

A GUIDE TO BOLIVIA FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS



A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY

From the mighty ice-covered peaks of the Andes to the vibrant rainforests and huge savannas of the Amazon basin, Bolivia is a country of stunning

natural beauty. There are vast, dazzling salt flats, ancient ruins, the world's highest capital city, La Paz, and some of the most diverse plant and animal life in South America.

HISTORY

Bolivia's earliest known civilisation dates back to around 2000 BC. The ruins of this people's grand city, Tiwanaku, can still be seen today near the shores of Lake Titicaca. Thousands of years later, in the 15th century, Bolivia became part of the Inca Empire. The Spanish invaded in 1525 and Bolivia lived under their rule for almost 300 years. During this time, the indigenous population were enslaved. Bolivia finally gained independence from Spain in 1825.

Bolivia has survived periods of significant instability since gaining independence. It lost much of its land, including the coast, in wars with neighbouring countries. The 1900s were filled with revolution and turmoil and there were many changes in government. A democracy was finally established in 1985.

CURRENT SITUATION

In 2005, Evo Morales was elected—Bolivia's first president from an indigenous community. Over the last ten years, poverty levels have fallen and indigenous people's rights are better recognised and protected.

However, Bolivia remains the poorest country in South America and many people still battle discrimination and inequality in their daily lives. Almost half of the population live below the poverty line. This rises to as high as 60 per cent in rural areas, where people depend on farming to make a living.

THE ALTIPLANO

The *Altiplano* is a vast plain high in the Andes, 3800m above sea level. The soil in this region is poor quality and extremely dry. The climate is changing and so are the rains – they are very unpredictable; sometimes there can be too much rain, but usually there is simply not enough.

These conditions make it difficult to grow food. Families are unable to grow enough varied food for a good diet. As a result, many people, particularly children, are malnourished. Often family members are forced to leave the area to find work in the cities because failed rains and sudden hailstorms have destroyed entire harvests.

CAFOD PARTNERS

On the Altiplano, CAFOD has three 'partners', local organisations that know the area and its needs. They offer training in traditional and modern farming methods, such as making organic fertilisers and terracing the land to stop soil being washed away. They also provide tools and training in how to build greenhouses and wormeries — containers in which worms convert waste into rich compost at no cost.

The impact of these techniques is huge. Families who had received continual support from CAFOD partners are now able to grow enough food to feed themselves as well as additional food to sell to earn an income. Those who have learned new skills go on to support others by sharing their knowledge around the community.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Geography: Geographical skills; Locational knowledge; Place knowledge; Human and physical geography, including climate zones, biomes and vegetation belts.

English: En1 Speaking and Listening: Speaking; Listening; Group discussion and interaction; Drama
En2 Reading: Reading for information; Non-fiction and non-literary texts. En3 Writing: Composition.

RUBEN'S STORY

Ruben is eight years old and lives with his mum, dad and younger brother in Bolivia. They live in an area called the *Altiplano*, high up in the Andes mountain range.

Ruben's family own some land near their home, where they grow food to eat. They rely on this food, but unpredictable weather and poor soil makes growing food really difficult. The family often went hungry, and Ruben's parents worried that Ruben was very quiet because he was not eating enough food.

However, there is good news. With support from CAFOD's partner, Ruben's family were given the materials and support to build their own greenhouse. The greenhouse protects crops from the harsh environment, so they are now able to grow lots of tasty vegetables to help Ruben grow up big and strong.

Ruben's family often visit their greenhouse together. Ruben enjoys weeding and taking care of the plants.

CAFOD's partner have been working with Ruben's community in lots of different ways. As well as supporting families to build greenhouses, they have been teaching them about good farming practices and showing them how to build wormeries, so they can use worms to make compost! All of this is helping more families to grow enough food.

With this support, Ruben's family can now grow enough food so they can cook well, eat well and live well. Ruben seems much happier and is learning lots at school. The family are even able to sell some of their leftover vegetables at the market. The money they make helps them plan for a brighter future.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

RUBEN'S STORY

Using the film and story above, share and discuss Ruben's story.

- Choose children to 'hot seat' as Ruben.
- Suggested questions for the children to ask Ruben:
 - > How did you feel when you could not grow enough food?
 - > How do you feel now that your family have the greenhouse and have learnt new farming methods?
 - > What was life like for you and your family before you had the greenhouse?
 - > What does the greenhouse mean to you?
 - > How do you feel about your future?

THE RIGHT TO NUTRITIOUS FOODS

Explain that every child has the right to nutritious foods. Link to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 24, and Catholic Social Teaching.

- Explain that Bolivia is the poorest country in South America, and one in five people are malnourished. Demonstrate this fact by picking out one in every five children in the class.
- Talk about the reasons why many people in Bolivia may not have enough food (climate change, weather conditions and poor soil) and how this might affect their health, well-being and ability to work or learn.
- Explain that one of the corporal works of mercy is to feed the hungry. Decide how to take action as a class to help feed the hungry, to help others around the world to have their right to food.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING ENOUGH FOOD

Use Ruben's story to unpack the impact that CAFOD-funded food projects have on communities. Ask children to draw diagrams or pictures to show the different ways that having enough nutritious food to eat improves lives. You may wish to use the following points to guide you:

- **Growing food** By learning good farming practices and having the support to build greenhouses and wormeries, families like Ruben's are able to grow enough food, meaning fewer people go hungry. Families can sell extra crops to pay for other things they need, such as uniforms and books for school.
- **Education** When children have enough food to eat they have more energy and can concentrate better in class.
- **Health** With nutritious food to eat, people stay healthy, so they can work or learn better, improving their lives.
- **Poverty** Being able to grow enough food improves lives in many different ways, helping to break the cycle of poverty.

BOOK A CAFOD VOLUNTEER

For a free assembly or workshop visit:

cafod.org.uk/local

WATCH RUBEN'S FILM WITH YOUR CLASS
cafod.org.uk/primary



BOLIVIA INFORMATION SHEET FOR CHILDREN

KEY FACTS



Population: Almost 11 million

Main Languages: Spanish, Quechua, Aymara and others

Main religion: Catholic

Average life expectancy: Female 71 years, male 66 years

Land size: Four times the size of the UK

Agricultural products: Potatoes, corn, rice and grains, coffee, sugar and cotton

Currency: Bolivian Boliviano

DID YOU KNOW...?

Worms can stop people going hungry! How? Well, worms help to make compost, and compost helps crops to grow better. With a wormery, families like Joel's can grow more vegetables, so they don't go hungry.



Joel and his family live in Bolivia. They used to find it difficult to grow much food. But with support from CAFOD they built a wormery. Their vegetables now grow much better, and Joel and his brother are growing bigger and stronger.

HOW TO MAKE A WORMERY

YOU WILL NEED:

- A container – wormeries can be bought online, or you could use an old fish tank
- Moist soil
- Sand
- Worm food – old leaves and some fruit/ vegetable peelings



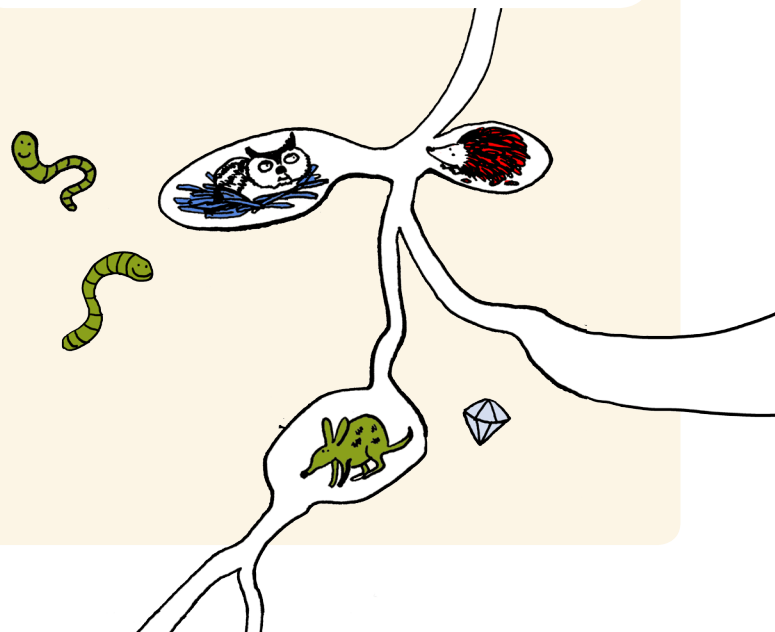
INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Add a thin layer of sand to the bottom of your container. About 1cm deep should do.
2. Add a thick layer of soil, a thin layer of sand and another thick layer of soil. Continue filling the container until the soil reaches about 5cm from the top.
3. Find some worms! You can buy worms from fishing shops, although it is probably more fun to go out and find your own.
4. Add the worms to your container, and sprinkle over some worm food.
5. Enjoy your very own wonder worms! Look for the patterns they make in the soil, and see what happens over time to the peelings or fruit you put into the container.



HANDY TIPS:

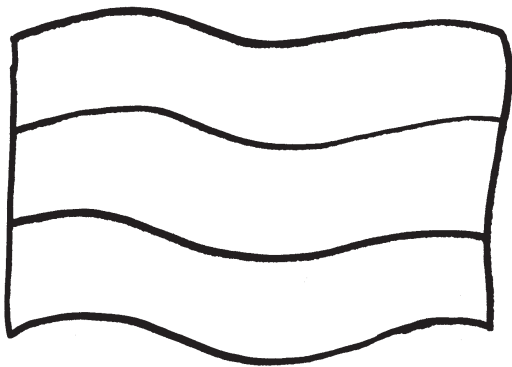
- Worms breathe through their skin and need damp soil to be able to do this, so always make sure the soil in their container is moist.
- Don't feed your worms too much and try varying their diet. Worms like coffee grounds and tea bags, cereals, bread and well-crushed eggshells.
- Worms don't like heat, so keep them out of direct sunlight. If you want to handle them, make sure your hands are slightly damp.



BOLIVIA ACTIVITY SHEET

- 1 Add labels to the map – La Paz, Sucre, the Andes, surrounding countries.
- 2 List some key facts about Bolivia.
- 3 Colour the flag and find out its meaning.
- 4 Design a poster about Bolivia. Include information and images to tell others about this country.

1.



2. KEY FACTS

3. ABOUT THE FLAG

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