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PAGE 02
Editorial

The right for water supply and sanitation in Latin America: How expansion of services contrasts with the ability of vulnerable groups to access those services.
By Carolina Fairstein & Fernanda Levenzon

PAGE 04
Privatisation / Latin America

New ways for privatisation of water supply and sanitation

By Por Javier Taks

PAGE 06
Property Expansion and Right to Water Supply / Mexico
The Xoxocotla community case

By Maria Silvia Emanuelli & Rodrigo Gutiérrez

PAGE 10
Campaign for the Constitutional reform for the right of water / Colombia

Searching for the crisis' solution

By Juan Camilo Mira

PAGE 11
Models of management services and popular participation / Bolivia

Water services reforms: experiences, challenges and achievements

By M.Cecilia Chacón R.

PAGE 14
Credits and Support

The right for water supply and sanitation in Latin America: How expansion of services contrasts with the ability of vulnerable groups to access those services.

By Carolina Fairstein & Fernanda Levenzon *

The changes in economic, social, and political relations in Latin America produced in the last 20 years have caused an accelerated rate of urbanisation without planning or inclusion policies. As a result of this process, cities show a deep socio-space inequality. People with low-income are generally limited to living on land lacking infrastructure and services, neglected by the authorities.

The growth of the population living in poor housing located in informal settlements, combined with the progressive deterioration of groundwater sources¹, has reduced water accessibility and increased health risks to inhabitants. Currently, there are at least 50 million people without access to drinking water and 120 million with inadequate sanitation in Latin America and the Caribbean². In most cases the victims are people with low income.

It is surprising that, despite the reality described above, Latin America and the Caribbean have already fulfilled the Millennium

Development Goals for water and are on track to fulfill the sanitation target³. This suggests that the success in meeting the MDG⁴ does not imply a better situation for those that are most in need, emphasizing the importance to apply a human rights based approach for water and sanitation policies. According to human rights principles such as protection and prioritization of vulnerable groups and non discrimination, States should ensure that the allocation of water resources and investments in water, facilitate access to water for all members of society⁵, and should give special attention to those individuals and groups who have traditionally faced difficulties in exercising this right.⁶

This edition focuses on the importance of water and sanitation for the whole society and all the related issues. The articles address how power conflicts reflect decisions on public water and sanitation in the region. The way that water supply and sanitation politics delay and disregard the disadvantaged population is denounced. It

also illustrates the civil society strategies and responses to this problem.

The right to water and sanitation was developed under international human rights law and within the legal framework of many countries. It works as a guide for the analysis of law, and imposes an action framework required for policies and practices. The focus on human rights is gradually incorporated into the very concept of development, so that there is no possibility of designing a model of development that is incompatible with human rights.

The lack of a human rights approach in water and sanitation policies can be seen in social exclusion and the lack of adequate solutions for the provision of services for informal settlements, disrespect for the traditional uses of indigenous and peasant communities and a lack of priority for the most vulnerable social sectors in infrastructure planning and establishment of tariffs, among others discriminatory

situations which perpetuate structural poverty. The human right to water and sanitation demands public intervention and adequate regulations to ensure that the public interest and human rights principles would prevail over any other interest (social, economical or political) in the governance of the water and sanitation sector.

Latin American society was mobilised in revolt against poor services management and has used the human right to water and sanitation to legitimise their demands. In this context, successful campaigns included the right to water and sanitation in the constitutions of Uruguay (2004), Ecuador (2008), and Bolivia (2009). These constitutions establish provisions on the management of water resources, the priority use of water for human consumption, the exclusive management of public services by public providers, forgiveness of debt related to water for human consumption, and the auditing of private companies, among others. On the other hand, there has been

development of strategies for legal and administrative proceedings to require the respect, protection, and fulfillment of the right to water and sanitation to situations of deprivation, contamination, inability to pay, etc.⁷ These and other experiences from the Latin American countries are essential to the growing consolidation of the right to water and sanitation in many countries, and also in the international system of human rights. We thank the collaborators of this issue for illustrating some of the conflicts and responses that were generated to ensure access to water in the region and for clarifying all that remains to be done for the right to water and sanitation to be a reality for all.

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¹ This deterioration is produced by large-scale dumping of untreated waste into rivers and the increase of groundwater caused by improper use of water resources and lack of drainage system.

² This information can be found at www.wsinfo.org

³ The United Nations, The Millenium Development Goals Report (2008), pp. 40 & 42; The United Nations, The Millenium Development Goals Report (2008), Progress Chart.

⁴ Between 1990 & 2004 the deficit in the region was reduced from 27% to 9% for drinking water and from 32% to 23% for sanitation. As per WHO (World Health Organisation) / UNICEFF (United Nations Children's Fund), Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation, www.wsinfo.org

⁵ General Comment 15 para. 14.

⁶ General Comment 15, para. 16.

⁷ For more information on laws and court decisions that recognise the right to water and sanitation, see COHRE, Legal Resources for the Right to Water and Sanitation (2009). Available at: <http://www.cohre.org/legalresources> See also INGENIERÍA SIN FRONTERAS Y PROSALUS, Derecho al Agua (2008), available at www.isf.es

New ways for privatisation of water supply and sanitation

By Javier Taks *

During the World Social Forum in Belem, Brazil (January 2009), water organisations and networks analysed the new forms of privatisation, which are related to processes driven by profit in the use, production and distribution of water in benefit of national and transnational private parties, without consideration of common interests of the people and the state. This article collects the main ideas discussed in the meeting concerning the privatisation of water and sanitation systems in the continent of Latin America.

The failure of the first generation of privatisation

The 1990s saw an increase in private capital for communal goods like water. In Latin America, public water and sanitation service providers were privatised. This process was based on the idea that water is a scarce economic good and that only through a free market system, ecological balance (no one would waste water if it costs a lot) and equal access would be achieved. Competition would enforce the reduction of prices, favouring the poor population).

The last twenty years have demonstrated many flaws in this system. The corporations from developed countries predicted that water business would be one of the most profitable on the planet. The results of the investors' plans have been somewhat different: more scarcity of clean water, commodification of the resource, and

reduced access by the vast majority of the world's poor. Large companies in the cartel of water were enriched: Suez, Vivendi-Veolia, RWE Thames Water, and small partners.

Some countries resisted this change. Experiences in Cochabamba (The Water Wars in 2000) and Uruguay (Water Plebiscite in 2004) echoed and allowed the creation of organisations challenging the privatisation. Governments began to confront the problem and suggest alternatives for the management of drinking water, sanitation, and water resources. Facing this reality, the companies attempting privatisation of water had to search for new ways to continue their projects.

Regional Agreements

The free trade agreements signed under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) included water as an economic good, similar to the multilateral agreements on investment. This provided greater security to private companies that invested in the sector. However, the resistance has been strong and determined. The defeat of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) project, promoted by the United States for the continent constitutes a significant example. Additionally, the failure of the Doha Round of the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) delayed an agreement that may include water in its multiple modalities for liberal use by international enterprise. This delay contributed to an

increase in bilateral agreements, in spite of the resistance from some governments and social movements. A new offensive emerged through inter-regional agreements such as the Association Agreement between the EU and Central America (AdAa UE-CA,). A European strategy called for political dialogue, with human rights as a main emphasis. The establishment of a free trade zone between Central America and the European Union was necessary in order to improve the competitiveness of European companies in the face of North American and Asia. This represented a new round of liberalisation, accelerating processes of privatisation in the Central American region. However, this marginalised existing efforts, both legal and social, to prevent or reverse the anti-concessions (Hidalgo Celerié 2008: 65).

The first step: sanitation

The sanitation system has become more attractive to private investment than the drinking water systems. The European Union, facing hostility in Latin America and siding with privatisation, invested their loans in the framework of Association Agreements. This included the reorganisation of European companies (i.e. Chile, Mexico). Without a doubt, it is a highly disputed sector. The number of potential customers is higher because of lower percentages of current connections to the sewerage networks. Also, public companies need more capital for their initial investment.

Public-private partners

Public-private partnerships are managed as multilateral agencies: private capital gets to control the profits, while the public partner absorbs potential losses and provides legitimacy to the business. Also, the public partner ensures the willingness to put concessions into capital assets accumulated in water and sanitation systems (pumping, piping networks, pipes, etc.). Therefore, many activists for the global movement for water suggest that the right setting for water laws must be accompanied by articles that leave the provision of water supply and sanitation in public hands. It should be governed by public rights, because this is a more transparent and plausible form of social control.

Public companies and public-publics partners

Public-private partnerships have hidden interests in privatisation. That is why the public-publics partners are strongly encouraged. One example is the cooperation that is happening between public enterprises of Uruguay with Bolivia, Venezuela and Benin. There are copious cases where public enterprises of the northern hemisphere are associated with public companies from the south, but these public companies then act as if they were private companies (Urrea y Camacho 2007: 9). Public companies can act internally as private companies and without popular control when

the competitiveness, profitability and efficiency - the "neoliberal" mantra - is the guide of its policies (Castro 2007: 109). The "municipalisation" of systems integrated at the national level opens the door to the privatisation processes (outsourcing, concessions, corporate control and patronage). This was reported in Uruguay by the National Commission for Protection of Water and Life on the experiment of a company: "public-national to public-municipal" in the city of Maldonado, which replaced a transnational company.

Technologies for purification and decontamination

With increasing water contamination, the private investors and its governmental allies promote the use of intensive technologies for water decontamination and purification for human consumption (desalination, nanotechnology) over rational use and prevention. The motivation is to create a dynamic sector with high returns in the water industry. The big question is: who is the owner of the water that is not decontaminated? (Barlow 2008: 11).

The impact of the first generation of privatisation has been a greater social differentiation in access to water quality, environmental injustice by the degradation of water resources in areas of greater poverty. Specifically on a transnational level, this system has culturally reconstruc-

ted water as a product and people as consumers-buyers. The spread of new forms of privatisation could maintain these impacts, with the inclusion of ambiguous rhetoric of development and the human right to water. Again, the goal is to convince society that private profit and greed are the motives that lead to equity. This is a myth to be overthrown daily.

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The Xoxocotla community case

By Maria Silvia Emanuelli & Rodrigo Gutiérrez *

The native community náhuatl of Xoxocotla is located in the State of Morelos, in central Mexico. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (National Statistics Office), 20 000 people live in this community (even though the estimated population was 40 000).

Until the 20th century, the community did not have any kind of water infrastructure network. In 1938, the then candidate for president, Lázaro Cárdenas, visited the region and promised water supply for Xoxocotla. Once elected, Cárdenas kept his promise. The inhabitants received funds to design and build eleven kilometers of tracks for the conduct of water from the Chihuahuita fount, the main source of water in the region. This water supply also benefits twelve other communities and still functions today. However, its utility has decreased dramatically.

An initiative called Water Laws of the State of Morelos created in the 1980s predicted the participation of private companies in managing the water sources in the area. Confronted with the possibility of privatisation, people in the region incorporated the idea that water supply can be managed by the communities. This initiated the Water System "Sistema de Água (SA" of Xoxocotla. This is an organisation managed by the community that distributes water to the population. In past years due to the

shortage of water sources, the SA was obliged to reduce water distribution. This distribution now happens sporadically, at most once a week a few hours per day. It cannot supply the entire community. For that reason many people need to use the private water services, for example buying sell bad quality water from tankers.

Both inhabitants and academics agreed that this situation has been aggravated in the last fifteen years due to State and federal government promoting the development and urbanisation of the region along with contractors, predominantly to increase tourism to the area. Huge residential areas were built with the objective of solving the homeless issue and to provide more job opportunities¹. To accommodate this kind of urban growth, authorities permitted changes in soil use and the perforation of water wells. According to specialists, Morelos is the third most populated state in the country. There is enormous pressure on its natural resources, especially water sources. Additionally, an important area of the native forest was devastated in more than 60 000 hectares (as per the forest inventory in 2000), due the change of soil usage and agricultural activities. This is especially true of areas devastated by the urban growth promoted by the properties built in environmentally protected areas. Recently, the housing policies promoted by the federal government enabled the construction of another 20 000 units in a reduced area with

limited urban infrastructure, including water supply². Even though there is not a way to project the right number of housing, reliable sources calculated 50 000. That represents 200 000 new inhabitants for that region.

As a consequence, the whole region has had a dangerous increase of paved space covering recharge areas of water tables, over-exploration of the water sources and the contamination of rivers and springs. The truth is that most of these projects had many administrative irregularities that violated state and federal laws. Corruption is a constant when conceiving licenses for the studies of environmental effects and the design of the projects.

This situation along with the upcoming project La Ciénega de Tepetzingo estimated the construction of 2014 houses. These would be supplied with water from a well dug near the Chihuahuita fountain in 2005. Organisations and people unhappy with this situation led to the creation of the Movimiento de los Trece Pueblos de Morelos. This movement reported the risks of contamination, possibly caused by the construction as well as the fact that the new well could have an effect on the availability of ground water. After legal advice, the movement reported four complaints, which resulted in the suspension of the construction. This social organisation started with thirteen communities and now it has more than fifty affiliations. Together they have founded the Morelos

People's Council, whose role is to defend natural resources.

In September 2008, SA and Morelos' People Council representatives, organisations together with the HIC-AL and Coletivo RADAR, presented to the Latin American Water Tribunal (TLA, Spanish initials), the case: "Possible aquifers over-exploration for the expansion of housing units", in the fifth Public Hearing for "Water Justice on the land and territories of indigenous population", held in Guatemala in September last year.

The TLA is an independent international organisation for environmental justice. Its

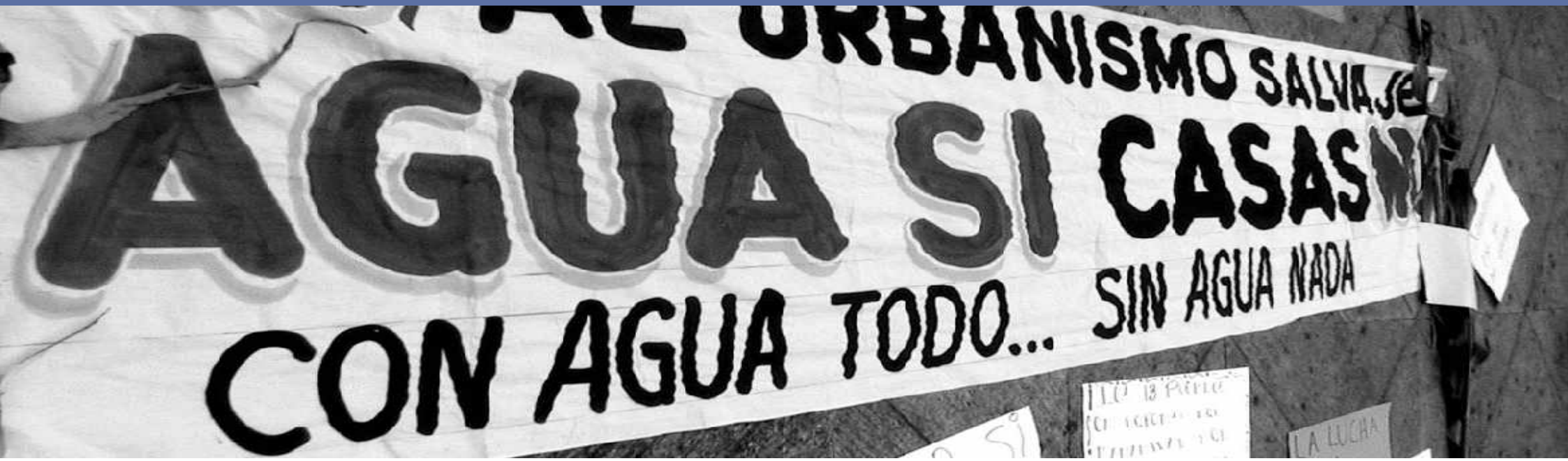
purpose is to contribute to the solution of conflicts related to water supply in Latin America³.

The applicants complained to the tribunal about the violation of their rights to water supply and lack of water caused by the over-exploration of the water tables and over urbanisation near the fountain where their water is extracted. They also referred to the discrimination that native communities are suffering. Their usage of water is limited while the new housing units receive water 24 hours per day.

The tribunal recommended:

1. " Authorities should implement an urgent water distribution solution, prioritising people with a greater need for water supply in the Xoxocotla community."
2. "The cancellation of aquifer exploration for housing, (...) and golf clubs (...)"

Currently, the situation is not getting any better. The authorities refused to take the TLA recommendations and the housing in the region keeps growing more and more. But the native inhabitants continue to defend themselves by organising and networking on the national and international level.



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¹ For years the Institute of Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores (INFONAVIT) does not permit that the same person have more than one house. Recently this rule was changed and there are many cases where houses are used only during the weekends by tourists.

² Bolongaro, Andrea (et.al) Análisis de la vulnerabilidad y capacidad de adaptación al cambio climático en los sectores más relevantes del estado de Morelos, Instituto Nacional de Ecología y Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, September 2006, pp. 113-114.

³ For more information about this tribunal and its trials go to <http://www.tragua.com>

Searching for the crisis' solution

By Juan Camilo Mira *

The Colombian Committee of Representatives of the Legislative power is undertaking a project with the objective of introducing constitutional reform that aims to recognise water accessibility as a fundamental right. This would guarantee access to free minimum vital needs and preserve the water sources, as well as guarantee equal access to this natural resource.

As per the document Conpes 3550 - National Council for Social and Economic Policies- (November 2008), the social and economic costs of environmental degradation in Colombia are greater than those of other countries with similar levels of income. This has caused a 2.8% decrease in GDP (Gross Domestic Product), which is equivalent to 5.2 trillion Colombian pesos per year.¹

The Colombian quality of life improved between 1985 and 2000 due to the installation of better public water coverage services and basic sanitation in poor areas². Since 2000 however, the reality has changed dramatically. The "Demographic and Health research", held by Profamilia in 2005³, shows a step backwards in access to water. This also provides evidence that the areas with a better economy are more profitable to the water business than the areas that are poor and have greater needs⁴. Drinking water comprised 0.47% of the social spending budget in 1980 and reached 4% in 1991. The increased investment in water and sanitation was attributed to decentralisation and autonomous action of local authorities (prepared by the

National Constitution of 1991). This process continued until 2000, and began to reverse itself in 2001. It is estimated that the demand for water – according to the projections of growth – will multiply five times by 2025, generating a water access crisis in at least 65% of the municipal headquarters of the country.⁵

Colombia is a country with abundant water resources, but it is also a victim of interests created by "water geopolitics". Water geopolitics refer to the use of water shortages for profit by private management via the control of access to natural water sources. This has left many families who cannot afford to pay for water without access to it. Moreover, water quality is not good in most cities. More than nine million people receive a service that distributes water that is not recommended for human consumption.

Strategies for the approval of Constitutional Reform

A constitutional reform proposal is currently circulating in Colombia via a referendum⁶. This is a result of agreements between various social sectors, following discussions, education and mobilisation activities. The process began in February 2007 and from March to September 2008, it received approximately two million signatures. This was far beyond the required number by law to submit the initiative to the Republic Congress. Currently, the management of the referendum is in the hands of the Committee of Representatives and should pass – at the end of

July - four regulatory debates to approve an ordinary law that will convene the referendum for the second semester of 2009. The Water Defense Committee provided several strategies, including: i) proposals to obtain international support, national and regional movements for the water defense and the support of artists, writers, teachers, outstanding people and all persons from outstanding organisations that wish to be entailed; ii) the public debate about the central proposal themes.

The referendum proposal aims to: recognise access to water as a fundamental right, guarantee minimum vital needs, preserve water sources and the strategic ecosystems necessary for the water cycle, and manage services directly by state and nonprofit-organised communities. The proposed reform will set water as a primary element for regional planning. This requires: the need to use soil maps in order to enlarge protected areas, strengthen and develop the tools to protect water elements, and include alternative cultural methods to the water problem. Additionally, it is necessary to promote a better policy on how new settlements should be more sustainable and less concentrated. The reform also proposes a new structure of public services for water and sanitation.

We hope that this constitutional reform will initiate the transformation of Colombian society: we must learn more from our ancestors, who managed to live with an abundance of water supply; we must strive to create a habitat for

aquatic and amphibian species; we must develop strategies to save urban, industrial, and agricultural water. We need to educate society about the water crises, specifically about the need to have less mega-projects and more small-scale solutions for the treatment of waste-water and the generation of hydroelectric power. Additionally, we need to apply more alternative technology and develop confidence in the implementation of our own solutions.



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¹ Public Policy Document of the National Council for Social and Economic Policies.

² DNP. DIOG. SISD, version 2.0, 1997.
www.profamilia.org.co/encuestas.

³ Villages with less than 10 000 inhabitants have an average water supply of 45% smaller than the large cities (IDRC- OPS/HEP/CEPIS, 2002).

⁴ www.ideam.gov.co

⁵ www.ecofondo.org

Water services reforms

Experiences, challenges and achievements

By M.Cecilia Chacón R*

Recently, Bolivia has been trying to implement a democratic system of water supply management. In Cochabamba, this is being attempted by direct participation of the citizen-directors and incorporation of the new constitution to access to water as a human right. However, the implementation of legal principals and new models of management that will allow effective access to water supply and sanitation is still a big challenge.

Privatisation in Bolivia

The reform of structures from the second generation¹ was imposed on Bolivia by the World Bank in 1996, followed by the financing of the privatisation process². This was the Municipal Drinking Water and Sewage Services (SEMAPA, Spanish initials) case in Cochabamba and Municipal Drinking Water and Sewage Autonomous Service (SAMAPA, Spanish initials) in La Paz³. Both were easily privatised to Bechtel and Suez, respectively, with flexible contracts and high attractive profit margins.

Privatisation ended in April 2000 by the water war in Cochabamba. However, there was a remaining contract with Águas de Illimani, in

La Paz³ and they insisted in prolonging the process through management of mixed economy known as PPP (Public Private Partnership).⁴

The socio-political conflict around the private management of water resulted in a demand for the State to guarantee access to water as a human right. In order for this to happen, a transformation of the institutional and legal framework would be necessary. The new framework would need to confirm State as the responsible body for the provision maintenance and service expansion of the water supply.

One of the new State responsibilities is the renewal of the institutional structure. Specifically, this involves political, legislative, and regulatory levels. Even the service itself includes the creation of new bodies to guarantee social participation in the policies of control and monitoring⁵. Emphasis is placed on the creation of effective mechanisms for: information, participation, care and protection of the population⁶. The intention is to create real democratic processes based on: transparency, technical management, administrative, financial, social development in all areas of Entities Service Providers of Water and Sanitation (EPSAS, Spanish initials).⁷

The Cochabamba experience: Águas de Tunari - SEMAPA

The termination of the contract with Águas de Tunari company did not result in the return to the previous model of management. It paved the way for the inclusion of social participation in the direct management of the service through the election of directors-citizens, through direct and universal suffrage. Over eight years we can see that a considerable proportion of the population did not take his/her right-obligation to participate in elections. To date, there has been a very low turn-out to the elections and the directors-citizens have therefore not been able to respond to a social mandate. Some sectors, such as coordination of water, suggest that suitable space and mechanisms to maintain permanent liaison between the aforementioned directors-citizens and population are not yet developed.⁸

The fact that it is a municipal company (*sui generis*), the composition of its directory facilitates the municipality participation in many aspects such as the right to veto.

In this case, even with the prices being fair and SEMAPA's policy of open disclosure about information, most of the population continues to wait for better administrative

and financial management to solve the lack of services in the south area and improve its continuity and quality.

The La Paz experience: Águas de Illimani: EPSAS

The Cochabamba experience influenced the development process of La Paz and El Alto. Unlike Cochabamba, the municipal management did not take place in those cities. Due to a contract of trust concerning the Águas de Illimani S.A., the Government of Bolivia, through the Water Ministry took charge of it and transformed into the Social Public Company of Water and Sanitation S.A. - EPSAS S.A.⁹. Meanwhile, a new model of management is being designed to respond to social demands.

After two years of EPSAS acting in La Paz, the quality of the services has been maintained - and more projects to benefit the poor population were created, especially in El Alto. However, it was necessary to confront the price issues. Prices were raised due to: increase of costs, water rationing for longer periods, need for system renewal and expansion, and to provide funding for new investments.

The new State political constitution: challenges and achievements

The aspects mentioned above are some of the triggers of inclusion for the right to water and sanitation between the provisions of the Bolivian Constitution¹⁰ that recognises:

"Article 16. I Every person has the right to water and food" (...)

"Article 20. I Every person has the right to universal and equitable access to basic services of: potable water, sewerage, electricity, gas, post and telecommunications networks.

II. It is the responsibility of the State at all levels of government, to provide basic services through public authorities, enterprises, cooperatives or community. The private companies can provide, under contract, electricity, domestic gas and telecommunications services. The provision of services must meet the criteria of universality, accountability, accessibility, continuity, quality, efficiency, effectiveness, fair prices and coverage needed, with participation and social control.

III. Access to water and sewerage system are human rights, and they are not subject to privatisation or concession subjected to

licensing and registration as required by law "(Article 20 of the Political Constitution of the Multi-country of Bolivia)

What remains is the creation of a legal framework and an institutional environment that allows the implementation of legal principles and construction of new models of service management in order to build the dream balance between efficiency of management, social participation, and state responsibility.

¹ The first package was adopted in 1985 by D. S. 21060 to fight hyperinflation.

² At this time public companies to be transferred were managed by the municipality.

³ For more information on this step see LASERNA, Roberto. "Conflictos Sociales y Movimientos Políticos: El año 2000 en Bolivia". Bolivia, CERES-DFID.

⁴ Orellana, René (2000): "De la revuelta cochabambina a la modificación de la ley de agua potable y alcantarillado sanitario" in: <http://www.aguabolivia.org>

⁵ The previous legal framework determined the participation only in levels of social control. That never allowed a real participation of society in decision-making. However, this structural change is transforming the logic of the prevailing system so that the customer-user of the service becomes a protagonist.

⁶ Refers to the concept of people because they want to overcome the criterion that only the client-user is entitled to claim the service; excluding from the debate everyone who needs it or does not have nominal registration.

⁷ EPSAS is the standard name that Article 8, item K, gives to all the entities that provide one or more of these services regardless of the nature of the management model.

⁸ This was a self-evaluation result held by Coordenação da Água e da Vida in April 2005.

⁹ The abbreviation of the name is popular and strangely coincides with the legal name of contracting providers.

¹⁰ Adopted with an approval of more than 60% by popular referendum on 25 Jan. 2009.

* **Cecilia Chacon** is a lawyer. She formed part of the Water and Life Coordination team and participated in the discussion on drinking water law and elaboration of risk law and regulations, as well as the negotiation of the exit of Águas de Illimani S.A. company.



COHRE – the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions – is an independent non-governmental organisation acting internationally to promote and protect the right to adequate housing for everyone, everywhere. Since 1994, the organisation has promoted the search for, and the implementation of, solutions to problems such as the lack of housing and inadequate housing conditions. COHRE works with organizations interested in economic social and cultural rights, particularly those relating to housing, and acts with various intergovernmental depart-

ments in its registered consultative status with the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of American States (OAS). COHRE also holds observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

COHRE is organised by thematic programmes (the Right to Water Programme, the Litigation Programme, the Women and Housing Rights Programme, the Housing and Property Restitution Programme and the Global Forced Evictions Programme) as well as regional pro-

grammes. These latter are divided into: the Africa Programme (COHRE-CA), the Asia and the Pacific Programme (COHRE-CAPP), Europe (with special projects), and the COHRE Americas Programme (COHRE-CAP).

Since 2002 the COHRE Americas Programme has been working in defense of the right to adequate housing in the region through capacity building programmes, legal assistance and promoting the right to land of minority groups and low income communities in informal settlements.

CAP also carries out activities at the national and international level, including fact-finding missions, litigation, monitoring and the promotion of campaigns against the practice of forced evictions.

The COHRE Americas Programme organises these and other activities in certain target countries where it works jointly with local entities. The countries where these activities are being conducted currently are Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Honduras.

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