



# Development Assistance Country Report for the Plurinational State of Bolivia

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PRESIDENTE CONSTITUCIONAL  
DEL ESTADO PLURINACIONAL DE BOLIVIA



# Contents

Introduction.....	4
Infrastructure & Poverty alleviation.....	5
➤ <i>Vivir Bien</i>	
➤ <i>Addressing Poverty</i>	
➤ <i>Moving Forward</i>	
Education.....	10
➤ <i>Current Education System</i>	
➤ <i>Proposed Education Reforms</i>	
Health.....	15
➤ <i>Health Sector Overview</i>	
➤ <i>Health Sector Challenges</i>	
➤ <i>Proposed Methods for Improvement</i>	
Indigenous Identity & Drug Enforcement.....	18
➤ <i>Introduction to Coca in Bolivia</i>	
➤ <i>Cultural Roots of the Coca Leaf</i>	
➤ <i>Coca and the SDGs</i>	
Goals Moving Forward.....	21
References.....	24



# I. Introduction

To whom it may concern,

The Bolivian people have endured many hardships at the hands of neoliberal development and assistance. Recent years have brought political upheaval leading to the unjust coup of a democratically elected president and resulting months of civil unrest. This coupled with the global pandemic has severely weakened our state infrastructure and thus our ability to respond to such challenges presented in the Sustainable Development Goals.

We appear at this aid consortium in good faith, and are open to dialogue and discussion about assistance programs. Yet, it must be clear: we are against the hegemony of development that prioritizes the health of corporations and harm of the Earth. We have seen what neoliberal development has done to Mother Earth, how its extractive industries clear our forests and poison our soil. The lumber companies that invade and wage war with our indigenous communities everyday. No more shall this be the reality for Bolivia.

The Plan Nacionales and Patriotic Agendas enacted under the Evo Morales administration guides our development as a state that wishes to exist in harmony with nature — as we did for centuries.


Bolivia was re-founded in 2009 as a plurinational state informed by the

indigenous knowledge of Vivir Bien, to live well, and the 2014 Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth. We recognize and seek to represent our multi-ethnic constituency that has long been marginalized by the development practices of the global north. No more shall Bolivia's past as a third-world colony dictate our future development.

Just as the Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto appeared before the UN in 1989 declaring that aid would cause the overthrow of her government and further harm to its citizens, we do the same but with nature as our citizenship. The first world needs our hemp, our timber, our natural gas, and our lithium. But the Earth needs itself, for without the carbon neutralizing power of the Amazon we would all perish. Traditional models of development are incompatible with the Bolivian people — we seek aid that acknowledges this fact — that human-kind can and must live in harmony with nature.

En solidaridad y igualdad de humanidad,

*Representatives of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, her indigenous territories, and the MAS political party.*



## II. Development of Infrastructure and the Eradication of Extreme Poverty

### *Vivir Bien*

2025 will mark 200 years since the establishment of the Bolivian country and just 16 years from its refounding as a plurinational state under former president Evo Morales Ayma. An achievement that has set the Bolivian people on track for an inclusive, participatory democratic state enshrined under Morales' 13 pillars of a sovereign Bolivia. Linked with the Sustainable Development Goals, the pillars of the 2025 Patriotic Plan seek to mitigate suffering and guarantee human rights and quality of life (Claros, 2021).

We believe that any potential development assistance enacted under the SDGs must consider the following 13 pillars:

1. Eradication of extreme poverty.
2. Socialization and universalization of basic services with sovereignty to Vivir Bien.
3. Health, education and sports for the formation of an integral human being.
4. Scientific and technological sovereignty with its own identity.
5. Financial community sovereignty without servility to financial capitalism.
6. Productive sovereignty with diversification and comprehensive development without the dictatorship of the capitalist market.
7. Sovereignty over our natural resources with nationalization, industrialization and

commercialization in harmony and balance with Mother Earth.

8. Food sovereignty through the construction of knowing how to eat Vivir Bien.
9. Environmental sovereignty with integral development and respecting the rights of Mother Earth.
10. Complementary integration of peoples with sovereignty.
11. Sovereignty and transparency in public management under the principles of not stealing, not lying, not being lazy and not being flattering.
12. Full enjoyment and happiness of our parties, our music, our rivers, our jungle, our mountains, our snow-capped mountains, our clean air, our dreams.
13. Sovereign reunion with our joy, happiness, prosperity and our sea.

The pillars which support the Patriotic Agenda are compatible with achievement on the SDGs. Both paradigms seek to guarantee the dignity, human rights and sustainable development of Bolivian citizens. Pillar 1 is identical to Goal 1 of the SDGs: No Poverty. Pillar 3 corresponds to Goals 3 and 4: Good Health and Well-being and Quality Education, respectively. Pillar 6 reflects the Bolivian understanding of Goals 8 and 9; Decent Work and Economic Growth and Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure. These specific goals and relevant pillars are incredibly important as they reflect the



Bolivian preference for a form of economic development outside of the free markets of capitalism. Further, as this first section will show, developing infrastructure is an intersectional solution that flows into possible success in other pillars and goals.

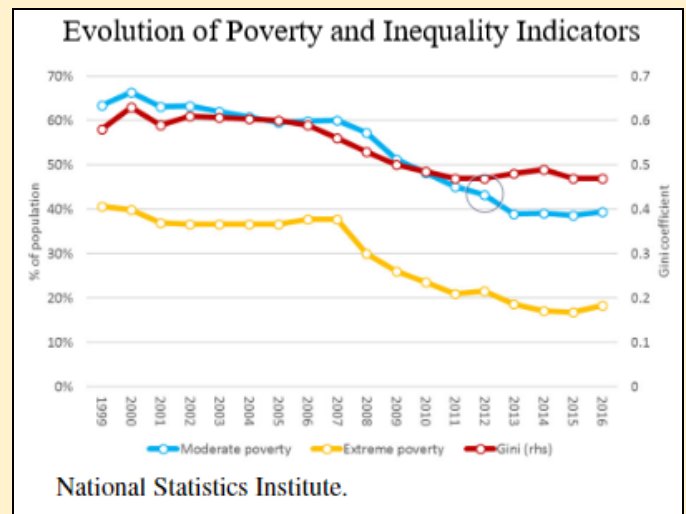
To have a life free from poverty you must have a stable house, access to medical care, and education, to name a few determinants. Pillar 9 and 12 provide a more indigenous-informed description of Goal 13: Climate Action. Bolivian development and well-being is inexplicably linked with nature. From the era of colonization, we have lived in careful harmony with our natural world, to decry the exploitative practices of foreign national corporations that seek to export resources for the profit of the global north, leaving our forests burned and waterways poisoned. The 2010 Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth speaks to Bolivia as one small part in an indivisible, global community that needs the environment.

Bolivia has integrated the indigenous cultural concept of *Vivir Bien*, to mean ‘the good life’ or ‘to live well,’ as a guiding principle for our constitution, national development plans, and public policies. This understanding centralizes a traditional style of harmonious coexistence with nature, allowing the Bolivian project to explore alternative models of development that address people’s everyday struggles. The SDGs borrow this language more so than previous development agendas; promoting well-being under Goal 3, protecting terrestrial ecosystems under Goal 15, and

ensuring sustainable consumption and ways of living under Goals 6, 7, 9 and 12. As such *Vivir Bien* is both a lens and informant for Bolivian development, owing to our state’s rich indigenous legacy.

### *Addressing Poverty*

The Plurinational State of Bolivia has made great progress in the eradication of poverty; between 2007 and 2015 levels of moderate and extreme poverty were significantly reduced by 21 percentage points, as well as inequality in income distribution, with the Gini coefficient decreasing from 0.56 to 0.47 (Beverinotti, 2018). This coincided with the threefold growth of our economy which was due to increased state participation.



The Bolivian economy is largely dominated by mining and the exportation of hydrocarbons; representing 78% of total export value in previous years (Beverinotti, 2018). The state’s investment into the public industries allowed the Bolivian economy to dodge the decline in economic growth suffered by other Latin American raw





material exporters. The state then distributed these profits to expanded conditional cash transfers (CCTs) which address extreme poverty at the source (World Bank, 2015. Pg. 8). These transfers were linked to school attendance, pregnancy, and early medical care. This model comes as an extension of the *Renta Dignidad*, or dignity income, which provides Bolivians over 60 a monthly, universal payment. Finding funding for this welfare apparatus is absolutely essential so the Bolivian state can respond to the social determinants of poverty and human suffering.

A vast majority of the Bolivian people live in rural, historically-indigenous communities disconnected from state infrastructure. While our development model respects and celebrates their autonomy, it also represents a gap in our coverage for welfare and basic amenities. As such the premier limiter to Bolivia's progress on the SDGs and the country as a project in environmental and indigenous rights is our infrastructure.

According to the 2012 population census only 40.3% of rural housing possessed safe drinking and 37.5% had any type of sanitation facilities. The inability for the state to provide for all citizens is reflected in our economic informality, of which accounts for 80% of Bolivia's labor market (Beverinotti, 2018). Despite our limited resources we were able to make great strides since 2012, as displayed in our 2021-2025 Economic and Social Development Plan, accounting for 37 sanitation and clean water projects. Programs that raised drinking water

access to 94.6% and sanitization to 68.6% in 2019 (Gumiel, 2021. Pg. 26).

Electricity and telecommunications followed this same trend of increasing greatly under public dignity policy financed by state-controlled industries. Coverage has increased from 37% in rural areas and 89% in urban areas in 2006 to 80% in rural areas and 99% in urban areas in 2019 (Gumiel, 2021. Pg. 27). The nationalization of the telecommunications industry sought to make it an universal service and bring coverage to 100% of Bolivians by 2025. This change brought great benefits; increasing the access of communities with greater than 50 inhabitants to internet and mobile service from 55% in 2016 to 81% in 2020 (Gumiel, 2021. Pg. 28).

Similar programs were carried out in housing and travel infrastructure. The 2025 Patriotic Agenda enshrines that 100% of Bolivian citizens shall have access to decent, stable housing that allows them to live well. Within this framework the State Housing Agency or (AEVIVIENDA) has expanded access to housing and reduced the housing deficient from 60.4% in 2006 to 45.2% in 2019. Within this period 27,312 new homes have been delivered and 64,904 have been improved to the standards of the Patriotic Agenda (Gumiel, 2021. Pg. 31).

Connecting rural communities in travel is essential to also provide basic necessities outlined above while also respecting their sovereignty. From 2006 to 2019 the Bolivian Highway Administration (ABC) constructed 5,983 km of dual carriageways linking



major population centers to the countryside (Gumiel, 2021. Pg. 32).

All of the above programs were undertaken as part of the Bolivian government's promise to a life of dignity with the state servicing the role of providing and protecting the common welfare. In this sense 100% coverage in water, sanitation, electricity, telecommunications, housing, and travelways are not issues to be solved with market-based solutions. These issues are infrastructural concerns meant to be solved by the state in a universal struggle for human rights and sustainable development.

#### *Moving Forward*

Recent events have hindered Bolivia to continue pursuing Vivir Bien under our national development plans and the SDGs. The 2019 right-wing coup of Jeanine Áñez's interim government sought to crush Evo Morales' indigenous struggle; by 'returning' the bible to the palace, and giving police forces a 'license to kill' fueling the violence that caused the Sacaba and Senkata massacres. The subsequent victory of Luis Arce — a candidate in the same Movement for Socialism political party (MAS) as Morales — in a fair democratic election, signaled the return of Vivir Bien and the indigenous struggle.

However, the onset of SARS-CoV-2 and ensuing global pandemic stretched the resources of the Bolivian state and highlighted our limits in reaching distant communities. These facts have also increased the difficulties in keeping our

documents and censuses updated in recent years.

Yet all of the above projects have either been halted or slowed in the past two years as funding and government ability has waned. Our progress on Goal 1, the elimination of poverty, has stagnated as we lack the state power to continue solvency projects. However, we have displayed our model of development to Vivir Bien outlined in our National Development and Patriotic Plan centralizes the rights, dignity, and sustainability of the environment and indigenous people — and it works.

To address these programs is to alleviate poverty at the source, to provide the basic material conditions necessary to lay the foundations for a life of dignity and human fulfillment. Continuing these projects is vital and whose success is intertwined to the Bolivian state's progress on the SDGs. Anything less than these policies could threaten the sovereign and right to self-determination that Bolivia has refounded itself upon.

We ask all potential donor agencies and actors wishing to invest in Bolivia's eradication of poverty understand that the solutions already exist — they just need funding.

The Bolivian people do not need market-based solutions, neoliberal development, or structural adjustment programs. The Sustainable Development Goals outline a future that is complementary with the current Bolivian model that





guarantees universality the ability to live well.

Meeting the goals of the SDGs means not disrupting the Bolivian state, but encouraging it.

**1** FIN DE LA POBREZA

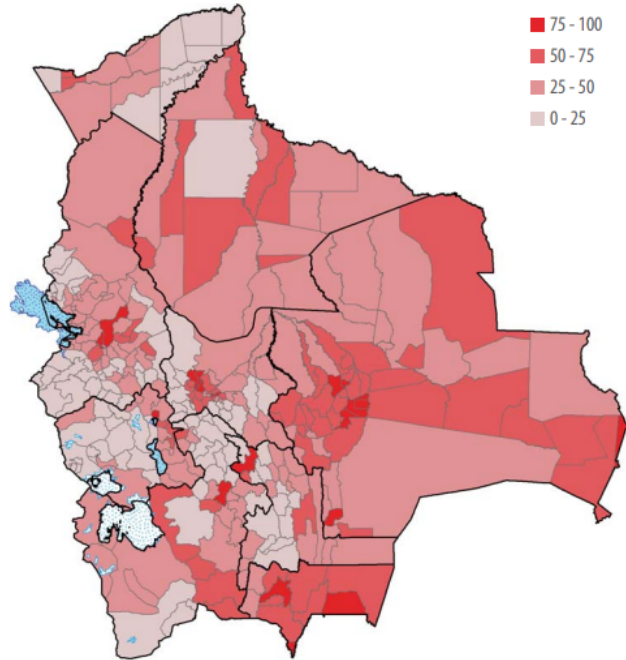


**Goal 1: Put an end to poverty in all forms**

Las 10 posiciones más altas			
Departamento	Municipio	Posición	Índice
Cochabamba	Colcapirhua	1	90.5
La Paz	La Paz	2	90.3
Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz de la Sierra	3	86.2
Cochabamba	Quillacollo	4	82.5
Santa Cruz	Camiri	5	81.3
Tarija	Tarija	6	80.6
Santa Cruz	Montero	7	79.5
Tarija	Bermejo	8	79.4
Santa Cruz	Portachuelo	9	79.3
Oruro	Oruro	10	79.1

Las 10 posiciones más bajas			
Departamento	Municipio	Posición	Índice
Cochabamba	Cocapata	330	5.5
Potosí	Tacobamba	331	4.7
Potosí	Tinguipaya	332	3.6
Potosí	S.P. De Buena Vista	333	3.4
Potosí	Kochas	334	2.3
Cochabamba	Alalay	335	2.3
Chuquisaca	Poroma	336	1.2
La Paz	Callapa	337	0.9
Pando	San Pedro	338	0.7
Oruro	El Choro	339	0.0

How close is each municipality in Bolivia to achieving SDG 1?



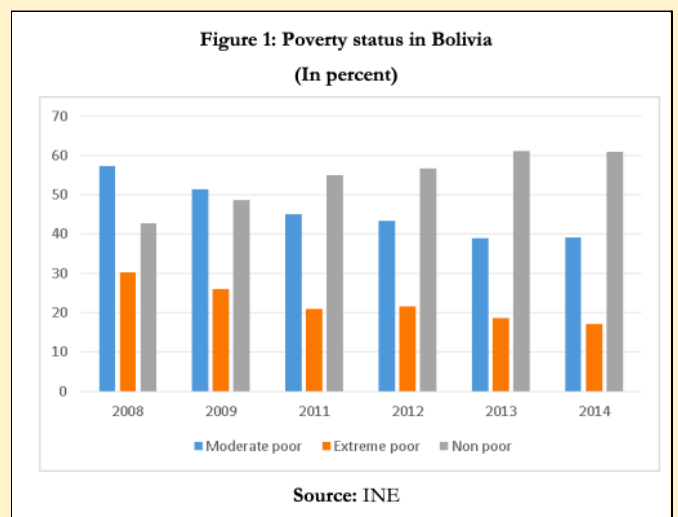


### III. Education

Education is the core of fighting poverty and improving inequality in the current system. The current education system focuses on closing the gap and building a stronger relationship between everyone. According to the National Census of Population and Housing, it has already had a large impact, as national illiteracy rates have decreased from 20 out of every 100 people to 5 out of 100. From 1992 to 2012 literacy rates dropped by 35 percent, accompanied by an increase in school enrollment of 5.3% from 2008 to 2013 (Villegas et al., 2016, INE, 2014). These improvements don't just have educational benefits but also represent a massive economic boost, as well. The moderate poverty rate has dropped since 2002 and continued to decrease well into the 2010s. In 2002, moderate poverty decreased from 63% to 45% in 2011 (Villegas et al., 2016). This decrease in poverty is closing the socioeconomic inequality gap from 0.60 to 0.49 according to the Gini Inequality Index (See Figure 1).

These benefits have come from an education system that values the collective needs of its students. We understand the importance that education has in closing inequality gaps and improving the lives of our people. Because of this understanding, we ranked 11th out of 127 developing nations when it comes to the amount of spending that goes into education (Bürge, 2019). This expenditure has allowed for free compulsory education from the ages of four to 17 years old, as well as free universities and public colleges. Education starts at the age of four with pre-primary

schools in Bolivia and the Educación Inicial en Familia Comunitaria program which ensures that we teach children basic and fundamental skills while ensuring that their mental and basic health needs are met. Once this program is completed at the age of six to 12, the child is then moved to primary education, known as Educación Primaria Comunitaria Vocacional. The goal here is that children learn basic skills in science, mathematics, and language and are exposed to moral and collectivist values that will benefit society after they finish their schooling. Upon completing this cycle of education the child will then go into the Educación Secundaria Comunitaria Productiva program from 14 to 17. The goal is to prepare these young adults to become active members of the community, responsible members of the workforce, or ready them to choose to pursue higher



education. During this time period grades are not the priority but the focus is instead on the level of learning that the individual gains. Once this mandatory schooling is



done these young adults have several options to further their education, whether it's entering into Formación Técnica y Tecnológica Media or attending a trade school. Taking the Formación Técnica y Tecnológica Media pathway usually leads to a traditional study that ends with a Bachelor's degree or the student can extend their education two more years for their Master's or four more years for their Doctoral degree, respectively. Students looking to further their education must first take their Aptitude Entrance Exam to attend any public university. Public universities come at no cost to the student but private ones have a tuition-based system. These aren't the only pathways available, as a student can enter into Formación Superior de Maestras y Maestros (Teacher Higher Education) in order to become a teacher in the future.

#### *Current Education System*

There are four different types of teachers in our system, categorized as normal, senior, interim, and graduate teachers. Normal teachers are individuals who complete their training at higher institutions, allowing them to teach at various schools. After ten years of experience and passing the teaching exam they become senior teachers. Interim teachers are individuals that did not complete their pedagogical training and usually tend to act as substitutes while graduate teachers are individuals that teach within education and usually work at higher-education institutions. Sadly, due to the lack of funding and the impact of COVID, many teachers are demanding higher wages that reflect the importance of

their work. A teacher program would be beneficial both for the teachers and also for adults looking for work. To improve the current state of teachers in our nation, we are asking for funding to create more teacher programs and raise wages to increase teacher retention. To become a normal teacher requires over 3,600 hours and six terms of schooling through four categories of training; teaching practice, specialized training, and personal training (Bürgi, 2019). More funding and opening more teacher programs could incentive local leaders to become intern teachers, which would help us reach previously inaccessible areas and increase community development. This is because local leaders would lead by example and already have close bonds with the community. Research has shown that contributions to the community increase by 20% when a local authority is put into public institutions (Jack & Recalde, 2015). This also encourages considerate decision-making as they are more likely to carefully think about potential effects on the community that their policies may have. This is a bottom-up approach as these leaders would push values of collectivism that may be missing in their communities while representing those values by leading by example. Numerous research studies (Jack & Recalde, 2015, d'Adda, 2012) have found a correlation between leadership and highly cooperative communities. In these studies, "good" leaders have been able to improve cooperative outcomes.

Although the World Bank funding that occurred in 1980 was designed to improve teachers and reform learning materials, a

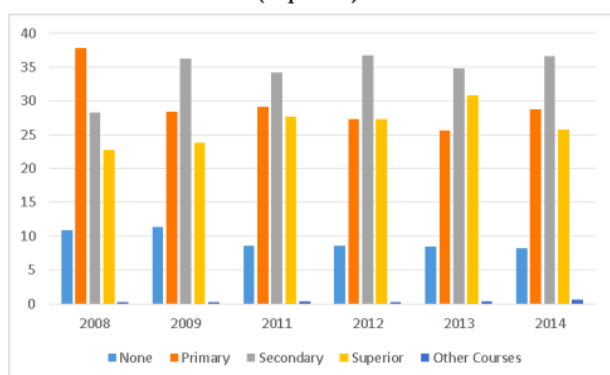


majority of the funding instead went to secondary education while a third of it went to technical and tertiary education (Masino & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). Although an effective way to improve education, I believe this previous plan can be improved and used more effectively; if we were given a second chance with the same amount of aid, we could employ more of a focus on interventions towards the supply-side of education institutions (See Figure 3). These policies would allow us to hire extra teachers, decreasing the ratio of teachers to students. This would also allow more motivated and younger instructors to be hired who would then learn from more experienced seniors. Improving the teacher programs would increase and expand the number of schools in more rural and indigenous areas. This would go hand in hand with teaching materials, as we could place more emphasis on helping indigenous students learn Spanish. A major challenge to potential students is the distance between the schools in rural and urban locations which prevents students from attending their classes. With more schools and teachers to fill gaps in rural areas, children can attend school and still support their families, which

are usually impoverished. By increasing educational access we are also battling and using the best methods to decrease poverty (See Figure 1). Teacher commitment would also increase with a set of regularly attending students, improved materials, and wages. A monitoring system could also potentially be implemented that would keep track of teachers and students to make sure no student is left behind and ensure every child has the same level of access to education.

In our country, there is a shortage of qualified workers, who often have trouble finding jobs. This shows the potential of education, as higher qualified workers could help improve the economy and secure more jobs. Education has been shown to directly improve the standard of living. In Uganda, the growth of living standards and reduction of poverty had a larger impact on those who had a basic education (Villegas, 2016, Appleton 2001). In the case of Brazil, it was revealed through research that the most important factor in combating poverty was education (Villegas, 2016, Verner, 2004). Every level of education; primary, secondary, and tertiary, all have a significant impact on poverty. The simple decrease of illiteracy has been shown to have a positive effect over the years; in 2008 illiteracy had a 15% contribution to living within poverty while in 2014 that number again decreased to have a contribution of only 5% (Villegas, 2016). Our efforts to increase education have been steadily working, as we had an 8% increase over six periods from 2008 to 2014 of those who completed secondary education. There was also an increase of

**Figure 2: Education level attained by the population over 19 years old in Bolivia (In percent)**



Source: INE



three percent of citizens in higher education from 2008 to 2014 (See Figure 2). It should be stated that higher education has the biggest singular impact on overcoming poverty, so not only is getting more students into schools important but having them continue their journey all the way through the system has the greatest effect on them and the economy. Although literacy has a 9% effect on overcoming poverty, graduating has a 23% effect on overcoming poverty (Villegas, 2016).

#### *Proposed Education Reforms*

Programs that are designed to challenge poverty, like expanding schools and learning material, would greatly benefit the indigenous people of the nation, as in the last three years they have had the highest chance of living in extreme poverty (Villegas, 2016). Having classes that help improve their Spanish, taught in their native tongue, would greatly help them overcome poverty. In a situation like this, it would be essential to have local leaders be the temporary or permanent teachers as they would know the values of the community and have pre-existing bonds. As more people finish schooling, poverty decreases as well. That's why it's very important that we put a greater emphasis on reaching indigenous women who don't speak Spanish and live in rural areas. With more teachers and schools, we could help those in need the most.

It is critical that when it comes to aid, the top-down approach is not used as a method of asset education, as oftentimes it only increases the performance of the strongest

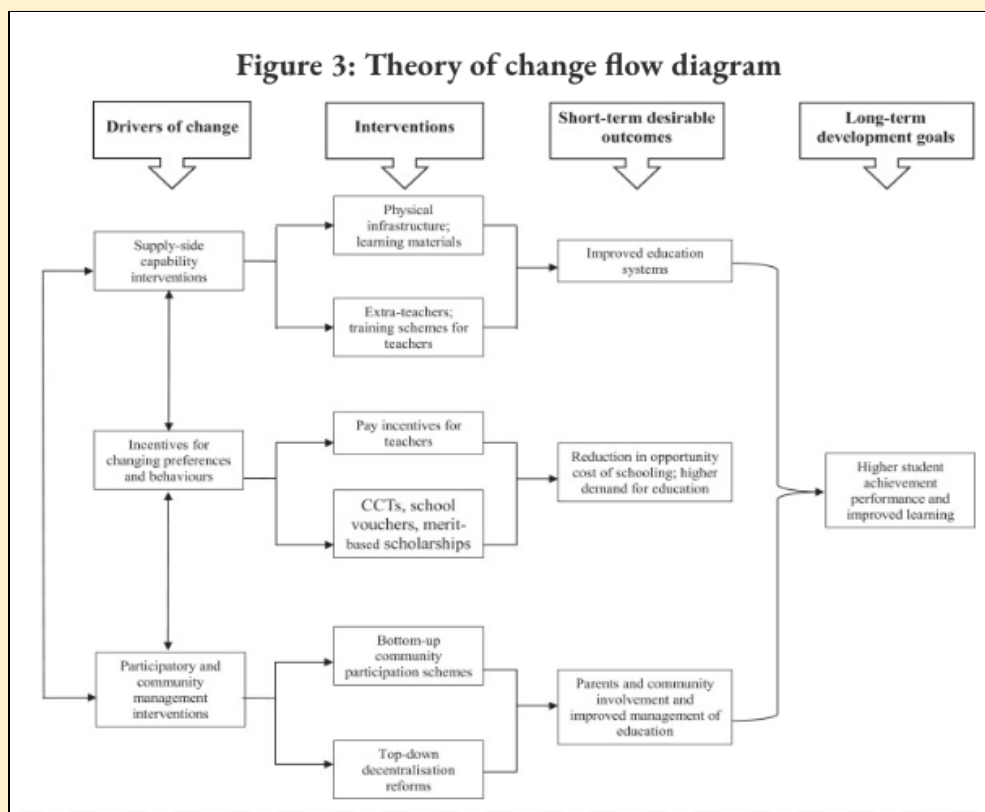
and most well-off students. This would mean Spanish-speaking, urban males would reap the benefits and not the indigenous, rural, or female students that need the benefits of education the most (Masino & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). Top-down methods simply fail to reach the poorest and most in-need students. Combined with the fact that other investments and resources are not available to them like textbooks, notebooks, and transportation, a top-down approach would not result in any significant improvement (Masino & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). Conditional cash transfers should also be considered inadequate aid, along with merit-based scholarships, as these methods are designed to facilitate the desired behavior change through finances. As the purpose of education is to teach our students collectivist values through student-led practice that helps improve their problem-solving and creativity, financial incentives would be misguided (Duong & Phan, 2018.) The role of the youth in our nation is similar to that of Cuba; we want every child to value leadership, national pride, political participation, and the development of the community. With CCTs or merit-based scholarships, students would be encouraged to only focus on themselves and view their fellow countrymen as competition— this goes directly against our own values. As the only way to determine who earns these CCTs is through test scores, grade progression, and class attendance, this method ties the student's behavior to financial gain, mirroring similar neo-liberalist practices that we do not wish to follow.





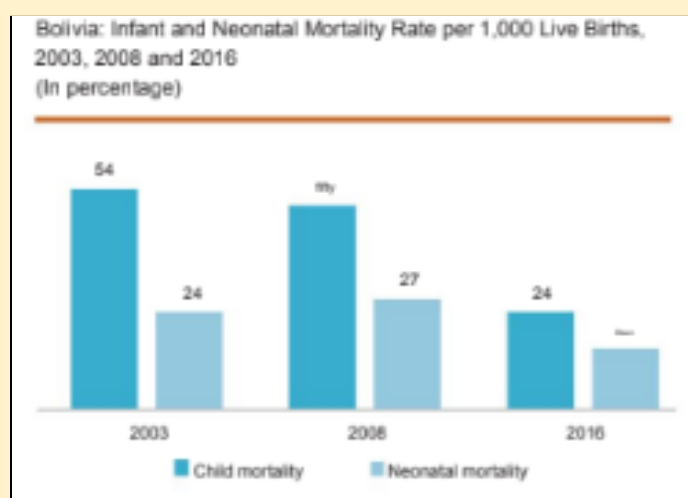
We believe that supply-side capacity interventions will prove to be the most successful method of aid delivery, as it has raised student test scores and achievements in other countries. According to Burde and Linden (2013), community-based schools in rural north-western Afghanistan produced positive effects on both girls' and boys' test scores. Combining supply-side capability interventions and community management policies, like ensuring that parents and other community members are actively engaged and participating in the education system, will yield the most return from aid intervention (See Figure 3). In other countries, like Honduras, creating school boards entirely composed of local parents resulted in improved test scores, both in the short and long term. This type of community engagement has been proven to improve student educational performance (Masino & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016).

A strong connection between education and the community would not only result in the best use of funding but would improve the nation in the long term, as we would be creating future generations of children that would value what's best for the country and its people. We would have competent and educated adults that trust their fellow citizens and have a strong ability to problem solve at a high level (Martin, 1991). Students that have strong political participation encouraged in their schools will later go on to become active participants in national politics, making our country a better place for everyone. Opening more opportunities for education while bettering the relationship between the government and its people, as well as fighting and reducing the rate of poverty in rural indigenous areas should be the main goals of our aid program.



## IV. Health Sector

Despite the incredibly difficult nature of health in the past few years, thanks to donor generosity and significant health policy changes under the Unified Family, Community and Intercultural Health System (SAFCI), we have survived significant civil unrest on top of a devastating global pandemic.

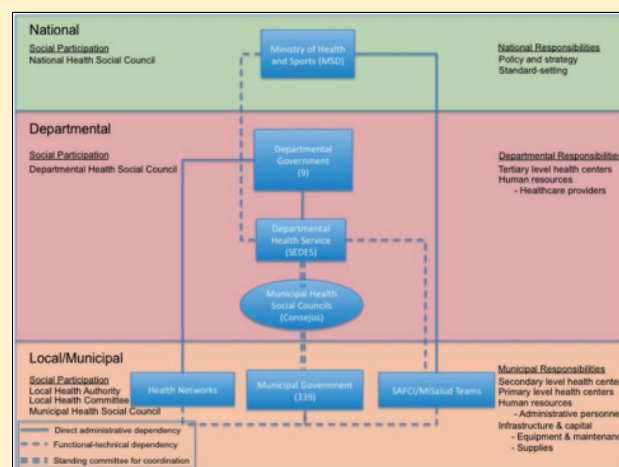


### Health Sector Overview

During this time Bolivia maintained comparatively low COVID-19 death rates and continued to transform its health system while improving many health indicators and taking great strides towards reaching Sustainable Development Goal number three: Health and Wellbeing. Overall child mortality has decreased from 54 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 24 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016 (Andersen et al., 2020). Chronic malnutrition has been a significant health barrier, especially for children under five years old. 27.1% of children under five in 2008 were severely

malnourished, however that number fell to 16% in 2016 due to significant program efforts from the Bolivian government (Gumiel, 2021. Pg. 32). Finally, almost the entire country has reached the SDG targets for Chagas, Dengue and Malaria (Andersen et al., 2020).

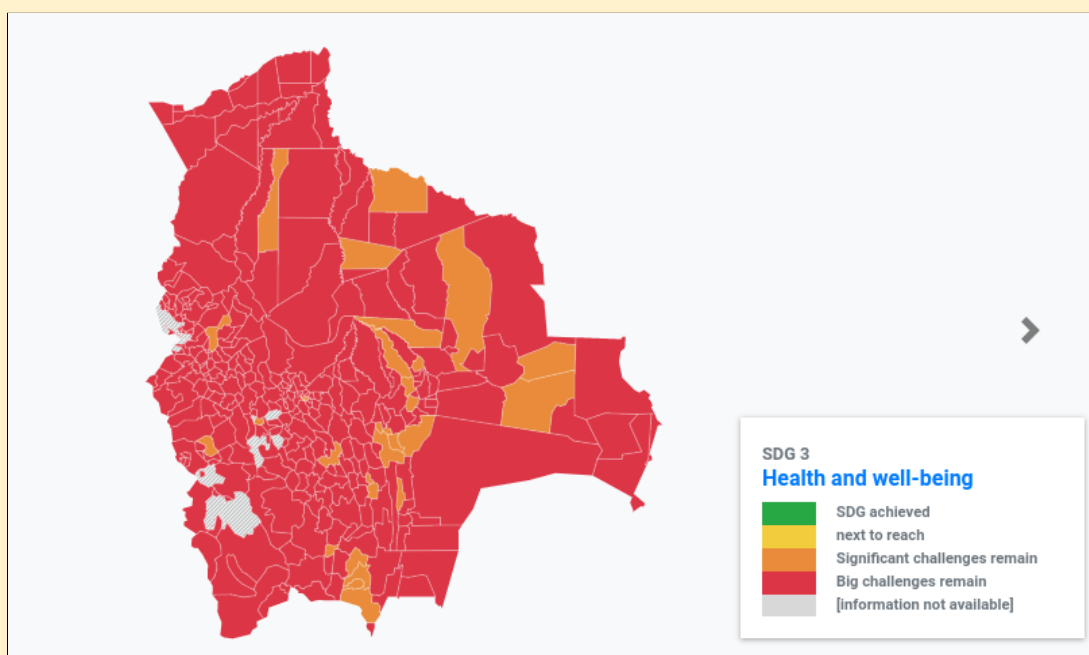
This shows that Bolivia is overall headed in a positive direction regarding health goals and much of this health-sector success can be attributed to Bolivia's revolutionary health system. Our policy shifts towards an intercultural, cost-free universal healthcare model catered to our unique, highly diverse population. Health services are decentralized in four levels: national, departmental, municipal and we have a strong focus in preventative primary health care which has been shown to be highly effective in previous studies (Alvarez et al., 2016, pg. 115). If Bolivia's Universal and Free Health System (SUS) hadn't been launched in 2019, it would have been far less prepared and the results of the pandemic could have been very different (WHO, 2022).





These changes - which stem from the 2009 constitution inspired by Vivir Bien philosophies - declared Bolivia a plurinational nation that includes Article 18 which states that every person has a right to health (Bolivia (Plurinational State of)'s Constitution, 2009, art. 18). Although great strides have been taken in working towards this right - there is still a long way to go in fulfilling this goal as significant health inequalities remain throughout Bolivia.

only 50.6% of our country is fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Efforts to successfully integrate indigenous medicinal practices into our health system continues to fall short of the mark according to 2018 focus groups where indigenous healers shared feeling “misunderstood, underappreciated and poorly integrated into the health system,” (Amnesty Intl, 2017). Accessibility of clinics must be addressed as a large portion (12-70%) of Bolivians live over an hour from a primary care clinic.



### *Health Sector Challenges*

Substantial challenges face the health of Bolivians such as difficulty accessing care due to geographical and financial barriers and the pandemic has exacerbated these. Life expectancy in Bolivia remains low compared to other Latin American countries (OECD, 2017). While still in the heat of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our health workers employed by public institutions were left without pay and proper PPE for months (Amnesty Intl, 2017). Additionally,

Unfortunately, even when health clinics and hospitals are accessed, there is a significant shortage of nurses, hospital beds and psychiatrists to address the population (OECD, 2017). Lastly, a significant issue in writing this report is that current data and research regarding health statistics, needs and outcomes are inadequate as there is not enough high quality research in the health sector area. Much of the data available is pre-pandemic and incomplete which raises significant challenges in analyzing trends



and the current situation. Plentiful, high quality data in various aspects of the health sector is highly imperative to most efficiently allocate resources and initiate reforms therefore the lack of data and research must be addressed promptly.

#### *Proposed Methods for Improvement*

In order to combat these issues and holes within the Bolivian health system, multiple steps need to be taken and aid is needed for this to occur. Resources and systems are needed to ensure health professionals are able to make a livable wage and encourage others to join these professions. Sustainable economic growth and allocation of resources will ideally be paired with donor generosity to help stimulate this. COVID-19 vaccine aid, specifically in reaching our rural and indigenous populations in an ethical, culturally sensitive manner would be beneficial to help increase the resistance against future COVID outbreaks. To increase accessibility to primary health care facilities and hospital beds, especially near rural and indigenous populations, more clinics and hospitals must be constructed with careful consideration to maximization of accessibility and respect of land use. This is an additional area that we could benefit from aid. Additionally, the shortage of medical practitioners can be aided by foreign donors by helping to increase teaching capability and in the short term lending workforce. For many of these issues there are clear steps to be taken to address them. Others are more difficult to solve such as incorporating indigenous practices more seamlessly in the health system, therefore research must be done to see how to best

approach them. Comprehensive analysis of Bolivia's health reforms including quasi-experimental studies with control groups, improved and complete health indicator tracking are imperative to continual health system improvements and success (Alvarez et al., 2014). These areas are ripe for third party researchers as Bolivia does not yet have the resources to perform such in-depth research.

In summary, efforts can and should be made to overcome these barriers, but due to Bolivia's current economic climate, aid is imperative to beginning this process. Changes that would be beneficial to Bolivia's health system and that are ripe for foreign aid include work towards strengthening health infrastructure, increasing inclusion of intercultural care (Gumiel, 2021, pg. 21), expanding accessibility of health care to indigenous and rural populations, improving ability to train medical professionals and pay providers (Alvarez et al., 2014) in conjunction with thorough research into the performance and effectiveness of these reforms.

We hope to have made clear that Bolivia is motivated to provide the highest quality, culturally sensitive health care to all of its citizens in line with our philosophy of Vivir Bien. We have shown over the years to be committed to meeting the SDGs despite significant barriers making them more difficult to achieve. With donor support, Bolivia can make these changes, meet the SDGs and improve the quality of lives for millions of people.



## V. Indigenous Identity & Drug Enforcement

### *Introduction to Coca in Bolivia*

The coca leaf has been a source of controversy in Bolivia for quite some time, with foreign backed eradication efforts beginning in 1983 and the United States joining in on efforts to promote eradication in 1987. The original use of coca was the consumption of unprocessed leaves, intended to be exclusively ceremonial as an institutional part of the lives of the indigenous Quechua people. These intentions were perverted in the 1980's as the country faced an economic crisis and many farmers turned to coca production for the manufacture of cocaine as it was more profitable and offered a lifeline in the face of difficult conditions. This created tension across borders as Bolivia became a primary source of cocaine for much of the Western world. Various eradication strategies backed by the US and UN ensued through the 1980s and 1990s, starting with our initial 5 year program aimed at reducing overall production starting in 1983 and the establishment of the Dirección de la Reconversión de la Coca—Direco, or Coca Eradication Directorate. Indigenous coca farmers, or Cocaleros were severely damaged by these new policies despite having little to do with cocaine production as a whole, continuing to partake in only traditional use. Resistance from these groups prompted little change until Evo Morales came into power in 2006 and introduced social control policy.

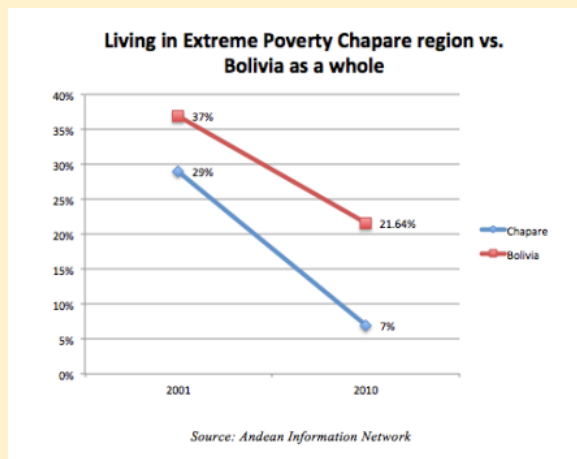
Building off of the Mesa Administration's 'cato policy', in which each family in the Chapare region was allowed to grow 1600 square meters of coca to ensure they had enough for personal use but not drug production (Andean Information Network), Morales continued to build with his fellow farmers and not against them. With funds from the EU, a six dimension plan was created to address the issue at hand without sacrificing the Quechua or indigenous way of life. Specific regions are allowed to row within quotas, but any extraneous coca growth is subject to immediate eradication. The model of "control social de la hoja de coca" is still implemented today and cites its goals as listed below (Andean Information Network):

1. "Land titling for coca-growing families with catos.
2. Biometric registry of coca growers authorized to grow the cato
3. The registration and recurring measurement of each cato of coca by the state monitoring organization, the Economic and Social Development Unit (UDESTRO).
4. The creation and maintenance of a sophisticated database (SISCOCA), which aids the monitoring of coca cultivation and traces coca leaf transport and sales.



5. Integrated development projects to complement subsistence income generated by the cato.
6. The empowerment of the community to self-police in order to restrict coca cultivation to the one-cato limit. This includes training for union representatives on database use and community joint action to monitor and restrict coca planting.”

Since this policy has been enacted, many positive effects have been experienced in communities that once were torn between poverty and crime. In the Chapare region from 2001 to 2010, illiteracy declined from 17.8% to 4.3%, school attendance for 6-19 year olds improved from 71% to 85.7%, and extreme poverty has dropped from 29% to 7%. Chapare now significantly surpasses Bolivia as a whole in all of these categories, but was far behind prior to 2010 (Andean Information Network).



### *Cultural Roots of the Coca Leaf*

The Quechua people have populated the Andes regions of Latin America for centuries, and their presence has long been synonymous with coca agriculture and consumption. To view this sacred leaf as

nothing more than a stimulant abused by rural workers is culturally dismissive and denies the unwavering validity of ancient traditions that have held true into the modern era. Dependency between midland coca producers and highland subsistence farmers and herders help maintain a sense of community among Quechua groups across Bolivia. The Yungas region of Bolivia has been cultivating coca since at least the Inca Era, and subsequently the practice has become deeply entrenched in local economies. The Chapare region has also been a large producer since the 1980’s when many of the nation’s farmers relied on coca farming to carry them through the economic downturn. Living a rural lifestyle in the Andes can be a severe and taxing endeavor, and the coca leaf provides a much needed boost to brave the extreme climates and complete farming or herding tasks. Social interactions are often based around mutual use of the leaf, in which a shared time referred to as ‘hallpay’ consists of offers of ‘kintu’ between community members, and they chew coca to recharge between bouts of work for the day. (Allen 1981) These interactions are focused on meditation and reciprocity, providing clarity and communal strength throughout long days of physical labor.





As direct descendants of the Inca, the Quechua believe that their now extinct ancestors were capable of direct communication with religious entities tied to the Earth, an ability lost when the Spanish drove them to disperse into the jungles and evolve into new identities. Current Quechua religion dictates that this essential form of communication is now contingent upon coca leaf consumption as they do not possess the inherent ability of the Inca and must use the plant as a medium. (Allen 1981) Without this cultural staple crop they would be incapable of participating in their traditionally practiced form of spirituality and connecting to the Tirakuna, or gods, which are perceived to control the daily lives of villagers. Indigenous identity and usage of the coca leaf are undeniably tethered in Bolivia, and one cannot exist with the other impeded.

#### *Coca and the SDGs*

The linkages between the treatment of coca and those who grow it are numerous, as drug policies largely dictate the livelihood of many Bolivians, and disproportionately affects indigenous peoples. This is very evident when considering our successes and failures as a nation thus far. We are making significant progress on Goal 17, which shows our dedication towards meeting the sixteen prior goals, as finding and creating partnerships is what will allow for growth to increase exponentially. Goal 13, Climate Action, is another area in which great improvements are frequently occurring, along with Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and Goal 4. (Quality Education) Many of our

shortcomings are regarding institutions of fundamental human rights and ensuring they are accessible for all people in the country. Goals relating to hunger, good health, infrastructure, sanitation, clean water, inequalities, and equitable systems are considered to be in the ‘major challenges’ category. This being said, Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is on an upward trajectory and is experiencing legitimate improvement, meaning that people are finding ways to take care of their families and provide these basic necessities that many Bolivians are unable to find.

Looking at the upward trends experienced in the Chapare Region, the positive effects of the Coca industry cannot be ignored. While only Chapare, Yungas, and some minor areas in La Paz are legally allowed to grow coca, the jobs created from farming, transport, distribution, and sale of such an important commodity is invaluable to the indigenous community, who is often the last group accounted for as nations develop. 80% of work within the economy of Bolivia is informal sector work, and workers in the country experience some of the lowest productivity rates in the region. A Bolivian worker is 12% as productive as an American worker. (Beverinotti) Taking advantage of an exclusive right to grow coca for licit purposes helps to undercut both of these issues by promising direct payments to farming families who consistently provide coca, and is not subject to global markets if it is sold legally. (Andean Information Network) Ensuring the legal production of coca is supported will protect the interests of some of Bolivia’s most vulnerable peoples.



## VI. Goals Moving Forward

Holistically, the groundwork for a stable, democratic state that provides for the common welfare and protects human rights already exists in Bolivia. The resources required to equitably distribute the benefits of these institutions is where we are limited. We aim to utilize ODA and grant funds to expand our current programs in Infrastructure & Poverty Alleviation, Education, Health, and Drug Enforcement & Indigenous Identity. These categories represent some of Bolivia's most sobering disparities, but as a result offer momentous opportunities to make tangible change as the country rebuilds following the pandemic

Further investment will finance expanded infrastructure allowing state power to reach our rural, indigenous population with programs that provide amenities while respecting their sovereignty. Such aid would fund state infrastructure for conditional cash transfers, sanitation, electricity and telecommunication access, as well as housing development under the State Housing Agency. These programs have proven to work and are only limited by their funding.

The Ministry of Education and Culture of Bolivia believes whole-heartily in the potential of our education reforms and seeks to improve our current system by implementing several changes. Combining supply-side capability interventions and community management policies, like

ensuring that parents and other community members are actively engaged and participating in the education system, will yield the most return from aid intervention.

We would also like to devote a portion of our aid to building more schools, especially in more rural areas, or areas with large indigenous populations, to provide education to our most vulnerable communities. Teaching classes both in native languages and Spanish will prepare indigenous students for seeking higher education in the future, while making learning accessible to them now. Teaching programs that train educators to be more compassionate, empathetic, and understanding, while also enhancing their communication skills will benefit both students and the next generation of educators. By implementing reforms like these, while carefully observing and maintaining results, we aspire to improve the state of education in Bolivia in a meaningful way and improve the system for the benefit of future generations.

Aid directed to the health sector would go towards funding more primary care clinics that are accessible to rural populations, increasing health education capabilities to train more health professionals, providing sufficient funding to pay health workers, significant efforts towards increasing COVID-19 vaccination rates and finally



increasing research into health indicators and program effectiveness in order to maintain the best health policies for Bolivia. Aid in these areas would bolster our existing programs and provide access to quality healthcare to many more citizens.

Aid granted towards the preservation of indigenous culture through the reinforcement of the Social Control Coca program will be utilized to reimburse farmers subject to crop substitution, conduct satellite surveillance on rural coca growing regions, and to fund eradication of illegal growing operations. Ensuring that the

exclusive right to produce coca stays in the hands of the responsible, self-governing Cocaleros promotes our “Coca Yes, Cocaine No” policy and provides irreplaceable economic opportunities for the Quechua indigenous population.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia possesses the programs, paradigms, and will eradicate poverty and bring the Sustainable Development Goals to its citizens. Our public policies in health, sanitation, housing, agriculture, and education conform to both the SDGs and our indigenous struggle of Vivir Bien.









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