

FIND YOUR CALLING

“When I was a child my mother said to me, ‘If you become a soldier, you’ll be a general. If you become a monk, you’ll be the pope.’ Instead I became a painter and wound up as Picasso.”

Picasso

Living fifteen to a room with no shower or toilet. Ending each day with blisters on your hands. And you can’t even speak the language. Would you want to go back?

Katie Reilly does. The six weeks she spent building and installing cisterns in Bolivia have given her a passion to help people get out of poverty and live sustainably. She explains, “The conditions were shocking. We only had to live like that for a few weeks but the villagers have to live like that all the time and I don’t think they should have to.

“Many mountain villages don’t have basic services so people are moving away to the edge of big cities.

“The cisterns collect rainwater to be used for irrigation. It’s a pilot project – hopefully it will enable people to stay.”

For her final year dissertation at Brookes, Katie is researching the most effective ways to support Bolivia’s poorest communities, using her own experience as a case study. “How much responsibility do they themselves have for living sustainably and how much is it down to architects, charities or governments to help them?” she asks.

And is Katie planning to return? “Next summer – Bolivia’s winter – I’m hoping to go back and work on another water project.”

The project Katie worked on is run by Mano a Mano and Oxford Development Abroad.

Katie studies Architecture.

