

Progress Report April 2008

Project LC-LA 4/07: Bolivia, Lowland

1. Summary

Immediately after project approval in July 2007, the SODIS Foundation contacted the partner institution for the project in the Bolivian lowland, PROCOSI. PROCOSI is an umbrella institution of NGOs, which has been working in health promotion in the country for more than 10 years. In August, their "Community Health Project" was approved by the main donor, USAID. This integral project involves health promotion in 4 Departments in the tropical region of Bolivia, where more than half of the population lives. The project will last for 4 years and includes, among others, the promotion of safe drinking water – a result of prior lobby work of the SODIS Foundation with USAID.

In September, the base line study of the project was carried out, the data of which still are being processed. However, it is clear that the project will benefit far more than the planned 15,000 families. PROCOSI also accepted the proposal of the SODIS Foundation to form a joint technical support team at the level of PROCOSI, which then will train, supervise and support the participating NGOs in the field. Between October and December, the training manuals and kits were updated; they are currently being produced for 1600 community health promoters. While the training and information process is well defined, it is becoming obvious that for such a large scale project, more emphasis needs to be placed on mass communication. Therefore, the SODIS Foundation is preparing the proposal for a second phase of this project, which will focus on mass communication in order to amplify the impact of this project and reach the target audience through other channels.



Members of a training of trainers workshop in Tarija

2. Project zone

In 2007, the SODIS Foundation presented a project to be implemented by the Federation of NGOs "PROCOSI" (Programa de Coordinación en Salud Integral) in the lowland of Bolivia. The project is defined a component within the large-scale "Community Health Project", which is being financed by USAID. The project is an integral intervention in order to improve health and quality of life of the population in rural parts of 4 departments of Bolivia: Beni, Chuquisaca, Santa Cruz and Tarija. Within each department, the municipalities with low human development indices are being included in the project. These are typically rural areas, where people depend on subsistence farming and fishing and to a lesser degree on trading and informal work. The lowland of Bolivia is characterized by hot and humid climate, with a rainy season between January and April. The baseline study showed that the most common sources of drinking water are rivers, springs and wells. Due to the hot climate, water hardly is boiled and people prefer to drink it directly from these sources, without any treatment. The baseline study also showed that diarrhea is very common; prevalence in children under five was between 32 and 48%.

3. Progress and results

During the process of project definition and negotiation, the SODIS Foundation managed to significantly increase the number of beneficiary families of the project. The Community Health Project in total will benefit more than 80,000 families, and for the current project of cooperation between the SODIS Foundation and PROCOSI, the component of "Safe Water, Hygiene and Sanitation" will benefit 50% of the communities, i.e. some 40,000 families – which is almost three times as many as originally planned (15,000). This was possible due to the fact that the topics of household water treatment, hygiene and sanitation promotion could be included as integral part of the project, which brings about strong benefits of scale.

It also shall be mentioned that PROCOSI and USAID insisted that within the project the methods of SODIS and boiling are being promoted as the main method for household water treatment. This shows that lobbying at national and international level over the past few years has resulted in official acceptance of the SODIS method by key players like USAID (USAID is the biggest bilateral donor in Latin America).

The project is the biggest project of the SODIS Foundation in all of Latin America: within one project, 8 NGOs, the Ministry of Health and PROCOSI are participating, benefiting in a first phase more than 40,000 families. The project agreement was signed on January 24, 2008, in a special ceremony where representatives of PROCOSI, its member organisations, the Ministry of Health and the SODIS Foundation were present.

Indicator	Planned	Progress April 2008
Facilitators trained	200	200
Community health promoters trained	1600	200
Families trained in household water treatment, improved hygiene and sanitation	42,000	Not reported yet

So far, the technical staff of PROCOSI and the facilitators of the 8 participating NGOs were trained. A specific methodology has been developed for this project, with its materials for the facilitators and a kit for the 1600 community health promoters ("Agentes Comunitarios de Salud", ACS). This 1600 kits were produced and distributed in April 2008 and will be used for the training workshops in May. Training at family level will start in the second semester 2008, and PROCOSI will report progress every three months.

4. Networking

The project is being implemented by PROCOSI and 8 of its member NGOs. Additionally, the project is designed to be implemented in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health and directly is linked to the government program of "Intercultural Family and Community Health", and to the priority policy of "zero malnutrition". This direct involvement in government programs and policies is very important as it guarantees the active participation of the staff of the Ministry of Health at all levels – from the Minister of Health to the director at departmental level to the staff of the health centers and post in the communities.

In a next project phase, it is planned to involve the Ministry of Education, through a component of promotion of safe water, improved hygiene and sanitation in schools.

5. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Strengths:

- Size of the project (more than 40,000 families)
- Solid partners (USAID, PROCOSI and its member organizations, Ministry of Health)
- Household water treatment is part of an integral health project
- A specific methodology with its proper tools has been developed

Weaknesses:

- Slow processes of project definition and preparation
- Complicated processes within the process (PROCOSI, partner NGOs and MoH), which slows down the production of materials

Opportunities:

- There are good chances to extend the project to the 50% of the communities which are not involved in the first phase (some additional 40,000 families)
- The project will serve as a demonstration of the effectiveness of household water treatment and later may be integrated into government policies and programs.

Threats:

- Between USAID and the Government of Bolivia, there are political tensions, which may lead to frictions within the project or between the NGOs and the beneficiary population.

6. Lessons learned

- Due to the specific requirements of USAID, the process of production of material is slow and more time has to be planned in the future.
- Project negotiation is a crucial phase of every project, where significant benefits can be obtained.
- Including household water treatment as a component within a large project is ideal for optimizing resources and making use of existing processes and capacities.

7. Recommendations

- Bacteriological analysis will be limited to a small number of people and groups. There is a need for making these analysis in strategic places and at community gatherings, or to identify other technologies for water quality analysis.

8. Outlook

- The next very import step within the process of training is the series of workshops within each partner NGO of PROCOSI, where the facilitators will instruct the local health promoters.
- After this, the training of the families will start, with its follow-up process at household level.

9. Financial situation

The following expenses have been reported so far:

Item	Activity	Expenses (USD)
1	Production of information and training material	15,000
2	Training workshops	1,500
3	Project supervision and monitoring	2,500
	TOTAL EXPENSES BY APRIL 2008	19,000