

Children Living in Jail

- Place: La Paz, Bolivia
- Project Leader: Dra. Cecilia Uribe de Chavez. The report is divided into three sections and written by the team members. The three sections are: (a) the psychologist's report; (b) the pediatrician's report; and (c) the social worker's report.
- Timescale: Second Year of Three
- Budget: \$4,000

Please note that because this project is operating on a different fiscal timescale (January to December) to the other projects in this report, the final narrative and financial report was sent to the foundation at the time of submission of the interim reports on January 31, 2008.

Below is an update from Dra. Uribe, CFHI's Medical Director in La Paz, Bolivia. It refers to the new Jail Director, with whom there were initial personal and professional issues for the project team to deal and the progress that many of the children are making.

"I'm writing to let you know that the problems with the new jail Director have been solved for the most part. The atmosphere within the jail is returning to normal, slowly but surely. The work of the three professionals working on the project has been kept going under the same terms, the only difference now is that they have to provide more reports, approximately one each week, reporting on the work they are doing.

The social worker has more access to the files and contact info for the children's families, which is what the new Jail Director wants. She also wants, whenever possible, for children to be able to live with their families outside the jail, so they can lead a more normal life. But, of course, the mothers who live in the jail do not want to budge and this has created some tension. We have asked the girls and boys in the jail to make some drawing so that we can send them to you and you may put them in your calendar for next year or newsletter.....

The drawings demonstrate that the children are in a happy place, and without exception, they drew themselves in open spaces, in the open air, in parks, playing. According to the psychologist, this is very meaningful and tells us a lot about their desire to live outside the jail. This was a bit hard for us to hear and made us very sad, because we can offer them services and medicine, but not freedom.

We have decided to take them for a walk outside the jail as often as possible so they can start getting used to the streets and parks where we take them. We also want them to have a sense of their belonging and place in the world so we are sewing colored school uniforms for the girls and boys.

I am very happy to be able to tell you about this news, and most of all, that we have overcome the rough start with the new director and things are going back to normal. I hope that Becky [former CFHI Outreach/Alumni Coordinator] can still send an alumnus to help out in the project this year, which is the last year that it's scheduled to be operating."

(Translated from Dra. Uribe's report by Nick Penco, CFHI Student Program Manager)