



PHOTO & CAPTION

A Partnership Fights Chagas Disease



Photo: USAID/Bolivia/PROCOSI

Houses such as these in rural endemic areas were the nests for triatomine bugs and Chagas disease. With USAID's support, over 12,000 infested homes were improved, and the risk for the disease for 72,000 Bolivians was reduced.

Chagas disease is transmitted by triatomine bugs that live in poorly constructed huts and bite unsuspecting inhabitants as they sleep. Chagas' chronic symptoms develop ten to twenty years after infection, with an enlarged heart or heart failure as the most common complications.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 18 million people worldwide are infected and that approximately 50,000 will die each year, making this one of the most serious public health problems in the Western Hemisphere. In Bolivia, it is estimated that Chagas-endemic areas include almost 150,000 homes with 900,000 inhabitants.

With USAID funding, and in close coordination with the vulnerable communities, a network of nine non-governmental organizations has provided Chagas disease prevention, education and construction training. The network has played a critical role in leveraging and coordinating resources from various Bolivian partners, such as the Government of Bolivia and municipal governments. These efforts have led to counterpart funding for the purchase of construction materials such as cement, roofing tiles, and lime.

In the last five years, this partnership has renovated over 12,000 rural homes, with approximately 72,000 Bolivians benefiting from the program, contributing to significant reductions in housing infestation rates.

Less tangible but equally important is the sense of dignity and community pride that grows as people develop their own capacities to mobilize resources, protect their children, practice healthier behaviors, and create comfortable, safe, and attractive homes for their families.