



Transcript of interview with Toribia Lero Quispe (CAOI)
Análisis feminista ante la crisis climática

Webinar - Climate Justice and ESCR
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* Go to the original video (in Spanish) in this [link](#).

Why adopt a human rights approach to the climate crisis?

Toribia

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Years ago it was said that climate change was inevitable. But now we are already experiencing it and feeling its devastating negative effects, and this is precisely in the climate crisis what directly affects human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples. It is having a big impact in indigenous communities by destroying their livelihoods.

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There is water shortage, the lands are desertified and the territories devastated. There is an increase in violence and specifically this violence is mostly suffered by women. The melting of glaciers, the disappearance of lagoons and lakes ... The lake mainly represents us women and is one of our deities and we see them disappear. And droughts also make our deities die. That is, when a lake dies, when the ice melts, our deities die because we invoke those lakes, those lagoons, those *apus*, where it is full of snow, and when the ice melts, life is dying, our gods are dying and that takes away our knowledge, our worldview.

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And unfortunately droughts are also related to disasters and these disasters make the land stop producing and entire communities have to migrate to the cities. And in that place, there is no more life and culture is no longer reproduced, knowledge and experience vital to us are no longer reproduced to build our livelihoods.

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The countries that cause the most negative effects on the climate haven't had the smallest caution and have preferred to solve this problem through commodification mechanisms: paying indigenous peoples to care for trees in the forests and the Amazon. But there are communities, like in the case of the Andean region, on the coast and others, where there are no forests, no trees, it is not the Amazon, so these resources remain an Amazonian part to take care of the trees, to implement projects ... the rest are abandoned, marginalized from these global policies. The villages where there are no trees ... it is not like in the Amazon ... those trees, of course, emit many benefits. But we have native forests, we have a huge forest diversity in our communities that is not taken into account for these types of projects.



How to approach patriarchy in the advance of climate justice?

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Women are the ones who carry the weight of injustices and the patriarchy that leads to this oppression of women. We must face this by deconstructing the systems with actions, with proposals for advocacy, identifying the entities that advance or support these patriarchates, such as the church and conservatism. The church has been one of the institutions that has caused the most oppression in indigenous communities because it has a very conservative approach to life.

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So many years of fighting to eliminate the violence that, for example, ... one of these cases is the right to abortion, but the church is against it. We want women to know much more, for example, about this issue of sex education, but the church is opposed and thus, it is very exclusive. For example, with the LGBTI issue, it gives us a very different education to be able to hate, say, people who are not women or men. So these institutions of patriarchy... patriarchy is anchored in these types of institutions and that is precisely what we must deconstruct. And from Latin America we consider, for example, that we must work progressively in unity on these issues. For example, it is not easy to confront patriarchy if we also get confused with ideologies, and in this case, for example, if women come together to have a common agenda, a global agenda, we could confront patriarchy.

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And patriarchy also has to do with capitalism, with that oppressive capitalism system, this capitalism system that has deepened extractivism for the benefit of a few, but which destroys the territories and also generates violence ... it generates violence in the communities, it generates violence in the cities and above all, all that weight of that injustice generated by capitalism falls on the shoulders of women. And the oppressed women we do everything possible, the impossible to survive and we also give life to the cities, we give life to the towns, but I think ... we think that all of us united we can denounce and face this and propose advocacy and as I said again we have to ... detach ourselves a little from the existing ideologies, for example, socialism in the 21st century, which is another current, right? And that separates us further, it divides us ... But as women even if we have one ideology or the other, we experience injustices in the same way. That's it.

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For example, our demand also has to do with how to improve the quality of education. Women have little access to quality education and education also has to do with the reduction of violence from effective units, from various educational institutions and promoting and spreading the importance of eradicating violence, only a society with quality education, an education that is also accessible to women, it is possible to advance towards this patriarchal deconstruction.

How does the climate crisis affect women and girls?

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In the climate crisis there are droughts and droughts are long, they can be five years, seven years long. The men have to go to look for resources in other cities and we are the women who stay in the communities to take charge as heads of household. So, all that work falls on the women and they have to manage everything. That is the big impact. The other issue when there are long droughts, is that women have to travel long distances to get water....you know that water sources begin to dry up



because earlier when there were more sources of water, the husband traveled, and water was available and you were close to your source of water. But with these long droughts, with the thaws, with the climatic catastrophes that occur, these water sources dry up and you have to go and look for other sources of water much further ... the routes are further and you also have to carry the water on your back or drag it in your arms and that takes up time, that is, the use of time is reduced, the care of your body is reduced because of fatigue and what you can do, some initiatives to improve your quality of life You have to spend time looking for water, you have to spend time taking care of the chores that the husband has left you while he is going to look for the sustenance to complement the family income.

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The impact is different. The women, with that time that they already have distributed to take care more of the home, the family, to go search for water, to search for pastures because with the cattle you have to go much further or rent, so you spend more money, you spend more time, we have few opportunities to be able to even access training and leadership ventures, for example... it limits us to exercise political rights, it limits, for example, our right to education because girls, because they have to help their mothers, are no longer going to school, because the girls spend more time with the mother and the father sometimes takes the boys or prefer that they get an education. Why? Because there is "machismo", because they perceive more utility in men than in women. So, this climate crisis restricts many of your rights.

Why is it necessary to adopt an intersectional feminist approach?

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As women we must have clear and precise information and that also has to do with making a diagnosis, doing research to see how the impacts of the climate crisis affect women differently. Right now, we have no data. There is data for example about urban women, rural women ... It's something we, indigenous women, have been always demanding, because indigenous women have identity, identity of nationalities. Women, for example, in Colombia: there are many women who are from different indigenous communities and each village has its own identity, its own approach. And the same in Bolivia: we are 36 communities in the lowlands, Amazonia and 18 nationalities in the highlands, but that is not reflected in the diagnoses. You can't see how we are being affected. There are places for example in the Bolivian Chaco where women suffer cruelly.

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There are women and men in Bolivia, the Weenhayek community, who fished for their living. In these last 15 years, those rivers ... because of the mining pollution these rivers have been terribly affected and, as a result, fishing has been banned. Since they can no longer fish, these towns have been trained to carry out other initiatives such as farming watermelons, but generally once these towns have decided on a project, they can't find markets for their product, so the fruit is spoiled and they end up living on the streets, begging and the ones who beg and prostitute themselves the most are women. And the men go out to ask for bonds to survive on the riverbanks because they do not know how to farm, they do not know how to take care of cows. They had another way of living community life.

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Add to this the climate crisis because in those towns rain is scarce. There were other rivers that have dried up, there were other rivers where they could fish but those rivers had their trajectory changed... the rivers have dried up. So, the climate crisis influences these women and they are not taken into account. Only the women say to themselves right now as I tell you, the women of the lake for example, we have to go and collect more grasslands... (The time right? We don't have much time anymore). But in the economy, this impact also means a lot because you do not have economic resources to be able to, for example, support your family and survive. And that has to do with food security: you are affecting the quality of your life because you are no longer feeding yourself in the same conditions.

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There are many communities living this climate change in different ways and based on that, for example, the government in Bolivia and in the rest of Latin America, are drawing up laws, for example to be able to monopolize production of certain seeds: produce a single variety, produce a single variety of quinoa, produce a single variety of potatoes because it has a market, because it adapts to different climates and the harvest is not lost. But we are losing wisdom with it. We are losing hundreds of varieties of potatoes, dozens of varieties of quinoa that has another type, that has different types of nutritional properties. Each seed has a different nutritional property that also does a lot to the body and a single variety, for example this one we are currently eating produces diabetes because it has more starch, more sugar. So those are the things we are experiencing: loss of knowledge, loss of seeds, public policies based more on large markets and us, the small producers we are being forgotten as they are forcing us to leave and go to the cities.

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In Colombia, the leaders who take care of the forests get killed, those who take care of the territories they're assassinated. In Bolivia that situation is lived in a different way: it is exile and you are forced to emigrate to the city to survive. In rural areas, what they produce has no market value-there are products that come from large companies or are imported from other countries that make your product-what you have produced have no value. So, with the little you earn you can no longer produce or you can no longer live in the community. Those are the things that happen because of the climate crisis and that affects all areas, from the elaboration of public policies, the approach to the countries that are not managing it well because they only address it as a climate emergency or environmental emergency, environmental disaster, and then they just give you some resources and they forget about you, but they are not working on the issue of resilience, adaptation to climate change, there is no financing, not even small pilots for indigenous peoples.