

## **Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Patacamaya-Tambo Quemado Road Improvement Project**

Raúl Peñaranda  
La Epoca newspaper director  
La Paz, Bolivia

### **Criteria: relevance**

Patacamaya-Tambo Quemado road was actually the first Bolivian paved road to the sea. To have a paved and stable road to the sea was one of the major national goals during half a century but it couldn't be accomplished due to several reasons: lack of fiscal funds, complex political relations with neighboring country Chile and political instability. Its importance was that Bolivia, as a landlocked country, needed the road desperately to cut the costs of exports and imports.

Before the road was improved and paved, a trip to the port of Arica could take, during the rainy season, up to 20 hours or more for buses and trucks. That length of time has reduced to less than half after the completion of the road construction.

The better internal political situation after the recovery of democracy, the bringing near to Chilean authorities run by former president Jaime Paz Zamora and the international cooperation, helped to complete this important public work. Right now, Arica is the most important port for Bolivian imports and exports in the Pacific, more important than Antofagasta and Iquique (in Chile) or Ilo-Matarani (in Perú). In the last years, although, the *relative* importance of the use of Arica has decline (not the net volume of goods transported) due to the intense use of a new port over the Hidrovía Paraguay-Parana, which allows Bolivian exporters to get to the port of Buenos Aires through the Platense basin.

Right now, Bolivia has only two paved roads to Pacific ports: to Arica (Patacamaya-Tambo Quemado) and to Ilo-Matarani (in Peru). The next road that Bolivia wants to build is Oruro-Pisiga, to connect the port of Iquique.

### **Criteria: sustainability**

The importance of the road Patacamaya-Tambo Quemado is very high for the Bolivian development even though is relatively short (188 kilometers). It connects to the Chilean section and allows to compact cars to be in less than six hours in Arica from La Paz.

The sustainability of this project is the project itself: a good and short paved road that can last for decades and connects the country with a modern port in the Pacific will still have a vital importance in the future. The exports of Bolivian minerals and other commodities are increasing rapidly due to the increase of international prices (the grow is near 100 percent in the last two years) and the road is going to have a rising use.

The other important aspect is that this road joins the major Bolivian city (La Paz) with a poor highland area, with a population that lives in very bad social and economic conditions. So this road is helping that population to get bigger agricultural production but also the possibility of doing other kind of activities, like ecotourism. Several ecotourism lodge have been built in last years in the area of influence of the road, generating alternative revenues for the region's peasant population.

The Pacific ports in North of Chile and South of Peru are the natural Bolivian exits and their indefinite and rising use means the sustainability of those type of projects.