

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first edition of Update, Operation South America's newsletter, keeping you abreast of the latest developments. We held our very successful launch event at Aldridge Parish Church on July 15th and our Founder, Phil Grainger shared the vision for our work in Paraguay and beyond. This centres on the Recalde family in the village of Quyquyhó, some 170Km (106 miles) to the south-east of the Capital, Asuncion. Every weekday, in a caring Christian environment, the Recaldes provide a hot meal for 100-150 children aged 3-15. For many, this is the only decent meal they will get.



The Recalde family L-R Joselo 14, Marie-Louisa, Oswaldo and Rocio 26

Several members of the OSA management team visited Quyquyhó during August, to see the work for themselves and investigate ways in which we can support and help develop the work. Operation South America grew out of a previous organisation called Project Paraguay and has considerable experience in principally building projects in other parts of Paraguay. So impressed were we by the commitment and knowledge of Oswaldo and Marie-Louisa that we determined the need to re-focus.

OSA is in the process of registering both as a British charity and internationally in Paraguay, initially. This will have several advantages, mostly financial, and will enable the easier transfer of funds from UK as our support base develops.

FEEDING THE 5000

Not 5000, perhaps, but it must feel like it to the small team of ladies who help Marie-Louisa to prepare meals each weekday. Comedor is Spanish for dining room, hardly a description of the basic facilities available to the children (by European standards) who eat at makeshift tables and benches under a convenient tree. But nobody complains and the plates are always empty by the end of the meal. For many this will be their only meal of the day and some have to walk more than 10Km (6 miles) to get it and to attend the local school.



Lunchtime at the Comedor

LIFE IN QUYQUYHO (pronounced "ki-ki-oh")

In many ways a picturesque village, Quyquyhó is reached by dirt roads, preferably in a 4x4 vehicle, although it does have a regular bus service. The village roads are built in the Paraguayan tradition of broken stone laid on a sand base, hard wearing but like uneven cobbles to drive on. It has a clinic, two churches (one nearing completion), a school, a rather run-down public park and several shops. As with much of Paraguay, wealth sits cheek by jowl with poverty and the well-appointed, immaculately-kept house with new 4x4 and boat on trailer is only a few doors away from the tired brick-built or wooden shack which is home to a family of 6 or more



WHY QUYQUYHO?

There is much poverty evident throughout the world so why choose this place? As a group of Christians we have links with Paraguay going back several years. We have come to know Oswaldo as an honourable man with a clear vision, based on Christian principles and focused on people's needs. We believe that his vision for Quyquyhó is appropriate and achievable. Moreover we feel that it has the potential to be transferred to other locations both in Paraguay and elsewhere in South America. We want to support Oswaldo and hope that you will join us.

OSA OBJECTIVES

As an aspiring charity we have to have clear objectives and a plan for future development. Our stated objectives are as follows:

- To serve the needs of the indigenous peoples of South America through the provision of food, shelter, health support, education and skills for employment, at the discretion of the charity's management and trustees
- To encourage, through a Christian ethos and from an early age, those activities which will promote a sense of self-respect and community responsibility, essential for good citizenship.

Our visit convinced us that this is the right place to start. We are not a Western charity attempting to impose our views and values on a Third World country, but a support organisation responding to needs perceived by a native Paraguayan in a specific location. Only when we are satisfied that the activities and methods are appropriate and successful, will we consider replicating them in other locations.

NOT JUST ABOUT FOOD

The children who come to the Comedor love to play and learn. They are encouraged by games, toys, creative activities, Bible stories, songs and prayers. Through a generous gift we were able to provide six individuals with the loan of a bicycle to make their journey a little easier. We are hoping to expand this service in the future. The Comedor provides temporary shelter at mealtimes. There is also limited accommodation for homeless family groups on a temporary basis, when necessary. We have negotiated with a local church use of the building for meetings or recreational activities when the weather is inclement.



HEALTH MATTERS

In any community there are individuals in need of medical help. Although there is a clinic in the village, tests and medicines have to be paid for and many families do not have enough food, let alone spare cash for medicines. We have arranged some training from medically qualified advisors and provided appropriate literature for local volunteers. This includes hygiene, basic diagnostic techniques of common ailments and their treatment and recognition of when to refer individuals to hospitals. We provide a small medical fund for the purchase of medicines to treat common ailments and consider requests for support of more serious cases on an individual basis. On our recent visit we made provision for short-term nursing of a terminally ill woman whose children were regular attendees at the Comedor. We have also made arrangements to fund medicines for a teenager who suffers from epilepsy, drastically improving his quality of life.

SCHOOL SPONSORSHIP

Education is free, up to the age of 11. After that, money has to be found for uniform, books and exam fees. Not a huge sum, at around £120 per year but, even so, out of the reach of some families. Some teenagers who show early potential can be left to their own devices, with predictable consequences, as boredom and lack of hope set in. With no discernable qualifications or skills there is little hope of employment. Most of the team members who visited this year, came home with links to surrogate children or grandchildren. We could not let ourselves see potential being wasted for the sake of a few pounds per month.

HOW CAN I HELP? We need help in all of the following areas:

- Prayer support: For confirmation that we are moving in the right direction.
Financial support: We estimate that £20,000 will be needed in the next year.
Volunteering: We want individuals to visit and experience the exciting developments at Quyquyhó.
Encouragement: We would like to enlist support from interested groups and individuals all over the UK

We are in the process of preparing audio-visual materials which will explain the vision in greater depth than is possible in a brief newsletter. We will be happy to come and speak to interested groups and give a more detailed illustration of our work. Please feel free to contact us