

## The Communities in Bolivia

All these communities are situated in the Sorata Valley in the Middle Andes region of Bolivia.

### VILLA CONCEPCIÓN

Our first community is situated in a valley accessed by a dirt track. The bus journey from the country's capital, La Paz, takes about five hours. When we started work with this community, there were forty-two families (131 adults) living in Villa Concepción, and another eighteen families now also benefit from this project.

The people's first language is Aymara. They grow potatoes, corn, peas, chirimoya and wheat. They keep a small number of cows, pigs, sheep and horses. The animals provide manure for the crops, but the quality of the livestock is very poor due to illness and in-breeding. The community has one teacher, who teaches eighteen children up to fourth grade primary. The whole area has one medical centre with one health worker, but lacks medicines and basic materials. The houses are made of mud with earth floors and corrugated metal roofs. They use wood for fuel, and have no toilets or bathrooms.

Our second community of **CHICHAQUE** is close by, and very similar. There are a total of 28 families (90 inhabitants), all indigenous. The community is regularly cut off by heavy rains in summer when the rough tracks leading there are blocked by landslides, or washed away. They now have safe piped drinking water thanks to the hard work of the volunteers of the Cherry Tree Bolivia Group. Previously their water came from the river and from springs, resulting in a very high rate of cases of acute diarrhoea, which is potentially fatal in very young children. Another 11 families are due to join the community and will also benefit from the water supply.

The third community we worked with, **CHIQUIRUNI**, is situated in the same region, and is also indigenous and Aymara-speaking. It is a much smaller community, with only fourteen families, approximately 56 inhabitants. The climate is fairly warm and humid, with heavy rain in the wet season. There is a very deep river gorge close to the community. Only a small area of land is cultivated, where the community grow mainly maize, but also beans, wheat, peas, barley and vegetables. They keep a few pigs, plus a small number of sheep and cows.

The houses are made of mud, with corrugated metal roofs and earthen floors. There is no electricity and cooking is by means of wood. There are no toilets, and water is collected from a spring. There is no health centre. The community is extremely poor. More than half the inhabitants cannot read or write, and only half the children go to school.

Our fourth community is called **CHUCHULAYA**. It is a much larger community of over 112 families who requested help with obtaining an improved supply of safe water, like the three villages in the Sorata Valley near La Paz, Bolivia, which Cherry Tree volunteers had already helped. Chuchulaya is situated in a steep valley where they grow maize and vegetables and pasture a few animals. For much of the year there is no vehicular access to the site, due to heavy rains. There is a small health centre in the community, and it is believed that the improved hygiene resulting from a better water supply will greatly reduce the incidence of acute diarrhoea. This is being closely monitored. The project cost only £185 per family.

The communities have all received education in the safe use of water, and in health and hygiene.

