For the past 10 years the Bolivian “Alerta Verde Foundation” (Green Alert Foundation) educates Cochabamba residents on self-reliance through urban agriculture. Projects first focused on school gardens, to motivate home garden installation through student interest. Since 2010 a home garden family program was added to promote a healthy living, parting from easy replicable cheap techniques to promote future independency. Projects are made possible by financial support of NME Mundial and MISEREOR.

Main Objective
Create urban gardens with women and children in the Plan700 neighborhood to better resident’s self-confidence and create healthy home environments. Training focuses on organic school and family gardens. These gardens improve food security and diversify consumption towards a healthier diet while beautifying living spaces with green, productive areas. Plan700 has high slopes, and is inhabited by impoverished migrants from the Andes highlands and Bolivian mining areas. It is not officially recognized by the local government, it lacks drinking water, there are gender inequality issues, and jobs typically are in the informal market sector with irregular day-to-day incomes.

School Program
• Weekly visits with theoretical and practical lessons (all ages).
• Based on low-cost urban agriculture techniques in small spaces.
• Donate vegetable seeds to interested students.
• Challenge students by a watering can competition of recycled material.
• Seedling box homework assignment to encourage home gardens. Students take care of their seeds in a plastic bottle container, and bring it back to school for a grade.
• All students receive a small bag of seeds to promote home gardening during the summer holidays.

Family Program
• Install a square foot garden (120cm x 120cm) at home, with a great variety of crops.
• Connect theory workshops to practical implementation through home visits.
• Empower (mostly) women by teaching them how to grow their own food.
• Composting for future fertility.

The program allows women to garden independently, without economic burdens, teaching them how to prepare inexpensive organic fertilizers and pesticides, and explains how to harvest seeds for future planting. The gender inequality and stereotypes unfortunately cause husbands to frequently think their wives are losing time in a small garden. Successful harvests have resulted in productive improvement while reducing and countering gender stereotypes. Square foot gardening because it demands little water (people in Plan700 buy water from water trucks), requires little time, can be installed in the best spot because of its small size, it’s easy to fertilize, and it’s a good starting point for new gardeners. Experience demonstrates that a successful garden often will expand. Create a climate of change through a neighborhood approach combining work with schools and families, where ultimately beneficiaries can receive support within their own neighborhood from more advanced “promoters”.

Lessen food insecurity crises through revitalizing spaces with productive, green areas.