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Relevance of Social Capital in Understanding and Negotiating Conflict around Water Management in a Micro Basin in the Andes Region

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Key Message

Social capital—the interaction and relationship between the different actors within a basin and the social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them—is key to the successful implementation of benefit sharing mechanisms.

Summary

This study on social capital in the Lullan-Parón micro-basin looks at analyzing the relationships among the different actors engaged in hydrological management. Social capital refers to connections and relationships that tie individuals and communities together, permitting them to act together in an effective manner in pursuing common goals. When neither trust nor reciprocity exists among community members or between community and other basin actors, conflict is difficult to negotiate. The study provides better and deeper understanding of existing and latent conflicts around water management that could impede the implementation of benefit sharing mechanisms. So far, conflicts between the community and a hydroelectric company in the area regarding management of the Paron Lake are strong and are perceived as unsolvable. Our analysis should help identify venues and alliances (building social capital) that can help community overcome the standoff and negotiate win-win water

management conditions. We hope this research can also provide an analytical framework and guidelines to be used by other basins within CPWF to understand conflict.