



TV

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UN IN ACTION

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COLOMBIA: WATER – WAYUU WOMEN'S GOLD

VIDEO

MARIA ELENA WALKS TO TAP

CLOSE-UPS OF CLAY WATER-
BOTTLE ON HER BACK)

SHE ARRIVES AT TAP AND FILLS
BOTTLE

GRISELDA POLANCO ON CAMERA

GRISELDA WALKS ACROSS OPEN
SAND

BCU WOMAN'S FACE

AUDIO

NARRATION

Its noon and almost 42 degrees centigrade. Maria Elena is going to fetch water – again. In this community in the north-eastern Colombian desert, as in many others around the world, providing water for the family is the role of the women. At least three times a day, Maria-Elena walks a kilometre through the sweltering sand to the tap in the village. But the water that comes out is salty. (29")

GRISELDA POLANCO (in Spanish): F

"It's from an underground spring, but it was perforated. Here we have salt water." (5")

NARRATION

Griselda Polanco is Maria Elena's niece and one of the leaders of their community. They form part of Colombia's largest indigenous group, the Wayuu, whose ancestral lands near the Venezuelan border are suffering the

BOY SUCKING ON HOSE FROM
DIRTY POOL OF WATER

devastating consequences of climate change.
(17")

GRISELDA POLANCO (SPANISH) F

GRISELDA POLANCO ON CAMERA

"This used to be a rich land, a land where it rained, where it was fresh. And now, in the last five years, there's been a terrible drought. Last year, we went the whole year without a single rainfall." (12")

NARRATION

WATERING HOLE

As a result, the traditional Wayuu water reserves, or "Haways", are drying up. (5.2")

GRISELDA POLANCO (SPANISH) F

GRISELDA POLANCO ON CAMERA

"Some people drink this green water, though there are only the dregs left, because there's nothing else to drink. But it's harmful to drink – it gives us diarrhea, it fills the children with parasites." (12")

NARRATION

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The consequences on the children are felt particularly keenly amongst the women who, in the matrilineal Wayuu culture, bear the ultimate responsibility for the survival of their people. Griselda's mother, Elodia, sitting alongside HER elderly mother, explains. (17.9")

ELODIA JUSAYU (SPANISH) F

ELODIA JUSAYU ON CAMERA

"The mother has to find a way to provide for the family, to work, whatever it takes, to find food for her children." (8")

NARRATION

WATER TOWER
PEOPLE COLLECTING WATER:

Yet almost within sight of their homes, there is an ample supply of fresh water being drawn from their land – but Griselda and her family and neighbours in the village of Pesuapa are denied access to it. (13.8”)

GRISELDA POLANCO (SPANISH)

GRISELDA POLANCO ON CAMERA

“The water that they get from here, from the indigenous communities, is for the people of the town, who aren’t indigenous.” (6.7”)

NARRATION

WATER TOWER
GRISELDA CONFRONTS TEAM OF
ENGINEERS

For years, Griselda has been campaigning for her people’s right to this water. She confronts a team of engineers working on the site and demands that her community get some of the water. (12”)

NAT SOUND:

NAT SND: GRISELDA TALKING TO
WATER ENGINEERS

GRISELDA: *“I want to know who is the contractor here so that I can talk to him, otherwise we’re going to paralyze this work.” (6.5”)*

MAN: *“He’s not here at the moment” (1.4”)*

NARRATION

ORSINIA POLANCO ARRIVES AT
COLOMBIAN CONGRESS
BUILDING

The fight for the right to their natural resources has been taken to the highest level. In 2006, Griselda’s sister, Orsinia Polanco, was the first indigenous woman elected to the Colombian Congress, in Bogota. She has fought repeatedly in Congress for a law to be passed

recognizing water as a fundamental right for ALL Colombians. (22”)

ORSINIA POLANCO (in Spanish)

ORSINIA POLANCO ON CAMERA

“One of my biggest dreams, which I’ve always fought for and argued, is that there’s water for the Wayuu people. It’s the first thing I want.”
(8”)

NARRATION

But the bill she introduced in 2009 did not become law and she feels the state has not protected her people and the right to their natural resources. (10”)

NARRATION

MARGARITA BUESO

Margarita Bueso, Programme Manager of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in Colombia, says that the Wayuu people’s rights to the basic necessities of life must be protected. (12”)

MARGARITA BUESO (SPANISH) F

MARGARITA BUESO ON CAMERA

“The state has a huge responsibility to support indigenous peoples in preserving their culture... and as the woman is fundamental, I think we should improve the law and their access to justice to guarantee their basic necessities.”
(17”)

GRISELDA POLANCO (SPANISH)

GRISELDA POLANCO ON CAMERA

“With water, we’d be able to plant seeds and, if we plant, we’ll be able to feed ourselves well. The truth is – we will have a future if we

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manage to get water to irrigate. And if we manage to get it for this community, we can get it for other communities too.” (17.4”)

CLOSING TAG

This report was produced by Gill Fickling for the United Nations. (4”)