

Quarterly Bulletin of the Maya Childcare Trust

PROGRESS OVER THE PAST THREE MONTHS

The past three months have been extremely busy, not least because of the effects of Hurricane Stan at the beginning of October, but we are pleased with the progress that has been made:

The Centro Infantil Bellota ('Acorn Childcare Centre') is now fully registered as a non-profit association in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

We have a great building for the Centre that, with the help of volunteers, has been scrubbed clean, painted, and is gradually being furnished.

We have been writing policies and developing the ethos and philosophy of the Centre. We have made contact with several other local organisations involved in childcare and education, and have talked with them about their experiences.

We have also been doing what we can to support those who lost homes, jobs and even members of their family in the wake of Hurricane Stan.



LOOKING AHEAD

We are awaiting an inspection of the building and approval from the Ministerio de Salud (Ministry of Health), which will complete the process of legalisation as a childcare centre.

We are hoping to appoint and train staff (another childcare worker and a cook) and to secure sufficient long-term volunteer support to ensure that children receive all the care and attention that they need.

We hope to enrol 10 children into the Centre to begin with, and to gradually increase this number over the first year, once we have the resources to do so. If all goes smoothly, we will have the Centre up and running by March 2006.

The Acorn Childcare Centre



**CENTRO
INFANTIL
BELLOTA**

notice with the name of the Centre on the door. With nothing more than this, we had a steady stream of mothers ringing the bell to enquire about the service we offered.

The need is clearly there. We still have many things to put in place before we can officially open our doors to children, but we are making steady progress and are delighted to have a Centre which we will eventually welcome them into!

Volunteers painting the Acorn Childcare Centre

After walking the streets of Quetzaltenango for several days and researching many options, we finally found a building that we really liked. The location is very central, making it easily accessible to working mothers. The rooms are large and open, allowing easy access between one area and the next. The building is well-kept with attractive stone work and plenty of natural light. The only problem was that it was a bit beyond our budget. We made our case to the owner and her agent, and they reduced the initial asking rent by 40% to accommodate us. We drew up a contract together and very quickly moved in! With the support of volunteers from some of the local language schools we scrubbed the place clean and painted it. (The building previously housed the UN human rights mission in Guatemala, but they didn't seem to have done a lot of dusting.) To help volunteers find the house, we stuck an A4



Front room off the entrance porch of the Centre

Hurricane Stan Appeal



Flooding as a result of Hurricane Stan

On 3, 4, and 5 October, Hurricane Stan stormed through Central America. The countries most affected were Guatemala and El Salvador, where hundreds were killed in floods and mudslides, and many communities were left completely cut off with very limited resources.

Estimates of the death toll and damage caused vary considerably and accurate numbers are still difficult to establish. Two villages were completely wiped out and many bodies were never dug up from the mud that buried them. Official authorities predict that the death toll will be over 2,000, while local papers put the figure as high as 3,000 dead. Estimates of the number of people affected are around 250,000 with 84,949 people living in temporary shelters throughout the country. The full scale of the disaster is not yet known.

UNICEF reports that over 1/3 of the victims are children. Many have lost family members and in Sololá and San Marcos at least 42 children have been left orphaned. In Quetzaltenango an estimated 2,227 children have been displaced from their homes.

It is predicted that the loss of crops, livestock, housing, employment and the damage to roads and general infrastructure has set the country back by at least 4 years. The coffee and banana industries on which many depend have been badly affected. The country's reserves of basic food items will not last, but

importing large quantities of these products may have a devastating impact on local agriculture. The disaster will have long-term consequences for many.

When news of the disaster reached the British Isles, a number of the supporters of the Trust, after hearing that Rachael and Pati were OK, asked if there was



Many children have been displaced from their homes

Hurricane Stan Appeal cont...

anything that they could do to help. This prompted the Trustees to launch a special appeal for money directed specifically towards needs resulting directly from the hurricane, but remaining within the objectives of the Trust. The response to the appeal has really been remarkable, over three thousand pounds was raised, and we are extremely grateful to all who have given in such an open-hearted way to help those affected. With the money raised we have been seeking to offer immediate relief to children and their families by purchasing and helping to distribute drinking water, food, milk, formula for babies and young children, nappies, clothing, vital medicines, vitamins, soap, disinfectant and other essentials. We have also put together a number of boxes of resources for working with children who have been bereaved or traumatized as a result of the storm, and we are working with a couple of psychologists to try to ensure that these are put to good use. We still have funds available and are trying to find the best way of offering some more lasting support to those seeking to rebuild their lives after losing so much.



Pati preparing emergency supplies to send to those affected

Do you shop online?

Do you use the internet for shopping? If so, you could help raise funds for the Maya Childcare Trust while you shop. All you need to do is visit the UshopUgive website at the address shown below. By selecting the Trust as your chosen charity and then selecting an online retailer of your choice, a commission will be passed to us by the website - it's as simple as that. This will cost you nothing extra and will help us to raise funds for our childcare centre. Instructions are given on the UshopUgive website. Here is the link that you need to type into your internet browser:



<http://www.ushopugive.com/default.asp?charid=729>

You have received this Bulletin because you are listed on our database as a supporter of the Trust. The Trustees believe that this quarterly communication is an important way of letting you know how your donations are being used. If you would prefer to be removed from our mailing list please either email us at: info@mayachildcare.org or write to our Secretary, **Mr Andrew Ker, 24 Ravensdale, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT36 6FA.**