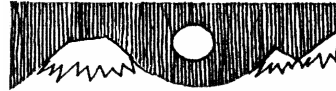


The Mexico Child Link Trust

CHARITY REFERENCE NUMBER XR18919

ANNUAL REPORT April 2005 – April 2006



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Prof. Roy Mc Conkey, B.A. Ph.D. (Chair of Learning Disability, University of Ulster)

EMPLOYEES

Jonathan Getty, B.Sc., P.G.C.E., D.E.L.E. Project Co-ordinator

STAFFING

The Trust is a small organisation with one salaried employee. Our low level of staffing enables overheads to be kept to a minimum. Mrs. June Getty works as a part-time volunteer in general fundraising and administration. Mexico Child Link also relies on the help of voluntary collectors and supporters, who organise fundraising events on our behalf throughout Northern Ireland.

During 2005-2006 Mexico Child Link made a monitoring and evaluation visit to the project in Mexico between 9th December 2005 and 15th January 2006. The visit involved the monitoring of the programmes funded by Mexico Child Link and the continuing development of the project.

AIMS.

Our main aim is to improve the quality of life of abandoned children and young people with learning disabilities in Mexico. We work in partnership with a Mexican organisation called Fundación Trébol de Puebla A.C., which we helped to develop and now partially fund and advise.

FUNDACION TREBOL – Our partner organization in Mexico

The Mexico Child Link Trust has a long-term partnership with Fundación Trébol, supporting its work and programmes in the state of Puebla, Mexico. This includes a residential project in Atlixco, Puebla for abandoned children with learning disabilities. Two houses constructed on a 2.5-acre site during 1995 are home to 12 children and young people aged from 6-24. Work continues to develop a small farm based on a system of sustainable agriculture. A carpentry workshop has provided training for over 50 children and young people.

Management of funding

Assets in Mexico are owned by *Fundación Trébol de Puebla A.C.*, a tax-deductible Mexican charitable organisation. Their accounts are published monthly for inspection and are subject to an annual audit from an independent auditor, in accordance with Mexican law. Mexico Child Link has put many systems in place for internal control and accountability such as a fortnightly spreadsheet listing income and expenditure of the two houses (food, medicine, clothing etc.) There are also systems in place to safeguard the income of the young people, some of whom have a poor understanding of money management.

Introduction

Mexico Child Link has always had a very close working relationship with its partner organization, Fundación Trébol de Puebla AC. The project in Mexico is run by a staff team which is locally recruited and trained. Mexico Child Link gives help and advice with regard to issues such as staff training and risk management. Apart from being the major funder of the project, Mexico Child Link is also responsible for external monitoring and evaluation. However, it has always been our aim to encourage our project partners to be more independent, and there are encouraging signs that they are gaining more recognition in Puebla. Within the past year, Fundación Trébol has forged links with local retailers such as Walmart and Superama who now make a weekly donation of goods which have damaged or defective packaging. In March 2005 our partners received news that CEMEX, the largest cement company in Mexico was to fund both a refurbishment programme and the construction of a wall around the project site. The CINIA programme outlined below has also put our project partners more directly in touch with local business and it is hoped that this will bear fruit in the future through financial support or donations in kind. The salaries earned by the young people through CINIA also help with the overheads of the project.

Our project is currently comprised of two specialist adobe houses, set in 2.5 acres of agricultural land, for children and young people with learning disability. This provides a setting where they can learn the skills they need to become more independent. The land is used to run a small farm with 50 sheep and goats, and has a vegetable garden and other crops. Our programmes also include support for young people with learning disability in employment with CINIA and other employers in the area. The project also provides a range of skills training such as carpentry, cooking and sewing. There is an advice and information centre on the theme of learning disability linked to the office in Puebla which provides free advice to parents, carers and professionals with regard to learning disability.

We are a small organization with no single major donor, and we depend to a large extent on the generosity of the many individuals who support our work. In spite of this, we were able to send funding of almost £38,000 to our project partners, including a £4,000 grant for house repairs from Ulster Garden Villages. In order to keep costs under control, only one evaluation visit to Mexico took place this year in December - January. Fortunately, low cost telephone connections via broadband now make it easier than ever to keep in touch with the project in Mexico. Nonetheless, project evaluation visits are still necessary in order to see first hand how the children and young people are progressing, and to ensure that the work programmes are being properly carried out. Recommendations were given to Ana Sandoval the Project Director covering areas such as: risk management, project maintenance, communication, management of the farm, fundraising and general administration. The report also made specific recommendations with regard to programmes being carried out with some of the children and young people.

CINIA

A recent positive development in Mexico has been the training and employment opportunities provided by the organization *Centro de Capacitación, Industria y Artesanía* (Training Centre for Industry and Craftwork) which has been established in Puebla. It is usually known by its acronym of CINIA. There are more than two million people in Mexico with a physical handicap or a learning disability. According to official figures, 700,000 of them have no employment. CINIA works exclusively with young people who have a learning disability and provides them with an initial four months of paid training. The aim is to sign contracts with local employers and find permanent jobs for the young people. The organization has close links with Grupo Guriak, an organization established in the Basque country which has similar aims and objectives. Rodolfo, Paty, Marisol and Alma now have permanent employment there. They get health care and all statutory workplace benefits through their employment. Rodolfo in particular is doing very well and has been selected as a team leader. He recently received a salary increase.

Employees of CINIA gain access to healthcare and other state benefits. In Mexico, it is unusual for people with learning disability to have an employer who respects labour law in this way. This is a tremendous opportunity for the young people as they are able to earn their own wages and integrate into the workforce. This is in accordance with our policy of normalization for people with learning disability.

They have the opportunity to earn a living and very much appreciate the chance to socialize with people of similar age and interests. Ana Sandoval, Fundación Trébol Project Director has reported that Paty and Marisol have made significant progress, with regard to their self-confidence and interpersonal relations. Marisol in particular has made great progress in relation to her anxiety about living and socializing outside the project.

The main challenges presented by this programme include difficulties with public transport as some of the drivers are not very considerate to the young people with learning disability. The CINIA factory is about twenty five miles from Tenex-tepec where the young people live. There has also been some difficulty in convincing employers that they deserve a chance in the workplace. It is a long working day; the young people waking at 5.30am to catch a public transport Combi at 6.30am into Atlixco where they can take a bus to the CINIA factory near Puebla. The working day ends at 5.30pm and they are back home by 7.00pm. Jonathan Getty visited the CINIA factory on 4th January as part of the Mexico Child Link evaluation visit and their management made a reciprocal visit to Fundación Trébol on 10th January. (Pictured,



AnaLuisa Sandoval, Director of Fundación Trébol and Fernando Diez, Director of CINIA)

FUNDRAISING

Like many small charities, we find it difficult to raise funds, but fortunately we have been able to maintain our core programmes to date. Despite this, Mexico Child Link has had another successful fundraising year with over £46,000 raised. The fundraising deficit for our programmes in Mexico was reduced to £4,000 compared to £14,000 in the previous financial year.

Ulster Garden Villages

Mexico Child Link received a £4,000 grant from Ulster Garden Villages which was used to carry out essential repairs on the two houses where the children and young people live. The main work carried out involved roof repairs and new floors.

Common Grounds Café, Belfast

Mexico Child Link has been taken on as a designated charity by Common Grounds, a non profit café, based in University Avenue, Belfast. It selects and supports local charities which focus on development work. The support will include profit from the sale of a CD by Caroline Orr. A concert which she organized in February 2006 raised over £1400. Caroline has recorded an album called Common Thread and the proceeds are being donated to charities working in the developing world.

CEMEX

Our partner organization in Mexico, Fundación Trébol, received a grant from CEMEX, a Mexican Multinational Cement Company. The grant is significant and is worth over twelve thousand pounds. It was used to build a wall around the project site and for improvements to the bathrooms and the sewage system. The wall will be very welcome given some of the security problems there have been in recent years. The company used its own employees to carry out the construction work, which started on April 1st. There was a promotional event with 80 guests from the company and Esteban Ortega (pictured) laid the first stone. The work has now been successfully completed.



Quiera

The project received a small grant from Quiera, the charity of the Mexican Bankers Association, to organize a summer programme for the children. Quiera also awards monthly educational grants to Lucero, Emmanuel and Oscar.

Marion Gibson Trust

Mexico Child Link received a donation of £3,146 from the Marion Gibson Trust. This trust fund had been a long term supporter of our work and the donation was received when the trust was wound up after the death of Jim Gibson in 2005.

Cafamerica

Mexico Child link can receive tax deductible donations from the US through CAFAmerica. In March they increased the size of the minimum donation which they will process to US\$500. This makes the service less useful to the individual small donor. US donors can still support MCL through the UK CAF site although these donations are not tax deductible.

Wallmart/Superama

Our partner organization Fundación Trébol is receiving “merma” – goods with defective packaging from these two supermarket chains. The quantity of goods is substantial and includes items such as cooking oil, toilet rolls, beans, yoghurt and general provisions.

Staff Changes and Programme Development

Ana Luisa Sandóval, who has been with Fundación Trébol for six years, took over from Angélica López as project director in May 2005. Ana is a psychology graduate from the *Universidad Autónoma de Puebla*. We wish Angelica all the best for the future. As part of the reorganization, Jovita Saldaña the independence training worker assumed more responsibility for the day to day running of the residential project in Tenextepec. Long term employee, Maribel Gutierrez, the office administrator, also left to look after her new baby.

Current programmes.

Mexico child link supports a range of programmes involved with the education and training of children and young people with learning disability.

These include horticultural skills training, carpentry, and sewing. These programmes are all still active although there are fewer participants due to several of the young people finding external employment through CINIA. The advice and information centre on learning disability is still open and has an extensive range of magazines, videos and other reference material.

Update on the progress of the younger children.

The two most recent arrivals, eight year old Mario (pictured on front cover) and his brother Israel (6) are both attending a primary school in the nearby village of La Trinidad. Isra has been making good progress, especially with his speech and language but Mario is finding things more difficult and we are considering moving him to the local special needs school in Atlixco where he may be happier. Lucero (14) has her 15th birthday, *Quinceaños* in September which is always cause for a big *fiesta* in Mexico. Oscar (14) has been settled and happy recently although his level of disability means that he cannot benefit as much from the independence training and preparation for the world of work as much as some of the others. It is inevitable that he will need a high degree of care and attention for the rest of his life. Juan Gabriel (14) has been very unsettled and his condition has deteriorated to some extent. Both of these children would benefit from a project which specifically caters for people with special needs such as theirs, but we have been unable to find anywhere locally. For the moment the project is attending to their needs as best it can and their situation will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Civil Engineer Project Volunteer



A Belgian Civil Engineer, Mr Khaled Faiz, who recently worked in Belfast for Ferguson McIlveen, spent six weeks in Mexico during November-December 2005 helping our project partners prepare a project proposal to fund a small house for two of the young people Esteban Ortega and Argelio Avila. The design of the house was low cost, and took into account sustainable building practice. It was hoped to secure funding from RIBA, the *Royal Institute of British Architects* but the proposal is unable to be funded this year due to an excess of funding commitments by RIBA, and will have to be resubmitted at the end of 2006. As well

as Khaled, the project involved, Laura Ramírez, head of the architecture department in the *Universidad de Las Américas*, Puebla, and three of her students in liaison with Mexico Child Link and Fundación Trébol. Esteban and Argelio, the two young people who are to live in the house were able to express their preferences with regard to its design and location within the project site.

SKYPE

SKYPE was installed in the office computer in Puebla. This programme allows unlimited free phone calls to any other SKYPE user and has enabled Mexico Child Link to maintain more frequent contact with project partners in Mexico and significantly reduce its telephone charges.

Public transport.

A staff member and two of the children were involved in an accident in early April when the Combi Van in which they were traveling was in collision with a truck at the approach to Atlixco. Juan and Oscar emerged relatively unscathed but staff member Fany had severe bruising and whiplash injury. She was off work for several weeks but has now returned.

Risk management

Mexico Child Link translated a risk management template used in one of the local health Trusts. Jonathan Getty presented the material to Fundación Trébol Director, AnaLuisa Sandoval and some of her staff team during the evaluation visit in December 2005. The staff showed a good understanding of the principles involved and it is hoped that this will prove to be a useful tool with regard to decision making within our partner organization. There is a need to formalize risk management with so many of the young people now working outside of the project. Initial thoughts are that the priority areas to work on are use of public transport and risk of abuse and/or exploitation.

Promotion

A talk was carried out in Coalisland Brackville Church of Ireland on 17th November.

A news update was sent out to 500+ supporters in early December which produced some significant donations.

Donations of over \$1000 was received from the US

A presentation on the work of Mexico Child Link was made to *Common Grounds* non profit Café in January and a talk on our work was also given at St. Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt.

Project visits

The project was visited by Emma Hallam in January 2006. She is a British Mexican woman living near Oxford. Emma has family connections in the area where our project is located and she visits Mexico several times every year. She is a member of a Latin American Circle in England and has expressed interest in supporting Mexico Child Link through her contacts.

Mexico Child Link would like to take this opportunity to thank those who fundraised on our behalf, or gave support in kind, as well as the many people who made a donation to support our work.

The City of London Freeman's School

Corranny P.S., Roslea

Stephen McClelland

Edgecombe TRC

Common Grounds Café, Belfast

Christy Stewart

Marion Gibson Memorial Trust

Dorothy Arthur

Makro, Dunmurry

June Getty, May Blair and friends

Maurice Dawson

Khaled Faiz

Roslea Choir

Davis Senior High School, California

Richill Supervalu

St. Vincent de Paul, Roslea

Glycowell

90 Monthly donors who give from £1 to £50

Ulster Garden Villages Ltd.

Paget Trust.

Davis High School

Wallace High School, Lisburn

St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt

Newell Stores Dungannon

The Moore Trust

Elizabeth Pritchett

MKB Russells

Bob and Pearl McClean

Anita McNabb

St Tierney's P.S., Roslea

Fairfield Middle School, Ohio

Noreen Napier

Stream Presbyterian Church, Ards

Ulster Bank Charity Fund

Herne Bay High School

FINANCE

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2005-2006

(12 months to 5th April 2006)

All values are in £ Sterling

INCOME	£
Street Collections	11,007
Donations	4,670
Website donations	528
Give as you Earn	1,364
Banker's Order	10,161
Schools	4,836
Grant Giving Trust	7,896
Gift Aid	2,776
US Donations	985
Bank interest	127
Church groups	200
Fundraising	1,540
Total	46,090

EXPENDITURE	£
Salaries	7,435
Grant to Mexico	37,932
Pension scheme	960
Travel Insurance	65
Printing, postage & stationery	868
Telephone	378
Expenses incurred abroad	2,083
Audit	130
Sundry expenses (petty cash)	213
Depreciation	279
Exchange gain	(34)
Total	50,309

Funds held as of April 5th 2006 12,210

Mexico Child Link accounts are audited by *Dawson & Company*, 1 Conway Court, High St. Newtownards, N. Ireland BT23 4GW.



What is Mexico Child Link?

The Mexico Child Link Trust is a UK registered Charitable Trust, governed by a group of seven trustees with an interest in learning disability.

Mexico Child Link is an independent charitable organisation, not linked with any religious or political group. UK donations are fully tax deductible through the Gift Aid programme and US donors can ensure their donations are fully tax deductible by supporting us through CAF-America.

Mexico Child Link was founded in 1992 by Jonathan Getty & Colette Mc Ginnity, in response to the needs of abandoned & orphan children with learning disability in Puebla State, Mexico.

Mexico Child Link works in partnership with Fundación Trébol de Puebla A.C., an independent Mexican charitable foundation, which we helped to set up and now partially fund and advise. This close relationship allows the project in Puebla to be run efficiently by Mexican staff trained in the field of learning disability.

Mexico Child Link provides a range of services for people with or affected by learning disability. The core project is a home for abandoned & orphan children with learning disabilities, near the town of Atlixco. Many of them are ex street children. The children live on a small farm in 2 specially built adobe houses where they are cared for in a family setting. The farm, based upon sustainable agriculture, provides a degree of self sufficiency for the project and allows the children to learn practical skills. The aim is to help them gain employment as adults.

If you would like to get involved, or support our work, please get in touch. We are particularly interested in getting involved with local schools and making contact with individuals who have fundraising experience.

