Research Project Description FSD Cochabamba

Site: Cochabamba, Bolivia

Description of FSD: 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 Africa, Asia, and Latin America. 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. FSD’s program sites are in six countries and 10 cities, where for almost two decades it has supported more than 300 community partner organizations and trained more than 3,000 volunteers. Its community development efforts have maintained an ongoing project sustainability rate of nearly 80 percent, addressing health, social, environmental, and economic issues by responding to community priorities and offering training, grants, and volunteer support to community partners.

Description of FSD Cochabamba: FSD Cochabamba was established in the community 17 years ago. FSD is an organization that provides international volunteer opportunities with 30 local community organizations. FSD has an office in the city of Cochabamba and a small staff of 3 to 4 people depending on the time of year. FSD is an organization that has strong links with local organizations that rely on the work of students who support or develop small projects of great impact.

Research Project Description:
FSD Cochabamba works in community development. The work is done through partner organizations that are dedicated to many areas of development (environment, health, microfinance, gender, human rights, education, and appropriate technology). FSD supports local initiatives with human and economic resources that have a positive impact on initiatives that partner organizations are currently undertaking.

The CBR Fellow will work with FSD to analyze the community impact generated by international volunteers from the past 5 years. Each year FSD allocates resources, seedfunds, and grant funding to international volunteers and those volunteers support local initiatives. FSD desires to understand the impact these volunteer opportunities are having in the community beyond the currently measured sustainability rate (which was last measured at 80%). The CBRF will work with the FSD team, community organizations, and project beneficiaries to research the impact, benefits, and setbacks of international volunteer projects within the communities and local organizations. The objective of the research is to determine the social and economic impact for its partners and their communities. We also want to compare this impact against other organizations that offer the same service with different methodologies.

Methodology: CBR Fellows would conduct interviews with beneficiaries, surveys with clients, and focus groups to gather information. However, the research approach and methodology is flexible and dependent on the skills and abilities of the selected fellow.

Student profile: The student should have an advanced level of Spanish (not just in reading and writing, but in speaking as well). The language component is crucial to a research project, especially when taking place over a short period of time. All should have a background in research methodologies and basic development theory. Depending on the schedule it is possible that the student should start collecting data before arrival in Bolivia.