

Community Development: Combating Illicit Crops while Building Communities in Bolivia

ACDI/VOCA's community development activities emphasize community participation and resource mobilization to build social and economic infrastructure, create employment and generate income.

By Glenn Blumhorst

ACDI/VOCA takes a multifaceted approach to organizing and developing communities in order to combat the illicit drug threat in Bolivia. With funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and in cooperation with the Bolivian government, ACDI/VOCA has become a leading provider of technical assistance in agricultural production, processing and marketing, business development services, environmental and natural resource management, institutional strengthening and community development in Bolivia. Through ACDI/VOCA-Bolivia's more than 500 short-term technical assistance volunteer assignments under the Farmer-to-Farmer Program since 1996, efforts have been made to strengthen communities as well as improve their living standards. The Yungas Community Alternative Development Fund (YCADF), launched in 2001, continued and built upon this community-centered approach.

To date, YCADF has implemented numerous projects ranging from potable water and drainage systems to educational partnerships. Maintaining community involvement for each effort, the YCADF ensures that communities of the Yungas are setting the examples for a dynamic and thriving Bolivia.

Community Goals, Community Action

The guiding principle in all ACDI/VOCA community development initiatives is that projects must respond to the demands of the community. In the Yungas, ACDI/VOCA achieves this by constructing buildings such as schools or community centers, implementing potable water, sanitation or other economic or technical projects and providing alternative agricultural opportunities that help the inhabitants lead better lives. The various



ACDI/VOCA community development initiatives call on the communities themselves to take ownership. For instance, beneficiaries often work in the construction of new infrastructure and are called upon to maintain it afterward.

facets of community development are addressed at all levels and consider environmental and social contexts.

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—Emilio Lora, President of the Committee for Potable Water and Sanitation, Nariz de Cano and Nuevo Mundo communities

YCADF emphasizes the integrated development of communities, applying the principals of sustainability and shared ownership. Through the provision of 234 small grants, over 200 communities have received assistance in projects they themselves have deemed necessary to improve their quality of life. These small-grants projects help to meet the needs of municipali-

ties, complete social and productive infrastructure improvements and strengthen local economic initiatives. Through funding from

USAID and in cooperation with the Vice Ministry of Alternative Development (VDA) for the government of Bolivia, YCADF has made great strides in forging successful, integrated, alternative development.

Ensuring Every Voice is Heard

Following a precise and efficient process for identifying projects, ACDI/VOCA is selected by the VDA to work with communities that have agreed to reduce coca cultivation. Once the agreement is signed, ACDI/VOCA begins work on the project designated highest priority by the communities themselves, usually through a community meeting. A key feature of all ACDI/VOCA community development activities is ensuring that when communities assign priorities the entire community is involved, especially minorities and other disadvantaged or underserved groups. After feasibility is examined, a consultant is hired to design the project, and concurrent training

and education begin. YCADF's integration with the community allows for projects to strengthen Bolivia from the inside out and from the bottom up.

Community Ownership Yields Sustainable Results

Another important feature of a successful community development program is community ownership. For instance, in the case of construction of a boarding house for children who are normally required to walk long distances to school, ACDI/VOCA evaluates the students' and families' potential contribution and the long-term maintenance and operation prospects. If the building will include running water and electricity, the community is evaluated on the probability that it will be able to consistently pay for these amenities. In addition, the community members and students, who are expected to contribute, are instructed in the proper upkeep of the structure. The beneficiary support or counterpart contribution is important in establishing individual ownership. Additionally, the formation



Potable water systems are one of the most sought-after improvements in the Yungas.



Staff Spotlight: Glenn Blumhorst in Bolivia

Glenn Blumhorst has served as ACDI/VOCA-Bolivia's chief of party and country director since 1998. As a senior development specialist with 18 years of experience, he oversees alternative and community development, grants management, technical assistance and training/extension activities in institutional capacity building, sustainable rural development, food security, natural resource conservation, enterprise development, social and productive infrastructure improvement and volunteer technical assistance worldwide, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Uganda, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay. He holds a bachelor of science and a master's degree from the University of Missouri.

of a local oversight committee to supervise construction of all projects guarantees the overall sustainability of the project and maximizes its impact in the region.



Potable water is one of the most important and desired social improvements in the Yungas. An integrated approach, involving the community on all levels, is achieved by the formation of local representative committees. At inception, participating families are in-

formed of the continuous commitment necessary to maintain a clean and reliable water system. A local firm is contracted to do the construction work while the committee members establish a fee structure and collect money from participants. Finally, the families are informed of the financial needs of a system that is expected to have long-term viability. Through geographic information systems (GIS), the examination of the growth patterns and projected needs plays a critical role in planning. The committees also learn basic accounting to establish systems and maintain transparency, which serves to structure an efficient governing body for the water system and also to strengthen faith in community leaders.

President of the Committee for Potable Water and Sanitation in the Nariz de Canoa and Nuevo Mundo communities, Emilio Lora, said, "Having finally completed this mission is important, and the responsibility to maintain and care for the system is ours now. We are incredibly happy to have had the help of ACIDI/VOCA to complete this project."

When a sewer system is built in an urban setting, the appropriate counterpart contribution of community members in order to be included in the system is often construction of in-home bathrooms. As part of an education effort in this arena, long-term ACIDI/VOCA trainers establish health campaigns and conduct home visits to educate on hygiene methods and maintenance of the systems. Additionally, environmental health and waste management techniques complement these systems. Not only are individual lives improved when children are healthier and homes are cleaner, but the communities take pride in their better appearance and self-sustained social infrastructure.

Commodity Management Applying Technical and Market A

ACDI/VOCA is a leader in innovative management of donated U.S. promote food security and market development around the world

A CIDI/VOCA's commodity management expertise is one of its technical strengths. Between 1992 and 2004, ACIDI/VOCA managed over 800,000 metric tons (MT) of commodities donated by various parties, but primarily by the U.S. government. In addition to managing commodity under its own USAID P.L. 480 Title II and USDA programs, ACIDI/VOCA is building its portfolio of commodity management and monetization contracts whereby its technical expertise is sought and utilized by other organizations.

In all of its programs that include the donation of commodity, whether for sale to generate proceeds for development purposes (monetization) or for distribution, ACIDI/VOCA undertakes a rigorous process of ensuring the appropriate commodities are utilized, that any negative impact to local markets and commercial imports is minimized, and that the best monetization or distribution methodology is utilized to enhance the development impact of the process itself.

Analyzing Data to Design the Right Program

During the design process for a food aid program, ACIDI/VOCA conducts an assessment of the current market in-country. For all Title II programs, this is a Bellmon Analysis, which determines food aid needs, looks at production and imports, assesses shortages and seasonal variations as well as determines available transportation and storage. This analysis



Vitamin A-fortified vegetable oil is one of the commodities ACIDI/VOCA manages in Rwanda.

is utilized to determine potential disincentives to local production and ensure that adequate storage and transportation facilities are in place to facilitate the movement of the commodity and prevent waste. This assessment is critical and is updated every year. ACIDI/VOCA also assesses the appropriate tonnage to bring into the country, based on the Usual Marketing Requirements, an assessment of needs and imports into a country, including both commercial and food aid com-