



Photo by Rebecca Kirchner

In September and October of 2003, amid fierce civil demonstrations protesting the management of natural gas reserves, 59 Bolivians were killed and 200 more were seriously injured at the hands of the military. The tragedy shocked the country and continues to be a source of tremendous national frustration since there has not been legal consequence for these human rights violations. The result of perpetual rights violations by the government against its people has fueled a palpable sense of desperation and anger. The president – Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada – who was in office for only 14 months of his second run as Bolivia's president, soon resigned and left for the United States. His brief, violent regime brutalized the country with serious rights violations, such as limiting freedom of press, homicide, genocide, and torture. In response, the Bolivian Supreme Court began investigating the excessive force used to quell the demonstrations, along with many other violations committed.

Domestic abuse is another extremely pressing issue in Bolivia. Abuse of women and children is widespread and often goes unreported or unpunished as the two groups currently have limited capacities to be agents for change. Overall, Bolivians could gain much through education of their basic human rights and empowerment to act on political issues that affect them.

FSD partners with local NGOs that address grassroots rights issues in a wide variety of areas. Whether implementing educational workshops for women and children, promoting rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, or providing legal counseling to victims of violence, your experience with FSD will submerge you into a subject that lies at the heart of Bolivia's development struggle.

Internship/Volunteer opportunities in human rights in Bolivia include:

- Develop informational campaigns and workshops regarding citizens' rights for children, adolescents, and women.
- Support efforts to educate and inform community members about the lives of young girls and women living in the streets of Cochabamba. Offer training for at-risk girls to assertively exercise their rights and responsibilities.
- Provide legal counseling to those suffering from HIV/AIDS and victims of sexual and physical abuse. Promote the civil and human rights of people living with the virus.
- Support public policy campaigns geared toward health and education reform. Lobby government at the municipal, departmental, and national levels with concrete policy proposals.
- Provide environmental legal consulting to shift local policies around land use.
- Assist with an organization's activities in dealing with and preventing intra-familial abuse: Provide holistic socio-physical recuperation, education, counseling, and health support to women and children who suffer from abuse. Work with foster and adoptive families to get children out of abusive homes.
- Work with the inter-institutional committee to write the Charter of the city of Cochabamba.

For more opportunities in human rights in Bolivia, visit our website or contact us directly.