



International development: challenges for a world in transition

Fighting for water

Doris Quito, Comunidad Campesina de Pumaorcco - English subtitles

We have a shortage of water here. There isn't enough for all of us. Our stream gets very small in the dry season – then we don't even have drinking water, that's why there are problems – we fight over water. Somebody will be irrigating and someone else will close the canal. As a little girl I was always scared. Only really pushy people got irrigation water. We were left out. My father would say 'don't get into fights with those people'. But my mother wouldn't accept it. She fought for her rights, but I was scared.

Narrator

Conflicts over irrigation water happen throughout the Vilcenotta Valley. Here it Cuchuma during the 1980's a large development project tried to solve the problem, by building hydraulic systems. Conflict continued. When ITDG became involved in 1991, they began by simply talking to the local people.

Washington Chañi Caceras, Project Manager ITDG, Sicuani *English subtitles*

People have lived for many hundreds of years in this valley practising agriculture and managing irrigation systems. This is the essential fact we had to understand in order to get our project started

Narrator: ITDG discovered that conflict often happened because a key institution wasn't working properly. For years communities had appointed someone called a 'tomero' to manage the distribution of irrigation water.

In many communities they discovered this function was being abused.

Hilarion Arone Quispe, President Comunidad, Campesina de Chihuaco - *English subtitles*

There was corruption. The tomero would give preference to his family and friends. They'd get a lot more water than others. The distribution was unfair so there'd be fights. People who booked water didn't get it. There were lots of problems

Narrator

In a process that took several years, ITDG worked with community authorities to reorganise irrigation communities. Tomero's now operate in a stronger institutional framework. For instance water users are registered and payments for water are recorded.

Carlos de la Torre (*English subtitles*)

ITDG gave them better tools – ways to administer and manage water, that are more equitable and efficient

Narrator

A small farmer like Luzmarina Paucar, with no particular power and influence in the community, now has more chance of getting more irrigation water. As long as she can pay for the water, and as long as she'd up to date on her community commitments, the Tomero will oblige.

Luzmarina and tomero conversation. *English subtitles*

Are you planting?

Yes, I am.

Let me see your paper. Do you owe me something?

No I'm up to date

Was it for today?

Yes

Let me see. Please take care of the water. Don't waste it.

Narrator

If Luzmarina feels aggrieved for any reason, she can appeal to the Irrigation Committee.

Nicolas Cahuana.Aijmachoque, President, Irrigation Committee..... *English subtitles*
People who have a complaint come to me so we check the problem. If we see it's minor or not really a problem at all we let it go. If its big, we involve the Management Board of the community. They consult with us. That way we sort things out.

Narrator

When communities like Cachuma complained they were losing water, because their canals were made of earth, ITDG raised funding for cement.

Washington Chañi Caceras, Project Manager ITDG, Sicuani *English subtitles*
ITDG cooperated in the renovation of the canals, invested cement, iron, wood and other materials. But the campesinos did the work, they invested their labour. Now they're managing the irrigation system themselves. They've make it their own – that's what makes it sustainable.

Narrator

Luzmarina Paucar prepares for the arrival of the water, she booked earlier.

Luzmarina Paucar Quispe (*English subtitles*)

Before, irrigation was a problem. With earth canals the water didn't reach all of us. We couldn't irrigate properly so not much grew in the fields. Now I don't have a problem. In the old days we used to waste water

Narrator:

Cachuma hasn't entirely solved it's water problem. It has to share this river with three other communities down the valley.

Juan Aguilar Arosquipa, Tomero (*English subtitles*)

The people below us steal our water. They cheat by opening the canals in a different way. We have to take strong measures. When we go to fine them we find they've run away. We have to be vigilant all the time.