

“Home In a Box Project” (HIB)

The mission “Friends of Chimbote,” was started when Fr. Jack Davis from Devils Lake, North Dakota arrived in Chimbote Peru in 1970 shortly after a devastating earthquake struck the region. Sixty five to seventy thousand people perished and 80 % of the buildings in Chimbote were damaged or destroyed.

The mission has grown to include 7 soup kitchens, 7 libraries, 5 quanta’s for homeless or handicapped, a Pre-University program, Dollars for Scholars, drug and alcohol abuse program, battered women’s shelter, tutoring program, micro loan programs, medical clinic for the poor, trade school programs and more. Chimbote is a fishing port city that has lost much of it’s commerce due to the earthquake, overfishing, and climate change. Still, thousands of refugees from the mountains continue to squat on the outskirts of the city where they live in miserable poverty.

With the help of Minnesota Rotary Clubs and other donors we have been sending two 40ft. shipping containers each year for the past 13 years to Chimbote. We send humanitarian supplies as well as education and medical supplies. As Rotary Clubs and other non-profits have learned...it is not enough just to send items...there must be sufficient organization at the receiving end to assure that the right items are sent, secured and distributed efficiently to those most in need. With the long term experience of the mission and in cooperation with the rotary in Chimbote many of the logistic problems have been greatly reduced. We can say with confidence that for the most part the right goods are getting to the right people efficiently.

“Home in a Box” was developed 4 years ago to try to get around some of the distribution problems in an impoverished area. Realizing that simply putting items out on tables and inviting the poor to take what they need is very inefficient since the people who come might not have the greatest need and the poor tend to take whatever is offered...who can blame them? So we met with several of the staff and social workers at the mission and asked who is in the most need, what are the most basic and obvious needs and how can we distribute these items more efficiently. This is how the idea of using 18 gallon plastic bins loaded with only durable, basic need items began. We worked together to determine what should be in each bin and the items are listed below along with instructions. (The list has been reviewed each year and small revisions have been made).

Here is how the “Home in a Box” project works...

1. Individuals and groups are invited to get involved with helping the poor in Chimbote by purchasing the list of items and filling the bins. The project is well received because it is straight forward, clear and can be done by an individual completing one bin or an organization doing 50.
2. Those wanting to help are given instructions, some tips and the packing list.
- 3.. “Home in a Box” is well suited for groups who want to do a hands on project...some can be shoppers, some can be workers. After purchasing the items most groups have arranged a time to set up an

“assembly line” to pack the bins...either at their own location or our warehouse location....this usually involves pizza... Completed bins are either delivered to the warehouse or picked up by volunteers.

4. The bins are manifested at the warehouse and packed into the container for shipping to Chimbote...about a 45 day trip.

5. Upon arrival at the mission the “Home in a Box” bins are secured in a storage area and are distributed by the missions social workers one or two at a time to families who are most in need. The social workers and staff at the mission who work with the poor daily along with the help of the local rotary identify those families who will receive the bins. Perhaps the family has just arrived from the mountains or has experienced a fire or other loss. Unlike many of the other humanitarian items, the “Home in a Box” can be stored over the entire course of the year and distributed as needed.

“Home in a Box” is a project of the “Friends of Chimbote Mission” in Chimbote Peru.

The Director of “Friends of Chimbote” in the U.S. is Susan Trnka

Friends of Chimbote is Headquartered in Fargo, North Dakota.

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