

OXFAM AMERICA

From objects of history to agents of change

Retrospective overview of
indigenous movements in the
Andean Region

1980-2010

Thea Gelbspan

FOREWARD

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*Author's translation

When Oxfam America began to work with indigenous groups in South America in 1984, it was considered to be one of the few organizations that had identified indigenous peoples as agents of social change. For most NGOs, political parties, and governments, the existence of indigenous peoples was considered to be a relic of the past with no meaningful place in the modern world. Over the years, we were able to recognize that many of these peoples had survived, with their history, values and rich social and cultural practices. They had been subjected to anonymity and a subordinated status, especially in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, even though they constituted the majority in many cases.

Working with indigenous peoples has been a special challenge because indigenous issues have always been controversial. Many people have minimized their capacity and few have recognized them as social actors with decision-making abilities. Placing indigenous issues on the development agenda was difficult, particularly because they do not reflect a perspective of class struggle or fit neatly in an anti-poverty framework. Indigenous peoples do not consider themselves poor because they have their lands, territories, natural resources, knowledge and a collection of practices that were developed since the time of their ancestors. They have their own unique cultural identity and they govern themselves by their own organizations, according to their own principles. They are by no means isolated from the larger world, rather, they are a part of it. This distinguishes indigenous people from those who consider themselves "poor;" a difference which has sometimes caused tension with other sectors of civil society, including their allies: peasant groups.

One of the main lessons we have learned from 30 years of work with indigenous peoples is that the development of peoples is more political than merely offering funding and executing income-generating projects. For indigenous peoples, development necessarily involves the defense of their rights and the empowerment of their organizations, the protection of their lands and resources and the affirmation of their cultural identities. These are the sources of their self-esteem and the strength that unites them, while respecting the differences among groups. Development with indigenous peoples thus means confronting powerful economic and political interests, assuming risks, having courage and knowing how to make the right decisions at the right moments.

Economic development projects can demonstrate results from one year to the next, but they are not always sustainable. Working with indigenous peoples to defend their rights and promote far-reaching social change requires patience and perseverance because the results are not visible in the short-term. Oxfam America was able to maintain consistency with its long-term objectives and achieve the intended outcomes while avoiding getting caught up in issues in style at certain moments in time. This allowed the program to employ long-term, visionary strategies. Supporting indigenous men and women meant building horizontal relationships of respect, tolerance and trust which, in the end, nurtured far-reaching social and political changes that confronted the underlying causes of poverty and injustice in the Andean region.

After three decades of work, it is evident that indigenous peoples and their social movements have become important political actors, both regionally and internationally. They have constituted a powerful voice in the defense of lands and natural resources and the fight against the negative impacts of extractive industries. Their proposals have reached spaces where political decisions are made, where they have effectively demanded respect for their rights while putting forth development alternatives, such as “Buen Vivir” (living well) or *Sumaq Kausay*. The indigenous movement has flourished and it has borne fruit; although in the path to realize their dreams and hopes, they have also had to confront serious challenges and, at times, make mistakes.

Far from being considered as vestiges from some distant past, indigenous peoples have, in recent decades, nourished themselves with new knowledge and the organizational strength necessary to be heard. They have compelled governments to change their policies and plans to make their countries more inclusive, and have involved themselves in the process of globalization, together with their allies.

The organizational trajectory, political awakening and lived experience of indigenous people in the Andean region during these three decades offers rich lessons. It was for this reason that Oxfam America’s program on Indigenous Peoples Rights and Interculturality made a great effort, during its final year of operation, to examine these processes and the results they have achieved with cooperation from external consultants in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, in consultation with indigenous leaders and their allies. Finally, all of this information was systematized and enhanced by the analysis of Thea Gelbspan, a former staff member of Oxfam and a longstanding ally of indigenous movements. In effect, this book offers important information about the trajectory of indigenous peoples of the Andean region, their experiences and processes and the contribution of their allies to that process. The work that has resulted in this book has been based in numerous research initiatives, testimonies, interviews and a robust bibliographical review.

This book has been developed in recognition of all of the indigenous leaders (men and women), local, national and regional organizations who have shared their teachings and learnings; by indigenous intellectuals who have contributed to new forms of development together with their allies, including NGOs, academics and researchers. The growth of the indigenous movement was the product of all of these efforts, together.

Lima, Peru
May, 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This book presents a retrospective overview of the social and political movements of indigenous peoples in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia between 1980 and 2010. It describes key developments that set the context for the strategies employed by indigenous organizations in the Andean highlands and the western Amazon in order to have a say in decisions that affect their lands and their lives. It also details the ways in which Oxfam America accompanied these movements in the struggle to claim their rights and identifies some key achievements and lessons learned in the course of their long partnership.

The project was developed in close collaboration with Igidio Naveda, a former staff member and one of the principal architects behind Oxfam America's vision and program on indigenous peoples. It is based on a review and synthesis of several major program evaluations commissioned by Oxfam America in recent years which were complemented by programmatic materials produced by Oxfam staff or consultants, grant applications, academic literature and interviews with former Oxfam America staff and partners in the region's indigenous movements.

Organized chronologically according to the three decades that correspond to the review period, the major trends and key developments in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia are described. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the period leading up to 1980, including the consolidation of the hacienda land tenure system in the colonial and postcolonial period in the Andean republics and the rise of peasant unions, followed by the appearance of the first recognized indigenous organizations in the region. It presents an overview of the agrarian reform processes in the three countries and the pressure that these process exerted on the lands of the Amazon region and the peoples who lived there.

Chapter 3 describes the emergence of indigenous organizations in the 1980s and the beginning of Oxfam America's program in South America, at a time when structural adjustment programs led to the early adoption of several free-market reforms that had wide-ranging implications. It recalls the particular experience of Peru, which was beset with a mounting insurgency and rising levels of political violence during this period. Meanwhile, in Ecuador and Bolivia, several new indigenous organizations appeared on the scene. Chapter 3 describes the early stages in the resurgence of the *ayllu*, an ancestral form of organization from the Andean highlands that began to emerge and express itself in this period. It explains the origins of Oxfam America's program with indigenous peoples in the region, together with the vision and rationale behind the program, as well as its principle strategies, programs and partners described, similar to the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4 describes the “period of gold” for indigenous movements in the 1990s in the region, with the notable exception of Peru which was engulfed by internal strife, pervasive acts of terrorism and mounting repression by security forces. At a time when the increasingly severe impacts of neoliberal economic reforms and the rapid expansion of extractive industries prompted indigenous peoples to mobilize, in Ecuador, indigenous organizations dramatically emerged on the national scene in a phenomenon that has come to be called an “ethnic earthquake.” Meanwhile, in Bolivia, organizations from the Amazon initiated national marches, signaling a wake-up call to the country’s government and landed elites. The tireless activism of Bolivian indigenous organizations throughout the decade led to several major changes in the country’s laws and enabled significant advances in efforts to obtain legal recognition for the collective land rights of indigenous peoples. In the Andes, the *ayllus* continued to grow stronger, leading to the formation of a national organization near the end of the decade.

Chapter 5 covers the period of 2000-2010, when the rampant exploitation of natural resources and the deepening of market-based economic reforms fed growing social conflict. It highlights the experience of indigenous leaders in Ecuador as they decided to align themselves with a military-led coup d’état and, subsequently, assumed key posts in the new government. In Bolivia and Peru, participation by indigenous peoples in key government posts also became a driving trend, one that had significant consequences for the region’s indigenous movements. This final period under review also witnessed the weakening of several indigenous organizations in the region, at the same time that promising new actors emerged.

Chapter 6 offers an overview of the key achievements of the 30 years under review, and Oxfam America’s contributions to those outcomes. It discusses how the region’s indigenous movements managed to advance fundamental parts of their agenda; including ensuring a robust defense against the most damaging impacts of the neoliberal economic agenda, the defense of and titling of indigenous territories and advances in the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples at the national, regional, and international levels. It revisits the question of how the indigenous people of the region moved from the cultural, political and economic margins to become central actors in shaping the national affairs of their countries and region in the span of a few decades, and what we can learn from the lasting partnerships that characterize this story.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE REGION, THE PEOPLE AND THE STORY

Between 1980 and 2010, indigenous peoples in the Andean highlands and Amazon lowlands of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia made great strides in the long path to justice. Within a period of several decades, peoples who were deeply marginalized within their respective countries and national societies, socially excluded and culturally misunderstood, managed to form organizations, build social movements and push – often successfully – for transformative social change.

This retrospective of the growth and emergence of social movements of indigenous peoples in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia between 1980 and 2010 attempts to explain the strategies employed by these groups in their efforts to claim their rights, defend their territories, sustain their livelihoods according to their cultures and identities, and participate in the political and economic development of their countries. It also explores the contributions of Oxfam America's South America program throughout that process, identifies significant achievements of this period and reflects on lessons learned in throughout the process. This book was developed in close collaboration with Igidio Naveda, former staff member, and one of the main intellectual architects, of Oxfam America's program with indigenous peoples in the South American region. His guidance, insights, institutional and personal memory, and extensive contacts in the indigenous rights movements were critical to the work contained in the pages that follow.

The methodology employed consisted of a review and synthesis of several major program evaluations that Oxfam America commissioned in recent years. This was subsequently complemented by a review of programmatic literature, including several unpublished reports and a catalog of selected grant applications that guided Oxfam America's support to several partners over the years. Interviews were also carried out with former Oxfam America staff members and leaders of the indigenous organizations that have been Oxfam America's partners in key periods of the program. Finally, the report was informed by a review of scholarly journals and other academic literature.¹

Organized chronologically, key developments in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia are discussed in each of the three decades under study. The chapters do not contain

¹ See the bibliography for more information.

a complete rendition of the historical developments in the region, nor do they provide a comprehensive description of all Oxfam-supported activities in each period under review. Many activities and events have been omitted from the discussion in order to focus each section on key trends and theme, in efforts to ensure that this story is accessible for an English-speaking audience that may not be overly familiar with the region and the recent history of its indigenous movements.

The main question guiding this study has been this: how did the most excluded groups in the societies of the Andean republics, in a period of a few decades, enter the public sphere in their respective countries and become central political actors and agents of social change? This study intends to clarify how indigenous peoples managed to reject the colonized and marginalized roles that society had allotted for them, organize themselves, and consolidate their own social movements. It examines how they were able to effectively claim their rights to pursue their own development, enjoy access to (and control over) their lands and territories, and participate in public affairs. This book represents an effort to promote a greater understanding of the overall trajectory that has characterized the lived experiences of the region's indigenous peoples and their representative organizations in the past 30 years, the ways in which Oxfam America has contributed, and a few lessons that have been learned along the way.

An introduction to the Andean and western Amazonian region

High among the jagged Andean highlands of South America, condors glide over the stark, glacial rock and down over terraced gardens and pastures. During certain ceremonial times of the year, the people of the Andes tie brightly colored pompoms on their sheep, goats, and alpaca as they bring them to pasture. They chew coca leaves to give themselves strength in their long days of work tending to their crops and animals, and they honor the *pacha mama*, the earth from which they derive their subsistence, their culture, and their very identity. They speak among themselves in Quechua (or Kichwa or Aymara, or other related Andean historic languages), but when they go to nearby towns or cities to carry out their business, they usually speak in Spanish. With the legacy of pronounced discrimination, indigenous peoples have often been dismissed and sometimes insulted by nonindigenous people while, back in their communities, their traditional knowledge has sustained them.

Descending from the Andean peaks, cloud forests and rolling hills give way to the diverse and expansive ecosystems of the western Amazon. There, amid the rich biodiversity of foliage, wildlife, and natural resources, live communities who speak a multiplicity of languages and nurture different traditions. The distance between each of the Amazon-dwelling communities is staggering: often several hours by boat, a day's walk, or longer, as there are few roads. For the people who have lived in this region for generations, their territories and natural

resources have historically provided them with food and health, and have enabled them to maintain and perpetuate their cultures. In recent decades, however, their lands have been intruded upon by settlers, roads, loggers, and mining and oil companies; in many cases, prompting these communities to learn new strategies to defend their territories and their cultures, as well as new ways to continue to live lives of dignity.

For the indigenous people of the Andean mountains and the Amazon rainforest, access to their territories and control over their natural resources is essential for them to enjoy food security, health, culture, and a generally adequate standard of living; all rights that are recognized under international law. From these lands, the people farm crops, fish, and raise animals. Their ancestors lived and worked on these grounds, and the people that live there today often profess to feel their presence as they walk across the lands that they call home. According to many indigenous people, their lands make them who they are, and are the basis for their survival, their development, and their self-determination.

Who are indigenous people?

There is no universally accepted definition of who constitutes “indigenous,” though several criteria have commonly been recognized to apply. According to the Martínez-Cobo report to the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (1986), “Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity² with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.” Some experts and indigenous leaders have also argued that self-identification (whether a person describes himself or herself as indigenous) is another important criterion.

In 1989, the International Labor Organization, in its Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO 169), established its definition of indigenous people as either being descendants of those who lived in the area before colonization and/or being people who have maintained their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions since colonization and the subsequent establishment of new states. The ILO recognized that indigenous peoples have their own distinct languages, cultures, and social and political

² “Historical continuity” by indigenous peoples consists of the occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them; common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands; culture in general, or in specific manifestations; language; residence in certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world; and other relevant factors. José R. Martínez-Cobo, “Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations,” UN Document E/CN.4/Sub.2/1983/21/Add.4., para 379

institutions. It also referred to self-identification as an important criterion for understanding who is indigenous.

In September of 2014, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean established that approximately 45 million indigenous peoples live in Latin America, representing 8.3% of the population.³ Estimates of the amount of indigenous peoples living in each country vary, but it is generally agreed that, in Bolivia, 62 percent of Bolivian's citizens are indigenous, a number that reaches 72 percent in rural areas. Bolivia's constitution recognizes 36 groups of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. In Ecuador, between 7 and 9.2 percent of the country's population is indigenous, whereas, according to Peru's census of 2007, estimates of the percentage of indigenous people within the wider population range from 30 to 45 percent.⁴

Indigenous people and poverty

Indigenous peoples make up approximately 5 percent of the world's population, some 370 million people, yet they comprise 15 percent of people living in poverty⁵ and about one-third of the world's rural people who live in extreme poverty.⁶ In Latin America, indigenous people represent 10 percent of the population and, similar to global trends, a disproportionate number of the region's poorest people.⁷ Forty-three percent of poor families in Peru are indigenous.⁸ In Bolivia, approximately 75 percent of indigenous people are poor, compared with the national average of just over 50 percent,⁹ and their average monthly income amounts to approximately one-half of that of a nonindigenous family.¹⁰ In Ecuador, 87 percent of indigenous peoples live in poverty, and up to 96 percent of indigenous peoples live in poverty in the rural highlands. Many factors have perpetuated this disadvantage over time, including poor levels of education, high rates of malnutrition, and inadequate access to health care. Indigenous peoples also confront deep-seated discrimination and face substantial barriers to accessing opportunities equal to those enjoyed by their nonindigenous counterparts. On average, for example, indigenous workers earn only half of the wages of nonindigenous workers.¹¹

3 Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL). *Los pueblos indígenas en América Latina: avances en el último decenio y retos pendientes para la garantía de sus derechos* (Santiago, Chile: November, 2014)

4The Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission report estimates 30% for Peru's indigenous population, while the CIA estimates 45%.

5 International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). *IFAD Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples* (Rome: November 2009)

6 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). *The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (New York, 2009)

7 Gillette Hall and Harry A. Patrinos. *Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Human Development in Latin America: 1994–2004* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan 2006), 221

8 Hall and Patrinos, *Indigenous Peoples*, 71 and 104

9 Hall and Patrinos, *Indigenous Peoples*, 31–32

10 Harry A. Patrinos, Emmanuel Skoufias, and Trine Lunde. *Indigenous Peoples in Latin America: Economic Opportunities and Social Networks* (Washington, D.C: World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper No. 4227, 2007), 8

11 UNDESA, *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, 33

Indigenous people experience disproportionately high levels of maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, cardiovascular illnesses, and other infectious diseases.¹² Life expectancy for indigenous people is 20 years lower than their nonindigenous counterparts; malnutrition is twice as prevalent among indigenous children, and child mortality is still 70 percent higher in indigenous communities, compared with nonindigenous communities.¹³ These risks particularly affect indigenous women, as a consequence of specific barriers they face in accessing necessary health care services or in having a voice in decisions regarding the treatment they receive. Suicide rates, drug abuse, alcoholism, and depression (particularly among indigenous youth) are considerably higher than the national averages in many countries in Latin America. Children born into indigenous families often live in remote areas where governments do not invest in basic social services. Consequently, indigenous youth and children have limited or no access to health care, quality education and justice.¹⁴ When they do access health care, education, or justice systems, they often face serious disadvantages owing to the monolingual nature of many public services offered in the region and corresponding cultural divides.

Years of school attendance also differ substantially. Nonindigenous children in Peru average two and one-third years more schooling than indigenous children, and in Bolivia this gap averages four years. In 1988, 70 percent of Quechua speakers in rural Peru had not gone to school, compared with 40 percent of Peruvians who did not speak an indigenous language.¹⁵ The structural factors that perpetuate the marginalization of indigenous people are evident: indigenous people recover more slowly from economic crisis, they experience more severe poverty, and that being indigenous increases an individual's probability of being poor.¹⁶ At the same time, indigenous peoples maintain within their lands and territories 80 percent of the world's biodiversity and natural resources.¹⁷

Overview of this report

The report is organized chronologically, beginning with the consolidation of the hacienda land tenure system and the appearance of the first formal indigenous organizations in the three countries under study. It details the rise of peasant unions and the dominance of class struggle as the main framework for marginalized people to aspire to social justice in the Andean countryside. The chapter ends with a discussion of the significance of the agrarian reform

12 UNDESA, *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, 8

13 UNDESA, *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, 23 and 25

14 UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Fourth Session. UN Document E/C.19/2005/2, Annex III, Item 1

15 Hall and Patrinos, *Indigenous Peoples*, 12

16 Hall and Patrinos, *Indigenous Peoples*, 222

17 Claudia Sobrevila. *The Role of Indigenous Peoples in Biodiversity Conservation: The Natural but Often Forgotten Partners* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2008)

processes in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, and the resulting pressure that this process exerted on the lands of the Amazon region.

Chapter 3 begins with the structural adjustment programs that began in Bolivia in 1982 and in its neighbors in the years that follow. The unique experience of Peru in the 1980's, at the beginning of a growing internal conflict, is described, as well as the formation of several new indigenous organizations in neighboring countries at a time when Oxfam America's program with indigenous peoples was initiated. With an early focus on territorial defense in the Amazon and cultural revival and affirmation in the Andes, the chapter highlights several key partners and programs that are illustrative of the regional program's earliest years.

The "golden decade" for the region's indigenous movements during the decade of the 1990's, in response to the deepening neoliberal economic reforms and the dramatic expansion of extractive industries, is discussed in Chapter 4. In an "ethnic earthquake" in Ecuador, indigenous organizations catapulted onto the national scene and quickly occupied a new place as central political actors. In Bolivia, repeated marches from the Amazon signaled a wake-up call to the country's government and landed elites, leading to several major changes in the country's laws and enabling significant advances in efforts to obtain legal recognition for the collective land rights of indigenous peoples. In the Bolivian Andes, the *ayllus*, an ancestral form of organization from the Andean highlands, continued to strengthen and deepen ties across the highlands, forming a new national organization near the end of the decade. The chapter also details the evolution of Oxfam America's programs with indigenous peoples in this decade—toward supporting indigenous peoples confronting the impacts of extractive industries, strengthening indigenous peoples' organizations and leadership capacities to advocate for their rights, undertaking mutual learning visits, and leveraging greater resources to support the defense of forests and indigenous territories.

For the period of 2000-2010, Chapter 5 explores the effects of intensified exploitation of natural resources and resulting pressures on indigenous peoples' territories, which pushed their organizations to explore new strategies, yielding mixed results. From the decision of the indigenous movements in Ecuador to align themselves with a military-led coup d'état and, subsequently, assume key posts in the new government, to the participation of Bolivian and Peruvian indigenous organizations in electoral affairs, the chapter reflects on the experience of indigenous peoples in spaces of official power, as well as some key challenges this experience posed. It also describes how Oxfam America positioned its regional program in light of these challenges, pursued its objectives, explored new strategies, and sustained its support with indigenous peoples throughout the decade.

The final chapter identifies major achievements of these indigenous movements in the three decades under review. It describes ways in which indigenous people moved from being an excluded and ignored population to becoming central political actors and champions for a progressive social change agenda. It discusses notable successes achieved in several fundamental parts of the indigenous movement agenda, including resisting the advance of neoliberalism and extractive industries, securing title for substantial lands, and achieving the passage of new legal, constitutional, and international measures that recognize the rights of indigenous peoples. The chapter also offers insights and preliminary lessons learned from Oxfam America's long partnership with the indigenous movements of the region.

Over the past 30 years, the indigenous peoples of the Andean and Amazon regions have made tremendous strides: moving from being largely ignored and marginalized to serving as central actors in the mainstream of the political, social, and economic affairs of their countries and the region. As Antonio Lucero, a leading scholar of indigenous peoples wrote for the World Bank's World Development Report series, "Rightly described as the 'poorest of the poor,' indigenous people in these countries have over the past three decades formed local, regional, and national organizations that have challenged their long standing neo-colonial marginalization."¹⁸

Over the past five hundred years, indigenous communities have suffered the devastating impacts of colonization; their traditional authorities and ways of doing government dismantled, their lands invaded and taken from them, and their cultures scorned. But, still, they survived—they organized themselves, reaffirmed the value of their cultures and identities, and, in a matter of several decades, moved from the status of the rural poor at the margins of the margins, to being political protagonists in their countries. They have come to represent powerful voices in the national, regional, and—increasingly—global arena, and have come to master the art of advocacy and diplomacy. They have revolutionized the social landscape in the Andean region, mobilizing thousands of people on the streets of Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru to assert their rights. Once historically denied a voice and any ability to determine their own futures, the indigenous peoples of the Andean region have become primary agents for social change. It is their story, and the story of those who walked with them and their social movements for many years, that is contained in the sections ahead.

¹⁸ José Antonio Lucero. "Indigenous Political Voice and the Struggle for Recognition in Ecuador and Bolivia," in *Institutional Pathways to Equity: Addressing Inequality Traps*, eds. Anthony J. Bebbington, Anis A. Dani, Arjan de Haan, and Michael Walton (Washington DC: World Bank, 2008),

CHAPTER 2

THE PRECEDING YEARS: EARLY INDEPENDENCE TO THE MID-1980S

To fully appreciate the tremendous strides that have been made by indigenous peoples' organizations and social movements in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia over recent decades, it is helpful to establish the context from which they emerged—the “baseline conditions” upon which Oxfam America began to construct partnerships and support social change processes in the region. This chapter begins with an explanation of the *haciendas*, large agricultural estates that emerged in the early years of independence and organized the lands and economies in the region for over a century. It subsequently describes the processes of agrarian reform in the Andes of three countries under review—and their impacts, both via the rise of peasant unions and a class-based framework for addressing issues affecting rural communities, as well as in terms of the colonization of the Amazon lowlands.

Consolidation of the hacienda system

During the colonial period in South America (roughly, the 16th through 18th centuries), lands were acquired across the Andean highlands in order to extract raw materials for the Spanish Crown, mainly in the form of minerals, timber resources and agricultural produce. Following independence in the 1820s¹⁹ and for more than a century afterward, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia could be described as semi feudal systems. Agricultural lands were highly concentrated in the hands of a tiny elite and were organized in *haciendas*, large agricultural estates, which sustained the colonial and postcolonial economies of the region. According to José Antonio Lucero, scholar of indigenous movements, “More than a mode of agricultural production, the hacienda was also a political institution of the colonial political economy.”²⁰ The control enjoyed by large landowners often extended to the people who lived there and worked the fields, and indigenous people living on the haciendas were obliged to incur substantial (often life-long) debt and enter into conditions of servitude.

¹⁹ Peru declared its independence in 1821, Ecuador in 1822, and Bolivia in 1825.

²⁰ José Antonio Lucero. “Locating the ‘Indian Problem’: Community, Nationality and Contradiction in Ecuadorian Indigenous Politics,” *Latin American Perspectives* 30, no. 1 (2003): 23–48.

The landed elites of the Andean republics, including the Catholic Church, generally assumed responsibility for indigenous populations; they spoke for them and administered their affairs, while continuing to enjoy the fruits of their labor.²¹ The majority of highland rural people were considered to be laborers, not citizens. They worked the estates under highly exploitative conditions while their landlords prospered. In the independent countries of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, indigenous people faced multiple barriers to enjoying the rights of citizenship. Barred from participating in public affairs owing to requirements such as literacy, indigenous people were not fully enfranchised until well into the 20th century²² when the obstacles to universal suffrage were lifted.²³

Discrimination against indigenous people manifested not only in societal norms and institutional practices. It was also perpetuated by the daily attitudes and actions of the nonindigenous population and by the absence of indigenous voices in public debates on issues that concerned them. Indigenous peoples also faced particular obstacles in their ability to sustain a livelihood and enjoy an adequate standard of living: access to essential goods and services, education, and health care was difficult, as was any semblance of access to the justice system on the basis of equality. Indigenous people were excluded not only from the benefits of economic progress but from the very ways in which their national societies had defined themselves—for example, in their nation's constitutions and national hymns.

Early indigenous organization in the Andes and Amazon regions

Indigenous people have always had their own structures of organization and local government. They have systems for decision-making and procedures by which their leaders are recognized. In their own languages and according to their own traditions, they have educated their children, mediated household or communal conflicts and administered justice. Based largely on their ancestral knowledge about the vegetation and the other natural resources of their traditional lands, many indigenous people have also developed their own forms of medicine and wellness through generations.

The people of the Andean highlands share a long tradition of organizing. The harsh elements of the highland mountains and the scarcity of water and other essential natural resources have, over time, given rise to cultures that are accustomed to working together. The communal labor practice of the *minka* and the principal of reciprocity, tenets of Andean culture, reflect that collective tradition. Since the pre-Columbian era, Andean people formed part of a state. First this was the Inca empire; later, they were subsumed into the haciendas;

21 Lucero, "Locating the 'Indian Problem'"

22 Voting rights were granted to indigenous peoples in 1952 in Bolivia, 1978 in Ecuador, and 1979 in Peru.

23 Marc Becker. *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indigenous Movements* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008) and Lucero, *Indigenous Political Voice*

and, progressively, the independent states of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru.²⁴ In the Amazon region, by contrast, indigenous people lived in areas with abundant natural resources and a generally mild climate, and they were able to sustain self-sufficient clan-based units. Neighboring groups often felt mutual distrust, seeing each other as competitors rather than as allies, and organizing between remote communities in thickly forested areas where few, if any, roads existed was impractical and further compounded the tendency of Amazonian people to live in distinct communal units with limited interaction with others.²⁵

Then, discussed later in this report, the area was targeted for colonization. The Amazon lowlands were considered to be lands for the taking:—the future breadbasket for the region. Policies that encouraged settlers to colonize the Amazon failed to take into account the existence of peoples who had lived on those lands for generations, not to mention the unsuitability of Amazonian soils for intensive agriculture. As roads were built, settlers and missionaries established a permanent presence, and natural resource extraction began to proliferate. These new threats facing indigenous peoples prompted them to organize in new ways.²⁶ As Richard Smith, former Regional Director for Oxfam America's South America program said, "While indigenous groups in the peripheral areas of the Andean republics have been threatened for many decades, the more recent policies of national integration through road building and colonization pushed many groups to the brink of crisis. Although aggression against the ethnic basis of the indigenous groups was many-sided, the open assault on their land base brought the issue of survival into clear focus. It was this struggle which was the original *raison d'être* of the ethnic federations."²⁷

According to most accounts, the first recorded formation of ethnically based indigenous organizations in the region dates to 1964, when the Shuar Federation was founded by communities of that ethnic group located in the Sucua region in the lowlands of southeastern Ecuador. A few years later, in 1969, in the central jungle of Peru, the Congress of Amuesha Communities was established.²⁸ In the highlands of Ecuador, indigenous communities in the Andean regions of Imbabura, Pichincha, Cotopaxi, Bolívar, Chimborazo, and Cañar began to organize according to their common Kichwa identity, which led to the creation of the Confederación Kichwa del Ecuador (ECUARUNARI) in 1972. Representing the highland Kichwa-speaking indigenous peoples of Ecuador, ECUARUNARI's focus in its early years was primarily on demands related to the fulfillment of

24 Oxfam America South America Regional Program Strategy Paper, September, 1984

25 Cathy Ross, interview by the author, May 5, 2013

26 Lucero, *Indigenous Political Voice*

27 Richard Chase Smith, "A Search for Unity within Diversity: Peasant Unions, Ethnic Federations, and Indianist Movements in the Andean Republics," in *Native Peoples and Economic Development*, ed. Theodore MacDonald (Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival, 1984)

28 Smith, "Search for Unity within Diversity"

promises of agrarian reform and the recognition of the multiple cultures that comprise the Ecuadorian state.²⁹

Peasant unions and a struggle between classes

As described earlier, the agrarian systems that emerged in the post-independence states in the Andean region centered on the consolidation of large estates to produce raw materials, largely for domestic consumer markets.³⁰ The grievances of peasants who belonged to highland indigenous communities whose land had been taken over by the haciendas focused on the loss of their lands and claims for their return. Those who worked on the estates, by contrast, focused their demands more on labor conditions and the difficulties faced in accessing land for their own use. As discontent among the region's agricultural workers mounted, peasant movements emerged, and these groups articulated demands for the recuperation of lands, control over labor and resources, and defense of indigenous culture.³¹

By the 1950s, the peasant movement in the Andean region began to gain force, centered on a class-based notion of identity within the nation-state. The term "Indian," which was commonly understood as the identity of the colonized native, was discouraged by peasant leaders in the drive to emphasize the unity of all rural working classes. According to Carlos Mamani, an indigenous Aymara intellectual and longstanding partner of Oxfam America, "The unionization of the indigenous people was the most successful part of the colonial process."³² Many indigenous people, particularly those located in areas near large cities, began to leave aside their traditional clothes and cultural practices. Many learned Spanish in order to interface more easily with the "modernizing" society in the cities. In some extreme cases, indigenous people adopted Spanish last names to further obscure their aboriginal roots.³³

During the 1960s and 1970s, the only real political spaces in which to address issues of social justice were secured by those organizations and movements associated with class struggle. The path to a socialist revolution, according to left-wing political leaders, required uniting the proletariat to rise up and seize power from the traditional elites who, until then, enjoyed control over the nation. Peasants represented the rural members of the envisioned proletariat; there was no room within this concept to recognize culture, identity, and the great diversity of peoples and nationalities in the region.³⁴ The unions enjoyed a great deal of

29 ECUARUNARI's website: www.ecuarunari.org

30 Some production near the coastal areas was shipped overseas to Europe, although poor infrastructure made it difficult to bring goods from the region's interior.

31 Smith "Search for Unity within Diversity"

32 Carlos Mamani, interview by the author, May 27, 2013

33 Igidio Naveda and Carlos Mamani, *Reconstitución de Pueblos: Una Alternativa de Descolonización y Poder Indígena* (Working Paper. Unpublished, 2004.)

34 Naveda and Mamani, *Reconstitución de Pueblos*

recognition by the state; in many cases they were awarded legal status (*personería jurídica*), which enabled their members to access credit and other benefits.

By the 1970's, indigenous communities in Ecuador and Bolivia were affiliated mainly as members of peasant unions, rather than as organizations or political actors in their own right.³⁵ Because the governments in the region recognized the peasant unions to be the principal organs of political representation of the people living in the Andean countryside, peasant leaders and their affiliated political parties spoke on behalf of rural highland communities and portrayed their constituents as a homogeneous class of the rural poor.

Agrarian reform in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador

The region's peasant unions finally achieved their demands in the second half of the 20th century. Beginning in Bolivia, the dismantlement of the hacienda system was soon followed in Peru and (to varying degrees) Ecuador. However, the legal changes related to land tenure did not lead to equality or justice for indigenous peoples. They did, however, set forth the conditions that would enable the Andean/Amazon region to establish a platform for indigenous political actors and their eventual contestations regarding development and inclusion, in the periods to follow.

Agrarian reform in Bolivia

In the early 20th century in Bolivia, 82 percent of the land was owned by about 4 percent of landowners.³⁶ The rural population was compelled to work on these lands and in the largest silver and tin mines of the Americas, often in conditions of forced labor. As the landowners became wealthier, dismal working conditions prompted grievances by the workers, who became progressively more radicalized in the early 20th century. Following a call for revolution by the working class in 1946, social unrest mounted. In the early 1950s, the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, or MNR) emerged, led by Victor Paz Estenssoro, who assumed the presidency of Bolivia on April 16, 1952.

Soon after taking office, Paz Estenssoro established an Agrarian Reform Commission, which, in 1953, passed the Agrarian Reform Law prohibiting the practice of coerced labor and limiting servitude and debt bondage.³⁷ A program involving expropriation of the haciendas of Bolivian landowners and their

³⁵ Ayllus were converted into grassroots peasant member unions; the markas, larger organizational units comprising several ayllus, became rebranded as the main peasant union, the Central Sindical Campesina.

³⁶ Lucero, Indigenous Political Voice

³⁷ While this law represented significant advances in protection against forced labor and slavery, in some places, particularly in the remote Amazon interior, these practices have continued to exist far after being outlawed.

distribution among the Indian peasants was introduced; however, most of the lands were distributed among 40,000 medium- and small-sized farmers. For more than 500,000 indigenous and peasant families, only about 10 million acres were made available.³⁸

In the decades that followed, far-reaching land reform did not materialize. The lands that were distributed to peasants were generally less productive and were located in remote areas in the rural highlands, where poor soils, scarce water, erosion, and harsh elements make agriculture very difficult.³⁹ By 1970, only 45 percent of peasant families eligible to receive lands had received titles, while large parcels of land were granted to speculators and businesspeople. In the lowlands, the processes available for achieving title for indigenous peoples' lands were virtually inaccessible due to impenetrable bureaucratic procedures and unintelligible administrative requirements.

Bolivia's agrarian reform of 1953 ended the longstanding hacienda system and made it possible for the workers of the countryside to gain title to their lands. In response to mounting pressure for lands by Bolivia's peasants, government officials and landed elites promoted the migration of workers and families from the highlands to the Amazon region. Peasant unions, as well as unions of mine workers, became powerful political forces and served as the primary interlocutor between the state and its rural workers. Meanwhile, the majority of the country's indigenous people did not benefit from the land transfers, nor were they recognized as political subjects or granted collective rights.

Agrarian reform in Peru

The agrarian reform process in Bolivia served as an inspiration for Peru, where peasant federations had been organizing in the preceding decades to promote greater access to land for the country's agricultural workers. Land reform was a major electoral issue leading into the 1956–1962 presidential period, and focus on land reform was further fortified by the agreement at Punta del Este, Uruguay, in August 1961, where the Inter-American Economic and Social Council reinforced a commitment to land reform and other democratic reforms in the region.⁴⁰

Peru's land reform process could be characterized as iterative. A new constitution adopted in 1920 changed the system of land tenure and recognized the existence of indigenous communities, setting off mobilizations by both indigenous and peasant people claiming their land rights. In 1925, the Office of Indigenous Affairs (Dirección General de Asuntos Indígenas) was established,

38 Ramon Pajuelo Teves, *Reinventando Comunidades Imaginadas: Movimientos indígenas, nación y procesos sociopolíticos en los países centroandinos* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2007)

39 Laura Starr, "Bolivia's 'Agrarian Revolution' Hanging In," *Council on Hemispheric Affairs* (2007)

40 Alfonso Chirinos-Almanza, "La Reforma Agraria Peruana," *Nueva Sociedad* no. 21 (1975): 47–64

and a registry was created to document the existence of indigenous communities and award them administrative recognition.

In 1933, Peru adopted another constitution, one that recognized the legal existence of indigenous communities and their status as subjects of rights. This recognition was a landmark, and had both positive and negative implications for indigenous peoples. On the one hand, it provided a legal framework for which indigenous communities could claim their land rights. On the other, this framework imposed the notion of “communities” as the units that could enjoy this legal recognition. Although some indigenous peoples did live in communities, historically their attachment to their land was related to ancestral ties to territories, which are larger than individual communities. These territories, rather than specific communities or plots of land, form the basis for the identity and culture of indigenous peoples, as well as their livelihoods.

In the subsequent decades, there were modest, but progressive, improvements in some of the laws relating to indigenous peoples. In 1961, a Statute on Indigenous Communities was adopted, and, in 1964, President Belaunde Terry issued the Law of Agrarian Reform, in which “communities of indigenous people” were recognized. Subsequently, a new Statute on Indigenous Communities was issued in 1966. The Agrarian Reform Law of 1969, adopted by General Juan Francisco Velasco Alvarado, established that indigenous communities should be recognized as peasants, and called for their incorporation into agricultural cooperatives. The new law obligated the indigenous people of the Amazon to parcel out integrated territories into artificial “community” units in order to fulfill the requirements for obtaining title to those lands. In 1974 the Law of Native Communities was designed to incorporate communities in the Amazon region into the new legislation. Yet, notwithstanding the limitations posed by this legal framework, indigenous people have, in many places, embraced it in Peru in order to obtain or protect their lands.

Agrarian reform in Ecuador

In Ecuador, “agrarian reform is best understood as an extended process of transformation in the use and distribution of land and in rural labor arrangements ... less a legislative corpus than a prolonged but dramatic social, political, and economic process of profound transformation and struggle,” states William F. Waters.⁴¹ Following independence in the late 19th century, a system of ethnic administration emerged whereby landowners, the church, and other powerful figures were essentially given charge of “their” Indians. Of great importance to the indigenous peoples working on the haciendas, in 1918 imprisonment for debt was abolished.⁴² In 1937, Ecuador adopted the Law of Organization and

41 William F. Waters. “Indigenous Communities, Landlords and the State: Land and Labor in Highland Ecuador, 1950–1975,” in *Highland Indians and the State in Modern Ecuador*, eds. Kim A. Clark and Marc Becker (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 120

42 Kim A. Clark and Marc Becker, eds. *Highland Indians and the State in Modern Ecuador*. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007)

Administration of Communes (Ley de Comunas), which recognized the existence of settlements that were not incorporated into the administrative system of the state. It created the legal category of the commune (*comuna*), which would legally recognize rural communities comprising 50 or more people. The law allowed for locally elected governments (*cabildos*) and for collective property ownership⁴³

By the 1950s, the structure of land and political power in Ecuador had remained largely unchanged from the previous decades. The haciendas continued to enjoy the obligatory labor—called *huasipungo*—provided by peasants who lived within their territory, in exchange for access to land and other resources of the hacienda. In 1954, approximately half of Ecuador's arable lands were in the hands of a cluster of wealthy families, just over 1 percent of the population, who possessed almost two-thirds of all agricultural land in the highlands. Only about 15 percent of this land was permanently being cultivated. Meanwhile, 82 percent of farmers worked on less than 14.5 percent of arable land.⁴⁴

Ecuador's first agrarian reform was declared by the military government of 1964, which envisioned cooperatives of farmers and people dedicated to animal husbandry as the main recipients of redistributed lands. A second agrarian reform was decreed in 1973 by the dictator Guillermo Rodríguez Lara.⁴⁵ Although these reforms led to the end of the *huasipungo* and the proliferation of small landholdings (or *minifundios*), they did not dramatically change the structure of lands or the political power in the countryside. At the same time, they had a significant homogenizing effect of treating all members of the rural population as peasants, without recognizing cultural and ethnic considerations. "Peasants therefore became small landowners, and, once they were free from the haciendas, they reconstructed their historic community, finding there a space for social, cultural and political re-articulation—or, as one might say—forms of self-government. This refers not only to a physical space, but to a historic, cultural identity with political potential."⁴⁶

In sum, the agrarian reform processes that took place in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador dismantled the haciendas and enabled smallholder rural communities to obtain titles for their lands. However, it was mostly the poorest-quality lands that were transferred in this process; many communities remained unsatisfied with the outcome and determined to continue the struggle for rights to their lands and territories. The reforms also sparked new waves of settlers who migrated to the forests of the western Amazon in search of a more prosperous future.

43 Lucero, "Locating the "Indian Problem"

44 Kim A. Clark and Marc Becker. "Indigenous Peoples and State Formation in Modern Ecuador," in *Highland Indians and the State in Modern Ecuador*, eds. Kim A. Clark and Marc Becker (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 13

45 Mario Melo and Martha Moncada, *Evaluación del Programa de Derechos Indígenas y Plurinacionalidad de Oxfam América en Ecuador* (Unpublished, March 2013)

46 Natalia Solari. *Análisis retrospectivo del Movimiento Indígena en Ecuador, Perú y Bolivia*, (Unpublished, 2011)

Increased pressure on the Amazon

The Amazon region has been recognized as a store of valuable natural resources for decades. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, a rubber boom brought settlers into some Amazon areas, settlers who at times forced indigenous people to work for them in conditions of slavery. In other parts of the Amazon basin, particularly zones with comparatively easy access (such as Peru's Selva Central), roads were built, and in some cases, even railroads were constructed to connect the area to the country's cities. The existence of new roads facilitated access, which brought further penetration of the area by settlers. Catholic missionaries and some Protestant groups soon followed. These groups, in turn, brought public schools and other institutions, such as the Instituto Lingüístico de Verano in Peru (ILV), which was tasked by the Peruvian government in 1945 to take charge of the education of the indigenous people of the Amazon region.⁴⁷

These developments prompted profound changes for the indigenous peoples of the Amazon, many of whom had sustained a way of life that was originally entirely or partially nomadic. Such developments also posed serious threats to the lands, territories, and livelihoods of the indigenous people of the lowlands, and threatened their ability to maintain their cultures, enjoy development, and realize their rights. The above-mentioned agrarian reform processes and peasant movements prompted many landowners to encourage colonization into the eastern reaches of the Andean region, further accentuating the pressure exerted on the lands and communities of the western Amazon. Governments and landed elites often described these lands as empty (*tierras baldías*), void of inhabitants.⁴⁸ Progressively, waves of workers and their families moved to the lowlands to seek opportunity.

In some lowland areas, such as the northern Amazon region of Ecuador or in the Beni in Bolivia, valuable natural resources were discovered in indigenous peoples' territories as early as the 1960s.⁴⁹ Communities who lived in previously remote, forested areas became the sites of operations of oil companies (and the devastating contamination that they caused) and loggers, particularly those profiting from the prized old-growth woods. At this time, lowland indigenous peoples were not prepared to meet this challenge or to effectively defend their rights in the process. Soon, their lands were invaded, and many were recruited to join the ranks of laborers on the haciendas and cattle ranches.

47 Oscar Espinosa de Rivero. *Para vivir mejor: Los indígenas amazónicos y su acceso a la educación superior en el Perú*. (Santiago, Chile: Fundación Equitas, 2011)

48 Ortiz, Pablo. "Informe Nacional Ecuador" in *Encuentros y Desencuentros: Un estudio de las relaciones entre ONG del norte y las organizaciones indígenas en el Perú, Ecuador y Bolivia* (Quito, Ecuador: Oxfam, Hivos, Ibis and SNV, 2007)

49 TEXACO operated in Ecuador from 1964 to 1990; Occidental in Peru from 1965 to 1969.

The situation of indigenous people varied from one of open slavery, to *empatronatos*,⁵⁰ to having lands partially invaded, to losing all of their possessions and having to settle in urban areas where they made their livings selling small-scale goods and services. Unlike the Andean areas, where small farmers moved in to claim subsistence parcels putting pressure on indigenous lands, the situation in the south was one of aggression by medium and large sized landowners in Beni and Santa Cruz, people who needed large extensions of land for ranching or for agro-industry. ... Loggers also came into the forested area of Chimanés (Beni) taking with them millions of dollars in the 1990s ...⁵¹

The wholesale ransacking of valuable timber and other natural resources for the area was a great affront to the communities who had worked to manage those resources sustainably, and their organizations pledged to defend their territories against further incursions.

Indigenism: An early experiment in indigenous politics

In the late 1960s, some urban indigenous intellectuals who (or whose parents) had migrated to the cities, underwent a sort of identity crisis. Although they were treated with discrimination by nonindigenous people in the cities and knew that they were in some ways different from the urban mestizo population, they had lost many of their ties to the countryside, their indigenous language, and their sense of belonging to a particular land or territory. This experience, particularly for indigenous intellectuals in Bolivia and Peru, fomented a new ideology known as *indigenism*.⁵²

Some indigenous activists, inspired by the social and political movements of rural peasants during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the achievements of the Black liberation movement and the American Indian Movement, formed their own organizations. The Movimiento Tupaj Katari (MITKA) in Bolivia, the Movimiento Indio Peruano (MIP), and the Consejo Indio de Sud America (CISA) all emerged in this period. According to Richard Smith, Oxfam America's first regional program director in South America, the "ideological content of the indianist movement ... purports the existence of a pan-Indian identity and civilization which is the basis of unity of all Indian peoples."⁵³ Although the appearance of

50 *Empatronatos*, or *patronatos*, were large landholdings, established during colonial years, where indigenous people worked as serfs for the landowner, or *patrón*.

51 Oscar Espinosa de Rivero. *Para vivir mejor: Los indígenas amazónicos y su acceso a la educación superior en el Perú*. (Santiago, Chile: Fundación Equitas, 2011)

52 Igidio Naveda, interview by Sofia Vergara, April 17, 2013

53 In "A Search for Unity," Smith goes on to say: "The ideology of Indianidad has three tenets: (1) Indian peoples lived in a state of moral, social and ecological harmony before the European invasion. (2) In order to regain that lost harmony, Indian peoples must return to the institutions of their past as the basis of a new political and economic order. (3) The left-right political confrontation in Latin America is ... a struggle within an already alienated European civilization, and Indian peoples are enjoined to remain neutral ... [and] direct their energy toward liberating themselves from non-Indian domination, institutions and culture."

indigenism was an important element in creating space for a discussion about indigenous people on the public stage, it emerged not as a representative movement of indigenous communities, but rather was a movement of urban intellectuals, missionaries, and others situated outside indigenous communities.

The second half of the 20th century witnessed several other developments that were conducive to the formation of new movements of indigenous peoples. By this point, in many parts of the region haciendas had been terminated and the semi-feudal land system in the Andean republics had come to an end. Many agricultural workers had, by now, obtained titles for their land, although they lacked the capital and other skills to use it productively. An economic depression beset the rural highland areas in many places, and people increasingly began to migrate to cities and larger towns in search of greater opportunities. Indigenous youth began to enroll in high schools and universities, a trend that gradually led to the development of an intelligentsia of indigenous scholars, many of whom received political training by leftist political parties. Many of these young people, with a reaffirmed sense of indigenous identity and new perspectives from their exposure to life beyond their communities of origin, were to become important leaders in the social movements that would emerge in force in the decades that followed.

CHAPTER 3

DEBT, FREE MARKET REFORMS AND THE EMERGENCE OF AN INDIGENOUS VOICE: 1980-1989

In the final years of the Cold War, new political space for social conflicts and efforts to renegotiate power dynamics emerged. This period also marks the progressive abandonment of policies that empowered governments to regulate their economies and establish social protections against market excesses. Neoliberal economic policies came first to Bolivia in the mid-1980s, charting a path that the other countries of the region would soon follow. In this same period, a large number of indigenous organizations were formed, many of which quickly became significant political actors, infusing talk of discrimination, exclusion, and rights into the national and regional arenas.

KEY CONTEXTUAL DEVELOPMENTS

Debt crisis, structural adjustment, and free-market reforms

The 1980s have widely been referred to as the “lost decade” for Latin America.⁵⁴ As the economic growth of the 1970s abruptly stalled, the countries of the region were beset by runaway inflation, currency devaluation, spiraling unemployment, and crushing debt. The rural poor living in the countryside experienced severe hardship as governments removed subsidies and other supports intended to boost the rural economy and deregulated many of the business-led activities that were taking place on indigenous lands.

Bolivia was the first in the region to experience the shocks of the World Bank’s structural adjustment programs, which would spread to Peru and Ecuador approximately eight to 10 years later. As a part of the conditions agreed to with the World Bank, Bolivia closed state-held mines and fired more than 25,000 workers in 1985. The mines, which had been nationalized after the 1952 revolution, served as the center for organized labor in Bolivia, an important force challenging the neoliberal policies of the day. The market-oriented reforms adopted in the region also included measures to promote increased foreign investment in other important sectors of the economy. With the relaxation of tax

⁵⁴ See, for example, Margaret Daly Hayes. “The US and Latin America: A Lost Decade?” *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 1 (1989)

laws and other regulatory barriers, the governments attracted mining and oil companies and promoted the extraction of subsoil resources to help remedy the country's balance of payments and offset some of the worst consequences of debt⁵⁵

The increased hardship experienced by rural people prompted waves of migration to the cities, where newly unemployed laborers, peasants, students, and other groups joined together to compare their grievances. Gradually, new alliances were formed between disenfranchised groups that were bearing the brunt of the region's economic decline.

Neoliberalism, insurgency, and militarization in Peru

A series of reforms were also adopted in Peru, aimed at liberalizing the economy and deregulating the operations of businesses and foreign investors. Unlike its neighbors, the market-oriented reforms that took place in the 1980s in Peru unfolded against a backdrop of a growing insurgency that originated in the central highlands. The Maoist group Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) sought to organize rural peasants and indigenous people in an envisioned unified revolutionary force that would rise up and seize power from the country's elites. Throughout the decade, their tactics became increasingly extreme and they began to target municipal authorities, teachers, aid workers, or others who were working to respond to the needs of the urban poor. Summary executions and forced disappearances by the Shining Path became increasingly common, even before well-planned terrorist acts began to be carried out in the nation's major cities. In response, the country became increasingly militarized, leading to excesses on both sides of the conflict. Against the backdrop of increasing political violence and a growing counterinsurgency campaign by the state, the ability of civil society to organize and express their concerns freely decreased as the decade advanced.

The emergence of new indigenous organizations

In the beginning of the 1980s, peasant unions constituted the main form of social organization in the rural highlands of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia and served as the principal interlocutor between the state and low-wage workers. The unions were seen by the state as the political representatives of people residing in the rural areas, including via their participation in political parties and electoral processes.⁵⁶ As described earlier, the unions espoused a class-based analysis, which understood all rural workers as peasants; the rural side of an envisioned proletariat. Union leaders, however, largely proved intolerant of the notion of

55 Benjamin Kohl. "Privatization Bolivian Style: A Cautionary Tale," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, no. 4 (December 2004)

56 Igidio Naveda, interview by Sofia Vergara, 2010

differing identities within the ranks, such as language, culture, or affiliation with a particular place. Nor did they recognize that, for some rural people, labor conditions were not the overriding concern. Yet, at the same time that the traditional left refused to recognize the particularities of indigenous peoples several new organizations came into being.

In 1980, Peru's national Amazonian indigenous organization, the Asociación Interétnica de la Selva de Perú (Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest, or AIDESEP).⁵⁷ That same year in Ecuador, the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, or CONFENIAE) was formed by provincial organizations such as the Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza (Organization of Indigenous People of Pastaza, or OPIP) and the Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas del Napo (Federation of Indigenous People of the Napo, or FOIN), as well as ethnic federations such as organizations representing the Shuar and Secoya indigenous peoples in Ecuador's Amazon region. Soon after, ECUARUNARI, which represented the indigenous people of the highlands of Ecuador, joined the indigenous organizations of the lowlands to form a national coordinating body for the incipient national indigenous movement. Meanwhile, in Bolivia during this period, in the eastern department of Santa Cruz, four new indigenous organizations (called centrales) were formed in Lomerío, Concepción, Guarayos, and Izozog. In 1982, these centrales, together with some other indigenous groups, held the First Assembly of Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Bolivia where the Confereración de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia, or CIDOB) was created.⁵⁸

These national-level Amazonian indigenous organizations were each built by local and provincial indigenous organizations and ethnic federations, many of who were responding to intensified threats to their lands and territories. In eastern Bolivia, many indigenous communities were surrounded by landed elites that coveted their lands and natural resources, including highly valued old-growth timber, and enjoyed unrivaled political and economic power.⁵⁹ In Ecuador, as oil companies (the most well-known was Texaco) began to operate in the Amazon region, many of the lowland peoples were just beginning to appreciate the threats posed by the mounting pressure on their lands and resources. In Peru, aside for a few areas in the Amazon that were accessible by roads and some zones where the Shining Path guerilla fighters reached, many of the lowland indigenous peoples were still living in relative isolation.

The newly formed national indigenous organizations of the Amazon region and their federated bases embarked on efforts to secure titles for the indigenous

57 South America Regional Program Strategy Paper, September, 1999, 18

58 Bol/51-97, Operational Annual Plan, 1997

59 Lucero, Indigenous Political Voice

lands on which their member communities lived and worked. They also began to regionalize their efforts, in recognition of their common struggle across national borders. Described further in the sections that follow, in 1984, the Coordinator of Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon Basin (Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica, or COICA) was originally comprised of the national Amazonian indigenous organizations of five countries, but would soon grow and expand to include, to date, the indigenous organizations of the nine countries that comprise the Amazon basin.⁶⁰ As described below, COICA would soon come to be a key partner for Oxfam America, which would accompany the organization in the decades that followed.

In Ecuador, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) was created in 1986 from a union between (highland) ECUARUNARI and (lowland) CONFENIAE and became the first national-level indigenous organization in the region. CONAIE did not take long to advance its agenda. In 1988, it proposed a Law of Nationalities, which placed the issue of indigenous peoples on the national agenda for the first time. In 1989, the organization convened a highly successful general strike to reinforce its proposal; an indication of the burgeoning capacity of Ecuador's indigenous movements.⁶¹

In sum, throughout the decade of the 1980s, a number of important new indigenous organizations were formed at the local, regional, and national level, many with the critical support of Oxfam America. They began to consolidate their membership, define their internal structures, build capacity in their leaders, and define their agendas.

Resurgence of the ayllu

In the pre-Columbian era and throughout much of the colonial period, highland indigenous people were organized in spatial kinship units called ayllus, which were traditional indigenous models of self-governance, characterized by commonly held territory and relations of reciprocity, including shared collective labor and mutual assistance.⁶² Throughout the colonial period and into the early years of the newly independent liberal states, the ayllu became progressively undermined as a form of local government, through the dispossession of indigenous people from their lands, forced labor, and subjugation to the cultural dictates of the church, among other things. The landed elites took charge of "their indians" and administered the affairs of indigenous peoples as if they were

⁶⁰ Today, COICA's member organizations are the Asociación Interétnica de la Selva de Perú (AIDSESP), Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONFENIAE), Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC), Amerindian Peoples Organization of Guyana (APA), the Federation des Organisations Autochtones de Guyane (FOAG), the Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB), the Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira (COIAB), the Organization of Indigenous People in Suriname (OIS), and the Consejo Nacional Indígena de Venezuela (CONIVE).

⁶¹ Becker, Marc. *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indigenous Movements* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008)

⁶² Definition offered by Inturias, Mirna Liz, and Miguel Angel Aragón. "Informe Final de la Consultoría: Del proceso al cambio. Incidencia de Oxfam America en el Movimiento Indígena de Bolivia, 2000–2011," (Unpublished, April 2012)

children. There was no recognition of any notion of self-determination or the right of indigenous self-government in the republics of the region.

Meanwhile, the *varas*, indigenous authority figures, would don the traditional symbols of their authority—ponchos, sombreros, and *chicotes* (whips) and, virtually in secret, they would exercise leadership over important organizational and political issues affecting the *ayllus*. Together with their female counterparts, the *ayllu* authorities would make the rounds to the various families living within the territory. Over a period of several days or weeks, these authorities would serve a number of functions ranging from agricultural advisers to marriage counselors. They would mediate conflicts, organize local economic arrangements, and plan ceremonial events. The practice of indigenous authority was maintained clandestinely, beyond the view of the landlords, the peasant unions, and other outsiders.⁶³ While this may appear to resemble an ancient traditional practice, many *ayllus* still carry out these practices today.

The notion that Andean indigenous people could revive the *ayllu* as their form of organization and self-government was only beginning to be contemplated by the most visionary indigenous leaders and intellectuals in the region. Yet, Oxfam America did not take long in recognizing the alternative that the *ayllu* movement offered to the mainstream notion of “development” at the time. “The reconstitution and strengthening of the *ayllus* in Bolivia is the basis for reaffirming the ways of life and organization of the indigenous peoples of the Andes, and constitutes a long-term ethnic alternative to attain autonomous development, sustained by their self-management and autonomy and based in their cultures, their languages, their knowledge and control over their resources.”⁶⁴

In the early 1980s, the *ayllus* did not have organizations that ensured their political representation on their own terms. They were recognized not as indigenous people but rather as members of the peasantry. The unwillingness of Bolivia’s peasant unions to embrace cultural diversity and the importance of identity for many of their members soon became a source of tension within the organizations. In the north of Potosi, a *Katarista* (indigenist) faction within the peasant union had clashed with union leadership that was unwilling to promote indigenous issues, and formed a separate organization, called the Federation of Indigenous *Ayllus* of the North of Potosi (*Federacion de Ayllus Originarios del Norte de Potosi*, or *FAO–NP*). Around the same time, indigenous leaders in the Department of Oruro formed the Federation of *Ayllus* of the south of Oruro (*FASOR*) in 1988.⁶⁵

The emergence of *ayllu*-based organizations in the early part of the decade represented a challenge to the power of the peasant unions, who were presumed

63 Igidio Naveda, interview by the author, May 5, 2013

64 BOL/21–98–99, *Ayllu: Tierra Comunitaria de Origen y Autogestión*, Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA)

65 Igidio Naveda, interview by the author, May 5, 2013

to speak on behalf of the rural poor up until that time. Reacting to the perceived loss of that coveted political space, peasant leaders often harassed, or fought openly with, indigenous authorities in areas where they were becoming more active.

Growing space for indigenous rights on the international stage

By the early 1980s, the international context was evolving in ways that were progressively allowing new room on the international agenda to promote the rights of indigenous peoples. In 1982, the United Nations Human Rights Commission established the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. By 1985, in response to growing calls by the Indigenous Peoples Caucus to promote the development of international standards related to the rights of indigenous people, the working group became more active and initiated the drafting and development of a proposed Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Oxfam America invested considerable time and resources to facilitate the participation by its indigenous partners in this process.⁶⁶

The issue gained further international attention in 1986 with the publication of the long-awaited “Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations,” by José R. Martínez-Cobo, the Special Rapporteur of the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The report, among other things, recommended that the United Nations establish a body to address issues affecting the ability of indigenous peoples to realize their human rights.⁶⁷ The initiation of the drafting process for the future UN declaration and the release of the report by Martínez-Cobo created new momentum at the international level for advancing recognition of indigenous peoples as the subjects of rights, including collective rights. The indigenous organizations of South America were determined to play an integral role in the development of a new international framework for the defense and protection of the rights of indigenous people worldwide.

In another significant development, in 1989, the International Labor Organization adopted Convention No. 169 (the Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, or ILO 169). This treaty represented a considerable advance for the recognition of the rights of indigenous people, including the right to be consulted, to participate, and “to decide their own priorities for the processes of economic development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use.” Oxfam America recognized the significance of this convention and committed to disseminating it and encouraging advocacy to press for its adoption. The rights codified in the convention reflected several of the key

⁶⁶ Igidio Naveda, interview by Sofia Vergara, 2010

⁶⁷ Martínez-Cobo, Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations

demands of the burgeoning indigenous movement in the region and its ratification soon became a rallying point for indigenous peoples in their respective countries.

OXFAM AMERICA'S VISION AND PRACTICE

Oxfam America's program with indigenous peoples was formally initiated in South America following the definition of the region's first Regional Program Strategy in October of 1983. Oxfam America was no stranger to the region; by that time, it had already funded 16 projects in Bolivia, 15 in Peru, three in Brazil, and one in Argentina.⁶⁸

Focus and rationale

In the mid-1980s, Oxfam America was attempting to define the focus of its various regional programs (in Asia, Africa, and the Americas), that intended to contribute to promoting development and create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and social injustice. In his capacity as the first regional director for South America, Richard Smith argued that indigenous peoples made up a significant percentage of the national population in the countries of the region and contributed to the development of their communities and countries. Yet these peoples were among the most marginalized and excluded groups of society. Indigenous people, it followed, are the original inhabitants of the region, yet they had lost part of their territory, their forms of government, and their identity. They lived in areas of the greatest biodiversity and environmental fragility, and they conserved and sustained cultures and traditional systems of knowledge. These arguments reflect the overarching vision behind Oxfam America's decision to focus its support in South America on indigenous peoples.⁶⁹

Igidio Naveda, a Quechua intellectual from the highlands of Apurimac, Peru, joined Oxfam America as a consultant in 1986 and as staff by 1989. Naveda was central in defining the organization's evolving vision based on both his unique political judgment and his own lived experience. Responsible primarily for the Andes region, he would soon be joined by Margarita Benavides, who would assume charge of the Amazon sub-program into the subsequent decade.

The central precept underlying the regional program strategy was that indigenous people would only be able to overcome the deep-seated inequality and injustices they faced through establishing alliances, both among their organizations and with nonindigenous people. However, for those alliances to truly be supportive and enable indigenous people to realize their goals, they had to pursue their own

⁶⁸ Igidio Naveda. *Una Breve Mirada Sobre la Vida de SAMRO* (Unpublished, February, 2007)

⁶⁹ Naveda, *Breve Mirada*

“autonomous development.” This development would serve as a basis on which to negotiate with potential allies and partners as equals. Therefore, Oxfam needed to support indigenous peoples in developing their own strategies for political and economic development that would be implemented by their communities and their representative organizations. The notion of “autonomous development” envisioned a process of economic and social empowerment based on the diversity of peoples and their own internal modes of decision-making and participation. The theory was that this approach would enable indigenous peoples “to recover the power to develop their societies for their future generations in the direction they choose.”⁷⁰

The rationale for a focus on indigenous peoples therefore arose from a critique of the way in which “development” was conventionally understood and promoted in the region. This conventional model of development, long-embraced by technocrats, politicians, and some academics, has not benefited rural indigenous communities; rather, it reinforced colonial structures of domination and perpetuated poverty and extreme poverty. Indigenous people, the early South America program designers argued, were alienated from decisions that affect their lives. Their labor and resources are extracted from them for the benefit of people based far away in cities or even farther away in overseas markets. The development policies that respond to this logic undermine local, self-sufficient economies, focus on individual self-interest and emphasize private accumulation; all of which present a serious threat to indigenous cultures. The South America program argued that indigenous people, “who maintain relative economic independence, cultural integrity and a solid sense of WE are in a better position to create alternatives for, and assume control of, their own development.”⁷¹

Goal and objectives

The goal of Oxfam’s South America program was defined as promoting the autonomous development of indigenous peasants in the Andean highlands of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, and the tribal indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin (Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, Colombia, and Bolivia). In the Andean highlands, the program concentrated on Quechua and Aymara indigenous people, who live either in communities or cooperatives established by agrarian reform. In the eastern slope of the Andes, where the mountains descend into the vast lowlands, the program worked with tribal peoples who were mobilizing to defend their territories and natural resources in the face of proliferating threats.⁷²

While the program had specific, differentiated objectives for the Andean and Amazon regions, these two subprograms shared five overarching objectives: (1)

⁷⁰ Oxfam America. South America Regional Program Strategy Paper, September, 1984

⁷¹ Oxfam America. South America Regional Program Strategy Paper, 1984, 8

⁷² Oxfam America. South America Regional Program Strategy Paper, 1984

to strengthen economic independence and well-being of indigenous families and improve their capacity to accumulate capital within the context of the community; (2) to promote access by indigenous and peasant communities to productive land to strengthen their control and defense of the resources found in their territory and to encourage the proper management of these resources for their sustained use; (3) to increase indigenous peoples' opportunity for political participation and for leverage through the consolidation of grassroots representative organizations; (4) to reinforce the social and economic ties of community, solidarity, and the basis of indigenous culture and identity; and (5) to permit the participation of indigenous peoples in current processes to define, implement, and defend their political, economic, and cultural rights as peoples.⁷³ These goals and objectives, originally proposed for the period of 1984–1987, were subsequently ratified, and remained in force as the guiding framework for the regional program for the following 10 years.

OXFAM AMERICA'S PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH

The earliest phase of Oxfam America's work with indigenous peoples in South America centered on strengthening indigenous peoples' organizations, reaffirming their cultures and identities, and securing the rights to their territories. This approach represented a significant departure from the dominant emphasis of development organizations and grant-makers at the time, which often promoted measures aimed at the assimilation of indigenous peoples into the wider, nonindigenous culture and measured their impact based on standard economic indicators.⁷⁴

Alliances for territorial defense in the Amazon region

In the early years of Oxfam America's regional program, approximately 60 percent of the regional program budget was allocated to the Amazon region, where indigenous federations had formed. Grants supported efforts to secure the right of indigenous peoples to their territories and sustainably manage their natural resources, while supporting their empowerment in the political sphere.⁷⁵

As one of the organization's initial partnerships in the region, in 1987, Oxfam America began funding APCOB (Apoyo al Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano) and CICOL (Central Intercomunal Campesina Indígena de Lomerío). APCOB, which was a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), had initiated a partnership with the Chiquitano indigenous peoples of Lomerío (a traditional

73 Naveda, Breve Mirada

74 Laura Roper, personal correspondence with the author, July 26, 2013

75 Sofía Vergara. Programa de Pueblos Indígenas e Interculturalidad: Revisión de Impacto y Aprendizaje. Trayectoria Histórica de la Teoría de Cambio 1984–2010 (Unpublished, March, 2011)

territory in Nuflo Chavez Province, Santa Cruz) in the early 1980s. At that time, the Lomerío area was populated by 5,000 Chiquitanos living in 35 communities, of which 25 were nucleated settlements and 10 were disperse settlements located around cattle estates. At that time, the Chiquitanos were struggling to confront the threats posed by timber companies that were entering their lands to extract wood. APCOB supported the Chiquitanos in organizing to defend their territories, which eventually led to the formation of CICOL, the organization made up of indigenous peoples of Lomerío. In an effort to help the Chiquitanos defend their territory and natural resources, APCOB supported them to implement a forestry management plan, comprised of four components: natural resources management; agriculture and animal husbandry; territorial consolidation; and organizational strengthening.⁷⁶ To help the Chiquitano people strengthen their claims over their territories and demonstrate that they are utilizing the productive capacity of the lands, Oxfam America provided the funding necessary to buy a sawmill, in order to fulfill a requirement necessary to obtain the title to the land.⁷⁷

The Coordinadora de Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin, or COICA) also received critical support, particularly in its earliest years.⁷⁸ In particular, funding enabled COICA's leaders to come together and strengthen their alliances at a time when travel from the various Amazonian locations where these leaders were based was extremely costly and virtually impossible without external funding. Oxfam America also contributed to building the capacity of leaders to promote the rights of indigenous peoples in international arenas including at the United Nations and the World Bank; described further in the chapters that follow.⁷⁹

Oxfam America's commitment to promoting alliances for the defense of territories and natural resources was also sustained. In the late 1980s, there was a growing interest in the Amazon from environmental groups that had sprung up to arrest deforestation and promote the conservation of biodiversity. The approach of environmental organizations at that time, however, was focused on the creation of national parks or protected areas, where people were not allowed to live, hunt, farm, or exist.⁸⁰ This approach led to tensions between environmental and conservation organizations (led mainly by NGOs based in the Global North) and the indigenous organizations of the Amazon over the best way to promote environmental conservation in the Amazon and the role of the indigenous people of the areas in question. In the late 1980s, Oxfam America facilitated a coming-together of COICA and representatives from these environmental groups which

76 BOL/33-98, Integrated Use and Management of Communal Natural Resources

77 As an indication of the effectiveness of this project, in 1995 the Lomerío Global Forest Management Plan was completed and won the prestigious Smart Wood certification. The first exports of sustainably harvested timber from Lomerío took place in 1995 and generated considerable profit for the organization owing to increasing global market demand for sustainably produced forestry products. Cathy Ross, interview by the author, May 5, 2013

78 "COICA was created with the support and encouragement of Oxfam America," Regional Program Strategy Paper, 1999, 18, author's translation.

79 Igidio Naveda, interview with the author, July 25, 2013

80 Cathy Ross, interview by the author, May 5, 2013

resulted in the formation of the Amazon Coalition (later renamed the Amazon Alliance) in 1990. Oxfam America served on the board of this alliance until it was dissolved in 2009.⁸¹

Cultural revival and affirmation of indigenous identity in the Andes

In the Andean region, Oxfam America confronted the pervasive poverty that existed in rural communities, primarily by building the capacity of indigenous organizations so that they could assume direct control over and management of their own development projects and processes. In its early years, the regional program initiated an exploratory process to identify possible partners, subregions, and opportunities to promote autonomous development in the highlands.⁸² Autonomous development was an ambitious goal at the time, given that the issue of indigenous peoples was largely absent from both the national agendas and the specific development priorities in the region.

Initially, the regional program supported scattered projects in the Bolivian highlands, assisting various localized development projects, such as the cultivation of flowers, the collection of potato seeds, and the construction of water infrastructure. Some of these projects were co-funded with Oxfam Great Britain and Oxfam Canada well before the Oxfam International confederation was formed, when each “Oxfam” operated independently in the countries in question. Oxfam America had selected these projects because they benefited Quechua-speakers who were clearly indigenous people. As the program strategy evolved throughout the 1980s, projects supported in the Andean region became notably more strategic. For example, Oxfam America supported CIAC, a partner working in Calcha (near the border with Argentina), to support highland communities in rebuilding and conserving a system of canals and reservoirs that would serve to manage water resources and preserve indigenous cultures. Rather than proposing to rebuild the canals according to modern designs, CIAC realized that the traditional rituals related to the cleaning and maintenance of the canals were intricately related to the role of traditional authority figures (roughly translated into “mayors of water”) and the preservation of their culture. Therefore CIAC supported communities (with Oxfam America’s financial and strategic support)⁸³ to conserve those ancestral practices and value their cultural and social functions.

In the Peruvian highlands, Oxfam America funded several landmark projects in Puno with its partner Chuyma Aru, an organization comprised by Aymara intellectuals who worked to promote cultural reaffirmation with Andean indigenous people. These projects supported Aymara-speaking communities whose livelihood and culture were largely centered on raising alpaca and cattle

⁸¹ Interview with Richard Smith by Sofia Vergara 2010, and Oxfam America. Regional Program Strategy Paper, 1999, 19

⁸² Igidio Naveda, interview with the author, April 13, 2013.

⁸³ Igidio Naveda, interview with the author, July 25, 2013

and cultivating native crops such as potatoes and quinoa. Chuyma Aru helped these communities reconstruct the ancient Inca system of terraced agriculture, employ a traditional form of recycling to improve their crops and enhance the quality of their grasslands to improve the nutritional intake of their alpacas, among other activities.⁸⁴ In Huancavelica, Oxfam America funded projects with its partner Yapuq PRODER to build on an ancestral system of irrigation while introducing new aspersion technologies, as well as associated cultural and social practices of the Anqara indigenous people.⁸⁵ In the department of Ayacucho, similar projects were carried out by the Asociación para la Promoción del Desarrollo (PRODES).⁸⁶ With these projects, Oxfam America encouraged the celebration of traditional cultural practices related to agriculture and other productive practices, in an effort to contribute to the self-esteem and self-worth that indigenous peoples felt about their traditional knowledge and identity. Oxfam America's partners also contributed to economic development in Quechua-speaking communities by employing appropriate technologies combined with ancestral knowledge that had been maintained by the communities.

In the mountains of Bolivia, Oxfam America also initiated a partnership with the Andean Oral History Workshop (Taller de Historia Oral Andina, or THOA) in 1986. THOA, an NGO based in La Paz and composed of Aymara intellectuals, promoted the affirmation and expression of cultural identities by disseminating testimonies, historical and political documents, and radio programs.⁸⁷ For example, they worked to revitalize indigenous languages, cultures, and ancestral forms of organization in the form of the ayllu. THOA documented a history of the caciques, historic indigenous leaders, using oral history, mainly from indigenous elders, and then shared the story in dramatized form with the communities who had participated in the project. During the 1980s, THOA assisted the ayllus that were beginning to separate themselves from the predominant peasant unions, particularly in the north of Potosi and Oruro. As stated in a grant application for THOA corresponding to a subsequent period, "the reconstitution and strengthening of ayllus in Bolivia is the path to reaffirm the Andean indigenous peoples because they maintain their ways of life and organization and they constitute a long-term ethnic alternative to construct an autonomous development, sustained in the self-management and autonomy of peoples, based in their cultures, languages, knowledge and control over their resources."⁸⁸

84 PRU/72–99, Vigorización de crianza Andina de animales y plantas (Chuyma Aru)

85 PRU/70–X–98, Afianzamiento de la Capacidad Productiva, el Tejido Social y la Organización Comunal Andina en la Microcuenca del Río Lircay (Yapuq PRODER)

86 PRU/94–98, Defensa Territorial y Afirmación Cultural en las Comunidades altoandinas de Vinchos. Asociación para la Promoción del Desarrollo (PRODES)

87 Marcia Stephenson. The Impact of an Indigenous Counterpublic Sphere on the Practice of Democracy: The Taller de Historia Oral Andian in Bolivia (Working Paper 279, Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, September 2000), 4

88 BOL/21–98–99, Ayllu: Tierra Comunitaria de Origen y Autogestión, Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA), author's translation

According to a report tracing the evaluation of the theory of change underpinning Oxfam America's program with indigenous peoples between 1984 and 1995, the program centered on three main types of intended outcomes: (1) changes in social capital, attitudes, and beliefs: indigenous organizations would know and respect their cultures and traditions and participate actively in their representative organizations, which would empower them and enable them to defend and claim their rights; (2) changes in the institutional environment: government and intergovernmental institutions, and civil servants, would approve and apply policies that recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and guarantee their ability to pursue their autonomous development; and (3) changes in material and natural capital and livelihoods: indigenous families would enjoy greater economic independence and capacity and be able to sustain themselves from their lands and natural resources.

Guided by these intended outcomes and an underlying theory of change that sought to promote the empowerment and autonomous development of indigenous peoples, Oxfam America's program embarked on what would come to be a long partnership in the years and decades that would follow.

CHAPTER 4

GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION AND RESISTANCE VIA ETHNIC IDENTITY: 1990-1999

As free market-oriented reforms became entrenched throughout the region, indigenous movements gained strength and prominence on the national stage of their respective countries. In Ecuador, indigenous movements dominated several national debates, overthrew governments, and experimented with a taste of political power during a brief alliance with the administration in the middle of the decade. In Bolivia, indigenous people in the lowlands began to mobilize, compelling the adoption of several important new laws and policies in response to issues prominent on their agenda, while in the Andes, a resurgence of ethnic identity was quietly—but progressively—underway. In contrast, the increasingly militarized environment in Peru due to the Shining Path insurgency had the effect of silencing dissent and closing space for critical civil society activities, including activism for indigenous rights. Internationally, this period also coincided with great advances in recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples.

KEY CONTEXTUAL DEVELOPMENTS

Deepening neoliberal reforms and the expansion of the extractive frontier

In response to alarming levels of debt, far-reaching neoliberal reforms were adopted, first by Bolivia in the early 1980s, while in the 1990s Peru and Ecuador adopted structural adjustment measures and brokered agreements with multilateral financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund which determined critical economic policies in these countries. As a result, the region's governments privatized large sectors of their economies, slashed social spending and withdrew subsidies that had traditionally benefited the poor. Meanwhile, oil, natural gas and mining companies and loggers advanced deeper into previously unaffected communities.

The three countries adopted new waves of legislation aimed to attract foreign investment particularly in sectors that would produce raw materials for export, while providing virtually no protections for the people who were affected. In Bolivia, President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada passed the Privatization Law in 1992, which authorized the sale of state-owned industries and, by doing so, sent many mineworkers into the ranks of the unemployed. In 1994, the government adopted the Capitalization Law, which privatized half of the country's largest

state-owned companies, with the promise to distribute the benefits equitably across society. While investment in the oil and gas sectors increased, the overall economy experienced little stimulus from these measures. At the same time, the new legal framework enabled the unfettered exploitation of natural resources, particularly in the far reaches of the Amazon where the state's presence was very weak. During the late 1990s, for example, the greatest mahogany stand in the world, from the eastern reaches of the Bolivian jungle—was decimated by illegal loggers and sold on the black market for an unmeasured amount of cash.⁸⁹

Soon after Alberto Fujimori assumed the presidency of Peru in 1990, he also undertook a series of policy and legal measures aimed at expediting market-oriented economic reforms and facilitating greater levels of foreign direct investment. Significant emphasis was placed on the extractive industries sector; between 1990 and 1997, investment in mining in the country, historically a primary motor of its economy, increased by 2,000 percent,⁹⁰ affecting lands and communities that had previously not experienced the damages of mining and leaving behind a wake of environmental devastation and serious social and cultural impacts.

Meanwhile, conflict raged in the Peruvian countryside in the ongoing battle for control between the armed forces and the Shining Path. Over time, the tactics employed by the guerrillas became progressively more brutal. In communities across the southern highlands and into the central jungle, people were disappeared, massacres took place and mass graves were hastily filled. Local authorities, teachers, and development workers—and anyone else who worked to provide assistance to rural communities—were targeted by the Shining Path, which aimed to make conditions in the countryside intolerable for the residents of the rural communities, ostensibly to eventually prompt the residents to rise up in a mass revolution.⁹¹ Intolerance of ethnic diversity by the Shining Path also became pronounced, as they discouraged people from speaking in indigenous languages because recognition of these differences was perceived as being divisive in their efforts to constitute a unified mass of the rural poor.

Many Quechua-speaking communities in the central and southern highlands of Peru and the Ashaninka people of the central jungle found themselves caught in the crossfire between the violent insurgency and the militarized response of the Peruvian government. In some areas, rural communities organized themselves in self-defense units known as *rondas campesinas*, which would patrol the areas surrounding their communities to alert people of the presence of the guerilla. These *rondas* became an important ally to the Peruvian military and, thanks in great part to their collaboration, the Peruvian armed forces were eventually able to defeat the Shining Path. This time, however, the basis for the organization was

⁸⁹ Cathy Ross, interview by the author, May 5, 2013

⁹⁰ Solari, *Análisis retrospectivo*, 30

⁹¹ Igidio Naveda, interview by the author, September, 2011

not about class (as it was for peasants), working conditions or ethnic identity. It was an effort to survive the political violence that would beset the country for almost two decades.

The extent of the devastation caused by the armed conflict—particularly for the country's rural population—cannot be overstated. According to the national truth and reconciliation commission established following the war's end, by the time the war came to an end at the turn of the century, nearly 70,000 people had been killed; at least 75 percent were indigenous.⁹² As acts of terrorism by the Shining Path proliferated in the nation's cities and an extensive counterinsurgency campaign mounted, a climate of fear enveloped the Peruvian public. The conflict also generated a political situation in which opponents of the government were criminalized and often grouped in the same category as illegal armed groups. Given this environment, civil groups and social movements in the country found it difficult to speak out against the neoliberal reforms, the radical increase in mining, and the drastic cuts to public supports for the rural poor; let alone denounce the extrajudicial executions and other violations of civil and political rights in the country.

It was, in many ways, a decade of silence for Peru's indigenous peoples. However, notwithstanding the constrained conditions in which they were living, communities affected by the expansion of mining in Peru—many of which represented indigenous peoples—began to organize and mobilize in the highlands. As they became increasingly vocal about their grievances and demands, a new social movement began to develop. Led by regional groupings of mine-affected communities in several of the departments of the country most heavily impacted by mining, soon they would grow to constitute a formidable political force in Peru. The Coordinator of Communities Affected by Mining (Coordinadora de Comunidades Afectadas por la Minería, or CONACAMI) was formed in 1999 from a meeting held with more than 1,200 community representatives from across Peru. In this period, CONACAMI would play a critical role in the development of a regional indigenous movement and serve as a key partner for Oxfam America.⁹³

Ecuador also entered into a period of great instability at the same time that it adopted a series of far-reaching structural adjustment measures. Between 1992 and 2002 the country had five presidents, two of whom assumed power by means of a coup d'état. Meanwhile, oil companies entered into a bidding frenzy over the blocks of the eastern rainforests that the government was auctioning off with unprecedented speed. In 1998, the government of Ecuador granted drilling rights to the Atlantic Richfield Corporation (ARCO) for the 200,000-hectare Block 24 concession, an area in the southeastern forests that comprises part of the ancestral homeland of the Shuar and Achuar indigenous peoples. Having

⁹² Reporte Final de la Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación (Lima, Peru: August 28, 2003)

⁹³ Igidio Naveda, personal correspondence with the author, July 25, 2013

learned (thanks in part to Oxfam America's support) about the extensive oil damages that had affected the northeastern Amazon as a consequence of Texaco's operations over the past two decades, the indigenous people in Block 24 were unwilling to allow a similar occurrence in their area. In the final years of the 1990s the indigenous federations of the Shuar and Achuar people, with the backing of CONFENIAE and CONAIE, managed to sustain an insurmountable resistance to the entry of the oil company in their territory. Unable to proceed with activities to make the concession profitable, ARCO sold the block to Houston-based Burlington Resources in 1999.⁹⁴

“Ethnic earthquake” in Ecuador

An organized response to intensified treats to the territories, economic survival and cultures of indigenous peoples of Ecuador catapulted them onto the public scene in a development described by some observers as the “ethnic earthquake” of the 1990s. By this time, the organizations of indigenous peoples had achieved a powerful convening capacity and proved capable of harnessing the collective weight of their constituency to exert irrefutable pressure for far-reaching structural changes.

In Ecuador, the indigenous movement was consolidated, led by CONAIE, the country's national indigenous organization. The movement combined conventional tactics that had long been the mainstay of left-leaning social movements—including demonstrations, running for electoral office, and even overthrowing governments—with demands that the rights of indigenous peoples to be recognized as members of their nations, while respected in their diversity. Most radical was the demand for the constitutional recognition of Ecuador as a plurinational state. “Far from the limited goals of identity politics, Indigenous demands hit at the heart of how elites had structured the state.”⁹⁵ CONAIE soon became recognized as an organization struggling for all marginalized groups, not just indigenous peoples. The organization's platform included the full implementation of agrarian reform and critiques of industrialization, unemployment, housing, education, health, and issues of racial discrimination.⁹⁶ “Far from espousing a separatist or utopian vision aimed at reconstructing the sovereignty they enjoyed before the time of the conquest, current indigenous movements seek definitions in the relationships between the groups they represent and the nation-states in which these groups are located.”⁹⁷

On June 4, 1990, on the day of the Inti Raymi celebration for the sun and harvest in Ecuador, CONAIE launched a nationwide uprising that “took the whole world

94 Amazon Watch “The History of Block 24”

95 Becker, *Indians and Leftists*, 167

96 Becker quoting Leon Zamosc. “The Indian Movement in Ecuador: From Politics of Influence to Politics of Power” *The Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Latin America*, eds. Leon Zamosc and Nancy Grey Postero (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2004)

97 Solari, *Análisis retrospectivo*

by surprise.”⁹⁸ Indigenous people mobilized to block roads, paralyze the transport system, and shut down the country for a week. The mobilization began in the central and northern highlands and spread across the country, perpetuated by spontaneous, decentralized actions initiated by local indigenous activists.⁹⁹ When the government agreed to negotiate with indigenous leaders, they presented the government with a list of 16 points, ranging from cultural issues (traditional medicine, bilingual education) to economic (debts, access to credit, and resources for economic development in indigenous areas) and political concerns (related to the self-determination of local communities and proposed constitutional reforms). According to scholar Pajuelo Teves “for the first time in the republican history of Ecuador, the indigenous population mobilized together, assumed a platform of ethnic demands and profoundly questioned the predominant way in which the state and citizenship had been constructed in the country.”¹⁰⁰ The issue of land was also central to the demands of the indigenous movement. While the agrarian reform had supposedly done away with land contestations, there were 217 registered agrarian conflicts during the 1980s in Ecuador.

Soon after the Inti Raymi uprising, CONAIE assumed leadership in planning for the First Continental Conference on Five Hundred Years of Indigenous Resistance held in 1992, which brought together 400 representatives from 120 indigenous groups throughout the Americas. This conference was a critical development for the regionalization (some say the “globalization”) of the indigenous movement, which, before this time, had been focused more locally or, at best, at the national level. The new alliances forged between indigenous organizations that had attended the commemoration helped to establish a new platform from which indigenous leaders began to set their sights on collective goals that they would work to advance in a coordinated effort.

Soon after this successful gathering, the indigenous peoples of the Amazon region of Pastaza, through their organization OPIP, presented a plan to regain 90 percent of their land. After two years and no developments, the indigenous peoples of the Amazon initiated a long walk from the Amazon to Quito, the country’s capital. Over 13 days, 2,000 Kichwa, Shuar, and Achuar peoples walked 240 kilometers to demand the legalization of their territories and the constitutional recognition of Ecuador as a plurinational state. The indigenous peoples of the Amazon received a warm welcome in the nation’s capital; the march had captured the attention and awakened sympathies of many of Ecuador’s nonindigenous citizens.¹⁰¹

98 Richard Chase Smith, interview with Sofia Vergara, 2010

99 Becker, *Indians and Leftists*

100 Pajuelo Teves, *Reinventando Comunidades Imaginadas*, 44

101 Melo and Moncada, *Informe de Consultoría*

The indigenous movement in Ecuador also constituted formidable resistance to the neoliberal reforms in the country and the region. In 1993, CONAIE played a leading role in broad-based popular protests against a government proposal to liquidate a primary health care service in rural areas. After two days of powerful demonstrations, the government stepped back from its proposal and reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining the service. In 1994, CONAIE again mobilized its members and allies to reject the Law of Agrarian Modernization, which would have abolished communal property, privatized water for irrigation, and reoriented all public support in the agriculture sector to large-scale agribusiness. The indigenous-led mobilization to express rejection of this law paralyzed the country for 10 days, prompting a government-declared state of emergency.¹⁰²

These mass actions precipitated a gradual process that began to modify the power dynamics between the state, political parties, large landowners, and the new indigenous political actors, embodied by CONAIE. Following centuries of being marginalized from access to the rights of citizenship and the exercise of political participation, the indigenous movement was now able to bring forth its own proposals. In CONAIE's Political Project, published in 1994, the organization stated: "The current State, as a form of political organization, does not express the plurinational reality of Ecuador. Plurinationality implies equality, unity, respect, reciprocity, solidarity between all of the Indigenous Nationalities that comprise Ecuador. It recognizes the right of Nationalities to their territory, political and internal administrative autonomy, in other words, to determine their own process of development."¹⁰³

By the mid-1990s, indigenous peoples in Ecuador had opened new channels for participation in affairs of the state. They achieved the creation of a special fund for indigenous areas (FIDE), a bilingual education program, and the Development Council for the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador (CODENPE), and they succeeded in the reorganization of the Development Program for Indigenous and Black Populations (PRODEPINE). In 1996, Pachakutik, the political/electoral branch of the national indigenous movement, was created, and soon it won 10 percent of the seats in the national congress. In 1997, the popular movements of Ecuador managed to bring about a Constituent Assembly. CONAIE and its local members organized lengthy consultations to ensure that its position was, effectively, representative of its members and then tasked trusted indigenous intellectuals to propose various formulations of its political proposals. Some indigenous leaders attended the actual debates in the Constituent Assembly, and others engaged in ongoing workshops with indigenous peoples across the country to ensure that these peoples were knowledgeable and supportive of the proposals CONAIE was promoting in the capital. This was a

102 Lucero, "Locating the 'Indian Problem'"

103 Solari, *Análisis Retrospectivo*, 48

complex process that required the support of CONAIE's partners, as detailed in the following section.¹⁰⁴

Mobilizing for territory, dignity, and identity in Bolivia

In Bolivia, many lowland indigenous communities were surrounded by ranchers from the traditional landed elites and experienced increasing incursions by loggers, ranchers, and oil companies into the swamps, drylands, and rainforests that made up their territories. In 1990, spearheaded by the Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB) and their extended grassroots members in the lowlands, the indigenous peoples of the eastern forests organized the Long March for Territory and Dignity, a march from the Beni to La Paz. Subsequent mobilizations led by the indigenous organizations of the Bolivian Amazon to reiterate their demands took place in 1992, 1994, and 1996.¹⁰⁵

The 1996 march achieved one of its chief objectives: later that year, the Bolivian congress adopted a law creating the Institute of Agrarian Reform (the Ley INRA), which, among other things, provided a legal framework for awarding titles for collectively held indigenous lands. TCOs, or "communal original territories," which were recognized by the Ley INRA, would subsequently become an overriding goal for many indigenous organizations in the Bolivian Amazon, including several of Oxfam America's longstanding partners.

Meanwhile, in the highlands of Bolivia, *ayllus* were rapidly emerging as political actors and powerful social organizations. Throughout the decade, solidarity between federated *ayllus* in Potosí, Oruro and La Paz deepened, and leaders began to work to develop a common platform. After recurring exchanges between *ayllu* leaders and the strengthening of ties between provincial federations, in 1997 the Council of Ayllus and Markas of Quollasuyu (CONAMAQ) was formed as the representative organization of the indigenous people of the Bolivian Andes.

Advances in the international recognition of indigenous rights

Internationally, this period also coincided with great advances in the development and appropriation of international standards for the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, around which the newly allied indigenous organizations collaborated. It was a critical decade for the entry into force of ILO Convention 169 in the region: Bolivia ratified the instrument in December 1991, Peru in February 1994, and Ecuador in May 1998. It was also an important period for the development of what would later come to be the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Many of the participants in the First Continental Conference on Five Hundred Years of Indigenous Resistance would come, in the years

¹⁰⁴ Igidio Naveda, personal correspondence with the author, May 29, 2013

¹⁰⁵ Inturias and Aragon, Informe Final de la Consultoría

ahead, to serve as delegates to the drafting process for the UN declaration and would participate in the complex lobbying efforts required to ensure passage of this landmark declaration by means of the intergovernmental system.¹⁰⁶ Finally, by the early 1990s the pan-Amazon organization, COICA, had become consolidated and was serving as an effective advocate for lowland indigenous peoples vis-à-vis oil companies, the World Bank, and, increasingly, the United Nations.

OXFAM AMERICA'S VISION AND PRACTICE

Oxfam America's South America program in the 1990s built on the reasoning set forth in Oxfam's original program paper, beginning with a series of critical learning exercises that informed Oxfam's work in support of indigenous peoples for the coming period.

In 1992, an external evaluation was commissioned. Among its conclusions was the observation that "objective 1 of the Program [to strengthen economic independence and well-being] has not been met; given the conditions of extreme poverty in which indigenous peoples live, this objective is largely unattainable." Overall, however, the evaluations concluded that the vision behind the regional program continued to be appropriate, a finding that reinforced the decision by the regional office to continue with its general approach to promoting the rights of indigenous peoples.¹⁰⁷

Following the evaluation, the regional director, Richard Smith, took a leave of absence to coordinate a study related to the economic development of indigenous peoples in the Amazon region. The study, which lasted from 1993 to 1995, resulted in a publication titled "Indigenous Economy and the Market: The Challenges of Autonomous Development."¹⁰⁸ Among other findings, Smith found that Oxfam projects in the Amazon that were primarily oriented to economic development and production had largely failed, when measured according to economic indicators. It observed that many of the indigenous organizations were fundamentally political organizations, rather than economic development agents, and their priorities and approach to executing these projects responded more to political and strategic considerations rather than to purely economic ones. The study also found that some projects that had been perceived as more successful from an economic perspective often exacerbated inequalities among community members.

106 Victoria Tauli-Corpuz. "How the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Got Adopted" (Philippines: Tebtebba - Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education, August 2011)

107 Vergara, Programa de Pueblos Indígenas e Interculturalidad, 12, quoting the report from the 1992 evaluation

108 Author's translation; the original title is *Economía Indígena y Mercado: Los Desafíos del Desarrollo Autónomo* (Quito, Ecuador: Oxfam America and COICA, 1996)

Largely in response to the insights afforded by this study, in the years that followed, Oxfam America began to reorient its support for productive projects in the Amazon in favor of more politically informed initiatives that aimed to secure access to, and control over, indigenous peoples' lands and territories and the sustainable management of their natural resources.¹⁰⁹

In this period, Oxfam America was also undergoing several transitions that informed the direction of the work of its regional programs, including in South America. In 1997, the organization approved a new strategic plan (1998–2002), titled Partnerships for Impact, which established three thematic areas to focus its programmatic work. Those areas were community-based resource management (CBRM), participation for equity, and development finance. During the time that this strategic plan was in place, the South America program focused mainly on the first two areas. CBRM offered a methodological approach for supporting families and communities to control and manage their water and livelihood resources sustainably. Participation for equity referred mainly to advocacy and other efforts to promote public participation in the formulation of policies and public-interest decisions.

In addition, the various organizations that shared the name “Oxfam” that were based in countries around the world formally confederated in 1995, creating the Oxfam International confederation, which would come to wield substantial influence over the direction of regional program priorities and strategies in the coming period.

Within the South America regional office, Cathy Ross, who had served for several years in Oxfam America's headquarters in support of the South America program, joined the regional office in 1999 and assumed responsibility for the Amazon program. Ross' vision proved critical for guiding Oxfam America's support to fostering sustainable organizations and coordinating strategic support for their cause.

Goals and objectives

In 1996, Oxfam South America program's earlier focus on indigenous peoples and objectives relating to their autonomous development were again ratified.¹¹⁰ The objectives presented in the 1996–1998 program paper were, therefore, (1) to strengthen the economic independence of indigenous peoples and improve their capacity to accumulate capital within the context of their communities; (2) to promote access by indigenous and peasant communities to productive land to strengthen their control and defense of the resources found in their territory and to encourage the proper management of these resources for their sustained use;

¹⁰⁹ Laura Roper, personal correspondence with the author, July 26, 2013

¹¹⁰ The only change that merits mention here was the decision to subsume the fifth objective (enabling indigenous people to participate in processes to realize their human rights) within the third objective (increase opportunities for the political participation of indigenous peoples).

(3) to increase indigenous peoples opportunity for political participation and leverage through the consolidation of grassroots representative organizations; and (4) to reinforce social and economic ties within indigenous communities and strengthen the basis of indigenous culture and identity.¹¹¹

Following the adoption of this new program paper, Richard Smith departed from Oxfam America, and, in 1997, Martin Scurrah was hired as the new director for Oxfam's South America program. Soon thereafter, the regional office initiated a participatory consultation to collect input for the new regional program strategy that would guide the work from 1999 to 2004. The consultation reaffirmed the focus of the regional program on indigenous peoples as the primary agents of social change, noting that indigenous peoples "tend to be the most poor, the most marginalized and those with least access to public services such as health care and education, [and that] they suffer great social and racial discrimination and they live in highly bio-diverse and ecologically fragile areas."¹¹² The goal of promoting the empowerment of indigenous peoples to augment their capacity to defend their rights and control their resources was also ratified.

Oxfam America's programmatic approach with indigenous peoples

In this critical period for the indigenous movements of the region, Oxfam America undertook a more deliberate approach to supporting indigenous organizations to defend their rights and promote changes in the institutions and societal dynamics that were perpetuating their economic and social exclusion. With growing clarity regarding the organizational conditions necessary for Oxfam America's partners to conduct effective advocacy, the South America program placed great emphasis on strengthening organizations and building their capacity to carry out strategic efforts to bring about desired changes. In addition, as discussed in the following pages, an innovative strategy based on facilitating the exchange of experiences between Andean leaders of the three countries soon proved to be highly effective in deepening alliances through mutual learning activities. Oxfam America also, during this period, leveraged several million dollars to support efforts by lowland peoples to defend their territories and natural resources.

Oxfam America was also aware of the importance of collaborating with the growing number of funding agencies and NGOs that had begun to work with indigenous peoples' organizations in the region.¹¹³ The regional program began to employ more rigorous monitoring approaches in an effort to counterbalance the

111 South America Regional Program Strategy Paper, 1984 and Naveda, Breve Mirada

112 South America Regional Program Strategy Paper, September, 1999

113 Funders with whom Oxfam America coordinated during this period bilateral aid included Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional [AECI] from Spain, DANIDA from Denmark, and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit [GTZ] from Germany). Oxfam America also worked closely with Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (HIVOS), Interamerican Foundation, SwissAid, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), and Cultural Survival, among others. Igidio Naveda, interview with the author, July 25, 2003.

lack of transparency demonstrated by some organizations and funding agencies, in addition to deepening collaboration with the other affiliates of the Oxfam International confederation operating in the region.

Confronting the threats posed by extractive industries

In 1998, Oxfam America began to fund the Amazon Defense Front (FDA) to confront the serious environmental and human rights abuses resulting from the operations of Texaco Ecuador between 1964 and 1990 in Ecuador's northeast forests. The FDA was formed in 1994, soon after a class action suit was filed in a New York federal district court against Texaco Inc., claiming that the company used obsolete and inadequate technologies that contaminated the environment and put at risk the health and livelihoods of local residents. This precedent-setting case required substantial organization of the plaintiffs to ensure that affected people were at the center of decisions about the case and to sustain the judicial investigations that would soon follow.¹¹⁴

In the southeastern Amazon region of Ecuador, Oxfam America supported the Shuar Federation (FIPSE) to resist the commencement of extractive activities by US-based Burlington Resources Corporation in what is known as Block (oil concession) 24, as well as supported legal advocates at the Centro para los Derechos Economicos y Sociales (CDES).¹¹⁵ In Peru, many of Oxfam America's partners in the Andes were confronting the severe social and environmental impacts of mining, leading to the formation of the National Coordinator of Communities Affected by Mining (CONACAMI) in Peru in the following decade.

In response to these developments, one year into the implementation of the Regional Program Strategy 1999–2004, three staff members of the South America regional program team developed a “Proposal for an Advocacy Strategy for Natural Resource Extraction.” This work built on experience gained from working with indigenous organizations and their advocates who were confronting the growing threat of extractive industries on indigenous peoples' territories and defined the initial vision and framework for Oxfam America's extractive industries program which developed in the years that followed.

Organizational strengthening for indigenous rights advocacy

Oxfam-funded projects enabled organizations to participate in trainings on indigenous rights, formulation of legal proposals, and instruction in land titling, among other activities. These projects also provided legal and technical assistance, which contributed to the development of alternative laws and constitutional amendments by indigenous people.¹¹⁶ Following a series of

¹¹⁴ ECU/69–00, Legal Assistance, Legal Education, and Organizing the Future of the Texaco Suit, Amazon Defense Fund (FDA)

¹¹⁵ Melo and Moncada, Evaluación del Programa

spontaneous uprisings following the original 1990 Inti Raymi uprising, Oxfam America supported indigenous organizations to formulate their vision, their strategic plan, and their specific proposals. The regional program did not, however, aid in indigenous peoples' efforts to be elected into political positions. Program designers insisted, much to the chagrin of some partners, that Oxfam could not get involved in partisan politics and, in some cases, questioned the assumption that an electoral route would be best way to overcome political marginalization, generally.

Yet several key partners did opt for this path. In 1996, the leadership of CONAIE chose, for the first time, to participate in national elections. The organization formed a broad coalition with the political party Pachacutik and a nonindigenous movement called Nuevo País, from which eight deputies and 75 local authorities were elected. Despite this apparent triumph, the elections posed substantial challenges to the indigenous movement and CONAIE. Many of CONAIE's most articulate and capable leaders left the organizations to enter the government, leaving the movement virtually without experienced leadership. Some indigenous leaders became supporters and defenders of the policies of the short-lived Bucaram government, prompting further internal divisions.

After indigenous representatives were ousted from the government soon thereafter, CONAIE was left weakened, its grassroots members largely alienated from its leadership, and without a clear direction forward. Initially, in this critical period, Oxfam America provided ongoing support to maintain the organization's operation, including funding for administrative expenses, leaders' transport costs, salaries for support personnel, and a small fund for emergencies.¹¹⁷ Soon, however, Oxfam America's projects began to emphasize collective reflections about its recent experience, promote political and organizational reform within CONAIE, and strengthen the organizational and institutional systems of the 11 indigenous nationalities that comprise CONAIE. The project also supported the development of normative proposals for constitutional reform that aimed to promote a legal recognition of the plurinationality of the Ecuadorian state, which enabled indigenous people to submit these proposals to their members according to their own decision-making processes. The process of vetting with the member organizations and communities that formed the bases of Ecuador's indigenous federations took many months and substantial resources, but the effort was well worth it. Overall, CONAIE's members were informed and expressed a general agreement with the positions they took forward on behalf of the movement.

On the provincial level, Oxfam America ramped up its support for advocacy in defense of the rights of their members and their lands. The program supported the Federación Indígena y Campesina de Imbabura (FICI) in the Municipality of

¹¹⁷ ECU/26-98-99, Organizational and Legal Strengthening of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE)

Otavalo to compel the cement company Selva Alegre to assume its responsibility for environmental contamination caused by the plant and to provide adequate remedial measures. Oxfam America and FICI considered this project important not only on the merits of the environmental justice issues themselves, but also as a learning process about how to promote the necessary organizational conditions to enable indigenous people to effectively defend their rights and achieve accountability at a local as well as a national level.¹¹⁸

In the Amazon region of Bolivia, Oxfam America also contributed to strengthening and consolidating the organizations of indigenous people to help them increase their capacity to advocate for, and defend, their rights. In coordination with other funders such as HIVOS, SNV, and IBIS, Oxfam America provided institutional support to the Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia – or CIDOB) to strengthen the organization and enable it to more effectively exert its demands for territory, civil rights, and economic development for indigenous peoples of eastern Bolivia. Oxfam America’s support, both via funding and ongoing discussions with CIDOB’s leadership, emphasized improving its relationship with its member organizations, defining its strategic plan, and developing its administrative systems. In 1996, CIDOB organized a major march, which resulted, among other things, in the titling of eight territories by supreme decree, in the inclusion of rural workers under the General Labor Law, and in generally increased space for indigenous rights in the national political arena.¹¹⁹

Mutual learning via the exchange of experiences

As Oxfam America continued to accompany the diverse processes of indigenous organizations in the Andean region, it became increasingly apparent that the various partners had much to learn, and to offer. The leaders of *ayllu* movement in Bolivia, for example, maintained strong ties to their cultures and traditions, and their sense of indigenous identity was strong. However, they lacked the political vision and advocacy capabilities that their counterparts in Ecuador had developed.

These differences presented an opportunity to embark on a unique programmatic initiative. In 1997, Oxfam America initiated the Program for the Exchange of Experiences between Andean indigenous leaders of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia. The first visit consisted of several of the senior leaders of Ecuador’s indigenous movement¹²⁰ from the highlands visiting CONAMAQ in Bolivia. The visitors from

118 ECU/67–98, Apoyo a las Iniciativas de Abogacía, Federación Indígena-Campesina de Imbabura (FICI)

119 Bol/51–97, Operative Annual Plan 1997

120 Ecuadorian delegates included Carmen Yamberla, president of the Indigenous Peasant Federation of Imbabura (FICI); Arturo Yumbay, vice president of ECUARUNARI; Auki Tituana, the first indigenous mayor of Cotacachi in the province of Imbabura; and Ricardo Ulcuango, vice president of CONAIE.

Ecuador came away from this exchange impressed with the way that the Bolivian leaders maintained their traditional dress, chewed coca, and used ancient symbols to distinguish their authorities, and the Bolivians were inspired by the degree of political clarity displayed by their Ecuadorian counterparts. In the years that followed, the Bolivians visited Ecuador on several occasions, where they witnessed indigenous people controlling the country's intercultural bilingual education program and accessing government offices that were very distant from indigenous leaders in their country.

From Peru, the Permanent Coordinator for Indigenous Peoples (COPPIP) participated for several years, but they were unable to sustain regular involvement and lacked the capacity to host visits from counterparts from the other countries. After the middle of the decade, when the Coordinator of Communities Affected by Mining (CONACAMI) joined the Program for the Exchange of Experiences, visits to the highlands of Peru were also coordinated. In Peru, unlike their counterparts, these leaders were not representing a mass movement. But their visitors, inspired by what they had been able to achieve in their own countries, motivated Peru's leaders to think big. The following year, Peruvian leaders visited Bolivia and Ecuador to continue their learning process, build cross-border alliances, and develop a regional identity as indigenous people of the Andes.

Leveraging resources for the defense of territories and forest conservation

In 1992, Oxfam America was awarded a grant of \$3 million over a period of 10 years from Oklahoma-based Applied Energy Services (AES),¹²¹ which had commissioned the World Resources Institute (WRI) in 1991 to identify promising proposals for "an imaginative carbon offset program that has value beyond its immediate offset purpose."¹²² Among the 60 applications WRI would receive, Oxfam America's proposal to contribute to the conservation of 3.7 million acres of forests in the Amazon was selected.

The program was highly unique among mainstream conservation approaches of the time, because it focused on supporting the rights of indigenous people to own and control their lands and territories, and to defend, conserve, and sustainably manage the natural resources contained in those lands. The thesis was that by supporting indigenous organizations and their ability to defend and manage their territories, these people could slow deforestation rates more effectively than employing the more popular ecological approaches of establishing protected areas or other such methods. The AES-funded project aimed to help indigenous people of the Amazon to secure title to their territories, demarcate the boundaries of their lands, enforce claims against those who intrude on those lands, and

¹²¹ Associated Energy Services. Carbon Sequestration Reporting to the EIA

¹²² "AES Corporation and Oxfam America Launch Indian Self-Help and Carbon Offset Programs in Amazon,"

PRNewswire, June 30, 1993

develop plans for the sustainable management of these territories. The land management plans were anticipated to encompass a total of 3.7 million acres of forested lands in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. It was expected that this project would offset approximately 257 million tons of carbon dioxide (69 million tons of carbon) from emissions produced from one of the company's plants based in the United States.¹²³

The project had two main components. The majority of these funds (\$2.4 million) were dedicated to supporting multiyear projects to promote land titling and territorial defense in the Amazon region over 10 years. The project was concentrated in the region of the Bajo Urubamba in Peru with the Machiguenga indigenous communities, and, in Bolivia, in the collective indigenous territory of Lomerío and the Multiethnic Indigenous Territory in the Chimanes Forest. These projects employed the Community-Based Natural Resource Management methodology, for which Oxfam America had developed considerable expertise both globally and in the region, as well as activities aimed at the defense and protection of forested lands.¹²⁴

Ten years after the project was initiated, Oxfam America utilized GPS imagery and other new technologies to measure the rates of deforestation in the areas where the project had been implemented. These images vindicated Oxfam America's approach. In Lomerío, Bolivia, for example, satellite photos showed decimation of the forest base outside of the boundaries of the TCO, while the forests were relatively untouched within the borders of the TCO. The project evaluation also indicated that participating organizations and member communities had gained new skills, capacity, and knowledge regarding how best to manage their forests and the resources contained within, sustain the livelihoods of indigenous families, and defend the forests from mounting threats from loggers, oil and gas companies, infrastructure projects, dams, and other outside interests.¹²⁵

The other component of the AES-funding was the establishment of a long-term endowment fund for COICA. To initiate the fund, Oxfam America assigned \$600,000 from the grant from AES and contributed an additional \$400,000. Under the leadership of Oxfam America's president and the regional director for South America, several members of Oxfam's board of directors and COICA's executive council were brought together to form an advisory board for the management and administration of the fund. The endowment was invested in the US market in a mixed portfolio of stocks and bonds, and a series of agreements and procedures were developed by the advisory board to guide the

¹²³ AES Corporation and Oxfam America, "1993

¹²⁴ AMAZON/16-95, Workshop for AES-Supported Projects for Territorial Management

¹²⁵ Oxfam America filed an extensive report with AES containing quantitative as well as qualitative indicators to demonstrate the effectiveness of this project

administration of the fund in the years to come.¹²⁶ By the end of the 1990s, the Advisory Board was reviewing and approving yearly projects for COICA's nine affiliate organizations and central coordinating office, under the general rubric of territorial defense and natural resource management, at an approximate value of \$10,000 each. The decision to maintain disbursements at this conservative level, together with the cautious work of the fund's asset managers, permitted the fund to gradually increase in value, notwithstanding these yearly withdrawals.¹²⁷

Promoting internal accountability within indigenous organizations

The first UN-declared Decade of Indigenous Peoples began in 1995, prompting increased international funding to support indigenous peoples in South America. The indigenous organizations working on environmental conservation in the Amazon region were particularly targeted by the rapidly growing amounts of funds in the form of projects from governmental, multilateral, and private donors. In several cases, resources directed to indigenous organizations was allocated in large sums, with very little monitoring or follow-up to verify the way the funds were actually used.¹²⁸

In several organizations, serious questions began to be raised by members of the organizations themselves, as well as NGO allies and Oxfam program staff, among others. Concerns were expressed regarding the use and management of funds and the growing risk of corruption. In response, regional program staff engaged in more careful financial monitoring of at-risk grants, paid closer attention to financial reports, and commissioned audits for several partners. In monitoring visits and periodic conversations with the leaders of these organizations, Oxfam America emphasized the critical need for transparency and accountability. While the regional program demanded proper accounting for funds spent from Oxfam America's project funding, significant attention was also placed on putting into place the necessary systems to ensure that the leadership of indigenous organizations remained accountable to their own members with regards to their use and administration of funds. The results of these efforts were mixed, and in some cases, Oxfam America opted to discontinue funding for several longstanding partners. In these situations, Oxfam America was committed to continue to accompany the organizations and invest in their strengthening and in their capacity to overcome these challenges from within. According to Igidio Naveda, "We concluded that ... we needed to revisit our support for these organizations. In consequence, we temporarily discontinued our support and we decided to concentrate our financial support more at the

¹²⁶ These include a Memorandum of Understanding (June 27, 1998); Criteria for Long-Term Use of Resources (1998); Rules for Trust Fund Administration and Management (revised July 31, 1998, and May 16, 2001)

¹²⁷ Author's own recollection.

¹²⁸ Cathy Ross, interview by the author, May 5, 2013

grassroots, so that, from their position, they could begin to conduct oversight in their respective organizations.”¹²⁹

As explained above, the regional program strategy from the prior period extended through 1995. For the second half of the period (1995–2000) the intended outcomes were to ensure (1) changes in social capital, attitudes, and beliefs (meaning Andean indigenous organizations would open space with other actors and gain recognition by their wider societies; Amazonian organizations would become stronger and be administered with greater transparency and efficiency); (2) changes in the institutional environment (meaning government and intergovernmental institutions, and civil servants would approve and apply policies that recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and guarantee their access and control over their natural resources); (3) changes in material and natural capital and livelihoods (meaning indigenous communities would enjoy higher living standards and improved nutrition thanks to combined uses of traditional and modern techniques as well as increased recognition of their land right); and (4) changes in attitudes and perceptions (meaning nonindigenous actors including NGOs and aid agencies would improve and equalize their relationships with indigenous peoples).¹³⁰

And so, the partnership between Oxfam America and the indigenous movements of the Andean region continued to flourish, sustained by several victories, supportive alliances and ongoing learning, and looking ahead to the new millennium.

¹²⁹ Igidio Naveda interview with Sofia Vergara, 2010

¹³⁰ Vergara, Programa de Pueblos Indígenas e Interculturalidad

CHAPTER 5

FROM SOCIAL CONFLICT TO POLITICAL POWER; THE RISE AND FALL (AND RISE) OF INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS: 2000-2010

In the first half of the decade of the 2000s, indigenous organizations played central roles in the political developments that unfolded, both from the streets and from within the halls of power.

KEY CONTEXTUAL DEVELOPMENTS

The newfound protagonism of indigenous organizations as political actors, and their influence over the political agendas of their respective countries, took place in a context of growing social unrest and conflict. In Bolivia, indigenous peoples mobilized around their rejection of the privatization of important sectors of the economy and demands for the recognition of land rights, particularly for the country's lowland groups. In Peru, shortly after the end of the internal conflict, social unrest erupted following the passage of a series of legal and policy reforms facilitating the further expansion of extractive industries. In Ecuador, broad-based social mobilization (led in great part by indigenous organizations) culminated in a coup d'état backed by indigenous movements and the subsequent ascent of senior indigenous leaders to top government posts in the early part of the decade. Meanwhile, promising new actors emerged, such as CAOI, which represented the indigenous peoples of the Andean region, extending from Chile to Colombia.

Mounting social conflict

The continued intensification of free-market economic reforms in Bolivia around the turn of the century both spawned and aggravated longstanding grievances. In Cochabamba, Bolivia's country's fourth-largest city, the city's water supply was privatized in 2000, and a contract was awarded to a consortium run by the US-based transnational corporation Bechtel. The company soon raised the rates as

much as 400 percent in some cases, setting off mass protests often referred to as “water wars” in the first half of 2000. In 2003, Bolivian President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada announced plans to export natural gas from Bolivia through Chile, the country’s longstanding rival, to the United States. Following a popular uprising in response to this proposed measure, the president was compelled to resign and flee to Miami in October 2003.¹³¹

In Peru, conflicts¹³² between mining companies and affected communities proliferated, in part, following a series of legal and policy reforms that further deregulated and incentivized natural resource extraction activities.¹³³ Negotiations were underway for a free trade agreement with the United States which required Peru to adopt a series of new laws to remove barriers to trade and investment and facilitate foreign investment in the country. The ensuing privatization of numerous state-run industries, reforms to land tenure and other measures to attract foreign investment, particularly in the country’s forests, oil, energy, and mineral reserves, was met with grassroots resistance, guided in many cases by the region’s indigenous organizations. In 2002, the municipality of Tambogrande, in Piura, convened a popular referendum where the community declared, in the great majority, their rejection of a gold mining project pursued by the Canadian company Manhattan Minerals. In 2004, the country was shaken by large protests in the northern province of Cajamarca against the expansion of a gold mine by US-based Newmont Mining Corporation on Quilish Mountain.

In the lowlands, massive deposits of natural gas were discovered in the central Amazon, and contracts were signed in late 2000 for the development of the Camisea gas fields project by an international consortium, against the vigorous opposition expressed by AIDASEP (the organization of indigenous people of the Amazon). Then, on June 5, 2009 Bagua (el Baguazo) happened. As police moved in to break up indigenous protesters who were obstructing a road near the town of Bagua, Peru, a violent confrontation erupted, leaving 34 people dead.¹³⁴ One of the key leaders of AIDASEP, Alberto Pizango, was compelled to seek refuge in the embassy of Nicaragua, and subsequently fled into exile. The area was heavily militarized following the incident in Bagua, and the tenuous trust that had been built between indigenous peoples and the institutions of the state was all but shattered.¹³⁵ This time, however, indigenous peoples were not alone in confronting these threats. Solidarity with the plight of the Amazonian activists resonated across Lima and other major cities and around the world, thanks to the transnational alliances and networks that AIDASEP and other indigenous organizations had developed.

131 Jim Shultz, “Bolivia’s Water War Victory,” *Earth Island Journal* 15, no. 3, 2000

132 Oxfam America. “Mining Conflicts in Peru: Condition Critical” (March 2009)

133 Cathy Ross, interview by the author, May 5, 2013

134 Kristina Aiello. “Bagua, Peru: A Year After,” *North American Congress on Latin America*, June 25, 2010

135 Cathy Ross, interview by the author, May 5, 2013

Elections, coup d'état, a taste of government, and the aftermath

In Ecuador, discontent with the presidency of Jamil Mahuad led to further popular mobilizations led, to a large extent, by CONAIE. In 2000, the indigenous movement took the unconventional decision to ally itself with the military to stage a coup. In 2002, when the general who had headed the coup, Lucio Gutierrez, was elected president, he owed a great deal to the indigenous movement for the backing he had received. During the short-lived alliance between the country's indigenous movements and the government, indigenous people began the uncharted course of exercising political power "from the inside."¹³⁶ Under Gutierrez, indigenous people occupied key posts in government: longstanding leaders with impressive track records of effective organizing and movement building such as Nina Pacari and Luis Macas joined the cabinet, becoming the ministers of foreign relations and minister agriculture, respectively. The experience, however, was short-lived; the alliance between the indigenous movement and the government fell apart in 2003, and the indigenous organizations lost control of many of the institutional positions they had enjoyed briefly. Following this experience of alliance with the military and government, their participation in a coup and the entry of several key leaders into positions in government, the Ecuadorian indigenous movement was left, for a time, debilitated.¹³⁷

Notwithstanding this setback, the indigenous movements of Ecuador managed, in 2006, to defeat the proposed free trade agreement with the US, which had long been a rallying point for indigenous and other popular groups in the country. Finally, in 2007, a national Constituent Assembly was convened. With the support of Oxfam America and other partners, CONAIE carried out extensive consultations with its members before submitting proposals to the assembly. The Constitution of 2008 incorporated several key demands of the indigenous movement; defining Ecuador as a plurinational state, enshrining the indigenous principle of "living well" (*sumak kawsay*, in Kichwa) and recognizing the collective rights of indigenous peoples. Environmental rights, including the 'rights of nature' were also enshrined in the 2007 constitution, which, further, made these rights judiciable in a court of law.

In Bolivia, meanwhile, it appeared that being indigenous increased the chances of being elected president, as the run-up to the 2005 presidential election centered on two candidates who boasted indigenous roots: Felipe Quispe, founder of the Pachakuti Indigenous Movement (MIP), and Evo Morales, coca grower and union leader from Cochabamba. Quispe (who branded himself in his campaign as "El Malku," in reference to the indigenous leaders of the ayllus) eventually lost the election to Morales, whose ascent to power was arguably due in great part to his claims to his indigenous heritage.

¹³⁶ Lucero, "Locating the 'Indian Problem'"

¹³⁷ Igidio Naveda, interview by the author, April 13, 2013 and Melo and Moncada, *Evaluación del Programa*

While Morales ran on promises to return the country's power to its original inhabitants, soon after he assumed the presidency he authorized a series of laws that contradicted the demands of the indigenous movement. Among his most egregious decisions, according to many indigenous leaders, was his approval of the proposed TIPNIS highway project, which would cut through lowland indigenous territories—against the explicit opposition of affected communities. Granting permission for genetically modified foods (GMOs) to enter the country was another policy move that prompted deep opposition. As several indigenous leaders assumed positions in the government under the Morales administration, their organizations became weakened, a result that some observers suggest was intentional, as it allowed the government to remove critical leaders from these organizations and replace them with representatives supportive of the official position.¹³⁸

In Peru, the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was established to clarify the events during the war presented its conclusion in 2003; finding that an astonishing 69,000 people had been killed between 1980 and 2000, the great majority of whom were indigenous people.¹³⁹ The findings of the Commission made, for the first time, the extent of the human toll of the conflict visible, and helped explain how decimation of indigenous communities and the almost complete closure of political space for people mobilizing for social change during the years of the war had profoundly impeded the emergence of a movement of indigenous peoples similar to that which developed in the neighboring countries.

Organizational weakening and the emergence new regional actors

As a result of the developments described in the previous section, several indigenous organizations in the three countries were confronted with substantial challenges and several setbacks in terms of the strength and cohesion of their organizations and movements. In addition to the difficulties faced by the national organizations discussed above, the pan-Amazon indigenous movement suffered profound divisions, which culminated in two different factions holding separate General Assemblies for COICA. With one branch holding the organization's maximum decision-making body in Bolivia, another group held a parallel Assembly in French Guyana. In the two years that followed, COICA ceased to operate as a cohesive organization representing its nine national members, which prompted representatives of Oxfam's board of directors serving on the COICA-Oxfam America Endowment Fund Advisory Board freeze activity on the fund until the organization resumed normal operations. Meanwhile, many elders and supporters of the Amazonian indigenous movement contributed to mediation efforts to help COICA's leadership resolve its differences. By late 2006, the situation in COICA had stabilized, and Oxfam America initiated a process that

¹³⁸ Carlos Mamani, interview by the author, May 27, 2013

¹³⁹ Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume VI, "Crimes and Human Rights Violations," 653

would eventually lead to the transfer of the management of the endowment to COICA in 2013.

The birth of a transnational Andean indigenous movement

In the same period, new indigenous political actors were emerging on the scene. Following the conclusion of Oxfam America's Program for the Exchange of Experiences in 2005, the alliances that had been nurtured between participating organizations sustained a momentum of their own. In 2006, following the final evaluation workshop for the exchange program, the Coordinator of Andean Indigenous Organizations (CAOI) was formed by ECUARUNARI in Ecuador, CONAMAQ in Bolivia, CONACAMI in Peru, and the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC). For a time, the organization also included the participation of Mapuche indigenous organizations from Chile and Argentina.

The indigenous organizations of the Andean and Amazonian regions had, by now, developed substantial capacity in what came to be referred to as "indigenous diplomacy", particularly with the World Bank, the Organization of American States, and the United Nations. During this decade, intergovernmental negotiations relating to the draft UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had accelerated, and the indigenous organizations of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and the region (most notably, COICA and, later, CAOI) remained closely involved.

Beyond the UN-oriented lobbying efforts that some indigenous representatives engaged in, organizations began to convene a series of summits, conferences, and other international opportunities for indigenous organizations to strengthen their cross-border networks and explore a basis for collaboration and collective action. In 2009, indigenous organizations coordinated the first International Summit of Indigenous Women, in Puno, Peru, in conjunction with a Continental Summit of Indigenous People and Nationalities of Abya Yala. Oxfam America provided substantial support for this regional summit of indigenous women. Originally planned for 600 participants, attendance exceeded 2,000 women, and between 6,000 and 7,000 people attended the wider Abya Yala summit.¹⁴⁰

OXFAM AMERICA'S VISION AND PRACTICE

This final period under review was guided by the regional program strategy of 1999–2004, and, subsequently, the program strategy approved in 2005. Following the long tenure of Martin Scurrah as the South America regional

¹⁴⁰ Igidio Naveda, personal correspondence with the author, various

director, Gonzalo Delgado joined Oxfam America in 2006 and assumed leadership for the remainder of the period under discussion.

Goals and objectives

Under the 1999 strategic plan, the program had distinguished between the Andes and Amazon. The goal of the regional program in the beginning of the 2000's was "to empower the indigenous peoples of the region, augmenting the capacity of the communities and their representative organizations to defend their rights and sustainably manage their resources in ways that strengthen their culture and identity and improve their ways of life, reduce poverty and promote gender equality." Following the plan's adoption, a separate advocacy program was established to respond to the challenges presented by extractive industries.¹⁴¹

The goal of the strategic plan that followed, for the period 2005 to 2009, was for indigenous peoples and organizations "to be empowered to defend their rights and interests in order to overcome their exclusion of these populations in the three countries of the region, to decentralize political power by expanding spaces for indigenous peoples' participation at different levels of the decision-making process and [by] promoting equal opportunities and respect for differences, cultural diversity, pluralism values and greater autonomy."¹⁴²

During this period, the strategic plan of the Oxfam International confederation organized its programs according to five rights-based aims: the right to a sustainable livelihood; the right to basic social services; the right to life and security; the right to be heard; and the right to equality and nondiscrimination. Of these five aims, the South America program prioritized the right to a sustainable livelihood, the right to be heard, and the right to equality, and began to adopt new rights-based planning methods which the organization's headquarters formulated in order to be applied by its various regional programs. The objectives that guided the South America program between 2000 and 2004 were (1) to develop the institutional capacity of indigenous peoples by strengthening their representative organizations to effectively promote and defend their rights; (2) to strengthen the ability of indigenous people to defend their rights and to access, defend, conserve, obtain benefit from, and sustainably manage their territories and natural resources; and (3) to support indigenous peoples to obtain legal titles to their traditional lands and territories.

Significantly, under the strategic plan of 2005–2009, the regional program was restructured and the division between Andes and Amazon sub-regions was eliminated and replaced by two programs that sought to encapsulate the main intended outcomes for indigenous peoples across both sub-regions: indigenous rights (inclusion, rights, good governance, and participation) and sustainable

141 Naveda, Breve Mirada

142 Oxfam America. South America Regional Program Strategy Paper, 1999

development. The objectives were: to improve conditions in order to enable indigenous peoples and rural communities to exercise their individual and collective rights, and to contribute to the improved use and management of natural resources by indigenous and rural populations, and to reduce risk in the case of disasters.¹⁴³

Oxfam America's programmatic approach with indigenous peoples

Although the structure of the South America program had evolved, the theory of change guiding the program had, generally speaking, remained consistent:

In all of the indigenous cultures there is a vital connection between territory and cultural identity. For these reasons, ensuring access to and control over the land and its resources has been, and will continue to be, a central aspect of the South America Program. To ensure and maintain this access and to defend their rights in general, indigenous peoples need to be organized and ensure that their voices are heard through effective representative organizations that participate in the decisions that affect them. Lastly, access to land and resources is necessary but insufficient alone to improve the livelihoods of indigenous peoples. They must manage the resources on their land effectively and sustainably, depending on their own knowledge, techniques and traditions, and also on contributions from science and "western" technology to develop a more stable and productive local economy and learn how to participate more effectively in local, regional and national markets.¹⁴⁴

The challenges facing this positive view of change, however, were substantial. Serious divisions beset a number of the indigenous organizations in the region, compounded by an influx of relatively large sums of funding with limited controls or oversight mechanisms, as described in the preceding chapter. In response, Oxfam America decided to suspend funding of several longstanding partners, and instead directed its support for organizational strengthening to the federations and second-tier organizations that formed the bases of the national and sub-regional (Andes or Amazon) organizations. Particular support was directed to improvements and greater transparency in the administrative, accounting and management systems of indigenous organizations, as well as generally supporting the conditions necessary for indigenous peoples to advocate for their rights in international arenas. The regional program supported advocacy to confront the threats posed by extractive industries and promoted new strategies for helping indigenous organizations defend their communal territories and use their natural resources sustainably. Oxfam America facilitated new cross-border alliances that led to the formation of a new regional

143 Naveda, Breve Mirada

144 Oxfam America, South America Regional Program Strategy Paper, 1999, 32

organization; it also provided substantial support for capacity building in “indigenous diplomacy.”

Advocacy to confront extractive industries

When Oxfam America decided to establish an advocacy program in 2000 to address the growing threat of oil, gas, and mining projects on the lands of indigenous peoples, the organization’s vision was largely informed by the experience of some partners in the Amazon region who had been struggling against the intrusions of oil companies in their territories. At the same time, the recently-created Coordinator of Communities Affected by Mining (CONACAMI) brought together communities affected by mining across Peru in a collective effort to defend their rights. That year, Oxfam America held a workshop on advocacy in Lima, which several CONACAMI leaders credit with introducing them to the notion of strategic planning for advocacy and with providing them concrete tools for action.¹⁴⁵ Throughout the decade, Oxfam America supported Peru’s mine-affected communities through funding for institutional support, organizational strengthening, and connections with new allies, including several NGOs went on to provide substantial technical support. Oxfam America also funded studies, such as independent environmental impact assessments and the participation of indigenous leaders in advocacy efforts at the headquarters of transnational oil and mining companies in their home states, the World Bank and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, among other spaces.¹⁴⁶

Securing territories and the sustainable use and management of forests

In the lowlands of Bolivia, the indigenous organizations of Lomerío (CICOL), which had been tirelessly pursuing title for their communal property (TCO Lomerío), joined forces with two other nearby indigenous centrales (Central Indígena de Comunidades de Concepción, or CICC, and Central Indígena Paikoneca de San Javier, or CPISJ) to secure a joint title to the extensive Communal Indigenous Land (Tierras Cummunitaria de Origen or TCO) of Monte Verde. To support the TCO application, Oxfam America provided funding to prepare CICOL to engage the legal process of the petition for the land title and to the Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (the Center for Legal Studies and Social Research, or CEJIS) to provide technical assistance. This work yielded some concrete results, and in 2006 a title for 259,188 hectares (approximately 640,000 acres) was awarded to Lomerío. Given the extensive red tape and multiple administrative and other barriers to obtaining communal land titles in Bolivia, obtaining this title was a significant achievement. It also encouraged Chiquitano leaders to continue to claim their territorial rights to the remaining 123,000 hectares (approx. 304,000 acres). As one leader in Lomerío

¹⁴⁵ Personal correspondence between the author and Miguel Palacin, founder and former President of CONACAMI and former General Coordinator of CAOI, various

¹⁴⁶ PRU/105-00, Fortalecimiento Organizativo Regional y Desarrollo de Campañas de Incidencia (CONACAMI)

explained, “The state still owes us 100,000 hectares [247 acres]... so we continue to fight for it.”¹⁴⁷ According to an external evaluation, this achievement was a result, primarily, of the strong work carried out by CICOL’s technical team, their solid institutional platform, and their ability to form alliances.

Now that they had secured the title to their territory, the communities of Lomerío have turned their focus to territorial management and autonomy, which Oxfam America supported via funding for CEJIS to help CICOL to draw up an Indigenous Territorial Management Plan and constitute an Indigenous Territorial Management Committee. That year, CICOL joined in the “March for Indigenous Autonomy” and lent its strength to the collective demand for clear legislation on the rights of indigenous communities to autonomy over their territories; something later achieved in the 2009 Bolivian constitution. Soon after, San Antonio de Lomerío separated from the municipality of Concepción and was declared an “indigenous municipality.”¹⁴⁸

Indigenous diplomacy

During this final period under review, indigenous organizations of the region came to serve as key actors (both leading indigenous caucuses and in lobbying) in the eventual adoption, in 2007, in the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The eventual adoption of this landmark declaration was the product of several decades of tireless efforts by indigenous representatives from Asia, Africa, the Arctic region and North America, in addition to spokespeople from Central and South America. In concert with their counterparts from other regions, and often in a leadership capacity, the indigenous organizations of the Andean region participated actively in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination as well as activities around the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity. In the lead-up to these opportunities, Oxfam America helped indigenous organizations prepare by holding internal debates conducting research and generating proposals about the impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples, and by assisting in clarifying their positions in regards to the UN-sponsored Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) program. Oxfam’s approach emphasized participation of indigenous men and women, and also supported its partners to invest specific resources in building the capacity of women leaders to engage in these advocacy opportunities.

The intended outcomes for this final period were (1) changes in social capital, attitudes, and beliefs (indigenous organizations would be more effective, efficient, democratic and participatory); (2) changes in the institutional environment (local,

¹⁴⁷ Ogle, Summary Translation of the Report by Inturias and Aragón, 18.

¹⁴⁸ Ogle, Summary Translation of the Report by Inturias and Aragón

national, and international institutions would adopt norms and policies that recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and provide for effective consultation mechanisms); (3) changes in material and natural capital and livelihoods (indigenous communities have developed new strategies—based on traditional practices—to sustainably manage their natural resources and enjoy security of tenure over their lands); and (4) changes in attitudes and perceptions (other actors including nonindigenous men and women, NGOs, and international agencies have learned about indigenous peoples' rights and formed relationships with them based on equality and transparency).¹⁴⁹

By the end of 2010, indigenous organizations in the Andean region had been fortified, with extensive alliances across the region, new skills with which to advance their rights, recently acquired political savvy from a newfound closeness with the seats of political power and seasoned leadership. The movements of indigenous peoples had achieved substantial wins and managed to advance their agenda while guarding against the excesses of an economic and political system that ran counter to their interests. The section that follows contains a brief reflection about some of the key take-aways from this long and rich process which Oxfam America walked alongside its indigenous partners in South America.

149 Oxfam America. Regional Strategic Plan for South America (2005–2009)

CHAPTER 6

THE LONG ROAD TRAVELED

As described in the previous chapters, the indigenous movements of the Andean region have achieved extensive and multifaceted results. In a span of three decades, native peoples have moved from the social, political and economic margins to become central political actors and champions for a progressive social change agenda. They have been able to advance fundamental aspects of their agenda; presenting a formidable resistance to neoliberal policies and extractive industries, securing their ownership of their ancestral territories and securing new legal, constitutional, and international measures that recognize their rights. Throughout this process, they also enjoyed the unwavering support of several valuable allies, both within neighboring indigenous movements and beyond. Key among the partnerships that supported indigenous movements in these processes was Oxfam America, whose visionary strategies and consistent support proved to be largely effective in supporting indigenous people to become agents of social change in their region and the wider world. The lessons that can be gleaned from this rich partnership, particularly in terms of the nature of real, lasting development work embedded in human rights and movement-building, offer valuable insights for future practitioners. The sections that follow offer a reflection on some of the key achievements that were secured and lessons that have been learned through the partnership that spanned three decades and helped position indigenous peoples centrally on the scene of public affairs today.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

Emergence and strengthening of new organizations

Since the early 1980s, several ethnically based federations and traditional indigenous organizations were formed, shaking off the colonial mantle and claiming their rightful role as protagonists in their societies]. In the face of multiple adverse forces, indigenous organizations have adapted their strategies as the context has evolved and developed effective proposals for social change. They have forged effective cross-border alliances and developed new international advocacy skills, with which they have been able to advance their demands and proposals, with notable results.

Several indigenous organizations provided particular leadership at national and regional—and, increasingly, international—levels. This included AIDSESEP, the organization of indigenous people of the Amazon region of Peru and CIDOB,

which represents the indigenous people of the Amazon of Bolivia. ECUARUNARI, organization of indigenous peoples of the highlands of Ecuador, was another powerful social force, and a central pillar in the foundation of CONAIE, the first national indigenous organization in the region. CONAMAQ, formed in Bolivia in 1997 out of several *allyu* organizations, provided a central impetus for the highly visible rise of indigenous peoples' issues on the national agenda. Likewise, in Peru, CONACAMI, became a critical actor representing indigenous communities affected by mining. At the regional level, the emergence of COICA to represent the people of the Amazon allowed the voice of indigenous peoples to echo through the international halls of power, a process later reinforced by the creation of CAOI, representing the indigenous people of the Andean highlands. The sustained support provided by Oxfam America for its indigenous partners allowed them to strengthen their organizations, build the skills of their leaders, consolidate their bases and develop their political proposals. Their leaders gained new capacities, forged new alliances, benefited from technical assistance and came to master the arts of advocacy and alliance-building.

The resurgence of the *ayllus* was, in itself, a substantial achievement by the indigenous movement of Bolivia. In a period of a few years, new organizations emerged in La Paz, Oruro, Potosi, Cochabamba, and Chuquisaca in a renewed effort to channel their ancestral knowledge, cultural identity and traditional forms of government to reinforce their demands and proposals. Oxfam was critical to the strategic vision behind the *ayllu* movement, particularly during its embryonic stage. As Carlos Mamani, a Bolivian indigenous intellectual and longstanding partner, wrote, "Oxfam America has had the capacity to read the process that Bolivia was experiencing. Without their participation, you cannot explain the process of the reconstitution of the *ayllus* or the formation of CONAMAQ, nor the fact that indigenous issues once again became part of the agenda in the Andes and in the country."¹⁵⁰ While it was in Bolivia that the resurgence of traditional forms of organization was most robust, in Ecuador Oxfam America's partners in Imbabura worked for many years to revive the collective identities and practices of the Karanki, Natabuela, Otacalo, and Kayambi peoples. In the central highlands of Peru, particularly Ayacucho and Huancavelica, indigenous men and women began to revive their native cultures, secure economic self-sufficiency and restore their traditional authorities to their rightful place, notwithstanding the intensely adversarial environment of conflict, terror and repression.

New alliances, capacities and skills to exercise newfound protagonism

On the basis of this renewed embrace of their cultural identity and the empowerment that came from the creation of their organizations, indigenous

¹⁵⁰ Personal correspondence between Carlos Mamani, Bolivian Aymara intellectual and former representative of Oxfam America's partner, THOA, and Igidio Naveda, 2012, featured in Ogle, Summary Translation of the Report by Inturias and Aragón, 5.

peoples of the Andean region began to deepen their alliances and learn new skills.-

[W]hen CONAMAQ was formed, we worked hard on exchanges with other organizations ... the experience [of Ecuador's indigenous organizations] was an example for our leadership training here. Many of us know each other now and we have relationships of friendship and brotherhood. Many people here communicate with others in Ecuador. ... [N]ow there is a whole regional movement, and I believe that Oxfam America's support has been fundamental in this process.¹⁵¹

The exchange program helped indigenous leaders construct common proposals, perfect their knowledge of indigenous rights in national and international law and devise innovative strategies of implementing these rights in practice. This, in turn, prompted many of their organizations to focus not only on the issues that affected them locally, but to wield their newfound influence in issues affecting their countries, the Latin American region and, progressively, the wider international community. This also allowed indigenous organizations to learn to collaborate with other socially marginalized groups, beyond those who defined themselves as indigenous, and find common cause between their struggles.

[B]eyond specific demands, organized indigenous peoples and nationalities were carriers of an agenda oriented to transforming the economic, political and social structures of the States and to promote the participation of all sectors in the social, cultural and economic dynamic of the country, especially Ecuador and Bolivia.¹⁵²

In addition to their ability to build and sustain robust alliances across indigenous organizations and, increasingly, with other marginalized groups, indigenous leaders also learned new skills and built the capacities necessary to exercise this new political strength effectively in the spaces that matter.

Claiming rights, countering threats and advancing standards

Some of the achievements of the region's indigenous movements relate to concrete changes in attitudes, practices and power dynamics at the local level, or concern daily, immediate conditions that affect their lives. For example, a Bolivian participant in the Exchange Program who visited Peru relayed a story about a conversation he had had with a local official in Peru, "In one place we visited, the indigenous authority is called Varayoq. He doesn't wear a poncho but he does carry a whip (*chicote*).¹⁵³ The government of the community had their Lieutenant and only he sat at the table with us. So I asked him: why is the

151 Ogle, Summary Translation of the Report by Inturias and Aragón, 6

152 Melo and Moncada, Evaluación del Programa, 3.

153 The *chicote*, as well as the poncho, is worn mainly by male leaders as a symbol of indigenous authority in the Bolivian ayllus.

Varayoc not sitting with us? Then he told me that it is the Lieutenant that is the authority of the community and the Varayoc is just the guy to shoo away the pigs and the dogs. We explained to him that this is not the role of an ancestral leader, rather, it is to govern. We asked the Varayoc to sit at our side, as the head of the ancestral government. Others thought that the *ayllu* government didn't exist anymore and that it had died."¹⁵⁴

Another way that indigenous organizations succeeded in securing lasting changes in the immediate conditions affecting their communities was by demarcating their lands and securing titles for their ancestral territories in ways that would have appeared impossible half a century ago. In Ecuador, Oxfam America supported the Kichwa and Shuar people in the southeastern Transkutukú region to secure legal recognition of their territories and helped the now well-known Sarayaku community to secure ownership rights to their lands and resist oil extraction activities to which they did not consent. Also in Ecuador, titles for 98 percent of the territory that pertained to Achuar indigenous communities in the provinces of Pastaza y Morona Santiago were awarded in 2010, in great part due to the effective work of Oxfam America's partner, Centro Lianas, and in 2011, an additional 40 acres were titled in the name of the Shuar Federation. All in all, 225 acres of territory has now been titled for indigenous peoples to use, manage, and control in accordance with their cultures and ancestral knowledge.¹⁵⁵ In Bolivia, the Monteverde TCO (indigenous communal land) in the department of Santa Cruz, where 127 indigenous communities—approximately 100,000 inhabitants—live was recognized in 2000. By the mid-2000s, *ayllus* in the Andean highlands of Bolivia received titles to 135 TCOs, totaling approximately 21.5 million acres. In the lowlands, indigenous peoples won titles to 55 TCOs, a total of around 29.4 million acres benefiting more than 161,000 people. Altogether, upwards of 50 million acres were signed over as TCOs, adding up to an area that covers nearly 20 percent of the national territory.¹⁵⁶

While these powerful indigenous organizations, with broad alliances, new skills and newfound political space, enjoyed some important wins, the unfettered forces of global capital, aided by the free-market policies imposed by international financial institutions and embraced by the region's governments, threatened to erode many of these gains. In a testament to the strength and organizational prowess of indigenous organizations, they were able to forestall, or stop some of the most egregious free-market policies and development megaprojects that sought to extract profit from their lands and natural resources at the expense of their people. In 1993, the national indigenous movement of Ecuador was critical to defeating a bill that would have liquidated the rural health

154 Tomas Huanacu, a participant in the Program for the Exchange of Experiences, through which he visited Peru and Ecuador (quoted by Sofia Vergara in Intercambio de Experiencias)

155 Melo and Moncada, Evaluación del Programa

156 Inturias and Aragon, Informe Final de la Consultoria

service, el Seguro Campesino, and in 1994, CONAIE blocked a proposed Law for Agrarian Modernization. In the following decade, CONAIE was a major force against the proposed free trade agreement with the United States and they secured fundamental changes in the country's new constitution that sought to institutionalize more barriers to the erosion of economic social rights by the intrusion of market forces. In Bolivia, recurring marches from the Amazon region exerted citizen oversight over the government's plans to auction off valuable natural resources for the benefit of the nation's elites and foreign investors. In northern Peru, a popular referendum in the town of Tambogrande in 2002 stopped the establishment of a gold mine that would require the relocation of the town and the demolition of the community's orchards. The uprising that took place in Bagua in the country's Amazon lowlands in 2009 serves as another sobering example of the capacity of indigenous organizations (particularly AIDSEP in that instance) to impede the expansion of the extractive agenda; sometimes, at great cost to their own lives. It was thus that "the indigenous movement, carrier of the demands of environmental and social justice that are still not attended to ... [has carried out] actions of resistance that slowly take form in the face of the government's plans to expand the extractive frontier without a serious, equitable and transparent consultation process."¹⁵⁷

Indigenous people also succeeded in securing the adoption of new laws and standards—both domestically and internationally—related to the rights of indigenous peoples. In terms of national-level legislation, in 1991, Bolivia adopted Law #1257, which ratified ILO Convention 169 and helped place indigenous rights on the national political agenda. In 1992, the indigenous movement was critical to the passage of the Law on the Environment. In 1996, the Forestry Law and the Mining Code were adopted, both introducing mechanisms for the protection of the collective rights of indigenous peoples in Bolivia, and in 1999, the Hydrocarbon Law was passed. All of these laws were formulated in ways that are consistent with several key provisions from ILO Convention 169. In Peru, in 2011, the Law on Prior and Informed Consent, modeled largely on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, was adopted. Indigenous peoples also achieved several victories in terms of emblematic court cases. In February 2011, for example, Chevron Texaco was fined \$8.640 billion for environmental damages caused by more than 30 years of operations in the northeast Amazon region of Ecuador.

Indigenous peoples also played major roles in the reform of the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia. In Ecuador, the 2008 constitution incorporated three fundamental pillars of the vision of indigenous peoples for the country: living well (*sumak kawsay*); the rights of Mother Earth and a recognition of the plurinational nature of the Ecuadorian state. In Bolivia, similarly, the constitution adopted in 2009 defines Bolivia as "a Unitary Social State of Plurinational Communitarian

¹⁵⁷ Melo and Moncada, Evaluación del Programa, 27

law, free, independent, sovereign, democratic, intercultural, decentralized and with autonomies.” The constitution recognizes, among other things, indigenous peoples’ own political practices and justice systems and it provides for a proportional representation of indigenous peoples in the Legislative Assembly.

At the regional level, in June 2012, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights found in favor of the Sarayaku indigenous community of the Ecuadorian Amazon region. The people of Sarayaku had been struggling for years to resist oil extraction on their territories, with the ongoing support of Oxfam America and other allies. The Sarayaku decision signals a significant step forward in the evolving jurisprudence regarding the rights of indigenous peoples, as it establishes criteria for prior and informed consent that will serve as a precedent for other cases of development-induced violations of indigenous peoples’ rights in Latin America. It also, in a major advance in international human rights jurisprudence, recognizes indigenous communities themselves as subjects of collective rights under international law.¹⁵⁸ In another substantial development, Bolivia ratified ILO Convention 169 in December 1991, Peru in February 1994, and Ecuador in May 1998, making this instrument accessible for indigenous peoples to claim the rights established in that treaty.

Internationally, indigenous people have come to serve as central actors in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the World Social Forum, the processes related to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and, more recently, global climate change negotiations. Their delegates have proven to be skillful in advancing their agendas and gaining visibility of the struggles of indigenous peoples and other groups whose voices have not effectively been included in decisions that affect them. Years of practice and hard work, including structured learning and the development of new skills in what they have called ‘indigenous diplomacy’ has allowed indigenous peoples to learn to use the mechanisms offered in these spaces and to use them to promote their rights and hold their governments accountable.

In sum, the gradual process of cultural revival, the emergence and strengthening of new organizations, systematic mutual learning and ongoing capacity-building aided the empowerment of indigenous peoples and their ability to seize greater control over their own development. In an astonishingly short span of time, indigenous people managed to claim and secure their lands, prevent harmful policies and projects, achieve the adoption of new laws and the domestication of international indigenous rights standards and become protagonists on the international scene. They were able to move from being virtually invisible in terms of their country’s laws and policies, and subjected to overt and de-facto discrimination by the nonindigenous population and the institutions of the state,

¹⁵⁸ For more information about the Sarayaku decision, see “Pueblo Indígena Kichwa de Sarayaku vs. Ecuador”

to become protagonists in the political and social affairs of the region and, progressively, the world.

WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED?

There are numerous lessons that could be gleaned from the experiences that have been detailed in the preceding sections, both for social movements and for their allies and partners.

From the perspective of social movements, the experience of the indigenous movements over the past three decades has demonstrated that forming and strengthening grassroots organizations and building the capacity of their leaders can nurture movements and lead to far-reaching impacts. It is possible to achieve substantial wins from bottom-up processes of movement-building, self-expression and, as described near the beginning of this story, autonomous development. The trajectory of the indigenous movements of the Andean region has shown the importance of culture and identity, together with political analysis. It has demonstrated the critical role of alliances, both between organizations and with others, just as it highlights the risks inherent in conventional electoral politics, as a means for advancing sustained social change by previously marginalized social groups. In the end, the process that has been documented in the preceding pages indicates the continued importance of grassroots leaderships and strong organizations, united by broader social movements, in advancing positive social change and rectifying deep-seated social injustices. This story is a testimony of these critical efforts by the very people whose lives were the most affected by the historic inequalities that served as an unfortunate context. It is also a recognition of the importance of supporting such processes and the critical role of allies and partners, such as Oxfam America.

From Oxfam America's perspective, and, likely, the perspective of other partners and supporters of the region's indigenous movements, there are, likewise, several valuable lessons that merit noting. The program on indigenous peoples nurtured the early consolidation and growth of organizations of indigenous peoples, emphasizing the revitalization of their identity and empowerment. Over time, these organizations enjoyed critical support as they confronted threats to their communities and advanced their agenda of political and social change. Oxfam America's program recognized the role of fortifying leaders, building alliances and strengthening the power of the grassroots membership of the organizations that were their partners for over 30 years. It also showed patience with the non-linear (and seldom formulaic) developments that proved difficult as the basis of interim donor reporting but would lead to eventual, substantial, results. The program's ability to recognize key actors (such as grassroots leaders and indigenous intellectuals who designed the political proposals and

organizational visions that guided their social movements) who, with modest support, could yield substantial outcomes has also, undoubtedly, aided in the overall success of the program.

Oxfam's approach to these processes reflects the way in which 'development' has been understood and interpreted throughout this program. As discussed in the early part of this book, the regional program in South America had, as a starting point, a rejection of the conventional, economic notion of development which espouses income generation, access to money and a central role for the market. Oxfam's program recognized that this interpretation of development reinforced colonial structures of domination and perpetuated poverty and extreme poverty. Indigenous peoples, early program designers argued, have been marginalized from decisions that affects their lives. Under market-oriented development policies, their labor and resources are extracted for the benefit of people based far away from where they come, to the detriment of local, self-sufficient economies and indigenous cultures. In contrast with the prevailing development paradigm, Oxfam America argued that indigenous people, "who maintain relative economic independence, cultural integrity and a solid sense of WE are in a better position to create alternatives for, and assume control of, their own development."¹⁵⁹

By embracing measures that reflected a progressive interpretation of 'development' that was based on the realization of rights, Oxfam's program in South America yielded far greater impact than it would have, if it were to have measured its effectiveness by mere quantitative indicators and monetary gains. As stated in the foreword, development in a context where entire populations are excluded and subjected to discrimination is a political process. It involves cultural and social change, as well as confrontations with powerful interests... and it takes time. Part of what has made Oxfam America's program with indigenous peoples unique is that the program designers recognized these factors, had the patience to work with grassroots organizations, as opposed to exclusively with NGOs, and the willingness to build social movements and empower people whose voice has not been effectively heard in decisions that effect them.

The employment of some innovative program strategies appears to have been helpful in achieving these results. For example, particularly in the early years of the program, Oxfam focused on raising the self-esteem of indigenous peoples, in response to the discrimination and colonial subjugation they had experienced, helping them revalue their culture and embrace their identity with pride. This focus was applied to all areas of the program, including to less political projects oriented around economic development objectives. Oxfam America, for example, helped indigenous communities to manage their natural resources based on their ancestral knowledge, while combining traditional practices with modern

159 Oxfam America, Regional Program Strategy for South America, 1984, 8

techniques. The Exchange of Experiences program carried out between 1997 and 2007 was another innovative strategy that proved to be critical in strengthening participating organizations and establishing lasting regional alliances. The ability of participants to set the agenda of their learning visits, see the context where fellow participants lived and worked and learn from each other in structured ways, was a critical contribution and one whose benefits have been observed across the region's indigenous movements for years following its conclusion.

Finally, there is much to learn from the 30 years' process documented in the preceding sections, from the perspective of partnerships. Oxfam America has largely been perceived by many of its partners as an ally of the indigenous movement that was respectful of their organizational dynamics. In the words of program evaluator Mario Melo, "Oxfam America has been an ally to a process whose rhythm and contents are in the hands of the social actors who they aim to support." Ampam Karakas, a seasoned indigenous leader from the Amazon region of Ecuador, agreed. "[I]n the 1990s OA was more open than only supporting programs. It supported process," a statement that recognized Oxfam America's adaptiveness and willingness to respond to brief opportunity windows rather than exclusively relying on activities planned well in advance of their execution.¹⁶⁰

Oxfam America's program representatives have generally enjoyed trusting and honest communication with their indigenous partners in ways that allowed for substantive reflections, rather than just showcasing successes, as some donors would expect. In addition, Oxfam America's representatives engaged in ongoing monitoring of the activities of their partners, the projects they were implementing and the contexts where they worked. They gathered information from their partners as well as other actors who were able to provide new perspectives. Sometimes honest conversations were necessary in order to ensure that the actions being pursued by the region's indigenous organizations were effectively contributing to the realization of their stated objectives.

There are times where most organizations dedicated to advancing human rights and sustainable development must face the question: what does positive change look like? How does it happen? And, what do we need to understand in order to support these processes effectively? The case of the indigenous movements of the Andean region provides a compelling response to these questions. In a span of a few decades, indigenous peoples were able to move from an extremely marginalized status where discrimination, dispossession and exclusion were prevailing experiences, to a place of political and social protagonism in their countries and region. From the renewed expression and newfound valuing of their cultures, formation and consolidation of indigenous organizations,

¹⁶⁰ Melo and Moncada, Evaluación del Programa, 2013

emergence of grassroots leaders, deepening alliances, learning new strategies and building entire social movements, indigenous peoples were able to transition from being virtually invisible objects of history to central agents of social change. This overview, therefore, has been developed in recognition of the tremendous advances that indigenous people and their organizations have achieved in relatively little time, the rich partnerships that supported and nurtured that process and the potential that this experience offers to enrich future efforts to promote human rights and development world-wide.

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