

Alert Note

Bolivia: humanitarian crisis involving access to food, medicines, and essential services caused by prolonged blockades, 16 June 2026

Completed by: Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Completion date: June 16, 2026

Emergency date : May 4 – June 16 (ongoing)

<p>1. The nature of the emergency</p>
<p>The population in Bolivia is facing an acute crisis in access to and supply of basic food items essential for life, due to prolonged road blockades that started on May 4th and have cut off the vital supply of food, fuel, medicines, oxygen, transport, and health services. This immediate humanitarian emergency is affecting a pre-existing context of economic and social tensions that had already made families' living conditions more precarious. The paralysis of the rural productive sector has cut off the livelihoods of producer communities, while the resulting shortages in urban centres, and also in rural areas, directly threaten the food security and health of families in Bolivia.</p> <p>This crisis, intensified by the blockades of recent weeks, has drastically destabilized the economy of the most vulnerable households in the city of La Paz, critically increasing the cost of the basic family food basket. The immediate impact of the emergency is reflected in the excessive increase in prices of essential food items such as chicken, eggs, rice, pasta, and vegetables. According to official reports from the National Institute of Statistics (INE), La Paz recorded inflation of 5.41%, accounting for 84% of national inflation. Faced with the loss of livelihoods, unemployment, and economic exhaustion, hundreds of families have been forced to adopt extreme survival strategies, ranging from exhausting queues to obtain food at reasonable prices to begging and searching for waste in public spaces, including rubbish bins, by mothers who are heads of household.</p>
<p>2. The impact and scale of the emergency (include your source of information with links if possible)</p>
<p>The Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELB) classifies the current situation as a medium-scale emergency, exacerbated by prolonged blockades and instability that threaten to further worsen food security. It is essential to distinguish the historical socioeconomic context of the Altiplano region, which according to INE and IISEC records structural moderate poverty of 52.8% and extreme poverty of 28.2%, from the immediate humanitarian shock caused by the current event. The recent road siege around the La Paz conurbation has directly affected more than 1.6 million inhabitants of the metropolitan area of La Paz and El Alto, out of a total of 3.1 million inhabitants, who are facing extreme shortages and a critical increase in the cost of the basic family food basket. This is reflected in a local monthly inflation rate of 5.41%, which accounts for 84% of the price increase in the entire country.</p> <p>In response to this situation of massive shortages, the IELB has geographically focused its intervention on the most critical urban areas of the city of La Paz, in order to directly assist 1,600 affected families, approximately 6,400 people, whose daily subsistence livelihoods have been due to the conflict of recent weeks. They require urgent humanitarian assistance to mitigate the risk of acute malnutrition and disease.</p> <p>Main impacts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Severe humanitarian impact on the roads:</i> According to a compilation of information shared by media outlets (including the official news agency ABI), 22 people have died to date as a direct or indirect consequence of the blockades. <i>Child vulnerability and family violence:</i> According to CECASEM (Centre for Training and Services for Women's Integration), unemployment and lack of food have caused extreme emotional exhaustion in households. This has triggered an increase in domestic violence, school dropout, and the premature entry of children into child labour. <i>Abandonment of older persons:</i> The blockades of May and June 2026 physically isolated older persons in La Paz, the department most affected by the urban logistical siege. According to the Ombudsman's Office and IELB monitoring, this sector, which is vulnerable because it depends on the Renta Dignidad

pension or small-scale trade, has been left unsupported and without family assistance networks. The lack of transport prevents older persons from collecting their income or accessing health services, forcing them to ration food and essential medicines in an extreme manner due to the critical increase in the prices of the basic food basket.

3. Local and national capacity

In response to inflation of 5.41% and severe shortages in La Paz and El Alto, the population has resorted to critical survival mechanisms such as food rationing, bartering of goods, school dropout in order to engage in informal trade, and precarious self-supply of water and fuel. To mitigate this impact, the IELB has activated solidarity breakfasts and has a team of 25 professionals and 30 volunteers ready for immediate mobilization. With the support of strategic alliances, including municipalities, the Ombudsman’s Office and SEPAMOS, a pastoral psychosocial support network, and proven experience in climate emergencies between 2023 and 2025, the institution guarantees an integrated, timely, and coordinated humanitarian response for the most vulnerable families.

There are also some ongoing humanitarian responses. The [World Food Programme \(WFP\) has begun the first phase of institutional food deliveries](#) to priority health and social care facilities in La Paz and El Alto, providing 2 metric tonnes of food to support the continuity of food services. [Caritas Bolivia, the Red Cross, and the Ombudsman’s Office](#) have also initiated actions to deliver humanitarian aid to drivers stranded by the blockades. In addition, [six countries](#) in the region have provided humanitarian assistance amid the blockades.

4. Main needs and deficiencies

An assessment being carried out by the IELB central office, supported by reports from community and municipal authorities, confirms the collapse of family livelihoods in the department of La Paz. The severity of the crisis is directly evident in the institution’s immediate surroundings, in the El Tejar area, a commercial area of the city, where since the beginning of June people have been seen daily searching for organic waste in public spaces in order to feed themselves. This demonstrates a critical situation of food insecurity and extreme vulnerability.

Reports indicate that those most affected by this context are low-income families, families living day to day, families who have lost their income due to dismissals and the closure of businesses and small enterprises, children and adolescents, women who are mostly responsible for household food provision, persons with disabilities who are unable to secure a means of subsistence, older persons who are currently begging, and low-income families undergoing medical treatment for cancer.

Following the initial analysis and assessment carried out by our church, the following priority needs were identified:

- Food assistance / food kits
- Hygiene kits
- Health supplies for women, including menstrual pads
- Psychosocial support services

Humanitarian gaps and challenges:

- Limited capacity of local and central government units to respond to the needs arising from the social, political, and economic crisis
- Logistical difficulties due to the blockades

Please indicate if you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an X below
Rapid Response Fund (<i>intended for small and medium-scale emergencies</i>)	X
Appeal (<i>intended for large-scale emergencies</i>)	

5. Forum capacity and members' willingness to respond

ACT Member	Geographical approach	Areas of knowledge and experience
Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church	South America, Bolivia, Departments of La Paz, Cochabamba and Potosí.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Humanitarian emergency responses to climate crises (floods and fires). - Implementation of livelihoods (drinking water systems and food security) - Basic sanitation - Municipal and governmental relations and management. - Pastoral and psychosocial support.

6. Possible answers

In response to this acute crisis, the IELB will deploy its operational and volunteer capacities to address the urgent humanitarian needs of affected families in the departments of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Potosí, through the procurement of basic food items, hygiene supplies, medical supplies, and psychosocial support. Through the Rapid Response Fund and in strategic partnership with municipal governments, the IELB Youth Ministry, and the ACT Alliance, an efficient intervention will be implemented, prioritising local procurement in order to support the national economy.

Distribution logistics will be closely coordinated with local authorities and volunteer teams, with specific roles assigned to mitigate operational risks and ensure safe delivery.