

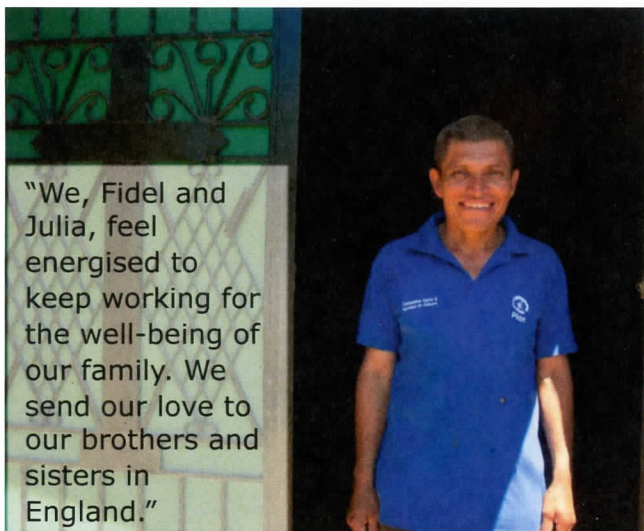
Update September 2018

Thank you for supporting the community in Puentecitos

In this update from Connect2 El Salvador, we're looking back at how your prayers, support and solidarity have transformed the lives of our Puentecitos friends over the years.

You have helped farmers learn to adapt to climate change by diversifying their crops and storing their produce in better ways. You have supported women as they have started their own businesses and formed savings groups.

Above all, through your fundraising, messages and enthusiasm, you have helped this hardworking community to live with dignity and hope.

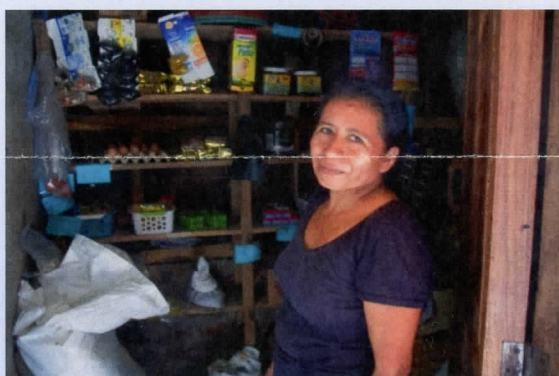


Later in this update: we have news on the future of Connect2. We will be inviting you to start a new journey with the people of Colombia from January 2019. We can't wait to share with you how your support could positively impact the lives of young people as they work for peace.

Lives you helped change



Ana Julia finds her women's savings group a real lifeline, as it can be difficult for rural people to get a bank account. "I feel motivated to work in a group because it benefits our families and we are helping each other."



Rosa runs a small shop and is also treasurer of her savings group. You gave her chickens to rear and sell.



Edelmira and Martir are mainstays of the project. They received training and seedlings to grow fruit trees, which have improved their family's diet and income.

Women in business

connect2: *El Salvador*



Over the last 8 years, UK parishes with CAFOD have helped the women of Puentecitos start up in business.

Poor rural families need extra income to boost what they earn from farming. You have helped small businesses through:

- skills training;
- start-up costs;
- ongoing support with leadership.

The new businesses, mostly run by women, are helping the local economy.

- **SIBIA** and friends in the New Hope group have set up a bakery: "What we feel most proud of as women is having the opportunity to work."
- **MARIA** is part of a women's group who make and sell soap.
- **JULIA** has opened a grocery shop, and sells eggs from hens raised by other women on the project.

This is not just about making cash. The project empowers women to make decisions and plan for the future. Since last year, 50 women have taken on leadership roles, helping their families and communities to develop.

"As women, we are learning to believe in ourselves. We have a strong sense of purpose and self-belief." *Sibia*

The groups also provide safe spaces where women can discuss problems such as violence and discrimination.

Care for our common home

Organic, sustainable farming to boost crops and adapt to climate change is reducing poverty.

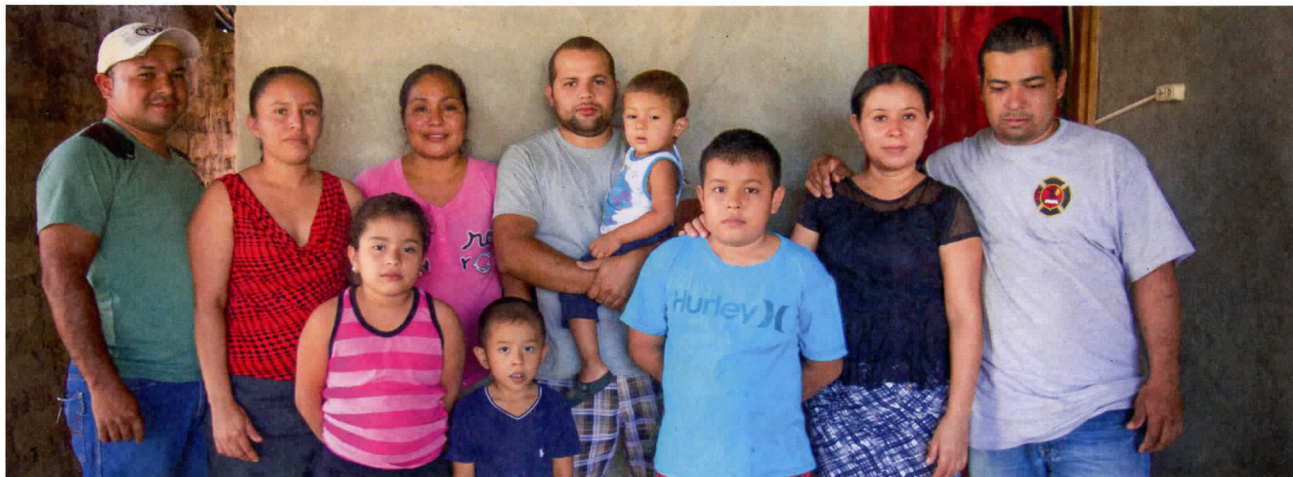
In fact, 7 out of 10 farmers have been able to buy less food, because crops yields are up.



- Farmers have learned to increase and rotate their range of crops and make organic fertiliser.
- Native seed varieties are being used that don't require costly chemicals, and won't rot on the stalk.
- Three quarters of families on the project now have a wider variety of crops, giving them a healthy diet including corn, cucumber, green beans, okra and lots of leafy greens.

Farmers are gradually becoming more self-sufficient and are beginning to feel that they have choices in life instead of being trapped in poverty.

"This independence makes us happy," says Fidel. "We have enough to share with others. Our family has the power to make our own decisions."



Farewell from El Salvador

These pages show just a small part of the real change that you have brought to our many friends in El Salvador in the past 8 years.

We have achieved many of our targets in improving people's income and food production in this very poor region of the country.

While CAFOD's work in El Salvador will continue, we would like to offer you a new focus for your support and fundraising for next year. So our December update will be the last from Puentecitos.

If you would like to write farewell messages to our friends, please send them to us and we will pass them on: *Connect2 Team, CAFOD, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JB.*

Hello to Colombia

From January, we'd like to invite you to join people in Magdalena Medio in Colombia as they work to build peace in their country after years of conflict.

With your support, the young people of Magdalena Medio (pictured below) will work to bring their community together and one day become known as "Generation Peace".

To mark the start of this new relationship between UK parishes and the innovative peace project, we will be moving on with a new name, Hands On, to replace Connect2.

To find out more do get in touch with your local CAFOD office or visit our website at: cafod.org.uk/HandsOn

Charity no 1160384 and a company limited by guarantee no 09387398



Key moments on our journey

2010

- The Connect2 scheme links to El Salvador and we meet the narrators Fidel and Julia, then later Sibia, Carlos and Erasmo.



2011

- 25 families are helped to repair fish ponds damaged by severe storms.
- The bakery gets a new, better oven.

2012

- A new network of shops starts across the area to help boost the local economy. Farmers plant native variety seeds to improve harvests.

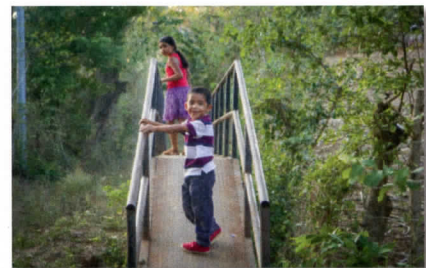


2013

- The New Hope group start a chicken farm, receiving training and an incubator.

2014

- Community is trained to map climate hazards and prepare for disaster. They receive megaphones, wheelbarrows, wellies, rope, shovels and torches.
- Volunteers build two bridges, for 650 families to cross rivers safely.



2015

- Workshops held on climate change and how to reduce its impact.
- Community water source improved, bridges built and repaired.
- 20 families received new roofs.
- 48 families join together as a cooperative to get fair prices for their crops.



Key moments on our journey

2016

- Five irrigation systems are installed to improve crop growth and preserve water.
- Renovation begins on the chapel in Puentecitos, to better withstand earthquakes.



2017-18

- 17 savings and loans groups are up and running. 205 local women are actively participating.
- Funds for 10 initiatives to buy chickens and other animals including ducks and pigs are awarded to local families.
- 40 women take part in exchange visits with other villages to share their experiences of sustainable farming methods.
- 125 households have improved the quality and quantity of their food.
- 70% of community members have a greater income as a result of selling their surplus production.

