

Reducing child deaths: Geography and cultural barriers are the major obstacles



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Arminda shares information and experiences with other mothers about the health of their children.

LA PAZ, Bolivia, 8 October 2004 – Arminda has two boys and always longed to have a little girl. Now her daughter, Judith Mariels, is five months old. Judith, like her two brothers, was born at home. Arminda did not receive any prenatal care; she believed that, as a member of the indigenous Aymaras ethnic group, she would face mistreatment and discrimination at most health centres.

The Aymaras live mainly in the central Andes of Peru and Bolivia. In Bolivia, geographical and cultural barriers are major obstacles to reducing under five deaths.

Arminda is very fortunate in that she belongs to a community association in the district of El Alto, in the Bolivian capital of La Paz. The community associations are part of the project 'Renacer' ('New start'), which is supported by UNICEF and other partners. The project's aim is to promote good health practices.

At association meetings each week, Arminda has an opportunity to share information and experiences with other mothers about the health of their children and, in particular, about how to care for infants. At a recent meeting, Arminda proudly announced to her friends that her little Judith Mariels had just been immunized for the first time.