

**SID - BOLIVIA**

**Helping Farmers Reclaim Eroded Land and  
Increase Their Productivity and Income**



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## **I. SID Bolivia's Goal**

We help reclaim the eroded soils and pastures of Bolivia's Altiplano and increase the productivity and income of Altiplano farmers. The Altiplano is home to 46% of Bolivia's rural population and 39% of the urban population. It was always the center of Bolivia's population and economy, and this was its downfall. The rural population increased, and farmers worked the land harder. Soils and pastures became eroded, productivity declined, and farmers worked the land even harder. However, the Altiplano is a large natural grassland, and farmers can make a good living from producing milk, beef, llama meat, and alpaca wool, if they first reclaim their eroded soils and pastures.

## **II. SID - Bolivia's Contribution**

We develop and promote innovations that more effectively address the twin problems of eroded land and rural poverty, such as:

- Making reclamation of eroded soils, pastures, and watersheds a co-equal goal of increasing productivity and income
- Using competitions among communities to mobilize widespread participation of farmers in adopting practices that reclaim land and increase income
- Planning the project with the beneficiaries
- Using successful farmers in addition to agronomists as project staff
- Employing female as well as male extension staff
- Making the equal participation of women in all training and technical assistance a condition of the project
- Beginning all projects with an assessment of the market, and then designing the project itself as the effort required to help farmers take advantage of opportunities to increase sales
- Treating farmers as business persons by helping them identify buyers
- Treating farmers as business persons by helping them make and use business plans
- Evaluating the results of the project with the beneficiaries.

## **III. SID - Bolivia's Program**

We address the twin problems of eroded land and rural poverty in three ways.

1. We work directly with farmers to demonstrate innovative methods for helping farmers reclaim eroded land and increase productivity and income at the same time.
2. We help farmers' associations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) employ more effective methods in the communities in which they work.

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3. We help organize workshops in which NGOs find solutions to common problems, share lessons learned, and seek agreement on best practices.
4. We also carry our projects that help the Government of Bolivia and donors establish policies and programs that more effectively reclaim our natural resources and reduce the poverty of our rural residents.

### **IV. Our Project History**

#### **Demonstration areas:**

1997 – 2000. Helped 1,630 farmers in 50 communities in the Patacamaya region of the Central Altiplano to reclaim soils and pastures and increase productivity and income. Farmers reclaimed 1,593 hectares by digging water retention ditches, damming gullies, and re-seeding pasture, and another 70 hectares by constructing terraces. They reclaimed 14,307 hectares of land by putting it into reserves, and they also put 27,341 hectares of land in use under strict rotation. Dairy farmers increased their productivity from an average of 5.3 to 10.7 liters of milk per cow per day; and beef farmers increased sales of cows from an average of one to two per year. Average farm family income increased by 64%.

2002 – 2003. Helped 1,150 farm families in 40 communities of the Viacha region of the Northern Altiplano reclaim land and increase income. Farmers reclaimed 300 hectares of pastures by digging water retention ditches, damming gullies, and re-seeding them. They reclaimed 30 hectares of salty soil by digging water retention ditches and sowing Atriplex. They also sowed 370 hectares of alfalfa and 80 hectares with *pasto llorón* (weeping grass).

2004 - 2007. Recently completed first year of three-year project to help 1,500 farm families in 25 communities of the Pucarani region of the Northern Altiplano to reclaim land and increase productivity and income.

2004 - 2007. Recently completed first year of three-year project to help 1,300 farm families in 30 communities of the Sica Sica region of the Central Altiplano to reclaim land and increase productivity and income.

#### **Technical Assistance to NGOs:**

1997 - 1999. Helped 10 NGOs, 4 governmental projects (2 from Bolivia, 2 from Peru), and 2 university projects to analyze their results and re-plan their projects in order to increase their coverage and impact.

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2000 – 2004. Helped 35 NGOs working throughout the Altiplano re-plan their environmental and agricultural projects to take advantage of more effective methods, implement the projects, evaluate their results, and improve the projects once again. The NGOs were working in 1,184 communities with 30,246 farm families. They helped farmers reclaim nearly a hectare of land per family and increase income by 23.3% during the course of the three-year period of technical assistance.

### **Best Practices Workshops:**

2000 - 2004. Helped two consortiums of NGOs, the Plataforma de Suelos and the USACE network, to carry out workshops in which NGO staff shared information on the effectiveness of different methods for reclaiming land and increasing income and discussed solutions to common problems.

### **Policy Formation:**

2002. Worked with GTZ (the German Technical Assistance Fund) and Bolivia's National Park Service to develop methods for helping farmers living in the Sajama National Park to reclaim native grasslands and marshes in ways that benefited the animals of the park as well as their livestock.

2004. Worked with JICA (the Japan International Cooperation Agency) and Bolivia's Ministry of Agriculture to plan a program for reclaiming soils and pastures and increasing productivity and income in the 10 municipalities from Patacamaya to Tambo Quemado, Bolivia's main road to Chile.

## **V. Building Democracy through Decentralization and Citizen Participation**

SID - Bolivia has also played an important role in helping implement Bolivia's decentralization and citizen participation program, enacted by the Popular Participation Law and reform of 1994. We helped residents of El Alto divide their city into seven districts and select public works and services for the 1996 city plan and budget. We helped citizens in the 22 districts of the City of La Paz select public works and services for the 1996 and 1997 plans and budgets. From 1996 to 2000, we worked in 20 rural municipalities throughout the country to develop methods and materials for helping citizens select and supervise public works and services, and for helping municipal officials to produce these public works and services as well as provide program and financial reports to the residents of their municipality.

## **VI. For More Information, Contact**

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