

Advocacy case studies

IMPROVING WATER SUPPLY IN BOLIVIA

COUNTRY:	Bolivia
THEMES:	Environment and climate change; food security; livelihoods; water, sanitation and hygiene
ADVOCACY APPROACHES:	Church and community mobilisation; government budget tracking; government officials: meeting with; social contracts and social accountability

Tipa Tipa is a small, indigenous Quechua community located in the Andes mountains near Cochabamba in Bolivia. Tearfund partner UCE (New Hope Church) has been working here for some time to help the community meet its needs. Water scarcity has always been an issue for the people of Tipa Tipa, most of whom are farmers who rely heavily on good rainfall to grow their crops. However, even when the rains come on time, the community still sometimes struggles with an inadequate water supply.

Many years ago, the villagers came together and dug a channel to carry water to their crops. While this partly solved the problem, the community still didn't have enough water for use at home. The village only had a small tank for storing water, and poor construction meant it had deteriorated quickly, and the people of Tipa Tipa were often without water for hours and even days at a time.

Recently, Tearfund provided training in Church and Community Mobilisation to UCE, and the congregation in Tipa Tipa was greatly inspired by the Bible studies they participated in as part of the process. As a result, they decided to help their community to find a solution to this problem. Recognising that water and sanitation is a government service issue, they decided to lobby the municipal authority that allocates budget and provides these services.

The community's efforts were bolstered when a new law was passed, giving Bolivian citizens the right to participate in government budgeting processes, allowing UCE to support the people of Tipa Tipa to track their budget allocations.

UCE asked the municipal authority to provide funds to build a new, larger tank and a new water pipeline network to all the homes in the village. In exchange, UCE contributed its own resources by offering the services of the church and the community for the construction work for free. It was difficult, and there were many meetings and discussions. However, the municipal authority finally decided to adopt the proposal put forward by UCE, and with municipality government funds and free local labour, a new tank and water system were built to supply water to the whole community.

In addition, UCE played a role in influencing the municipality's Annual Operating Plan and the construction of a sewerage system in Tipa Tipa. Families were then able to connect their toilets and showers to the system, and the community was able to build bathrooms where previously they had only had latrines.