

## Economic Empowerment of Women Artisans Facing Natural Disaster in the North of Peru (Piura case) Women Artisans Network “Weaving Hopes”

Ms. Carmen LEDESMA (Peru)

Between December 2016 and March 2017, a natural disaster called the Coastal Boy Phenomenon (El Niño) hit northern Peru, leaving thousands of families affected by the overflowing of rivers that caused floods in several departments, including Piura. The catastrophe destroyed homes, agricultural lands, road access and basic services and, therefore, a state of emergency was declared. In Piura, a total of 141,860 people lost their homes as of March 31, 2017. There were 27,981 victims and 34 shelters were installed with a total of 1,985 tents to protect the population in the districts of Catacaos and Cura Mori in Piura.

The Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP) participated in the relocation of families and women, girls, boys and adolescents in different shelters, and selected the shelter of San Pablo in Catacaos, Piura to concentrate more women with a total of 267 families. In this context, the MIMP installed Violence Assistance Module where lawyers and psychologists were stationed in order to prevent violence against women, and "JUGUEMOS" (Let's Play) Module for children to stimulate their early recovery through games, taking into account the resilience situation of this population after the natural disaster.

During the period between 2016 and part of 2017, high rates of violence were recorded in Piura, averaging 55% cases of psychological violence, 36% physical, 9% sexual, in addition to 3 cases of femicide and 9 cases of attempted femicide. Behind this situation was a condition in which displaced women and children were exposed to other forms of violence. In Piura, 2,757 cases of violence were registered in 2016 only.

The economically active female population of Piura was 40% (370 thousand people), with 82.5% of women engaged in the informal sector.

### Task Force



External part of the Workshop Tent of the artisan women's network "Weaving Hopes", which was full of visitors during a sale at a fair held from December 2017 to January 2018



Interior of the Workshop set up for the productive activities of the artisan women



Windows and exhibition in the sales area



Lactation area with cots to breastfeed the children while their mothers are working



Play area for their small children

### Women entrepreneurs in action



A senior craftswoman weaving a toquilla straw hat



Workshop for artisan women



Tent of Women's Emergency Center that serves to attend victims of violence cases in the San Pablo settlement

Toquilla straw products handwoven by women artisans



Selling the products of the women artisans at fairs and different institutions for Christmas 2017

In this context of displaced women, the MIMP, together with its National Program Against Family and Sexual Violence, designed an intervention strategy to promote the generation of income for women to achieve their economic autonomy through the development of their productive abilities to weave toquilla straw products—traditional crafts of Piura with great recognition—using natural resources in the area as a comparative advantage over other regions. Out of the total of 267 women in the shelter, in the first phase of the intervention in the second half of 2017, over 100 women were trained in the design of innovative straw products to enter the market. In order to support this pilot project of women entrepreneurs, a network of women artisans called Weaving Hopes was created in the district of Catacaos in Piura Region, aiming to promote future sustainability and women’s economic independence with the objective of promoting their economic autonomy by building their capacity for producing straw products and addressing commercial issues, as well as by cultivating their leadership while applying gender and intercultural approaches.

The MIMP has given technical assistance and been cooperating with the private sector, other state institutions, regional corporations such as BELCORP to facilitate the women’s empowerment and economic autonomy, as well as with others with a knowledge about colors and fashion trends of the products and services to make them more competitive and promote them to the market with sustainable projections.

The artisan women displaced and located in the San Pablo shelter did not have a space for designing their products, and therefore a module was installed as a workshop (10 meters wide, 17 meters long, and 4 meters high) with a space suitable for preparing their products, receiving training, and exhibitions and sales, which is divided into 4 areas: the product elaboration area, the marketing area, the lactation area with cots to breastfeed their children while working, and the play area for their small children. It has an intercultural approach respecting the way the artisans work at round tables—talking and sitting on cushions as they do their work, with the model of the product put at the center.

Currently, there are approximately 200 women who have joined the network, selling their products in shopping centers and at the request of companies. The MIMP has designed the second phase of the intervention to expedite access to the international market that is in the process of being implemented. The strategy of this project helps the women out of violence and poverty as they say: “We feel free and weave hopes of growth for our life free of violence with economic empowerment.”

## Before

Prior situation in the area of women artisans in the San Pablo shelter in Catacaos, Piura



Basic tent where it was impossible to teach 100 artisan women how to weave toquilla straw products



Classroom of a children’s school where the women received classes in toquilla straw weaving prior to the establishment of the module for artisan products workshop



Young mother serves as the leader of the women’s network