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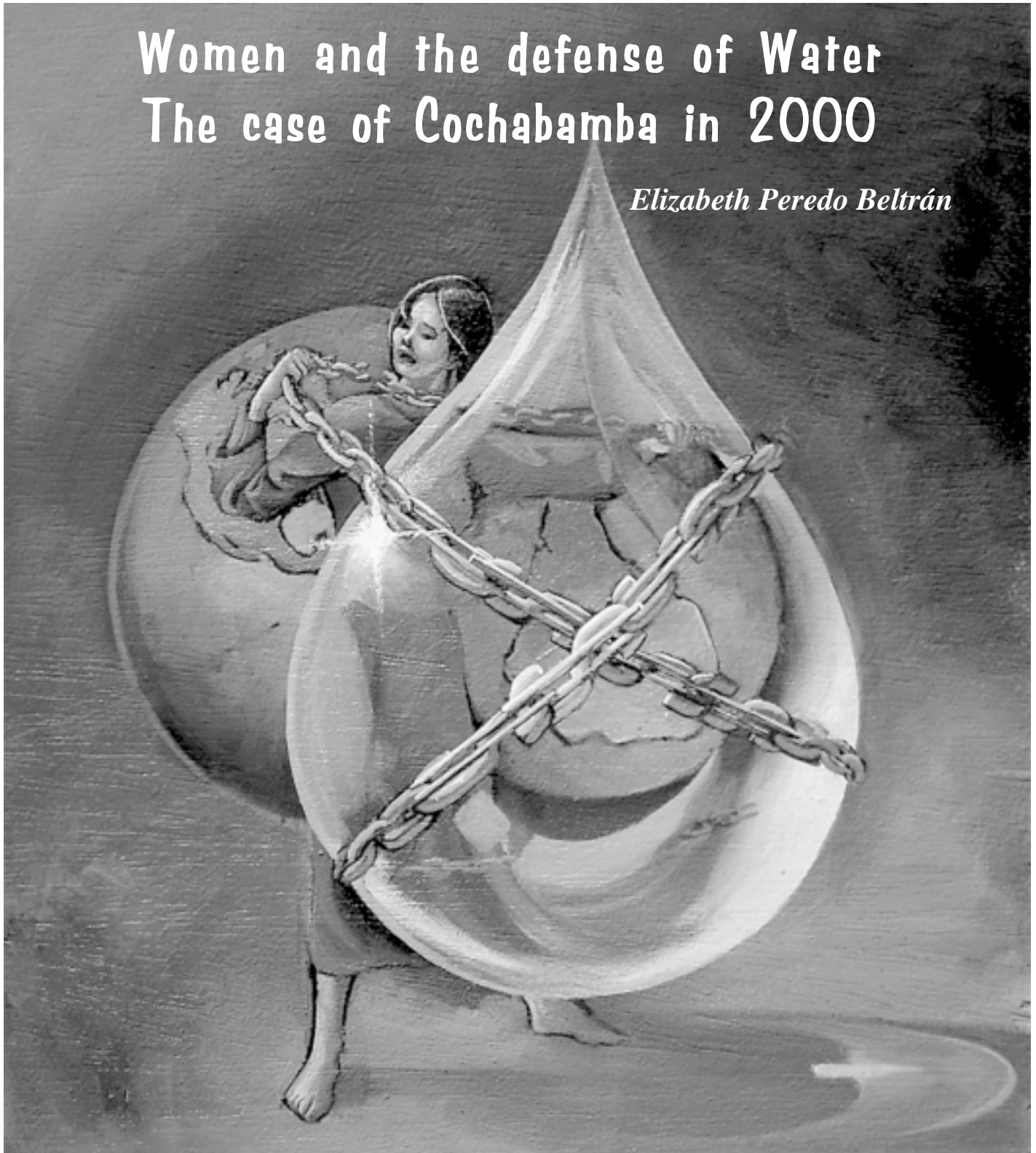
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## Women and the defense of Water The case of Cochabamba in 2000

*Elizabeth Peredo Beltrán*



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*Elizabeth Peredo*



## **Women and the defense of Water The case of Cochabamba Water War in 2000**

**Elizabeth Peredo Beltrán**

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# Women of Cochabamba's struggle for water and life: an introduction

«Why do we subject ourselves to the rules of international commerce? These treaties are never going to favour us - they aren't for us [women]. We lose our identity, Can't we resolve our own problems the way we usually do..? (Miriam, leader in Cochabamba water revolt)

The so-called «water war» that took place in 2000, when the people of Cochabamba kicked out the private water company Bechtel, has become famous in the annals of the alternative globalisation movement.

Faced with rent increases of up to 250% and a take-over of communal water supplies imposed by the newly privatised water utility, residents of Cochabamba and its surrounding districts faced soldiers and rising violence to demand the expulsion of the US multinational Bechtel. In April 2000, the government was forced to concede and ended the contract only to be sued months later by Bechtel in the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) for \$25 million for loss of income.

What is less well known in the story is the role of women in the struggle against water privatisation. Elizabeth Peredo Beltrán has recovered their story and draws out the important lessons that their struggle holds for the international community as it strives to meet the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people without access to safe, clean drinking water.

In both city and rural areas in Cochabamba, women are at the heart of managing water for their communities. The relationship between women and water is an essential part of life from the moment of birth when a woman's waters breaks to the daily use of water for washing, cooking, bathing and growing food. In a district where water is scarce, women have

been forced to develop strategies to provide water for daily life. Women are the ones who get up at 3 or 4am to collect water from the water truck. In rural areas, women have also played an increasing role in constructing and maintaining the over 200 local and communal safe drinking water systems as well as the irrigation systems.

It is not surprising then that when the newly privatised company not only increased rates but claimed ownership over the communal drinking and irrigation systems, that rural women were some of the first to protest.

In the words of Vicky: «When we arrived at our water supply in Tiquipaya, we found that soldiers were already there and we were unable to access our water source - a water source that had always been ours, always, from the time before our grandparents. They were taking away our right to water and to life. This could not be allowed to happen.»

Throughout the water war, women were involved in organising blockades, talking to the press, confronting the

police and preparing communal meals. Noticeably they were excluded from the final negotiations between protestors and the Government that led to the expulsion of Bechtel.

However, what the interviews with Bolivian women perhaps highlights more than anything is the conflict between two visions of water. One vision laid out by the women of Cochabamba sees water as the essence of life which is managed based on communitarian practices embodying solidarity and sharing. Another vision promoted by international financial institutions like the World Bank and WTO sees water as yet another commodity, and an opportunity for business and profit.

In Cochabamba, the struggle was not just against increased prices, it was a struggle of values over something we all depend on for life. At the heart of that struggle were the women of Cochabamba.

Nick Buxton,  
La Paz, April 2005



# Women and the defense of Water

## The case of Cochabamba in 2000

Elizabeth Peredo Beltrán

*«Water is a limited natural resource and public property. It is fundamental for life and health. The right to water is essential in order to live a life of human dignity. It is a condition for achieving all other human rights»...*

*«Water ought to be treated as a social and cultural property and not as primarily an economic good. By whatever means access to water is achieved, it should be long-lasting in order to ensure the right to water for the current generation and for coming generations»...*

*(The United Nations Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, November 27, 2002)*

Millions of women in the Global South dedicate many hours of their daily labor to collecting, saving and looking for water. Women play a fundamental role in managing water due to their roles as farmers and members of the community, urban users and members of cooperatives or water committees. As part of their domestic labor, women reproduce love and care and in many contexts, a rationale in seeking accessible resources, and this necessarily puts them in the role of defending both water and life. Their tasks are usually invisible within neo-liberal societies and not considered in macroeconomic calculations, which are limited to citing data about commercial and monetary activities such as the circulation of money. At the same time, they are victims of policies that try to direct public services towards profit making. They are victims of the limited or complete absence of investment by multinational companies in water connections, or they are victims to the rates structures that prioritize profits over social wellbeing.

In spite of this, privatization of natural resources is being promoted through the imposition of financial conditions by the multilateral development banks under the influence of big business.

They argue that public systems are corrupt and inefficient and that privatization opens markets, and according to the banks, distributes and conserves resources, including water, more efficiently. These policies are promoted in Latin America mostly under pressure from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but they are also laid out in the rules of free trade agreements, particularly in the rules of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Bilateral Investment Agreements (BITs), which seek to protect foreign investments, have multiplied throughout the world since the 1990s with the same objectives. These Institutions and Agreements promote these rules without considering their effect on human rights; in doing so they privilege an economic and profit making strategy over social and cultural conditions or environmental sustainability issues.



In the case of Cochabamba, Bolivia we can see how privatization was built on the basis of these web of agreements and how it consequently affected the human right to water, indigenous rights to earth and natural resources, as well as prompting a deep social conflict which put democracy in danger. We can also see that these policies have a major impact on women's rights and women's daily lives and spaces where they exercise

power, both undermining women's skills and destroying the very social fabric of their lives and communities. But we also learn about women's strength and potential in the defense of water as a human right, their conviction in their strengths, experiences, and capacity to mediate as well as the determination of Andean women to present proposals that offer alternatives and distinct ways of looking at water - the resource of life that is so essential for the health of the planet.

### Scope of the analysis

Multilateral banks' push for the privatization of natural resources is an economic strategy that favors profitability over social and cultural considerations and environmental sustainability. It reduces citizen participation in water distribution and environmental concerns by privatizing services.

We can mention at least five levels of impact as a result of the privatization process imposed on Cochabamba:

- Increase in water prices and rates;
- Creating of conditions linked to privatization which affected communal systems for safe drinking water;
- Right of private business to utilize water sources that rural communities and peasant irrigation systems have access to;
- Impact on the water culture in the region and hence the long term impact; and
- Impact of investment protection laws on women's rights.

### Background

The so-called «Water War» of Cochabamba in the year 2000 is usually explained only as a protest by urban water users against a rate increase. However, the conflict is much more than that. Bolivia's population is about 40 percent rural who survive on subsistence agriculture and are made up of indigenous communities and peoples. As these rural groups have a community-based culture and tradition of water administration, their rights to water were obviously gravely affected by privatization of water.

As a result, the population mobilized around three aspects during the Water War:

- The rejection of the water law formulated by the government;
- The modification of the Drinking Water and Sewage Law (bill 2029); and
- The annulment of the contract with Aguas del Tunari, the company in charge of water and sewerage services in the city of Cochabamba.

### Characteristics of Privatization

Privatizing drinking water services was one of the conditions imposed by the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in return for renegotiating Bolivia's foreign debt in 1998. In order to comply with these structural adjustment recommendations and conditionalities, the government put the Municipal Drinking Water and Sewage Service of Cochabamba (SEMAPA) up for public bid by private companies. By way of a Supreme Decree the privatization of SEMAPA was authorized on August 21, 1998 and the first attempt was made to seek bids unifying the service of providing drinking water with extending coverage and financing of the Misicuni Water Project which had been conceived as the solution of Cochabamba's water problems. For decades the Misicuni water project, which proposes opening a tunnel to connect water from the mountains to the valley of Cochabamba, has been touted as the solution to the water scarcity problem in the zone, but local administrations that have been both corrupt and not very transparent have never been able to put it into practice.

One of the central arguments for privatization given by the World Bank, the IMF and the IDB is to overcome corruption, bureaucratic red tape and the lack of transparency inherent in municipal enterprises. However, corruption, a lack of transparency and abuse of human rights are precisely the traits that characterized the short-lived management of Aguas del Tunari in Cochabamba.

The first two bidding processes for privatization of SEMAPA didn't work, and in the second, only one company, Aguas del Tunari, submitted a bid. Their conditions and demands of profitability were based on the criteria of «full costs recovery» from the users. Rather than putting out a call for new bids, the government directly invited Aguas del Tunari to take the system, and by doing so, accepted their conditions for doing business in Cochabamba. Everything happened in a couple of months due to the political influence of partners in the Aguas del Tunari consortium. A strategy to access alternative sources of water (rather than the Misicuni Project sources) that would require less investment was devised to make the terms for the proposed project even more favorable and acceptable to the economic interests of the company. The new strategy affected subterranean water supplies and sources for the whole central valley. Moreover the deal guaranteed a 16 percent rate of return from user fees, which experts consider extraordinarily high (Kruse, 2002, Tunupa Newsletter, 2001).

### Levels of Impact

The concession contract with Aguas del Tunari and Law 2029 which guaranteed profits and monopoly on water services and water sources had a profound effect on both urban and rural water uses.

In order to make privatization effective, the government applied Law 2029, which principally affected urban users by submitting them to dollarised rate increases (from 30 to 300 percent). Women, the great majority of whom are dedicated to reproductive tasks, suffered the most from the increase as they were obliged to reduce other expenditures in order to pay the high costs of these services.

*«My bill had doubled in just a month and it wasn't like we had used more water. I generally used to pay between 11 Bs and 12Bs (...) and then from one day to the next we had to pay double - 25! Of course, some people will say that 12 or 13 Bolivianos is next to nothing anyway, but*

not for a family like mine. We live on my salary alone, and 12-13 Bs is a lot of money. (...) I used to use those 12 extra Bs for my own transportation. With the hike, my only option was to get up earlier and walk to work - can't you see what I mean?»

(Cochabamba resident)

In Bolivia, the minimum wage is 480 Bolivianos per month (close to US\$ 60). Data shows that 82.7 percent of non-family homes and 69 percent of family homes live with collective incomes of less than four minimum wages - less than 1,600 Bolivianos, which puts a large part of the population below the poverty line.

Research by Cochabamba resident Jim Shultz showed that the rates were increased up to 250 percent of previous levels according to reported cases. The company claimed that they never raised rates more than 34 percent. When the concession was given, the contract stated that rates would rise by 20 percent (Shultz, cited by Kruse, 2001). A look at actual costs

after the tariff increases shows the following:

Women in the city, who as part of their gender roles manage water for consumption, distribution and storage in places where there are no household water connections or water resources, were particularly affected.

«The 'super rate hike' (tarifazo) people said, made us all indignant about the increase in prices in the bills, and finally, people simply refused to pay. We took our bills to the news media, to the Coordinadora's office - it was a scandal.»

(Woman neighbor in Casco Viejo)

At the same time, Neighborhood and communal water systems that had been built with work and contributions mostly from women of the communities suddenly became the property of private companies.

Only 55 percent of urban Cochabamba has access to safe drinking water via the Municipal Safe Drinking Water and



Sanitation Service (SEMAPA). Therefore many residents had built their own water system or would get water through the public wells. When Aguas del Tunari received the concession in Cochabamba, there were nearly 200 cooperative or community safe drinking water systems. The cooperatives, committees or associations are made up of families that belong to a neighborhood or community. Women participate very actively in the committees because part of the obligations of the members is to contribute to the installation of the water systems. The committees are very active, and they all have a series of tasks: define the rates, resolve problems of supply, and get contributions to improve connections.

Part of the company's obligations was to install new connections. However, they did not do this. In reality, a predominant trait of the company's behavior while it held the concession contract was to not invest its own money; it invested only money it could extract from users. Examples of this included taking over the neighborhood water networks and not investing in them, charging for installing meters, and

Family	Category	Description	Bill before the contract in Bs	Bill two months later in Bs	Percent increase
Hinojosa	R2	Poor house	143	314	220
Huayllani	R2	Poor house	11	28.4	258
Rojas	R3	economic	51	93.7	82





Boceto de Mural: Eleuterio Chambi

significant rate hikes for users connected to the system. In all of these measures the company completely lacked transparency. This generated a deep lack of trust in the organizations who perceived this process as the expropriation of their efforts and a way of diminishing community control and influence on water service, definition of rates, working class neighborhood improvements, new connections, etc.

Peasant communities and peasant irrigation systems were also threatened as their sources of water were taken over and charged at a largely unaffordable price.

The existing irrigation systems are not only a response to the lack of government attention to rural areas; they are also systems with great socio-cultural roots based on thousands of years of Andean rural culture that continues to have a strong presence in Bolivia and other neighbouring countries. The members of these systems consider water to be «alive»; it is an asset of nature and «Pachamama» (Mother Earth). There are 5.459 irrigation systems in Bolivia; around 4.700 micro irrigation systems in the hands of peasants and traditional communities.

The terms of the contract meant that peasant communities and peasant irrigation systems were obliged to renew licenses giving them access to water every five years, even though the company received a forty year concession on the system.

*«When we arrived at our water supply in Tiquipaya, we found that soldiers were there and we were unable to access our water source - a water source that had always been ours, always, from the time before our grandparents...They were taking away our right to water and to life. This could not be allowed to happen.»*

*(Vicky Amurrio, Tiquipaya Irrigator)*

But we have to also mention the impact of privatization on the Culture of Water. The vision of water which sustains Andean communities places collective and community rights first. Based on those rights, the communities organize their community life around subsistence agriculture where access to natural resources such as land and water is fundamental.

Andean societies are known for their traditional administration of the different

ecosystems (pisos ecológicos), and the construction of terraces, which together permit differentiated and diverse cultivations. This culture holds an ancestral vision about water that is also intertwined with their culture and cosmovision:

*«Land is feminine and water is masculine. Water fertilizes the land, like in the Tipón Temple (Cuzco, Peru). One fertilizes the land by irrigating it. You take care of the little plants, and the land provides our food.»*

*(Omar Fernández, 2003)*

*«At the beginning of the harvest we go to the mouth of the river and we speak to the river. We speak to the heavens to ask for rain, so that we will have water.»*

*(Woman Irrigator's testimony, 2003)*

But the culture of water also implies a vision about how to manage the resource and how to solve problems and tensions that can come up and indeed, are already present in agricultural irrigation: between the communal members of one ayllu or community, and with other surrounding communities. The authorities usually don't understand these aspects, much less so the rules related to natural resources and services. These management and consensus building measures undertaken by civil society and indigenous communities are also never taken into account by the authorities.

### **Privatization versus Common good: Visions confronted around water**

The conflict in Cochabamba (the third most important province in Bolivia), called the «Water War,» reflects as a local example the central tension that exists around water in the contemporary world: privatization versus the common good.

Opposing visions about water are becoming more and more evident: on the one hand, the globalizing and business related concepts and visions, which are oriented towards privatization and profitability as the way to resolve the global water conflict; on the other hand, visions, cosmo-visions and communitarian practices of local societies that emphasize communal, solidarity-based use of water. Some of these practices are



based on the social fabric of a longstanding socio-cultural and socio-economic tradition. While for many communities water means life; for transnational private companies, it represents an opportunity for business and profit. Many communities and groups of human beings have found that through living together and by means of conflict resolution between people and nature, that they can ensure the right to water as well as thank the Earth for its fruits. Businesses tend to dedicate themselves to extracting and commercializing nature's resources based on rules of a game that they themselves have invented to benefit their reality and concrete interests. As a result, they affect the balance between nature and human beings.

Because of their position in society and their lack of access to decisions around public policy, the poorest of the poor are effected most by these crises and tensions. Women are the most affected because of the social discrimination they are subjected to.

### The Water War

The Water War was a citizens' response to the arbitrary measures and conditions that attacked the rights of

nearly every sector of the population. Traditional demands for services, water systems rooted in a culture of community and demands for safe drinking water, as well as community practices for water distribution were all at play. Peasant and peasant irrigation organizations played a key role in the conflict because of the degree to which their rights to water access were affected.

Their efforts led to the creation of a citizen organization: the Coordinadora del Agua y la Vida. The Coordinadora (which can be understood as either Coordinating Committee or Female Coordinator) was created toward the end of 1999, and began to play the role of articulating the different social forces that were resisting the abuses. The double-meaning of the organization caused some confusion at the beginning. At one stage at the beginning of the conflict, leaders of the Coordinadora sought refuge in a convent. The nuns who agreed to host them asked «Where is this woman, the Coordinator? She must be a very brave woman». This anecdote passed around by word of mouth and provoked a popular «rumor» about the brave female coordinator who was defending

water, an important anecdote for creating its own historical memory.

In fact, one of the most important groups in the movement were the women irrigators, who are responsible for the daily task of fetching drinking water and who build and maintain the trenches for the irrigation of their crops. Urban women also played an important part in the movement due to their own gender roles in acquiring, storing and distributing water, because in many zones of

the city there is no domestic water supply. Due to the rate increases, many women had to adjust their budgets in order to pay the bills, or go to public water troughs in order to access cheaper water, or they or their daughters had to get up even earlier to get water from the water truck.

During the protests in April 2000, women from the irrigation organizations defended their right to water and the right of the community to use water based on their awareness of their responsibility for acquiring the resource, the unity of their organizations and their acceptance as leaders. They also defended their own gender issues within the movements with demands for greater participation, recognition, and decision-making power. Their reflections about the practices of exclusion and the mechanisms that make women invisible have given these members of irrigation organizations a double challenge: sustaining the social advances they have made whilst broadening their participation and rights as women.

*«I think that when we are organized, we know how much water we lose or don't*

*lose and what to do to not waste it. We don't need other people to come and tell us that - not the president, or those companies that want to privatize. We can. We can get organized, work, channel everything, and make sure that water isn't wasted - but leave us alone to work, it is our problem, not theirs. We don't want to be an object of theirs. We want our uses and customs to be respected. Private companies - leave us in peace; millionaires, leave us in peace.»*

*(Miriam, leader from Ciudad del Niño)*

Privatization became unviable due to the multiple pressures on the rural and urban population, which in turn provoked social conflict. This social conflict was extensive and ended up as a national struggle because people from other parts of Bolivia took action in solidarity with the men and women of Cochabamba. The company who was given the water concession was thrown out by the population after months of protests that culminated in a street battle in Cochabamba. The population and the army confronted each other from behind barricades; people from every social class came out every day

to protest privatization. Men and women found themselves at the frontline of confrontations and were repressed and threatened as a result. But they won, even though martial law was declared, dozens were injured and one person was killed. At the end of the day, all the pressure applied by the entire population was able to break the concession contract with Aguas del Tunari, and months later, peasant mobilizations - following the demands first made in Cochabamba - managed to defeat legal reforms to water and changed Law 2029 which attacked their rights.

#### **A second Water War: The Bechtel water lawsuit against Bolivia**

Bechtel is one of the largest US based multinational companies. It is one of the ten most powerful businesses in that country. It has implemented around 19,000 engineering and construction projects in 140 countries and is currently in charge of reconstruction in Iraq after the invasion of that country. In 2001, Bechtel reported an income of US\$ 14.3 billion, ten times the public expenditures in Bolivia for the same

year. Currently this San Francisco based company «has around 1,100 projects in 60 countries, including mining and minerals, hydrocarbons, petrochemicals, nuclear energy, civil infrastructure, telecommunications and increasingly, water» (Kruse, 2002)..

Despite its' strong base and roots in the US, Bechtel relocated its legal headquarters once the contract was finalized in August 1999. Under the name of International Water Holding BV, Bechtel changed its headquarters from the Cayman Islands to the Netherlands in order to profit from the protections in the bilateral investment agreement between Bolivia and the Netherlands, which submits conflicts between companies and countries to a private arbitration panel similar to the practice in the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA).

This is how, when forced to leave Bolivia as a result of pressure and demands from the population, Bechtel Corporation (one of the major partners of the consortium) was able to sue Bolivia for US\$25 million. The lawsuit is currently being debated by an arbitration panel of the World Bank (the International Center for the Settlement



of Investment Disputes, ICSID). Bolivia has refused to pay, arguing that Bechtel Corporation is basically a North American company, not a Dutch one. In addition, the amount of compensation that they are asking for is far beyond the less than US\$ one million the company actually invested in Bolivia.

According to Kruse, treaties protecting investment and the use of international arbitration have proliferated in the last five years (Kruse, 2001). In the early 1990s, there were only 385 bilateral investment treaties (BITs) in the world. By May 2001, there were more than 1,850. Bolivia has signed 17 bilateral investment treaties, 16 of which have been signed since 1990 - coincidentally at the height of neo-liberalism within Bolivia

But the most questionable element is that this lawsuit ended up at a World Bank panel, since the World Bank was precisely the international institution that played a fundamental role in pressuring the Bolivian state to privatize SEMAPA.

This illustrates not too subtly the clear connection existing all over the world between bilateral investment treaties and the favorable treatment of foreign investment with the major role that the multilateral development

banks and the IMF are playing in their enforcement and implementation.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

*«Why do we subject ourselves to the rules of international commerce? These treaties are never going to favour us - they aren't for us [women]. We lose our identity, Can't we resolve our own problems the way we usually do..? (Miriam, leader in Cochabamba water revolt)*

The impact of water privatization in Bolivia was not only expressed in the arbitrary rate increases and attacks on users' rights. Privatization also affected indigenous rights of access to water due to imposed legislation, which favored transnational investment. The social conflicts had repercussions on democracy, and provoked a crisis in the State, which in order to defend the interests of transnational companies used violence and state sponsored repression, resulting in one death and dozens of injuries.

The impact of water service privatization on women is rooted in the structures of gender discrimination and poverty, in family relationships and hierarchies, as much as in the services

themselves. Although the biggest impact was felt by women, the repercussions also hit families because women are the mothers and girls who are in charge of the home and had to develop strategies to cope with using less water which had a negative impact on the health and quality of life of the family in general.

The monopoly and exclusivity in safe drinking water services that was given to **Aguas del Tunari** affected the communal water systems where women's working contributions were significant, although invisible as a result of the lack of consideration for their reproductive labor. It also meant a form of expropriation of rural community water sources and peasant irrigation systems. This deepened the lack of appreciation for traditional knowledge and shared visions of collective management and acquisition of water - knowledge accumulated over centuries and based on mechanisms of control, consensus building, and traditional «uses and customs.»

Finally, it is important to note that the demand for US\$ 25 million for severance of the contract by Bechtel-Aguas del Tunari, signifies a potential threat to the most vulnerable Bolivians which will further deepen poverty within Bolivia with most repercussions on women, who represent the majority of the poor. It could affect public budgets directed towards women: employment, health-care, education and other social services fundamental to human development.

In Cochabamba, privatization processes, the application of the neo-liberal model and the rules of the multilaterals were applied indiscriminately and by force as «recipes,» justified by the corruption and the inefficiency of municipal services.

These policies affect the daily of people and communities. They affect women in their daily efforts to have a dignified life. They affect their most elemental human rights, such as the right



to water, which was recognized as one of the priorities in the United Nations' «Millennium Declaration» of 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We learned from the Cochabamba experience that it is fundamentally important to base development work on the perspectives and knowledge of local indigenous communities. Ensuring that water is used sustainably, respecting human rights and the right of nature itself, will mean policies based on the needs of peoples and the traditional mechanisms that their cultures have built through generations of social interaction and communal living. Some basic recommendations follow from these insights:

- \* **Water should be excluded from free trade agreements.** The commercialization of water should be ended. Water should be recognised as a social right, a right of nature, and a human right.
- \* Water services should be **excluded from conditionalities imposed by multilateral financial institutions** (IADB, WB, IMF), which force impoverished countries to privatize them in order to renegotiate debts and loans owed and granted by the international financial community.
- \* Societies should promote the maintenance and improvement of **public water systems with social control** by user communities and sectors of civil society. They should include a gender focus and reflect the needs and rights of women.
- \* The visions developed by women around water from their perspective of domestic responsibility and caring roles should be **visualized and recovered.** Feminine perspectives developed by indigenous women about water and the reciprocal interdependence humans have with nature have the potential to serve as an alternative by setting a counterpoint to commercial visions and the thinking about centralized political and economic power which have done nothing less than pillage nature in the search for profit.
- \* Communities, civil society and particularly women's organizations should all **work towards the adoption of a Universal Declaration on Water Rights**, linking it to the advancements humanity has made regarding human and environmental rights, and **defending water as a common good** that belongs not only to human societies but also to nature and all living creatures; hence water should be perceived and treated as a non-commercial resource that is indispensable for maintaining life.



# Join the campaign to save water from the WTO and other free trade agreements

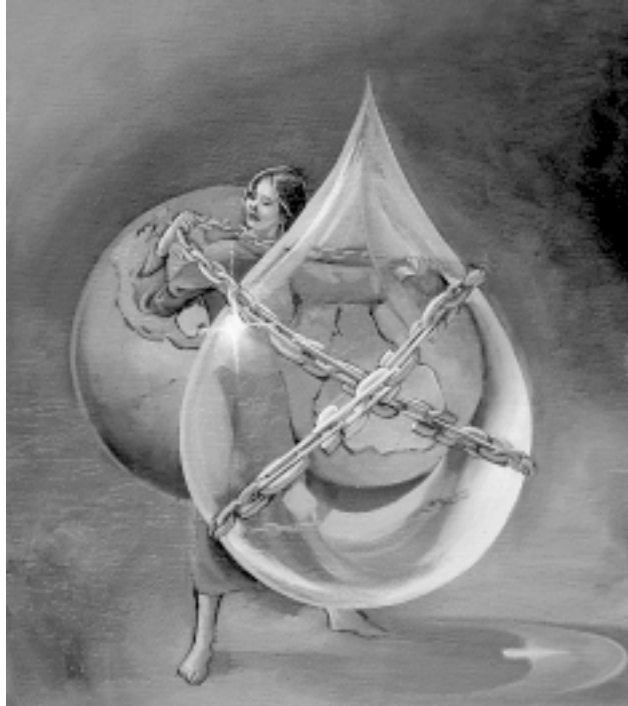
Water and access to water are fundamental human rights, but are currently under threat from economic liberalisation policies imposed by the WTO, regional trade agreements, Bilateral Investment Treaties as well as the conditionalities linked to loans and debt relief by the World Bank and IMF.

In the WTO, for example, water is already classified in the chapter on access to markets: The harmonized tariff schedule of the US includes water as a merchandise under the heading 2201: «Other types of water, including natural or artificial water, mineral or aerated water which doesn't contain sugar or other artificial sweeteners; ice and snow» and under heading 2501 which starts by talking about salt and sodium chloride and finishes by including «sea water.»

In other words, water in its different forms, is already being put on sale. If we allow this to continue, it will soon be irretrievably in the hands of large multinationals under trade rules that are indifferent to human rights, environment sustainability and life. This web of trade agreements is already causing social conflicts, deepening inequality and threatening human rights to water and sanitation. Our basic necessities are being placed in the hands of a cruel ideology driven by profit.

As a result social movements across the world are fighting back. Cochabamba, Uruguay, Grenoble, Tucumán, India are living examples of the global resistance against the commoditization of water.

The **campaign to save water from the WTO, FTAs and BITs** aims to unite the movements of different countries, regions and continents to:



Eleuterio Chambi

\* Stop the WTO making further advances in negotiations and commitments on drinking water and environmental services. Water must be excluded from all WTO agreements and rules, re-establishing the sovereign right of each State to regulate its own water resources in order to guarantee access to water for the whole population and nature. We will work towards the derailing of the WTO in order to free water from the bonds of free trade and private profit.

\* Stop the proliferation of Free Trade Agreements by mobilizing together at national, regional, continental and international levels. We must stop governments negotiating on water as if it was a commodity. Through parliaments, referendums, Constituent Assemblies, we will work to pass laws and constitutional reforms that prohibit governments from including water in its different uses in any commercial treaties. Where FTAs are already in existence, if we can not end them, we

must renegotiate them to exclude water from relevant chapters of the treaty.

\* End the blank cheque that BITS have given to multinationals. We will promote their annulment, or if that's not possible, at least their renegotiation in order to limit the definition of investments, ending claims of «indirect expropriation», submitting foreign investors to national laws and expressly establishing water in all its uses as a resource that lies outside the reach of any trade treaty. Similarly, we will stop, change and reverse contracts with foreign companies that impose privatization and the commoditisation of this vital resource.

\* Fight against the conditionalities imposed by the World Bank and Multilateral Development Banks (IADB, ADB, AFDB) which try to privatise drinking water, irrigation or hydroelectric energy. We reject «Capitalisation» or «Public Private Partnerships» as just different forms of privatisation.

\* Promote an International Convention on water, which is binding for States, which puts access to water as a human right above trade agreements, which protects this natural resource from privatisation and mercantilism and which guarantees the necessary resources to finance investments in the water sector by reducing military budgets of all countries and especially the major military powers. Without such action, we can not hope to reach the Millennium Development Goals on Water.

More information on [www.waternoteforsale.org](http://www.waternoteforsale.org)