

Providing water access and sanitation in Latin America

Working with the Spanish-based Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC), a non-governmental organization, OFID is ensuring that rural households in Bolivia and Haiti are provided with reliable access to clean water.

BY FATMA ELZAHRA ELSHHATI

Through special workshops, Bolivian schoolchildren learn about health and hygiene.

In 2014, OFID supported the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture to empower and improve living conditions for rural households in Bolivia and Haiti. The project, funded through OFID’s grants window, secured more inclusive and reliable access to water resources.

More than 20,000 people have benefitted from improved water facilities in Bolivia. The project, which targeted eight towns in Santa Cruz, has responded directly to the needs of each of the districts—larger districts were provided with water purification plants, while in smaller communities, deep wells were constructed.

OFID’s support, which amounted to US\$800,000, also contributed to improving living conditions for the rural poor in Haiti. This component of the project involved Food for the Poor, one of the largest international relief and development organizations in the United States. The aims were similar to those in Bolivia: to improve living conditions for the country’s rural poor. Over 19,200 people have benefitted directly through the construction of houses with proper sanitation and solar water filtration units.

The Santanas, a family of six from Haiti, are proud new homeowners. Before the project, they described how they lived in unsanitary



PHOTOS:FPSC

conditions and worried about the health risks posed to their four children: “We would pretend it was safe and that they would never get hurt or infected,” they said. Now the Santanas have been provided with a new home equipped with a personal sanitation unit and a water cistern.

People like Candelaria Anduira, from Bolivia’s indigenous community, Guaraní, have also experienced a profound change. “Life was very hard,” she said. “Especially for women, as we had to travel up to five miles a day to bring water.”

As a result of clean water delivered directly to homes, women in Candelaria’s community have time to cater to other tasks. “I now have time to be with my children after they come back from school,” she added.

Safe water for drinking, cleaning and other sanitary purposes will help significantly in the fight against waterborne diseases. In line with this, the project targeted communities prone to illnesses such as cholera, and encouraged them to become more involved in the management of their own resources.

The project has created a transformational change in the communities it has reached. In Bolivia, the communities involved took up the challenge to support better water sustainability by creating potable water associations. David Mariscal, President of the Samaipata Water Cooperative, explained: “...now that we [have] provide[d] potable water, we have established a solidarity [fee] amongst all, which allows families access to quality water at a reasonable price.” The fee has enabled cooperatives to maintain their operating expenses and invest in improvements and extensions to other families in the areas, Mariscal added.

In Haiti, the project promoted a sense of strong accountability and ownership within the community. Many residents voluntarily gave a helping hand during the construction stages by digging and carrying water for cement. Moreover, after completion of the project, local safe water committees were established to ensure resources are properly managed, going forward.

The governments of both countries have placed priority on ensuring the reliable delivery of water services is a reality for all. One of the many problems faced by Bolivia and Haiti has been the poor management of resources. It is an especially pertinent problem for the rural poor—many people still lack access to adequate sanitation facilities. However, OFID’s project shows the potential for successful development where resources are correctly targeted and managed. ■



The Santana family in Haiti have moved into a new home with its own sanitation unit and water cistern.



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