

Shelter provision in severe winter in Bolivia

In mid-2011 the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) provided supplementary feed to livestock in the Potosí region of Bolivia following snowstorms and very low temperatures. Communities in the Andean highlands in Bolivia depend mainly on their livestock – chiefly llamas and sheep – for their livelihood. In June and July of 2011, the Potosí region suffered snowstorms, resulting in a metre of snow in some areas and extreme temperatures as low as -20°C. Over 1,200 llamas were killed, and many became emaciated due to loss of forage as well as disease. Communities living above 3,600m above sea level were particularly badly affected.

In response to the crisis, FAO provided forage and mineral supplements to 140,000 llamas belonging to 1,800 families. This activity was complemented by capacity building and other activities to increase resilience against future severe weather events, including forage and food crop seed reserves and the introduction of improved forage crops, short-cycle varieties, and grass production in protected underground nurseries or ditches. The activities focused specifically on women as they are the main livestock keepers because of the steady outmigration of men to urban areas in search of employment. The project worked in conjunction with the local authorities and representatives from community-based organisations in the selection of targeted participants and the distribution of the feed and other inputs.

FAO also provided improved shelter for the livestock. Indigenous livestock shelters, where they existed, consisted of stone and mud walls with no roof. The project provided materials and support for the construction of improved enclosures to protect the llamas and other animals against the weather and predators, using locally available materials and based on a local design. The initiative targeted households with fewer than 50 llamas, and the low-cost shelters served as a demonstration so that other community members could take up the idea and construct their own.

Source: Einstein Tejada, personal communication, 2014.