

Environmental Education Project for the proper management of solid waste in Cochabamba

Cochabamba is a city that has a fast population growth and in recent years many environmental problems have intensified and have gotten out of control. One of these problems is the generation and disposal of solid waste. Therefore a group of students decided it was time to face the problem, and formed a committee to create a program to educate children, youth and adults about the proper handling of waste.

This project was implemented between 2000 and 2001, was assisted by the Municipality, the Female Civic Committee (CCF), Swisscontact and Bolivian Catholic University (UCB). It began with the training of 51 youth and adults in workshops to become environmental experts. Once the environmental experts gained knowledge of issues related to solid waste and modern methods of learning, all the schools from Cochabamba were invited to participate in the project. Eventually, there were 64 schools that sent 615 volunteers from 11th and 12th grade to be trained as Environmental Leaders.

There were developed 3 primers on environmental education, aired 6 TV spots and 15 radio jingles. Besides, weekly comics were published in three local newspapers. Only in 2000, the acquired knowledge was transmitted to more than 2247 adults and over 11 000 high school students. There were distributed 9000 primers in many locations in Bolivia. It is important to stand out that, among the experts and environmental leaders formed, approximately 81% were women; reaffirming the theory that women are more sensitive to issues related to environmental protection.

In between other activities organized by the UCB were carried out, such as the exposition of information panels presented at the International Fair Camp and at the Main Square during the campaign for the environment and natural resources protection.



The project suffered several flaws in its implementation, the major limitations were:

- The lack of experience of all entities involved because it was a pilot project.
 - A project coordinator was needed to devote fully to the program.
 - The lack of funds for the material distributed and the diffusion of television spots and radio jingles.
 - Many students who were trained had also to attend to their other activities; this resulted in the lack of time and commitment of some environmental experts, losing the participation of 30% of them.
- Finally, the “War of Water”, this social unrest affected not only Cochabamba but the whole country at this time, it delayed the academic schedule of schools and further reduced their involvement.