BOLIVIA
COUNTRY STRATEGY
2015—2019
With the support of a LIGHT FOR THE WORLD funded CBR project, Jhoselina receives rehabilitation services and education in Cochabamba, Bolivia.
Introduction

Population: 10,8 million\(^1\)
Human Development Index: 0,662 (119 out of 188 countries)\(^1\)
Population below national poverty line: 45%\(^1\)
Life expectancy at birth: 68,3\(^1\)
Physicians per 10,000 inhabitants: 4,7\(^1\)
Blindness rate: 0.6%\(^2\)

Bolivia, officially known as the Plurinational State of Bolivia, is a landlocked country in central South America. Although the HDI has largely improved over the past years, inequalities still exist both with regard to distribution of income and between departments and regions.\(^3\)

Disability in Bolivia

Despite the government’s initiatives and the efforts of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) there is still a need to change attitudes towards persons with disabilities within society, to address the lack of knowledge and understanding of the situation of persons with disabilities, and to inform persons with disabilities about their existing rights in the Bolivian legislation.

The Guiding Framework of LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s Overall Strategy

Our vision is an Inclusive Society for All where no one is left behind and all persons participate equally in the cultural, social, political and economic environment.

Our mission is to contribute to a world in which persons with disabilities fully exercise their rights. The UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) guides us and we engage in empowering persons with disabilities to take development into their own hands.

Persons with disabilities living in poverty, one of the most excluded groups in society, are at the centre of our work. We pay specific attention to women and children with disabilities, and other more excluded groups within the disability community, regardless of their sex, ethnicity or religion.

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s core areas of work are:

Eye health/prevention of blindness:
We aim to remove the physical, social, cultural, and communication barriers that prevent equal access to high-quality eye care services for all, especially for those living in poverty.

Rehabilitation:
We aim to use comprehensive and sustainable intervention systems to address the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and ensure that they can participate fully in society. Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) is an essential part of this strategy and allows us to involve communities, support special needs interventions and inclusion in community activities.

Inclusive education and livelihood:
We consider inclusive education as the bedrock for sustainable development: an investment to reduce poverty, generate sustainable livelihood, improve long-term health benefits, ensure gender equality and promote democratic governance.

In order to support different types of livelihood opportunities around the globe we aim to strengthen income-generating activities for people with disabilities.

Inclusive development and the rights of persons with disabilities:
Our mission for an Inclusive Society for All requires changes in policies, practices and attitudes that express the voices of persons with disabilities. To promote and establish such changes, advocacy and awareness-raising at individual, community, national, regional and global level are essential.
LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s overall objective for the country programme in Bolivia is:

To further strengthen LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s position in Bolivia as a competent expert organisation engaged in the elimination of avoidable blindness, building up comprehensive eye care, and promoting the rehabilitation and education of persons with disabilities. LIGHT FOR THE WORLD will work to ensure that mainstream programmes and services are disability-inclusive and empower persons with disabilities and their organisations to successfully advocate for their rights as laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The main geographical focus of the country programme for Bolivia will be in the central and eastern departments (Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca), and in particular the remote and rural areas within these provinces.

Supporting Inclusive Development in Bolivia 2015—2019

Eye Health / Prevention of Blindness

**OBJECTIVE:** Persons in need have access to eye health services through a strengthened national eye care system and provincial model programmes.

In Bolivia, eye care is only partially integrated into existing primary health care structures and service provision is mostly limited to the big cities and urban areas. Accessibility for the poor remains a challenge, particularly for those living in remote areas, as transport and related costs are major obstacles to accessing health services.

**RESULT 1:** Provincial pilot projects established in our project areas to improve access for poor patients and to provide models for the development of eye health systems on national level.

**LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s support will focus on:**

- Development and implementation of pilot projects with Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) partners to include systematic and regular eye care access to their beneficiaries in close collaboration with public health structures and local ophthalmologists;
- Guidance, strategic support, and capacity development of partner organisations to ensure quality improvement and sustainability of approaches.
RESULT 2: National eye health system is developed with the aim of its integration into general health care.

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s support will focus on:

- Active engagement of LIGHT FOR THE WORLD with and through others within the Eye Health Committee to contribute to the development of a National Eye Health Plan and related public policies;
- Promoting the elaboration of implementation strategies for the National Eye Health Plan in our project areas, that are aligned with and integrated in general health care strategies;
- Identifying entry points for cooperation with eye care training institutes to strengthen surgery competences of ophthalmologists and their understanding of comprehensive community eye care;
- Promoting access to comprehensive eye care to the rural and poor population.

Rehabilitation

OBJECTIVE: Persons with disabilities have access to rehabilitation, education, health and livelihood and participate actively in society.

Traditionally, the care of persons with disabilities has been predominantly provided by their families, who continue to play a major role in providing rehabilitation services, or by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Even though Bolivia has ratified the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the majority of persons with disabilities, especially from poor and rural areas, do not have access to rehabilitation services. This is mainly due to physical barriers, lack of awareness, major financial barriers or those resulting from social attitudes or discrimination. In recent years, NGOs have responded to the need for sustainable and comprehensive support in rural and isolated areas and have begun to implement Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes throughout the country and raising awareness of the need for care for persons with disabilities to be integrated in the public health system. The Bolivian government as well as local and international NGOs are increasingly showing interest to further tackle disability through CBR measures.

RESULT 1: Municipalities and public institutions implemented CBR programmes with the support of strong CBR projects.

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s support will focus on:

- Consolidation of links with and referral systems between CBR projects, general public health care, and education at primary and secondary level;
- Empowerment of DPOs, parents associations, and UMADIS (Municipal Unit to support persons with disabilities) to raise awareness, advocate for their rights, and reduce barriers to foster inclusive development;
• Capacity development of CBR partners to develop into resource centres to transfer knowledge to municipalities, public institutions and other interested actors;
• Development of strategies for phasing out of long term CBR areas, ownership transition to municipalities and other public institutions, and expansion to additional areas with a strong focus on mainstreaming.

RESULT 2: National policies related to CBR are improved and their application at local level is better understood and fostered.

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s support will focus on:
• Development of experience sharing and coordination forums among CBR projects, public institutions, and DPOs;
• Creation of links to other Latin American initiatives (CBR network, lobbying, training, exchange);
• Engagement at national level (by LIGHT FOR THE WORLD and likeminded partners) and at department level (by project partners) to support policy, programme and curricula development.

RESULT 3: Sustainable, standardised training possibilities on CBR and disability, which promote CBR as a strategy for inclusive local development.

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s support will focus on:
• Sustainable training structures in CBR and disability;
• Cooperation with universities to set up internships/practical work programmes with CBR programmes and inclusive school units (physiotherapy, social worker, psychology, etc.).
Inclusive Education and Livelihood

**OBJECTIVE:** Children, youth and adults with disabilities have access to quality education and livelihood opportunities in provinces where Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes are implemented and beyond.

Although there is legislation in Bolivia ensuring access for children and youth with disabilities to the education system, the majority of those with disabilities, especially from poor and rural areas, continue to face serious barriers, with a recent study\(^4\) finding that only 3% of children with disabilities attend regular schools and 4% special education units. Awareness about the possibilities and advantages of inclusive education is lacking among teachers, parents, and the general population. The shortage of well-trained staff and support services is also considered a challenge, especially in rural areas.

With only 1% of persons with disabilities having a formal job\(^5\), livelihood opportunities like access to employment and self-employment through different trainings is a priority for LIGHT FOR THE WORLD.

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5 2nd Universal Periodic Review for Bolivia 2014, IIIMS, 2014

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Cristofer Torres lives with his sister and brother.

*During the week he goes to school and plays with his friends in Sucre, Bolivia. He loves painting.*
RESULT 1: Education projects developed into provincial programmes providing input for inclusive education at both department and national level.
LIGHT FOR THE WORLD's support will focus on:
• Improvement of the quality of education through capacity development of CBR programmes (staff, teachers, parents, authorities, etc.) focusing on the concept and importance of inclusive education integrated in mainstream education, practical teaching methods, and appropriate teaching material;
• Evaluation and systematisation of inclusive education pilot projects supported by LIGHT FOR THE WORLD and dissemination of experiences;
• Capacity/organisational development to support the development of existing special or inclusive schools and rehabilitation centres into resource centres, capable of supporting educational authorities, mainstream schools, and/or vocational training programmes for inclusive education in rural areas.

RESULT 2: Application of legal framework and teacher training for inclusive education at national and department level.
LIGHT FOR THE WORLD's support will focus on:
• Setting up a trainer pool on inclusive education;
• Promoting training and use of the practical handbook on inclusive education within teacher training institutions and universities;
• Developing a strategy in coordination with key stakeholders with the aim of triggering change in inclusive education on a broader level (covering training, lobbying and advocacy, strategic alliances, platforms/exchange forum etc.);
• Linking up and partnering with mainstream education NGOs and civil society organisations to advocate for an inclusive education approach within their programmes.

RESULT 3: Livelihood opportunities in mainstream society strengthened for youth with disabilities in existing CBR and education projects.
LIGHT FOR THE WORLD's support will focus on:
• Personalised solutions for livelihood needs based on individual capacities as well as fostering initiatives to promote inclusive workplaces and inclusion in the corporate sector;
• Awareness-raising and capacity building of mainstream technical and vocational training centres to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities;
• Documentation, systematisation, and facilitation of good practices.
Inclusive Development and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

OBJECTIVE: Policies and programmes of governments and other development actors in Bolivia are inclusive of persons with disabilities. An empowered disability movement is visibly engaged in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

In recent years, the social inclusion of traditionally marginalised groups in Bolivia has advanced with both state and private institutions showing interest in ensuring the meaningful participation and accessibility of persons with disabilities in programmes and policies, yet they often lack capacities and experience to ensure implementation. However, the Decentralization and Autonomy Law provides promising possibilities to cooperate, coordinate, and seek support with departmental or municipal authorities.

RESULT 1: The inclusion and participation of people with disabilities and their organisations is promotes.
LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s support will focus on:
• Empowerment of Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) as well as parents associations to play an active role within the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes, promotion of inclusive municipal development, and monitoring of the rights of persons with disabilities
• Active engagement in the employment of persons with disabilities within our partner organisations in Bolivia.

RESULT 2: Mainstream government, and programmes of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities.
LIGHT FOR THE WORLD’s support will focus on:
• Close cooperation in all CBR programmes with key actors to jointly advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities and the inclusion with active participation of persons with disabilities;
• Inclusive education processes at national, department and local level; mainstream disability with existing education providers;
• Guidance and advice on how to advocate for change regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities (e.g. capacity development of DPOs, monitoring disability rights, support at local policy level);
Making the Bolivia Strategy a Reality

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD supports the initiatives of local partner organisations to safeguard local ownership and cultural as well as structural sustainability. In our work with partners we put an emphasis on capacity development, while respecting the needs expressed by our partners.

Partners

- CENAID: Centro de Atención al Discapacitado / Care Center for Disability
- EIFODEC: Escuela de Integración, Formación Deportiva, Expresión Artística y Desarrollo Laboral / Integrated School for Sports, Artistic Expression and Vocational Development
- ETI: Escuela Taller de Integración / Vocational Education School for Integration
- FAPIZ: Fundación Arquidiocesana Padre Ignacio Zalles / Archdiocesan Foundation Father Ignacio Zalles
- FASCO: Fundación de Ayuda Social de Concepción / Social Assistance Foundation of Concepción
- FASSIV: Fundación de Ayuda Social de San Ignacio de Velasco / Social Assistance Foundation of San Ignacio de Velasco
- IAPB: International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness
- IDEPPSO: Instituto de Educación y Prevención para la Sordera – Beni / Education and Prevention Institute on Deafness – Beni
- IIMS: Instituto de Investigaciones Médico Sociales / Institute for Health and Social Research
- UNAIS International Service

Our work is aligned to government policies and strives to work in close cooperation with public actors, technical experts, and international partners such as CBM, Kinderthilfe, Liliane Fonds, and Handicap International. The establishment of a local support structure through the registration of LIGHT FOR THE WORLD in Bolivia will strengthen this process.

Financial Resources

The total financial support of partners of LIGHT FOR THE WORLD in Bolivia is expected to stay constant at around 700,000 EUR per year or to rise slightly in the next five years, depending on outside funding generated during this period. Detailed figures are published in the LIGHT FOR THE WORLD annual activity report.

Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>CBR</td>
<td>Community Based Rehabilitation</td>
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<td>DPO</td>
<td>Disabled Peoples’ Organisation</td>
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<td>UMADIS</td>
<td>Municipal Unit to Support Persons with Disabilities</td>
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<td>UNAIS</td>
<td>United Nations Association International Service</td>
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<td>UNCRPD</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
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