

COUNTRY FOCUS - BOLIVIA 2004



1. Introduction

Since early 2000, Bolivia has been experiencing the worst social crisis in its recent history. In 2002, the population, led by the leader of the “cocalero movement” (coalition of coca farmers), Evo Morales, rose up against Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada’s government. In the first quarter of 2003, the on-going economic recession led to increasing social unrest and later in the year the Bolivian gas war, a conflict centering around the exploitation of the country’s vast natural gas reserves, resulted in further disturbances. Sanchez de Lozada was forced to resign, leaving the presidency to Carlos Paredes, a former journalist and historian, to whom the Bolivians granted a 90 days probation. On 17 October 2003, Carlos Mesa assumed the presidency.

Bolivia remains the poorest country in South America. It belongs to a region that suffers from increased political, economic and social instability. The country’s economy has furthermore been hit by the economic crisis in neighbouring Argentina. Bolivia has a rich culture and significant indigenous minorities (quechuas and aymaras), who almost invariably belong to the poorest and most vulnerable groups.

In addition to the socio-economic situation, Bolivia is regularly hit by a series of natural disasters that require immediate emergency response from the Bolivian Red Cross (BRC) headquarters and its provincial branches: floods, winter cold waves and volcanic eruptions.

2. National Context

Human Development Indicators 2003

Country Ranking - HDI	114
Total population (millions)	8.5
Life expectancy at birth	63.3
Annual population growth rate %	2.2
% population under 15 yrs of age	39.3
% population aged 65 and above	4.4
% urban population	62.9
% of the population living below \$1/day	14.4
% of the population living below \$2/day	34.3
GDP per capita (US \$)	936
Infant mortality per 1,000 live births	60
Under 5 mortality per 1,000 live births	77
Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births	390
% of births attended by skilled health staff	59
% of population using improved water sources	83
% of population using adequate sanitation facilities	70
% of population with access to essential drugs	50-79
% of adults living with HIV/AIDS	0.10
Women living with HIV/AIDS	1,200
Children living with HIV/AIDS	160
Net primary school enrolment ratio %	97
Adult literacy rate % MALE age 15 yrs +	92.3
Adult literacy rate % FEMALE age 15 yrs +	79.9

(UNDP 2003)

Bolivia has some of the lowest indicators in the American continent. Data from the latest UNDP report places Bolivia at number 114 among 173 countries with a Human Development Index of 0.672. Compared to other countries its GDP per capita is extremely low.

Health indicators demonstrate that the situation for Bolivians is precarious, especially among rural communities, many of whom are isolated. 0.1% of adults are living with HIV/AIDS but experts in the Ministry of Health do not accept this statistic as reliable, as few people are tested.

3. Priorities of the National Society

Foundation BRC	1880
Recognized by ICRC	1923
Number of departmental branches	9
Number of provincial branches	20
Staff	12
Active volunteers (estimated)	1200

At present, the Bolivian Red Cross is at a critical moment in its history. Traditionally, the National Society has been totally dependent on external funding for all aspects of its operations. During the last few years the BRC has initiated a modernization process, applying a National Development Plan, statutory changes, improvement of governance, increasing the professionalism of staff, and working more closely with the nine departmental branches.

The president, vice president, secretary general, treasurer, minutes secretary and membership secretary are all volunteers. The Society has a basic infrastructure, both at headquarters and branch level.

The programmatic priorities of the Bolivian Red Cross are consistent with those outlined in *Strategy 2010*. The BRC has focused its programmes on community health, HIV/AIDS, disaster management and organizational development.

Health and Care

- Primary health care programmes throughout the country with support from the American, Canadian and Spanish Red Cross Societies.
- The BRC has a significant role in HIV/AIDS education programmes with schools and communities.
- Mother and child health is approached by the National Society through health education and public health care.
- Training of traditional midwives and local health workers.
- Blood donation.

Disaster Response and Preparedness

- CBDPP.
- First aid training.

Organizational Development

- Branch development.
- Consolidating reporting and financial systems.
- Modernization of the communications department.
- Improvement of the National Society profile in Bolivia.
- Development and implementation of distance education programmes.
- Training within the organization.

Youth

- Recruitment of children and teenagers to be part of school brigades and out-of-school activities. Projects include the prevention of drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, first aid and environmental protection.

AT A GLANCE

BRC	COMMENT
Statutes	Completed in 2001
National Development Plan	NDP: 2000-2004
Cooperation Agreement Strategy (CAS)	2001
Self Assessment	Done in 2001
Last Elections	2001
Next Elections	2005
Yearly audit	2003
Youth representative in National Society governance	Yes
Disaster response plan within National Society plan	Yes
Disaster response plan integrated with the government plan	In process

The BRC has 9 departmental branches and 20 provincial branches. It covers all main cities, but has major difficulties in covering extensive rural areas as a result of dispersed populations and poor transportation infrastructure.

Main strengths

- ÿ Good national image.
- ÿ Appropriate international image for funding.
- ÿ Presence throughout the entire country.
- ÿ Improved governance.
- ÿ Multi-disciplinary technical capacity in the headquarters.
- ÿ Good inter-institutional relations with government and NGOs.

Main challenges

- ÿ Decline in the number of volunteers.
- ÿ Low percentage of professionals in volunteer corps.
- ÿ Financially dependent on external sources.
- ÿ Volunteers require better and more consistent training in all areas.
- ÿ Better follow-up on planning.
- ÿ Need to better distinguish between political and operational roles and responsibilities at the headquarters and in the branches.
- ÿ Improvement of relations with branches.
- ÿ Formulation of a technical team in headquarters.

4. Red Cross and Red Crescent Priorities

From 2000 to 2002 the Regional Delegation had an office in the headquarters of the BRC. The Regional DPP and Health Delegates were located in La Paz and provided assistance to BRC programmes. The Federation has provided support in the area of OD through the development of a cooperation agreement strategy (CAS), as well as through the Capacity Building Fund which has focused on structure, systems and branch development. The delegation has worked closely with the BRC in modernizing disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. Bolivia was one of the National Societies involved in the 2001 Andean Project. The Delegation has also made available through several sources of funding, resources for the construction of a national training centre together with the associated strategic plan for its use.

PNSs, such as the American, Canadian and Spanish Red Cross Societies are active in the country, funding projects relating to health and disaster preparedness. The German Red Cross has a long history of working with the BRC both in times of disaster and in the development and implementation of rehabilitation projects.

The ICRC has been supporting work in the Bolivian Red Cross for several years. Due to the recent social crisis the ICRC was on permanent alert and based its readiness on a conflict preparedness strategy. Traditionally, the ICRC works with the BRC in the areas of dissemination and IHL with the armed forces and national police force.

Partner	Health	Relief	DPP	Humanitarian values	Organizational Development
ICRC			Yes	Yes	Yes
Federation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
American Red Cross	Yes	Yes			
Canadian Red Cross	Yes				
Italian Red Cross	Yes				
German Red Cross		Yes	Yes		Yes
Spanish Red Cross	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes

5. Priority Programmes for Secretariat Assistance

Health and Care

- ÿ HIV/AIDS.
- ÿ Amazonico Programme.
- ÿ Technical support to the BRC overall primary health and care programmes.

Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Management

- ÿ Improving disaster response structures, systems and procedures through training and monitoring.
- ÿ Assisting the BRC in defining its role in the government's National Emergency Response System.
- ÿ Support for community based disaster preparedness projects.

Organizational Development

- ÿ Consolidation of capacity building process (branch development, communication, governance and management).
- ÿ Provide support for a volunteer management strategy.
- ÿ Promote the formation of a multidisciplinary technical team in headquarters.

Coordination

- ÿ Support in formalizing relations with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).