



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**BOLIVIA**

# CASE STUDY

## Raising Health Awareness by Phone

**Hotline gives Bolivians vital info on HIV/AIDS, STDs and other issues**



Photo: USAID/Bolivia/CPC

Operators from a national, confidential hotline respond to callers on questions related to AIDS and related issues, and refer them to health facilities where they can receive additional services.

***In the past five years, the hotline has responded to more than 200,000 calls addressing questions on issues ranging from biology and medicine, to STD diagnosis and treatment, pregnancy, newborn delivery, and AIDS.***

Telling Our Story  
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### Challenge

Bolivia has a high maternal mortality rate and an elevated incidence of sexually transmitted diseases. Only a decade ago, topics such as family planning, reproductive health and HIV were taboo there. The citizens' knowledge and understanding of disease transmission, consequences and cure were deficient, and in many cases inaccurate. Yet, no services were available to provide information.

### Initiative

USAID initiated a pilot confidential hotline on health issues in 1994 in three cities of Bolivia. This pilot program grew into a larger initiative in 2001. To boost citizens' access to confidential information services, USAID partnered with the Bolivian Ministry of Health to support a 24-hour nationwide hotline operated by a local non-governmental organization, Centro para Programas de Comunicación – Bolivia. Recently graduated psychology students who have received extensive training on providing adequate health-related information volunteer to respond to hotline calls. The services are continuously monitored and clients' privacy is ensured at all times.

### Results

Each month, the hotline takes 4,000 calls. In the past five years, the hotline has responded to more than 200,000 calls addressing questions on issues ranging from biology and medicine to STD diagnosis and treatment, pregnancy, newborn delivery, and AIDS. Seventy percent of the calls originate in urban areas and ninety percent are from adolescents, youth and young adults, requesting information on STDs, pregnancy and AIDS. The hotline's health education service is supplemented with information on health facilities where clients may go for a private, personal counseling session, get treatment for STDs or access voluntary counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS. The statistics obtained are shared with other organizations to help in program management decision-making.