

A YEAR IN BOLIVIA

SUMMARY REPORT 2011

Plan is introducing computers and technology to rural schools



About Bolivia

Bolivia is a country of beautiful and diverse landscapes. Their new Constitution seeking equality for the whole population has been approved.

Despite these developments, Bolivia remains one of South America's poorest countries with 60% of the population living in poverty.

Plan works with children, young people, families and partners in six regions of Bolivia to ensure all play a role in implementing sustainable programmes to improve their communities.

Problems affecting the children of Bolivia

- Low healthcare, schooling and education
- Parents often do not earn enough to make ends meet
- Women, children and young people are often excluded from decision-making.



The foundation of a school being built.

PLAN'S PRIORITIES IN BOLIVIA

1 Increasing health

- Protecting the health of mothers and children aged up to five
- Promoting community health monitoring
- Supporting nursery care

2 Learning for life

- Improving education for children aged six to 14
- Promoting better school management
- Introducing computers and technology to rural schools

3 Healthy environments

- Helping families introduce clean water and sanitation to their communities
- Assisting communities control and prevent disease
- Supporting families affected by natural disasters

4 Empowerment

- Helping families increase income through training
- Supporting rural boarding schools, enabling young people acquire an education and agricultural skills
- Raising awareness of women's sexual and reproductive rights

By being a child sponsor, you have directly supported projects like the ones below. Your ongoing support sustains our long-term development work which impacts the lives of children, their families and communities for generations to come.

Together we are making an invaluable difference to the lives of people in Bolivia.

To learn more about Plan's work in Bolivia visit:

www.plan.org.au/ourwork/southernamerica/bolivia



Farming family showing the variety of produce.

CASE STUDY: THE QUEST TO IMPROVE NUTRITION AND HEALTH

On the vast, windswept plateau of the Altiplano, where the altitude averages 12,000 feet above sea level, frost covers the ground for at least 200 days a year.

Families living in this region are among the poorest in Bolivia, working as subsistence farmers or petty traders. Although the land seems barren and inhospitable, they depend on it for food and an income.

But the extreme weather has a devastating effect on their ability to grow a varied and nutritious diet for their children. Added to this, families do not have the knowledge or technical support to farm the land productively.

Lucia is a mother from the municipality of Pucarani. She recalls how until recently families would only eat onions and carrots that they bought from the market, "and didn't eat any other green vegetables."

Others said their children did not eat vegetables at all.

Like all mothers, Lucia worried for her children's health. Without a nourishing diet they were at risk of malnutrition and liable to fall ill and miss school.

Women Lead

Lucia is one of dozens of women from four municipalities in western Bolivia who are working with Plan on a community food security project. We aim to teach them how to improve their families' nutrition and health by growing and preparing a wide variety of produce.

By tapping into Plan's expertise and that of our partners, the women are learning how to choose the best foods for their family, plant vegetable gardens and gain the biggest yields.

Maria, from Jesús de Machaca municipality, explains how this approach has worked for her: "Through the project, we have participated in seed management. For example, my family gathered up all the seeds we had, like potato, quinoa, cañahua and tarwi. With help from the technicians, we keep the seeds that resist frost, pests and hail."

Since women like Maria are usually solely responsible for feeding and caring for their children, it is vital that the project is led by their experiences and needs. This is particularly important in these communities,

where women have little say in how their lives develop and take almost no part in decision-making.

As the women's knowledge and confidence grows, so too does the project's momentum. Learning is shared at workshops and education fairs, so gradually the women and their families become self-reliant.

For example, a group of women have been selected by their communities to be "nutritionist mothers", leading workshops to show others how to prepare recipes using locally grown ingredients.

"All the mothers participate in making [the recipes], tasting them and noticing how the food looks, tastes and feels," says Faustina, from Sica Sica. Plan workers and local healthcare staff then talk to the women about the food's nutritional value and issues like food hygiene.

The women know their knowledge must be passed on if the benefits are to be sustained. From the start, children and young people have been actively involved, planting school gardens, attending workshops and sharing what they have learned.

"This knowledge is forever," says Victoria from Pucarani. "We can use it everywhere."

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2010

- Plan helped set up the first national parliament for children and young people
- Plan helped increase the number of pregnant women making use of health services in 24 municipalities from 60% to 90%
- Plan worked with nearly 2,000 families to improve their housing to prevent the spread of the parasitic infection Chagas disease



Farmers checking variety of potatoes.

Some names have been changed for child protection and privacy reasons