

The Mexico Child Link Trust

CHARITY REFERENCE NUMBER XR18919

ANNUAL REPORT 2001

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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., 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.

During 2001 Jonathan Getty and Colette Mc Ginnity spent over 7 months in Mexico. They worked closely with our partners Fundación Trébol to establish the new programmes funded by the Community Fund. They also participated in staff training and in monitoring and evaluation.

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 called Fundación Trébol de Puebla A.C. which we helped to develop and now fund and advise.

10TH ANNUAL REPORT OF MEXICO CHILD LINK

During the ten years since its formation, Mexico Child Link has succeeded in making its ideas become a reality for abandoned children with learning disability in Mexico. In this time, we have far surpassed our original objective of setting up a residential project, and together with Fundación Trébol we have developed a wide range of programmes.

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 Atlixco, Puebla 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. A carpentry workshop provides training for 35 children and young people. Fundación Trébol works closely with a number of large institutions, to improve the quality of care and training of abandoned children with learning disabilities. It also provides horticulture training in the local special school. A free Advice & Information Centre on Learning Disability has been set up in Puebla. 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. In 2001 Fundación Trébol employed a

total of 16 people. All staff receive pensions, housing credits and access to the state healthcare system for themselves and their families.

OFFICE AND MAILING ADDRESS

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FUNDRAISING

2001 was a successful fundraising year with almost £78,000 raised. This includes £49,000 from the Community Fund (formerly the National Lottery Charities Board), as part of a new 2-year programme which began in March. The remaining funding was raised through street collections, donations, school fundraising, and monthly contributions through Banker's Order, the Give as you Earn scheme and Gift Aid. Support was also received from Grant Giving Trusts. Mexico Child Link took advantage of the new Gift Aid programme, to reclaim over £1,500 from the Inland Revenue.

Fundraising within Mexico

Quiera (the Mexican Bankers' Association) awarded Fundación Trébol funding for 4 training scholarships for young people, and for a summer course for the children and young people. The residential project 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 on the farm. 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. Fundación Trébol made use of its tax-deductible status to obtain a number of important donations including a breeding ram and the donations from Quiera.

THE COMMUNITY FUND PROGRAMME IN MEXICO

In July 1997 the Mexico Child Link Trust began a three-year programme funded by the National Lottery Charities Board. This programme included the following services:

- Residential project for twelve abandoned children with learning disability.
- A series of productive projects on a small farm based upon sustainable agriculture, which also provides educational and training activities for the children.
- A horticultural training programme operated jointly with the local special school.
- A special education worker to advise staff and work directly with children with learning disabilities in a number of large institutions in Puebla.

The Community Fund awarded Mexico Child Link a two-year grant for the extension of the programme, which began in March 2001. This includes the above-mentioned services and the following new programmes, which were put in place in 2001:

- A free Advice and Information Centre on Learning Disability.
- The development of a carpentry workshop and other employment training.
- Support for young adults with learning disability to live more independently.

The following new appointments were made in 2001: General Director, Carpentry Skills' Trainer, Advice and Information Centre Worker & Farm Advisor. Two representatives of Mexico Child Link spent over 7 months in Mexico during 2001, working closely with Fundación Trébol, to help plan and set up the new programmes.

RESIDENTIAL PROJECT

The project aims to prepare the children and young people for the most independent life possible, taking into account individual levels of disability. Children learn to do things for themselves with the help of individual programmes designed using the Planning for Life system, which Mexico Child Link translated, adapted and monitors. One child now attends the village primary school and two young people attend the local secondary school. The primary school was selected to participate in a pilot integration project and staff attended meetings with teachers and Education Department

officials. A qualified speech therapist continues to work with each child. Four of the young people now receive a monthly training scholarship from Quiera. The two young people at secondary school paid for uniforms and school materials. One young person bought a bicycle for getting to work and another bought material and sewing equipment, for the sewing skills programme. 5 young people had summer work placements funded by Quiera. These included work on a local farm, in a carpentry workshop, in a hairdresser's, domestic work and helping a nurse in a rural health centre. Intensive individual work was also undertaken with the young people in work-related skills e.g. following instructions and social interaction at work. Quiera also provided funds for the 4 younger children to attend a summer scheme in Atlixco. They were able to participate in activities with children who do not have a disability. One adolescent returned to live at the project after spending time in the D.I.F. (Mexican Social Services) children's home. The children have surpassed all expectations in what they have learned and how at home they feel.

Miguel aged 19, remembers being beaten with piping and being left alone in a big city. He was kept in Puebla borstal for four years, suffered abuse and was given tranquillisers. On arrival at the residential project, (aged 13) he could only say 3 phrases and needed constant supervision. Miguel is now a confident young man who has had a paid job for 3 years. He currently looks after 40 sheep. He converses easily about his interests and does not need medication. He cooks his meals and does shopping with some help. Miguel says, *"It's far better here. I wouldn't go back there. No way. I learned nothing there, just sitting around all day doing nothing. I like cooking my dinner. I like locking the gate at night. I bought my own bike. It's great."*

Evaluation of the residential project

Mexico Child Link carried out a focused evaluation in February. It highlighted the importance of play and leisure activities for the development of the children and young people. It also noted their difficulties managing free time. An hour of free time every day was re-introduced.

Community Participation

The involvement with the local schools has greatly enhanced the project's community participation. The primary school is a *de facto* community centre. Children and staff have got to know local people and have been invited to community events. Several of the young people and the farm workers helped to prepare the site for the new secondary school, alongside pupils and parents. The carpentry workshop has also helped the reputation of Trébol in the area. 25 local children and young people attend the free workshop twice weekly. The new Project Director has facilitated increased community involvement and improved the project's presence in the area.

HORTICULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

In 1999, Fundación Trébol set up a training programme to teach agricultural skills in the special school in the town of Atlixco, about 7 miles from the farm. 20 pupils participated and planted and harvested radish, courgette, maize, coriander, carrots and beetroot. The programme takes place two days a week for two hours, with each group of 5 pupils attending for a half hour session. The programme is supervised by the Independence Training Worker. Training was given on the following: recognition and use of tools, understanding and following instructions, co-operating in a small group situation, seed and plant recognition, caring for plants and distinguishing useful plants from weeds. The school principal and staff have been very co-operative and encourage the children to participate. The programme has the recognition and approval of the children's parents, and of the education authorities.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN INSTITUTIONS

In 1994, Fundación Trébol carried out an investigation (supervised and funded by Mexico Child Link) in 22 residential institutions in and around Puebla City. It found a total population of 1015 children in care. 68 children had learning disabilities and were not receiving adequate care and attention. A N.L.C.B. funded programme in the institutions commenced in 1997, 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 2001, worked in 4 institutions. She made visits to a further 2 institutions to determine what support she could offer them. Most of her work took place in the government centre for abandoned children, which is home to 70 children, including 12 children and 3 babies with learning disability.

The programme has three main areas of focus:

- Regular meetings with staff to identify the training needed to enable them to work with the children with learning disability and the implementation of this training.

- Assessment of the needs of individual children.
 - Work with children with specific problems and training staff how to work with them.
- "Karla (aged 7 years) couldn't walk, stand up or even crawl when I started working with her in July 2001. She can now stand on her own and walk with minimum help. She has also learned to keep her tongue in her mouth and to control her saliva. We are now working on fine motor movements and strengthening the muscle tone in her hands. (Ana Luisa Sandoval, Sp. Ed. Worker, Dec.2001)*
- Ana Luisa was appointed as the new part-time Special Education Worker in April. In August this post was amalgamated with the new Senior Special Education Worker post, under the supervision of the General Director. Ana Luisa has established an excellent relationship with the directors, staff and children. Her enthusiastic approach has motivated her to participate in extra activities, which have raised the profile of Fundación Trébol. The Directors have praised the programme:
- "I am witness to the advances in Karla and to the way Ana Luisa works with all the children. I am really very pleased with the programme."* (Verónica Cobo, Director, government centre for abandoned children.)
- As a result of the programme in the government centre, staff now include the children with learning disability in activities, from which they were previously excluded. In another institution, staff now use the children's names instead of nicknames.

NEW PROGRAMMES STARTED IN 2001

The expansion of the Carpentry Workshop

The expanded carpentry workshop is undoubtedly one of the success stories of 2001. An informal carpentry workshop for the children in the residential project had been in operation since 1999, when SEDESOL (Mexican government Dept. of Social Development) awarded it a grant of £2,407 for tools and materials. The new Community Fund grant provides for the expansion of the workshop, to include children from the local community and also to employ a part-time Carpentry Skills' Trainer. Patricia Pincle a trained carpenter with 5 years experience of running a carpentry workshop in a special school was appointed to this post. The workshop takes place in two sessions, five afternoons a week. Each child attends twice weekly. A total of 35 children and young people attend, 10 of whom live in the residential project and 30 of whom have learning disability. The principal of the local primary school identified possible candidates for the workshop and the majority of them come from the small marginalized village near the residential project. The parents were pleased with this opportunity for their children, especially since it is free and does not imply the expense of bus fares. To date, the children have made benches; photograph frames, bookcases, small tables, a cassette holder and Christmas decorations. The money raised was used to buy further materials. While the workshop premises are being renovated to cope with the extra numbers, the workshop has been taking place in the store at the project site. Three members of staff attended a weekly training session with the Carpentry Skills' Trainer to enable them to act as workshop helpers. The participants are very enthusiastic about the workshop and proud of their finished articles.

"I am very good at sanding. The teacher gets me to finish off the sanding for the others. I made a serviette holder and I'm making a stool for my room now." (Paula aged 18 years) Paula cannot read, write or count and needs to be accompanied when outside the residential project.

The workshop has helped to increase the self-confidence of the participants.

"The children have much more interest in the workshop now that they know they can actually produce things. The two youngest and most disabled children in the residential project let us know that they also wanted to participate. They joined in and have shown great interest. The children have a great sense of achievement and they are very keen to show off and sell their produce!" (Martha Salvador, Director Residential Project)

The workshop promotes the integration of children with and without disabilities. It also gives abandoned children a chance to make friends with children from the neighbouring village. The workshop also prepares children for employment in a wider sense.

"The children have learned a lot in 7 months, not only in carpentry skills, also in work habits, respect for the safety rules, following instructions and general social skills." (Patricia Pincle, Carpentry Trainer)

During the 1990s the Atlixco area developed as a major producer of Mexican rustic pine furniture, so the workshop provides the young people with very specific employment skills.

Programme to support young adults with learning disability.

The residential project prepares children and young people for a more independent life outside the project. This move has important implications for the young person's life and requires careful planning. Programmes used by organisations in N. Ireland in planning for more independent living,

were translated into Spanish and adapted for use in a Mexican setting. This was carried out by Mexico Child Link after discussions with residential staff. An individualized booklet, which puts the young person at the centre of any planning for his/her future, was introduced to a number of the young people. A detailed "Supported Living Assessment" was also introduced. This helps both the young person and staff to identify accurately the support the young person will need, to live more independently and safely. The pace of the work with each young person has taken into account his/her learning disability and the emotional and psychological effects of their abandonment and experiences of abuse.

Advice & information Centre

The Advice & Information Centre is located in the city of Puebla. It works closely with CONFE, the main organization in Mexico working with people with learning disabilities. The main aim of the Centre is to provide information to families and to direct them to the appropriate learning disability services. The Centre is also open for use by professionals and students. Eugenia Hernández began work as Advice Centre Worker in mid April. Initially, she visited the organisations which provide services to people with learning disability, to determine the type and quality of the services available and to compile a register of these services. This also provided an opportunity to explain in person, the aims and objectives of the Centre to governmental and non-governmental organisations, including schools. Effective working relationships have been established with a number of agencies, including the Puebla State Commission for Human Rights. An interview format was designed to enable the Worker to assess user needs and thus determine the most suitable service for referral. The Centre has compiled reference material, which is easily accessible to families (taking into account that many people cannot read very well.) This includes a video library. The Centre has access to the resources of the Information Centre at CONFE's headquarters in Mexico City. Flyers and information leaflets advertising the services of the Centre were distributed to government agencies, NGO's and in residential areas, shops and markets in Puebla, Atlixco and Cholula. Taking into account the low circulation numbers of newspapers and poor levels of literacy, most publicity has been by radio. Fundación Trébol has participated in numerous radio programmes in Puebla to publicise the services of the Centre. Two radio stations have also advertised the Centre on a continuous basis. The Centre opened to the public in mid-September and attended a total of 43 people. The Centre has recently been invited to carry out awareness training about learning disability with pupils, parents and teachers in a mainstream school, which has 14 pupils with learning disability and also in a small voluntary school for children with cerebral palsy.

STAFF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Each new member of staff received induction training about the organization and their specific post. The Speech Therapist gave advice to staff on practical issues relating to communication on a weekly basis. The teacher of deaf children in the special school trained staff to communicate more effectively with the nine-year-old deaf girl, who lives at the residential project. All staff attended a one-day workshop on sexuality and learning disability. Fundación Down de Puebla provided four free places for staff to attend a two-day conference on learning disability issues. Staff from the local Social Security hospital delivered training on the following issues: first aid, stings from poisonous animals, nutrition and the prevention of illness through vaccination. Staff also received training on the following issues: how to communicate with people with learning disability, positive reinforcement, and the use of every-day language in speech therapy.

Mexico Child Link provided training on the following issues: the use of the Planning for Life system which is used for devising individual programmes, risk assessment and management, the programme to support young adults with learning disability in a more independent setting and problem behaviour. 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 regular recorded supervision with the project director. The General Director supervised the people in charge of each programme area, including the residential project director. The General Director reports to the President of the management committee and also reports weekly to the Co-ordinator of Mexico Child Link.

Staff changes

There were a number of staff changes throughout the organization, the most notable being the departure of Angélica López Romero, the residential project Director. Angélica left in March to take up a post in another organization, after five years of working in the residential project. The new Director Martha Salvador León has worked in a number of posts in the residential project and is very committed to the children and to the organisation.

Enriqueta Palestino Aguilar was appointed to the new post of General Director in June. Enriqueta had worked with Fundación Trébol as Co-ordinator since it was founded in 1993 and also as Special Education Worker since 1997. She has a wealth of knowledge and experience about learning disability and administration. She visited N. Ireland in 2000 to study and learn at first hand, examples of good practice in the area of learning disability. Maribel Rodríguez Gutiérrez was appointed as part-time Administrator to take over some of Queta's former administrative duties.

FARM

The farm is now well on the way to a more stable system of production, loosely based on Permaculture and other elements of sustainable agriculture.

The sheep and goat population of 40 has reached the limit, which our 4 acres of land can comfortably sustain and ten lambs were sold during the year. A local rancher who has over 1000 sheep donated a stud ram to the project in December, which will greatly benefit the genetics of the flock over the coming years. The animal is a Dorper Romanov cross, which should provide the benefit of increased weight gain and more multiple births in the flock. More sheep and goat housing was constructed to accommodate the greater number of animals. The animals are well cared for and are subject to a regular vaccine and anti-parasite programme. There has been no Foot and Mouth disease in Mexico since the 1950s but there are many other ailments, which have to be prevented or treated. A database of births, deaths and sales is regularly updated. There has been careful attention to diet, with lambs in particular being given access to high quality forage and grain supplement, which is produced from our own crops with the small mill purchased last year. The project also keeps chickens, rabbits and turkeys. Crop production is divided into staples, forage crops, vegetables and fruit. Staples include maize, sweet potato, wheat, and peanut. The area set aside for vegetables has been increased in order to try and have a more continuous supply of fresh greens. Fruit production has started, although the trees are still young and a few years away from full production. Fruit produced so far includes banana, avocado, mandarin, lemon, pomegranate, papaya, guava, prickly pear, and squash.

Farm Work Groups

The children are divided into two work groups, vegetable production and 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 carry out many routine tasks with minimal supervision. The children have a more responsible and respectful attitude to the animals in their care than when they arrived at the project.

Waste-water treatment

A new biological waste water system for treating kitchen waste-water (grey water) was set up on a trial basis. This involves diverting the kitchen waste-water to a soak-away surrounded by banana and papaya plants. The soil bacteria break down phosphates and the plants take up the water and any dissolved nutrient.

RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTAL & NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Fundación Trébol maintains excellent relations with state and municipal government and non-governmental organisations. It has established a reputation at state and national level for innovative and good practice in working with children and young people with learning disability. The D.I.F. (Mexican Social Services) requested help from Fundación Trébol on a number of issues, including preparation for more independent living. The foundation also worked closely with the S.E.P. (Department of Education) on the issue of the integration of pupils with learning

disability into mainstream schools. Fundación Trébol and Fundación Down exchange information and ideas about working with children with learning disability. The Advice and Information Centre with CONFE Puebla indicates the commitment of Fundación Trébol to co-operation with N.G.O.s.

PROMOTION OF THE WORK OF FUNDACION TREBOL

Fundación Trébol is becoming recognised in Mexico for its professional, progressive and creative work with children and young people with learning disability. It has been invited to participate in numerous radio programmes in Puebla and Atlixco about disability and human rights issues and has had a number of programmes dedicated exclusively to its work.

PROMOTION OF THE WORK OF MEXICO CHILD LINK

Over 500 people and organisations received a copy of the Mexico Child Link Newsletter in September. Over 100 individuals and organisations received a copy of the 2000 Annual Report. The regular street collections were used to promote our work to the general public. A report about the work of Mexico Child Link appeared in Viewpoint, the monthly newspaper published jointly by Mencap and the National Federation of Gateway Clubs. The newspaper has a monthly readership of approximately 18,000 throughout the U.K. A talk about the work in Mexico was given to National Higher Diploma students at The Centre for the Study of Developmental Disabilities, University College Dublin in April. Dr. Patricia Noonan Walsh, Director of the Centre, visited the residential project for the second time in August. The Centre donated training materials in Spanish to Fundación Trébol.

MEXICO CHILD LINK TRUSTEES

The Trust welcomed two new Trustees in April, John Donaghy and Roy Mc Conkey. John works as a Project Manager and co-ordinates international projects in S.& E. Belfast Community Trust. He has worked in community projects in Chile, Bolivia, Argentina and Peru. John's experience, especially in Hispanic countries, has helped to broaden the vision of the Trust group. Professor Roy Mc Conkey, Chair of Learning Disabilities at the University of Ulster, is a highly respected figure in the field of Learning Disability, having published extensively in the subject area. He has also worked in a number of developing countries. With his expertise and vast experience, Roy has helped to focus the work of the trustees. Dr. Maria Mc Ginnity, Trust Secretary, and founding member paid a visit to the residential project, farm and carpentry workshop in November.

THANKS

Thanks are due to the following organisations and individuals that gave support throughout 2001:
The Community Fund (formerly National Lottery Charities Board)

June Getty	The Paget Charitable Trust
May Blair	I.T.S.
The Ulster Bank, Arches Retail Park	Marion Gibson Memorial Trust
Dawson Cunningham Ltd.	Mount Lourdes Grammar School
J.W. Russell & Co.	Nuffield College, Oxford University
Wallace High School	Edgcumbe T.R.C.
Prontaprint, Lisburn Road	Hazel Dickson
Parkview Special School	Corranny Primary School
City of London Freeman's School	College Freight N.I. Ltd.
Centre for Developmental Disabilities, U.C.D.	St. Tierney's Primary School
Christmas Sit-Out, St. Anne's Cathedral	N.I.C.V.A.

In addition the Trust would like to thank:

17 donors who support us through the Give as You Earn Scheme

55 donors who support the Trust monthly through Bankers Order.

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

Special thanks

Mexico Child Link gives special thanks to the City of London Freeman's School, which donated a total of £4,000 in 2001. The School has supported our work most generously since 1997. In this our 10th Annual Report it is also fitting to acknowledge the tireless contribution of Mrs. June Getty to the work of the Trust during the past 10 years.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS OF KEY OBJECTIVES FOR 2001

The following objectives were achieved:

1. All existing programmes and commitments will be maintained.
2. 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 (Note: See main text re. Senior Special Education Worker post.)
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.

The following objectives are ongoing:

1. Help young adults with learning disability find housing and employment appropriate to their needs.
2. 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.
3. In conjunction with Quiera (Mexican Banker's Association), publish a manual on the use of the Planning for Life system.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2002

1. All existing programmes and commitments will be maintained.
2. The work will be carried out in compliance with The Community Fund Terms and Conditions.
3. Increase the amount of unrestricted funding.
4. Develop links with international organisations for the purpose of raising funds.
5. Explore the feasibility of setting up a web site for Mexico Child Link.

FINANCE

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2001

INCOME	£
Street Collections	5,774
Donations	3,729
Give as you Earn	1,730
Banker's Order	7,254
Schools	5,911
Grant Giving Trust	3,250
Covenants	1,770
Community Fund (formerly National Lottery Charities Board)	<u>49,000</u>
Total	78,418

EXPENDITURE	£
Salaries	11,643
Community Fund Grant to Mexico	49,000
Grant to Mexico	14,000
Pension scheme	1,920
Printing, postage & stationery	844
Telephone	385
Travelling expenses	1,457
Expenses incurred abroad	4,423
Accountancy	118
Bank interest & charges	18
Sundry expenses	34
Depreciation	402
Exchange gain	<u>34</u>
Total	84,278

Funds held as of Dec.31st 2001 9,603

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

Full accounts are available on request.