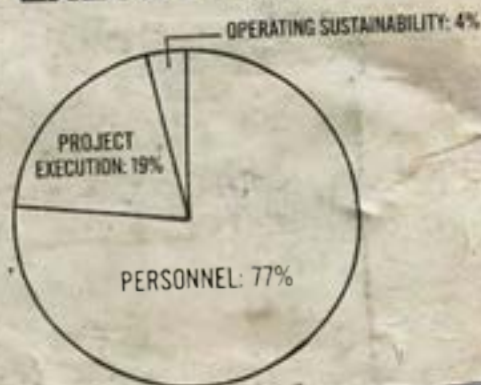


Financial overview

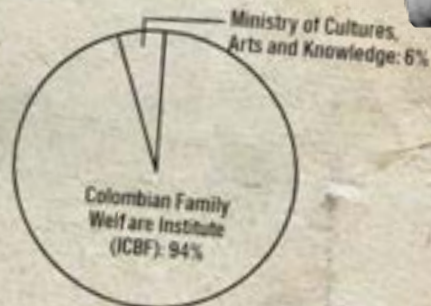
Fundación Mi Historia is committed to transparency and responsible financial management.

Funding in 2024 came from our institutional partners and was invested primarily in programme delivery, personnel and operational support.

BUDGET EXECUTION.



REVENUE:





Looking ahead to 2025

For the coming year, we have identified five key objectives for Fundación Mi Historia:

1. To secure stable core funding that guarantees the financial sustainability, institutional continuity and operational independence of Fundación Mi Historia;
2. To expand our participatory journalism initiatives;
3. To consolidate Fundación Mi Historia's positioning as a national and international reference in violence prevention and the promotion of social inclusion, through active participation in professional networks, public events and peer-reviewed or specialised publications;
4. To expand the reach, visibility and impact of Radio Trompo, strengthening its role as a youth-led journalism platform for public education, prevention and civic participation;
5. To research and prevent the digital recruitment of adolescents, by developing critical digital literacy strategies that strengthen resilience and digital citizenship among children, adolescents and young people in contexts of risk.

Our focus remains on narrative, dignity and youth agency as foundations for peace.



Mi Historia

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radio trompo
la voz juvenil