

Final Technical Report

Project Title: “Building Research Capacity for Indigenous Self-Governance in Bolivia”

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Abstract: In 2009 with the promulgation of a new constitution, Bolivia initiated a novel new process for indigenous self-governance. The two research partners in this project (Dalhousie University and Fundación TIERRA) have been involved in that process from its earliest stages. This project was designed with two objectives: a) to conduct and disseminate produce policy-relevant and academic research on indigenous autonomy in Bolivia, and b) to develop viable and sustainable methodologies for action-research and NGO-academic collaboration with the NGO Fundación Tierra. The project operated for 24 months from April 2012 through March 2014. The project achieved both objectives, with many lessons learned along the way. The primary investigator (John Cameron) has been working closely with Fundación TIERRA – and in particular research assistant Wilfredo Plata – on both objectives. Notable project outputs included: establishment of a methodology for academic-NGO research collaboration; 6 internal staff research capacity-building workshops at Fundación Tierra; multiple workshops in indigenous municipalities on indigenous and municipal autonomy for indigenous; organizational support and participation in meetings of the Inter-Institutional Platform of Support for Indigenous Autonomy and the National Council of Indigenous Autonomies; presentation of research findings at conferences in Bolivia and North America and the publication of multiple articles oriented towards the general public and academic audiences.

Keywords: Indigenous autonomy, Bolivia, NGO, research capacity-building

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1. The research problem:

This project addressed both a research problem (indigenous autonomy in Bolivia) and a more practical methodological challenge (viable strategies of academic-NGO collaboration).

Following the implementation of a new constitution in 2009, Bolivia became a one of the leading countries in the world for the constitutional protection of indigenous rights, including the right to autonomy or self-governance. However, putting these rights into practice has involved a distinct set of challenges at both the national and local levels. The first set of challenges are at the national level and involve the timely implementation of legislation and public policy to support the creation and operation of new institutions of indigenous autonomy. The second set of challenges are at the local level and revolve around the negotiation of the specific terms of self-governance among indigenous populations - which are generally much more heterogeneous than public policy makers anticipated; for example, in several indigenous territories discussions of self-governance have been paralyzed by differing visions of the specific institutional mechanisms through which it should be exercised and which elements of indigenous culture should be privileged.

Addressing these national and local challenges requires the careful documentation and analysis of indigenous autonomy processes by the organizations involved in them using evidence-based research methods so that they can intervene more effectively to shape public policy. In particular, as indigenous autonomy processes in specific locales move forward or encounter obstacles, careful documentation and analysis is important for understanding the practical implementation of indigenous autonomy and also for the negotiation of appropriate public policies, national laws and NGO support strategies. However, few of the organizations involved in supporting indigenous autonomy are engaged in the serious documentation or analysis of their work.

The first challenge addressed by this project was the need for careful documentation and analysis of local social and political processes behind the creation of institutions of indigenous autonomy for public policy purposes.

The second challenge - which extends beyond the specific context of indigenous autonomy – was to develop more effective methodologies for academic-NGO research collaboration both in research with indigenous communities as well as other areas of policy-oriented development research. More specifically, the objective that followed from this second challenge was to find viable ways to connect the practical knowledge of NGO field staff who work directly with indigenous peoples with academic and policy research - with the dual goals of a) strengthening policy-relevant research, and b) integrating academic research into ongoing reflection by field staff of their work, in particular on appropriate forms of support to indigenous self-governance. This includes the promotion of research capacity and publication among indigenous actors themselves, including both those who work as technical staff within NGOs and those who live in and / or represent indigenous communities.

2. Objectives:

The two objectives for this project were: a) to conduct and disseminate policy-relevant research on indigenous autonomy in Bolivia, and b) to develop viable and sustainable methodological strategies for NGO-academic research collaboration and / or action-research with the Bolivian NGO Fundación TIERRA.

Progress towards project objectives

The project achieved both objectives, although it would always be possible to do more and the 24 month timeline for the project shaped what was possible to achieve in a relatively short period.

Progress towards research objectives:

- Regarding the first objective, the project conducted extensive field research on indigenous autonomy in Bolivia and has disseminated or will soon disseminate the findings from that research to different audiences (indigenous communities, indigenous leaders, policy-makers, NGOs, academics, general public) (see section 5 Outputs) . Regarding the second objective, the project experimented with and implemented various strategies for action-research and NGO-academic collaboration, and generated some useful lessons about which strategies are most viable as well as the conditions and effort required for their success.

- One of the most significant challenges encountered in the project was the declining political will on the part of the Government of Bolivia to support indigenous autonomy. Although apparently supportive when the project was first proposed in 2011, the Government's position became increasingly restrictive over the course of project as it became clear that indigenous autonomy would threaten both its political power and its control over natural resource extraction. In this context, it became clear that only a small number of officials within the Government of Bolivia (in the Ministry of Autonomy) were actually interested in evidence-based research as the basis for public policy making. As the government's position on indigenous autonomy became clear, interest from overseas aid agencies also declined, which made it much more difficult for indigenous organizations and NGOs to access funding to promote and research indigenous autonomy. Moreover, over the course of 2012-14, the Government of Bolivia made it very difficult for NGOs to support indigenous autonomy processes through threats to revoke their legal status, which were carried through in several prominent cases. In this context, a great deal of diplomacy was required when engaging in policy discussions and when producing public and policy-oriented articles and reports in Bolivia.

Summary of research findings

- The two key research goals of this project were a) to analyse the national legal, policy and political framework for indigenous autonomy in Bolivia, and b) to analyse the local level dynamics of indigenous autonomy in indigenous communities.

- In terms of national policies and politics, the Government of Bolivia claims to support indigenous autonomy, but has acted in ways that restrict its implementation – primarily in order to protect state control over natural resources and the political power of the government political party, the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement towards Socialism, MAS). This pattern of

constitutional and discursive support for indigenous rights coupled with practical and policy-based hostility parallels the policies and practices of numerous other Latin American states – and is analysed in various project outputs (listed in Section 4).

- In terms of local dynamics, the project found that the process of debating and negotiating how indigenous autonomy should be designed and should function in specific locales generated much more conflict than had been anticipated by most outside observers or actors in the autonomy process. In that context, the project focused attention on understanding the reasons for support and opposition to indigenous autonomy within indigenous communities and on the subsequent conflicts as well as the strategies adopted by community leaders, NGOs and public officials for mediating those conflicts (See section 4 for related research outputs).

- The failure to anticipate the conflictive dynamics of indigenous autonomy was the result of two assumptions that proved to be problematic. First, that indigenous communities in Bolivia actually wanted to pursue indigenous autonomy as a framework for self-governance; and second, that indigenous communities in Bolivia that had agreed to pursue indigenous autonomy also agreed on how it should function. Our initial research quickly revealed ambiguous attitudes towards indigenous autonomy within many indigenous communities that were in a strong legal position to pursue it. For example, at a number of information workshops in indigenous communities conducted as part of the project – it became clear that indigenous leaders were not at all convinced that indigenous autonomy offered any concrete benefits over the alternative system of municipal government. As a result we initiated a focused research project on *Indigenous Attitudes towards Indigenous Autonomy* in two different regions of Bolivia: the Province of Ingavi in La Paz Department, and the provinces of Yamparaez and Zudañez in Chuquisaca Department. Our research found that the reasons for interest in indigenous autonomy were almost entirely pragmatic (e.g. access to resources, etc.) rather than ideologically-driven (e.g. a quest for indigenous rights) as were the reasons for disinterest or opposition. We also found that many indigenous organizations and communities have explicitly chosen *not* to pursue indigenous autonomy because they have concluded that the possible risks and problems outweigh the potential benefits. This research remains ongoing and will be disseminated both formally and informally in Bolivia and internationally.

- Regarding our second problematic assumption, we also quickly discovered that attitudes towards indigenous autonomy within the indigenous communities that had already decided to pursue it were much more divided than we had expected. Indeed, conflicts over the future design of institutions of indigenous self-governance became so intense in some places that the autonomy process was completely paralyzed and appears unlikely to continue. The project made efforts to mediate some of those conflicts – especially those based on misinformation (see Section 4 Outputs) and also to analyse them for both academic audiences and policy making groups in Bolivia.

- Between the project start and October 2012, five indigenous municipalities completed the formal ‘statutes of autonomy’ required to convert to indigenous autonomy. Plata and Cameron – along with Canadian PhD student Jason Tockman – conducted a detailed analysis of these first five autonomy statutes. Key findings from that analysis included: a) the emerging model of indigenous autonomy reproduces much of the existing municipal system of local government but

using indigenous names for institutions of governance, b) indigenous autonomy statutes make little reference to internationally-recognized indigenous rights (such as UNDRIP and ILO 169) and instead appear to completely accept and operate within the more limited framework of Bolivian law. The project both analysed this trend in policy-oriented and academic forums and publications and also engaged in practical measures to promote awareness of internationally-recognized indigenous rights within indigenous communities, including collaboration with the ILO in a series of regional workshops throughout Bolivia in 2013 (see Section 4 – Outputs).

- Another key research finding concerns the high level of inappropriate intervention in deliberations about the design of indigenous self-governance by government lawyers and consultants, who have subtly ‘imposed’ a highly legalistic framework, which, we believe has stifled genuine debate and innovation in the development of new institutions of indigenous self-governance in Bolivia. We have disseminated this finding through a number of forums and have also taken a series of concrete actions to address the problem, including discussions with government lawyers and consultants and a redesign of workshop formats (so that indigenous communities are now given spaces to discuss their objectives for self-governance *before* government lawyers explain the legal framework).

Progress towards dissemination of research:

- The project successfully disseminated research findings through different strategies and forums targeted at different audiences (for full description see Section 4 Outputs):
 - public presentations and workshops in indigenous communities
 - meetings with government officials, indigenous leaders, NGOs
 - short newspaper articles
 - on-line publication of research in progress (Fundación TIERRA website)
 - large scale conference-workshop with indigenous leaders in Bolivia
 - academic conference presentations
 - articles in peer reviewed academic journals

Progress towards methodological objectives:

- The central methodological objective was to find viable strategies to facilitate academic-NGO research collaboration and to promote research capacity among NGO staff at Fundación Tierra. The project experimented with various strategies for collaboration, some of which turned out to be viable, and others not – at least within the constraints of available time and resources.

The methodological problem – as noted above – is that NGO staff with the deepest knowledge of both policy processes and local community dynamics are not typically engaged in research and written analysis – while researchers typically lack the intimate knowledge acquired by NGO staff through their daily activities. The objective was to bring researchers and NGO staff together in ways that promote the production and dissemination of new knowledge and that facilitate critical reflection and research among NGO staff. The strategies to accomplish this objective all involved efforts to bring together the knowledge of NGO staff with that of researchers.

The most successful strategies were:

- Periodic retreat-style workshops with NGO staff to collectively share and analyse information related to indigenous autonomy. The project organized 6 such workshops with staff from Fundación Tierra and invited guests (see Section 4 outputs). The workshops proved to be very effective mechanisms to encourage NGO staff to share observations and critical analysis – which they generally did not have the opportunity to share in the course of their regular work. The workshops thus served as an effective research methodology while also helping to build the capacity of staff to engage in research activities – as well as fostering positive morale among staff.
- Regular (i.e. weekly to bi-weekly) debriefing of NGO staff through face-to-face interviews and conversations and skype conversations.

Other strategies that the project experimented with but which proved to be less successful included:

- Efforts to encourage staff to convert field reports into research observation documents. That is, rather than simply reporting on the location of an event, the cost of travelling there, etc., we encouraged staff to complete research observation reports to record, for example, the number of people at a meeting, the issues discussed, and key positions in the discussions. The project created a template form for field staff to write their observations, which was adopted by the director of Fundación Tierra as a practice for all field staff in 2012. However, after several weeks of relative success, the willingness of staff to write substantive field reports began to wane. Staff cited lack of time as the central problem; however, real reasons appeared to be lack of inclination to write and lack of energy to do so. Meetings and workshops in rural communities often involved significant waiting time when staff members could have focused their energy on completing field reports, but it became clear that they were not inclined to do so without significant and regular pressure from their supervisors. In this context, relatively few substantive field reports were completed by staff members and there was no documentation of much of what they observed and learned about indigenous autonomy processes. Regular debriefing by the project team and the retreat-style workshops proved to be the only consistent way to tap into the observations and reflections of staff members.
- Document sharing via Dropbox. Early on, the project established a dropbox site for all researchers and staff members working on indigenous autonomy issues to share relevant documents. None of the staff members had used dropbox or any other document sharing platform before. This strategy was successful at generating a relatively thorough digital archives on indigenous autonomy in Bolivia, but required almost constant oversight to remind staff members to upload relevant documents to dropbox. This system worked relatively well when the Primary Investigator (Cameron) was living and working full time in Bolivia, but less well without constant oversight. The challenge seems to be to develop a work ‘culture’ of digital document sharing – which is compounded by the lack

of time that most staff had to actually read any documents they might share with each other and the research team.

Overall, the project encountered strong institutional disincentives for NGO field staff to engage seriously and regularly in research activities (such as writing field observation reports). Field staff claimed to be interested in participating seriously in research, but in the context of pressures on their time to complete other tasks related to projects supported by other funders and their lack of training and experience as researchers, it was clear that research activities were often relegated to relatively low positions on their lists of priorities. As a result, the more traditional strategies of occasional research retreats and de-briefing interviews (often over coffee or lunch) proved to be the most viable mechanisms for research collaboration. This does not mean that efforts to engage field staff in research more deeply could not be successful, but those efforts would require continuous oversight (which was beyond the resources of this project) and would also very likely generate tensions with other expectations on field staff.

A related goal of the project was to support research capacity building among Fundación Tierra researchers themselves. Beyond the learning that would have resulted from involvement in any research project, this project was particularly successful in fostering an understanding and appreciation of the importance of including the voices of indigenous leaders and communities members in the research process and as research outputs through oral history research and publications. Researchers at Fundación Tierra were very competent at an objective style of qualitative and quantitative research which would fulfill all regular criteria for ‘evidence-based research.’ However, one result of that approach to research was that the voices of indigenous leaders were virtually absent from the NGOs publications. To address this problem, the project organized a workshop for researchers and staff on testimonial research methods (facilitated by a Bolivian expert on oral history) and conducted two substantive oral history interviews with important local level indigenous leaders involved in the autonomy process in their respective communities. Those testimonial interviews are being edited and will be published by Fundación TIERRA in 2014. This initiative generated significant learning about oral history methodologies as well as a new recognition of the need to continue with oral history research in the future.

3. Methodology: Collaborative Action Research with Fundación TIERRA

One of the two central challenges and goals of this project was to develop an effective methodology for collaborative action-research between academic institutions and NGOs, in this case Dalhousie University in Canada and Fundación TIERRA in Bolivia. Immediately following the release of funds to Dalhousie from IDRC, Dalhousie signed a research agreement with Fundación Tierra as the formal basis for collaboration. The agreement included funds to support the salary of a full-time action-researcher (Wilfredo Plata), the field action-research travel costs for the researcher, funds for six workshops with the entire team of staff working in the area of indigenous autonomy at Fundación TIERRA, and funds for a large-scale workshop with indigenous leaders in Bolivia to disseminate research findings and to provoke debate. In the 2012 fiscal year, the project organized 3 internal team workshops for TIERRA staff.

The project hired Wilfredo Plata as the action-research assistant for the project. Plata worked closely with Cameron and other Fundación TIERRA staff to gather, disseminate and document information about indigenous autonomy in Bolivia and actively participated in numerous policy forums on indigenous autonomy, most importantly 1) the Inter-Institutional Platform of Support for Indigenous Autonomy (*Plataforma Interinstitucional de Apoyo a la Autonomía Indígena Originaria Campesina*)¹ and 2) the National Council of Indigenous Autonomies (*Consejo Nacional de Autonomías Indígena Originaria Campesinas – CONAIOC*).² Plata's ongoing participation in both forums provided crucial opportunities both for gathering information and for the informal dissemination of research results (a list of meetings is included in Section 4 Outputs).

The principal investigator, Cameron, conducted two 15 day research trips to Bolivia in 2012 (April, October) and two 15 day research trips in 2013 (April, December). In addition, Cameron and Plata spent one to two hours per week meeting by skype and also shared information by email.

Research methods and analytical techniques:

The most important method was action-research and participatory observation by the research assistant, Wilfredo Plata and to a lesser extent by the PI, Cameron. Plata was an active participant and observer in the indigenous autonomy process from its beginnings in 2009 through the delivery of workshops on indigenous and municipal autonomy in indigenous communities and through participation in meetings with the Inter-institutional Platform, CONAIOC, officials from the Ministry of Autonomy and with small groups of indigenous leaders. However, in contrast to other TIERRA staff (and Plata's own role prior to the project start), the Project has enabled Plata to take the necessary time to carefully document observations from this participation for the purpose of research – and to share it with Cameron and other TIERRA staff through written documents and meetings (face to face + skype).

The initial agreement between Dalhousie University and Fundación TIERRA providing funding for Plata's full time employment as a research assistant for the project for 18 months as well as funding to cover field work costs during that period. However, as a result of savings from Cameron's research travel, funding for Plata's position and field research costs was extended for an additional three months – for a total of 21 months.

It is also important to note that following the project end date (March 31, 2014), Plata is continuing to work on project activities at Fundación TIERRA's expense, specifically work on the preparation of academic and policy reports and the edition of the oral history interviews with indigenous leaders (see below).

¹ The Inter-institutional Platform is composed of 11 NGOs, the Indigenous Autonomy unit of the Ministry of Autonomy, and Bolivia's School for Plurinational Public Management – which a) collaborate the provision of technical support for indigenous self-governance, and b) discuss policy options for promoting indigenous autonomy.

² CONAIOC represents the 11 indigenous municipalities in Bolivia that are currently engaged in conversion to indigenous autonomy. It meets regularly – along with staff from support organizations – to share information and to develop common strategies for implementing indigenous autonomy.

Action research and participatory observation primarily took the form of organizing and facilitating information sharing workshops on indigenous autonomy in indigenous communities. Many indigenous community members and leaders were eager to learn about the legal requirements to access formal legal status as indigenous autonomies and called on Fundación TIERRA to provide workshops. As one of the key staff members responsible for providing those workshops, Plata had the opportunity not simply to share information, but also to hear from indigenous community members about their perspectives. Action research and participatory observation proved to be much more effective research methods than interview or survey-based techniques – in large part because action research / participatory observation generated trust with research participants in ways that interviews could not. The action research also took place regularly over the entire 24 month duration of the project (also following 3 previous years of action and observation in many communities) and so, unlike interviews, was also able to record changes in the perceptions and ideas of research participants over time.

Observation was a second core research method. Specifically, Plata and Cameron (when in Bolivia) collectively observed hundreds of hours of meetings in which indigenous communities deliberated on the content of their indigenous autonomy statutes. Plata and Cameron were granted access to the deliberative assemblies in six indigenous municipalities undergoing conversion to indigenous autonomy (everywhere they asked). In these instances, the researchers did not engage in the discussions and debates but simply observed them.

To supplement observation, Plata and Cameron also conducted specific and targeted semi-formal interviews with selected participants in the deliberative assemblies, generally during breaks between the proceedings of the assemblies.

In addition to these field research methods, the project also created an archive of electronic and physical documents on indigenous autonomy in Bolivia, based at the TIERRA office in La Paz.

4. Activities

- 7 full-day internal team workshops with Fundación TIERRA staff to reflect on indigenous autonomy process. Five of the workshops involved Fundación TIERRA staff only. Two of the workshops also involved invited expert guests:
 - April 18, 2012 (Sucre, Bolivia)
 - October 23, 2012 (Sucre, Bolivia)
 - April 18, 2013 (La Paz, Bolivia)
 - May 17, 2013 (La Paz, Bolivia) – workshop on oral history methodologies. Invited expert Carlos Mamani, founding member of the Taller Historia Oral Andina (Andean Oral History Workshop – THOA) and a leading indigenous intellectual in Bolivia.
http://ftierra.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14988:rair&catid=177:autonomias-indigenas&Itemid=243

- October 23, 2013 (La Paz, Bolivia) – workshop on the Constitutional decision on the indigenous autonomy statute of Titora with invited legal expert José Luis Exgeni.
- December 10, 2013 (Sucre, Bolivia)
- December 12, 2013 (La Paz, Bolivia)
- Cameron research travel to Bolivia: 4 research trips
 - April 10-27, 2012
 - October 19-28, 2012.
 - April 13-29, 2013
 - December 3-16, 2013

Each of these research trips involved the following activities:

- Face-to-face meetings between Cameron and Research Assistant (Plata) and with the Director of Finance and Executive Director at Fundación TIERRA to coordinate project activities and monitor progress towards project objectives.
 - Informal meetings with Fundación TIERRA staff to debrief work related to indigenous autonomy
 - Formal internal team workshops (see above)
 - Observation of indigenous autonomy assemblies meetings in the research sites
 - Observation of meetings of the Inter-Institutional Platform of Support for Indigenous Autonomy
 - Observation of meetings of the National Council of Indigenous Autonomies (CONAIOC)
 - Interviews with indigenous leaders, government representatives and staff from other NGOs.
- Informal presentation of research and lessons learned with members of IDRC Canadian Partnerships branch, Ottawa, January 28, 2014.
 - Activities performed by project research assistant (Wilfredo Plata):
 - Regular and ongoing participant-observer research and organizational support for the organization of meetings of the Inter-institutional Platform of Support for Indigenous Autonomy (June 2012-March 2014).
 - Regular and ongoing participant-observer research and organizational support for the organization of meetings of the the Consejo Nacional de Autonomías Indígena Originaria Campesinas (CONAIOC) (June 2012-March 2014), including 3 workshops to create a strategic plan for CONAIOC.
 - Regular and ongoing participant-observer research on indigenous autonomy in six indigenous municipalities involved in conversion to indigenous autonomy status.

- Organization of national workshop: “Intercambio de experiencias sobre el proceso de construcción de las Autonomías Indígena Originaria Campesinas en Bolivia” (“Exchange of Experiences with the Construction of Indigenous Autonomies in Bolivia” (Casa Campestre, Cochabamba), 14-16 November, 2012.
- Edition of special edition of *Nuestra Tierra* magazine on Indigenous Autonomy for mass distribution in indigenous communities – published September 2012 (see outputs below).
- Edition of special edition of *Nuestra Tierra* magazine on Indigenous Autonomy for mass distribution in indigenous communities – published November 2013 (see outputs below).
- 8 Workshop – seminars: on indigenous and municipal autonomy in the province of Ingavi with representatives from 5 municipalities (Guaqui, Jesus de Machaca, Taraco, Tiwanaku, Viacha), August 10, 13, 14, 26; September 1, 16; December 12, 18, February 20, March 8. (2013).
- Field research on indigenous attitudes towards Indigenous Autonomy in the province of Ingavi (Dept. of La Paz) (September 2012-March 2013).
- Research on indigenous attitudes towards Indigenous Autonomy in the Department of Chuquisaca (January – March 2013).
- 7 x two day workshops with Indigenous leaders on indigenous and municipal autonomy throughout Bolivia in March and April 2013 (La Paz: 26-27 March, Trinidad: 2-3 April; Riberalta: 5-6 April; Santa Cruz: 8-9 April; Camiri: 11-12 April; Oruro: 15-16 April; Sucre 18-19 April). The goal of these workshops was to provide information about indigenous autonomy to indigenous leaders and to stimulate debate and discussion among them on indigenous autonomy as an option for local governance.
- Organization of major public conference on “Territorial Management and Indigenous Self-governance” held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, 24-26 April 2013 (see outputs below).
- Co-organization with CONAMAQ: workshop on ‘Land, Territory and Autonomy’ in CONAMAQ’s annual assembly, Sucre, 28-29 January, 2013.
- Organizational support for four high-level workshops with indigenous leaders on the indigenous rights included in International Labour Organization Convention 169 (March-April 2013). The workshops were coordinated with the ILO’s regional office in Lima, Peru. The workshops took place on the following locations and dates: Oruro (5-6 September); Santa Cruz (11-12 September); Sucre (23-24 September); Cochabamba (26-27 September). In total, more than 190 indigenous leaders participated in the workshops (108+ male, 82+ female)

- Oral history interviews with indigenous leaders involved in indigenous autonomy processes (Don Javier Lara, Totorá, Bolivia; Don Andrés Maturano, Mojocoya, Bolivia), November 2013-March 2014).

Lessons Learned from Project Activities:

Three important lessons were learned through the project activities.

- First, the methodology of participatory action research used by the Research Assistant (Wilfredo Plata) proved to be a very effective research strategy. Through the direct organizational support that Plata provided to the various indigenous organizations involved in this research, he was able not only to learn a great deal but also to develop the high level of legitimacy needed for more formal research activities (such as semi-formal and oral history interviews). What was unique about this project is that it also afforded Plata the time to document and analyse research data and to be involved in the written and oral dissemination of research results. This opportunity was very much valued by Fundación TIERRA. Unfortunately, few donor organizations appear willing to support such research-related activities – preferring instead to emphasize only tangible field projects.
- Second, participatory action research also proved to be an extremely important strategy for disseminating research findings. Few of the indigenous leaders involved in this project read any of the written outputs (other than the *Nuestra Tierra* magazine articles). In that context, oral face to face communication was essential in sharing analysis from the project. Similarly, face to face communication was also important in spreading awareness of other project outputs with government officials and NGO staff. For example, two project outputs (articles on the local tensions over indigenous autonomy and the analysis of the first five statutes of autonomy) were distributed as required reading to all staff in the Indigenous Autonomy unit of the Ministry of Autonomy – but only as a result of the close connections between Plata and Ministry staff.
- Third, as noted above, it proved more difficult than expected to engage Fundación TIERRA field staff in research activities. The primary problem was not a result of inappropriate methods but rather lack of time. Staff are employed to work on donor-funded projects and face considerable pressure to generate project results according to schedule, which leaves little to no time for serious involvement in reflection and research – even when directly related to the projects they are involved with. A second challenge related to the lack of a ‘research culture’ among field staff – that is, the absence of habits related to taking field notes, reflecting on observations, and writing for public audiences.

5. Project Outputs

Mass dissemination

- *Nuestra Tierra* newspaper-style publication (24 Pages) on Indigenous Autonomy in Bolivia. September 2012. Distributed throughout Bolivia. 5000 copies. Project Research Assistant (Wilfredo Plata) edited and produced the publication as part of this project.

- Nuestra Tierra newspaper-style publication (12 Pages) on Indigenous Autonomy in Bolivia. November 2013. Distributed throughout Bolivia. 5000 copies. Project Research Assistant (Wilfredo Plata) edited and produced the publication as part of this project.



Conference

- Organization of national conference in Bolivia “Territorial Management and Indigenous Self-governance” Cochabamba, 24-26 April 2013. The conference was targeted at indigenous leaders in municipalities and territories across the country which are already engaged in or interested in conversion to indigenous autonomy. The conference attracted 124 indigenous leaders from across Bolivia as participants. In additions to IDRC funds from this project, the conference was supported by Trocaire, Ibis, Oxfam and GIZ. The project Research Assistant (Wilfredo Plata) was a key member of the conference organizing team.



Reports:

Wilfredo Plata, John Cameron and Jason Tockman. 2013. “Análisis de los 5 primeros Estatutos Autonómicos en el marco de la Ley Marco de Autonomías y Descentralización”. Commissioned report for the Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu), Bolivia. February 27, 2013. 4 pages.

Refereed Academic publications:

John Cameron. In press (2014). “Auto-gouvernance autochtone dans les Andes : les contradictions des institutions politiques hybrides” in Nancy Thede, ed. *Hybridité et résistances : Trajectoires inattendues de la démocratie locale*. Paris : Editions Karthala, pp 223-273.

John Cameron, Jason Tockman and Wilfredo Plata. (Forthcoming in 2014). “New Institutions of Indigenous Self-Governance in Bolivia: Between Autonomy and Self-Discipline” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*.

Jason Tockman and John Cameron. (Forthcoming in Fall 2014). “Indigenous Autonomy and the Contradictions of Plurinationalism in Bolivia” *Latin American Politics and Society*.

John Cameron. 2013. “Bolivia’s Contentious Politics of ‘Normas y Procedimientos Propios’” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 8, 2: 179-201.

Non-refereed publications:

John Cameron. 2013. “La sentencia contra la ley de autonomías retrasará las AIOC en curso” *Nuestra Tierra* (Newspaper published by Fundación TIERRA). November, page 11.

John Cameron. 2012. “Identidades Conflictuadas: Conflictos internos de clase y de identidad étnica en la Construcción de las Autonomías Indígena Originaria Campesinas en Bolivia” Fundación TIERRA: www.ftierra.org (24 pages).

John Cameron. 2012. “Las consecuencias inesperadas del conflicto TIPNIS para la plurinacionalidad en Bolivia” en Fundación Tierra, ed. *Marcha indígena por el TIPNIS: La lucha en defensa de los territorios*. La Paz: Fundación Tierra, pp 192-193.

John Cameron. 2012. “Identidades en conflicto: La movilización de identidades y memorias históricas en la construcción de las Autonomías Indígena Originaria Campesinas” *Nuestra Tierra* (Newspaper published by Fundación TIERRA). March 29. (2 pages)

Conference Presentations:

- John Cameron. 2013. “Reflections on Excellence in Academic-Civil Society Research Collaboration on Indigenous Self-Governance in Bolivia” Paper presented to the conference “Research for change: What is “research excellence” for civil society organizations and their academic partners?” IDRC and Coady International Institute, November 13-14, Antigonish, Canada.
- John Cameron. 2013. “La construcción de la Autonomía Indígena Originaria Campesina en Bolivia: Proceso difícil y contradictorio” Seminario-taller internacional “Gestión Territorial y Autogobierno Indígena” 24-26 de abril de 2013, Cochabamba, Bolivia.
- Wilfredo Plata. 2013. “La autonomía indígena originaria campesina desde la perspectiva de los actores políticos y autoridades locales en zonas rurales de Chuquisaca y La Paz” Paper presented at the 2013 Meeting of the Asociación de Estudios Bolivianos, Sucre, Bolivia, 31 July-2 August.
- John Cameron and Jason Tockman. 2012. “Indigenous Autonomy and the Contradictions of Plurinationalism in Bolivia” Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Kelowna, May 20, 2012.
- John Cameron. 2012. “The Contentious Politics of ‘normas y procedimientos propios’

in the Construction of Indigenous Autonomy in Bolivia” Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Kelowna, May 18, 2012.

- John Cameron. 2012. “Bolivia’s Contentious Politics of ‘Normas y Procedimientos Propios’” Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, San Francisco, May 23-26, 2012
- John Cameron. 2012. “Bolivia’s Contentious Politics of ‘normas y procedimientos propios’” Paper presented to the Canadian Association for Studies in International Development meetings, Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, May 29-31.
- John Cameron and Wilfredo Plata. 2012. “Nuevas instituciones para el autogobierno indígena en Bolivia: Un análisis de los Estatutos de Autonomía Indígena Originaria Campesina” Paper presented to the VIII Congreso Internacional de la Red Latinoamericana de Antropología Jurídica (RELAJU), Sucre, Bolivia, October 24-26.

Training – Graduate students

- Tonianne Mynen. 2012. “Young People’s Perspectives on Culture and Development: Building Autonomy in Indigenous Communities in Bolivia” MA Program, Dept. of IDS, Saint Mary’s University (Mynen was supervised by Cameron and conducted action-research with Fundación TIERRA’s regional office in Sucre).
- Paul Hilborn. In progress. Decolonization and plurinationalism in Bolivia: a case study of indigenous autonomy. MA program, Dept. of IDS, Dalhousie University. (Hilborn is being supervised by Cameron with support from Fundación TIERRA’s regional office in La Paz).

Planned and forthcoming outputs:

- John Cameron, Jason Tockman and Wilfredo Plata. In progress, publication anticipated in 2014. “Nuevas instituciones de autogobierno indígena en Bolivia: Entre la autonomía y la auto-disciplina” *Descursos* (Universidad Mayor de San Simon, Cochabamba, Bolivia). Translation and adaptation of “New Institutions of Indigenous Self-Governance in Bolivia: Between Autonomy and Self-Discipline.”
- John Cameron and Wilfredo Plata. In progress, publication anticipated in 2014. “Saying ‘No’ to Indigenous Autonomy in Bolivia” For submission to the *Bulletin of Latin American Research*.
- John Cameron and Wilfredo Plata. In progress, publication anticipated in 2014. “Porque ‘No’ a las Autonomías Indígenas” (Spanish version of “Saying ‘No’ to Indigenous Autonomy in Bolivia”). For publication on Fundación TIERRA web page.
- John Cameron. In progress, publication anticipated in 2015. “Is this What Autonomy Looks Like? Tensions and Challenges in the Construction of Indigenous Autonomy in Bolivia” For submission to the *Latin American Research Review*.
- Edited testimonial oral history interviews with *Don Andres Maturano* and *Don Javier Lara* (leaders of indigenous autonomy processes in Mojocoya and Totora, respectively). Interviews conducted and edited by Wilfredo Plata. To be published by Fundación TIERRA in 2014.

Unique and specific accomplishments related to outputs:

- The project accomplished a significant degree of research-capacity building for the Research Assistant (Wilfredo Plata) and for the field staff at Fundación Tierra who work on projects related to indigenous rights as well as for research staff. In particular, Fundación TIERRA developed a much deeper appreciation for the value of involving field staff in research activities and for collaboration between researchers and field staff. The project contributed to capacity development with specific strategies for such collaboration, including retreat-style internal workshops and debriefing meetings.
- The project contributed to greater understanding and capacity within Fundación TIERRA to use participatory action research methodologies (i.e. staff who simultaneously support project activities and conduct research and engage in analysis).
- The project contributed to greater understanding and capacity within Fundación TIERRA to use oral history methodologies and testimonial style publications – to ensure that the voices of indigenous actors are clearly projected into policy debates.

Outcomes

Reach

- Following the presentation of an analysis of the 5 autonomy statutes at the RELAJU conference in October 2012, the national-level indigenous organization CONAMAQ requested a 4 page executive summary of the paper for its own internal use. The argument presented in the paper (now in press for publication in *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*) that indigenous organizations involved in conversion to indigenous autonomy did not seek to claim internationally recognized indigenous rights was significant in the decision of the ILO's regional office (based in Lima, Peru) to conduct four high level workshops with indigenous leaders in Bolivia on the indigenous rights contained in ILO Convention 169.
- Reflection within TIERRA internal team workshops has resulted in a new methodology for workshops with indigenous communities for presenting information and provoking discussion of municipal and indigenous autonomy. In the past, such workshops typically began with presentations about the legal framework and requirements for conversion to indigenous autonomy. Internal reflection highlighted the ways in which this format often constrained the subsequent discussion to legal themes and requirements – rather than a broader discussion of the ways in which indigenous communities hope to govern themselves. The workshops have now been redesigned to begin with discussions of visions for self-governance and only later to explain the existing legal framework in Bolivia for indigenous autonomy.
- Use of research findings within Fundación TIERRA: Ongoing research indicates that many indigenous municipalities are unsure of the advantages of conversion to indigenous autonomy. As a result, TIERRA workshops in indigenous municipalities are now careful to present the options for both indigenous and municipal autonomy and to make clear that they are willing to

work with indigenous municipalities on self-governance issues regardless of which path they choose.

Impacts:

- Following workshops and meetings on indigenous and municipal autonomy in the province of Ingavi, indigenous leaders in the municipality of San Andres de Machaca have taken the decision to pursue formal conversion to indigenous autonomy.
- Following workshops and meetings on indigenous and municipal autonomy in the province of Ingavi, indigenous leaders in the municipality of Tiwanaku have taken the decision to continue with the municipal system of governance.
- It can be expected that following workshops held in indigenous municipalities in the province of Ingavi, that other indigenous municipalities will use information presented through this project to make similar decisions about whether or not to pursue conversion to indigenous autonomy.
- Production of a strategic plan by the Coordinadora Nacional de Autonomías Indígenas Originarias Campesinas (CONAIOC). Partial credit for the draft strategic plan can be attributed to the Project through the work of Wilfredo Plata.

Capacity Building

Institutional reinforcement and sustainability of the research organization: The primary focus of this project was on supporting the Bolivian partner organization, Fundación TIERRA. To date, this project has helped to strengthen the capacities of TIERRA in two key respects:

- *Reflection on experiences with indigenous autonomy to identify lessons learned:* Through the project six full-day internal team workshop meetings were convened to bring together staff members to discuss and reflect upon the indigenous autonomy process, government policies towards it, and the institutional practices of TIERRA towards indigenous autonomy. These workshops served the purpose of both internal reflection and ongoing evaluation of a) the indigenous autonomy process, and b) TIERRA project and research methodologies (see project activities – above).
- *Increased documentation skills among researchers and field staff:* One of the central objectives of this project was to strengthen the capacity for documenting evidence and knowledge about indigenous autonomy within Fundación TIERRA. To date, two primary mechanisms have been developed: 1) a system for field staff to produce field observation note as part of every trip report (rather than just report on the location, date, etc.); 2) the use of drop-box to share documents and other information. Although not always successful in consistently using these methods, field staff clearly became competent with both.

Increased research skills:

▪ ***Strengthened capacity for policy-relevant research on indigenous autonomy within Fundación TIERRA:*** the research assistant for the project, Wilfredo Plata, is a permanent Fundación TIERRA staff member who had worked on indigenous autonomy project implementation until the project start date. This project has made it possible to shift Plata's responsibilities to also include research, analysis and dissemination. While Plata had previous research experience, this project also strengthened his policy-relevant research skills, through training in research methods, and practical experience in carrying out a major research projects – as well as in integrating research with TIERRA's field activities (one of the key objectives of the project).

▪ ***Strengthened capacity for oral history research with indigenous peoples within Fundación TIERRA and Dalhousie:*** One of the objectives of this project was to increase the capacity of both TIERRA staff and Cameron to conduct research in collaboration with (rather than on) indigenous peoples. One key challenge was to produce written information with indigenous actors, rather than simply involve them as sources of information. With this specific goal in mind, the project organized a one-day workshop on oral history for TIERRA staff in April 2013 –facilitated by Carlos Mamani, a founding member of the *Taller Historia Oral Andina (Andean Oral History Workshop – THOA)* and a leading indigenous intellectual in Bolivia. That workshop led to a decision to conduct a series of oral history interviews with indigenous leaders involved in the autonomy processes and to publish testimonial style documents based on those interviews for mass distribution in Bolivia.

▪ ***Capacity building of women and marginalized groups:*** Within the TIERRA team of 7 staff members who work in the area of indigenous autonomy, 3 are women and 4 are men. 5 staff members (2 women, 3 men) self-identify as indigenous.

Overall Assessment and Recommendations:

This project achieved all of its objectives. These were 1) the production and dissemination of evidence-based and policy-relevant research on indigenous autonomy in Bolivia, and 2) research capacity building for academic-NGO collaboration and participatory-action research methods.

The primary recommendation from this research is that development research funding organizations (e.g. IDRC) and development donor agencies recognize the value of participatory action research and support it with project funds. This means that project funding include specific support for project staff to engage in research activities – including the collection and documentation of data, collective analysis of data, and the oral and written dissemination of research results. Far too often, project staff and research staff in development NGOs operate in isolation from one another. That isolation needs to be overcome by bringing field staff and researchers closer together – but will require recognition of the value of doing so by donor agencies.