

## **Peruvian Women : Facing Political Disasters**

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Throughout the centuries, Peruvian women suffered gender discrimination. In addition, political, social and economic disasters have affected women in their social, productive and reproductive roles.

Disasters distort momentarily the normal development of communities. This in turn prioritizes intervention in event of emergency, independently of whether it affects or not more women or children. However, public policies to prevent natural or political disasters do not incorporate a gender perspective.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Peruvian women suffered the consequences of natural and political disasters. In both decades, there were long droughts and floods at a time when there was political violence and terrorist actions as a consequence of economic and social gaps. Thousands of parents, husbands, children, young students, peasants, policemen and troops were killed, leaving thousands of women alone or as heads of family, who lost their land and houses. In other words, they were left in a social abyss with the terrible stigma of gender discrimination. The majority of these women came from the rural areas of Andean regions. At the same time, they also broke the traditional roles of millennium masculine heredity due to stereotypes and patriarchal society.

In this period, many woman organizations were established throughout the country. In rural areas, non governmental organizations were established to provide food or health aid. However, this was not the answer because women needed instead help to be independent and participate in productive processes.

In light of these events, some women recognized that they did not intend to take a risk with their family lives. Others wanted to continue but suffered intimidation. Some organizations withdrew and others were closed. Many women organizations, however, did not close totally. Gradually, they were opened again and new organizations were created in the middle of this conflict.

In December of 2000, the Peruvian Government established The Truth and Reconciliation Commission-CVR, through Supreme Decree N° 065-2001-PCM, to

investigate human rights abuses in Peru in the 1980's and 1990's, attributable to terrorist organizations, armed forces and government officers during these time. The main goal of the CVR was the compensation of victims of violence, and to achieve national reconciliation because of differences among Peruvian citizens.

According to research of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission-CVR, between 1984 and 1998, 29 women of 465 organization leaders disappeared or were murdered. At the same time, this research removed the anonymity of hundreds of women who were fighters for social demands and women rights. Terrorist organizations found women strongly accepted their extreme terrorist actions. Subsequently, women paid a very high cost with their lives.

The CVR investigated thousands of disappearances and tortures. Some examples are the massive murders in Cayara, La Cantuta and Barrios Altos and many "common graves" that were discovered frequently during those days. At the same time, CVR investigated other cases where women were kidnapped by terrorist groups; forced into sexual slavery; raped during terrorists' actions and by the armed forces. They also analyzed cases where women were subject to sexual abuse during interviews by military forces. They also reviewed cases where women became pregnant due to sexual abuse and were forced to raise kids resulting from this abuse. According to the CVR's final report, around 69,000 people died or disappeared during twenty years of war. The final recommendations of this Commission included health and education programs; compensation and reparation for the victims of political violence and provision of identification documents. In addition, a High-level Multisectoral Commission was created in February 2004 to design and coordinate the implementation of state policies concerning peace and reconciliation.

In conclusion, we can say that women were subject to the worst kind of violence from government and terrorist movements. Gender discrimination occurred simultaneously on both sides. As women suffer the worst negative impact during disasters it is important to eradicate gender discrimination. Government officers have the obligation to incorporate gender perspective in the political agenda and make public policies more effective. Women only want justice to be done!

