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Bolivia : Quality standards for the management of water and sanitation utilities

- International Office for Water - Cooperation - International actions - Institutional reforms and governance -

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With regard to a project financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Office for Water, associated with BCEOM, assisted the Bolivian Government's "Programme for the Development of a Regulatory framework for the Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Sector" with the formulation of a set of standards and technical guidelines for the management of these utilities.

In order to improve coverage and quality of water supply and sanitation utilities, the Bolivian government wants to develop the concession of these public utilities in municipalities with more than 10,000 inhabitants. Such an objective requires that means and criteria be developed at the same time to ensure the quality of the services provided by private companies to the users..

Using an assessment of the situation regarding regulations at the national (Bolivia) and international level (France, United States, Peru), the following standards and technical guidelines were formulated:

- Quality of water intended for human consumption,
- Discharges of industrial wastewater into the sewerage system,
- Normalised measurements of drinking and waste waters,
- Terms for drinking water supply,
- Non-accounted for water - macro and micro measurements,
- System for metering, billing and recovery,
- Information of users and management of complaints.

A model for service regulation was also proposed together with a contract between the water company and the users.

The feasibility of these proposals was validated by a cost-benefit analysis of their economic impacts on the community.

This significant regulatory work carried out on behalf of the public Authorities in charge of the water supply and sanitation sector in Bolivia (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior e Inversión - Superintendencia de Aguas) will improve the quality of the services provided to the users and strengthen the State and Municipality capacity to control the negotiation and follow-up of contracts for the concession of their public utilities to private companies.