

8. The power of experience



Recalling the pulse of the process

The five years of PASA have inspired a stronger sense in those Andean farmers involved of their right to produce and eat local, healthy food. This right encompasses wishes and dreams expressed via drawings, storytelling and video-making by members of the Andean Wisdom Networks and their communities.

These wise Andean men and women collectively recalled and highlighted the following as meaningful milestones in the Food Sovereignty process.





It began with a meeting in Portugal in 2007, when the IIED invited Peruvian and Bolivian institutions to be partners of its associates from Iran, Mali and India in the *Democratising Food and Agricultural Research* initiative.



This meeting was followed by slow but steady moves towards bringing Andean farmers together to talk communally about the food they grew and ate. In June 2008 several families in Vilurcuni, Perka and Torasaya were personally invited to take part in the participatory research and community video trainings. These two training events generated the visualisation of thoughts and the process of reflecting in groups and transforming ideas into innovative activities. The new capacities learned were applied at the Cumbre en la Apacheta (the Summit on the Summit) in 2009. The Summit was an intercommunal event that gave more than 400 participants – farmers, local authorities, NGO representatives and friends from Bolivia – the chance to voice out and exchange their concerns about food sovereignty and other issues.



In 2010 thematic Wisdom Networks began to be organised in preparation for entering into a dialogue with agricultural scientists. A PASA core group flew to Penang, Malaysia from 24 to 31

October for a Global Partners Meeting and International Exchange Workshop. This was an unforgettable experience, especially getting to know some of those involved in the Citizens Juries in Mali and in India as well as nomads and also farmers in Iran who were experimenting with wheat and barley. The good memories of this intercultural encounter that also gathered some one hundred members of the Asian Rice Campaign remain a great inspiration.

Interregional encounter in Penang, Malaysia

During two days the following topics were covered:

Day 1: Farmer agendas for Food sovereignty

1. Conclusions of Farmers from India and Mali about the democratisation of agricultural research
2. Gender justice and the role of women in the control of seeds
3. Critical Dialogue with AGRA (Agricultural green revolution in Africa, supported by the Gates Foundation and Monsanto) and its influence on global food policy
4. Seeds and local foods, cultures that sustain nature and biodiversity
5. Food sovereignty and the impact of climate change, the mitigating role of indigenous knowledge
6. Nomadic herders and peasant networks as organisations that defend nature

Day 2: Participatory Action Research methodologies

1. How to organise campaigns on Food sovereignty, links between producers and consumers, as in the case of the Asian defenders of Rice Network
2. People's tribunals and citizens juries as mechanisms to influence public agrarian policies and changes in food research agendas
3. Caravans of biodiversity (India)
4. Community video in Peru: voices defending Andean food sovereignty
5. Facilitation of group processes with Visualisation in Participatory Programs (VIPP)
6. Conservation of seeds in the hands of indigenous and peasant women

Results of the wisdom dialogues

The following year, in October 2011, the Alpaca Wisdom Network agreed to a two-day interaction with scientists in Ayrumas Carumas. Then it was the turn of the Fisheries network in Perka, followed by both 'Sweet' Potato and Bitter Potato networks in Yunguyo. Finally the Aymaña network carried out a dialogue on Llamas, Alpacas and Bitter Potatoes.

All these face-to-face interactions between representatives of scientific institutions and Andean farmers gave rise to unexpected feelings and spontaneous responses. It was especially rewarding to see the scientists acknowledging and positively responding to the food wisdom demonstrated by the network members. The sincere, attentive and mutual respect between the scientists and farmers when focusing on their knowledge differences was a pleasant surprise for both parties; this has set the terms of engagement for a common agenda in the future.



Indeed, at the Assembly of Chivay, in the Colca Valley, in January 2012, the Wisdom Networks affirmed that they would be looking to gain the support of the scientists in defence of food sovereignty as a product of a joint, democratic wisdom. They also reaffirmed their links with the Andean Movements of food sovereignty in Ecuador and Bolivia.



Visualisation of Ideas

Another level of reflection resulted in the network members' own assessments about what they have learned and how the PASA years have enriched their lives.

The Wisdom Network members recognise that at the beginning of the process, everything was very different. Coming from an oral culture, the spoken word has always been the medium of communication – in Quechua, Aymara or Spanish. In the past, their knowledge and practices were conveyed to external interlocutors like researchers and development workers, and followed their script; this knowledge was then documented or edited in films by the interlocutors on behalf of the Andean peasants.

But in the PASA process, the generation of knowledge and actions about food sovereignty took place within a new power balance. Wise men and women first reflected inward deeply and then illustrated their ideas on big sheets of paper, their drawings triggered by a flow of personal, free associations, and selected memories about agriculture and food. Their visualisations showed the plurality of their subjective experiences.



DIAGRAMA HISTORICO DE PESCA ARTESANAL EN LA CC DE PERKA

AÑO	PECES DEL LAGO	Nº DE PESCADORES	HERRAMIENTAS DE PESCAR	TRUQUE VENTA	MAESTROS QUE HACEN RITUALES AL LAGO
ANTES	BOGA Umanto ISPI Qhesi Qarachi Suchi Mauri	5			
1950	TRUCHA Umanto ISPI Qhesi Qarachi Suchi Mauri	14			
1960	TRUCHA ISPI Qhesi Qarachi Suchi mauri Pejerrey	26			
1970	TRUCHA ISPI Qhesi Qarachi Pejerrey Suchi Mauri	29			
1980	TRUCHA ISPI Qhesi Qarachi Pejerrey Mauri	38			
1990	TRUCHA Qhesi ISPI Qarachi Suchi Pejerrey Mauri	46			
2000	TRUCHA Suchi ISPI Qarachi Pejerrey Mauri	66			
2005	TRUCHA ISPI Pejerrey Suchi Qarachi Mauri	81			
2010	TRUCHA ISPI Qhesi Qarachi Pejerrey Mauri	88			

Vertical text on the right side of the table:

- Carlos Suez Gutierrez
- Clemente Mejra
- Antonio (hin) Pablo Coca
- Manuel Estiva
- Caytano Chumbilla
- Andrés Cutipe
- Domingo Feliciano Graj
- Cesilio Oñeja
- Jose Ramos

Mis comidas del año

C.C. Chimbo
CP. AYMAÑA

Sabro:
- Juan Lasso Pocco Gondo.

Dibuyo:
- Bill Noe Lomel Alarcón.

FIAMBRES DENTRO DEL CICLO AGRICOLA

UTANA QAMARBE

SEMBRAR PAPA

PREMIER SEMBRA PAPA

DESCARRAR DE HUASO Y ABERA

CONGELAR PARA PAPA

RECOPAR HUASO

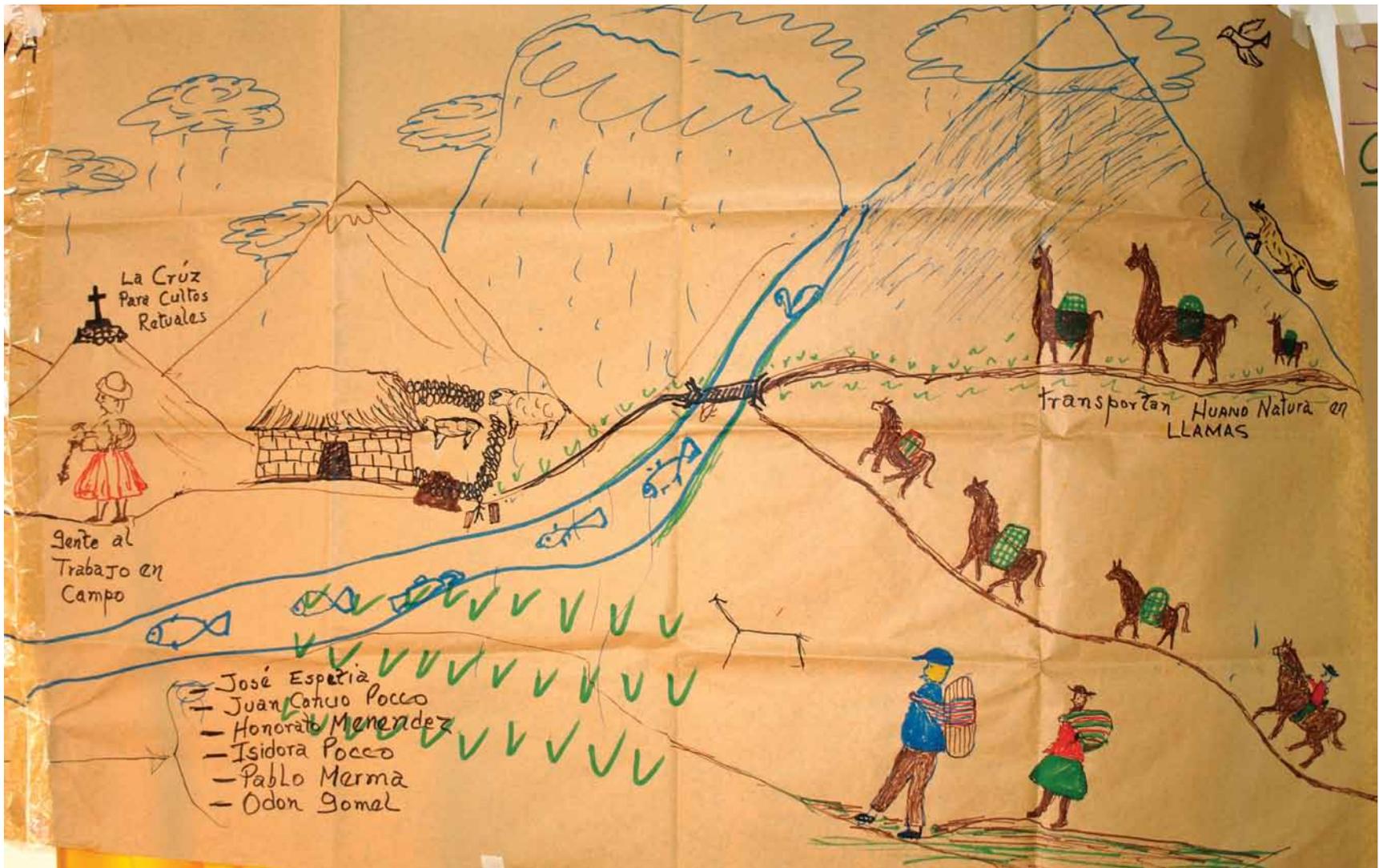
SECCAR DE PAPA

BARDIAR DE TIERRA

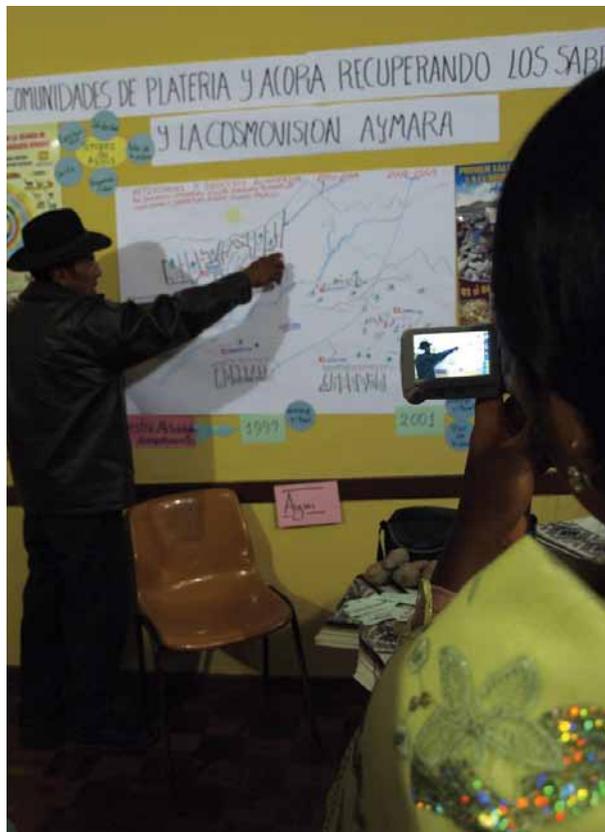
GRILLAR PAPA

VALURCINSET/009





The video-makers visualised topics involving multiple voices, combined with an insiders' perspective on the beauty of the landscapes, creating a new aesthetic, and confidence and pride in their food culture. At the same time their videos challenged peacefully and productively the hegemony of conventional documentary filmmaking and contested the official representations of Andean communities as being poor and hungry. Learning to use the camera gave men and women an equal chance to always be ready to film or be filmed, in front or behind the camera, focusing on different aspects of food production, processing or enjoying the delicious food that comes from their own fields.



is a chance to talk with veneration about the animated landscape and the climatic particularities that makes *chuño* possible. And the wisdom members' illustrations and stories of the *aynocas*, the Andean crop plots in the higher zones, created much excitement and made young and old alike want to join the network. They have come to realise that caring for diversity is a lifestyle, is part of themselves, as opposed to eating industrially produced rice or noodles – food that cannot be divorced from secular, bureaucratically driven developmentalist approaches, with their project criteria and clinical measurements.

In the community

The idea of food sovereignty made them aware about the importance of maintaining and increasing the variety of natural pastures since, for example, the flavour of alpaca meat is incomparably better when the animals can graze freely. Keeping water sources and canals clean for the alpaca engages community members who are increasingly keen to produce for themselves and consume free-range alpaca meat.

All in all, the spiritual bonds within participating Andean communities have been strengthened by greater observance of rituals related to animal reproduction, seed exchange, and field clearance, since these are fruitful occasions for talking about the importance and practice of maintaining a good relationship with *Pachamama* – Mother Earth – and the *Apus* – the Sacred Mountains – who guard over what they eat. Community leaders who have joined the wisdom meetings have come to see the power of producing natural food from their own fields instead of depending on industrial foodstuffs.



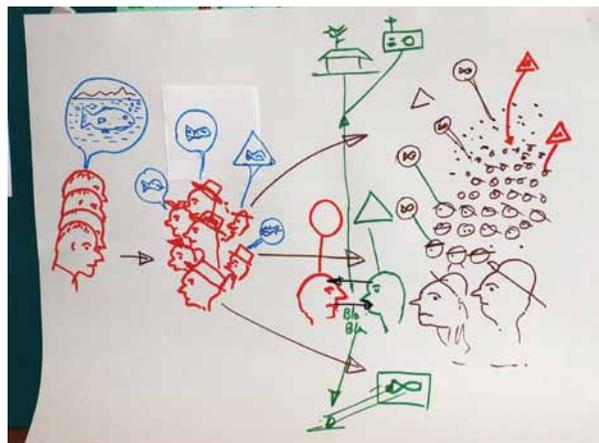
With scientists

On another front, the sharing of ideas with scientists in the communities was a display of creative reversals. Usually learning happens only at universities and schools, but in this case the communities were at the very centre of the process, and a new style of knowing was inaugurated. Both partners interacting in the dialogue were subjects with knowledge, not informants; all were equally teachers and learners at the same time.

The dialogue with scientists in **Ayrumas Carumas** provided an unusual scenario. The network members presented the alpacas' lives, one by one, describing each by colour, age, personality, the health properties of alpaca wool, and their love for each animal. The scientists' reaction was one of astonishment to this imaginative way of being and knowing.

On their part, the farmers' were greatly encouraged to open up by the scientists' positive response to their explanations of the drawings. They spent time with the scientists, guiding them through fields where up to 50 different potato varieties were growing; some scientists could not believe it, others wanted to be convinced by their own methods, so it was a chance to continue a longer process of sharing knowledge and impressions. The scientists were invited to return for another visit and see the potato fields in bloom, which is a special way of counting biodiversity.

During these farmer–scientist dialogues, besides exchanging knowledge, there was an opportunity for both to taste natural, healthy and sovereign food together. This was not only a joy to the senses, but cause for reflection and action to build friendship and jointly defend food sovereignty.





Global level

At a different level, taking part at the global meeting of the food sovereignty partners in Malaysia was an intercultural experience of incalculable impact on persons who had never imagined that their wisdom would take them so far away. The Andean men and women of wisdom met and exchanged ideas with pastoralists from Iran, and farmers from India and Mali as well as those involved in the Rice Campaign in Asia. Back home in their communities, they told family and friends that across the ocean there are also people defending their rights to grow and obtain food by different means. New solidararian bonds around food sovereignty have been established, and new content for a global movement from below.



The future of Food Sovereignty

This process of remembering, reflecting and modelling has articulated a way of conceptualising the defence of food sovereignty deeply ingrained in rural lifestyles. It is a shift towards endogenous visions and dreams embedded within a cultural tradition that contests secular, project-based logic, usually driven by the development activists and representatives of the agro-industrial food systems.

The visions that have emerged are cultural and cognitive constructs. In order to approach them more intimately, we follow the roots underlying the popular Aymara ceremonial game and ritual, *Alasitas*. This takes place after the harvest, when men and women exchange their busy daily agendas for ways of remembering, imagining, associating ideas and making analogies. These common intellectual practices allow a ludic manual transformation of the dreams, wishes, visions into miniature objects, traditionally made with quinoa flour. We used modelling clay instead, but maintained the thinking at the basis of the *Alasitas* that can be understood by the seminal principle:

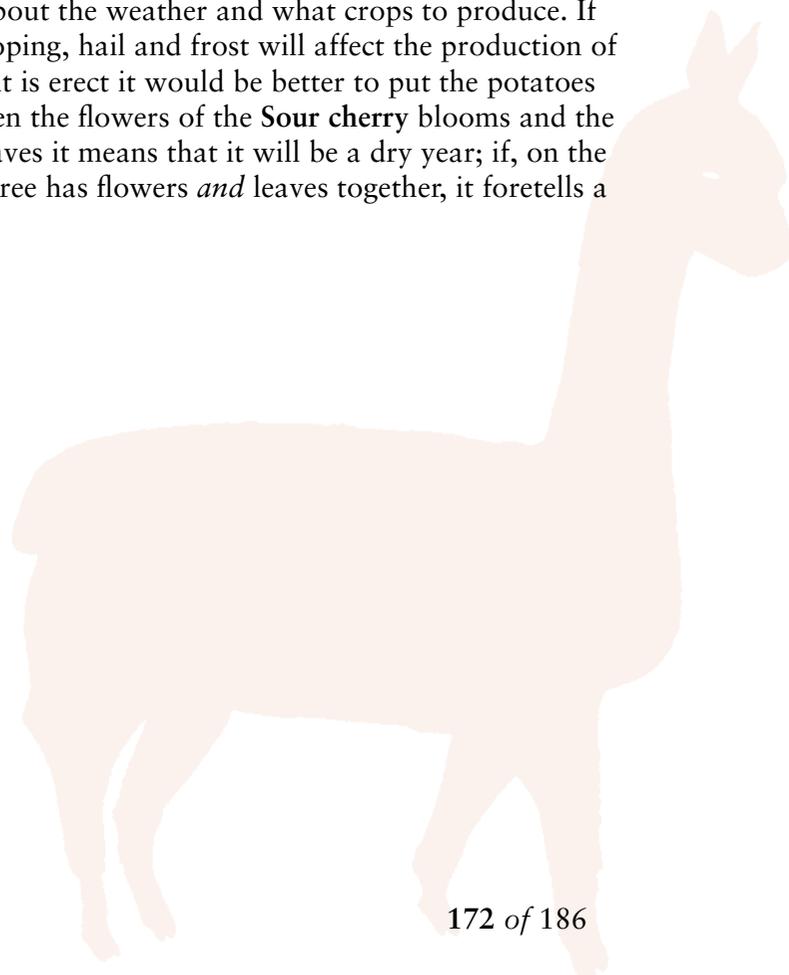
the tiny objects are like seeds and by giving them the appropriate attention and care they will become real fruits.

Relying on the signs

Lydia and Andres

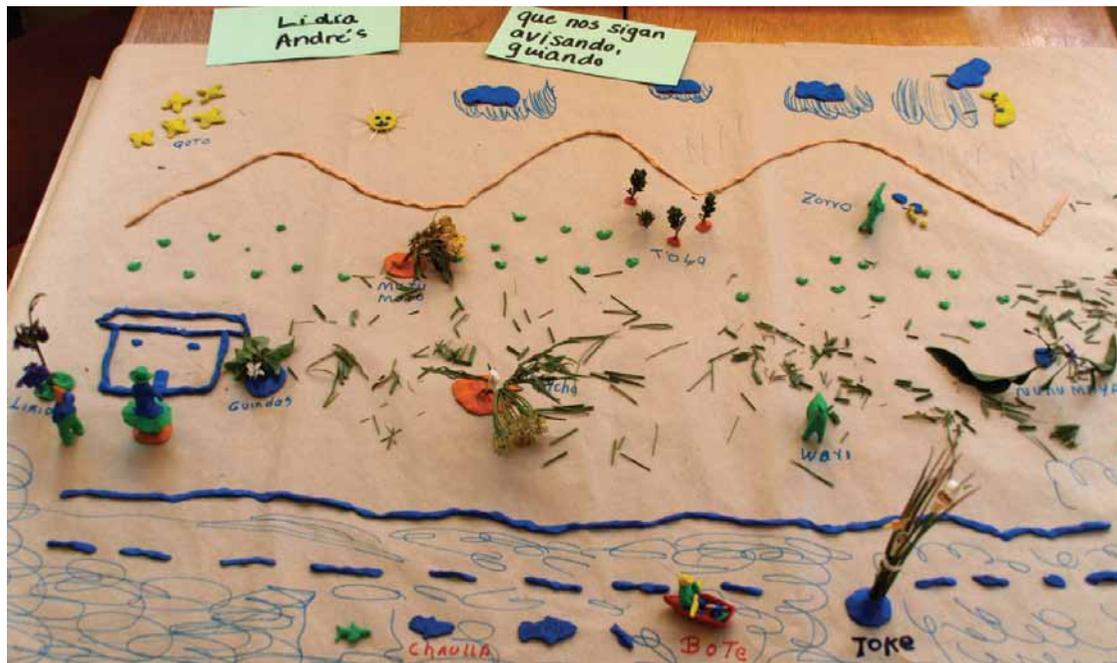
We look into the sky on very specific days. The stars will inform us what food products will grow in abundance and which are not auspicious to grow. From the 13 of June onwards we spot the Seven Stars (Pleiades) or *qoto*; if they are shining very brightly, it is a good sign for growing potatoes.

Plants and animals also behave in such a way that we can draw conclusions about the weather and what crops to produce. If the **Iris** is drooping, hail and frost will affect the production of the potato; if it is erect it would be better to put the potatoes in earlier. When the flowers of the **Sour cherry** blooms and the tree has no leaves it means that it will be a dry year; if, on the contrary, the tree has flowers *and* leaves together, it foretells a rainy year.



Mutu-mutu is another plant we observe in August; it tells us about the dry or rainy seasons related to broad bean cultivation. *Tola*, in the upper zones, is a small tree that advises us whether or not to sow potatoes. Down in the lower zones, when the *Huaycha* flowers drop, it is an indicator that it is time to harvest. If the flowers of *Nuño Maya* appear like grapes, it tells us that there will be a good potato harvest.

There is a small bird, the *Toke*, that builds his nest on the patch of cattail at the lake. If the nest is placed at the bottom of the cattail, it will be a dry year; if the nest is built in the upper part of the cattail, it will be a very rainy year. The Fox and the *Vicuña* are also indicators sent by the *Achachilas*, the sacred ancestors, to tell us of the food we will have or not in the coming year. Therefore our dream is to keep trusting the signs in spite of climate change and develop our knowledge of the local natural indicators that provide us reliable information about our crops here in our immediate environment.



Growing diversity in our fields

Juan and Betzabe

Our fields are protected by the *Apus, Chale* and *Lanqueri*. *Pachamama* tells us in our dreams how we shall run our fields, in the upper parts or in the lower parts, which soils are good and which seeds should be sown. That means, we must never use the high-yielding varieties even if they are donated by an NGO or University. If we don't use our local varieties they will disappear and what are the chances of recovering them?

Our fields also produce well when we offer *coca* to mother earth. She increases the diversity of our crops and our fields remain healthy. Having healthy products in our fields, we avoid depending on the market. My dream is to transmit these ideas in meetings and educate the youth about the value of having the time and energy to produce food.



The taste of free animals

Lucía

I dream of healthy animals that can provide me, my family and my community with tasty food, not contaminated by industrial fodder. I can sustain all my animals with oats, barley, natural pastures, and cattail that grows around the Lake. All this is natural and the meat is so tasty.

Look! Here are all my healthy animals: llamas, alpacas, sheep, pigs, chicken – a delightful dream.



The storeroom is sacred

Antonio and Basilia

In my dream the *Apu* is here, the mountain that protects us. When we sow, he provides us with food from the fields and pasturelands for the animals and we store here all that our fields produce. We build the storeroom with stones that are suitable for the countryside. Our daily provisions find here a place, all the products that we have worked hard for. We burn aromatic herbs to perfume the food at least three times before storage, and bring *Illas*, little pebbles from the river, which will protect our provisions during the year.

The storeroom is sacred. Strangers cannot enter. Only women are allowed to manage the foodstuffs in the storeroom. Men have the right to produce plenty so that the storeroom is filled with broad beans, selected potatoes to eat for at least one year, others for seed and finally the ones that last much longer like *tunta* and *chuño*. We store barley, *quinua* and *cañigua*; it is all our work. If we have a family garden, we keep vegetables. Men also have the right to travel to *Marcapata* once a year to barter for maize for our families. When we come back from the lowlands with our llamas loaded with maize, all the women and children are happily waiting for us. *Pachamama* is also grateful because she sees that we have everything we need to eat, stored for a complete year and it will not become ruined. We use the *Taqui*, deposits made of *Ichu*, the tall grass from the higher zone as we have learned from our grandfathers and fathers. Some people deposit their foodstuffs in their homes, but there is not enough air there.

We store food for many years, *chuños*, *morayas* and jerky can last three, ten or many more years if they have been properly processed.



The flavours of my kitchen

Presentación

My dreams are about potatoes, *izaño*, *tunta*, *quinua*, all what I produce in my fields I process and prepare delicious food with. I am cooking a *quinua Patasca* with fish from the Lake, and *Mariva* potato. I don't use the black *Imilla* since it breaks into pieces when it is boiled. While I am cooking I praise my clay pots and tell my children, they are natural, and much better than aluminium pots. To grind the Andean cereals I use a little millstone and use the big ones to pound the herbs. My husband is also in the kitchen, we keep company sitting around the fire, it is so nice to be together and talk about the produce from our fields. We feel that it is a triumph to continue our tradition of good flavours like this, and my grandchildren will follow in spite of the fact that the school teaches them other customs. They will never give up on the flavours from our kitchen – that is our dream of food sovereignty.



Our Wisdom Networks

Severino and Pastorita

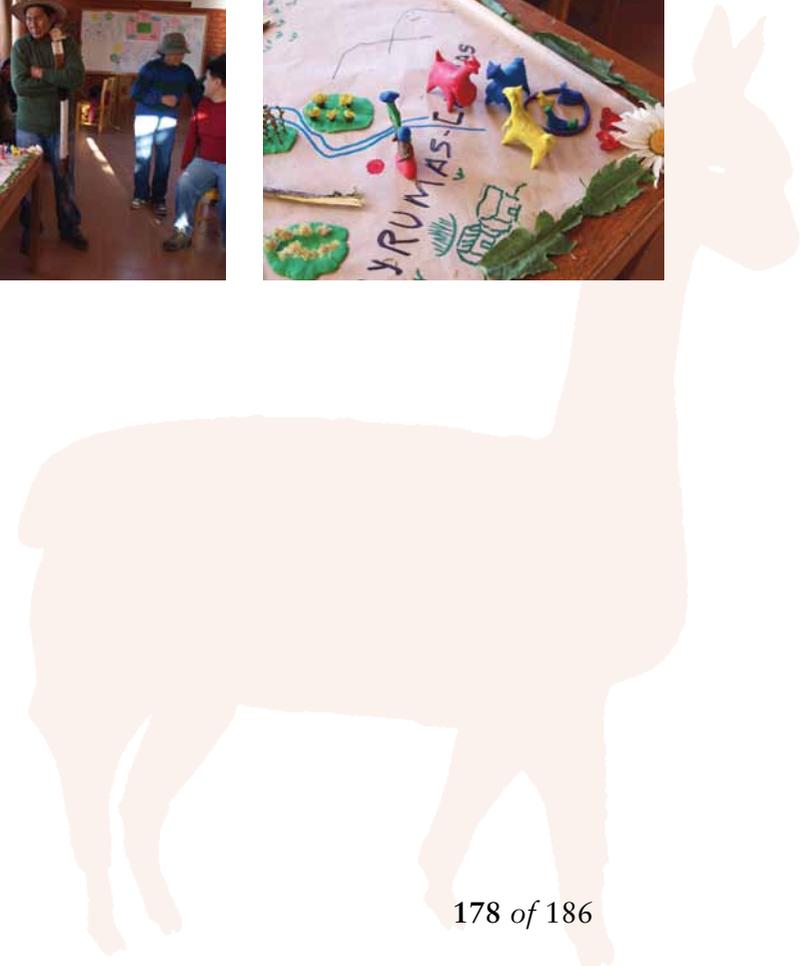
We have linked our wisdom, treating each other like brothers and sisters. Meeting each other on different occasions we realise that we are many and all wise persons.

I never thought that I was going to be considered by the Communal and District Authorities because I am from the far away mountains, without formal education except for two years of elementary school. But I've learned from my father, I've always followed him. He told me to trust my dreams and take the responsibility attached to wisdom. In a communal assembly my dreams were confirmed and because of my knowledge about alpacas I was named representative to join the Wisdom Network. I, who started with just a few alpacas! I have been able to exchange and share knowledge with many other men and women who work in the fields nurturing animals in the higher zones.

We have met in Copacabana, Aymaña, Chimboya, Raqchi, Querumarca, Chivay – in all these places and even beyond the Oceans, we listen to each other like brothers and sisters. I have learned so much from them talking about Food Sovereignty. Now young people and the authorities of my community congratulate me about how far I have been able to travel with this wisdom about alpacas. That creates more responsibility and commitment. It also increases my sense of spirituality as a herder who gradually has learned to ask for permission, as the Elders taught me when I was young. Together with them I began to read what the *coca* leaves were telling me. No matter how late in the night I learned to consult *coca*, so that mother earth would guide me about whatever would happen. From the elders I have been blessed with wisdom and the heritage to serve mother earth. One cannot enter this wisdom disrespectfully because it is sacred. Wisdom involves life and death. That is my father's experience; he died while celebrating a ritual to mother earth,

reading the *coca* leaves, asking for permission.

The Wisdom Network is life with two sides, men and women, *chachawarmi* that creates harmony and credibility for the dialogue with scientists.



Dialogue with scientists

Don Rufino

Scientists work and live in the cities, in buildings. They eat high-yielding varieties of potatoes that are grown with chemical fertilisers. Scientists are usually men and they accept our invitation to come to our communities. We live in rural communities, in large families and produce all that we eat, like many different types of potatoes, while observing the rituals with coca leaves and reading the signs of nature like the sun, moon, stars, wind and plants. We rely on these signs to find out auspicious times to work in the fields.

The scientists from the Ministry of Agriculture accepted the invitation made by the communal authorities, which confirmed the instruction not to give us seeds or fertilisers. We don't want their potato seeds because after two years they don't reproduce anymore. What we wish is that the scientists walk and talk with us on a longer path in the community, that they leave their notebooks and pay attention to us; that they talk about what interests us and that we find a way to understand each other. Our conversations will make them see that we work our fields with the yoke and oxen, not with the tractor because we know that it damages the earth, and we defend our mother earth. We work manually and it is worth the effort to do everything in its own time and not quickly. Regarding chemical fertilisers – they are not for our fields because we have a commitment to our ancestors and our local authorities to keep intact these fields as heritage for the next generations.



We want to continue talking like this so that scientists will begin to understand how we think, how we work and that we do not need their seeds, their tractors nor their fertilisers and pesticides. Talking like friends we will feel stronger, organised as families and communities. This way we can work together and start to conduct trials. The scientists will learn together with us how to pay attention to plant indicators and to understand that these are not meaningless, but full of content. Talking richly with each other, we can transmit a new heritage to our children and grandchildren. It is our wish that the scientists don't come and go. It is better that we continue together until the end. That is my dream.



