INTERCULTURAL BRIDGES FOR SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS: EXPERIENCES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN BOLIVIA

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Engineers in Action
Bolivia
“We are all made of the same clay, but not from the same mold”

*Mexican Proverb*
BOLIVIA

- 10.3 M
- 15% access to sustainable potable water
- 24% under the poverty line
- 44% rural area
- 36 different indigenous nations
RURAL COMMUNITIES IN BOLIVIA

• Union
• Meetings
• Gender
• Decisions
STARTING A PROJECT IN BOLIVIA

- First approach:

Local Engineer → Leader → Board → Community

- Local Engineer – Community
  * Trust
  * Cultural background

- Foreign Engineer - Community
  * Misunderstanding needs
  * Language is culture
PARTICIPATION; DOESN’T JUST HAPPEN

• Different perspective
• Initiator manages the process
• Confidence and Skills
• Trust and commitment
• Goals
LOCAL ENGINEER:
Technical knowledge/
Cultural background

FOREIGN ENGINEER:
Technology/
Funds/ Innovations

COMMUNITY:
Intuitive knowledge/
Labor/ Local decisions/
Beneficiaries

Project Sustainability
Why is bridging cultures so important?

- Pre-design = failure
- Culture adapted projects
- Ownership
- Input
- Enrolment = Anti-paternalistic
Intercultural Bridges; About understanding

“Each culture is cultured in their own way” Fuglesang, A
LOCAL ENGINEER:

• Professional, technical and PERSONAL CHALLENGE
• Intercultural communication capacity = crucial
• Build a real relationship
• Community hierarchy
LOCAL ENGINEER ROLES

• First approach: Initiator
• Inter-institutional networking
• Adapt the project
• Support independent community interests
• Monitoring
RESULTS:

- Not any local engineer
- Encourage community input
- Building relations
- Adapt project
CONCLUSIONS; LESSONS LEARNED

1. Intercultural communication is crucial for the sustainability of the projects.
2. The participation of local engineers and the community members in the project cycle is necessary to ensure the sustainability.
3. The input of indigenous communities is greater when they feel confident.
4. Building an inter-institutional network brings stability to the project.
GRACIAS !!