

**REPORT ON THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF THE INDIAN CE TEAM
IN BOLIVIA
(8th to the 15th August 2006)
(Report by Ashraf and Marcella)**

Sequence of Events and Persons and Organizations Interacted with.

1. **8th August 4.30 pm: Meeting with Bolivian team organizing the visit.**
(Maria Ester Uaete, Oscar Loayaza, and Wendy Rivera, together with Ashraf and Marcella)

The Schedule was prepared for the visit from the 9th morning to the 15th August.

2. **9th August 9.00am: Meeting with Vice Minister for Irrigation** (Sr. Luis Salazar & Sr. Jesús Caseres, Technical assistant, of the same Ministry, with Maria Ester with Ashraf and Marcella)

Sr Lucho shared with us the experience of himself and of the like minded groups who realized that their water resources were handed over to companies for management and whose priorities i.e, their use would be strictly commercial, whereas the locals would not be able to use their resources for their agricultural requirements and other uses.

This was more pronounced in Cochabamba where the water resources of Tiquipaya were handed over to a private company without any consultation with the local communities so people organised themselves to demand their rights. This phenomenon was witnessed across the country with people demanding the rights of ownership and a community planned use of water.

In Bolivia the management of the water resources by the community is a part of their culture from time immemorial, which includes protecting the water source, equitable distribution of water for various activities like irrigation, home consumption, livestock usage, etc and what was not a part of their culture was the commercial use of water. Hence this led to a spontaneous mobilisation and unification of all the communities who opposed the handing over of the water resources to the companies.

This led to a conflict between the local communities, the government and the companies. In Bolivia prior to this there was no law or legislation governing the use of water because the local people thought it their inalienable right and the use of water was very much a part of their culture. The conflicts that arose due to the handing over of the water resources to the companies gave rise to a need for laws and regulations to protect the rights of the local communities.

There have been attempts to bring about regulation as early as in 1906 and then again in 1930s to formulate a law to regulate the use of water. These attempts merely began and ended in discussions. The people were now tired of the discussions and were demanding a law for the management of the water resources with the requirements of the local communities taking the prime position. Due to all this more particularly the perseverance of the various organisations, the local communities and the other stake holders it is more likely that the law would now be approved and passed by this government.

The Vice Minister also informed us that the entire life of the families and communities were woven around agriculture and water was indeed their life line. This gave rise to the felt needs of the people and his ministry has prepared a five year comprehensive irrigation plan and the same would be implemented with the funding from various

donor agencies. These plans would lead to the institutionalisation of waters for irrigation.

3. Meeting at the IC office 11.30 am participants: Maria Ester, Oscar and Juan Carlos Alunalde, Director Agua Sostenible

This CAPEX group discussed with us the issues relating to institutionalisation of water for irrigation which was a felt need of the people of the local communities for a long time but began to take a concrete shape from 1998 with the people demanding the institutionalisation of irrigation.(groups of NGOs, communities, and individuals).

1998 - demands for institutionalisation

2001 - process of formulation of norms for irrigation (laws for use of water in mining & electricity and trains were there in existence)

2002 - Conflicts regarding the use of water surfaced in Cochabamba. 14 NGOs and various communities got together and organised themselves in demanding the institutionalisation of water for irrigation.

2003 - Concluded the process of formulation of norms for irrigation

2004 - Final shape to the proposed law which came up as a peoples initiative - the first of its kind in Bolivia . The National association of water users and community systems for irrigation were formed.

The impact of all these was (i) the right to use water for irrigation by the local communities and (ii) the frame work of a comprehensive law at the municipal, departmental and national levels.

A learning group of various individuals and organisation was formed in 1998 and met regularly until 2004 to discuss the various issues relating to the use of water for irrigation. They used the following strategies to achieve their objectives: social mobilisation through demonstration and processions (including the NGOs, the technical experts , people from the universities and people from the local communities) , Different issues and aspects relating to irrigation were discussed and thrashed out and the information was disseminated to the local communities through regular and consistent meetings., alliances were created among various political and other groups for lobbying and negotiating at different levels, Interactions between the communities and all the groups were encouraged and the communities were given a voice to air their views, the communities were encouraged to analyse the issue based on their lived experiences and propose norms. Thus a bottom up approach has been ensured in the formulation of the laws.

Meeting with The Vice – Minister Sr. Walter Valda of Water Resources and Watersheds At 2.30 pm Participants: Maria Ester, Oscar, and the Vice Minister.

The Vice minister shared with us the plans they had developed for the three major watershed in the country at the national level. These were further divided into 48 meso watersheds including biodiversity as a component. They shared with us the vision , misión and goals of their ministry.

10th August : Visit to the Municipality of SORATA - Irrigation Project.

Participants: Maria Ester, Jesús, an engineer for the Sorota municipality and 3 campesino leaders of the village

This field exposure was very informative as it gave us an opportunity to directly interact with the farmers and learn about the changes the introduction of irrigation has brought about in their lives. For instance, we were informed that the farmers were now able to rise three crops in their lands annually and also regulate the appropriate use of water. This irrigation Project was implemented by a company and handed over to the community last year, but thereafter there has been no follow up from the company. The local community meets to discuss and manage it.

The people shared with us the issues of concern they are facing since there has been no follow up by the company after the implementation, to which Sr.Jesus and Maria ester promised to take it up with the concerned authorities.

An irrigation Project should be accompanied by inputs on improved agriculture, soil conservation and better water management .

The local communities should be trained for the management and maintenance of the irrigation system and a fund should be created for this.

10th night: Travel to Cochabamba

11th August : Visit to Tiquipaya Municipality.

Meeting with the Municipal council of Tiquipaya. The council consisting of 7 persons (including 2 women) were in session

The committee shared with us the main issues that they were facing with respect to providing water for irrigation and for drinking purposes, due to the rapid urbanisation that they were witnessing in Tiquipaya. We had the opportunity to share with them our experience regarding rain water harvesting for drinking purposes and how water sheds are managed in India.

We visited the irrigation Project being implemented by PROMIC. Here we had interaction with a Felicia a lady farmer who shared with us the changes the irrigation has brought to her family. She was now able to cultivate different types of crops including floriculture which is now her major source of income. During our discussions it was revealed that the farmers had to invest their own savings for the next crops after meeting all the expenditure they would incur towards other family needs and education of their children, festivities etc., there are private micro-credit organisation but no banking loans were available. She also expressed her desire to improve her economic condition in order to give her children a better education.

Meeting with the Director for Planning (Andres Malgarajo) of the Municipality of Tiquipaya.

He shared with us his experience as an irrigant farmer of Tiquipaya. This provided him an opportunity of getting actively involved in the water issues having first hand information helped him to see the issues in the proper perspectives. Now, in his present role as director planning he is able to provide the required support to the aspirations of the local communities. He also shared with us the new changes that are taking place at the local and the National levels in as much as the peasants are now able to approach and communicate directly with the authorities in respect to their problems.

12th August Meeting in the office of Atica with Roberto Mendez (formerly of PROMIC and currently advisor to the Ministry of Irrigation) and Sr. Bernardino Salis of the NGO Atica.

This was mainly a discussion of CAPEX. Roberto shared with us the process by which the theme was selected for learning for the Capitalization of Experiences.

CAPEX is formed of an informal group of persons and organizations who worked and are interested in the water issues and not only of organizations that have been funded by the SDC.

Two issues were selected, 1. the institutionalization of the water for irrigation and 2. the Tiquipaya as a case study. Tiquipaya was selected for study because of the complexity of the problem having both the rural water needs and the conflicting urban requirements.

Visit to the Urban Water Canals and drainage systems. Bernardino and Romaldo P. Capriolo accompanied us on this visit. We were given an insight into the growing urbanization and the demands for water. With the urbanisation there is a decrease in the agricultural lands and an increasing contamination of the water and soil (by chicherias and slaughter houses). Because of the power of these industrialists, there is great difficulty in curbing contamination and the abuse of water. Because of these powerful people, there is no backing from the municipality for finding appropriate solutions to these problems.

Much effort is made by the office of the Use of water and land in the periurban areas to sensitize the periurban community regarding the protection of the water of the Canals, but with little effect. All sewage and garbage is drained into the Canals.

Roberto gave us an overview of the government structure of Bolivia from the national level to the communities. This helped us understand the Bolivian context better.

12th night: return to La Paz

13th August Sight Seeing to Tiahuanaca and lago Titicaca
(accompanied by Sr. Oscar Loayaza and his family)

14th August Report writing

15th August morning:

Discussions and WRAP Up Meeting with the Bolivian CAPEX Group and the Indian CE delegation

Participants: Maria Ester Udaeta (Senador of the Republica de Bolivia), Carlos Delgado Miranda (Director general of Watersheds and Water Resources); Rocio Bustamante, (Centro Agua); Muorik Bueno de Mesquita Consultor gestion Social del Agua and ambiente en Cuencas); Oscar Loayaza (IC); Javier Zubieta (Director IC), Roberto Mendes.

In the first part of the Meeting we had a sharing of the Experiences of India (sharing of the CE workshops and the studies of the 4 Groups. We showed a film by WOTR, "Water Gives Life" and Ashraf shared his experiences of his department of PRIs and their working with the NGOs.

This was followed by the sharing of the experiences of the Indian Delegation in Bolivia. The details of which are given below.

Learnings from the Bolivian Experience of the Water Issues

A. The Institutionalization of Water for Irrigation

1. Water Rights: Water for human consumption is a right of every person, of those in the rural areas as well as those of the urban areas. Those in rural areas have the right to use it for home consumption as well as for their source of livelihood. They have the responsibility of protection of the water bodies and to get financial rewards from it, if given for use to those not in the community.

The urbanites have the right to receive water for drinking. This is a basic human right.

2. Preparation of a law based on the lived experiences of the community and located in their culture.

- Began from the felt needs of the people – a time of reaction to a particular situation that conflicted with the unwritten but practiced culture.
- The threat to the culture was the unifying factor.
- The commercial use of water is not part of the culture.
- A broad based process that involved all sectors – the campesinos, NGOs, experts and academicians from all regions of the country.
- Discussions at various levels, and attempts at disseminating the understanding of the norms, guidelines as well as the customs and culture.
- A revival and conservation of the good practices of the culture.

3. Perseverance in following the agenda (ie water rights)

- From 1998 to 2004 and now beyond. Presumably a group of committed persons were behind this follow-up. This is essential to see anything through.
- Patience and perseverance and a not willing to be put off even by the time factor, makes for success and achievement.
- This perseverance is required today to see that this law is now promulgated.
- How was this process financed ?????
- Require elements that will sustain such a process.....
- Require persons with academic background that give weight to this demand. (to take it ahead it has to be more than emotional)

4. Involvement, linkages and coming together of all involved

- NGOs and the communities they work with, individuals, political parties, technical experts all united together to address the issue.

- Water rights was a common felt need and problem across the spectrum nationally as well as class wise.
- Identification of a core issue / the water problem, unified everyone.
- Strategy for mobilization of the people (demonstrations, marches, workshops etc)

5. The Empowerment Process

- Análisis of all aspects of the water for irrigation and for livelihood was important for all, especially those campesinos, so that they can make informed decisions.
- Workshops and discussions at all levels and of all aspects of the norms and regulations and check if these are according to its application within the culture.
- A process which united all people. In general, all had the same understanding of the issues under discusión.

6. An impact: All / most of those who were involved and took leadership role in this process gained the confidence of the people, as has been reflected in the recent elections.

B. The Case Study: Tiquipaya Water Users System

1. All humans have a basic right of water: Those in the urban areas have the right of water for human consumption and for household use. Those of the rural areas have the right of water for livelihood as well as for home consumption. This has priority over the commercialization of water.
2. The realization of Water Rights are always a complex issue.
3. Water resources belong to the people in whose community it is located. They have the first right to use it for both human requirements and livelihood needs. They are also responsible for its sustainable management.
4. Equitable distribution of water, its use and management by the local communities are a part of the culture of the Bolivian people.
5. Urbans have the responsibility of maintaining quality of the water that flows through their lands and municipalities, ie it is their responsibility to maintain the water of the canals clean. This is very difficult to achieve in the urban sector despite the interventions of sensitization that is undertaken by the department.
6. Communities have an identity. This is lost when urbanization takes place. There is also a loss of “feeling for the land and water” therefore pollution, wastage takes place. It is a “not caring” attitude about the next generation or even about the downstream people.
7. A coming together of all stakeholders to analyse the issue from their respective perspectives.