



Newsletter 2015

20 Years of Responding to Poverty

Just over 20 years ago, a group of British Quakers visited Bolivia to meet and build links with the Quakers there. They most certainly did not realize it at the time, but they were making the initial steps of what has become a 20-year journey of responding to poverty.

In the last 20 years, Quaker Bolivia Link has:

Built over **365 family greenhouses**, bringing a secure food supply to all those families.

Provided over **1870 families** with access to clean water.

Aided over **260 families** with a variety of breeding projects, including trout, chickens, cattle, pigs and llamas.

Supported over **50 families** with projects specifically designed to generate income, such as weaving, cheese production and flower cultivation.

Assisted over **750 families** with improved crops or irrigation systems.

And in doing so has helped to make communities on the Altiplano stronger and more resilient.

To celebrate we have a new logo and a new look to our website, www.qbl.org which has much more about the work of QBL.

Thank you for your support.

Please help us keep this work going.



A spring shared with animals

← BEFORE the QBL project and AFTER →



Señora Nicolasa with the tap outside her house



Joan Neary from QBL-UK visits Bolivia

This Spring I went to Bolivia on behalf of QBL UK. In La Paz, I met with the staff team and members of the Bolivian Board and I visited nine of QBL's projects. These projects, covering a range of activities, are located in small isolated communities many kilometres from La Paz.

The Chojnoko Water Project, for example, was completed in 2013. It is providing water for 76 families. The villagers warmly greeted us (two QBL members of staff and I) and they were eager to show the positive changes they now enjoy. One woman talked about the pleasure of washing her hair in clean wa-



ter, another spoke about the joy of having clean clothes and yet another woman, keen to show us how they had benefited, arrived with an armful of fresh vegetables. Children were also growing and tending vegetables in the school green house.

In Tupal Tupa, some 240 kilometres from La Paz, the quinoa project, involving twenty families, had just started. The women of the community were also eager to show off their chicken-raising project, which had been funded by QBL UK some six years ago.

Arriving at the Rosapata Yariba community felt like stepping into the sky; this is one of the highest communities in the Altiplano. It has just been granted approximately £10,000 for a llama project. The funds will be used to improve llama production by intro-

ducing some new breeds of llama, building corrals to protect the animals from inclement weather conditions and by providing technical assistance to improve the quality of the meat and fibre produced. The textile workshop in the village square produces beautifully woven garments sold locally and further afield.



The Khara Khota trout project, idyllically located under snow capped mountains, was completed in 2009. It was recently awarded a small grant to buy a grinder, which will be used to process local organic feeding materials for the fish. This will enable the community to produce bigger fish that will be more marketable than those currently produced. The community is also interested in developing sustainable tourism around this beautiful fresh water lake.

Many of the people I spoke to expressed optimism for their future. Some families have returned from the cities with renewed energy and ideas and are keen to find ways of developing their communities. The prospect of running water and other development projects makes returning to these remote places more possible for those who have left.



I left inspired by the warmth of the people, aware of the hard and challenging lives they lead and convinced that these projects make significant positive differences in peoples' lives.

Climate Change in the Altiplano – what is happening?

In August, thirteen people who live in the small Tupal Tupa community on the rural Altiplano, met with one of the QBL staff team to talk about climate change.



Those who participated in the discussion did not use the concept 'climate change' but they had clear perceptions of changes in the weather that they had experienced in recent years and the effects on their agriculture.

They said that the weather is now very unpredictable. In the last three years for example, there have been huge variations in the rainfall. Last year, there was little rain and it arrived late, this year there was plenty of rain but it lasted well into the dry season. Similarly, the level and intensity of ice and hailstones is no longer predictable. The cold weather has been less intense in recent years, which has resulted in the failure of the chuno crop. (Chuno is made by freeze-

drying potato in the open and is an essential part of the diet in the Altiplano). There has also been an increase in pests that attack crops and when there is a delay in the arrival of the cold weather, the pigeons attack the quinoa. It is getting very difficult to prepare for and adapt to the continual changes in the climate. More needs to be done to understand what is happening and to find new ways of dealing with the changing situation.

Safe Drinking Water needed in the village of Tiji Chucapaca.

QBL is fundraising at the moment for a safe drinking water project for the people of Tiji Chucapaca which is in the Municipality of Corocoro on the Altiplano, about 200 kilometres southeast from La Paz, a journey of three to four hours by public transport. The water used today by the community is not suitable for human consumption. It is salty, open to the elements and is contaminated by animals as humans and animals use the same sources. There is no electricity in the community but there is a local primary school with around 40 children enrolled.

This project will benefit 25 families who live in the Tiji Chucapaca and are spread across a wide area. It plans to install 4 separate water systems with 4 storage tanks, 4 gravity based water systems, extensive piping, 1 well with a manual pump and 26 taps with one at the community centre.

As with all QBL projects, training will be provided in the construction and installation of the system and in its running, maintenance and management. This will include working with the community to develop rules, regulations and an operations manual for use once the project is up and running. Workshops to raise awareness about health and hygiene and ways of changing habits and practices

will be run for the families involved and for the wider community.

A local work committee has been set up to plan and run the project, local people will do a lot of the hard work and a QBL technician will provide expertise and then do follow up home visits to provide support and monitor the project.

A project like this costs about £13,000. About £3,000 will come from the Municipality of Corocoro and the local community, so we are looking to raise £10,000 and help change life in Tiji Chucapaca.



Please help us fund this project.

Live Adventurously



Did you know Bolivia has more than 30,000 Quakers? That they are almost all indigenous Aymara? Would you like to meet some of them and see how their lives are improving dramatically?

The 2016 Quaker Service and Study Tour of Bolivia will visit communities "off the beaten track" to see how projects of Quaker Bolivia Link change lives and to offer volunteer service. This is an exciting time to visit Bolivia, a time of dramatic social and political change ending five centuries of social exclusion of the indigenous majority.

Trip participants will have a window into Aymara culture and spirituality, where community is strong and decisions are typically made by consensus. We'll talk with secondary students at the BQEF Student Residence in Sorata and Aymara Quaker university students who now have opportunities for education and professional roles of which their parents never dreamed.

Live adventurously - for more information, see www.treasuresoftheandes.com

How is the money spent?

The money we raise is spent in Bolivia through a local NGO, Fundacion QBL-Bolivia. They have a board of volunteer Trustees who are all Quakers from the La Paz area. Communities submit project proposals to QBL-Bolivia and these are developed and assessed locally before being passed to QBL-UK or to our sister charity in the USA. If a project is suitable and we have sufficient funds, it will be approved. There is an office in La Paz, with a part-time administrator/bookkeeper and there are two experienced technical officers who supervise the projects in the field, organise the materials and assist with training. The local community provide the majority of the labour. Projects are usually audited after a couple of years to assess the impact in the community. Our team in the UK are all volunteers; so virtually all the money that you donate is sent to Bolivia and spent helping communities help themselves.



Quaker Bolivia Link (UK)
45 Wroxham Rd
Sprowston
Norwich
NR7 8TN

Website: www.qbl.org

Email: uk@qbl.org

Registered Charity No: 1055192.

A Quaker response to poverty

Quaker Bolivia Link grew from the concern of individual Friends to improve the living conditions of some of the poorest people in Latin America: the Aymara of the Altiplano. We welcome anyone interested in our work to come to one of our meetings. If you would like to be advised of these, please write or email.

If you would like to make a donation to support our work, please visit our website www.qbl.org or send a cheque to the address on the left. Gift Aid and Standing order forms are available.

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