

Water, Water Everywhere, But...



Providing water to grateful rural communities



HIGH IN THE ANDES MOUNTAINS LIFE HAS been a constant battle for survival for 39-year-old Eugenio Guzman. He makes a modest living as a tin prospector and farmer. Home for his family is a simple, windswept mudbrick adobe home.

Similar, crumbling and abandoned nearby houses underline the uncertainty and hardship on the surrounding mountain plateau.

But life suddenly became a lot easier for Guzman and his neighbors in Bolivia's Carbuyo village last year when a wind-driven well was sunk adjacent to his house. A huge water tank was built and pipes installed to all nearby houses.

For the first time, these rural dwellers had access to regular, fresh and safe water. "We have never had constant water before," Guzman said. "It is transforming our lives."

Bolivia has plentiful reserves of water. But for several reasons—some of its rivers are polluted, glaciers are disappearing because of climate change, underground reservoirs are difficult to exploit, communities are located in isolated regions—many of the country's nearly 10 million population have lacked access to safe and regular water supplies.

JICA has worked for many years with Bolivian authorities to overcome these problems in a variety of ways (the agency also works with other Latin American countries which face similar headaches.



(see "Peru" box, page 12)

According to JICA expert Yoshinori Fukushima since 1998 an estimated 4,500 of the country's 28,000 rural communities representing 70% of the population have received help.

Fukushima, an ethnic Japanese born in Bolivia, said nearly 4,000 shallow and deep wells ranging in depth from a few meters to 420 meters have been sunk. Huge water tanks were built and solar or wind power systems installed to provide power.

In the latest joint project which began in 2008, nearly 300 deep and shallow wells are being dug annually and although JICA's direct participation is scheduled to end in 2011, Fukushima said the government is expected to continue the schedule.

Small-scale enterprises have been established. In Sora village, for instance, a newly established bakery sells home-made loaves to locals and profits support a recently installed water system.

A JICA-supported laboratory in the mining town of Oruro analyzes

water from any newly dug wells.

"Sure, at times we find 'bad' water, too high in salt or minerals," Jorge Lizarazu Blondel, a JICA regional coordinator said recently. "If that happens we close the well immediately."

The importance of even a simple well was highlighted during a recent visit by a JICA delegation to the town of Socamani. Virtually the entire community turned out for the visit, including local and regional officials, the school band and most of the 400 primary and high school students.

In addition to providing the town with water, the school now receives running water — free.

"Yes, we had water before, but only for a few hours a day," one town official said. "Now, it is almost 24 hours a day. The new well has helped reduce pollution and water related diseases, particularly among the children."

Some enterprising homes have even installed greenhouses, and locally grown onions are now marketed as far away as the United States. ■



Community foot patrol

The Koban principle

WHAT DO 17TH CENTURY JAPAN and one of the world's 21st century megacities have in common?

A concept of community policing developed in those far off days is helping authorities in Sao Paulo, the sprawling Brazilian metropolis of nearly 20 million people, to reform a law enforcement system which in the past has been overwhelmed by soaring crime rates and deep public mistrust.

KOBAN is based on the idea of direct community policing. Small police units are stationed in neighborhoods and, after securing the trust of communities, can more effectively tackle problems ranging from providing emergency services or solving crimes to other assistance such as 'lost and found' or issuing directions.

The very first Koban, a simple security police box, was established in 1874 and today has become an integral and instantly recognized symbol of policing in Japan with around 6,000 local stations across the nation.

So successful has it become that JICA has 'exported' the concept to countries as far apart as Singapore, Indonesia and several South and Central American countries, including Brazil.

Sao Paulo state and its capital first introduced the Koban concept in 1997 and in the latest project which ends in 2011, Japanese police experts regularly visit Sao Paulo and local officials go to Japan for advanced training.

Nearly half of Brazil's 27 states have

now embraced the idea as have nearby countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Brazil needed all the help it could get. Along with its impressive economic growth in recent years the South American giant recorded equally 'impressive' crime statistics.

In Sao Paulo, 30.1 persons per 100,000 population were being murdered in 2003, a figure five times higher than the American state of California.

In the two square-kilometer Vila Formosa section of the city, a 17-strong unit of Brazil's military police has been at work since 2008 establishing closer ties with 10,000 local city and small-scale industrial workers.

"Before, the population was afraid of

the police. We had a very negative image," admits Koban leader Sgt. Adilson Ciriaco. "Today, we receive crime tips. Everyone knows us. We have become a friendly face."

The unit achieved a turn-

around by routine foot patrols, neighborhood 'door knocking' and community-friendly activities such as helping the homeless and elderly, visiting schools, establishing communal vegetable gardens and printing a regular Koban news sheet.

"Thefts and robberies have decreased by 40% in the last two years," said Sgt. Ciriaco. "People come to talk to us, to tell us things. They are actively participating in community policing rather than running away from us." ■



Japanese and Brazilian police discuss the Koban concept.

Peru: A Similar Water Problem

Like neighboring Bolivia, Peru has plenty of water, but many of its 28 million population have difficulty accessing it. JICA has been working for more than 30 years to help improve the situation and for the last several years has been involved in the government's Agua Para Todos (Water for All) program.

One project is improving water and sewage facilities for the 8.5 million people who live in and around the capital, Lima, which is surrounded by dry regions, with the construction of water towers and a major water plant.

Since 2000 access to safe water has increased dramatically in the city of Iquitos, and a recent sewage project begun with JICA's assistance will sharply reduce the flow of untreated waste into the nearby Amazon River.