

▶ **Fabiola Quishpe** lives in the community of Apahua in rural Ecuador. She has been working in her community to preserve the *paramós*, the sponge-like Andean grasslands that play a key role in preserving water in the local eco-system. Progressio arranged for Fabiola to attend the climate negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009, bringing the voice of small-scale farmers to the international decision-making table.

**Q. What message did you bring to Copenhagen?**

**A.** People in the cities, they make the decisions, but they don't know what it is like here [in rural communities]. They are in their offices, they can't imagine this life – maybe if they visited, but they do not. Rural people eat, breathe and sleep agriculture. For this we need water. Without the *paramós* we will have nothing: no water, our soil will be bad, our crops will fail. We have to protect mother earth, and care for her.

My message to international decision-makers would be to safeguard water, as it is a vital liquid for all of humanity.

**Q. Do you feel that you were listened to?**

**A.** During my time in Copenhagen, I attended the launch of a report on the environment and climate change called *Other worlds are possible*. Through my connections with Progressio, my story was featured in the report – so I was really happy to see a copy.

It was really great for me to speak at the launch – to share the experiences that we are living at the moment, not only my community's experiences but also the experiences of my province and country.

**Q. What did you learn?**

**A.** After my presentation, other indigenous representatives from around the world also spoke about their experiences. Listening to these stories I was able to understand that all of us have the same challenges. We all



have our own traditional knowledge and expertise that is going to help us adapt to climate change – and this traditional knowledge needs to be respected and promoted.

Yet in each country that has indigenous people, those governments are not respecting and not listening to the indigenous voice. The laws that they make are always their own agreements on their own terms. They are not listening to what the communities say about their needs.

**Q. How important was it to have your say?**

**A.** Some people asked me if I was nervous before I spoke. I thought that was funny. No I wasn't nervous at all, I felt very proud. I wanted to stand up proud and strong in front of so many people from so many countries and share the experiences of my community and my people.