



FRIENDS OF ALALAY (SANTA CRUZ)

Registered charity no. 1123425

SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER

This will be a different (and slightly longer) newsletter from usual, but then we live in rather unusual circumstances. In fact, if things had gone to plan we would have been visiting the children in Bolivia at the present time and reviewing the current and proposed projects.

Of course, this global COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented situation for all of us, including the children supported by the Alalay Foundation.

According to the [Bolivian Ministry of Health](#), as of 3rd April there were 139 confirmed COVID-19 cases and eight deaths (five in Santa Cruz – the city in which our kids live, and three in La Paz, where Alalay also works), although sadly we suspect the real numbers will soon be much higher, as in the rest of the World. Bolivia is in serious lockdown to try to stop the spread of the virus: one person per household (aged 18-65) is allowed outside to buy food (between 7am-midday) one day per week, all public/private transport is prohibited (except for healthcare/security professionals), and there are fines/imprisonment if rules are violated (read more about further restrictions [HERE](#)).

Although our children and staff team in Santa Cruz are currently all well and safe, we were deeply saddened to learn of the [death of the husband \(aged 49\) of Mrs Claudia Gonzales \(Alalay Foundation Founder/Executive Director\) from COVID-19](#). He had recently returned from a trip to the USA, developed serious symptoms and was unable to access a respirator in time – his passing highlights the challenges within the Bolivian healthcare system in attempting to deal with the pandemic. We send our sincere condolences to Claudia, her family and all at Alalay at this sad time.

Alalay staff recently shared the following update with us:

“Thank you very much for your message of support to Claudia and all those at Alalay. We also thank you for caring about our boys and girls. Thanks to God, all of our children are currently healthy, following the lockdown rules and also following the COVID-19 prevention guidelines developed by Alalay. At the moment we have enough food, hygiene and cleaning products for everyone... We are very grateful for your concern and we hope from the bottom of our heart that everyone is well there”.

This lockdown clearly brings its own peculiar problems: How do you keep large numbers of children occupied at home each day? It's difficult enough to entertain a couple of children for three months in the UK. And how do we feed a hundred children each day, when shopping is so constrained?

Fortunately, the Aldea (*out-of-town centre where the majority of the children live*) and the Welcome House have ample outdoor space so the children don't feel too locked in, and a variety of recreational, sporting and schoolwork activities are being organised by our fantastic house parents. All schooling and vocational training is suspended for the present time and many of our projects are on hold.

Our staff team is also protecting themselves and following the quarantine rules. Some staff are working from home rather than coming in daily, to reduce the risk to the children.

But the house parents are, of course, staying with the children and doing an amazing job. Although Bolivia is in complete lockdown and all public transportation and private car use is prohibited, Alalay have special permission from the authorities to continue with their work and get supplies every few weeks.

We now have an urgent need to provide additional short term financial help (as well as encouraging the Alalay family in many other ways) and have decided to risk spending our relatively small reserve fund in one go – as I said at the start of this newsletter, these are unusual times and they call for unusual responses! We would clearly have a major problem if one child or staff member were to contract the virus and we need to try to prevent this happening, or deal with it effectively if it does.

To end on a more positive note, we recently introduced the children to the idea of painting “rainbows of hope and gratitude” to put up in their windows ([as in the UK and rest of the World](#)) and, as you can see from the photos, they have taken to this task with great enthusiasm! We are asking our supporters around the World to do the same and share their rainbows with us to demonstrate solidarity, hope and love through these times.

Our thoughts remain with our Alalay family in Bolivia, plus the thousands of children, young people and adults living on the streets who cannot #StayAtHome and are already in a truly precarious and vulnerable situation. We plan to somehow still support them too.



For the most up-to-date information please always look at our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

Annie Syrett-Jones, Bristol – April 2020
www.alalay.co.uk