

Mexico Child Link

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www.mexico-child-link.org , 80 Locksley Park, Belfast BT10 0AS

Dear Supporter:

I am writing to you on behalf of Mexico Child Link to give you a project update and ask for your continued support.

If you are already a monthly donor, please give the enclosed leaflet to a friend or colleague

Two new arrivals



Mario & Israel with a new friend

During July we had the exciting news of two new arrivals, Mario, aged five, and his younger brother Israel who is still only three. Both have some learning disability and were subject to serious neglect before being abandoned and taken into care. Their hometown is *Ciudad Serdan* in the State of Puebla. Ana Sandoval worked with the children for six months to prepare them for the move to the project. Although they are city children, they have adapted quickly to life in the country and they really enjoy the space, freedom and opportunity to help look after the animals.

The transition to more independence

Two of the young people are now living more independently outside of the project.



Josefa (24) is back in her home village of Coyay, a Totonac Indian village in Puebla's *Sierra Norte*, one of the most inaccessible and poorest parts of Mexico, where many people speak little or no Spanish. Although it is only 150 miles away, it takes seven hours to drive there from Atlixco. Josefa lives with her partner Luis in a house which is also occupied by Luis's two sisters and his mother. The elder sister has a new baby. Josefa is now speaking mainly in Totonac. She has the fluency and confidence of a native speaker, and appears to be returning to her

indigenous roots. In the nine years she was in our project she never had the opportunity to use the language of her village; it had remained dormant until she was reunited with her own people. For many years we had suspected her indigenous origin, as she was prone to make the kind of gender and grammatical mistakes of someone who has Spanish as a second language. In a recent phone call to the project, staff found her very difficult to understand as she was speaking in a mixture of Totonac and Spanish. There is little or no linguistic overlap between Spanish and Mexico's 60 or so Indian languages. We have set

up a regular programme of monitoring visits to ensure that she is properly supported. Fundación Trébol took over the guardianship of Josefa several years ago, so this is an independent arrangement, which does not involve local authorities. Although the village is very poor and Josefa's house is badly constructed, it is a viable option for her, as the alternative would be living on the streets, or in an institution such as a psychiatric hospital. She now has a lot of independence, and is back with people from her own culture. She also has an acre of coffee plantation, which had been tended by an uncle of hers in her absence, so this may provide her with a source of income.



Rodolfo (19) has also moved out of the project. He is pictured (right) on arrival in the project aged 11. In contrast to Josefa, he has been given the use of a small gatehouse only 200 yards away from the project site in exchange for 8 hours of gardening work for the owner of the main property. He is still working in the project and gets his meals there. He returns to his house at 8.00 in the evening and arrives at work at 8.00 the next morning. He divides his time between



the house and the project and he has free time at weekends for activities such as football. He is very pleased with this arrangement, and is being closely supported by Jovita Saldaña, the independence-training worker.

New project Director



Enriqueta Palestino, our Project General Director, resigned in March due to ill health. We are very fortunate to be able to welcome back Angélica Lopez. She knows the children and the management of the project very well and this has enabled a smooth transition. Angélica previously worked as Project Director for 3 years and has worked in Trébol for 6 years altogether. Angélica is 37 and has spent her entire career in childcare projects. She is a psychology graduate from a local university in Puebla. She knows the programmes used in Fundación Trébol and will be able to carry out staff training, including the use of the

independence training system, which she used in her previous spell as director.

Enriqueta worked for Fundación Trébol for eleven years and we wish her all the best for the future.

Roof repairs

The houses where the children live are now ten years old and are in need of some basic maintenance. For the last couple of years the roof of each has started to let in water during the rainy season, which runs from late May until October. Project director Angélica Lopez says, "Both houses are regularly inundated. The children's mattresses get soaked and it is very stressful for the staff who work in the houses, who shouldn't have to endure these conditions."

A 6.7 Richter Scale earthquake in June 1999 may have contributed to the deterioration of the houses. There is also a problem with the flooring of the houses. When they were built, a very basic type of floor tiling was used and these are now breaking up and are difficult to keep clean. They also present a problem for children who do not have good motor skills who sometimes trip over them. We are hoping to raise extra funds for these basic repairs.

Farm

In June, the project rented 3 acres of land to sow maize as winter-feeding for the livestock. Rodolfo is now the sole worker on the farm and has responsibility for the animals, including record-keeping for the flock. He enjoys the work although there are days when he is not overly motivated. I suppose we all feel that way about work at times.

Security

The security situation in Mexico has deteriorated, and Tenex-tepec has suffered a considerable amount of burglary, livestock theft, and even kidnappings. The project had 20 sheep stolen over the summer. There were also problems with local youths starting fires in the dry season. These problems have affected our neighbours as well as ourselves and we have been in regular contact with the police, who are taking measures to improve security in the area, mainly through extra patrols. There were also difficulties associated with the increased independence of some of the young people in the project, with regard to finding a balance between supervision and independence. To some extent, this goes with the territory in this type of work. Alma has moved out of the project and we are looking for a more secure environment for her to live in.



Emmanuel shows us how to sow maize

Holiday in Veracruz

The highlight of the summer was a short trip to Veracruz to give the children and young people a well-earned break. None of them had ever seen the ocean, as Puebla State is landlocked and a long way from the coast.



Veracruz, a huge port on the Gulf of Mexico, is about six hours away from the project site in Atlixco. Highlights of the holiday included a trip to the aquarium where the children were able to see sharks, manta rays, turtles, and other marine life. Four of the group went on a boat trip to *Isla de Sacrificios* and *Cancuncito*. (pictured Lucero, Argelio and Esteban) They enjoyed shopping near the harbour and were able to watch the Marimba bands and performers in the Zócalo. However, the most popular part of the trip was the beach, and the opportunity to swim and play in the

water. The funding for the holiday was provided by the Mexican Bankers Association (Quiera) so it is good to see our project partners raising some finance for themselves.

Fundraising in Mexico

Fundraising responsibilities passed from Queta Palestino to Ana Sandóval, the advice and information centre worker. This proved to be successful and a considerable amount of donations were received such as, 100 Bathroom Towels, new sheets, a new cooker, general provisions such as, beans, rice, flour etc., and two new solar water heaters donated by the Volkswagen Foundation.

The Mexican Bankers Association (Quiera) is also paying monthly training and education grants to Emmanuel and Oscar.

Christmas cards and Greeting cards.

This year in a new venture we have decided to raise funds through the sale of a set of eight different cards (like the one enclosed) showing the children at the project site. The cards depict their everyday activities on the farm, in the carpentry workshop or with their pets. The cards are blank inside allowing you to write your own message, so they can be used as either Christmas or Greetings cards.

100% of the funds raised will be used to support our work in Mexico as we are selling the cards directly. You can order cards on our website, by sending back the enclosed form, or by phoning (028) 90622239.



Thanks Due

The *City of London Freeman's School* has continued its long-term support, as have *St Eugene's* and *St Tierney's* in Roslea as well as *Ulster Garden Villages Ltd.* *Coranny School* raised funds, as did the *Paget Trust.* *The Moore Trust* sent a donation and *Mena Wilson* organised a fundraising Barbeque on our behalf. *Edgecombe TRC* gave support, as did *Monaghan Lions.*

Thanks are also due to Paul Arthurton for his suggestions regarding fundraising and Donovan Ingram at CMS Cameron McKenna. *Wallace High School*, and *Kilcreggan Homes* gave support. Thanks also to *Makro*, *Dunmurry* for the successful annual collection held at their premises, *MKB Russells* and *ITS* for the use of their premises for our meetings. *June Getty* and *May Blair* have already raised more than £10,000 during street collections. They were helped by: *Hazel Dickson*, *Carmel Holland*, *Ross Workman*, *Isobel Colvin* and *Millie McCullough.* *Bob* and *Pearl McClean* also raised funds on our behalf, as did *Mary Faulkner.* *Libraries for Life* in the U.S. is donating Spanish children's books to the project.

In addition the Trust would like to thank: 16 donors who support us through the Give as You Earn Scheme, 70 donors who support the Trust monthly through Bankers Order, and the many people who supported us through individual donations, which varied from £5 to £1500.

I will send you a further update when I have more news about the project.

Thanks again for your continued support.

Jonathan Getty

(Co-ordinator, The Mexico Child Link Trust)

Handwritten signature of Jonathan Getty.

Mexico Child Link is a UK registered charity, which sponsors projects in Atlixco & Puebla, Mexico for homeless, abandoned and orphan children with learning disability, many of whom are ex street children. Our projects in Mexico include; a home for children & young people with special needs, farm based on sustainable agriculture for skills training. Carpentry workshop for children with learning disability, advice and information Centre on learning disability, Advisory service for orphanages & institutions in Puebla, and a horticultural training programme.