

ProjectsAbroad

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad **Bolivia**



Editor's Letter



Carmen Herbas
Country Director

Hi all ,

Welcome to the November edition of our Newsletter for Projects Abroad Bolivia. This newsletter aims to inform all ur volunteers with news and information about the latest happenings in Projects Abroad Bolivia, and the country in general.

We encourage everyone to join us in making it interesting and exciting by sending in your own written articles and pictures of your experiences here with us. Your stories and pictures will help others to understand and learn about Bolivia.

Feel free to join us in our Facebook group so we can be in touch, before, during and after your trip to Bolivia!.

If you have anything you'd like to contribute, suggest, or comment on, please contact
bolivia@projects-abroad.org

Best wishes from Bolivia!

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The closed down childhood: Helping girls victims of sexual exploitation in Bolivia

Mariel Torrez
Desk Officer, Bolivia

It's a sunny day and the room is full of music. There are girls laughing and dancing in time with catchy Latin dances that come one after another from the speakers in the corner. It's the last day of Juliane Lund, a 19-year-old volunteer from Denmark, at Sayari Warmi, a centre for female teens that have been victims of domestic violence, and sexual exploitation in Bolivia.

The festive atmosphere gets to its peak when the girls start to chant in Spanish to Juliane: "Don't go away. I ask you please. You are the one who fill us with passion. You are our light and whole life."

There is no need to say that tears, laughs, and hugs weren't held back as the emotions on display were merely the ending point of a touching story that had started two months ago when Juliane decided to do something different in this part of the world, inspired by the conversations held with a Chilean friend of hers, before going to college.

At the beginning she was hesitant about which country, program, and project were the best for her, but when she heard about a center in South America that was eager to receive volunteers that wanted teach different things to girls in their teens that had been rescued from local brothels, as a sort of "occupational therapy", she decided to follow that call and say good-bye to Kvistgaard, her hometown, for a while.

The main purpose of Sayari Warmi, Juliane explains, is "to rebuild a good relation between the family and the (rescued) daughter, but most of all to rebuild the trust in other humans" through its 3 stage recovery program. However what is very clear to her after these months working there, she points out, is the importance of providing those girls the sense of being loved, a concept that is lost for many of



them. "Of course, volunteers can't fill this need entirely but I have felt a big difference in some of the girls after I arrived because I can take the time that the others who work there don't have, to listen to their stories and dreams."

The staff of this centre, Sayari Warmi, is wonderful, assures Juliane, but they are grow-ups, and the girls need someone closer to their age with whom they can relate to, and also someone who can teach them new things. "There are very dedicated workers at the placement who teach different hand crafts, but none of them have the skills to teach, for example, English or Math, and most of the girls really want to learn - many of them dream of getting a good education which is very hard to get with that major lack of academic training."

In fact, being denied formal education for a long period of time is a problematic that most of the children and teens victims from sexual exploration must deal with after they have been rescued. Research conducted by The United Nations Children's Fund in Bolivia about this matter on 2004, revealed that besides psychological and physical violence this is one of the main issues that must be addressed alongside health issues.

The title of this research, *The Closed Down Childhood*, is a good way to summarize the work that the staff and volunteers like Juliane do at Sayari Warmi. "The girls at Sayari Warmi," she admits, "are wonderful and loving, but you can't help but notice that these girls have seen and lived things that they, in many ways, are way too young to experience - they are (only) between 13 and 17 years old!"

"However I feel," she adds, "I have given them a little more space and a little more freedom than what they normally have. I have seen the girls change from shy and quiet to outgoing and energetic. I strongly felt I made a difference whenever I talked one on one with the girls about their lives and listened to their stories and problems while working with them." In fact, the birthday party of one the girls, she recalls, is for me "the most memorable experience from my volunteer work. The girls were so

genuinely happy that I got tears in my eyes. It touched me very deeply to see that they also can be just teenage girls who laugh and have fun."

Juliane left Bolivia and her new friends a couple days ago, but it's impossible not to find similarities between that birthday party and the celebration described at the beginning of the story. Both were moments on which those girls seemed to recover a piece of the life stolen from them at such early age. There is still a long way to run, but we want to believe that an important step was taken thanks to young people like her who are able to prove those girls, through volunteering, that there is still someone who can genuinely care about them despite all.



Projects Updates

One of the traits of most of our volunteers is the desire of doing something else for the children that they have met during their stay in Bolivia.

Touched by the reality they have seen and heard; fantastic things have been achieved over the years by them.

This is the case of Mailys Marschal and Charlotte Marguery, two French volunteers that decided to paint the dormitories of CATD, a local orphanage for special needs children, after spending some time with those kids.

They took the trouble of convincing other French volunteers in destination and any other able to hold a brush to help them besides buying the material needed.

These are the results of those painting afternoons. Well done Maya and Mailys!

List of volunteers that helped:

Cecile Mongredien FR
Anais Catarino FR
Julian Mattys BE
Jean Saxby AU
Sebastiaan Visser NL

Volunteers in action: That extra mile!

Mariel Torrez
Desk Officer, Bolivia



Outreach/ Dirty Weekends

Music workshop: Charango time!

Mariel Torrez
Desk Officer, Bolivia

Music volunteers that come to Bolivia not only have the opportunity of teaching music to children of unprivileged backgrounds, they also have the chance of learning about our rich musical heritage.

Thus, we organize from time to time workshops on which our volunteers can learn the basics of traditional musical instruments of ours, from tark'as, zampoñas to charangos.

This time we decided to focus on the charango, an Andean stringed instrument, similar to a small guitar whose lively sound is a must when playing local tunes such as cuecas, bailecitos, morenadas, taquiraris, just to name a few.

The workshop started a teaching activity, but later thanks to the musical abilities of the assistants it turned out to be a jam session that everyone enjoyed!



Photos of the month



You create beauty with your attitude your, behaviour and your actions!



Credits

Editor: Mariel Torrez

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Equine Therapy program

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Thank you to everyone who has helped bring about this month's issue of the Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad Bolivia. If you would like to contribute your experiences, stories, photos or anything else to the next edition then please send them to:
bolivia@projects-abroad.org

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