



**GENDER, PEACE & SECURITY IN BRIEF #4**

**Why do we need to talk about gender, diversity and climate change when it comes to peace and security in Latin America?**

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## INTRODUCTION

Climate change<sup>1</sup> and environmental degradation constitute two of the most significant threats to human development<sup>2</sup> and human security.<sup>3</sup> The increase in global warming has caused a series of events that have affected both weather and climate worldwide, causing direct effects in the form of high-intensity hurricanes, droughts, floods and rain regime changes. Indirect effects include displacement of populations,<sup>4</sup> decline in agriculture, changes in production systems and deterioration of biodiversity.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, environmental degradation is both the cause and consequence of armed conflict. **Territorial control has been one of the root causes of violent conflict between groups and States throughout human history.** Consequently, territorial control has different impacts on the lives of men, women and others due to differing gender roles, stereotypes and social expectations.

1 We adopt the use of climate change as per its use across the scientific community to refer to the wide set of impacts caused by increasing CO2 emissions. Global warming is understood as the rise of surface temperature and its associated consequences; a term widely used publically and in the media. We acknowledge the political and communicative debate as regards to risk perception, thoughtfully explored by A. Leiserowitz "Climate Change Risk Perception and Policy Preferences: the Role of Affect, Imagery and Values" *Climatic Change* 77 (2006): 45, 68 nevertheless this is not the centre of this document.

2 United Nations Development Programme. Website: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev> (last visited: 30.09.2019).

3 Commission on Human Security. "Human Security Now". (New York: 2003).

4 Jane McAdam, ed., *Climate change and displacement: Multidisciplinary perspectives*. (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2010): GG.

5 Deepa Joshi, "Gender Change in the Globalization of Agriculture?" *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 27.2 (July, 2015): 168.

In addition, researchers in these fields have concluded that: "There is a causal interrelationship between climate change and gender: climate change tends to exacerbate existing gender inequalities, and gender inequalities lead women to face larger negative impacts."<sup>6</sup> This document therefore looks into a series of strategic scenarios that explore the connection between climate change, environmental conflicts and its gender dimensions in Latin America.

## STATE OF THE ART

Historically, and based on its colonial past, the strongest economic sector in Latin America has always been the production of primary goods - agriculture, livestock and mining in the region. This productive apparatus is rooted in *extractivism*,<sup>7</sup> or the massive extraction of non-processed resources; either within the formal economy (agro-export, hydrocarbon exploitation, trawling) or in the irregular economy (illicit use of crops and illegal mining and logging). Land

6 Lorena Aguilar "Training manual on Gender and Climate change" (San José, Costa Rica: Global Gender and Climate Alliance, 2009): 87.

7 We adopt Norma Giarracca and Miguel Teubal's vision for whom extractivism equals to the reprimarization of the economy "the emphasis placed on the production of raw materials for export - commodities-, but also those provided by the agricultural and livestock sector in the production model of "agribusiness" or agroindustry for the domestic market (...) capital intensive sectors, which create little employment or even expel it and have few links to the rest of the economy because they tend to be part of enclave economies. These are very profitable activities, involving the attrition and depletion of the country's natural resources with fierce environmental degradation and consequences on human health". Giarracca and Teubal "Reprimarization Of The Argentine Economy? Buenos Aires", *Extractive Activities In Expansion* (Argentina: Antropofagia, 12).

has thus become the main good controlled by a capitalist economic perspective that only values nature as a source of resources. This mindset does not acknowledge the social dimensions of territories that serve as social settings in which environmental, political, cultural and economic relationships develop and take place between different populations.<sup>8</sup>

This lack of recognition of the human dimension is the basis of indirect, invisible and naturalized symbolic violence, wherein economic gain becomes the prevailing objective over the sustainability of life. This violence even goes beyond the symbolic; physical confrontations, war and strategic action have taken place in order to exercise sovereignty over the space.

Furthermore, the process of the formation of identity has had a segmented impact on early republics, still crossed by colonial, ethnic and racial hierarchies. These hierarchies place privileged *criollos* (locally born Spanish descendants who self-identify as white and heirs of conquerors) above the survivors of the African slave trade and their descendants. The decimated indigenous and poorer communities, both rural and urban, are also politically relegated. "The formation of the identity of white *criollos* was based on the exclusion of other social groups with whom they share the same territory. Moreover, exalting the richness of the habitat became one of the core elements

8 General discussion about it in the section "Territory" Dictionary of Human Geography, eds. Derek Gregory, R. Johnson, G. Pratt, M. Watts and S. Wiley Whatmore (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 746-747.

reinforcing group identity and fostering aspirations of autonomy in regards to the Spanish crown."<sup>9</sup>

Hence, economic, social and gender inequalities are some of the most pressing challenges in public policy at the regional level.<sup>10</sup> **Public debates across the global South cover a wide, heterogeneous and complex terrain of discussions aiming to deconstruct and question structures that legitimize power and inherently require a postcolonial critique.** This includes a recognition of intersectional forms of discrimination based on class, gender, race, educational level, ethnicity and nationality, among others. An intersectional perspective confirms and validates a vision in which differences and diversity do not mean unequal.

In addition to three decades of academic discourse from different academic disciplines on the consequences of climate change<sup>11</sup> and post-colonial socio-economic

9 Jorge Enrique Gonzalez "Introducción" Naciones y Nacionalismos en América Latina, ed. Jorge González (Bogotá, Colombia: CES, CLACSO, 2001): 23.

10 Countries like Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Honduras, Mexico and Panama are in the list of the top 10 most unequal countries in the world according to the World Bank "Taking on Inequality Poverty and Shared Prosperity" (2016): 84.

11 Since 1977 interdisciplinary studies regarding climate change have appeared, Schneider, Stephen H. "Climate change and the world predicament: A case study for interdisciplinary research." *Climatic Change* 1.1 (1977): 21-43, more recent approaches include Wolfram Mauser, Gernot Klepper, Martin Rice, Bettina Susanne Schmalzbauer, Heide Hackmann, Rik Leemans, Howard Moore, "Transdisciplinary global change research: the co-creation of knowledge for sustainability" *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 5. 3-4 (2013): 420-431. G. Palacio "Cambio climático, retórica política y crisis ambiental: una nueva interfase entre ciencias naturales y ciencias sociales" *Cambio climático, movimientos sociales y políticas públicas* ed. J. Postigo (Santiago, Chile: CLACSO, 2013): 51- 74.

analysis,<sup>12</sup> there is also a rich body of research that applies a gendered perspective to these issues, often referred to as *ecofeminism*.<sup>13</sup> This perspective establishes a direct opposition between a ‘masculine view’, seen as linked to production and capitalism, and a feminist vision of care, in which attention is centred on the sustainability of life and social reproduction.

At the international level, the link between gender, peace and climate security has yet to be established. While there are international commitments and debates, such as the United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC),<sup>14</sup> which has led to a series of subsequent agreements, and the creation of the Conference of the Parties (COP),<sup>15</sup> the environmental degradation dimension has yet to find its way into the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

While an increased awareness, commitment and political will towards environmental protection are observed at the international and national level,<sup>16</sup> it is independent,

12 Boaventura de Sousa Santos “Construyendo las Epistemologías del Sur: para un pensamiento alternativo de alternativas” (Bogotá, Colombia: CLASCO, 2018), Arturo Escobar Sentipensar con la tierra. Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diferencia (Medellín, Colombia: Ediciones UNAULA, 2014).

13 M. Mies and V. Shiva *Ecofeminism* (London: Zed Books, 2004); Rico M Género, “Medio Ambiente y sustentabilidad” Serie Mujer y Desarrollo (CEPAL, 1998): 21-23.

14 UN “United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change” (FCCC/INFORMAL/784 G.E05-62220(E) 200705 (New York: United Nations, 1992) [https://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/background\\_publications\\_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf)

UN General Assembly, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, (A/RES/48/189) January 1994.

15 The entire COP library can be found at <https://unfccc.int/documents?search2=&search3=COP>.

16 Library of National Action Plans: (NAP) [https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/News/Pages/national\\_adaptation\\_plans.aspx](https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/News/Pages/national_adaptation_plans.aspx)

locally-led initiatives<sup>17</sup> that have worked on mitigation strategies and adaptation mechanisms to respond to new scenarios resulting from climate transformation. These scenarios include forced migration, polluted drinking water and air, reduced agricultural productivity and the fragmentation of whole communities. **Collective resistance has mobilised rural communities, afro-descendants, small farmers and indigenous groups whose subsistence and world view is dependent on their relationship with their land.** Their strategies of defence combine the construction of grassroots networks, third sector alliances, territorial mobilisation, local watchdog initiatives and a solidarity-popular economy.

In Latin America, great expanses of native forest have huge potential to capture allocated CO<sub>2</sub> across the continent, representing a key strategic asset for climate change mitigation. Policies, Measurements and Actions (PAMs) aiming to Reduce Emissions for Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) have therefore been established. However, they have yet to fully mainstream gender and diversity issues within their frameworks on the use of natural resources.

[unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/News/Pages/national\\_adaptation\\_plans.aspx](https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/News/Pages/national_adaptation_plans.aspx)

COP 21- Paris Agreement- follow up mechanism on National Determined Contributions (NDCs) <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NDCStaging/Pages/All.aspx>

More info on Gender inclusion under the UNFCCC: WEDO “Pocket guide to Gender Equality under the UNFCCC” (2017).

17 Information regarding global climate action independent network of initiatives at NAZCA <https://climateaction.unfccc.int/>

After a very dry, austral winter, millions of hectares of Amazonian forest, Bolivian Yunga and Parana's jungle have burned since early August 2019. While forest fires are not new, the institutional responses exemplified by the region's government bodies as well as global institutions are concerning. The denial of climate change and the prioritisation of economic growth over our ecosystems will not provide sustainable answers towards human development and inclusive security, but rather the opposite. **In order to respond to one of the greatest security threats of our time, more systematic, consistent and radical responses and mitigation strategies are needed. These responses and strategies must recognise and integrate the intersectional-gender dimension of natural resource management, extractivism, environmental degradation and resulting armed conflict and forced migration, and most of all the political commitment to do so.**

## CONCLUSIONS

Since 1492, the Americas have represented a vast land of resources for exploitation and exportation. After two centuries of liberation struggles and processes towards independence from colonial powers, the shift in power relations has allowed a consolidation of elites who have managed resources and maintained power in their own hands. As a result, Latin America and the Caribbean are

two of the most unequal regions in the world in terms of income distribution, which in turn reinforces other sets of social and power imbalances including gender inequality.<sup>18</sup>

Environmental conflicts caused by extractivism are one of the main causes of symbolic, armed and structural violence that differentially affects men, women and others in Latin America. Forced migration due to droughts, low agricultural productivity, lack of access to potable water to sustain life, despoil of territorial rights and community fragmentation are just some of the results of today's environmental and social challenges. Climate change, environmental degradation and the recent impact of returning neoliberal movements are serving to reinforce power inequalities that threaten sustainable human development.

Despite these challenges, various academic, but also local and indigenous critiques, have dismantled historical structures of inequality and clarified the links between climate change, gender, peace and security. These perspectives challenge the destructive effects of neo-liberal extractivism and focus instead on the defence of territories, food sovereignty, and the struggles against despoil, pollution and patriarchal violence against the earth, women and girls.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> CEPAL "Territorio e igualdad, planificación del desarrollo con perspectiva de género" (LC/L.4237) (Santiago de Chile: Octubre 2016): 7. / Segovia O y Williner A ""Territorio e igualdad, planificación del desarrollo con perspectiva de género" (LC/L.4237), CEPAL Santiago de Chile, (Octubre 2016): 7.

<sup>19</sup> Fondo Acción Urgente "Extractivismo en América Latina. Impacto en la vida de las mujeres y propuestas de defensa del territorio" (2016): 33.

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