

# *The Mexico Child Link Trust*

CHARITY REFERENCE NUMBER XO 354 / 92

## **ANNUAL REPORT 1995**

### **CHAIRPERSON**

Mrs. A. R. Mc Murray, B.A., M.A., (Management Consultant)

### **TREASURER**

Mr. R. P. Yarr, B.Sc., (Financial Adviser)

### **SECRETARY**

Dr. M.G.A. Mc Ginnity, M.B. M.R.C. Psych., (Consultant Psychiatrist in Mental Handicap)

### **TRUSTEES**

Mr. G. F. McElroy, LL.B., (Solicitor)

Dr. T.B. Anderson, B.Sc. Ph.D., F.G.S., (Head of Geology Dept., Queens University Belfast)

Mrs. U. Brennan, S.C.T Cert. D.A.S.E. Sp. Ed., (Teacher)

Mrs. C. Lewis, T. Cert., Dip. Sp. Ed., (Teacher)

Mr. M. Barbour, B.Sc. P.G.C.E., M.Sc., (Educational Psychologist)

Mr. N Mowbray, B.A., P.G.C.E., (Teacher)

Mexico Child Link is a Charitable Trust, recognised as such by the Inland Revenue.

### **AIMS.**

Our main aim is to improve the quality of life of abandoned children with learning disabilities/mental handicap in Mexico. We work in partnership with a Mexican organisation known as Fundación Trébol de Puebla A.C. which we helped to develop and now fund and advise.

### **THE PROJECT**

The Mexico Child Link Trust supports a residential project in Puebla, Mexico for abandoned children with learning disabilities. This project has the support of local government in Mexico as well as a number of Non Governmental Organisations. This year two houses were constructed on the 2.5 acre site which was purchased last year. Building work took place between March and September and the first children moved in on August 31st. The first steps were also taken to set up a small farm based on a system of sustainable agriculture known as Permaculture.

### **PROJECT STAFF**

The following staff were appointed:

**Guadalupe Anaya Walker**, Project Director

**Sonia Cabrera Bautista**, Farm Manager

**Carmen Rivera**, Houseparent

**Cristina Ramos**, Support Worker

**Enriqueta Palestino Aguilar** continues as office administrator.

### **STAFFING**

The Trust is a small organisation and our low level of staffing enables overheads to be kept to a minimum. The Trust Co-ordinator, Jonathan Getty is a full time salaried member of staff. Colette Mc Ginnity received a salary in November and December. 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.

## OFFICE AND MAILING ADDRESS

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## CONTACT ADDRESS IN MEXICO

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The work of the trust can be divided into two main categories; fundraising and development.

## REPORT OF WORK IN IRELAND

### FUNDRAISING

1995 has been another successful year, with £37,806 raised. This funding was raised through street collections, donations, specific fundraising events and monthly contributions through bankers order, the *Give as you Earn* scheme and covenants. Some support was also received from Grant Giving Trusts.

We are indebted to the following organisations and individuals who supported us generously throughout the year by giving their time or financial support.

June Getty  
Jimmy Lynch  
Jacqui Reynolds  
Eamon O' Gorman  
Ray Keenan  
Mt. Lourdes Convent Grammar  
The Eric Stonehouse Trust  
I.T.S. Limited  
The Beeches, Aghalee  
Dean Shearer  
May Blair  
St. Ronan's Primary School  
Wallace High School  
Roslea Choir  
S & F Goodman Trust  
Dungannon Royal School  
Dungannon Baptist Church  
Ulster Bank Limited  
The organisers and contributors  
to an art exhibition in Rosses Court  
J.W. Russell & Co.

Alan Bell  
Ulster Garden Villages Limited  
Patsy Mc Phillips  
Coranny Primary School  
Longstone Special School  
Philip Allen  
St. Eugene's Secondary School, Roslea  
St. Michael's College Enniskillen  
Loreto Convent Primary School, Omagh  
Hilary & Alf Mc Creary  
Brookfield Special School  
St. Mary's Primary School, Maguiresbridge  
Michael Hewitt  
Newmills Presbyterian Church  
Una Brennan  
Douglas Tyler  
Muckamore Abbey Hospital  
Duke of York Bar  
Tanya Mc Ginnity  
S.M. Dawson & Co.  
Mrs. A Mc Ginnity

In addition the Trust would like to thank:

22 donors who support us through the *Give as You Earn Scheme*.

3 supporters who covenant to the Trust.

17 donors who support the trust monthly through Bankers Order.

The many people who supported us through individual donations which varied from £5 to £300.

## **DEVELOPMENT WORK AT HOME**

Talks and slide shows were given in schools and other organisations throughout Northern Ireland. This helped to raise awareness about Mexico and the issue of learning disabilities in developing countries. Visits were made to several organisations in order to research staff training and procedures. Information was obtained regarding N.V.Q. Child Care Training. Research was also undertaken into the appropriate use of volunteers within the project. Contact was established and reference material obtained from childcare organisations, concerning the protection of children from abuse. Discussions took place with a local expert in Permaculture.

## **PUBLICITY AND PRESS COVERAGE**

The numerous street collections carried out were used as a platform to explain the work of the Trust to the general public. Press releases were sent to the local press before and after collections. Radio interviews with *BBC Radio Ulster* took place during the year. A Newsletter was sent to over 500 supporters in June and December.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE TRUST**

Ian Rendle resigned from the trust for personal reasons. Nigel Mowbray, a Special Education teacher, became a trustee.

## **REPORT OF WORK IN MEXICO**

Two representatives of the Trust were working in Mexico from January 27th to October 17th 1995.

## **STAFF APPOINTMENTS AND TRAINING**

The process of staff selection was carried out in conjunction with members of the Management Committee of our partner organisation Fundación Trébol. Residential child care organisations were visited in order to investigate staffing issues which helped in the decision making process regarding staff structures and pay. Detailed job descriptions, job specifications as well as terms and conditions were drawn up for all posts. Staff are well paid in local terms and are also entitled to medical care. The selection procedure involved interview by a panel of five, a detailed evaluation system, thorough verification of references as well as psychometric tests. This proved a very useful learning experience for the members of Fundación Trébol who participated. Staff received four days induction training in preparation for their work with children with learning disabilities. Fundación Trébol has an ongoing commitment to staff training and supervision. Two members of staff attended an in-service training course lasting three months which was organized by the D.I.F. ( the government agency with responsibility for children. ) All staff attend weekly meetings with the Director at which child care issues are discussed. The work of the Director is supervised by the President of Fundación Trébol. The Arc Community in Mexico City has agreed to undertake an annual external evaluation of the project. The Office Administrator and members of the committee visit the project on a monthly basis.

In June, Members of Fundación Trébol attended the Second International Conference on Disability, held in Mexico City.

## **BUILDING**

After a consultation period with project architect Jesús Salgado, building work began during March.

Given the financial crisis in Mexico, it was decided to construct two houses as quickly as possible in order to avoid an increase in the cost of building materials and higher labour costs. The first house was completed in August and the second in September.

The houses are built mainly from adobe. (compacted earth bricks) Each one is approximately 1600 square feet and is roofed with fired clay tiles. The houses have a sense of space and are cool and comfortable to live in. Each dwelling has four bedrooms, 3 for children and 1 for a staff member. The houses also have a bathroom with 2 toilets and two showers. The remaining rooms are a kitchen-dining area, living room, washroom, larder and cold store.

Each house is equipped with a solar panel which produces most of the hot water needed

during the day.

Sewage water is treated by passing it through a septic tank, 2 toxin-removing tanks of water lilies and finally, gravel filtration beds. Fruit trees planted above the filtration channels absorb most of the water. The excess drains off to a small pond.

## **CHILDREN**

The first 5 children, all aged 12-13, moved in during August/September 1995. They attend a local special school and have a secure stable home for the first time in their lives. Esteban and Juan Pablo, had spent most of their lives in a local Borstal, even though they were not young offenders. Another boy, José Luis used to spend his time singing for money on the buses which circle the ring road of Puebla City. Josefa was found begging on the streets in Puebla and Pati had been abandoned in an orphanage as a baby.

All the children have been registered and obtained birth certificates, as without them, they would have few legal rights. Local government has been lobbied in order to provide better facilities and services for children with learning disabilities.

## **FARM**

Sonia Cabrera, a qualified agronomist, was appointed farm manager in July.

It has been decided to set up the farm on the basis of a system of Permaculture. This is a form of sustainable agriculture which is highly productive, yet avoids the use of pesticides and chemicals.

The farm provides the children with an interesting and healthy environment in which to live and will also be a training centre where they can learn useful skills.

Basic tools were purchased and initial work started in June. The site has been badly neglected for several years and will require a lot of work to improve the soil, which has become over saturated with salts, thus making it too alkaline. The site was fenced in to prevent neighbours' livestock using it for grazing.

An acre of beans was sown to be ploughed into the soil in order to add organic material and improve the nitrogen content.

Fruit trees have been planted and a vegetable garden prepared and sown. A wooden hen house and run have been constructed. An area of Alfalfa (lucerne) has been sown, which will provide a food source for the chickens and rabbits.

A system of composting and recycling has been set up. The compost is added to the vegetable garden in order to improve the soil structure, and push the pH towards neutral.

Trees and shrubs from a Government tree nursery were planted around the border of the site.

Several local farmers gave help and advice.

## **FUNDRAISING IN MEXICO**

During 1995 our partner organisation Fundación Trébol received its first grant aid from within Mexico.

In January, *The British Embassy* in Mexico City provided a grant to purchase the kitchen equipment and dining room furniture for the first house.

In July, *The Hasbro Children's Trust* in New York agreed to pay the salary of the project director for one year.

**SEDESOL** the Government Department for social development awarded a large grant in December to purchase a pick-up truck, as well as solar panels and furniture for the second house.

An aid programme called **FAPRODE** supported by the Mexican Government allows Fundación Trébol to make an extra 10% on all funds received from within Mexico and abroad.

**Desarrollo Integral Familiar**, the Government Department responsible for childcare has agreed

to pay for some medicines and hospital care.

**Jesús Salgado**, the project architect invested a considerable amount of his own resources in improving the specification of the houses which were built.

A number of individual donations were received in money and in kind.

Funding applications were also made to, Ba'asolay, American Foundations, environmental organisations, and other Embassies in Mexico City.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Two volunteers from Ireland, Marie Mc Carron from Donegal, and Cloudagh Barry from Athlone, worked on the farm from October to December.

## **PROJECT PARTNERS**

Several changes took place in the management committee of our partner organisation Fundación Trébol. The President of the Management Committee, Maria Elena Fernández, left for personal reasons and Erika Godínez was elected to the post. Erika is the principal of a school in Puebla for children with Down's Syndrome and has been involved with the project since its initiation. The project architect, Jesús Salgado joined the committee during the summer.

## **PUBLICITY**

Prior to the admission of the children, the project director met with neighbours, local community leaders and parents of children in the local primary school to explain the nature of the project. The work of Fundación Trébol received publicity throughout the year. An article was published in CONFE magazine. The official inauguration on October 7th received considerable media attention with coverage by Puebla newspapers, television and the local radio station.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF ORGANISATIONS IN MEXICO**

Fundación Trébol is a member of CONFE, the national organisation that works on behalf of people with learning disabilities. It is also a member of GLARP, a Latin American organisation which works to rehabilitate disabled people. Fundación Trébol is a founder member of FOPEC which incorporates twenty five Non Governmental Organisations from Puebla who work together. The Director of the project also attends monthly meetings of Directors of residential units organised by the D.I.F. Excellent working relationships have been established with the D.I.F. and with many other child care organisations in Puebla.

## **KEY OBJECTIVES FOR 1996**

1996 will be a year of consolidation in Mexico and no major capital costs are contemplated.

The objectives for the year will be stated within four main categories;

Children, Farm, Staffing and Fundraising.

### **1. Children**

- (a) 12 abandoned children with learning disabilities will have been given a new home by the end of March 1996.
- (b) Individual programmes will be established for each child according to his/her level of development. These programmes will be re evaluated regularly .
- (c) Internal and external systems of evaluation will be established and monitored for effectiveness.
- (d) The feasibility of a befriender scheme for each child will be examined.
- (e) A programme of sex education and relationship training will be introduced within the project.
- (f) Joint programmes and activities with the local special school in Atlixco will be initiated.

### **2. Farm**

- (a) The effectiveness of the farm manager will be assessed in terms of productivity, training and progress.
- (b) The farm will achieve self sufficiency in vegetables, eggs and meat.
- (c) Several ponds and storage reservoirs will be constructed.
- (d) The viability of beekeeping, cheese-making and small scale fish farming will be

investigated and projects will be implemented if appropriate.

- (e) An effective system of record keeping will be established.
- (f) Links will be established with other organisations working in the field of sustainable agriculture.
- (g) Mexican Government support will be sought for productive projects.
- (h) A greenhouse will be constructed.

### **3. Staff**

- (a) Ongoing staff training will be carried out.
- (b) A staff appraisal system will be established through supervision and formal staff evaluation.
- (c) A staff group for the second house will be recruited by the end of February and integrated with the existing team.
- (d) An effective system of record keeping will be established.
- (e) A policy on the use of volunteers will be established.

### **4. Fundraising**

#### **(i) (Mexico)**

- (a) The administrator and director of Fundación Trébol will be given training in general fundraising strategies and how to prepare a project proposal.
- (b) Fundación Trébol will be given advice on database management and producing a newsletter, with a view to raising funds.
- (c) Funding will be sought from both British and American Trusts which work in the areas of Learning Disability and sustainable agriculture.

#### **(ii) (Ireland)**

- (a) The Trust will attempt to recruit a support group of 200 donors who donate £10 monthly through bankers order or the *Give as you Earn* scheme.
- (b) Mexico Child Link will establish a capital fund with funds raised, with a view to securing the long term income of the trust.
- (c) The database of donors and supporters will be expanded from 500 to 750.
- (d) A fundraising committee will be set up in N. Ireland.

### **CONCLUSION**

1995 exceeded our expectations in terms of the rapid establishment of a residential centre for children with learning disabilities. Capital expenditure was high as two houses were constructed. Work in 1996 will focus on the development of programmes, procedures and evaluation of the project and the development of the farm. If the project is functioning effectively, further building and expansion may be considered in 1997.

## FINANCE

### INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 1995

#### **INCOME**

Donations	£11,174
Fundraising	£10,684
Give as you Earn	£ 1,913
Bank Interest received	£ 900
Street collections	£10,160
Bankers Order	£ 1,675
Covenant	<u>£ 760</u>
	<u>£37,806</u>

#### **EXPENDITURE**

Grant aid to Fundación Trébol	£48,236
Postage, printing, stationery	£ 820
Telephone & Fax	£ 229
Travel Expenses	£ 2,540
Expenses incurred abroad	£ 950
Living Allowance	£ 2,692
Bank Fees	£ 2
Accountant Fees	£ 59
Fundraising Expenses	£ 1,228
Salaries	£ 5,567
Depreciation Office equipment	£ 354
General Expenses	<u>£ 939</u>
	<u>£63,616</u>

Funds held as of December 31st 1995 £16,679

Jonathan Getty

Co-ordinator

Anne Mc Murray

Chairperson