



Photo by Marijke Kodden

One of the most pressing environmental concerns in Bolivia is soil erosion from overgrazing and poor cultivation methods, including slash and burn agriculture. Over the past few decades of this century, the use of chemical fertilizers and the overexploitation of renewable resources has all but destroyed the sustainability of agricultural lands in the Cochabamba region by creating a gaping deficit between nutrients added and nutrients taken from the soil. Due to the very poor soil quality, local agricultural communities surrounding Cochabamba produce consistently low crop yields year after year, afflicting the health of local farmers, their children, and the land they live on.

Other environmental concerns facing Bolivia include deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and industrial pollution of water supplies used for drinking and irrigation. Overuse of natural capital to meet short-term economic needs in conjunction with rising population pressures have left the country depleted of resources that traditionally supported the vast majority of its citizens.

FSD supports grassroots environmental organizations that reflect the needs of struggling rural farmers and community members hit hard by the current conditions. Interns and volunteers work to improve the sustainable management of soil, water, and land use through activities that might include working directly with the local universities, offering farmers micro loans, and/or cultivating new water, irrigation, and sewage systems. By strengthening Cochabamba's natural capital and educating/empowering rural communities, FSD aims to support the development of a strong, sustainable agricultural economy.

Internship opportunities in environment in Bolivia include:

- Assist professors at the local university who teach under graduate and post graduate classes in the sustainable management of natural resources. Support research into new practices and technology of agro-ecology preservation. Write and publish scientific articles with research results.
- Investigate proven, cost-effective, and creative ways to improve community habitats through ecological sanitation systems, composting, and proper management of water systems.
- Develop ways to raise awareness in society and the government about sustainable management of natural resources for the increased production and consumption of ecologically aware products.
- Assist with a school's sustainable agriculture and ecology projects which include crop diversification, fertilization methods, and soil maintenance.
- Assist in the organization and creation of organic gardens in the community of Maria Auxiliadora - a cooperatively run neighborhood for women who have experienced intra-familial violence.
- Work with neighborhood political organizations in the Zona Sur of Cochabamba - a peri urban area which is home to indigenous, migrant, socio-economically excluded residents. Support the creation of community-managed projects such as potable water, irrigation, and sewage systems.

For more opportunities in environment in Bolivia visit our website or contact us directly.