Newsletter 2017

We hope you will enjoy this update on our work with communities living on the Altiplano in the remote high Andes where the harsh weather conditions can make daily life difficult.

Thanks to your generous support, two new projects to bring clean running water to remote communities have been started in 2017. We are raising funds now for two further projects, for water and food security, to start next year – you can read about these inside.

More projects are being developed with local communities; there is much work to do. Around 40% of our funding is from individuals, 30% from Quaker Meetings and the rest from Trusts, Quaker Hilfe in Germany and the Cherry Tree Nursery in Bournemouth. Many thanks to every one of you. All our work on this side of the Atlantic is done by volunteers, so almost 100% of the money we raise goes straight to work in Bolivia.

Please do help us to keep this work going!

Alberto Quelali, President of QBL in Bolivia, at the celebration to mark the completion of the camelid project in Roxapata Yaribay.

And here are some of the children whose health and quality of life are enhanced by your generosity.
To the south east of La Paz lies the province of Pacajes. This is a sparsely populated region of 55,000 people spread over 4,000 square miles (about half the size of Wales) at an altitude of around 4,000 metres. A small town, Coro Coro, serves as the administrative centre of the province. Most of the people live in small villages or isolated farmsteads and make their living from the land, growing arable crops and potatoes and raising animals.

Rural electrification in Bolivia means that many villages have electricity but may not have access to clean water. Under the current government of Evo Morales, local municipalities have access to some funding to make small grants to support projects that will help small rural communities with water and food security.

To the north east of Coro Coro, the Comanche Municipality is one where QBL has established a good working relationship with the mayor who is enthusiastic for our help. Two projects, proposed by the communities themselves, have municipal support and are now waiting for us in Quaker Bolivia Link to raise the money to allow them to happen.

One is the **Butijlaca Food Security Project** which will produce fodder to improve the supply of food for cattle, sheep and llamas in the village of Butijlaca. It will do this by establishing plots of barley and alfalfa fodder, provide equipment such as cutters, choppers and a bailer. It will improve native grasslands by replanting native seeds and by introducing simple practices such as trenching holes to collect water and by replanting and transplanting native species in sites that have been eroded and have little vegetation. The health of livestock will be improved through the control of parasites and diseases and by helping the families involved in the project to set up indoor food storage facilities to prevent deterioration through being exposed to the sun. The animals not only provide a source of food for the community, they are the villagers’ only means of income creation.

This project will benefit 42 families, approximately 126 people. All the families in the village have come together to develop and implement the project and have set up a committee to oversee and manage it.

The project will cost $25,500; of this, the community themselves will contribute the equivalent of $5,200, mostly in the form of their labour and the Municipality will provide $5,300. Quaker Bolivia Link now has the challenge of raising $15,000 to make this project a reality.
This project will benefit 74 families, about 256 people. This community relies on water from scattered small springs and wells, which are in poor condition, exposed to the elements and shared by livestock and other animals. As a result, the water is contaminated by the animals, including frogs and rats. In the community, illness including diarrhoea and vomiting are common, and these are exacerbated by the contaminated water. As has been experienced in other communities that have had water projects, providing clean accessible water dramatically reduces the incidence of disease. Clean water will also enable a wider range of crops to be produced to supplement the potatoes, barley and quinoa that are grown currently. More livestock can also be reared and these are the community’s main source of income.

The scattered nature of this community makes for a complex water distribution network – much pipework will need to be laid and this work will be done by the community themselves. There will be 70 taps on the system and 4 wells with manual pumps. All Quaker Bolivia Link projects recognise the social aspects of change and the Fundacion Quaker Bolivia Link (FQBL) staff team work alongside the communities to help establish practices that will help the benefits last for many years.

In Palcoma Alta, the project will include workshops which will:

- develop the internal statutes governing the management of the system by an elected committee;
- give information about personal and environmental hygiene including management of waste water and rubbish;
- support the community to expand the range of crops they produce;
- explore ways of using their agricultural produce to improve nutrition for all and, provide skills in the operation and maintenance of the water system.

The project will cost $32,800. The community will contribute the equivalent of $9,000. The Municipality of Comanche will provide $9,000 and has already paid for a survey which has outlined the water needs of the community. QBL UK needs to raise $14,800 to enable the project to go ahead.
At QBL, we are always interested in how the projects that we have helped deliver are faring – is all working well or have problems arisen? Sometimes, we hear but at other times, we need to ask. So, a few years ago, we decided to commission a review of a wide range of the water projects that have been delivered over the last decade or so. 15 projects were identified where some additional help would be welcome, usually only small scale in nature and costing about $1500 each.

Faulty taps and broken pipes were the usual problems, although in one case, the water intake had proved not to be in a good place and is being moved to deliver less salty water.

When projects are implemented, a local water committee is established and arrangements set up for families to make a small, regular contribution towards looking after the system. The local people are also given training in how to maintain the system and keep it clean. Quite often, it was these human things that needed some help.

So, 15 reinforcement projects have been created and are now under way; restoring systems to deliver clean water reliably to 15 communities and developing their skills to look after these vital assets into the future.

We learn, too, of course, and yet again we find that people are the key to all that we do.

One of the reinforcement projects is in Condorpata. Here in 2008, they celebrated the opening of the new water system for their village.

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 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.