

Word Made Flesh Bolivia

STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2024

Introduction

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

Word Made Flesh Bolivia is a community of passionate world-changers who consistently choose hope, seeking abundant life for sexually exploited women and their families. Our service is an expression of our faith, a declaration of our belief in an all-powerful God and a humble attempt to follow Jesus’ example of life and service among the poor. It is our desire that the following proposal would bring light to dark places and transformation to all who participate.





Vision

Abundant life for those affected by sexual exploitation in Bolivia



Mission

We awaken hope and offer opportunities for holistic transformation



Values

The work of Word Made Flesh Bolivia is influenced and guided by an intentional spirituality expressed through the following core values:

Intimacy

We celebrate intimacy with Jesus as our highest calling and created purpose.

Vulnerability

We acknowledge our brokenness that leads us to seek wholeness.

Integrity

We seek to live in accordance with what we say and do, striving for transparency in all areas of our life.

Justice

We seek to right wrongs against the most vulnerable and extend honor to all in accordance with the values of the Kingdom of God.

Compassion

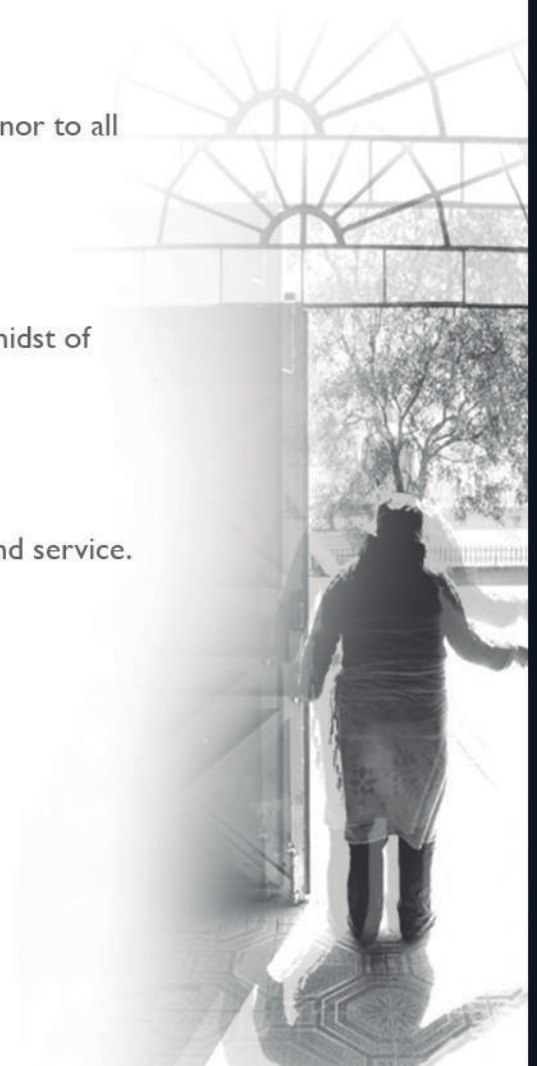
We celebrate compassion as a sacrificial act of identification in the midst of suffering.

Service

We relinquish power and seek to follow the example of Jesus' life and service.

Community

We create a safe space for care and mutual growth for all.



Philosophy

Word Made Flesh is committed to the following philosophical commitments, expressed in seven missional starting points:¹

Jesus and the Kingdom of God

Hebrews 12:28, 13:8

We are an ecumenical community of Christians united in obedience to Jesus for service among the poor. Our service flows from intimacy with Jesus and is guided by the values of the Kingdom of God.

The Most Vulnerable of the World's Poor

Matthew 25:40, James 2:5

We respond to the needs of the world by building community among those who lack sustainable access to resources and availability to opportunity.

Community

Genesis 1:27, Mark 6:7, John 13:35, 1 Corinthians 12, Acts 4:32, Philippians 2:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Community, a tangible sign of the Kingdom of God, is our starting point for theological, ecclesiological and missiological activity. Solidarity with the most vulnerable of the world's poor fulfills our community.

Holistic, Incarnational Mission

John 1:14, 20:21, II Corinthians 5:18-20, Luke 4:18-19, Matthew 25:35-36, James 2:15, I John 3:16-18

We do not minister to the poor; we are on a mission among the poor, identifying with them rather than integrating the poor into our reality. Identification is central in the ministry of reconciliation. Our purpose is for the redemption of the whole person toward the redemption of society. We participate in holistic transformation, desiring to facilitate regeneration and restoration.

Simplicity in Life and Ministry

Matthew 10:7-10, I John 3:16-18

We posture ourselves in simplicity with open hands, dependent on God.

Partnership in Mission

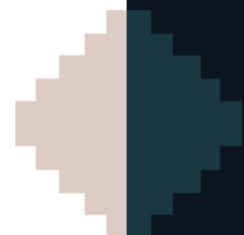
Revelation 5:9-10, Galatians 3:28

In our praxis of mutual submission, mission is dependent on partnership with local Christians and churches. Mission unifies us.

The Urban Context

Isaiah 60, Matthew 9:35-36, 21:10, Luke 13:34-35, Revelation 20-22

Our eschatological hope for the renewed city calls us to give ourselves to the redemption of urban setting.



History of

Word Made Flesh Bolivia

The story of Word Made Flesh Bolivia (WMFB) is one of God's faithfulness and grace - of perseverance in the midst of high-altitude living, political turmoil, sickness, trauma and transformative hope. WMFB first began as a desire to continue the work of Word Made Flesh in South America. As one of the most impoverished countries in the region, as well as its proximity to the already established WMF Peru, the community decided to expand ministry to Bolivia.



On August 2, 2001, Andy and Andrea Baker innocently arrived in El Alto as the first missionaries of WMFB. To their surprise, they found an unmet need among women in prostitution, and opportunities for ministry began to open. Early in 2002, they began visiting the brothels in Bolivia's largest red-light district and slowly began building relationships with the women there.

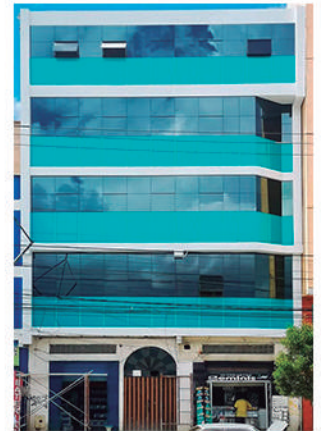
Nearly a year later, La Casa de Esperanza, The House of Hope - named by the women themselves - opened its doors as a place of hospitality and care for sexually exploited women and their children. Together, the local community determined four ministry foci and began literacy classes, childcare, medical consults and a corresponding restorative program.





In 2006, La Palabra Hecha Vida (LPHV) became a locally registered Foundation, and in 2015, LPHV became the first tax-exempt non-government organization in the Department of La Paz.

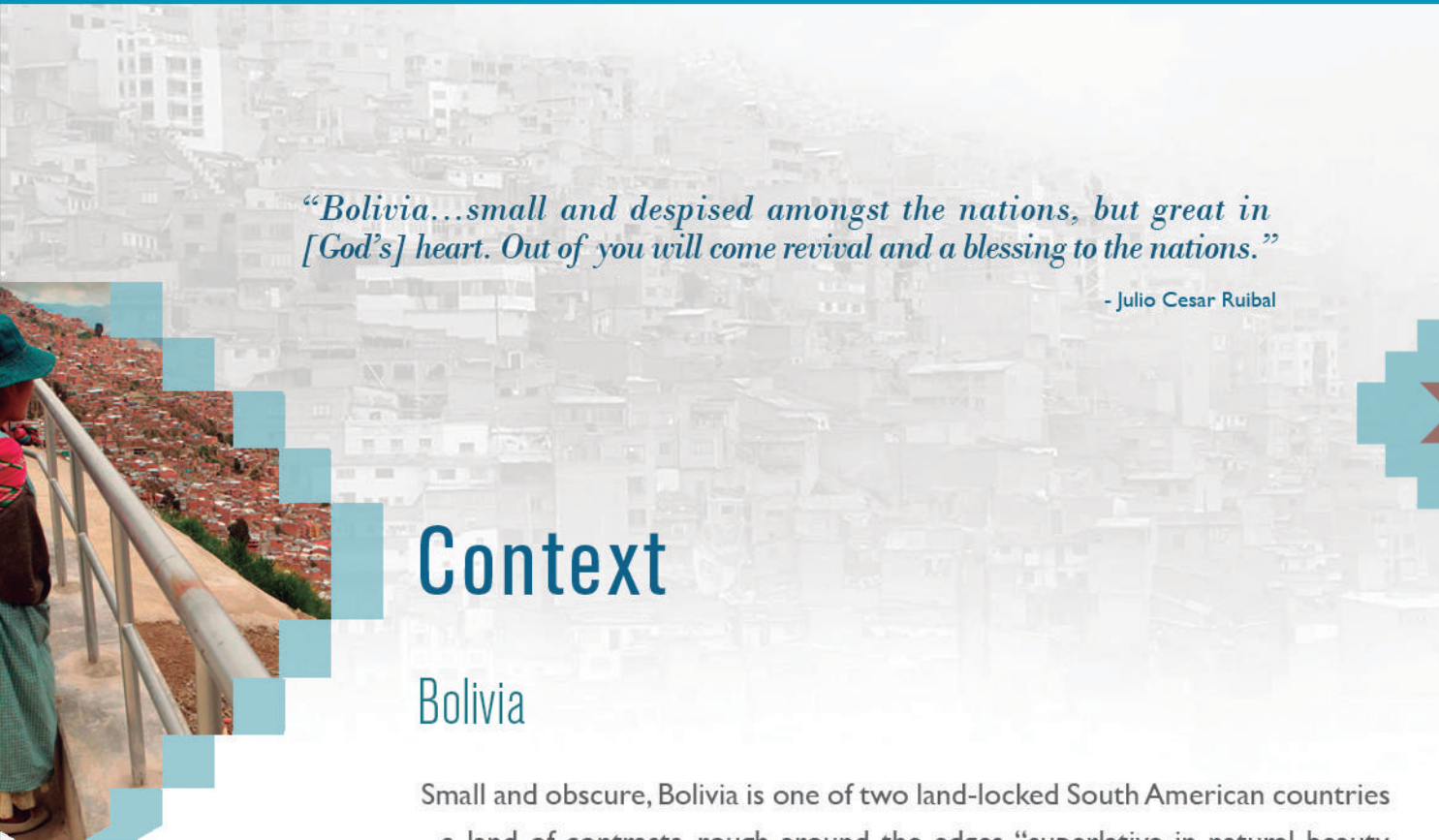
Recognizing the huge economic hurdle that impedes many women from leaving the streets, the community began to draft a dream, a social enterprise for women in prostitution, and in 2010, SutiSana received its first participants. A combination of Aymara & Spanish, the prominent local languages, SutiSana means, "healed name." Based on Isaiah 62:2, SutiSana celebrates when a woman leaves behind her former street name for her true identity in Christ. Now as an independent entity, SutiSana continues to provide employment, a fair salary and full benefits to survivors of sexual exploitation.



In 2015, after witnessing the repetition of harmful cycles of poverty and abuse, WMFB expanded their attention to include a holistic and preventative after-school program for children affected by prostitution. Together alongside their mothers, children learn and grow for the restoration of the whole family and long-term generational impact.

In 2019, to accommodate growth, WMFB expanded to add a 5th floor to its facilities, serving an average of 194 women and 128 children per year. Comprehensive, trauma-informed models of healing and care developed for both sexually exploited women and their families, as well as the staff who care for them. Regional influence also began to grow through work with local churches and anti-trafficking networks.

Now as we face the significant effects of a global pandemic, we hold on to all that the Lord has done throughout the years, and we trust in this faithfulness as we joyfully anticipate accompanying many others to wholeness and freedom.



“Bolivia...small and despised amongst the nations, but great in [God’s] heart. Out of you will come revival and a blessing to the nations.”

- Julio Cesar Ruibal

Context

Bolivia

Small and obscure, Bolivia is one of two land-locked South American countries - a land of contrasts, rough around the edges, “superlative in natural beauty, rugged, vexing, complex...”²

Hosting ancient treasures, Bolivia is rich in cultural diversity and natural resources. With over 11 million inhabitants,³ the majority are indigenous⁴ and living in urban areas.⁵

Bolivia has struggled from centuries of exploitation, maintaining one of the highest poverty rates in Latin America.⁶ In 2008, a little over 20% of the population reported a state of multidimensional poverty, with deprivations in health, education and standard of living.⁷ But over the last two decades, poverty ratios show a dramatic cut in half under Latin America’s first indigenous president, Evo Morales. With socialist policies, President Morales brought short-term political and economic stability throughout Bolivia, reducing the country’s overall inequality in life expectancy, education and income.⁸ Though successful in amplifying the indigenous voice, Morales failed to fully meet expectations or reconcile ancient racial divides.

With political unrest and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years, poverty, inequality and the risk of malnutrition are expected to increase significantly.^{9 10}



El Alto

Seated at 13,300 ft. above sea level along the high-plains of the Andes mountains, El Alto is intense: oxygen-depleted, windswept, with frigid temperatures, blaring sunshine and scant vegetation.¹¹ Yet El Alto is Bolivia's youngest and fastest growing urban center, with over one million residents.¹²

First created as a collection of government subsidized neighborhoods on the outskirts of the capital, the young city grew exponentially in the '80s with an influx of miners and their families, when tin mines suddenly shut down across the country. Thousands flocked to urban centers in search of options, making El Alto a classic example of rapid urbanization - a city of migrants, a city of hope. Yet, under the pressures of rapid growth, inadequate infrastructures resulted in insufficient housing and a lack of basic social services. Unemployment and underemployment contributed to a tremendous increase in the informal economy.

El Alto's sister city La Paz grew as a colonial center during the Spanish conquest, due to its strategic location: a large valley en route between the highly exploited silver mines of Potosi, with Cuzco, Peru en route to the sea. Historically more developed and largely mestizo, La Paz stands in stark contrast to El Alto, the "Aymara capital of the world." Humble, reserved and hard-working, the indigenous Aymara remain skeptical of "outsiders," who have historically exploited them. By her wealthier neighbors, El Alto is considered a center of rebellion and delinquency. These vastly different cultural and socio-economic contexts feed into centuries-old tensions, which simmer just below the surface and often erupt.



Women

In the shadows of the Bolivian reality is a culture that systemically undervalues women, making minors, the indigenous and poverty-stricken particularly vulnerable. Four out of ten women still live in poverty,¹³ disadvantaged by cultural expectations¹⁴ and limited opportunities,¹⁵ and concentrated largely in informal, vulnerable employment, limiting their access to benefits and higher earnings.¹⁶

“Aymara women are disadvantaged both by being indigenous and female.”¹⁷ The Aymara have the largest gender gap in literacy and school completion.¹⁸ Exacerbating this disadvantage, indigenous workers are paid less regardless of education.¹⁹



“A woman of color living in the global south is in significant danger on a daily basis of sexual violence.”

- Christena Cleveland

Additionally Bolivia is one of the most violent countries for women in the world.²⁰ Bolivia ranks highest in partner violence in all of Latin America.²¹ Nine out of 10 women are expected to be victims of some type of violence in their lifetimes;²² 70% victims of sexual violence.²³ 96% of victims of child sexual violence are female.²⁴ Every three days, another woman falls victim to femicide.²⁵



COVID Effects on Women²⁶

As sobering as these realities are, the COVID pandemic has only intensified life for women in Bolivia. “Confined living conditions and tensions generated by significant security, health and money worries are exacerbating experiences of violence that already constituted a serious gendered social and public health problem.”²⁷

The crisis has also intensified “existing economic and gender inequalities, given that it is the poorest women who bear the heaviest burden of caring and for whom this burden of caring limits their opportunities to livelihood.”²⁸

“The pandemic revealed what does not work: An economy that relies on women’s unpaid and undervalued labor—especially that of immigrant women, Indigenous women, and women of color—while high-quality and affordable health care, education, and safe, nontoxic environments are considered privileges for the few.”²⁹

Trafficking³⁰



When poverty and violence collide it creates the perfect conditions for entry into trafficking. “Millions of women, children and men worldwide are out of work, out of school and without social support in the continuing COVID-19 crisis, leaving them at greater risk of human trafficking.”³¹

The Internet is playing a major role in facilitating these crimes. Traffickers, skilled in taking advantage of such situations, use social and online networks and informal temporary employment agencies to identify and recruit potential victims. “Traffickers integrated technology into their modus operandi at every stage of the process: from recruiting to exploiting victims.”³²

In Bolivia, the majority of trafficking victims are adult women trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation,³³ as a result of force, fraud or coercion. The commercial sexual exploitation of children in Bolivia is a harsh reality that is also growing at an alarming rate.³⁴

Weak border control makes the land-locked country even more susceptible. Bolivian women and girls are exploited in sex trafficking within Bolivia and neighboring countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru.³⁵ Traffickers also exploited women from neighboring countries, including Brazil, Colombia, and Paraguay, for sex trafficking in Bolivia, as well as an increased number of Venezuelan victims in sex trafficking and forced labor within the country.

While there is some progress in law establishment and public awareness, Bolivia lacks the capacity or judicial infrastructure to ensure the protection of victims and the vulnerable.³⁶ According to the 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report, the government of Bolivia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so.³⁷ Bolivia “did not prosecute any traffickers, care provided to victims was inconsistent, and cases involving complicit officials remained open.”³⁸

At the national level, Bolivia is among the lowest ranking countries for citizens’ confidence that the judicial system punishes the guilty.³⁹ “Sexual predators act with impunity: someone who sexually assaults a child in Bolivia is more likely to die slipping in the shower or bathtub than to be sentenced to jail for their crime.”⁴⁰ Without firm political and social structures in place, vulnerable women lack even basic resources for their protection, support or empowerment.

Additionally, while positive initiatives exist against the commercial sexual exploitation of minors, Bolivia also allows the freedom of adult women through regulated prostitution for those 18 years old and over. The combined cities of El Alto and La Paz report approximately 19,013 legally registered sex workers.⁴¹ Though it is widely assumed that women in prostitution choose “easy money,” an estimated 84% are likely victims of sex trafficking.⁴² Even more likely, she fell prey escaping previously mentioned social and economic factors.⁴³ Bolivian law then fails to make the link between abuse, trafficking and prostitution, essentially leaving a victimized young woman trapped, while dignifying her exploitation.

WMFB exists as the only organization in Bolivia specifically serving sexually exploited women and their children. We aim to meet her where she is, to break through lies that may entrap and awaken dormant dreams. When she is ready, we offer the tools and support needed to reach her goals. The following pages outline that plan.

WMF Program Model⁴⁴

“Everyone tells you that [prostitution] is a good job, that you can earn whatever you want and that you’re valuable, to the point that you start to believe it yourself. But now I know - I know they were cheating me, I know it's exploitation, and not just a job. I feel like I can finally breathe again, and I'm never going back.”

- Charo,* Survivor and WMFB Program participant



Presence
& Prevention

CONNECTION

Word Made Flesh serves on the front-lines among sexually exploited women & their children in Bolivia. We value depth and quality, as we accompany victims seeking abundant life.



Protection
Housing
& Support

SUPPORT

Through street outreach, social services, therapy, discipleship, skills training and employment, after-school tutoring and mentorship, we work with the whole person and the whole family for holistic and generational change.



Health & Nutrition
Psychological &
Therapeutic Support

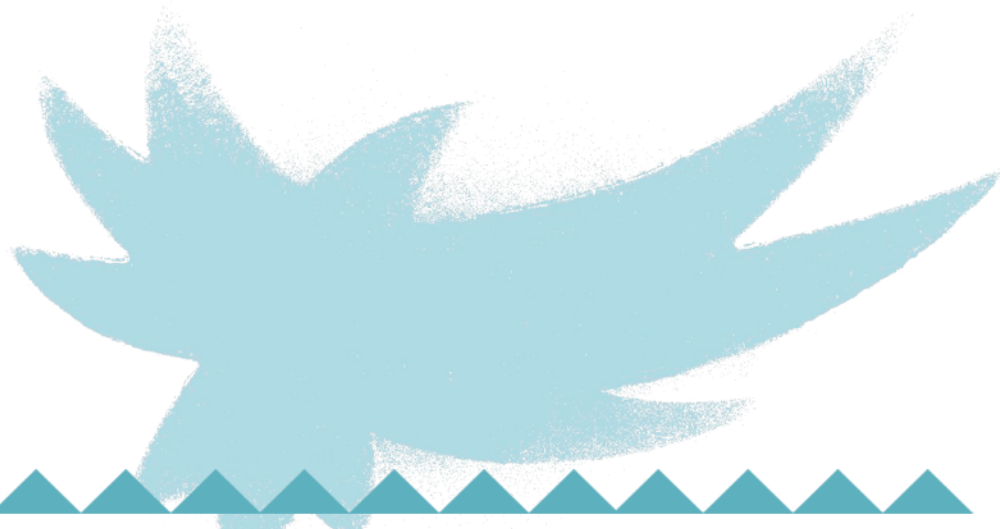
HEALING

With trauma-informed care and using research-based, contextualized and measurable indicators for growth, women and children can find fulfilling ways of engaging in society with reduced vulnerability to abuse or re-victimization.



Education &
Skills Development
Faith & Leadership

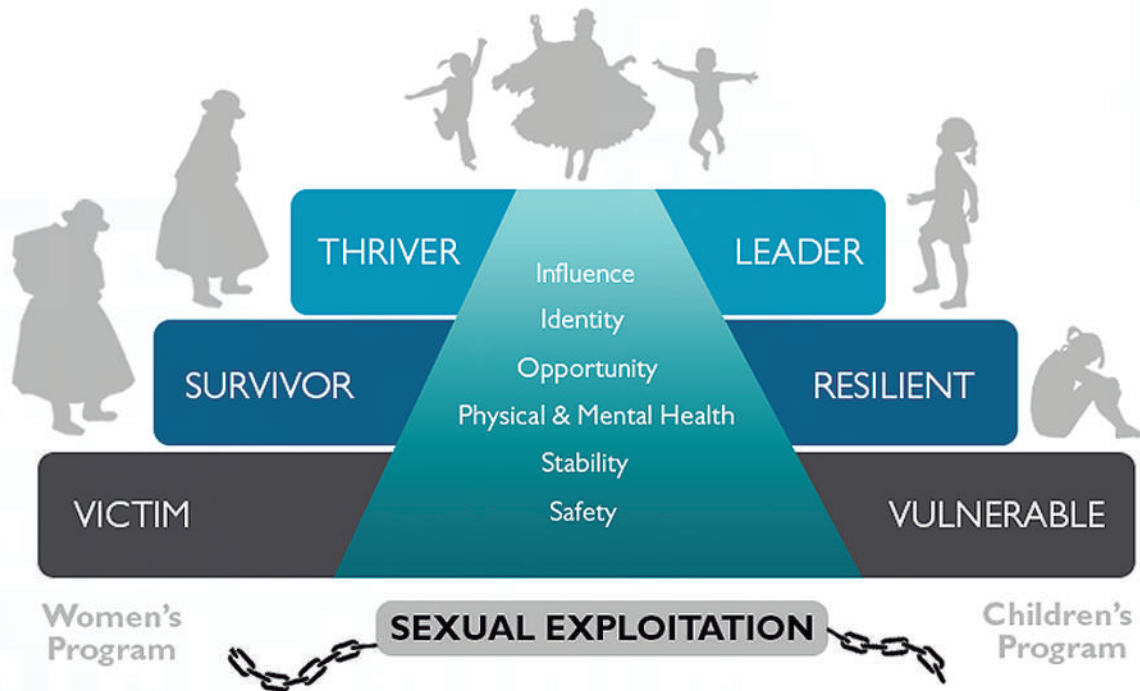
OPPORTUNITY



WMFB Program Model

WMF meets vulnerable people in the context of sexual exploitation or other high-risk situations. Considering key categories, program participants move through three specific phases. As they improve overall functioning, well-being and external circumstances, women and children find the support to live abundantly.

ABUNDANT LIFE



Zoe's Story⁴⁵

"I arrived [to WMFB] shy and scared, afraid people were going to judge me. [Leaving prostitution] was not easy for me. I kept falling into debt, my health deteriorating... If it was not one thing, it was another, it seemed that it would never end. There were moments when I thought that everything I was doing was not going to work. I had very discouraging moments of sadness and depression, which made me doubt everything. But [they] did not give up on me; they encouraged me to keep going."

When we met Zoe, she was homeless and in great need. She had lost custody of her children, and also struggled with alcohol and health problems. During one of her medical check-ups, a mandatory procedure for women in the brothels, she received a personal invitation to visit WMFB.

During the first months at WMFB, Zoe learned to prioritize her needs and made changes. She learned to accept and love herself through therapeutic support, as well as how to set goals, recognize situations of vulnerability and restore her life.



"[WMFB] has been a faithful friend - loyal, diligent, assertive, showing me empathy for everything that has happened in my life's journey... Now new projects await me, dreams to fulfill... I'm really excited about this new journey."

Zoe is currently graduating from the restoration program. Her new perspective and her love for God has changed her life completely. In addition to opening a beauty salon, she wants to continue supporting WMFB by guiding new women who come to our facilities.

"May new projects arise to help my friends [still on the streets], so that they can get a decent job as soon as possible, as soon as they come to knock on the door [of WMFB]. Most of them arrive desperate with children, just like I was. Thank you, thank you very much for everything you gave me."

SWOT Analysis

As we seek to serve with excellence, we recognize there are always areas to improve and grow. So we began this planning process with a group analysis to identify our specific strengths and challenges, which we then used as a guide in creating updated strategies.

Strengths

- Clear vision, stable growth
- Established trust with target population and donors
- Strategic location, adequate infrastructure
- Knowledgeable (TIC-trained) and experienced staff
- Holistic care models for target population & employees
- Diverse community with trust, respect and shared values
- Administrative excellence and transparency

Weaknesses

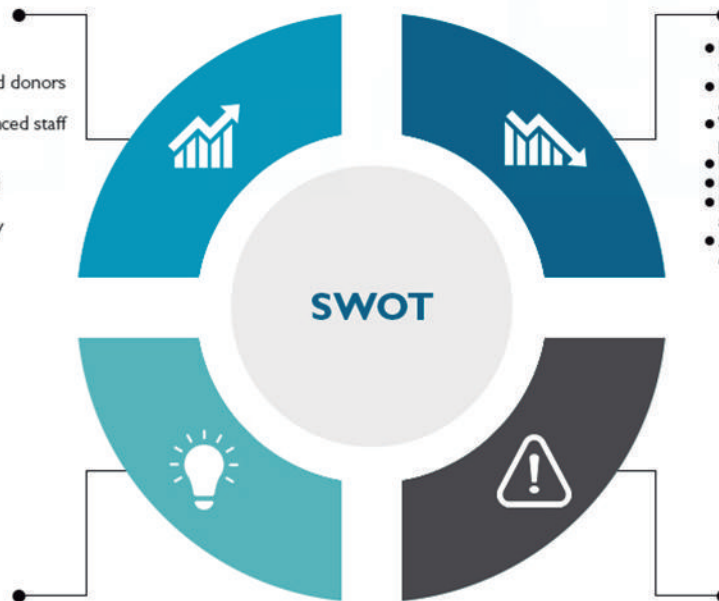
- Lower institutional profile in comparison to experience and expertise
- Need for updated policies for security and internal communication
- Weak coordination between program areas and partner churches
- Few opportunities for development & employment
- Paternalistic perspectives that limit growth
- Lack of diverse funding, marketing strategies and connections
- Administrative capacities in personnel, obsolete equipment & limited digital resources

Opportunities

- Survivors lead as change agents internally and externally
- Increased technological accessibility to target population, staff resources and institutional influence
- Expand WMFB services to other cities and regions in Bolivia for more comprehensive outreach
- Increased connections & partnerships to expand resources & influence for long-term sustainability
- Disseminate program data to increase funding & awareness
- Teach & replicate WMFB models for holistic programming, community care & administration
- Modification of sexual violence law 348 regarding women in Bolivia
- An updated institutional identity to reflect local values and objectives

Threats

- Pandemic challenges (limited in-person contact, mental health issues, increased needs & vulnerability)
- Growth of trafficking networks (and online tactics)
- Instability of beneficiary population
- Unstable government, policy changes and legalization of prostitution
- Structural, socio-cultural, spiritual & interpersonal opposition against a woman's growth
- Economic crisis & increased competition within anti-trafficking organizations leads to decrease in funding
- Institutional rebranding could lead to losing identity, donors, connections, etc.
- Identity as a Christian institution



Looking Forward



Goal 2021-2024

Reduce the physical, spiritual, economic and social vulnerability of sexually exploited women and their children, facilitating access to opportunities for abundant living.

For two decades, WMFB has sought to honor God and others in our mutual journey towards wholeness. By leveraging valuable experience, this proposal seeks to pivot to current realities.

Our analysis identified a clear vision and a community of seasoned national leaders knowledgeable of the target population, as well as an opportunity to strengthen their influence and capacities. WMFB has also developed a contextualized program model for families affected by sexual exploitation. Opportunities to share that experience with a variety of audiences could strengthen the global fight against human trafficking.

Additionally, a global pandemic has shifted priorities. Increased technology opens opportunities for outreach and influence, as well as increased vulnerabilities for those innocent of online risks or lacking access to resources.⁴⁷ Violence and financial strain are also disproportionately affecting women, particularly women of color, and therefore also the children in their care. Strengthening the economic potential of women and youth is a priority. With these realities in mind and with the hopes of influencing society and maximizing the potential of vulnerable families in Bolivia and beyond, we seek to improve in the following areas:

- ▶ Equip program participants for sustainable economic growth through professional mentoring and access to increased career opportunities
- ▶ Include, honor and expand the influence of local leaders and survivor voices, embracing gender, racial, economic and cultural diversity as represented in the Kingdom of God
- ▶ Address root causes of sexual exploitation and reduce demand⁴⁸ through an updated Advocacy program⁴⁹
- ▶ Improve anti-trafficking efforts through education to train government officials
- ▶ Update evaluation tools to better align between the Women and Children's programs
- ▶ Clarify program directives with a separate department for development and communications

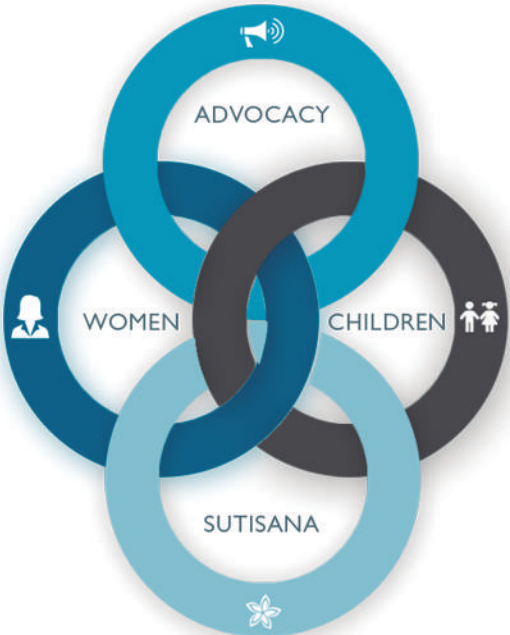
“I hope to mark a new chapter for WMFB, as a mature organization highlighting impact and leading in the fight against sexual exploitation. I hope to replicate our experience and knowledge and watch leaders grow among those we serve.”

- Doris Monasterios, WMFB Director of Operations

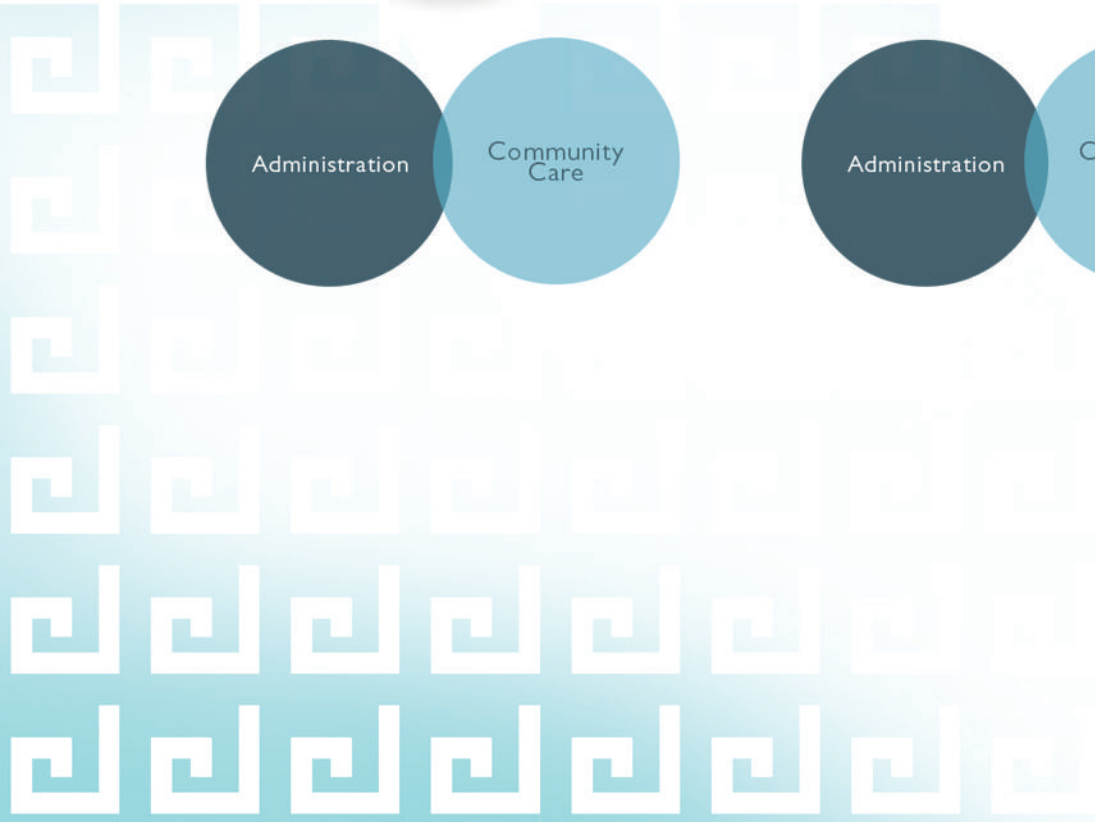
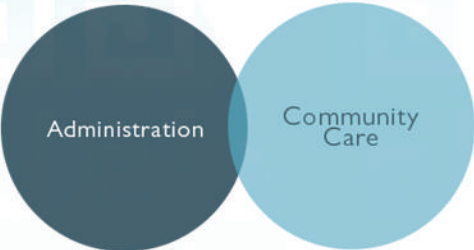
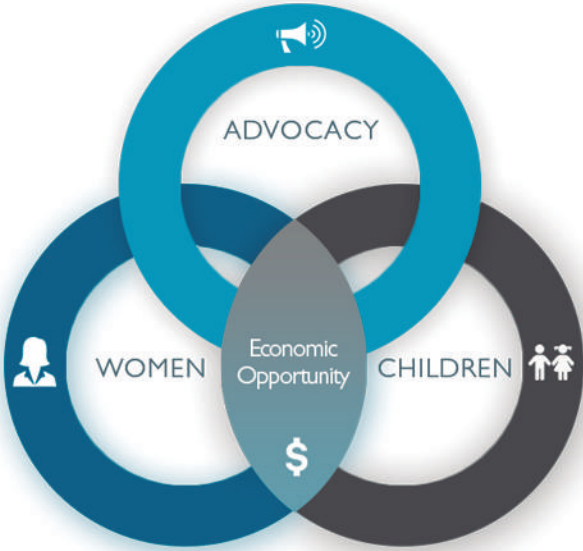


Organizational Structure

Previous



Updated



Proposal

Women

Encourage positive influential leadership of women affected by sexual exploitation in their community

Expand services to 3 key locations of sexual exploitation and trafficking throughout Bolivia	% of women reached, based on # local registry
Begin preventative outreach initiative to university students and young teens	# women reached
Improve virtual capacities with updated initiatives	# consistent participants
Strengthen relationships and strategic alliances with government institutions and key thought leaders	# institutional partnerships
Establish connection and trust with sexually exploited women through regular visits to places of sexual exploitation	# of authentic conversations # of visits made
Offer a trustworthy and safe community based on trauma-informed care where women can find a sense of belonging and support	% of participants involved, based on # of women reached
Provide timely responses to the needs of women in emergency situations	% of women who receive care to alleviate emergency
Affirm the value of women by supporting their personal growth and skills development	# of women participating in the activities
Reduce the overall vulnerability of sexually exploited women through comprehensive restoration program (as measured by the VST) ⁵⁰	% of women progressing in mental well-being and healing of trauma (VST)
Provide group and individual therapy for the healing of trauma ⁵¹	% of women showing progress according to VST
Implement holistic growth plan for each woman that allows her to set personal growth goals ⁵²	% of women showing progress according to VST
Strengthen the family bond between mother and children	# actions in coordination with Children's Program
Foster survivor influence through storytelling, in internal and external spaces	# active participants in survivor support group (Vuela Libre)
Facilitate economic independence for women to improve their reality and earn income from non-exploitative sources	% of women helped improve their economic stability
Offer training on household financial management, vocational guidance and entrepreneurship	% of women demonstrating application of learned skills
Facilitate access to vocational and educational scholarships and internships	# women who participate
Develop a professional development mentoring program for survivors of sexual exploitation and at-risk youth to access fair and equitable work	% of program members who develop professionally # of participants who complete mentor program
Provide micro-loans for approved small business initiatives	% of women who begin their own business # of women who access microcredits

Children

Break cycles of violence in children affected by sexual exploitation by reducing vulnerability, strengthening leadership and promoting equitable opportunities

Reduce vulnerabilities regarding health, nutrition, protection, safety, education, skills and psychosocial capacities	% of children who advance to Resilient (CSI) ⁵³
Ensure children have sufficient food and medical care throughout the year to grow adequately ⁵⁴	% children growing adequately
Educate children on abuse to prevent harm, and intervene in situations of high risk and vulnerability ⁵⁵	% of children who can identify high-risk situations # interventions as identified by child
Provide education and psychosocial support to vulnerable children and youth	% children progressing % of children that move from to Resilient (CSI)
Reduce vulnerabilities through holistic restoration program to produce resilient leaders	% of children who advance from Resilient to Leader (CSI)
Offer a comprehensive program, where each child grows to their full potential based on the Child Status Index scale (CSI) ⁵⁶	% of progress (CSI)
Encourage personal, family and social impact through story-telling, mentoring and leadership opportunities	# of active leaders
Strengthen professional skills and career development in youth to break cycles of poverty in their homes ⁵⁷	% of children who advance from Resilient to Leader (CSI)
Facilitate professional mentoring relationships for economic and educational opportunities	# of youth who complete program
Generate opportunities to access scholarships and / or experiential learning with partner institutions	# of scholarships awarded # of partner institutions # of youth enrolled in partner institutions programs

Advocacy

Build a just and healthy society by addressing gender and cultural discrimination to challenge the current condition of women, particularly sexually exploited women

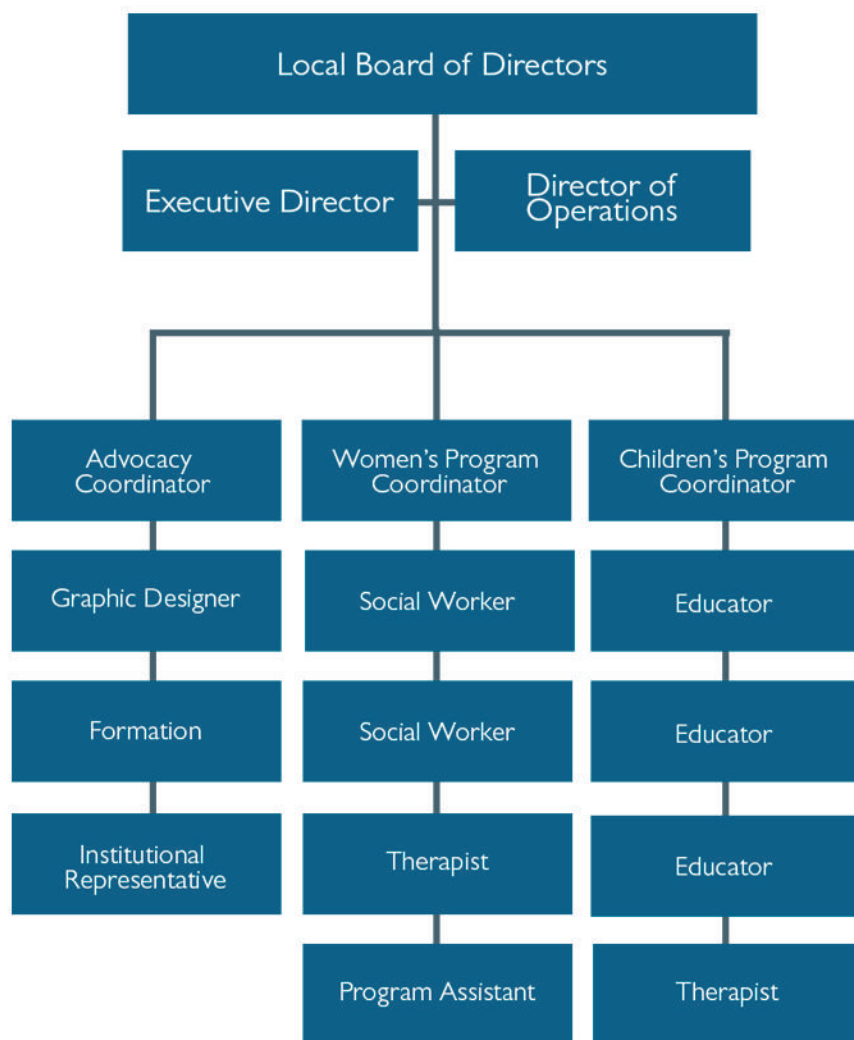
Position WMFB as a benchmark in the fight against sexual exploitation, trafficking and related crimes	# of representations in public activities
Strengthen the work of anti-trafficking and gender violence networks locally and internationally through active and purposeful participation	# of representations anti-trafficking networks
Create advocacy and training programs for all levels of government and society ⁵⁸	# of anti-trafficking and gender violence awareness activities completed
Influence anti-trafficking and justice efforts locally and internationally sharing the experience and values of WMFB	# of presentations completed
Establish strategic alliances to support the needs of the target population	# of alliances made
Recruit and train mentors for survivors of sexual exploitation	# mentors trained
Establish partnerships in vocational training to support professional development	# of established partnerships

Organizational Support

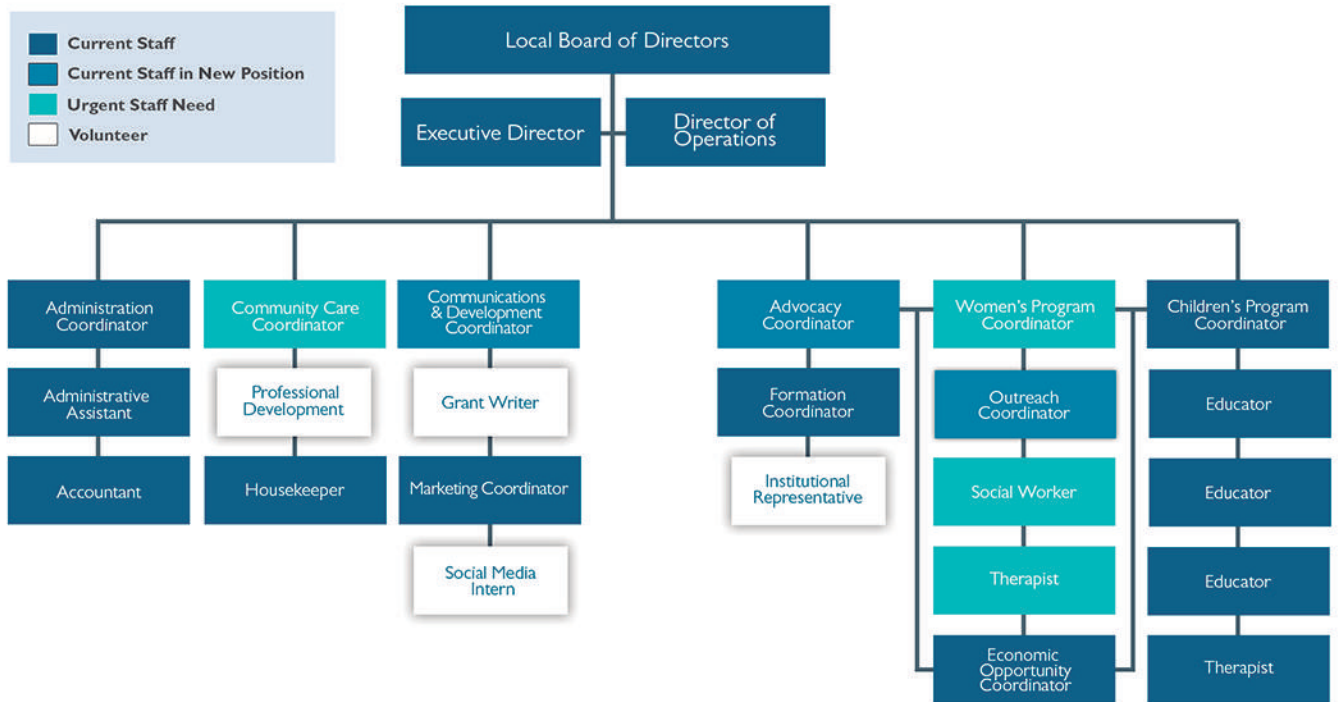
Respond with transparency, precision and professionalism to the demands of local and international laws and funding institutions	# of financial audits without any observations
Ensure compliance and generate financial reports in accordance with required standards, policies and procedures	# of reports generated
Provide holistic care to WMFB staff members to support their personal, professional and communal development, diminishing the probability of vicarious trauma and burnout	Staff showing holistic growth
Provide tools and activities that support physical health, emotional health and spiritual growth	% of employees who participate
Support the professional development of employees based on clear goals for skills growth and improvement in alignment with institutional needs	% of employees with completed trainings
Share the impact of WMFB locally and internationally, highlighting integrity, responsibility and experience	% budget needs covered
Implement efficient systems for gathering data and communicating impact to specific audiences	% increase in online engagement
Updated branding is recognized and trusted	% increase in individual donations



Current Organizational Chart



Updated Organizational Chart



Free indeed!

By Doris Monasterios



Turmoil on All Sides

I have lived in El Alto, Bolivia almost all my life. My parents worked in the copper mines, and 30 years ago moved to the city where they raised my four sisters, my brother and me. I have watched the city limits explode, reaching out further and further. I've seen up close how difficult it is for migrants to learn a whole new way of life, to navigate intense poverty, limited options and racism. El Alto is one of the most patriarchal cities in Bolivia, due to the cultural roots of the Aymara. My father was a pastor, and I grew up witnessing "machismo," even in Christianity. My mother worked all day washing clothes by hand and then came home to do the housework with no recognition for her labor. She lived tired and frustrated, and hit my siblings and I almost daily. For me, it became complicated to recognize healthy interactions. Financial scarcity led to a life of chaos. When my little brother fell sick with tuberculosis at six-years-old, quality health care was out of reach. An ineffective brain surgery left him with a disability he continues to battle. At fourteen, my close group of friends and I were talking about how our parents beat us; some of my friends were beaten in atrocious ways. That was normal for us, but sexual abuse was never mentioned. I found the courage to share that when I was ten, my uncle tried to abuse me sexually, an experience that marked me with intense shame. I was shocked to hear each of them share similar stories: sexual abuse by parents, brothers, uncles, cousins, neighbors.

Left Alone

Five years later, my father died from lack of adequate medical care. We didn't have a single dollar to pay for his medical expenses, and they wouldn't even let us take his body from the morgue to bury him. The church where he had served for 20 years not only failed to help us with the medical bills, but didn't even visit us during this time. I was disillusioned. My mother is the strongest and bravest woman I know. She showed us how to hold our heads high and make ends meet. I purchased stuffed animals in bulk and sold them on a street corner while I studied to be a secretary. Years later, I landed full-time work with a local non-profit, but found myself suffering intense sexual harassment from my boss. In the midst of confusion, I met a young man whom I married, with hopes of escaping my problems. My mother had always taught us that a woman without an education has to depend on a man. So I finished my bachelor's degree, juggling work and studies, while raising my newborn daughter. In my marriage, however, I suffered an excess of violence. I felt like I was worthless, as my needs were never considered important. I was numb to the damage being done, as it's all I had ever known.

A New Opportunity

In 2009, Word Made Flesh offered me a position as an administrative assistant. The opportunity helped me be more present to my daughter and to heal after years of abuse. I was able to serve and to grow in my leadership. In God's goodness, we finally found safety, and I divorced from my ex-husband, overcoming the stigma that a separation can bring. I now own my own home, where my daughter and I, my mother, brother, sisters and their families all live. I have grown to believe in my potential as a leader, and believe that as a woman I can be someone who leads empowered in who I am in God and proud of my roots.



"Christ set us free, and I long for all women, including my daughter to experience this freedom too."

Notes

- ¹ Word Made Flesh adheres to the declarations of faith drawn up by the First Lausanne Congress for local and global evangelization “The Lausanne Covenant.” 1974. <https://lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>
- ² “Bolivia.” *Lonely Planet*, 2021. <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bolivia/introduction#ixzz4L63YsTBY>
- ³ “Bolivia.” *The World Bank Group*, 2021. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/bolivia>
- ⁴ There are 36 recognized indigenous peoples in Bolivia. “Bolivia.” *International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)*. <https://www.iwgia.org/en/bolivia.html>
- ⁵ 70.5% of the total population is urban. “Bolivia.” *The CIA World Factbook*, 2021. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bolivia/>
- ⁶ “Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line (% of population).” *The World Bank*, 2014. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC>
- ⁷ “Bolivia (Plurinational State of): Human Development Indicators. Human Development Reports. *United Nations Development Programme*, 2021. <http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BOL>.
- ⁸ Poverty in Bolivia decreased from 59.6% to 38.6% in ten years, from 2005 to 2015. “Anuario Estadístico Bolivia,” *Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)*, 2021.
- ⁹ “Poverty and Equity Brief. Bolivia.” *World Bank Group*, 2020. https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global_POVEQ_BOL.pdf
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- ¹³ “Plurinational State of Bolivia.” *United Nations World Food Program*. <https://www.wfp.org/countries/bolivia-plurinational-state>
- ¹⁴ “Despite their increasing role in the labor market, women still carry the majority of domestic obligations, which imposes a burden on their time and wellbeing. This time deprivation affects women’s choices and their personal development. ...Bolivian women would spend more time working or studying if they would devote less time to household and care work.” “Bolivia: Challenges and Constraints to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.” *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank*, 2015, p 20. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/23829/Bolivia000Chal00women0s0empowerment.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
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- ⁴⁵ Zoe's name has been changed to respect her privacy, but her words and story are shared with her permission.
- ⁴⁶ "Funding shortages and changing donor priorities put organizations under significant strain. Real—and expected—funding shortfalls further strain overstretched and under-resourced women's rights organizations... Evidence from the 2008 financial crisis reinforces a bleak forecast of potential economic losses for NGOs at a time of increased demand for women's rights organizations." "COVID-19 and Women's Rights Organizations: Bridging Response Gaps and Demanding a More Just Future." Policy Brief No. 20, *UN Women*, 2021, p 6. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2021/policy-brief-covid-19-and-womens-rights-organizations-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2200>
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- ⁵⁰ The Victim-Survivor-Thriver model is based on a TF-CBT (Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) model and contextualized to WMFB programming and culturally-specific realities of the population WMFB serves.
- ⁵¹ "Many survivors of sexual violence suffer as consequence in the immediate period after the assault and over their lifetime. These include guilt, anger, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Survivors of sexual violence are more susceptible to behavioral disorders, cognitive problems, low academic performance, and other difficulties." "A Performance Study of the Bolivian Public Justice System." *International Justice Mission*, 2018, p 17. <https://ijmstoragelive.blob.core.windows.net/ijmna/documents/studies/IJM-A-Performance-Study-of-the-Bolivian-Public-Justice-System.pdf>
- ⁵² "Improvements in agency—a person's capability to make strategic life choices and to transform these choices into desired outcomes—are paramount to speeding up progress towards gender equality and to development in general." "Bolivia: Challenges and Constraints to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment," *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank*, 2015, p 23. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/23829/Bolivia000Chal00women0s0empowerment.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- ⁵³ The Child Status Index is an internationally recognized tool used in more than 10 countries to measure the well-being of vulnerable children, contextualized to WMFB programming and culturally-specific realities of the population WMFB serves.



Notes

- ⁵⁴“Inadequate diets and low consumption of nutritious local products are at the root of overlapping nutritional problems, including alarming levels of anaemia – which affects 53.7 percent of children under 5 and 29.9 percent of women of reproductive age.” “Plurinational State of Bolivia,” *United Nations World Food Program*, 2021. <https://www.wfp.org/countries/bolivia-plurinational-state>
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