

Bolivian-Canadian Clean Water Network

MORE THAN JUST A DROP IN THE BUCKET...



BCC WATER NETWORK

BCC Water Network is a volunteer-run organization that partners with Bolivian groups to help provide safe drinking water and sanitation to the poorest of the poor in Bolivia

Quick Facts:

- Currently has two member organizations: **COBAGUAL** and **Jaraña**
- Has a team of Canadian volunteers and a Calgary-based volunteer Board of Directors
- Present focus is on affordable means of reducing waterborne disease through **BioSand Filter (BSF)** implementation and basic hygiene training
- Promotes a participatory development model, where filter users help construct their filters in addition to covering a portion of project expenses
- Currently over 400 filters installed by **COBAGUAL** and more than 2600 people with clean water

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1st Annual Water Fiesta a success!



We are very pleased to announce that the First Annual Clean Water Fiesta was a great success! The event which was held on May 24, 2009 generated over \$7,000 that is currently being used to support COBAGUAL's projects in rural communities in Eastern Bolivia. A number of organizations and individuals donated both with their time and in items that made for a very memorable silent auction. The performers, Club Tango Argentino, Fineza Flamenca Dance School and Mike Polaschuk shared their talent while Dave Bethune of CARA shared his knowledge of water issues in Bolivia. Each member of

our volunteer board of directors contributed significantly to making the Clean Water Fiesta a reality. And of course this fundraiser would not have happened, let alone been so successful without the hard work of the Water Fiesta Organizing team. With all the preparations made it was so exciting to see such incredible support from the Calgary community in supporting the important need for clean water in Bolivia, so a big thank you to everyone who attended. Plans are currently underway for the 2010 Clean Water Fiesta planned for the end of April in Calgary. Keep an eye on our website for more details!

COBAGUAL Update



COBAGUAL faced their most challenging year in 2009, largely due to health and personal issues that each of the four employees faced. In January 2009 Eastern Bolivia was in the grips of a serious dengue fever outbreak that took several lives. This outbreak affected each of COBAGUAL's team members, either because they personally became ill, or had to care for sick family members.

Once the worst of the outbreak had subsided, the team began work in the community of Los Chacos, where they collaborated with community members to build and install 30 filters by the end of March. COBAGUAL began their next project in the community of Virgen de Cotoca with funding from a generous donation by the Urban Spirits Rotary Club. The community was very excited about the filters and the project was progressing well until two of COBAGUAL's employees were involved in a serious motorcycle accident during a break from work. Luckily Australian volunteer Justen Herdman was able to fill-in for one of the injured workers to help finish the project. In August, once everyone was healthy, the team went on to complete a 21 filter project in the community of El Cañón, a project funded jointly through the Urban Spirits Rotary club and by donations from the First Annual Clean Water Fiesta fundraiser. The next few months were dedicated to follow-up visits of all of the filters installed since work began in April 2007, as well as building on several suggestions for improvement that the foreign volunteers had made during their visit.

The last few months were also a time of rebuilding for COBAGUAL as two employees, both of whom had worked with the team for over two years, faced a series of unfortunate personal issues that finally culminated in their resignation from the organization. Although their contributions to COBAGUAL's projects will be greatly missed, the team has benefited from the learning experiences of the last few months. The health problems faced by the COBAGUAL team also inspired the BCC Water Network to devote a portion of project budgets to employee health insurance. The COBAGUAL team is currently using the remaining funds from the 2009 Clean Water Fiesta to finance a new project in the town of Yotaú. Although the last few months have been difficult in many respects, COBAGUAL has been able to get back to work in 2010 with a fresh perspective having learnt a great deal from the experience of carrying out over 400 follow-up visits and undergoing a detailed evaluation of ways that their work can be improved.



Courtesy Chelsey Dawes and Kathryn Wells

Notes from the field

Last year, for the first time, we had four foreign volunteers stop by Ascension to help COBAGUAL out with filter construction, provide computer training to staff, and provide suggestions for how COBAGUAL's work could be made more efficient and more effective. A huge thank you to Chelsey Dawes, Lillian Hart, Justen Herdman and Kathryn Wells for their hard work! Chelsey Dawes, who has since become a BCC Water Network board member, shares some of her experiences with us below:

When I began my trek to South America, I did not have much of a plan. I knew that I wanted to go to Argentina and Peru, and figured I would fit Bolivia in for a couple of weeks somewhere in between. What I did not expect, was that Bolivia would end up consuming most of my trip, and turn out to be a heartfelt and amazing experience that I will never forget.

Before arriving in May, I had already discussed with Trevor about my interest in visiting Bolivia to see COBAGUAL and the filters in action (I have a degree in Non-Profit management, so it seemed like a good fit). It was decided that my friend Kathryn and I would go down for two weeks, do some

site visits and train the staff on basic computer usage.

The day we arrived in Ascensión, I felt right at home. Despite the language barrier, I fell in love with Bolivia. We started our two week volunteer stint right away with a visit to the community of Los Chacos. The great need for the filter systems and the positive impact that COBAGUAL was having there were immediately evident. It was really interesting and inspiring to meet the beneficiary families of the project, to see their previous water sources, and the simple conditions in which they live.

Eventually two weeks turned into three weeks, and three weeks turned into five weeks. The work of simply doing site visits and teaching the team more about computers turned into much more. From participating in follow-up visits, construction and installation, to teaching English and gym class, I was completely immersed in the intricate culture of Bolivia and it has forever changed me as a person.



Courtesy Chelsey Dawes and Kathryn Wells

Left to right: Kathryn Wells, Justen Herdman, COBAGUAL's Roberto Salas, Lillian Hart and Chelsey Dawes

When I look back at the time I spent in the community of Ascensión, and the endless hours that went into computer lesson preparation and translation, there is not one thing that I would change (except for maybe knowing A LOT more Spanish!). Bolivia will forever be apart of me. Not a day will go by that I won't think about my time there, about the people that I now view as family and the community that I hope to visit again soon.

Technology Focus: Large scale rainwater catchment systems

Rainwater has been used for domestic and agricultural purposes for millennia, especially in areas where surface water and groundwater resources are inaccessible. These systems always consist of two components – a catchment area, where rainwater is intercepted, and a tank or pool, where it is stored for future use. In its simplest form, rainwater catchment systems consist of a pit dug into a low point in the ground where rainwater from the surrounding area forms a pool.

Jaraña uses a modification of this model of rainwater catchment system called a *wijiña* in areas of Oruro where the high salinity of groundwater prevents its use for agriculture. According to Jaraña, *wijiñas* have been used in the Bolivian high plains for thousands of years. They consist of conical basins excavated into the ground, which sit above the level of the water table joined to canals with

built in sedimentation pools. These canals not only allow the *wijiñas* to capture water from a larger area so that they remain full for a longer period during the dry season, but also remove sediment from the water, increasing its quality. The *wijiñas* are constructed above the water table so that the rainwater they collect is not

contaminated by salty groundwater. Jaraña uses excavators to build their *Jarañas* so that they can be made at a sufficient size to meet the needs of community members.

Given that the effects of climate change are increasingly depleting already scarce surface water resources in the Bolivian highlands, *wijiñas* will likely represent one of few remaining options to sustain agriculture and livelihoods in regions with non-potable groundwater. The water that *wijiñas* collect is not appropriate for human consumption, but it can be made potable through treatment with the BioSand Filter or another appropriate water technology. *Wijiñas* are currently Jaraña's most popular project, implemented with a significant financial counterpart from local governments and project beneficiaries, and are attracting widespread demand from peasant farmers throughout Oruro.



Thank you to our latest donors:

Urban Spirits Rotary Club, Joyce Fawns, Gary and Shirley Hirsche, George and Nicky Porter, Roy Topley and Joanne Porter, Derek Jones and Antonia Alisauskas, Patti Beer, Rod Downing

First Annual Clean Water Fiesta Donors:

Alice Berard and Gainsborough Galleries, Bumpy's, Derek and Camille Baker, Cactus Club Café, Calaway Park, Calgary Activist Network, Campione Cycles Factory Outlet, Capture the Flag, CAWST, Clean Calgary, Cobs Bread, Co-op, George Eynon, Figtree Foundation, Diana Frost, Grilla Covers, Kelly Grant, Dan Hampson, Gina Hooper, Amelia Labbe, LA Interactive Fitness Consulting, La Prensa, Latin Corner, Let's Bowl, Michelle Cederberg – Live Out Loud, Rene and Angela Menjivar and everyone at La Pachanga, Mountain View Bowl, Paintball, Laser Tag, Trek and Airsoft Adventures, Primal Grounds, REMAX Hot Air Ballooning Team, Safeway, Second Cup, Starbucks, Ten Thousand Villages, The Comedy Cave, The Crux Climbing and Bouldering, The Keg, The New 97.7, Roy Topley, Adele Woolsey, Yoga Passage

And thank you again to everyone who has supported our work!

Volunteer Shout-out!

The Clean Water Fiesta Organizing Team: Diana Frost, Kichiji Kabayama, Noemi Flores, Amelia Labbe, Alana-Dawn Eirikson and Alice Berard, Maarten Dankers for all their hard work.

Dave Bethune for speaking at the Fiesta Fundraiser. Club Tango Argentino, Fineza Flamenca Dance School and Mike Polaschuk for sharing their talent during the fiesta.

Aaron Krupp for his creativity and patience in designing BCC Water Network pamphlets.

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