



**STORIES OF CHANGE**  
**Impact Report**  
Fall 2022



# ARRIBA

**Achieving Reproductive Rights  
for Bolivian Adolescents**



So far, you've generously helped reach more than **20,000 BOLIVIANS**, including

- **9,000 ADOLESCENT GIRLS**
- **7,000 ADOLESCENT BOYS**
- **1,700 HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

ABOVE: Girls gather around a health worker, eager to learn.

COVER: A woman in the Bolivian countryside.

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Dew and her little girl, who live in Aiquile.

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# The Upside

Welcome to the fourth year of the ARRIBA project: Achieving Reproductive Rights for Bolivian Adolescents.

**ONE YEAR TO GO!** In this report, you'll meet Liz, a young activist, and Adela, an ambitious advocate for gender equality. Plus you'll read about the many ways that your support is helping adolescents and women make healthy decisions about their bodies, families and futures.

We will share compelling new survey data that shows the genuine progress your generosity has supported.

There's still a long way to go, but thanks to you, people in Bolivia are bringing about important change for generations to come.

**THESE ARE THE MAIN GOALS OF THE FIVE-YEAR PROJECT, IMPLEMENTED IN 12 RURAL MUNICIPALITIES OF BOLIVIA:**

**1**

Adolescents and women of reproductive age have more power to claim and exercise their rights to sexual and reproductive health and protection.

**2**

Better delivery of high-quality maternal, newborn, sexual and reproductive health care.

**3**

Improved health governance and systems that can serve the needs of adolescent girls and boys and women of reproductive age.

# Breathtaking Bolivia

And that's not just because of the altitude!



**BOLIVIA IS FAMOUS FOR ITS RAINFORESTS,** deserts, mountains and iconic salt flats. It's home to South America's largest proportion of Indigenous people – some of whom you'll read about in this report. The country is also known for two extremes: La Paz is the world's highest capital city, and Bolivia has one of the highest degrees of income inequality in the world. Here are some fast facts:

- During the pandemic, many people were forced to migrate from their rural communities to the cities in search of employment.
- Bolivia has the highest newborn mortality rate in Latin America. Up to two-thirds of deaths could be prevented if mothers had access to proper care during childbirth and the first week of their infants' lives.
- In 2019, Bolivia implemented a policy that would guarantee universal, equitable, timely and free access to health care via the Unified Health System.
- Concern about gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy has sparked social movements that are advocating for change.



## MAKING SENSE OF SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & RIGHTS

Here's what it means

The term “sexual and reproductive health and rights” is a mouthful. But what does it mean? It starts with physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction – including expressing gender identity and sexual orientation – as well as making decisions about reproduction, intimacy and so on. It means having safe sexual experiences that are free of harm, discrimination or coercion – none of which is possible without protecting and ensuring fundamental human rights, including:

- Having access to health care and information
- Being able to choose whether and when to marry, with whom, and to experience equality within that marriage
- Being able to choose whether and when to have children and how many

It also means preventing and treating sexually transmitted diseases; treating infertility; supporting family planning and menstrual health; stopping unsafe abortions and violence against women and keeping women and babies safe, from pregnancy onward.

# Spotlight



A woman from Batallas wearing a traditional pollera skirt.



Two women playing in the Pucarani soccer game.

## FASHION STATEMENT

ImillaSkate teens wear traditional skirts to raise awareness about the discrimination Indigenous women face.

**POLLERAS**, the traditional skirts worn by Indigenous Aymaran and Quechuan women, are now also skate-park street style, thanks to the nine young women in the ImillaSkate skateboarding collective. The skaters wear them to promote acceptance of Indigenous women and their ancestral culture in our modern world.

“It was rare to see girls on skateboards,” Daniela, one of the group’s founders, told *National Geographic*. “We do it [wearing polleras] as a demonstration, as a cry for inclusion.”


**“The polleras are very valuable to me. I wear them with pride.”**

– Deysi, another team member who is practicing for the national skateboard competition in November

The ARRIBA project has also helped organize similar feminist-inspired sporting experiences, like soccer games between Aymaran men and women.

In Pucarani, a parents’ game was held to create a safe space in which to challenge gender stereotypes and build a sense of inclusivity and equality.

Clothing can say a lot. One of the team’s jerseys reads: **“Strong is the one who never loses tenderness.”**

 Check out @ImillaSkate on social!

# THE RUNDOWN

Your support helps women, girls and boys access safe sexual, reproductive and maternal health services and information. Here's what has been achieved so far.

## 21,000 HOME VISITS

were carried out by health workers.

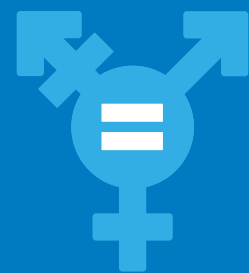


## 4,500 ADOLESCENTS

received mentoring from Champions of Change peer mentors.

## 2,100 TRADITIONAL LEADERS & 5,000 COMMUNITY MEMBERS

learned to support sexual and reproductive health for all.

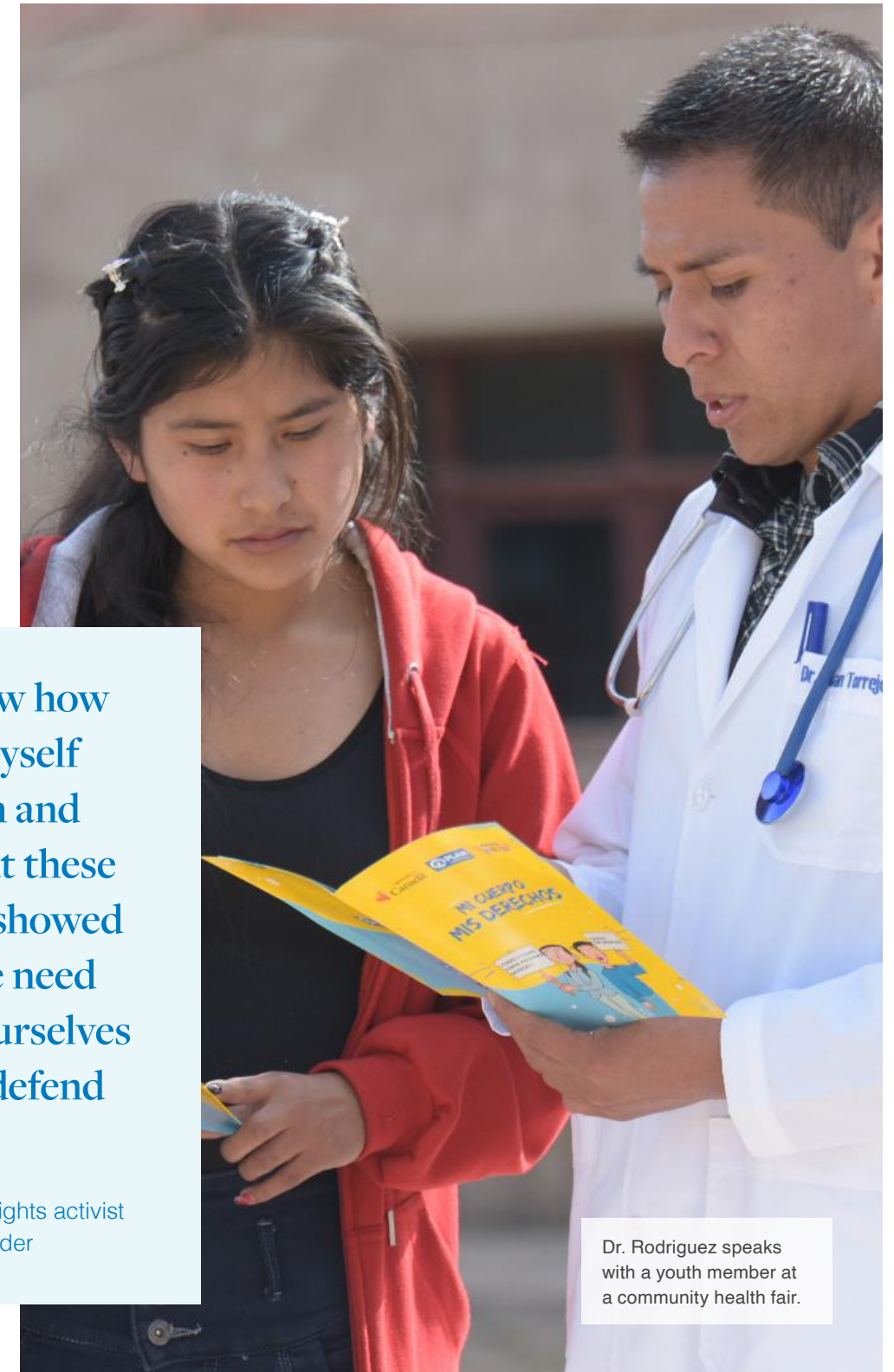


## 12,500 ADOLESCENTS

learned about their sexual and reproductive health and rights and how to prevent gender-based violence.

## 50 HEALTH FACILITIES

were equipped to better meet the needs of women and youth.



“I didn’t know how to defend myself from sexism and violence. But these workshops showed me how. We need to inform ourselves in order to defend ourselves.”

– Adela, a women’s rights activist and community leader

Dr. Rodriguez speaks with a youth member at a community health fair.

# The Report Card

## YOUTH FOCUS

At the beginning of the project in 2018, we conducted participant surveys and community evaluations. Now, four years later, we've re-evaluated to track our progress.



A man and a woman midwife stand beside a pregnant woman in a newly equipped delivery room.

### BEFORE

### AFTER

49% of 10–14-year-olds were able to identify risks of violence.

**79% CAN!**

33% of adolescents had adequate sexual and reproductive health and rights knowledge.

**71% NOW HAVE THIS KNOWLEDGE.**

Only 31% of adolescents perceived women and girls as equal to men and boys.

**60% SHARE THIS POINT OF VIEW.**

40% of 15–19-year-old girls decided by themselves or with their partners to use contraceptives.

**83% MADE THE DECISION!**

## HOW DID THE SHIFT HAPPEN?

- Youth learned about their sexual and reproductive health and rights and about how to protect themselves from gender-based violence. They also built life-skills at workshops and training events held with adolescent networks and Champions of Change clubs.
- Health providers visited youth in their homes to discuss sexual health education and services available to them. They also learned specialized care practices for youth.
- Couples' clubs met to redefine gender and parenting roles.

# Spotlight



Liz [back right]  
with her fellow  
Champions of Change.

## LIZ THE MATH WHIZ

She wants a community where girls = boys.

“**ONE OF MY BIGGEST DREAMS** is for my town to be a place where no one experiences sexism,” says Liz, a 16-year-old Champions of Change participant from Camargo. Liz loves math and one day wants to pursue a career in finance. She says the skills she learned at the ARRIBA project’s Youth Network and Champions of Change group have made all the difference in her life.

“**All the training sessions and workshops I’ve attended have changed my way of seeing things.**”

– Liz

In addition to learning about gender equality and how to build her self-esteem, Liz says she now also understands her sexual and reproductive rights.

Health workers in 50 facilities that you helped refurbish have become trusted confidants and advisors for Liz and her peers. “I didn’t know there was specialized care in the

doctor’s office,” she explains. “The doctors inspire trust, so you can tell them things you might not tell your parents.”

With a new outlook, Liz now recognizes and understands that gender stereotypes exist in her community. “Our society is not as good as one might think,” she says. “It’s very influenced by macho culture. It’s hard to talk to older people about these issues because they have such different thoughts than we do.”

And while there’s no single solution to bring about gender equality, Liz would like to be part of the equation. “The coolest thing is to share our learnings with others,” she says. “It’s the best way for them to be correctly informed, instead of through the internet, which is not a reliable source.”



Liz, a Champion of Change wearing an ARRIBA t-shirt in a community centre in Camargo.



# The Report Card

## FOCUS ON WOMEN AND MOTHERS

At the beginning of the project in 2018, we conducted participant surveys and community evaluations. Now, four years later, we've re-evaluated to track our progress.



A woman in front of a school with her children.

### BEFORE

### AFTER

New mothers scored their health care service satisfaction at 41 points.

**SATISFACTION HAS REACHED 58 POINTS.**

26% of new mothers said they didn't receive any support from their partners.

**ONLY 13% FEEL THIS WAY.**

Only 28% of pregnant women knew their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**64% NOW HAVE THIS KNOWLEDGE!**

32% of expecting and new mothers sought sexual and reproductive health services.

**49% SEEK OUT THESE SERVICES.**

## YOUR SUPPORT SPARKED THESE CHANGES. HERE'S HOW:

- Fifty health facilities were equipped with examination tables, stethoscopes, blood-pressure monitors and other medical supplies. Fifty delivery rooms received beds, baby blankets, personal protective equipment (PPE) and safe waste-disposal receptacles. Health workers, such as midwives, also received training on maternal and newborn health practices.
- Traditional community leaders learned about the importance of gender equality and their vital role in protecting children and youth, especially adolescent girls, from gender-based violence.
- Women learned about their sexual and reproductive health and rights and how to protect themselves from gender-based violence through expecting couples' clubs, community workshops and home checkups by health workers.

# Spotlight

## ADELA, THE AYMARAN ACTIVIST

Discover how a historic feminist heroine is inspiring Bolivian women to advocate for their rights

**“WE WANT TO BE A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY, DON’T WE?”** asks Adela, an Aymaran woman in Pucarani. “We don’t want discrimination and violence.”

Adela has been a women’s rights activist and community leader for many years. She held a leadership position in the Bartolina Sisa Confederation, which is an organization of campesina and Indigenous women in Bolivia with more than 100,000 members. The union

is named after Bartolina Sisa, an Aymaran heroine in Bolivia’s struggle for independence from Spanish colonial rule in the 1700s.

**Did you know that the International Day of Indigenous Women, on September 5, honours the date of Bartolina Sisa’s death?**

Three hundred years later, Adela is championing Bartolina’s legacy with your help. She is currently

a leader of her village’s agrarian centre and has attended many Plan International workshops on preventing violence and promoting gender equality.

“These workshops have been empowering for our sisters in [the] Bartolina [Sisa Confederation],” she says. “Now we recognize manifestations of macho culture and identify types of violence in the community. I didn’t know how to defend myself from sexism and violence. But these workshops



Adela [right] greets other members of her community group.

showed me how. We don’t need to be afraid. We need to inform ourselves in order to defend ourselves.”

Adela is committed to sharing her knowledge and skills as she believes this is the best way to promote gender equality. She adds that the most urgent training needed is in family planning and preventing early pregnancy.

While women’s autonomy over their bodies is being set back in

the United States and in other parts of the world, Adela will continue to advocate for women in Bolivia, just as Bartolina did before her.

**“The sisters are awakened. The young people are happy; they’ve changed.”**

– Adela

Nancy lovingly holds her baby bump.



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# Thank you!

Your support for the participants in the ARRIBA project and the people of Bolivia has helped ensure safer pregnancies and gender equality. It has also helped protect girls from violence and improved youth rights.

We're excited to see where the fifth and final year of the will project lead, and so is Mary Luz, an expectant mother who is part of a pregnant women's club.

**“I thank the project for teaching me many things and allowing me to grow,” she says. “I am a leader, and I am ready.”**

Parents at the Pucarani soccer game.



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\* CRA Charity Registration Number 11892 8993 RR0001

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