

When the chips are down ...



This presentation accompanies the *When the chips are down ...* assembly for 11 to 14-year-olds.



This is Adela Calla. She is 15 years old. She lives in the community of Chillca Palca, about 4,000 metres above sea level, high in the Andes in Bolivia. Adela's food comes mainly from her family's small plot of land that they have for growing food, and keeping animals to sell or rear for meat. The climate and poor quality of the soil make it difficult to grow food in Chillca Palca, and the staple diet is potatoes. Adela eats about 15 potatoes a day – morning, lunch-time and evening.



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But life has improved for Adela. And that is because of greenhouses like the one in this photo. It doesn't look like the greenhouses we have because the materials we use would not be suitable in Chillca Palca. This greenhouse has no glass, and it has walls made of mud bricks. The Center for Private Enterprise (CIPE), a local organisation backed by Christian Aid, taught the people of Chillca Palca how to prepare strong foundations for the greenhouse, and has advised them on the structure of the greenhouses. The roof is made of thick plastic sheeting and wood or rocks are used to hold the plastic down. Water is very precious and scarce at times. As the sun shines it gets very hot in the greenhouse and water collects on the walls and on the inside of the roof. It's possible to harvest the water that collects there and then use it to water the plants



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Adding worms to the soil produces good-quality compost, which helped Adela's family grow vegetables and improve the potato crop.



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Adela has learnt how to look after the plants. She says, 'I get rid of the weeds and plant the seeds. It's good to have the greenhouse because it gives us vegetables, which are good for us.' They eat the vegetables but also sell them, which brings in vital income for the family. The potato crop has improved because of the compost and means that the family has enough potatoes to eat all year round.