

## BOLIVIA REGION

**Official Language: Spanish**

### Vision Statement

*We, the missionaries of the Divine Word in Bolivia, challenged by the current situations, are convinced that through our charism we can share with our loving people of Bolivia the message of the Kingdom of God. The person of Jesus and the Gospel are our strength and fountain from where we draw our consolation: “go and make disciples of all nations” Mt 28:19*

### Mission Statement

*The region of Bolivia, being a multicultural and multiethnic country with various cultures, the mission of God invites us to rediscover the richness of culture, anthropology and religion. Thus, we are committed to transform these concerns into communion between God and people.*

*We commit to sharing of our missionary service with the people by living and experiencing the mystery and love of the Triune God. We accompany our work of evangelization in communion with the local Bolivian Church’s pastoral plans.*

### 1. Social Context

Bolivia has three regions: Plateau, Valleys and the East. Bolivia has much of the population in



rural areas; most of them speak Quechua and Aymara. A significant number of these two cultural groups live in the Plateau. Since the beginning of this century, there has been a rapid and remarkable urbanization. The Quechua and Aymara languages continue to be dominant languages, especially in rural environments, while Spanish is used more in urban centers. In ethnic terms, the roots of Bolivians can be classified into three main groups: The Native Americans, the descendants of Europeans (mainly Spaniards), and the mixed races of both, generally called mestizos. The interrelation between these

ances, over the years is normal; it is now difficult to estimate the proportion of each of them in a particular state.

The majority of the people are constituted by indigenous peoples. As poor peasants and miners, they are the ones that were excluded from the history of the country and the construction of the nation. The war of independence against Spain in the year 1825 was an achievement of the mestizos. This fact reinforced the social order, privileging a small group of miners and landowners. Since then, the country went through a series of almost 200 conflicts and counter-conflicts, until a democratic civilian government was established in the year 1982. Juan Evo Morales Ayma was a candidate for the Presidency in the year 2005 with the promise of empowering the poor indigenous majority and to distribute the wealth among the poorest of the country. A decade after his government, people noticed several improvements in health, communication, roads, telephone, water, housing and education. This has led to an international recognition of his policies.

According to the newspaper “Diario Opinion”, Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin-America. Poverty affects the quality of life and the population as a whole and restricts the exercise of its human rights. Being poor means not only the inability to satisfy basic needs, but also keeps the people away from the track of opportunity to develop their ability to function productively and creatively in the society. They are also limited to raise their voices and make their

own demands more effective. As per the statistics, 20 percent of the population lives in a state of extreme poverty. According to the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Bolivia occupies the 104<sup>th</sup> place of a total of 174 countries in the ranking of human development.

## 2. Ecclesial Context

The Conference of Aparecida (2007) not only gave a new impulse to the Catholic Church in Bolivia, but also opened a new path. It is promoting a “missionary Church” through the training of lay partners who are assuming an important role in evangelization.

Along with the promotion of leadership of the laity, we notice the renewal of catechesis. At the same time, the stress is given to the formation of youth and also a profound reflection is given to their sense of belonging to the Church. Giving accompaniment to the people who suffer is a challenge; integrating new pastoral challenges forces us to question traditional ways of doing pastoral care with a sacramental model, which is ritual and almost magical. Now this gives way to a more experiential approach, more inspired by the Spirit and the signs of the times.

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**The Editorial Verbo Divino of Bolivia (EVD-Bolivia) and its book stalls contribute to the evangelization of the local Church.**

During the visit of the Pope Francis in July, 2015, he invited the Bolivian Church to continue to maintain the pattern of service to the marginalized, as it has been doing all along in the name of God. A decrease in the number of vocations to the priestly ministry is one of the big challenges that the Catholic Church in Bolivia is facing right now. At the same time, the local Church still depends largely on foreign aid. Only one diocese is totally self-sufficient economically.

### 3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

#### Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
<b>Parish</b>	13	45.6	38.9	44.4
<b>Education</b>	1	3.1	5.5	7.4
Schools	1	-		
Universities	0	-		
<b>Formation/ SVD Vocation</b>	2	6.2	5.5	7.4
<b>Administration/ Support</b>	3	9.3	11.2	7.4
<b>Other Apostolates</b>	10	31.2	16.8	22.2
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	1	-		
Communication	1	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	6	-		

#### Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	1	1.1	4.2	0
Retired/Sick	13	14.4	12.6	32.9
Others	0	0	7.6	2.6

#### Main Apostolates

**Parish Ministry:** Our SVD communities take responsibility for parishes and communities. Through the parish ministry we are able to share, live and strengthen our identity in the Divine Word through the local Church. Each parish has its own reality.

**Forming the Laity:** We form the laity so that they can assume responsibilities in the mission; above all through our Characteristics Dimensions. We notice that although it is very challenging, we can promote our SVD charism by promoting pastoral lay groups, which includes also a particular formation in our Characteristics Dimensions.

**Musicology:** Through our SVD mission and presence, we promote science and the national culture. We preserve Latin American thought with research in the archives of Bolivia (Chiquitos, Moxos, Sucre, Cochabamba, La Paz, Potosí, etc.) especially in the field of music. We demonstrate the positive influence of the baroque music in the evangelization of peoples and its major contribution to contemporary culture.

This research is being continued in the Archives of Chiquitos and Moxos.

### Characteristic Dimensions

**Biblical Apostolate:** Our efforts to promote the Word of God are realized through the preparation and distribution of simple printed materials by means of the EVD-Bolivia (Editorial Verbo Divino) and the coordinator of the biblical apostolate. Some of our confreres offer their services by doing biblical animation in the dioceses of San Ignacio and Ñuflo de Chávez.

**Mission Animation:** This task remains a great challenge for us because from several local Churches they have been asking us, as missionaries of the Divine Word, to guide the missionary animation program. The awareness and cooperation in the mission *Ad Gentes* is just at its beginning. To respond to these challenges, we have planned to create a team, which will be a priority task for the region in collaborating with the missionary animation in Bolivia. The American Missionary Congress (CAM) will take place in July 2018 in Santa Cruz-Bolivia.

**JPIC:** There are several initiatives in the field of JPIC in the entire region. They are very diverse in nature comparing with others: a home for street children, scholarship programs for rural youth, four schools with boarding for youth in the rural area, and health programs at the base level. In the area of social works, the SVDs are engaged with centers like a home for shelter and educational support, moral and spiritual support

with the centers CINCA in the Alto, boarding schools – St. Joseph’s and Guadalupe in St. Ignatius of Velasco, and Hostel facility of Arque (property of the Archdiocese of Cochabamba). The scholarship projects are going on for underprivileged young people for their studies. We also collaborate with other social institutions such as the Foundation of Public assistance of St. Ignatius of Velasco (FASSIV) which in turn accompanies and educates persons who are differently abled, and the Foundation “Nuestra Casa” – a center of reception for girls who are victims of abuse.

**Communication:** We maintain the Characteristic Dimensions of the SVD by publishing materials with different themes through the EVD (Publication center). In some of the local Churches these dimensions are incorporated as part of a diocesan pastoral plan. The EVD is a great help to the Church in Bolivia as it supports ongoing formation through materials on Bible, catechesis and Missiology. We currently have our presence in seven (of nine) bookstores nationwide.

### Priorities among Congregational Directions

As a response to the recommendations of the XVII General Chapter, the Bolivia region has assumed the priority for Family and Youth for a six-year period. The EVD-Bolivia has produced a brochure about the family that is used during the family visits in order to reflect and pray together in the light of the Gospel and family values.

The region has also organized various youth gatherings in the parishes for reflection about

the reality and purpose of youth of today in the light of the Gospel.

It has also organized meetings to give professional training for this priority to the confreres and pastoral agents in order to develop effective strategies and betterment of the apostolate.

It has also planned several meetings for family and parish youth by districts and at the regional level. The coordinators of the dimensions play a vital role in realizing this chosen priority.

**Collaboration with the Local Church, SSps, other Congregations and Laity**

**With the Local Church:** The BOL region collaborates with the local Church in distinct manners.

The first and most visible is our presence in different parishes which have been entrusted to us by the bishops of Bolivia. Our region has nine parishes in the west, center and east of Bolivia.

The Editorial Verbo Divino of Bolivia (EVD-Bolivia) and their book stalls contribute to the evangelization of the local Church through spreading the Word of God with publications and sale of materials that address the core principles of the Bible, cultures, music, catechesis, religious education, morality and ethics, community work and biblical spirituality.

Also the region contributes to the local Churches through talks and workshops given by its members in Bolivia.

**With the SSps:** With our Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit there is a good collaboration in the ministry of retreats, celebration of the liturgy and the pastoral work of our own SVD Parish Madre del Verbo Divino. There is also collaboration at the level of SVD-SSpS team for vocation promotion as well as mission animation. We hope that our collaboration will extend to other areas such as leadership, spirituality, and others.

**Other Congregations:** The relation with other congregations is good; we work together in many projects of JPIC with other congregations. We participate in common retreats and ongoing formation programs which are organized for the religious.

**Laity:** We have energetic catechists, lay and young leaders in our parishes; we are advancing well in the strengthening of our relation with the laity. We do not have an official group of SVD lay partners but we will make an attempt to promote this kind of group in the future.

**4. Intercultural Life – Ad Intra**

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishops	1	1	0
Clergy	24	36	24
Brothers (final vows)	6	3	3
Brothers (temporal vows)	1	1	1
Scholastics	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>31</b>

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	45.9	43.6	40.8
Nationalities	16	17	12

**Spirituality:** In addition to the deep spiritual heritage received from the Church and the congregation, currently we are able to motivate the practice of Bible sharing, but sad to note that there is a very little participation in the majority of our communities.

**Community:** As the entire region, we meet three times annually, usually for the Assembly, for the annual retreat and for ongoing formation for all the confreres.

**Leadership:** Different teams and commissions have been formed to assist the regional council in the decision-making and for formulating the action plan. Training and awareness-raising meetings are held every now and then for the financial team and parish animation team.

**Finance:** We have taken steps towards self-financing in the region with the purchase of real estate and some cattle raising. The Editorial Verbo Divino shares its annual profits with us. Self-financing is still a long way off. We receive a lot of moral support on the part of the Generalate but little economic support. Consultations are made with confreres to prepare them in the area of financial management. There is hope for the future.