Since 1995 QBL has been working alongside indigenous Aymaran people to fund, construct, and monitor community-based projects to secure access to water & sanitation, food sources, promote better health, and generate income.

Why Reinforcement Projects are Important

by John Scardina

Over the last four months the QBL-USA and QBL-UK Boards have approved funding (about $24,000 US) for fifteen reinforcement projects. These projects – all involving water systems – allow villages to update, repair, and expand upon systems that were originally built by QBL-BO 7 to 10 years ago. A good example is the project in Villa Puchini, a village in Santiago de Callapa municipality. Their initial water system – built in 2007 by QBL-BO with additional funding from the villagers and the municipality – was designed to serve 30 families with 30 children. Since that time there is a need to update and improve our original project in the following ways:

- improve the water intake system and reposition several of the pipes;
- clean and reinforce the main water tank;
- conduct regular water testing (pH, turbidity, coliform, and chlorine levels);
- update and repair the water accessibility of nineteen families;
- educate the villagers on health and environmental issues, include good dental care.

You may ask:

1. **What is improved?** Both the infrastructure – tank and pipes and home access faucets – and the consciousness of the village – how can we lead healthier and more sustainable lives? – are improved here.

2. **What education is included?** Education about maintaining the system, checking the water quality, and the health value of clean water all are included in this project update. The benefits of fluoridation are also discussed – a valuable addition to the community health program.

3. **How is the village contributing?** The villagers provided the majority of the labor in 2007 when the system was created. This time they will also help with the labor of repositioning pipes, as well as learning how to clean and maintain the tank. Community members and local health officials from the municipality will join QBL-BO staff for the health education trainings.

QBL seeks a long-term relationship with the villages being served, and that allows opportunities to maintain and improve our work over time. Too often we hear of well-meaning NGO's providing projects to villages who did not even initiate the process – as in “we think you need these new composting outhouses” only to find them being used as storage sheds a year later (a true story from Bolivia)!

Your support of QBL is vital to this work. Please consider increasing your contribution this year!
Meet Eduardo Mamani
QBL’s coordinator in Bolivia

Eduardo has been with QBL for the past 3 years. He was born in Nor Yungas - Quilo Quilo Suapia, a community in La Paz, Bolivia. When he was a child, he moved to Omasuyos province, Santiago municipality of the Huata community Chiquinape, where he spent most of his childhood. This town is located on the shores of Lake Titicaca. He went to High School and then College in Villa Tunari, El Alto city. His father was a teacher (retired) in a rural area and his Mother was a housewife who died in an accident when Eduardo was a teenager.

After graduating from college, he received a scholarship to pursue graduate study in Madrid, Spain. Eduardo’s graduate work focused on agricultural irrigation systems. “I had the opportunity to visit so many interesting places including Peru, Luxembourg, Moscow, Miami and even Havana Cuba!” - Eduardo shared. His exploration of agricultural irrigation in these diverse ecosystems afforded Eduardo extraordinary knowledge about enhancing agricultural production under a variety of circumstances. Eduardo loves Bolivia and upon his return to the country following graduation, he worked for the Ministry of Agriculture, other public entities including different NGO’s funded by USAID and foundations. He served as a trainer in coordinating water irrigation, agriculture and animal projects. Eduardo says that working for QBL has provided not only an opportunity to apply his extensive experience and knowledge, but also a chance to serve many families who desperately need assistance and support in making progress toward greater independence. He believes his work with QBL is his personal mission and professional obligation in helping these wonderful families. He is dedicated and passionate about his work. He feels happy working at QBL because of its mission and highly efficient, but culturally sensitive approach.

The most difficult challenge he’s facing is arranging for transportation for him and the staff in reaching the communities served. Eduardo loves working with the families within the communities served by QBL. He spends time with them and helps them overcome pressing challenges and in meeting their unique needs. He feels part of the communities in which he is engaged and understands, appreciates their culture, language and customs. Families in rural areas of Bolivia experience many challenges that may be difficult to appreciate by people from other countries. The level of poverty and remarkable absence of basic resources is astonishing. While progress is being achieved and improvements are being realized in very important ways, the communities served by QBL have much yet to overcome. The people within these communities are working very hard to improve their quality of life and to overcome intergenerational, extreme poverty. One exciting aspect of the work Eduardo does in behalf of QBL for the communities they serve is the underlying sustainable dynamics in the strategies employed. They are not merely helping people – they are helping people to help themselves.

“How Aymaran celebrate the holidays?

Aymaran celebrate the holidays with their own Christian traditions and rituals honoring the “Pachamama”, the highest divinity of the Andean people. The name Pachamama is translated into English as Mother Earth since pacha is a word in both Quechua and Aymara that means earth, cosmos, universe, time and space. And mama means “mother.” The concept of Pachamama is directly related to agricultural wealth since the economy of the indigenous peoples is based on agricultural production. In the cities the Catholic faith has become more prevalent, the ceremonies include worshipping the Pachamama through the Virgin Mary. During the holidays, Bolivians in general ask the Pachamama for health, prosperity, peace and a better life in the high Andes.

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