Enlarging Health Facilities
San Lorenzo, Bolivia

Project Cost
$30,000

Chapter
University of Texas, San Antonio

Background
The town of San Lorenzo is located in southern Bolivia close to the city of Tarija, in the Province of Mendez. Over the past several years the local population has grown by leaps and bounds.

The town currently has a third-tier state run health clinic that tries its best to serve the needs of the people for reasonable costs, but is outdated and undersized.

Engineers In Action is a non-profit group located and based out of Bolivia that identifies projects and works with EWB chapters to see them completed.

In 2008, the UTSA chapter of EWB had the chance to talk with EiA and discuss how they could help with this project.

The Need
The population in San Lorenzo has grown from 5,000 to 7,100 over the past several years. The clinic located in San Lorenzo serves that entire population in addition to nearly 10,000 people in the surrounding area. The current clinic has gone years without updates and is in poor condition. Doctors and administrative personnel work all day in difficult and uncomfortable conditions. Because of limited space, they are very often forced to turn away an average of 5 people per day. Current clinic services are limited to gynecology, pediatrics, dentistry and emergencies. When the clinic can't meet a patient's needs they are forced to send them to the closest local hospital, which is in Tarija, approximately 15 kilometers away.

The EWB-USA Response
Assessment
Resident engineer, Milton De La Cruz, visited the local officials in San Lorenzo to assess what would need to be done to retrofit the clinic to allow it to serve all the community’s needs. A basic design was established and a plan set in motion.

What was done:
An entrance module will be built for the new clinic and will take into account a proper environment for administrative offices, dental care, consultations, medical meetings, nutrition office, and an X-Ray room. The proposed module will have two floors and add an approximate 400 square meters to the facility. The town of San Lorenzo has already pledged close to $10,000 dollars to assist with the construction costs.

Following up
The University of Texas, San Antonio chapter was recently founded in early 2008. This group of dedicated students has decided to adopt this project by raising the required funds, traveling to San Lorenzo, and assisting the local community in construction. Part of their task will be to teach the local laborers how to construct the building in a manner that will ensure it stays sound and continues to serve the community for many years.

Moving Forward
While in San Lorenzo, the chapter will meet with local officials to discuss what other potential projects are in the area. Any potential projects will be evaluated and prioritized and then later designed and implemented. In the end UTSA hopes to establish a long and beneficial relationship with the San Lorenzo community that will benefit both parties for years to come.