Organization Overview

Foundation for Sustainable Development is an international development organization that seeks to support communities in achieving their goals through asset-based development and international exchange in Bolivia. FSD provides opportunities for students and professionals to engage in real community development work instead of a typical study abroad or drop-in service project program. The internships are thoughtfully designed to help you build your career while having a lasting impact on the people in the community in which you serve. Our internships have a strong emphasis on community ownership and follow the principles of Asset-Based Community Development. Interns receive extensive training in sustainable development principles and gain professional skills in project planning and budgeting, program evaluation, community assessment, and proposal writing. Interns apply their new and existing skill sets as they collaborate with their local colleagues on identifying, designing, and implementing a project to benefit the community.

Social Issue Focus & Impact

In 2006, a group of young Bolivian environmental professionals decided to create an institution that would respond to the big environmental challenges in the country. This institution would allow the members to unleash all their passions, imagination, and technical skills in order to improve Bolivia’s environment and help its people. Thus, on Earth Day, 2006, the environmental non-profit foundation Gaia Pacha was born.

Currently, the foundation is functioning with more than 11 active members and training 4 part time members studying abroad pursuing their master degrees. Gaia Pacha’s main office is located in the city of Cochabamba; and since 2012, the foundation expanded its activities into the lowlands of the Santa Cruz Bolivia department.

The Gaia Pacha Foundation seeks to create and implement scientific proposals to increase environmental awareness and change people’s attitudes and behavior towards the environment. The Foundation’s overall goal is to tackle problems where human actions alter ecosystem balances by developing real alternatives using local and scientific knowledge, thus satisfying the needs of both humans and their environment while taking into consideration the social and political realities of Bolivia. Gaia Pacha’s environmental programs are based on principles of ethics, transparency, justice, and solidarity.

The general objective of the Gaia Pacha Foundation is to create, propose and implement real alternatives and efficient solutions, based on local and scientific knowledge, to problems where human actions alter the harmonic dynamics of the environment, to meet human needs and to make them compatible with the environment.

Gaia Pacha’s activities are organized around the following three program areas: research and technology; education; and environmental politics, protection and conservation. Their work involves intensive research on environmental issues in the Cochabamba region in order to promote technical and scientific strategies that respond to the needs of the local community and value traditional knowledge and socio-cultural concerns. The Foundation’s educational model is dynamic and participatory, seeking to engage citizens, and specifically children and youth.
Position Description

The objective of this project is the identification and analysis of the resilience of family farming systems "orchards" in two communities of the Municipality of Santivañez, in Cochabamba, Bolivia. In this way, different socio-ecological indicators of family gardens run by small producers are explored, this helps us understand what aspects can be improved to have greater resilience in the face of climatic variability that affects food production. These indicators have taken into account the practices and knowledge that producers put into practice. The differences in the three municipalities show the challenges that families face when facing climate variability, however, in recent years drought and pests have been common problems in these municipalities.

Resilience is defined as the propensity of a system to retain its organizational structure and productivity after a disturbance. Resilience has two dimensions: resistance to shocks (extreme events) and the resilience of the system (Lin 2011). An agroecosystem is "resilient" if it is able to continue producing food, despite the great challenge of a severe drought or a storm. In agroecosystems, agrobiodiversity provides a link between stress and resilience, because a diversity of organisms is key for ecosystems to function and provide services. If a functional group of species, or trophic level are removed, it can cause an ecosystem to change to a "less desired" state, affecting its ability to function and provide services.

Student Profile

- Intermediate Spanish
- Basic knowledge of environmental issues desirable
- Willingness to work in the field and travel throughout various provinces

Time Frame

The program has two start dates on May 25 and June 15, however it is flexible for the start between May 15 and June 15