

Oxfam in Bolivia

In Bolivia, Oxfam focuses on women's and indigenous people's rights; urban equity; economic justice; preparing for disasters; and adapting to climate change



The situation

With 10 million people – and 36 different indigenous groups – Bolivia has the second worst poverty and inequality levels in Latin America and the Caribbean after Haiti. 60% of Bolivians live in poverty – 38% in extreme poverty.

In 2000, Bolivia began a “state reconstruction process” which has opened up new opportunities to work on inequality and social exclusion.

In numbers*...

90,000
total people helped

25,000
helped with adaptation



Photo: Mark Chilvers

How Oxfam is helping

Oxfam has worked in Bolivia since 1988, combating:

- high levels of inequality
- high poverty indexes
- people's vulnerability to climate change
- discrimination against women and indigenous people

Left: Lucia Quispe sits with her child in Khapi village, in the shadow of Mount Illimani glacier outside La Paz. Oxfam is working with her community to help it adapt to the melting glacier and find new ways of conserving water.

Making the economy fairer

We work to:

- address economic inequality that affects mostly women and indigenous people
- help social organisations talk to people in power, and create public policies that ensure wealth is distributed better
- use political alliances to influence global decisions on development, economic integration and climate justice.



Photo: Renato Guimaraes

People gather for May Day marches in La Paz. Oxfam works with local partners to help ensure marginalised communities are able to make their voices heard and influence the policies that affect them.



Photo: Mark Chilver

Rogelio Churqui Quispe and Severino Cortez, from the Aymara community, stand by Moutn Illimani where locals fear the glacier is melting so rapidly that in decades to come they will have no water for their farms.

We:

- work to ensure development planning at local, regional, and national levels focuses on climate change adaptation and risk management against disasters
- work with communities to reduce the chance of catastrophes and help them be prepared in the event of a disaster
- provide emergency relief across the country, with allies and Government, from preparedness and prevention to response and reconstruction
- support projects and policies on “disaster risk reduction” that consider communities’ need to adapt to climate change problems, by fostering best practice and innovation

Climate change adaptation and managing risks

We try to help people exercise their rights – especially in urban environments where a large population and high rates of poverty and inequality are a barrier to people (particularly women and indigenous groups). They have historically been excluded from public policies, and urbanisation and migration have made

their problems worse. But now, as legislative and societal changes happen, we have a great opportunity to foster new public policies, change attitudes and beliefs, and help build spaces for intercultural debate to strengthen democracy and gender equity.

Working with local partners and social organisations, we work to:

- strengthen networks, increasing discussions with people in power
- strengthen community work on monitoring and transparency.

Gender justice

Oxfam and Hivos (from Holland), with support from the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, have created a consortium to apply funds to encourage women – especially those from indigenous communities – to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, political participation, and access to natural resources.

Thanks to their efforts, in December 2009 the National Congress was represented by 30% women. Oxfam supported the creation of a platform that included more than 30 women organisations committed to ensuring compliance to the country's Electoral Regime act.

This opens the door to debate and the positioning of the political and social agenda of women. This is a definitive step forward in efforts to have women occupy key positions in Bolivia.



Photo: Renato Guimaraes

Women in traditional dress gather for the May Day marches in La Paz. Despite recent advances, many women and indigenous people in Bolivia face widespread discrimination. communities are able to make their voices heard and influence the policies that affect them.