

## **STRUGGLING FOR WATER SECURITY: Social mobilization for the defense of water rights in Peru and Ecuador**

**Financed by:** NWO-WOTRO (Integrated Programme)

**Chair group:** Irrigation and Water Engineering (IWE)

### **Research group:**

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Other researchers:

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**Graduate school:** WASS

**Expected project period:** from March 2008 till March 2013

### **Co-operation outside WUR**

Netherlands, other universities	:	Utrecht University CEDLA/Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation
other organisations	:	CAMAREN-Ecuador, CESA-Ecuador, AVSF-Ecuador, Federation of Water Users Organizations of Chimborazo (Interjuntas-Chimborazo), Eco-Ciencia, IPROGA-Peru
International organisations such as FAO, WHO	:	Justicia Hidrica alliance (international, IWE-coordinated)
Foreign universities and organisations	:	Catholic University (PUCP), Lima, Peru

### **Summary of the problem definition and objectives (in English)**

In the Andes secure access to water is essential for peasant and indigenous communities, their livelihoods and their environmental systems. With mounting pressure on water resources, it is often the rights of these socio-economically and politically marginalized groups that are imperiled. In response communities often have engaged in various individual and collective actions to protect their water security, mostly at the local level. Recently, new, community-rooted multiscale networks of water user organizations have developed that challenge the dominant legal and institutional arrangements. These innovative platforms emerge through the organizational consolidation of socio-political local spaces and places in the water management sector, and may link hundreds of local water user organizations. This research aims to study the emergence, development and achievements of these new institutions in Peru and Ecuador, focusing on:

a) how to understand these movements in a context of IWRM and

b) how to strengthen and stimulate such user-based developments that are struggling for water security for the marginalized water users.

The research focuses on the following **main question**:

How to understand the historical evolution and current development of new supra-local water user federations, in terms of their strategies, organizational practices and political significance for defending water security of peasant and indigenous communities in the Andes of Peru and Ecuador?

The central research question will be answered through the interdisciplinary study of four emerging and promising initiatives of social articulation and mobilization of peasant and indigenous groups to protect their water security against external threats.

The study will be done through **4 PhD projects**:

- *Securing water rights and livelihoods*: The challenges of supra-community networks in Peru.
- *Contesting water territories*: Social movements and collective action to defend water rights in the Ecuadorian Andes
- *Mines or minorities?* Social mobilization against mining companies in Peru
- *Protecting the Paramo*: Social mobilization for environmental conservation in the Ecuadorian Andes

The research works in close collaboration with the social movements and with the regional and international research, exchange and education networks. The research program will be used to inform the involved stakeholders, water scientists and practitioners at local, national and international level. This will be done through the publication of peer reviewed articles in international journals; congress visits; an edited book and 4 PhD theses in both Spanish and English; popular radio and television reports; grassroots 'artistic and literary contests'; e-conferences; photo exhibitions; audio-visuals and involvement of the PhD's in teaching.