

Agua Sustentable
Bolivia

MUJERES LIDERESAS DEL LAGO TITICACA

Move from Resistance to Action

Along the shores of Lake Titicaca - where pollution has become part of the landscape and inaction a habit -something has begun to shift. It did not arrive through an institutional announcement or a million-dollar investment. It began with a decision: to stop resisting in silence.

A group of women leaders—Mujeres Unidas en Defensa del Agua—chose to act. The capacity-building process led by Agua Sustentable, with support from IUCN, through the Swiss funded BRIDGE programme, has gone far beyond training. What is emerging is a new generation of leaders who not only understand the problem, but are ready to confront it with concrete tools.



The turning point came during the fourth workshop, held in the city of El Alto on april the first. That was where the narrative changed. Participants did more than reaffirm their role as defenders of their territories. They took a more uncomfortable—and more powerful—step: identifying specific cases of pollution that will be formally reported.

Two issues were clearly prioritized: the shutdown of the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) in Copacabana, and the deficient solid waste management in Desaguadero. For years, these problems were tolerated, normalized, or simply ignored. Today, they are beginning to take shape as formal case files—with evidence, legal pathways, and strategy. This shift is significant. It marks a move from scattered complaints to organized advocacy. From perception to proof. And, above all, from waiting to demanding.

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This progress is supported, in part, by an innovative approach: the “Yanapa Red” platform, a tool that combines technology, community organization, and a territorial perspective to enable the activation of complaints and the systemic documentation of evidence.
During this same space, another key step was taken; shaping the identity of the process itself. Participants collectively defined the name of the application and its slogan, “Suma Jakaña” (Living Well). Through participatory dynamics and consensus-building, the knowledge, territorial experience, and memory of elder women leaders were merged with the technological skills, practical focus, and development-oriented vision of younger generations who also took part. **The result is more than a name.**

“Yanapa Red”—which in Aymara conveys the idea of support, accompaniment, and solidarity—projects a tool that does not replace people, but strengthens them. A network that sustains, connects, and activates.
“Suma Jakaña,” meanwhile, is not merely a slogan. It is a statement of purpose: living well means clean water, respected territories, and decisions made with people—not behind their backs. Together, the name and slogan form something more powerful than an application: a platform with political, community, and cultural meaning, aimed at transforming how territory is defended.
Because what is not documented does not exist. And what is not formalized does not challenge anyone.

The process has also woven something equally vitalt: an intergenerational alliance. Experienced leaders contribute memory, legitimacy, and political insight; younger women bring digital skills, speed, and new ways of communicating.
In a context where the environmental crisis of Lake Titicaca no longer shocks, this process introduces a factor that can actually shift the needle: organized action grounded in clear rights and supported by the capacity to act.

In the end, the difference is simple.
Before, they knew the problem existed. Now, they know what to do about it.
And that—for any authority that prefers to look the other way—is a different story.
Together, they are building something much harder to ignore.



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