

## **Emergency supplies to isolated communities in Ucayali organised by staff of the National Intercultural University of the Peruvian Amazon**

**The problem.** The peoples living in the Amazon are socio-politically marginalized and are facing extremely severe hardship as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Medical facilities collapsed early on, basic-need supplies became scarce and the price of medicines soared. Travelling to a hospital takes several hours or even days. For lack of medical personnel, supplies and space Pucallpa's hospitals have had to close their doors to manage the crowds of patients, leaving many to their fate in the streets. Many of those that have managed to recover, find themselves with ongoing health issues related to COVID exposure.

Additionally, the limitations on mobility and the paralysis of the economy has meant that rural communities, especially those that are based on farming, non-timber forest products such as medicines and artisanal goods have not been able to reach markets, crippling home economies and resilience to bounce back.

**The objective.** The objective is two-pronged: 1) **Prevention Support** prevent more people from catching the virus by equipping people in isolated homesteads to protect themselves (prevention), and 2) **Resilience Support** to provide other support in a dynamic and direct way as needs change in unpredictable ways in the face of a new crisis response context (resilience).

**The solution.** With the government facing the daunting challenge of providing emergency medical attention, distributing food supplies and strengthening resilience across the population, staff at the National Intercultural University of the Peruvian Amazon (UNIA) have pooled their skills and local knowledge to take help to rural and peri-urban communities in Ucayali. The team have strong local networks, and so the resources arrive quickly to the people who need them.

**The Team** is led by Dra Aoife Bennet who has worked in the Peruvian Amazon for 9 years and moved to Pucallpa in 2019 to work at the local university and engage in social projects<sup>1</sup>. The team relies on the Ucayali support network – made up of key members of Pucallpa's professionals and leaders with contacts and capacity for enabling the purchase of goods in bulk (from farms and warehouses) and for coordinating the delivery to villages and communities.

Components of support:

The COVID-19 situation in Ucayali is dynamic and rapidly changing. Our primary objective is to launch an initiative for prevention packs. Nevertheless, other initiatives such as facilitation of resilience through supported market access, medical training and provision of a communal pharmacy, territorial and environmental defence support amongst others may be more fitting in some cases where remaining at home is not possible.

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<sup>1</sup> Dra Aoife Bennett Investigadora Docente Extraordinaria en la Universidad Nacional Intercultural de la Amazonía (UNÍA)

**Prevention** packs contain essential items to support families to get through the pandemic without having to go into a nearby town and risk infection, and spreading it. They include personal items such as soap, detergent, matches and medicine such as paracetamol and electrolytes as well as a generous selection of locally-relevant non-perishable food items such as beans, rice and cooking oil. The initiative has the support of the Ministry of Agriculture for sourcing locally-produced rice, and the Ministry for the Environment (Protected Areas) (SERNAMP) and other important local networks such as the Regional Directorate of Health, the Regional office of the Indigenous Federations and many more.

**Resilience** initiatives emerge on a case by case basis, for example we have provided one enthusiastic community with fast growing vegetable seeds, that can be grown in a small space near the house. Another community has asked for support with establishing a communal pharmacy, and another community has asked for craft supplies (needles, threads, dyes) to be sent so that they can produce artisanal goods, those women will also receive support transporting their goods in a biosecure way.

**Costs and reach.** The initiative has raised £20,000 on Aoife Bennet's Facebook appeal and will reach £30,000 including the contribution of £10,000 from APS member Mayasuni Habsburg's separate appeal.

The £10,000 donation will fund approximately 200 families (1,020 individuals). The overall budget will reach at least 510 families (3,060).

**Transfer of funds.** On approval of the grant by the APS Committee MH will transfer the sum of £10,000 to the Anglo Peruvian Society:

Account details (to be supplied by the Treasurer)

On receipt of the funds the APS Treasurer will disburse the funds to the project bank account (to be supplied by Aoife Bennett)

**Reporting.** The APS Committee member in charge of charities, Sophie Bell, will liaise with Aoife, bearing in mind this is an emergency intervention unlikely to extend beyond 3-6 months at the most.

Recommended to the Committee June 17 2020

Chairman