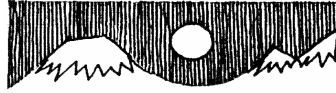


Mexico Child Link Trust



The Mexico Child Link Trust

CHARITY REFERENCE NUMBER XR18919

ANNUAL REPORT 2000

OFFICE BEARERS AND TRUSTEES

Chairperson

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

Treasurer

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

Secretary

Dr. M.G.A. Mc Ginnity, M.B., F.R.C. Psych., (Consultant Psychiatrist in Learning Disability)

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Mr. G. F. Mc Elroy, Ll.B., (Solicitor)

Dr. T.B. Anderson, B.Sc., Ph.D., F.G.S., (Senior lecturer, Queen's University Belfast)

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

At the A.G.M., Mrs. Carmel Lewis resigned as Chairperson of the Trust, after serving on the committee of Trustees since the foundation of the Mexico Child Link in 1992. The Trust is very grateful for the commitment and loyalty of Mrs. Lewis and extends its best wishes to her.

EMPLOYEES

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

Colette Mc Ginnity, B.A., C.Q.S.W., Dip. T.E.F.L., Project worker

STAFFING

The Trust is a small organisation and our low level of staffing enables overheads to be kept to a minimum. Jonathan Getty and Colette Mc Ginnity both receive a basic salary. 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.

AIMS.

Our main aim is to improve the quality of life of abandoned children with learning disabilities 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.

WORK IN MEXICO

The Mexico Child Link Trust supports the work of Fundación Trébol in the state of Puebla, Mexico. This includes a residential project in Puebla, Mexico for abandoned children with learning disabilities. Two houses constructed on a 2.5 acre site during 1995 are home to 12 children. Work continues to develop a small farm based on a system of sustainable agriculture. Fundación Trébol works closely with a number of large institutions and with the local special school, to improve the quality of care and training of abandoned children with learning disabilities. The work of Fundación Trébol has the support of state and municipal government in Mexico, as well as a number of Non Governmental Organisations.

FUNDACION TREBOL

Fundación Trébol is governed by a management committee of 6 professional people. The committee supervises the running of all aspects of the organisation and works in close collaboration with the Co-ordinator of Mexico Child Link.

The following staff comprised the team of twelve people in 2000:

Enriqueta Palestino Aguilar	Co-ordinator & Special education worker in institutions
Angélica López Romero	Project Director
Clara Martínez Hernández	Houseparent House 2
Karina Durana Roldán	Houseparent House 1
Maribel Rodríguez Gutiérrez	Support Houseparent
Teresa Andón Fuentes	Helper House 2
Manuela Pelcastre Zamora	Helper House 1
Jovita León Saldaña	Independence training worker
Lorenzo Cuateco Segundo	Farm Manager
Salvador Méndez Espíritu	Farm Helper
Norma Méndez Puente	Speech Therapist
Iliana Hernández Niño	Co-ordinator of "Programme to Support the Street Child."

OFFICE AND MAILING ADDRESS

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FUNDRAISING

2000 was a successful fundraising year with almost £34,529 raised. (Including £7,861 from the National Lottery Charities Board, to complete the grant which started in July 1997.) The remaining funding was raised through street collections, donations, school fundraising, and monthly contributions through bankers order, the Give as you Earn scheme and covenants. Some support was also received from Grant Giving Trusts.

Fundraising within Mexico

Quiera awarded Fundación Trébol funding for training scholarships, a summer course for the children, a one year diploma in leadership undertaken by the Director and other staff courses. The residential project also received donations in kind, including 48 litres of milk a week from a local dairy farm, which is used for making cheese. The same farm supplies 50 tons of manure annually, which has greatly improved the quality of the soil. The D.I.F. continued to donate long life milk, high nutrition biscuits and medicines. There were also donations of second hand clothes in good condition for the children.

It is recognised that Fundación Trébol needs to raise more of its own funds. Fundraising will form part of the responsibilities of the General Director.

New legislation covering charitable organisations in Mexico came into force during 2000. It is now obligatory for a Mexican charitable organisation to have an annual independent audit carried out. The audit of Fundación Trébol was finished in October and a number of procedural recommendations were made, but otherwise all was on order. It is to be noted that this is an extra expense for Fundación Trébol, over and above the expense of the monthly accounts.

NATIONAL LOTTERY CHARITIES BOARD PROGRAMME IN MEXICO

In July 1997 the Mexico Child Link Trust began a three-year programme funded by the National Lottery Charities Board. (N.L.C.B.) The main aim of the programme was to consolidate existing work and develop joint programmes with local institutions, such as children's homes in the city of Puebla and a special needs school in Atlixco. Two Representatives of the Trust spent over 4 months in Mexico during 2000, working closely with Fundación Trébol, to implement the N.L.C.B. programme. The N.C.L.B financial support for the programme ended in July and the end of grant report was submitted in October. The Board congratulated Mexico Child Link and Fundación Trébol for the success of the programme, which covered the following 4 distinct areas of work:

- Residential project for twelve abandoned children with learning disability. A speech therapist works on an individual basis with all the children in the residential project and also advises residential staff.
- A series of productive projects based upon sustainable agriculture, which also provides an opportunity for educational and training activities for the children.
- An agricultural training programme operated jointly with the local special needs school.
- A special education worker advises staff and works directly with children with learning disabilities in a number of large institutions in Puebla.

NATIONAL LOTTERY CHARITIES BOARD EXTENSION OF PROGRAMME

In late August 2000, the National Lottery Charities Board awarded Mexico Child Link a grant of £97,500 to run over a period of two years, to continue the services listed above and to develop the following services:

- The establishment of a free Advice and Information Centre on Learning Disability.
- The development of a carpentry workshop and other practical training for employment.
- A programme to support young adults with learning disability with a particular emphasis on accommodation and independent living.

The extension of the programme includes the appointment of the following new posts:

- General Director
- Carpentry skills trainer
- Senior Special Education worker
- Advice and Information centre worker
- Farm Advisor

This will bring the total staff team in Fundación Trébol to a total of sixteen. The start date for the new programme is 28th February 2001. Mexico Child Link and Fundación Trébol consider this continuation of N.L.C.B. funding to be a vote of confidence in their work in Mexico.

Preparation for Extension of the N.C.L.B. Programme

An Advice and Information Centre will be run by Fundación Trébol with assistance from CONFE Puebla. This is the regional branch of a nation-wide organisation which works on behalf of people with learning disability. Throughout the year, Mexico Child Link and Fundación Trébol had numerous meetings with CONFE regarding the establishment of the Centre. This joint venture is a very encouraging development, which will enable Fundación Trébol to take advantage of the resources of CONFE, which include considerable expertise in the area of learning disability in the Puebla branch, and access to the national information centre in Mexico City.

Mexico Child Link had lengthy discussions with Fundación Trébol regarding the role and responsibilities of the General Director. Detailed plans were also made with regard to the recruitment and selection policy for General Director. A rigorous selection procedure was initiated in December. The selection panel consisted of Erika Godínez, President and Estela García, Secretary, Fundación Trébol, Jonathan Getty, Co-ordinator and Colette Mc Ginnity, Project Worker, Mexico Child Link.

RESIDENTIAL PROJECT

In general the project is functioning very well. The children have generally been in good health and need less medical attention than during their first years at the project. The majority of the children are now adolescents and this has influenced the focus of the work, and has had practical implications for the running of the project. Staff have also had to adapt to a different way of relating to the young people. The emphasis continues to be on preparation for a more independent life, and the young people have assumed much responsibility for their own learning, and seem to acquire great confidence from being able to do things for themselves.

A qualified speech therapist attends the residential project one day a week. She works with all the children on an individual basis. There has been a notable improvement in the communication skills of a number of the children. This has been particularly helpful for the two boys who are now integrated in mainstream education. The speech therapist has a weekly meeting with the houseparents to discuss progress and give advice on the practical implementation of individual programmes. She has also been involved in reinforcing some of the work carried out in individual

care programmes. She co-ordinated visits made during school holidays to maximise language acquisition.

Relations with the special school in Atlixco were good and school staff attended a number of events at the residential project, including Alma's 15th birthday party. Two of the children were able to leave special education to attend state secondary and primary schools in a local village. After a period of adaptation, both boys have settled in and now have the opportunity to socialise with local children who do not have a learning disability. They both require considerable staff support with homework, which has put extra demands on the residential staff. Very close liaison has been required to facilitate the integration of both boys in mainstream education. Staff meet with the primary class teacher on a daily basis and the Director of the project meets with him weekly. *Quiera* (the Mexican Banker's Association) awarded two new training scholarships to two of the young people, which brings the number of scholarships to a total of four. Rodolfo used some of the money to buy his uniform, schoolbooks and materials.

The D.I.F. (Mexican Social Services) has adopted a very proactive policy in relation to the reintegration of abandoned children with their families (when they have information about them). As part of this policy, two of the children had contact with family members. In the case of Oscar, he did not recognise his mother (who has a learning disability and mental illness) nor his brother. Alma had a disinterested response to visits from her uncle. Fundación Trébol has co-operated with the D.I.F. in respecting the rights of the children to have family contact. The foundation has however had to negotiate with the D.I.F., in relation to how the purpose of the visits was managed with families, and also to protect the interests of the children. Our project partners have serious reservations about the wisdom of this policy of integration, given that the majority of the children who live at the residential project, were formally subject to abuse by family members. The D.I.F. has neither the resources nor expertise to assess the risks involved, nor to supervise the reintegration of vulnerable children with family.

The children very enthusiastically helped to repaint the inside of their houses during the summer holidays. The roof of one of the houses was repaired after damage caused by an earthquake in 1999.

There were a number of staff changes throughout the year. Fortunately this did not appear to have adverse consequences for the children. A number of former staff keep in contact with the children and visit regularly. Over 60 people attended Alma's 15th birthday party in December.

Increased Independence & Employment

The guiding principle of the residential project is to prepare the children and young people for the most independent life possible, taking into account their individual level of disability. Children are prepared for more independence in all aspects of daily life.

Programmes which respond to individual needs are designed using the *Planning for Life* system which Mexico Child Link translated, adapted and evaluates. Much of this work focuses on the acquisition of skills which promote independence. The children actively participate in the process and the young people now readily identify what they need to learn, to become more independent. Four of the young people have learned to use local public transport to go to school, do shopping and go out for the day to Atlixco, which is 10 kilometres from the project. Five of the young people now prepare their own breakfast, packed lunch and supper. Two of the young people were in full-time employment, in a clothing factory and local farm. The Independence Training Worker visited their places of employment on a regular basis to liaise with employers and help to resolve any difficulties. They both did their own shopping at the local market and shops, under the supervision of the Independence Training Worker. One young person left school and was in full-time training at the project, with a view to finding employment as a domestic help.

A number of the young people had expressed the desire to learn to make their own clothes. A Singer sewing machine was purchased which also provides another training option for the young people. There are a number of local clothing factories which could provide employment opportunities. Two young people attended a sewing skills class twice weekly.

Weekly recorded children's meetings in each house give children a structured opportunity to express their opinions. The children suggest the agenda and participate in finding solutions to the issues raised. On occasions the minutes were taken by two of the young people who can write. Topics raised by the children ranged from complaints about the behaviour of other children and

staff, suggestions about how to spend days out, to practical preparations and allocation of tasks and responsibilities in case of volcanic eruption.

The Independence Training Worker has worked closely with the young people in the areas of employment skills, use of money and public transport, budgeting, shopping and preparation of meals.

With the exception of the two youngest children, all the children and young people practise the skills needed for shopping, in a small wooden "shop" built for the purpose, on the project site. The Independence Training Worker supervises twice weekly role play sessions to improve social skills and increase confidence in asking for articles, prices and so on.

Independent living options were investigated for the oldest young person who was 18 years old in March. The process caused considerable anxiety to Esteban and was suspended, until it was considered that he felt confident enough to explore options at a more reasonable pace. Esteban has many support needs, and it was decided that he should remain living in the residential project until a suitable option was found nearby, and one which he was convinced about. In the latter part of the year, he did initiate some further discussion about the issue.

Carpentry Workshop.

Once a week, seven of the children and young people attended a carpentry workshop, which is situated about 10 minutes walk from the project. The training was supervised by a volunteer carpenter as well as project staff. This has been a very positive experience for the children as they have learned new skills and gained confidence. They have also had an opportunity to acquire work-skills in an area distinct from agriculture. During the 1990s the Atlixco area developed as a major producer of Mexican rustic pine furniture, which means that the carpentry workshop will give the young people very specific employment skills. In August 1999, SEDESOL (Mexican government department of Social Development) awarded Fundación Trébol a grant of £2,407 for tools and materials for the workshop. The children are very enthusiastic about the carpentry workshop. Unfortunately the workshop was sometimes cancelled due to the carpenter's other work commitments. The National Lottery Charities Board extension programme includes funding for a full-time carpenter, which will formalise the workshop and make it accessible to more young people (including pupils from the special school.)

HORTICULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

In 1999, Fundación Trébol set up a training and educational programme to teach agricultural skills in the special school in the town of Atlixco, about 7 miles from the farm. The programme takes place two days a week, and was supervised by the Farm Manager and the Independence Training Worker. 8 children participated and training was given on the recognition and use of tools, understanding and following instructions, co-operating in a small group situation, seed and plant recognition and distinguishing useful plants from weeds. The Director and staff of the school have been very co-operative and encourage the children to participate. The programme has the recognition and approval of the parents of the children who participate, and of the education authorities, (Secretaría de Educación Pública) with whom Fundación Trébol signed a formal contract for the programme. During the year, participation was affected by non-school attendance and illness. School numbers have also dropped quite dramatically. More work needs to be carried out to educate the parents who are unwilling to give permission for their children to participate, because of their learning disability. Towards the end of the year, inadequate communication between the two supervisors and lack of supervision by the Project Director adversely affected the programme. This was addressed and the necessary changes made to staffing.

TRAINING PROGRAMME IN INSTITUTIONS

In 1994 an investigation carried out by Fundación Trébol (and supervised and funded by Mexico Child Link) in 22 residential institutions, which cared for children with learning disability, showed that there were a large number of abandoned children with learning disabilities living in the participating institutions. A N.L.C.B. funded programme in the institutions has been in operation for three years, with the aim of improving the quality of care of these children. The programme is carried out by a part-time Special Education Worker who during 2000, worked in 5 institutions in and around the city of Puebla, and maintained the offer of help to 15 more organisations which didn't have any children with learning disability during this year. Since this programme has started

most of the institutions have stopped receiving children with learning disability. The bulk of the work now takes place in the Casa de la Familia Poblana, a reception and referral centre operated by Desarrollo Integral Familiar (D.I.F.) the Mexican equivalent of Social Services. The work has three main areas of focus: (i) regular meetings with the staff to identify training needs in relation to working with children with learning disability, and the development and implementation of staff training programmes to respond to these needs. (ii) assessment of individual children through close liaison with staff and the use of psychometric tests. (iii) work with individual children. At the request of the new director of the Casa de la Familia Poblana, in October and November the Special Education Worker gave a course which included the following issues: general information about learning disability, levels and characteristics of learning disability, characteristics of abandoned children and the effects of institutionalisation, and exercises to develop observation abilities when working with children. A special needs database is maintained with details of the children with learning disability who live in the institutions. This is used to assess the suitability of children for transfer to the residential project or to other organisations, and to make recommendations re. training/educational needs and medical needs. It is important to note that the data base had to be constantly updated in the last months of the year. Many of the children with learning disability had been reintegrated with their families as part of the D.I.F.'s new policy of integration. It is thought likely that many of these children will return to the care of the D.I.F. at some stage in the future, because of the reasons outlined above regarding the inability of the D.I.F. to adequately assess and supervise families of children with learning disability.

RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTAL & NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

In general terms Fundación Trébol maintains excellent relations with state and municipal government and non governmental organisations. Fundación Trébol has negotiated terms with the D.I.F. (Mexican Social Services) in relation to family visits, visits from D.I.F. personnel to the residential project and other issues. It is recognised that this in itself is an achievement, given that the D.I.F. usually adopts a very arrogant attitude in its relations with N.G.O.s. Fundación Trébol has established a reputation at state and national level for innovative and good practice in working with children with learning disability. The proposed Advice and Information Centre with CONFE Puebla is an indication of the commitment of Fundación Trébol to co-operation with N.G.O.s.

STAFF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

The Speech Therapist advises and trains care staff on practical issues relating to communication, on a weekly basis. The speech therapist attended a course on sign language to enable her to work more effectively with Lucero, the nine year old deaf girl who lives at the residential project. A weekly staff training programme run by Thaís relating to issues of professional development took place during the year, until the programme ended in November. A House Helper and the young person in training for domestic work, attended a cheese making course run by Desarrollo Rural (government Rural Education programme), in January-March 2000. Care staff participated in a course, on the nature and characteristics of learning disability in May 2000 and in a 1 day training course on sexuality and people with learning disability (July 2000). The staff team (including the farm workers) participated in a 3-session course on professionalism in work given by Mexico Child Link, in June and July 2000. The Co-ordinator of Fundación Trébol did a feedback session to the project staff about her visit to organisations in Ireland.

The residential project Director, undertook a one year Diploma in Leadership January 2000-2001 (one day per week). This course was funded by *Quiera* (Mexican Banker's Association.) The Director produced an "induction pack" for new houseparents as part of this course. The Project Director attended a three day conference on Youth Issues in Taxco, Guerrero, organised by the Mexico City based *Instituto de la Juventud* and funded by *Quiera*. She was invited to take part in a round table discussion about the services and support to young people provided by the D.I.F. One day of this conference was about young people with disability.

The Special Education Worker attended the second International Congress on Disability in Villahermosa, Tabasco in May 2000. The Special Education Worker, Project Director, Independence Training Worker, a Houseparent and the President of the management committee, attended the CONFE annual international conference on learning disability, in Mexico City in November. The President of the management committee continued to study a part-time Masters

degree in Education (Special Education) The Secretary of the management committee continued to study a part-time Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology.

Project staff had recorded supervision by the project director. Staff supervision is programmed weekly, but at times it was suspended due to unforeseen events. The Project Director and Co-ordinator were supervised weekly by the President of the management committee. The Director provided a weekly report on a register designed by Mexico Child Link. The Independence Training Worker also completed a weekly record of activities, designed by Mexico Child Link. There is bi-monthly fire and earthquake drill. Contingency plans and preparations in case of volcanic eruption were made in conjunction with the children, and regular practice evacuations were carried out. In July, Mexico Child Link carried out an evaluation of the use the system *Planning for Life* and worked closely with the Project Director and the representative of Thais (Programme to Support Street Children) regarding the practical implications of the recommendations.

STAFF TIME MANAGEMENT

In December, Mexico Child Link carried out an analysis of the use of staff time on the farm. In consultation with the Farm Manager and Project Director, a weekly timetable of activities was designed for the Farm Manager and Farm Labourer. An annual plan was also designed, which indicates times for sowing and harvesting crops, and other tasks which occur periodically. An analysis was carried out of the use of the Director's time and also that of the Independence Training Worker. It was established that they were both undertaking tasks which did not correspond to them. A weekly timetable was designed for each one in conjunction with them. All the staff involved in this process were very positive about the benefits to them, of having help in the management of their time.

PROCEDURES/RECORD KEEPING

In July, Mexico Child Link carried out a review of book keeping in the residential project and changes were implemented to improve recording and accountability. This included changes suggested by staff, especially to the registers used by the Project Director and the Independence Training Worker. The changes generally involved minimising the amount of written information expected from staff, and focused on specific questions to be answered by ticking a box (to take into account the low educational level of staff.) New farm records were also designed by Mexico Child Link and included forms for recording births of sheep and goats, the diet of lambs and a vaccination record of all animals.

SUPPORT FOR STREET CHILDREN PROGRAMME

Our partner organisation participated in a three year programme funded by "*Quiera*" a charitable foundation run by the Association of Mexican Bankers, which started in January 1998. This programme ended in November. During this year the programme concentrated on the use of the *Planning for Life* system. A number of changes were made to the registers used to record the progress of children in individual programmes.

The four main objectives of the programme were:

- (a) to improve the quality of care provided by organisations working with street children.
- (b) to strengthen the organisations through an analysis of their experiences and methods of work with a view to developing more efficient ways of working,
- (c) to carry out detailed follow up studies of individual children.
- (d) to facilitate communication, exchange of ideas and experiences and co-ordination between the various organisations that work with street children in Mexico.

This programme also provided a computer, the training scholarships for four of the young people, and funded the Diploma in Leadership undertaken by the Project Director.

FARM

The residential project is situated in a hectare (2.4 acres) farm which is based on a system of sustainable agriculture. The farm serves as a training resource for the children and supplies organically produced vegetables, grains, eggs and meat to the project. A further hectare of land situated opposite the project site is rented on a four year lease.

Farm Work Groups.

The children are divided into two work groups; (a) vegetable production and (b) care of animals. The different activities involved have been detailed and graded according to level of difficulty. Children have been allocated duties according to their capabilities and staff work alongside the children to encourage and train them. Children spend an average of 1 hour per day in these activity groups and are fully supervised at all times. The two youngest children have been incorporated into the farm work groups, learning simple tasks appropriate to their level of ability and concentration levels. There has been a considerable improvement in the skills acquired and in the level of responsibility of some of the children. A number of the young people can now carry out many routine tasks with minimal supervision. All of the children now have a more responsible and respectful attitude to the animals in their care.

New Developments

A small mill was purchased to make animal feed for lambs and to grind maize for tortillas. At the end of year the farm had 6 goats and 34 sheep. A ram was sold to a neighbour for a good price. A number of procedures were put in place to ensure better animal hygiene, which is the major factor in keeping animals healthy. There was a supply of rabbit meat throughout the year. A number of lambs are also ready for consumption. Work is still needed to convince staff of the benefits of freezing some of the produce, instead of consuming all in a barbecue.

The food produced for consumption on the project included a range of vegetables, sweet potato, rabbit meat, lamb and eggs. Some carp were harvested from the water storage pond. Harvests of maize and wheat were stored. Written records were kept of farm expenditure and income.

It has become evident that the Farm Manager has difficulty with planning, due to his low level of basic education. He also lacks the skills to carry out work in the community, to educate people about the advantages of sustainable agriculture. Mexico Child Link has been aware of these limitations for some time. The appointment of a Farm Adviser as part of the new N.L.C.B. programme, will address these issues. Fundación Trébol does however recognise the importance of staff continuity on the farm, especially given that most farm workers are unaccustomed to sustainable agriculture methods and also because of the difficulty in retaining workers, many of whom leave to work in the U.S.A.

VOLCANO POPOCATEPTL

The farm and residential project are situated approximately 22km from the crater of the active volcano Popocatéptl. The volcano had its most significant eruption in 500 years on the 18th December 2000. 42,000 people in the immediate vicinity of the volcano were evacuated, but fortunately the eruption was not as violent as the official monitoring agency had first predicted. The children in the residential project were evacuated as a precautionary measure, and stayed for two nights in the home of the Mexico Child Link employees in Atlixco. Contingency plans were in place in the event of an eruption, and these were followed by staff and children. Despite the scare, most of most of the children were very keen to return home. It was interesting to note that they seemed to find it difficult to cope with the lack of activity away from the project. Popocatéptl is one of the most closely monitored volcanoes in the world and is unlikely to be cause for concern without prior warning.

PUBLICITY, PROMOTION & RESEARCH

The numerous street collections carried out were used as a platform to explain the work of the Trust to the general public. A Newsletter was sent to over 600 supporters in December. Visits were made to several organisations and individuals in N. Ireland to obtain information and ideas about the following issues: (i) Finding out the opinions of children with learning disability about the care they receive. (ii) Working life skills (iii) Assessment for supported living (iv) Adult family placements. We are indebted to the following for their time and ideas:

N.&W. Belfast Community Trust, United Response, Downe Residential Project, Orchardville Society, Berni Kelly, V.O.Y.P.I.C. Project Vote, Promote Action, GOLD Project.

One of the employees of Mexico Child Link attended the following:

Two day conference entitled *Therapeutic Interventions in Day Care* organised by Challenge.

One day workshop given by Michael Smull on *Essential Lifestyle Planning* organised by S. & E. Belfast Community Trust. One day *Research Colloquium 2000* organised by Learning Disability Research Group.

Both employees also attended a number of public lectures organised by the Learning Disability Research Group.

Visit from project partners

Two members of our Mexican partner organisation were invited to visit Northern Ireland during the second fortnight in September; Erika Godínez, President of the management committee, and Queta Palestino, Co-ordinator & Special Education worker. The purpose of the visit was to study and learn at first hand, examples of good practice in the area of learning disability. They visited 13 organisations and learned a great deal about the provision of services in Northern Ireland. The visits to the organisations provided our partners with many ideas and food for thought in relation to the work of Fundación Trébol. They also provided an opportunity for an exchange of information about our work in Mexico. A number of the organisations were very impressed with the high level of independence achieved by the children and young people living in the residential project, run by Fundación Trébol. Several organisations expressed an interest in establishing closer links with Fundación Trébol, possibly through a twinning arrangement. Erika and Queta gathered ideas which will be used in setting up the Advice and Information Centre and the independent living options programme, in Puebla during 2001. They each prepared a report of their visit which included their impressions, and the information and ideas which they found most useful and relevant to their work in Mexico.

They very much appreciated the very warm welcome and generosity extended to them by the organisations which they visited. Representatives of the organisations showed great patience, while explanations were translated into Spanish for the visitors and their questions and comments were translated into English. The visitors were especially grateful for all the tea, coffee, scones and lunch provided during their stay. They were very appreciative of the effort made to make them feel welcome.

Thanks go to Lisette Kroes and friends who raised a considerable part of the funding for the trip.

Mexico Child Link would like to thank the following organisations which received our project partners:

Muckamore Abbey Hospital, Camphill Community Glenraig, Parkview Special School, Mencap, Edgcombe Training & Resource Centre, Down's Syndrome Association N. I., Downe Residential Project, Ardcora Residential Home, Carraigfoyle Paediatric Support Unit, Kilcreggan Homes, 1 Shaw's Avenue, Orchardville Bottlesorting Plant, Orchardville Business Centre and Compass Advocacy Group Ltd.

Erika and Queta also had lunch in a number of cafés which train and employ people with learning disabilities, including the *Camphill Café Hollywood, Stepping Stones*, Lisburn, the *Edgcombe*, Cregagh Road, and *Gaslight* Ballymoney. They met the trustees of Mexico Child Link and other supporters of the project work in Mexico. In their limited free time, they visited among other places: Fermanagh, Dublin, Sligo, the Antrim Coast, the Bushmills Distillery, Carrickfergus Castle and the Linen Centre in Lisburn.

Presentation of the work in the residential project

A slide presentation of the work of Mexico Child Link, and Fundación Trébol took place on 21st September in *Knockbracken Healthcare Park*, to coincide with the visit of Erika Godínez and Queta Palestino. The theme was the promotion of a more independent way of life for children and young people with learning disability. Jonathan Getty, Colette Mc Ginnity, Erika Godínez and Queta Palestino answered questions following the presentation. This provided an opportunity for individuals and organisations to find out more about our work in Mexico and personally meet members of our partner organisation. Over 60 people attended, including interested individuals, and representatives and members from 23 organisations working with people with learning disability.

Promotion of the work of Fundación Trébol

Fundación Trébol is becoming recognised in Mexico for its professional, progressive and creative work with children and young people with learning disability. Fundación Trébol has been asked to do presentations of its work at a number of national conferences in the field of learning disability. Ararú a Mexican Learning Disability magazine for parents and professionals published an article about the residential project and the organic farm. The article focused on the independence of the children and the ecological focus of the farm. Dr. Patricia Noonan Walsh, Director of the Centre for the Study of Developmental Disabilities at University College Dublin, visited the residential project in August. Dr. Walsh was very interested in a number of aspects of the residential project, especially the lack of institutionalisation. Dr. Walsh has expressed interest in supporting the project in whatever way she can, possibly by accessing suitable training and resource materials in Spanish. She has maintained contact with Fundación Trébol and Mexico Child Link since her visit. Queta Palestino and Angélica López (Residential Project Director) each did a presentation on the work of Fundación Trébol at a national conference on learning disability from 17th –19th November. Over 800 people attended the conference from all over Mexico. The conference was opened and addressed by the Mexican President elect, Vicente Fox, who subsequently took office on December 1st. Fundación Trébol had informal publicity through the advertisements for post in the newspapers. All those people who expressed interest in the work of the foundation received information about its work. To date, Fundación Trébol has not consciously sought to publicise its work. It recognises that this issue needs to be addressed and is hopeful that the appointment of a General Director and the establishment of the Advice and Information Centre, will go some way to making known the work of the foundation, without distracting the current staff from their responsibilities.

THANKS

Thanks are due to the following organisations and individuals that gave support throughout 2000:

The National Lottery Charities Board	Dean Jack Shearer
June Getty	Prof. Roy Mc Conkey
May Blair	I.T.S.
The Paget Charitable Trust	The Ulster Bank, Arches Retail Park
Catherine Valentine	Dungannon Royal School
Dawson Cunningham Ltd.	St. Ronan's Primary School
Muckamore Abbey Hospital	S.& E. Belfast Community Trust
J.W. Russell & Co.	Alan Hutchinson
Prontaprint , Lisburn Road	N.& W. Belfast Community Trust
Hazel Dickson	Loreto Convent Primary School
City of London Freeman's School	Margaret Anderson
Mount Lourdes Grammar School	Stepping Stones, Lisburn
Drumbeg W.I.	Water School Choir, Lancs.

In addition the Trust would like to thank:

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

29 supporters who covenant to the Trust.

30 donors who support the Trust monthly through Bankers Order.

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

The Trustees and staff of Mexico Child Link were saddened to learn of the death of Dean Jack Shearer. Since the Trust was founded in 1992, Dean Shearer had made a very generous annual donation to Mexico Child Link, from the Christmas Sit Out fund. His loyalty and confidence in our work was much appreciated.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS OF KEY OBJECTIVES FOR 2000

The following objectives were achieved:

- All existing programmes and commitments will be maintained.
- Two members of Fundación Trébol will visit learning disability projects in Ireland to gain first hand knowledge of current good practice.
- Mexico Child Link will comply with the rigorous monitoring and evaluation requirements of the
- N.L.C.B. as stipulated in the standard terms and conditions of the grant.
- Independent living options will be investigated with the young people who are ready to leave the residential project.

The following objectives are ongoing:

All existing programmes and commitments will be maintained.

- A practical guide outlining costs, advantages and disadvantages of sub projects based on sustainable agriculture will be researched and produced.
- Remaining farm infrastructure will be put in place. (construction of a greenhouse, construction of water storage tanks, beehives.)
- The agricultural training programme in the special school will be extended to include practical experience on the working farm at the project site.
- Visits to the project site will be encouraged and organised, with the aim of promoting sustainable agricultural practice.

NEW OBJECTIVES FOR 2001

The following are the objectives defined for Year 1 of the new N.L.C.B. programme:

1. Restructuring the organisation in order to carry out the new programmes more efficiently. The key appointment is that of General Director, a new post, which is being created to oversee current and new programmes, as well as the future development of the organisation.

In addition the following new staff will be recruited:

- (i) Senior Special Education worker
 - (ii) Advice Centre worker
 - (iii) Carpentry trainer
 - (iv) Farm Advisor
2. Maintain all existing commitments:
- (a) Residential home for 12 children with learning disability.
 - (b) Horticultural training programme in the local special needs school.
 - (c) Training programme for staff and children in up to 22 institutions in the City of Puebla where there is a population of children with learning disability.
 - (d) A small farm based upon a system of sustainable agriculture which acts as a training resource for children with learning disability and the local community.
3. Establish an Advice and Information Centre as a learning disability resource for parents, professionals, organisations, and other interested parties.
4. Develop a carpentry workshop as a training centre for people with learning disability.
5. Implement a promotional campaign to let relevant parties know about the carpentry workshop and Advice Centre.
6. Help young adults with learning disability to find housing and employment appropriate to their needs.

The following are general objectives for 2001:

- 1. Establish a twinning relationship between Fundación Trébol/Mexico Child Link and those organisations visited by our project partners, which expressed an interest in maintaining an exchange of ideas.
- 2. In conjunction with *Quiera* (Mexican Banker's Association), publish a manual on the use of the *Planning for Life* system.

FINANCE

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2000

INCOME

Street collections	£ 6,034
Donations	£ 2,980
Fundraising	£ 470
Give as you Earn	£ 1,507
Bankers Order	£ 6,996
Schools	£ 2,825
Grant giving trusts	£ 2,000
Covenants	£ 1,603
Bank Interest received	£ 2,253
N.L.C.B. funding	<u>£ 7,861</u>
Total	£34,529

EXPENDITURE

Salaries	£15,527
N.L.C.B. grant to Mexico	£20,652
Grant to Mexico	£19,016
Pension Scheme	£ 1,920
Printing, postage & stationery	£ 1,556
Telephone	£ 530
Travelling expenses	£ 1,903
Expenses incurred abroad	£ 3,707
Study visit	£ 2,673
Accountancy	£ 120
Bank interest & charges	£ 19
Sundry expenses	£ 33
Subscriptions	£ 230
Depreciation	£ 266
Exchange rate loss	<u>£ 82</u>
Total	£68,070

Funds held as of Dec. 31st 2000 £30,647

Mexico Child Link accounts are audited by Dawson Cunningham Ltd, 30 Castlereagh Street, Belfast BT5 4NH

Full accounts are available upon request.