

Background on the Salta Schools Project

The environment

The capital of Salta's province takes its homonym name and is better known as "Salta La Linda". Besides being an important city with many agricultural, educational, cultural and tourist attractions, it also has a large number of rural schools between the valleys and mountains, which form part of its beautiful landscape.

These schools are attended by the field workers' children, who live in small ranches very distant from one another, without having much contact with the world outside their area and, in most of the cases, in very humble conditions. They are generally illiterate or have barely completed their primary school studies. Nutrition is poor for many reasons and



there are many cases of malnutrition. Between the lack of education of their parents, the lack of economic means and the situation of isolation, the children end up having a monotonous diet mainly based on meat of the animals their parents breed and a small amount of vegetables missing a lot of nutrients necessary for the growth and the

healthy physical and mental development of a person. Their homes are ranchos built by their own hands with their own materials. This means that many structures have thin walls with little insulation from the cold or heat, leaking ceilings and dirt floors.

This is why the rural schools' mission, is not only to educate them, but is also to compensate the shortcomings these children may suffer at home, in terms of food, health, and general welfare. Due to the large distances that the children have to travel, most of them live in the schools from Monday to Friday. All of this work is supported by a very small budget.

The project

The schools are 130 -180 km away from the city of Salta (3 ½ - 4 hours by car) and ½ hours drive away from each other. Both schools, but especially the one in Isonza,

had huge needs at the beginning of the project. They basically needed buildings repairs and reconstruction, plumbing changes, more solar energy, more classroom teaching materials, textbooks and school staff. Children attending these schools are between 4 and 15 years old.

The project consists of three stages:

- **Education:** Securing basic resources for the operation of schools (providing tools and educational materials, fixing classrooms and greenhouses, improving nutrition).
- **Sponsor parents System:** Finding every child a sponsor to take care of them, not only economically but also emotionally in the long journey of his/her training.
- **The families and the environment:** Enabling community members so that they can have genuine access to resources. Organizing visits from medical professionals.

This plan is based on:

- Obtaining materials to repair the buildings or funds to buy them.
- Funding for scholarships to cover higher education costs.
- Collections/donations
- Sponsoring a child from abroad
- Individual volunteer programs between 3 and 9 months
- Collaboration of participants from different TLE/EIL programmes (Robertson Scholars, Summer Abroad, Elderhostel).

Since the beginning of this project most of the set objectives have been met starting with the Isonza School in 2005 and then expanding to the School of Amblayo in 2007.

This is what has been done in Isonza:

- Distance Sponsor parents:
Sponsor parents were found for all the students from both schools. The sponsor provides 360 pesos, almost \$100 annually for each sponsor child. (2007)
- Project "Turn on the Light": a U.S. Robertson Scholars Program fellow found the funds to equip the school with solar panels to get more energy for electricity and hot water for the hygiene of children (July 2007), but this recently came into full operation, in May 2009



- Changing external plumbing and water intake. (July - Nov. 2006)
- Furniture Painting and activities (July 2006/7/8)
- Class fixing: painting, new blackboard and installation of new shelves (Isonza - July 2006) and construction of new garden room, 1st. and 2nd grades (July 2008)
- Improvements made on the Patio de la Bandera and the Patio de Juegos (July 2006)
- Teaching English and computer science (July 2006/7/8). Solidarity and recreational activities (July 2006/7/8)
- First Aid Workshop (July 2006 and 2007).
- Children's Rights Workshop (July 2008)
- Greenhouse and allotments' reconstruction (July 2007)
- Creation of the farm: Chickens and rabbits were purchased with the funds provided by the sponsors (August 2007/2008)
- Donation of powdered milk to add it to the pupils' daily diet (2008/9)
- Donation of two computers (2007)
- Trip to Salta: thanks to the sponsors, all the children of both schools had the chance to go to the city of Salta. The majority of them had never left the area. The trip had activities cultural and recreational activities. (Isonza - July 2007)
- Collections: through several collections made in Buenos Aires were collected children books, videos for the kids, toys, 2 encyclopaedias of 14 volumes, notebooks, reams of sheets, backpacks, pencil case, rulers, pencils, kids clothing and economic contributions(from December 2005 onwards)
- Workshop of leather craft, coordinated by a mother from Isonza (2008/9)
- Ceramic Workshop taught by the director of Isonza. 'torno patero' donated by a sponsor parent.(2008/9)

