

christian
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'The earth is
the Lord's, and
all that is in it'
Psalm 24:1

Be bold, be strong:
**Caring for Mother
Earth in Bolivia**



A habitat under threat



Communities in the Bolivian Amazon often refer to the rainforest as 'the Big Home'.

Caring for Mother Earth supports indigenous communities in the Bolivian Amazon whose home and survival are under threat. These communities have a close and spiritual relationship with the rainforest. They often refer to it as '*La Casa Grande*' or 'the Big Home', which welcomes, protects and shelters all who live there. This relationship with the forest not only provides for the needs of the community but also protects the forest and the ecosystems that it supports. Having a legal right to the land is vital in preserving their cultural identity.

But now their home is under grave threat.

Bolivia is one of the poorest and most unequal countries in South America. Millions of people live in difficult conditions, struggling to survive. It shouldn't be this

way in a county that is so rich in natural resources and home to the great biodiversity of the Amazon rainforest. But deforestation by loggers, cattle ranchers and large landowners to grow cash crops are destroying the environment.

The impact of climate change on Bolivia is having a devastating impact on these forest communities. Christian Aid's partners are working with indigenous communities in practical and effective ways to protect this important and precious part of God's world, and to make sure they can live in safety for generations to come. Following terrible floods last year (see page 4), a generous grant from the Church of Scotland's World Mission Council enabled our partners to assess the needs of these communities as they began the recovery process. Now we need your help to carry on the work that can transform lives.

Smart solar solutions

Most families in rural areas of Bolivia use firewood for fuel. It's usually women and children who have to collect the wood, taking hours of their day that could be spent on education, work or fun. Using these fuels in traditional ovens is not only time consuming – the smoke they produce also has a terrible impact on people's health (especially for the women who are responsible for preparing meals) and on the environment. Burning so much firewood creates pollution and adds to deforestation, causing land to erode and agricultural production to struggle.

Getting hold of firewood to cook with is becoming more difficult too. More intense rain, leading to more frequent floods that last for months,

means that families who generally use firewood to cook are unable to find dry wood. The cost of cooking gas is too high for these poor communities, leaving parents with few options for feeding their children.

The answer is simple, sustainable and smart. With your help, the Caring for Mother Earth project can provide solar-powered ovens for families to cook with, making the most of nature's most renewable resource. Being able to cook without cutting down firewood means that children can have their time back, women can have their health back, and the rainforest can be left to grow – while families no longer have to worry about how they'll cook their food.



Solar-powered ovens can reduce deforestation and other harmful effects of using firewood for fuel.

Standing firm in future

Deforestation, coupled with an increasingly intense rainy season has meant that last year the forest communities suffered dreadful flooding. They lost homes, crops and livestock.

Lisbeth is 12 years old and lives in the Capaina region, one of the areas affected by the flooding. She, like many others, still has the marks of the fungal infection she contracted on her arms from being unable to get her skin dry. Her home was flooded and her village became, in her words, 'a lake with snakes'.

Lisbeth's brothers swam through the raging floods to try to hang the families' belongings from the roof of their house, hoping to save something from ruin. But the water rose over four metres. The villagers had to be evacuated by canoe, leaving everything they owned at the mercy of the rising floods.

When they finally returned to the village, Lisbeth's home was full of mud and they had to dig what was left of it out before they could get inside. They found their chickens and ducklings dead in the mud and all the fruit on their mango and banana trees was destroyed. With nothing left, the family had to start rebuilding their lives from scratch.



Lisbeth, 12, lost everything in last year's floods.

Understandably, Lisbeth is worried that the floods will come again. But through Caring for Mother Earth, we're working with these communities to help them get prepared, so that next time disaster strikes, all will not be lost. Your support will help local farmers to learn new ways to grow food, using innovative techniques, planting crops in moveable bags, and making the best use of higher ground. The solar-powered ovens we're providing really come into their own in times of flooding, allowing families to cook and boil water safely even when all the wood is wet.

Being prepared can make all difference between being washed away and standing on solid ground. With your help, children like Lisbeth will rest easier at night knowing that when the floods come again, their families will be more able to cope.