

## Commentary on Bolivia's domain ranks in the 2014 Global AgeWatch Index

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### Global AgeWatch Index rank

**51**

out of 96

Bolivia ranks at 51 overall and has the highest pension coverage in the region (95%), given it has one of the lowest Human Development Index scores in the region it has a relatively high ranking on the index and income security domain (55). It has the highest rate of employment of older people in its region (78.3%) and ranks (22) on the capability domain.

It ranks lower in the health domain (59), with below regional average values across all indicators. It ranks lowest in the enabling environment domain (78), with below regional average values on three out of four indicators: social connectedness (66%- the lowest in its region), safety (34%) and satisfaction with public transport (60%).

*Age Demands Action* campaigners in Bolivia lobby their governments to introduce better policies for older people. The Bolivian government is working to implement the General Law on the Rights of Older People (2013). This will guarantee dignity and protection in later life by establishing a council for older people.



### Income security

**55**

62.6/100

In Bolivia, only around a sixth of older people over the age of 60 receive a contributory pension. This situation has been dramatically improved with the introduction of a non-contributory universal social pension, the Renta Dignidad, in 2009. The social pension is guaranteed under the Constitution of 2009 for every person over the age of 60, and has increased pension coverage to 95%. Although the value of the Renta Dignidad is only US\$ 36 per month, it has had a positive impact on older people as well as their families. The pension has contributed to a 13.5% drop in the percentage of households living in poverty. Addressing administrative issues so that the programme can reach 100% of older people, and increasing the value of the benefit level should be key priorities of the programme going forward.

In 2000, the GDP per capita in Bolivia was US\$ 995. In 2013, it rose to US\$ 2,794. It is important to note that the rise in GDP does not reflect the large pockets of poverty which continue to exist in a country still marked by deep inequalities.



### Health status

**59**

46.4/100

Last year, around 58% of all older people had access to medical insurance through either the Health Insurance for Older People (SSPAM) scheme or what is known as "short term" insurance. Many older people do not know how to access

healthcare as it involves registering with their local authority. From May 2014, the government has been implementing a new Integral Health Insurance (SIS) scheme which replaces all former health insurance schemes. The SIS benefits older people, who by presenting proof of identity, get access to free healthcare at any public health centre.

Bolivia's health system still lacks specialist medical staff, has a shortage of medicines, and low quality of care. Older Age Demands Action campaigners are calling for an improvement. The quality of the healthcare administration continues to be neglected too. That, coupled with the dire poverty some older people live in, could help to explain the low percentage in the psychological wellbeing indicator.

 **Capability** **22**  
46.6/100

According to data used for the Index (provided by the ILO), employment of older people in Bolivia is 78.3%. This is relatively high as it includes informal employment, which generally takes the shape of small family enterprises and agricultural work. This work generates a low income for older people who therefore often cannot afford health insurance or invest in a higher yielding retirement pension.

Bolivia has seen great improvement in literacy levels among its population in the last few years. However, according to the results of the Survey of Households with Older People in 2011, the average years of formal education become less as the age of the person increases. The study shows that people between 60 and 64 years of age have an average of 5.5 years of formal education, while those 65 and older have, on average, one year less education than the younger age group.

 **Enabling environment** **78**  
57.1/100

In 1998, a law was passed to give older people the right to receive preferential treatment in all public and private offices, as well as discounts for public transport, electricity and water, and certain taxes. Yet, many older people in Bolivia still do not benefit from these rights. A study done in 2010 by HelpAge International Bolivia and the Ombudsman revealed that only 54% of all banks had helpdesks or windows dedicated to older people. 62% of transport companies were unaware of the legislation. In 2013, a national law for older people was passed. This should pave the way for older people rights to be addressed and for government support to be allocated. However, this law is still pending implementation in most areas."

Along with not being able to enjoy their legislated rights in full, many older people in Bolivia are also mistreated and discriminated against, often by their own families. Information from the HelpAge-established Centres for Social and Legal Orientation for Older People (COSLAM) reveal that in 2013 around 11,500 older people reported a violation of their rights. Many of these reports included physical harm.

**The Global AgeWatch Index ranks countries by how well their older populations are faring.**

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