



bolivia

micro-enterprise



Photo by Rebecca Kirchheimer

The recent decline of the Bolivian economy began in the late 1990's when prices of Bolivian exports dropped due to reduced international demand. In 1998, strong climatic changes, such as droughts and floods in different regions, destroyed farmers' assets and crops, forcing them to sell their products at very low prices, sometimes at no profit or loss. Due to the drastic loss in income of so many Bolivians, several microfinance institutions closed branches in the Cochabamba area, and new guidelines have made it impossible for many to obtain financial services.

Currently, the richest 10 percent of the Bolivian population earn 25 times as much as the poorest 40 percent. Without education or access to financial services, the disparity between the rich and poor will not be easily changed. While regulated institutions have difficulty offering financial services due to the inherent high costs involved, NGO's have the capacity to present microfinance options to struggling entrepreneurs and to re-stimulate the Bolivian economy. Microfinance services offered by non-profit organizations have shown promise in helping the poor in Cochabamba.

By partnering with several, local microfinance and business development organizations in the Cochabamba area, FSD is able to support increased training and microfinance services available in the region – empowering socio-economically excluded families and contributing to a powerful grassroots movement. Whether you decide to work with lending cooperatives for women and farmers or increase export markets for artisans, your experience with FSD will bring you to the frontline of micro business development.

Internship/Volunteer opportunities in micro-enterprise in Bolivia include:

- Support the allocation of loan funds and help organize financial records for women micro-entrepreneurs. Provide credit counseling and strategic enterprise solutions for these women. Support international fundraising efforts to grow micro-credit and business development programs. Evaluate newly implemented capacity building programs to assess contribution to women's overall empowerment.
- Assist in the dispersment of loans to new communities building water systems. Design and support workshops to train community representatives in the effective use of these loans. Help to find strategic ways to lower interest rates to 4% - 6% annually.
- Support negotiations on behalf of farmers for the prices of animal feed, milk, oats, alfalfa, soy, corn, and medicinal plants.
- Research reasons why women micro-entrepreneurs fail to repay loans on time and/or drop out of an organization's lending program before completion. Conduct impact assessments, that look at the levels of improvement, lack of change, or digression in the micro-enterprises of their clients.
- Increase export markets and general sales for a wide variety of locally produced goods. Build websites and design marketing materials for these small producers.
- Continue an FSD project that develops video and printed materials for the training of marginalized women so that they may successfully start and manage small businesses.

For more opportunities in micro-enterprise in Bolivia, visit our website or contact us directly.