



Quaker Bolivia Link (QBL) is an international, non-sectarian development organisation dedicated to reducing poverty among the indigenous peoples of Bolivia. Since 1995, we have been working alongside Andean people to fund, construct, and monitor small scale community-based projects to supply fresh water, secure food sources, promote better health and generate income. As a result, there are now over 500 families growing healthy vegetables in their QBL greenhouses, and 55 villages have QBL water supplies.

Guided by Quaker principles, QBL

- works to raise awareness of Bolivian culture and society.
- seeks to include men and women equally in the planning and leadership of projects.
- does not fund projects that have a religious purpose and neither includes nor excludes communities because of their religious beliefs.



Why Bolivia?

Sixty five percent of Bolivians are indigenous Andean people. They are poor and have been marginalized in their own country. They face many obstacles including poor soil, a short growing season and a lack of safe water for drinking and irrigation. There is widespread malnutrition. The international community often overlooks Bolivia because its problems are not the result of natural disasters, violent conflict, or terrorism. The plight of the indigenous Bolivians remains largely ignored. QBL funds projects generated by the communities themselves. We do not impose our ideas, but work with the populace to meet their self-defined goals. QBL provides skilled planning, supervised construction, maintenance and management training, and long-term evaluation.

If you would you like to hear more about our work, we would love to come and tell you about it

To request a talk about QBL and our work in Bolivia get in touch.

Do please display the poster that comes with this newsletter



Llama Herding in the High Altiplano

The Altiplano divides into distinct zones depending on altitude, elevation, geography and geology. On the main Altiplano between 3000 and 3500 metres in altitude one can encounter fertile fields (particularly around Lake Titicaca), scrubby chaparral, salt pans and semi-arid desert.

Crops on the more fertile land, with sufficient water, include quinoa, tarwi (lupin), potatoes, barley, maize and beans. There may be individually tethered cattle and sheep with pigs and chickens in good numbers. If non-salty water is available then this small scale agriculture can be practiced even in the most inhospitable terrain. After driving for an hour on a dirt road through an area that appears to be completely unresponsive of life, it's not unusual that a turn in the road will bring into view an adobe (mud) walled, thatched settlement of scattered houses with a few tiny fields of cultivated land. On the hillside, there may well be a small mixed flock of sheep and llamas.

However, once over 4000 metres and away from the lower Altiplano, the landscape is one of high, cold and windy tundra with a backdrop of permanently snow capped mountains. The only farming that is possible in these areas is the herding of llamas. The camelids (guanacos, llamas and alpacas) have shaped the culture of the high Andes of Bolivia and Peru and in the high Altiplano they still maintain the dominance that they have lost to imported animal breeds on the lower plains. If the people are to survive in these areas then it is important that their llama herds are maintained and improved and markets found for their products.

During 2008 - 2009 Quaker Bolivia Link supported an innovative project at 4,500 metres in the Community of Alto Penas in Battallas. This project helped 271 producers in the community with their herd of 12,000 llamas. Improved llama stock of 29 machos (males) and 70 hembras (females) were purchased in Peru from a long running llama improvement programme with the object of slowly improving the genetic composition of the historically in-bred local herd. Though the local stockmanship was of a good standard, training was offered in veterinary practice, disease control, recording and husbandry in addition to marketing skills.

In 2012 we hope to support a similar project in the Community of Pujrata-Villa Puchuni, which lies at 4,154 metres above sea level in the Municipality of Santiago de Callapa. We see these as exciting and important projects that will protect not only the livelihood of some of the poorest people on the Altiplano but also their historical cultural links with their land through a pattern of herding that long pre-dates the Conquistadores.

Tim Thompson



Chickens in Tiquipa

The Bolivian community of Tiquipa is located in Los Andes province, more than two hours journey from the city of La Paz. Here, high on the Altiplano, the climate is harsh, with extreme exposure to the sun during the day, freezing nights and increasing droughts. As with similar communities across the Altiplano, climate change is visibly affecting this small and isolated community, exacerbating the already extreme climate and impacting upon their food security.

Land in the community is in high demand for a number of native crops. It is being over-used and not managed sustainably, resulting in deterioration of the soil. The people have a diet high in carbohydrates, including potatoes, oca and chuño. There is very little access to sources of protein such as meat and eggs, causing malnutrition especially amongst children.

WilaKunto, the Association of Agricultural Producers and Livestock, requested the support of Quaker Bolivia Link to set up a chicken breeding project to provide both eggs and meat for the community. Longer term they hope to have enough eggs to sell at a local market, generating some income



The chickens have room to roam, safe from predators

The project took two months and cost about \$10,000. Of this the community contributed around a third and QBL the rest. The community have a chicken coop with outside and inside space, which was built for 19 chickens. They started off with 14 chickens to begin breeding and producing eggs.

An initial stock of feed for the chickens was provided with the intention to gradually diversify their diet to incorporate native plants and crops thereby improving sustainability. The community have the knowledge and information they need to maintain the chicken coop and look after the chickens and through WilaKunto, a strong structure to continue to manage the project.

19 families are directly benefitting from the programme. They have improved knowledge of nutrition and balanced diet, having participated in training sessions on the subject. The impact of this will be verified in the medium term when QBL carries out a follow-up evaluation.

Lucie Pannell



Inside the coop, the chickens are protected from the harsh cold nights of the Altiplano

New Projects

We are raising funds for new projects to supply clean water, build greenhouses and help improve food security. All contributions help and we are thankful to all our regular supporters

Quaker Service and Study in Bolivia



The 2012 Quaker Service and Study Tour of Bolivia will be from July 13 - 29, and will be an "off the beaten track" experience of service work in a residence for rural indigenous secondary students, visits to Quaker communities and seeing the results of projects of Quaker Bolivia Link and the Bolivian Quaker Education Fund.

This is an exciting time to visit Bolivia, a time of dramatic social and political change. The trip will offer a window into Aymara culture and spirituality: where community is strong and decisions are typically made by consensus. There will be an opportunity to talk with Quaker facilitators of Alternatives to Violence Project workshops and with Aymara students. Additional extensions are available, including Machu Picchu and volunteering in Bolivia. For more information, see www.TreasuresoftheAndes.com

Recycle

For several years QBL has been receiving a small but steady income from the recycling of printer cartridges. Reclaim-IT has put the QBL logo on its recycle envelopes which make them more noticeable.

How about leaving a recycling post at your Local Meeting, workplace, or school or even with friends? To find out how, go to www.qblrecycle.co.uk and be ready to recycle your ink cartridges and phones!

Help Sought

We are looking for F/friends willing to serve as Trustees and/or to offer their expertise in a support capacity. If you have an interest in Quaker outreach, fundraising, rural development or South America or are considering a future possibility working in the charitable sector this could be an opportunity for service.

For more details contact:

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A Quaker response to poverty

Quaker testimonies are based upon the simple premise that there is that of God in every person. From that stems the long history of Quaker involvement in peace, alternatives to violence, development and aid.

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 our quarterly Open Meetings. If you would like to be advised of these, please write or email.

QUAKER BOLIVIA LINK is a UK Registered Charity No: 1055192.