



## Newsletter 2022

Greetings from all of us at Quaker Bolivia Link. It has been a while since our last newsletter and much has been happening.

The team in Fundación Quaker Bolivia Link in La Paz have weathered the Covid challenges of the last two years and carried on delivering projects to bring water to rural Andean communities – more on page 2.

We have also been looking for new opportunities where small projects can make a big difference. Some of our longer term supporters will remember greenhouse projects – providing the facilities for communities to significantly improve their diet and well-being. This year we have funded a new greenhouse project in the community of Sombrapata in the municipality of San Andrés de Machaca – see more on page 3.

An innovative proposal was made to us by a young Bolivian Quaker, Magaly Quispe – providing greenhouses in prisons along with training in Alternatives to Violence techniques. We have funded the first trial project which is about to start – we now need to find funds for the next one.

We recognise the very many urgent calls for help in the world today and the ever increasing costs. Thus, we are extremely grateful to all our supporters for the funds they donate. All our work in the UK is done by volunteers, so almost all the money we raise goes straight to work in Bolivia. It is still true that in Bolivia, a pound raised in the UK goes a long way in helping the disadvantaged.

**As well as donations, we are looking for new trustees and assistance with outreach – for example, keeping the website up to date.**



Bolivian Band



# Our Water Projects

Jirapi Alta, Berenguela, and Antarani are villages in the high Altiplano, over 160km south of the cities of La Paz and El Alto. This is an area of extreme rural poverty and the migration of young people to El Alto results in an ageing population. The culture of the province is centred on the Aymara language and traditions of the high Altiplano, overlaid by Christianity.

The villagers graze livestock, a few cows, sheep and llamas for each family. They cultivate quinoa and potatoes in small plots. Due to its unique geography and climate, the Altiplano suffers frequent frosts throughout the year and periods of drought and inundation. These are now more extreme and unpredictable owing to climate change.

A major problem throughout this area is that clean drinking water is very difficult to access. At present, the poorest carry their water from distant wells which are often polluted. The more fortunate use an old, rudimentary, and often unsafe and saline water system. Inevitably, this leads to health and hygiene problems.

Over the last two years, our partners in Bolivia, Fundación Quaker Bolivia Link, have been working on projects to provide clean drinking water to each of these communities. This involves capturing



Breaking rocks to lay the pipe

water from sources that are clean and protected from animal and soil pollution, and then providing an extended piped water system running within easy reach of all. The community themselves lay the many kilometres of pipe which often run over very difficult terrain.

The Jirapi Alta project is nearly complete, having been delayed by the pandemic. The work in Berenguela and Antarani is underway.

These projects cost around £20,000 each – we would like to do more, if we can raise the funds.



It's a communal effort.

## Carpas Solares – Greenhouses - Food for Schools

QBL has supported greenhouse projects in the past – but not for many years. Now, we have two new ones.

QBL has formed a new partnership with an organisation based in La Paz, CIPCA (Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado) to deliver and maintain a project in the community of Sombrapata in the municipality of San Andrés de Machaca.

The project will construct communal school based 'carpas solares' - greenhouses for growing vegetables to be used both for school meals and for distribution to the families of the school children.

The Altiplano is not conducive to growing vegetables, since it is located over 4,000 metres above sea level. On the other hand, raising vegetables in greenhouses both diversifies the diet of families by adding essential minerals and vitamins and reduces malnutrition among children (currently 38% among under fives).

There will be two greenhouses like the ones in the photograph, a drip irrigation system and a worm compost system. [Earthworms should appeal to Quakers, they inspired Charles Darwin to write in his last book: *"Worms have played a more important part in the history of the*



*world than most persons would at first suppose"]*

At the project site, located on communal land, groundwater is found at a depth of 6 metres, so the installation of the greenhouse requires the construction of a shallow well, connected via an electric pump. The project will be complemented by a rainwater harvesting system that will capture the seasonal rains.

The community already has a well, which supplies drinking water for human consumption through a piped system.

Training in the growing and preparing of vegetables is an integral part of the work.

We hope that this new venture will be a success and lead to many more 'carpas solares'. The cost of this project is under £10,000 – smaller individual family greenhouses can be built for much less.







## **Carpas Solares – Greenhouses In Prisons**



For our other greenhouse project, we are pleased to be partnering with PAV - Programa de Alternativas a la Violencia, a local branch of AVP - the international Alternatives to Violence Project.

The food supply for inmates in Bolivian Prisons is precarious. It relies a great deal on support from relatives and friends. This has a high negative impact on the physical, mental, and emotional health of the prison population. PAV has run Alternatives to Violence workshops in Bolivian prisons for a number of years and is recognised for its work by the prison authorities. PAV Bolivia have identified an opportunity to build on this work by combining it with the provision

of greenhouses to provide both food, work, and a focus for prison inmates.

Two projects are proposed, one in a men's prison in Potosi and the other in a women's prison in La Merced. This is an innovation – nothing like it has been done before – so, we have provided funding for a first project in Potosi. We hope for success, and are raising funds so that the second project can follow swiftly after it.

Each project will cost around £9,000, including construction and management of greenhouses and the running of workshops in practical agriculture, food preparation, and Alternatives to Violence training.

### **Quakers on the Altiplano**

8% of all Quakers in the world live in Bolivia, as a result of missionary work initiated by a Navajo Quaker, William Abel in 1919. As an indigenous American whose people had been subjugated by European colonists he must have felt an affinity with the Aymara speaking people who live on the high Altiplano above 3,500 metres, who had suffered a similar fate under the Conquistadors. The land is fertile in part, particularly around Lake Titicaca, but much of the area is bleak and desert-like, a cold and inhospitable high plain surrounded by volcanic mountain ranges. The Aymara people live in small isolated hamlets, literally scraping out a living from small patches of land: growing potatoes, beans and quinoa, and grazing sheep and llamas. Glacial melt and a short rainy season feed the distant springs on which the Aymara rely for clean drinking water. Women are in the majority in the villages, as men are often working away for much of the year: in the city of El Alto, in the salt-pans or in extractive industries.

Quaker Bolivia Link  
Friends Meeting House,  
6 Mount Street,  
Manchester, M2 5NS  
Website: [www.qbl.org](http://www.qbl.org)  
Email: [info@qbl.org](mailto:info@qbl.org)  
Reg. Charity: 1055192.

#### **A Quaker response to poverty**

QBL 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. If you would like to support our work, please donate through our website [www.qbl.org](http://www.qbl.org), send a cheque to the address on the left or email for bank details. Gift Aid and Standing Order forms are available.