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**Master's degree in
Human Rights and Multi-level Governance**



PERUVIAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND THE
CLIMATE ISSUE.
AN EXAMPLE OF ACTIVISM FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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Table of Contents

List of Acronyms	3
Introduction	5
Chapter I: Historical and theoretical aspects of the debate on Indigenous women and climate change in Peru	11
<i>1.1 Research question</i>	11
<i>1.2 Theoretical framework on Indigenous Women and Climate Change</i>	20
1.2.1 Latin American Feminism	20
1.2.2 Ecological Feminism	27
<i>1.3 Context background: climate change in Peru</i>	32
<i>1.4 State of the Art</i>	38
Chapter II: An analysis of the role of Indigenous women in the Peruvian society through the reports of CEDAW and the current legislation at multiple levels of governance for the protection of their human rights	41
<i>2.1 The condition of Indigenous women in Peru</i>	41
2.1.1 The traditional gender roles in the Peruvian society: Machismo and Marianismo	42
2.1.2 The evolution of Feminism(s) in Peru	46
2.1.3 Current reality of Indigenous women in Peru through the lens of CEDAW's concluding observations	53
<i>2.2 Legislation for the protection of women and Indigenous people's rights at multiple levels of governance</i>	61
2.2.1 International legislation on women and Indigenous Peoples.....	62
2.2.2 Regional legislation on women and Indigenous Peoples	67
2.2.3 Peruvian national legislation on women and Indigenous peoples	70

Chapter III: The relationship of Peruvian Indigenous women with climate change	77
3.1 <i>Debate on Climate change in Peru within an intersectional gender-based approach.....</i>	77
3.2 <i>“Sumaq Kawsay” or the “Buen Vivir” of Indigenous people.....</i>	83
3.3 <i>How climate change affects Indigenous women’s rights in Peru.....</i>	84
3.3.1 <i>The Indigenous right to land and the issue of extractivism in Peru</i>	85
3.3.2 <i>Discrimination and gender-based violence against Peruvian Indigenous women.....</i>	89
Chapter IV: Peruvian Indigenous women’s climate activism for the promotion of social change	95
4.1 <i>Indigenous women’s activism against climate change through the example of the ‘Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú’ (ONAMIAP)</i>	95
4.2 <i>An overview of the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change PAGCC-Peru</i>	103
4.3 <i>Interview with Melania Canales Poma, president of the National Organization of Indigenous Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru..</i>	115
4.4 <i>Peruvian Indigenous women and climate change: current gaps and future perspectives.....</i>	121
Conclusion	129
Sources.....	135
Acknowledgements	159

List of Acronyms

AIDSESP: Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana

CEDAW: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

COP: Conference of the Parties

CSW: Commission on the Status of Women

ENCC: Estrategia Nacional ante el Cambio Climático (National Strategy against Climate Change)

ENDES: Encuesta Nacional Demografica y de Salud Familiar

GBV: Gender-based violence

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

ILO: International Labour Organization

INEI: Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (National Institute of Statistics and Computer Science)

LWPG: Lima Work Program on Gender

MIMP: Peruvian Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations

MINAM: Ministerio del Ambiente de Perú (Ministry of Environment)

NAP: National Adaptation Plan

OAS: Organization of American States

ONAMIAP: Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (National Organization of Indigenous Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru)

PAGCC-Peru: Plan de Acción de Género y Cambio Climático de Perú (Action plan on gender and climate change of Peru)

PLANAGERD: Plan Nacional de Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres (National Plan for Disaster Risk Management)

PLANIG: Plan Nacional de Igualdad de Género (National Plan for Gender Equality)

RRI: Rights and Resources Initiative

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

UN: United Nations

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

VAW: Violence against women

Introduction

Climate change is the biggest global threat nowadays. Indeed, together with its devastating effects such as droughts, floods, and desertification, the phenomenon is progressively destroying entire ecosystems, damaging biodiversity, and undermining human survival on earth.

On account of this, it is of the utmost importance to affirm that the climate issue concerns every human being on the planet, with its effects varying among individuals and geographical locations. Moreover, it should be highlighted that the phenomenon can have repercussions on the economies of entire nations, therefore threatening their security and livelihood.

As a result, the topic of the climate crisis has been receiving more and more attention at the international, regional, national, and local levels, positioning itself at the forefront of the public discourse and consciousness.

In addition to altering environments, climate change also has a social impact. Indeed, the phenomenon is strictly intertwined with global patterns of inequality, poverty, and vulnerability. This means that those social groups who are particularly vulnerable to crisis, such as women, children, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities, are the ones suffering the effects of the climate crisis the most, while contributing the least to it.

In this regard, it can be observed that climate change disproportionately affects certain categories of individuals due to multidimensional inequalities in the social, economic, and cultural field, which are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, thus creating a condition of vulnerability. Indeed, not everyone experiences the climate crisis in the same way. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to adopt an intersectional approach to the matter, meaning that all the different factors, such as gender, race, and class, which account for one's experience of the phenomenon are taken into account.

Following from this and for the purpose of this thesis, gender, geographic affiliation, and ethnic-cultural belonging will be taken into consideration.

Indeed, the subject of the present research are Peruvian Indigenous women.

The choice of Indigenous women was made due to their extreme vulnerability to climate change for encompassing two of the most exposed categories to the effects of the phenomenon, that is women and Indigenous peoples. Indeed, the climate crisis hits the hardest on the poorest, and women often have higher rates of poverty than men, resulting in a 'feminization of poverty'. In addition, they represent a group which is highly dependent on the environment and natural resources for its survival, especially in the case of Indigenous women. Moreover, due to their intrinsic and deep relationship with the ecosystem and its products, they are usually responsible for the sustenance of their families through their work, thus reinforcing their relegation to the private sphere of the family and marginalizing them from the public and decision-making arena. Climate change can therefore exacerbate the condition of poverty and gender stereotypes which characterize Indigenous women. As a result, they lack access to education and to the labour market, hence causing them to be dependent on their male counterparts. Such dependency contributes to preserving a patriarchal structure of society where women are oppressed by men, and to foster a culture in which gender-based violence and discrimination are justified. Additionally, in the case of Indigenous women, climate change menaces their very existence, contributes to further exclusion at the social level, and threatens their individual human rights and collective rights, making them highly vulnerable to its effects.

In this regard, it is possible to affirm that Indigenous women are affected by climate change the most because the phenomenon reinforces preexisting structural inequalities, discriminations, and forms of violence already present in the society.

In this case, the choice of the geographical and cultural area of Peru contributes to increasing Indigenous women's condition of vulnerability. Indeed, Peru is a country which presents high levels of exposure and risk

to the effects of climate change due to its territorial conformation and location. Indeed, the nation is affected by scarcity of water and consequent droughts, by deforestation connected to extractive activities, and extreme climatic events such as '*El Niño*'.

In addition, the country presents high rates of gender inequality, women's marginalization, poverty, and gender-based violence against women, thus worsening Indigenous women's already precarious condition.

As a result of all this, in a context like that of Peru, climate change represents an element which contributes to the violation of women and Indigenous peoples' rights. For instance, it exacerbates and condones a culture of gender-based violence and discrimination, and it reinforces gender stereotypes and gender roles, therefore preventing Indigenous women from having access to decision-making spaces and worsening their lack of leadership and recognition.

Nonetheless, it should be underlined that Indigenous women are bearers of ancestral knowledge and practices which can help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Indeed, even though they are often excluded from the possibility of formulating plans and strategies to counter the climate crisis, they are the ones most affected by the phenomenon and the ones who have developed adaptation and mitigation strategies throughout the years. In addition, their activism in the context of climate change has helped to safeguard and preserve the environment by fostering its resilience, while promoting their active role within the society at the same time. For instance, through advocacy activities, peaceful protests, and active participation at multiple levels of governance in order to influence the public discourse and make their voices heard, they have contributed to adopt gender-sensitive climate policies, to protect forests and water, and to fight for their rights as women and Indigenous, such as their right to land and their right not to be discriminated on the basis of gender or race. In this case, their traditional knowledge and practices, together with their concrete actions for the preservation of the environment and their rights, have highlighted the

importance of Peruvian Indigenous women for a possible change in the society inclusive of their recognition and participation. Therefore, they can become agents of change if their involvement in the society is enhanced and if their roles as ancestral knowledge bearers are duly recognized and respected.

Following from these premises, the present dissertation will try to answer the question: can Peruvian Indigenous women's activism in the context of the climate crisis promote social change?

Methodology

In order to properly address the topic of the climate issue connected with Peruvian Indigenous women and their activism for social change, qualitative data from primary and secondary sources will be utilized.

A historical approach will be employed to define how feminism(s) in Latin American and Peru have developed throughout the years. To define the framework of climate change in Peru and the condition of Indigenous women in the country, ministerial documents of the Peruvian Government will be analyzed together with international and national reports. Moreover, to get a clear view of the legislation for the protection of the rights of Indigenous women, international, regional, and national conventions and treaties will be taken into consideration. The present thesis aims at answering the research question through the use of papers, articles, and documents, which will then be elaborated to assess whether social change connected with climate change activism can truly happen. Lastly, the information collected from the interview with Melania Canales Poma (president of the National Organization of Indigenous Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru) will be utilized to get a firsthand perspective on the issue and have a comprehensive understanding of the problem together with possible solutions.

Outline of the chapters

To answer the question of whether Peruvian Indigenous women's activism in the context of climate change could promote social change, the present dissertation will be divided into four chapters.

The first chapter will explain the research question by analyzing the historical and theoretical connections between women and climate change. In doing so, Latin American Feminism and Ecological Feminism will be examined together with the current situation of climate change in Peru.

The second chapter will focus on the role and the condition of Indigenous women in Peru. In particular, such section will highlight the traditional gender roles present in the Peruvian society, that is, 'machismo' and 'marianismo', and provide a historical overview of the evolution of feminism(s) in the country. In addition, the current reality of Indigenous women in the country will be investigated through the help of CEDAW's concluding observations. Moreover, international, regional, and national legislation concerning the protection of women and Indigenous' human and collective rights will be analyzed to understand how the climate crisis threatens them.

The third chapter will dig deeper into the relationship of Peruvian Indigenous women and climate change through an intersectional gender-based approach. Specifically, the issues of extractive activities connected with land rights, discrimination, and gender-based violence will be examined as the main challenges Indigenous women have to face.

Finally, the fourth chapter will center on Peruvian Indigenous women's activism as a possible first step for the promotion of social change. As a positive instance of such activism, the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change PAGCC-Peru will be analyzed. In addition, Peruvian Indigenous women's actions for mitigation and adaptation to climate change will be examined through the example of the National Organization of Indigenous Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru (ONAMIAP) and the interview with

its president, Melania Canales Poma. In conclusion, the research will highlight current gaps and possible future perspectives on the matter.

Chapter I: Historical and theoretical aspects of the debate on Indigenous women and climate change in Peru

1.1 Research question

Climate change is widely recognized as one of the worst crises of the 21st century and as an extremely dangerous element with the potential to threaten human rights.¹ Indeed, according to the 2021 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) Fact Sheet on Human Rights and Climate Change, climate change may affect the right to life, the right to self-determination, the right to development, the right to health, the right to food, the right to water and sanitation, the right to adequate housing, and cultural rights.²

Climate change impacts every individual being and every region of the world, but its effects are differentiated and not everyone experiences it equally. As a matter of fact, *“People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation responses. This heightened vulnerability is rarely due to a single cause. Rather, it is the product of intersecting social processes that result in inequalities in socioeconomic status and income, as well as in exposure. Such social processes include, for example, discrimination on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, age, and (dis)ability”*.³

¹ According to NASA, climate change encompasses a broad range of global phenomena which trap the heat produced by gases in the Earth’s atmosphere. Such phenomena include global warming, sea-level rise, ices mass loss, shifts in fauna and flora, and extreme weather events. “NASA, *Overview: Weather, Global Warming and Climate Change*, n.d. <https://climate.nasa.gov/resources/global-warming-vs-climate-change/>”

² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Frequently asked questions on Human Rights and Climate Change. Fact Sheet No.38* (New York and Geneva: 2021), iii. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FSheet38_FAQ_HR_CC_EN.pdf

³ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Summary for Policymakers*. In: *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA:

Such vulnerability is also remarked in the already-mentioned UNHCHR Fact Sheet on Human Rights and Climate Change, which specifies that the individuals most affected by climate change are Indigenous peoples, women, children, migrants and internally displaced persons, and persons with disabilities.⁴

Given these premises, it is possible to notice that gender is highlighted as one of the main factors accounting for the differentiated impacts of climate change. In fact, multidimensional gender inequalities in the social, economic, and cultural field intersect and intertwine with the climate crisis, causing women to be disproportionately affected by the phenomenon.

This is due to several reasons.

Climate change hits the hardest on the poorest and women are overrepresented amongst the world's poorest people. As an example, according to a 2020 research conducted by the *Center for American Progress*, women in America have higher rates of poverty than men across almost all races and ethnicities throughout their lives.⁵ Such statistics find confirmation at the global level, with women being 4% more likely than men to live in extreme poverty. Furthermore, looking at working-age women, the gap widens with them being 22% more likely to live in extreme poverty.⁶

Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ar5_wgll_spm_en.pdf

⁴ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Frequently asked questions on Human Rights and Climate Change. Fact Sheet No.38* (New York and Geneva: 2021), 22-29.
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FSheet38_FAQ_HR_CC_EN.pdf

⁵ Robin Bleiweis, Diana Boesch, Alexandra Cawthorne Gaines, *The Basic Facts About Women in Poverty*. In: Center for American Progress (August 3, 2020), 3.
https://americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Women-In-Poverty-UPDATE.pdf?_ga=2.232474847.178743980.1647599825-2067664957.1647599825

⁶ UN Women, *Press release: New UN Women report uncovers significant gaps for women's empowerment and puts forth robust agenda to shift gears. Spotlights inequalities and challenges faced by women; identifies gaps and opportunities for gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York: 14 February 2018).
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/2/press-release-launch-of-sdg-monitoring-report-gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda>

As a consequence, with women being the largest share of the poor of the world and the growing 'feminization of poverty', climate change will have deeper and more serious effects on the lives of women rather than men.⁷

In addition, women are highly dependent on natural resources and land products, especially in rural areas where they are responsible for the livelihood and care of their households by providing water, food, and heating. Therefore, in case of natural disasters such as droughts, fires, or floods, they will work more to sustain their households, hence leaving aside education, access to the labour market and the possibility to earn an income.⁸ As a result, women will become more dependent on the male members of their families while experiencing a confinement to the domestic and private sphere, indirectly reinforcing the patriarchal structure of the society.

The situation aggravates in developing countries where women do not have access to the same resources, jobs, and education as men. In these contexts, women do not have access to the public and political sphere, thus being excluded from decision-making roles and policy arenas while remaining the most affected by the effects of climate change.⁹

In addition, climate hazards threaten women's human rights by exacerbating gender-based violence, especially sexual violence. Indeed, a 2019 research pointed out that during periods of drought, women traveled

⁷ "The majority of the 1.5 billion people living on 1 dollar a day or less are women. In addition, the gap between women and men caught in the cycle of poverty has continued to widen in the past decade, a phenomenon commonly referred to as "the feminization of poverty". Worldwide, women earn on average slightly more than 50 per cent of what men earn". "UN Women, *The Feminization of Poverty*. United Nations Department of Public Information DPI/2035/A (May 2000). <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/session/presskit/fs1.htm>"

⁸ Balgis Oman-Elasha, *Women...In the Shadow of Climate Change*, In: *Un Chronicle* (n.d.). <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/womenin-shadow-climate-change#:~:text=Women%20are%20increasingly%20being%20seen,dependent%20on%20threatened%20natural%20resources>

⁹ Anne Bonewit, *The Gendered Dimension of Climate Justice. In-depth Analysis for the FEMM committee*, In: *European Parliament Policy Department C: Citizen's Rights and Constitutional affairs -Women's Rights and Gender Equality. Directorate General for Internal Policies* (December 2015), 6. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/536478/IPOL_IDA\(2015\)536478_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/536478/IPOL_IDA(2015)536478_EN.pdf)

more frequently and longer to find sustenance, thus being more exposed to sexual assault. Their need to maintain their household forced them to trade sex for food. Moreover, the tiredness caused by having to provide for the entire family caused a loss of sexual desire, with their husbands responding with violence. Finally, climate change affected the self-confidence of men as providers of the household, pushing them to assert their masculinity and dominance through violence.¹⁰

Climate disasters, particularly food scarcity and insecurity, combined with the lack of social protection schemes and impunity for gender-based violence, contribute to the worsening of violence against women and girls and the increasing risk of domestic violence, forced marriage, forced prostitution and human trafficking, with women and girls with disabilities being the most vulnerable.¹¹

It is interesting to note that, on the one hand women are the most and worst affected by climate change, but on the other hand they are the ones contributing less to it. In fact, the carbon footprint of women is lower than that of men, highlighting a further dimension of inequality given that women have to pay a higher price than men for something they are less responsible for.¹²

To summarize, women are affected by climate change the most because the phenomena connected to it reinforce pre-existing structural inequalities, discriminations, and forms of violence already present in the society. This relationship between women and climate change and its gendered impacts

¹⁰ Anik Gevers, Tina Musuya, Paul Bukuluki, *Why Climate Change Fuels Violence Against Women*. Apolitical (9 December 2019). <https://apolitical.co/solution-articles/en/why-climate-change-fuels-violence-against-women>

¹¹ CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/GC/37. General Recommendation No. 37 on Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change* (7 February 2018), 4.
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_37_8642_E.pdf

¹² Annika Carlsson Kanyama, Nässén Jonas, René Benders, *Shifting expenditure on food, holidays and furnishings could lower greenhouse gas emissions by almost 40%*. *Journal of Industrial Ecology* (2021), 1602-1616.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/jiec.13176>

has become so evident and important that in 2018 the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) enacted its first General Recommendation on the matter, General Recommendation n.37, stating that “*Situations of crisis exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities and also compound intersecting forms of discrimination against, inter alia, women living in poverty, indigenous women, women belonging to ethnic, racial, religious and sexual minorities, women with disabilities, women refugees and asylum seekers, internally displaced, stateless and migrant women, rural women, single women, adolescents and older women, who are often affected disproportionately compared to men or other women*”.¹³ In this respect, climate change is seen as a further menace to the achievement of gender equality, but it can also be seen as a possibility to recognize and pose attention to existing inequalities and address them in order to promote concrete change in the patriarchal structure of the society. The discourse on women and climate change has become pervasive in the women’s human rights agenda; as an example, “*Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs*” is the priority theme of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.¹⁴

Having clarified how and why women are disproportionately affected by climate change, it is necessary to specify that not all women experience the climate crisis in the same way.

As a matter of fact, many factors of one’s life account for how an individual might confront climate change, such as gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, or immigrant status. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to observe climate

¹³ CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/GC/37. General Recommendation No. 37 on Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change* (7 February 2018), 3.

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_37_8642_E.pdf

¹⁴ UN Women, *CSW66 (2022) (14-25 March 2022)*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw66-2022>

change in relation to women through an intersectional approach, meaning that all the elements that might shape their experience of such phenomena need to be taken into consideration.

Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the word in 1989, affirmed that 'intersectionality' is "*Basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality, or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts*".¹⁵

Bearing this in mind, another category of individuals often cited as highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change is Indigenous Peoples. Indeed, Indigenous communities are strictly related to and dependent on nature, the land, and the environment. Therefore, with climate hazards such as floods, desertification, and global warming, Indigenous peoples' survival is at risk.¹⁶ Climate change concretely threatens the rights of Indigenous peoples enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, such as their right not to be deprived of their land, territories or resources and the destruction of their culture (article 8), the right not to be forcibly removed from their lands (article 10), and the right to preserve their historical and traditional sites (article 11).¹⁷

¹⁵ Katy Steinmetz, *She coined the term 'intersectionality' over 30 years ago. Here's what it means to her now*. Time (20 February 2020). <https://time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality/>

¹⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Indigenous Peoples, *Climate Change - The effects of climate change on indigenous peoples* (n.d.). <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/climate-change.html#:~:text=Indigenous%20peoples%20are%20among%20the,the%20environment%20and%20its%20resources.>

¹⁷ United Nations General Assembly, *A/RES/61/295 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (New York: 13 September 2007), 10-12. https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

As already mentioned in the case of women, also in this case there is a paradox: while Indigenous communities contribute the least to greenhouse gases emissions and, on the contrary, are fundamental for the maintenance of a resilient ecosystem through sustainable ways of life, they are the ones suffering the impacts of climate change the most.

It is important to note that, even though Indigenous peoples account for less than 5% of the global population, they are responsible for the safeguarding of 80% of the world's biodiversity.¹⁸

Furthermore, their attachment to nature and traditional knowledge has pushed them to find innovative and sustainable ways to tackle climate change and develop resilient environments, such as the creation of floating vegetable gardens to protect food from flooding in Bangladesh and mangroves planting to diffuse tropical storm-waves in Vietnam.¹⁹

Precisely for these reasons, indigenous peoples can be the key to adaptation and risk reduction strategies in the context of climate change. Nonetheless, they often occupy a marginalized position in the society and have limited or no access to the political sphere at the local, national, and international level, preventing them from sharing their knowledge and contributing to the fight against the climate crisis.

This is true especially for Indigenous women. Indeed, even if they are crucial for the transmission of sustainable environmental management knowledge to posterity, they still lack political participation and are not considered in the political debates, even more so than their male counterparts.²⁰

¹⁸ United Nations Climate Change, *Indigenous Peoples increasingly engaging in Climate Action*. UN Climate Change News (9 August 2021). <https://unfccc.int/news/indigenous-peoples-increasingly-engaging-in-climate-action>

¹⁹ United Nations Department of economic and Social Affairs -Indigenous Peoples, *Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change -The effects of climate change on indigenous peoples* (n.d.). <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/climate-change.html#:~:text=Indigenous%20peoples%20are%20among%20the,the%20environment%20and%20its%20resources>.

²⁰ United Nations Climate Change, *Indigenous Women vital to Climate Action*. UN Climate Change News (3 September 2021). <https://unfccc.int/news/indigenous-women-vital-to-climate-action>

Bearing in mind all these considerations, the present thesis will pose its focus on the role of Peruvian Indigenous women, analyzing their actions in fighting climate change and whether they can promote social change.

The choice fell on Indigenous women because, as already mentioned, they are disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change and excluded from the political arena. At the same time, they are the ones having a smaller impact on the environment and the ones developing strategies to cope with climate hazards in the long term, which could be of utmost importance in formulating climate policies at all levels of governance. Indeed, Indigenous women are considered the key to develop sustainable means of life and a resilient environment, adapting to and mitigating climate change at the same time: *“Indigenous women carry millennia-old knowledge as guardians of the land, waters, and biodiversity of living things around us. The knowledge passed down from one generation to the next makes Indigenous women original storytellers, keepers of traditions and languages, and the best experts of their landscapes”*.²¹

In addition, their actions in fighting climate change could be the chance for them to be included in the political debate on climate change and, consequently, for their voices to be heard in the public and political sphere. The potential increase of indigenous women’s political participation could then trigger the possibility to bring about change in the society with policies sensitive to issues of gender and Indigenous status, starting from climate change.

It also must be noted that Indigenous women face many mutually reinforcing difficulties and human rights violations in the face of climate change as both women and Indigenous peoples. For this reason, as previously mentioned, an intersectional approach to the topic will be adopted.

²¹ Cultural Survival, *Indigenous Women in Climate Change Solutions. A holistic and rights-based approach*. White paper presented at the GLF Climate Hybrid Conference (Glasgow: 5-7 November 2021). https://www.globallandscapesforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/14-White-Paper-GLF-Climate-Indigenous-women-in-climate-change-solutions_En.pdf

This research will focus on Indigenous women in Peru. The country was chosen because of its high vulnerability to climate change. In fact, according to Germanwatch's Global Climate Risk Index 2021, Peru ranked 46th out of 180 in the index related to 2019 and 45th out of 180 in the index related to the period 2000-2019.²²

Furthermore, Peru composes seven out of the nine factors leading to vulnerability identified by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.²³

Another reason is the large population of Indigenous peoples present in the territory. Indeed, according to the 2007 census, there are 4 million Indigenous Peoples in Peru (25% of the total population).²⁴

Focusing on women, the Peruvian society is strictly rooted in "Machismo" and "Marianismo", which shape traditional gender roles and relegate women to the domestic and private sphere. Therefore, "*discrimination against women and gender stereotypes [...] are deeply entrenched in traditional attitudes, institutional practices and society as a whole, depriving women of the equal enjoyment of their rights and contributing to high levels of violence against women*".²⁵

²² David Eckstein, Vera Künzel, Laura Schäfer, *Global Climate Risk Index 2021. Who Suffers Most from Extreme Weather Events? Weather-Related Loss Events in 2019 and 2000-2019*. Germanwatch (Berlin: January 2021), 42-48. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202021_1_0.pdf

²³ The seven factors are: low-lying coastal areas, arid and semi-arid areas, areas prone to natural disasters, exposure to droughts, and desertification, areas of high urban pollution, fragile mountain ecosystems, and significant economic dependence on the production and export of fossil fuels. "Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), *Estrategia nacional ante el cambio climático* (2015), 20. <https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/374120/ENCC-FINAL-250915-web.pdf>

²⁴ "Peru's population includes more than 4 million Indigenous Persons, of whom 83.11% are Quechua, 10.92% Aymara, 1.67% Ashaninka, and 4.31% belong to other Amazonian Indigenous Peoples. The Database of Indigenous or Original Peoples notes the existence in the country of 55 Indigenous Peoples who speak 47 indigenous languages". "IWGIA, *Indigenous Peoples in Peru* (n.d.). <https://www.iwgia.org/en/peru.html#:~:text=on%20their%20territory,-,Indigenous%20Peoples%20in%20Peru,to%20other%20Amazonian%20Indigenous%20Peoples.>

²⁵ CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/PER/CO/7-8. Concluding Observations on the combined seventh and eight periodic reports of Peru* (24 July 2014), 2. <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Concluding-Observations-CEDAW-Peru-2014-eng.pdf>

Accordingly, Peru ranks 62nd in the Global Gender gap Index 2021.²⁶

Nevertheless, Indigenous women have shown leadership capacity in the face of climate change, working together to propose solutions and demand change, contributing to the creation of public policies. In this regard, Peru is the first Latin American country to have adopted a national action plan on climate change and gender, the PAGCC-Perù. Having been the first, it can set a good example for other countries looking up to it and it can be a yardstick for the improvement of Indigenous women's condition and status and the promotion of social change in the nation.

In the case of Peruvian Indigenous women, climate change can exacerbate their condition of inequality and exclusion, but it can also be an opportunity to change the system and promote inclusion and gender equality while slowly dismantling the patriarchy underlying the structure of the society. This thesis precisely aims at answering this dilemma: can the activism against climate change of Indigenous women in Peru promote social change?

1.2 Theoretical framework on Indigenous Women and Climate Change

The discourse on the relationship between Peruvian Indigenous women and climate change needs to be framed within a theoretical framework, so as to provide the research with a theory-driven basis and approach. In this regard, there are two main theories surrounding the topic, that is Latin American Feminism and Ecological Feminism or Ecofeminism.

1.2.1 Latin American Feminism

The genealogy of Latin American Feminism presents gaps due to the high level of illiteracy among women, and the scarcity of non-white women

²⁶ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2021. Insight Report* (March 2021), 10. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

writings. For these reasons, feminism in the region developed through oral transmission.

The origins of Latin American Feminism, which ideas emerged as a result of colonialism and evolved in critiques to the norm of man as the entry point for humanity, can be traced back to the 19th century.²⁷ One of the first documentation of the Latin American Feminist tradition comes from Juana Inés María del Carmen Martínez de Zaragoza Gaxiola de Asbaje y Ramírez de Santillana Odonojú, who advocated for social and cultural changes, including changes in the role of women in the society. She also raised the concern for educational and intellectual rights of women and girls, seen as possibilities through which women could exercise self-determination. Furthermore, a particular focus was put onto equality, autonomy, and labour rights especially. Indeed, “*the idea that class and labor is a key dimension of women’s lives is one that is rooted in Latin American feminist activism*”.²⁸ Such feminist tradition legitimized and reinforced feminist struggles during the 20th century. In this age, the concepts of justice, equality and political change supported by feminists pushed for social change while converging with the goal of improving the condition of the poor people belonging to the working class. On this account, the improvement of the condition of women was not at the center of the discourse.

At the beginning of the century the Mexican Revolution contributed to shape the ideas of feminists around education, political participation, and reproductive rights. From Mexico, such ideas then spread across all Latin America: Argentina hosted the first Feminist International Congress based on the principles of peace, education, and social participation; in Colombia women fought for civil rights and in Panama for intellectual education and political participation.²⁹

²⁷ Stephanie Rivera Berruz, *Latin American Feminism* In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edward N. Zalta (2021). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/feminism-latin-america>

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *ibid*

Here we have a convergence between feminist ideas and concepts of social transformation. This is embodied by Luisa Capetillo, whose ideas highlighted the nexus between labour empowerment and gender equality: workers' emancipation and women's emancipation coincided since women were now part of the labour force.³⁰

Another issue that was raised throughout the 1900s was that of suffrage and political participation. In this case, the right to vote emerged in a discontinuous manner throughout the region due to different political leaders, politics, and regimes. For instance, Ecuador was the first Latin American country to secure the vote for women in 1929, while Peru only secured it in 1955.

During the period between 1950 and 1970, Latin American Feminism experienced what was called by sociologist Julieta Kirkwood "the years of silence". Throughout these years, on the one side women saw their political presence and social movements participation increase, on the other side there was a lack of feminist demands. In fact, women accepted and adapted to the political and social standards set by men without questioning them.³¹ The reason behind this is that the Latin American landscape was changing in view of the United States intervention in the country to defeat communism, the end of dictatorships like that of Nicaragua, and the rise of military regimes in Colombia, Argentina, and Chile.³² Moreover, during the so-called years of silence feminists were literally active, but the concepts and theoretical aspects of their works were not taken into account. Women were considered writers but not thinkers or theorists.

As a matter of fact, the main narratives on women concerned machismo, patriarchy, forced marriage and social isolation. Nonetheless, some

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

³² "McCarthyism, name given to the period of time in American history that saw U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin produce a series of investigations and hearings during the 1950s in an effort to expose supposed communist infiltration of various areas of the U.S. government". "Paul J. Achter, *McCarthyism*. Encyclopedia Britannica (27 May 2021). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/McCarthyism>"

feminists started to counteract them with doubts and resistance to the patriarchal order of the society.

Between the 1970s and 1990s social and political transformation characterized Latin America, shaping the context in which feminist ideas and activism originated. In fact, transitions from military regimes to democracies contributed to the diversification and plurality of the political landscape and the consequent development of different types of feminisms, often of a clandestine character and opposed to the regimes.

At this point in time, the main feminist themes, under the label of Neofeminism, could be summed up as focused on women's freedom over their bodies, meaning that feminists mobilized around the issues of abortion, sexual autonomy, motherhood, abuse, and rape. It is important to notice that it was the first time that women were recognized as subjects and their shared status as women was acknowledged as something that differentiated them from men. The previous acceptance and adaptation to men's standards was now refuted and there was an increasing pressure to obtain social and political transformation in which women were not subordinate to men and their demands for liberty were heard.³³

"Latin American feminists not only challenged patriarchy by defining themselves as distinct political subjects, but also challenged male paradigms of domination expressed through the militaristic and counter-insurgent state [...] Latin American feminism of the 1970s was linked to an activism that believed authoritarian regimes found their roots where patriarchal oppression trickled into the "private" sphere".³⁴

In the 1980s the first *Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe*, a regional critical forum for debates about feminism and its relationship to Latin America and the Caribbean, took place in Bogotá, reuniting the

³³ Stephanie Rivera Berruz, *Latin American Feminism* In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edward N. Zalta (2021). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/feminism-latin-america>

³⁴ *ibid*

different feminisms present in the region which agreed on the demands of equal pay, end of the double workday, the right to choose motherhood, and the right to safe abortion.

The forum contributed to create tensions between such different feminisms. Indeed, even though the participants all agreed that women suffered oppression due to their status and that that was exacerbated by class, the outcome of the Encuentro produced two opposed positions. The first one stated that neither capitalism nor socialism were apt to solve women's oppression and that the emancipation and liberation of women needed to be carried out outside any type of political party affiliation (*feministas*); the second one affirmed that feminism could not be revolutionary because it had an intrinsic commitment to socialism, and for that reason it could not be separated from struggles against class oppression (*militantes*).³⁵

The second Encuentro then shifted feminist claims, identifying the cause of sexism in the patriarchal system; issues of autonomy, sexuality, and race were also discussed.

1990s Latin American Feminism saw its focus on gender equality and non-discrimination adapted to a neoliberal infrastructure. In fact, women were disproportionately affected by the effects and shifts of economic policies, becoming poorer and being forced to join the menial labour force without any rights concerning work and wages.³⁶

The dominant themes concerning the feminist agenda were gender and empowerment, which were spread thanks to the work of Universities and Journals.

In these years, due to the political and economic transition, it is possible to observe an institutionalization of feminism: issues related to the individual, meaning human rights, health, and violence against women, were in line

³⁵ Nancy Saporta Sternbach et al., *Feminisms in Latin America: from Bogotá to San Bernardo*. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (1992), 409. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/494735>

³⁶ For example, maquilas or maquiladoras

with liberal politics. Therefore, feminists started to work alongside governments to promote public policy changes, but this goal was restrictive and prevented them to seek and address the root causes of inequality which called for such changes. In addition, the discourse on gender and equality was standardized according to the United Nations universal criteria, failing to account for the inequities among women and to pay attention to the context and needs of the Latin American population and, consequently, exacerbating already existing inequalities in power on the lines of gender, class, and ethnicity.³⁷

Such issues became the basis for the critiques against liberal feminists in the 21st century. The voices of those who, up to that point in Latin American Feminist history, had been marginal, started to emerge, that is Indigenous, Afro-descended, and lesbian women. According to them, institutional feminism lacked the proper attention towards exclusion, difference, and inequity related to women belonging to different social and cultural realities. Accordingly, they developed an anti-neoliberal discourse which came out during the Eight Encuentro, now considered a 'desencuentro' (disencounter).

The discourse of these new emerging voices was a decolonial and anti-patriarchal feminist one, in that it aimed at decolonizing universal feminism through an intersectional approach which considered race, ethnicity, and sexuality.³⁸ The principal critique was against the dominating end exclusivist model of feminism which was based on middle-class belonging, heteronormativity, and whiteness. Such model also contributed to the depletion of Indigenous women as mere targets of development and not subjects with inherent rights.

³⁷ Stephanie Rivera Berruz, *Latin American Feminism* In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edward N. Zalta (2021). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/feminism-latin-america>

³⁸ *ibid*

The emerging feminism proposed by the previously marginalized voices recognized that racism, heterosexism, and the consequent exclusion of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and lesbian women were colonial legacy. By imposing whiteness and racial stratification as the standard and entrenching it with social norms, colonialism impacted, exploited, and subjugated the above-mentioned categories of women for years and its effects still characterized the 21st century Latin American society through *mestizaje*.³⁹ These new voices are suggesting a rethinking of the concept of feminism which takes into account the disparities caused by colonialism, marginalization, and racism in Latin America and the specificities characterizing each woman, that is ethnicity, sexuality, religion, citizenship, and class. In doing so, they are opposing to a universalist and shared conception of womanhood, and they are advocating for an intersectional approach to feminism that values and considers racialized identities.⁴⁰ This brief historical excursus on Latin American Feminism has thus shown that the 21st century can be regarded as a time of evolution and change for Indigenous women in the feminist discourse. From facing inequality and being completely excluded from power and the public life, they have recently started to unite and demand changes in the society so as to be considered as rights bearers and see such rights recognized, respected, and implemented. In this regard, climate change could be a possible challenge for Indigenous women to unite around in order to propose solutions and cooperate with governments and authorities while being included in the political sphere and developing a preeminent role in the society.

³⁹ “The ideology of *mestizaje* (mixture) in Latin America has frequently been seen as involving a process of national homogenization and of hiding a reality of racist exclusion behind a mask of inclusiveness”. Peter Wade, *Rethinking ‘Mestizaje’: Ideology and Lived Experience*. In: *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37, no. 2 (2005), 239–57. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3875685.pdf?casa_token=HrfQS3_0oVAAAAAA:pk0PW1ieHhLfS4i0Mmm2tr8DUdBkviy_x0Pqrt6bQe6AgRFDahGQ2yG01jvMaiv_FDtwpfzLSYa5AhWQUiqmNjz0altZmvAGnQ9OeiZmDqp46Ada0

⁴⁰ Stephanie Rivera Berruz, *Latin American Feminism* In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edward N. Zalta (2021). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/feminism-latin-america>

1.2.2 Ecological Feminism

Ecological feminism, or ecofeminism, is a type of feminism which investigates the relationships between women and nature. Its principles focus on gender equality, commitment to the environment, and recognition of the inherent connection between women and nature.⁴¹ Indeed, according to ecofeminists, both women and nature undergo oppression in the face of a patriarchal, male-oriented, and centered society.⁴² In fact, they highlight the ways in which social norms create dominance over women and nature causing a fragmentary view of the world. It follows that ecofeminists advocate for an “*alternative worldview that values the earth as sacred, recognizes humanity’s dependency on the natural world, and embraces all life as valuable*”.⁴³

The origins of the modern Ecofeminist movement can be traced back to the 1970s-1980s in the United States. There, academic women organized a series of conferences and workshops which purpose was that of discussing the possible ways in which feminism and environmentalism intertwined so as to demand respect for both women and the natural world.

The premise underlying such meetings was that the historical association of women with nature brought about the subjugation of both, creating a hierarchy which exploited them and granted power to men. Consequently, deconstructing the oppression meant acting both on women and nature. Therefore, early ecofeminists focused on documenting connections between the two and look into ways to break such connections. At the same time, they strongly criticized the patriarchal systems responsible for their

⁴¹ The term ‘ecofeminism’ was coined in 1974 by Françoise d'Eaubonne to highlight the necessity for women to give rise to an ecological revolution. She used the slogan ‘Feminism or death’. “Trish Glazebrook, *Karen Warren’s Ecofeminism*. *Ethics and the Environment* 7, no. 2 (2002), 12–26. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40339034.pdf>”

⁴² Kathyne Miles, *ecofeminism*. In: *Encyclopedia Britannica* (9 October 2018). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecofeminism>

⁴³ *ibid*

oppression and feminist theories which did not take into consideration the interconnection between women and nature⁴⁴

Slowly and steadily the movement started to grow and, eventually, in the late 1980s it suffered internal divisions. Two distinct branches of ecofeminism had developed: on the one hand there were Cultural Ecofeminists, who believed women's sensitivity towards and deeper relationship with nature originating from their gender roles should be prized by society; on the other hand, there were Radical Feminists, who asserted that patriarchal society puts women and nature on the same level in order to degrade both and justify their exploitation and abuse. In this regard, ecofeminists later argued that such divergencies within the movement should be respected and celebrated as a strength of the movement itself.

Present-day ecological feminism still focuses on the relationship between women and nature, but in doing so, it adopts an intersectional approach which takes into consideration race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and women's positions in the society. Moreover, women belonging to minorities, namely Indigenous women, have started to gain a preeminent role in the ecofeminist discourse, advocating for environmental justice which is inclusive of their spirituality and local cultures and honours them, while recognizing the role played by Western cultures in hiding their vital relationship with nature. To realize such goals, they focus on individuality and the celebration of all biological systems as valuable, fighting through non-violent means.⁴⁵

The key point of the ecofeminist movement, as already stated, is the acknowledgement that dominant historical traditions have associated culture with men and nature with women, and such interrelation has been a major tool in the oppression of the latter. According to ecofeminist and philosopher Plumwood, this has caused a phenomenon called

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ *ibid*

*'backgrounding': "One of the most common forms of denial of women and nature is what I will term backgrounding, their treatment as providing the background to a dominant, foreground sphere of recognized achievement or causation. This backgrounding of women and nature is deeply embedded in the rationality of the economic system and in the structures of contemporary society".*⁴⁶

Backgrounding nature implies the denial of human dependence on biological processes and the view of humanity as outside of nature, seen as a *"limitless provider without needs of its own"*.⁴⁷ As a consequence of such refutation of dependency on nature, non-sustainable ways of life develop, endangering the future of the society.

Focusing on women, their backgrounding involves their identification with the role of caretakers and their confinement to the private sphere (e.g., nurses, secretariats, and housewives). The analogy with nature is here perfectly exemplified: women constitute the 'environment', the frame in which the actions of their male counterparts can take place and be appraised, all the while women's roles are continuously disregarded.⁴⁸ Precisely for these reasons, ecofeminism affirms that the opposition between culture and nature has roots in misogyny and patriarchy, and that they are not opposed but intrinsically related.

In this regard, Ynestra King states four principles of ecofeminism: first, western industrial civilization as opposed to nature reinforces the oppression of women; second, there is no hierarchy in nature, but men project onto it a human hierarchy which is then used to justify their domination over women; third, diversity and decentralization are crucial to a healthy and resilient environment; fourth, in order for humans to survive,

⁴⁶ Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. Routledge (London and New York: 16 December 1993), 19-21. <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/modules/fulllist/first/en122/lecturelist2017-18/plumwood.pdf>

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ *ibid*

they must acknowledge that they from part of nature and they must overcome the nature-culture dualism.⁴⁹

The issues characterizing both feminism and environmentalism are mutually reinforcing since they find their roots in the logic of domination at the basis of patriarchy. On account of this, feminists and environmentalists can form an alliance in order to contrast the male dominated society which causes the destruction of nature and oppresses women. Indeed, according to Warren, "*adequate analysis and resolution of such environmental issues as deforestation, water pollution, farming and food production, and toxins and hazardous waste location must be integrally connected to an understanding of the plight and status of women, people of color, the poor, and children ... [to help] one understand how mainstream environmental practices and policies often reflect, reinforce, or create practices and policies that devalue, subvert, or make invisible the actual needs and contributions of women, people of color, the underclass, and children*".⁵⁰

Thus, it is possible to affirm that ecofeminism aims at broad social change highlighting issues previously ignored by western feminism, which is criticized by ecofeminists for its focus on the concerns of white and educated woman belonging to the middle class and the exclusion of all other categories of women. In point of fact, ecofeminism includes in its discourse challenges to local and global forms of environmental abuse while recognizing the different impacts that they have on women, children, the poor, Indigenous peoples, and peoples in developing countries. At the same time, it aims at celebrating women's, particularly Indigenous women, relationship with nature as a possible solution to the oppression of both the natural world and women.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ynestra King, *The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology*. In: Libcom.org (n.d.), 19. <https://files.libcom.org/files/King-%20Ecology%20of%20Feminism.pdf>

⁵⁰ Trish Glazebrook, *Karen Warren's Ecofeminism*. *Ethics and the Environment* 7, no. 2 (2002), 15. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40339034.pdf>

⁵¹ Karen J. Warren, Jim Cheney, *Ecological Feminism and Ecosystem Ecology*. *Hypatia* 6, no. 1 (1991), 179–97. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3810040.pdf>

The goal of ecofeminism, as already remarked, is that to find a solution to the oppression of both nature and women in a world based on patriarchy and the logic of relationships of domination. For this very reason, it is of utmost importance that men and women work together to deconstruct the dualisms of men-culture and women-nature, while acknowledging their different roles in society and the different correspondence to power and subjugation that characterize them.

Indeed, power and social relations shape the way different subjects interact with the environment. Therefore, those who hold power, meaning men, will exert more control on nature, natural resources, and access to such resources than those, meaning women, who are regarded as individuals on whom to impose power, equating them to nature.⁵²

Consequently, such relations have political, social, and economic implications. In fact, possible solutions connected to climate change and natural disasters are taken in the spheres of politics, which are mainly populated by men. In this case the correlation between power-politics-environment deepens and women face both oppression and exclusion from the public life, contributing to their growing marginalization and the reinforcement of the link between power and political.

Power is not equally distributed: women are not considered as individuals able to exercise it, therefore they cannot have access to roles of power and decision-making, that is politics. Precisely for this reason, even though their deeper knowledge of nature and the environment has been demonstrated, they cannot influence policy processes aimed at fighting the effects of climate change. By intersecting gender, politics, and the environment it is possible to comprehend that ecofeminism pursues a broader social change which comprises both the fight against the climate crisis and the fight against a patriarchal model of society which rules out women.

⁵² Raymond L. Bryant, Sinéad Bailey, *Third World Political Ecology*. Routledge (London: 3 July 1997). [file:///Users/emmamariacavaliere/Downloads/Sinead%20Bailey-Third%20World%20Political%20Ecology%20\(1997\)%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/emmamariacavaliere/Downloads/Sinead%20Bailey-Third%20World%20Political%20Ecology%20(1997)%20(1).pdf)

In the end, Latin American Feminism(s) and Ecofeminism present themselves as the frames in which women, especially indigenous women, and the environment intersect, calling attention to the root causes of inequality and oppression, that is patriarchy, from which opportunities for social change can emerge.

1.3 Context background: climate change in Peru

Prior to focusing on the role of Indigenous women in fighting the climate crisis in Peru, it is important to give a brief overview of climate change in the country.

Peru is divided into three topographical zones, that is the costa (plains of the coast), the sierra (central highlands and valleys), and the selva (Amazon).⁵³ Each zone is characterized by different climates, habitats, biodiversity, and economies.

The costa is the most densely populated zone and presents the majority of Peru's economic activities, such as agriculture, agroindustry (including fisheries), as well as the industrialized and export-oriented sectors of the economy. Nonetheless, the area is facing scarcity of water, due to its uneven distribution across the country, and consequent desertification. In fact, *"3.8 million hectares of the country's total land surface is desert, with 30 million hectares (24%) more in the process of desertification"*.⁵⁴

Natural metals and minerals permeate the sierra. Consequently, extraction activities are the main industry in the area and deeply affect the territory by damaging the soil, producing biodiversity loss, and causing an increase in temperatures.

⁵³ Peru is the second country with the largest share of the Amazon rainforest (Brazil is the first).

⁵⁴ Jonas Bergmann et al., *Assessing the Evidence: Climate Change and Migration in Peru*. Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), and International Organization for Migration (IOM) (Potsdam and Geneva: 2021), 19-32. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/assessing-the-evidence-peru.pdf>

The selva, with the ninth largest area of forest worldwide, is characterized by the presence of water, a vast biodiversity, and natural resources, but it is suffering deforestation for agricultural production and wood illegal extraction.⁵⁵

With soil erosion and deterioration, exploitation of resources, and deforestation, the rural highlands and the rural Amazon, together with their ecosystems-dependent economies, are the ones suffering the impacts of climate change the most. Moreover, on the one hand, Peru is facing rising temperatures; on the other hand, the country is dealing with '*heladas*', that is meteorological cold waves.⁵⁶ Owing to higher temperatures, the glaciers present in the country are retreating, causing droughts, and affecting rainfalls and runoffs.⁵⁷ As a consequence, there is a reduction in the water supply and in the crops of people, affecting their wellbeing and businesses. Furthermore, rainfalls may cause flooding and landslides, forcing people to flee their homes and increasing displacement and migration across the country.

The main climatic phenomenon affecting Peru is the '*El Niño Southern Oscillation*', "*characterized by warming (El Niño) and cooling (La Niña) events of the sea surface temperature (SST) in the equatorial Pacific, which are accompanied by atmospheric changes (Southern Oscillation)*".⁵⁸ El Niño, so named because its usual arrival is around Christmas, is a recurring phenomenon bound with the complex interactions of the atmosphere which originate in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ "Since the 1960s, Peru's average temperature have increased 1°C and the number of cold days and nights have decreased, and the number of warm days and nights have increased". "Climate Change Knowledge Portal, *Peru. Current climate>Climatology*" (n.d.). <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/peru/climate-data-historical>

⁵⁷ Peru is home to more than 71% of the world's tropical glaciers

⁵⁸ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), SENAMHI, *El fenómeno EL NIÑO en el Perú* (Lima: 2014), 8-9. https://www.minam.gob.pe/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Dossier-El-Ni%C3%B1o-Final_web.pdf

In years without El Niño, the Pacific Ocean's waters are relatively cold, but when the phenomenon strikes Trade Winds are weakened, causing warm waters to migrate eastward, and reducing cold water upwelling. Conversely, in the course of the opposing phenomenon, La Niña, Trade winds are stronger causing a cooling of eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean's waters. El Niño and La Niña generate an increase in precipitations and a decrease in rainfalls depending on the specific area of the country. As a consequence, such occurrences have devastating impacts on Peru's population, including floods, landslides, and mudslides, leaving people without a home, food, and an occupation, increasing displacement and poverty rates.⁵⁹

As highlighted, Peru is extremely exposed to climate change and its effects. Indeed, half of Peruvian territory and population are settled on exposed space, and the vulnerability connected with exposure is rising due to the growth of the population, urbanization, and informal settlements. Moreover, some people, like migrants, are forced to occupy areas which are extremely dangerous and fragile, like riverbeds or water-stressed hills.⁶⁰ As an example, according to the 2014 National Plan for Disaster Risk Management (PLANAGERD), in 2012 60.9% of Peru's population was in conditions of vulnerability due to climate change.⁶¹ Those whose survival and wellbeing depends on the ecosystem, in particular, are the most vulnerable and disproportionately affected by climate hazards. In this regard, farmers, the poor, and Indigenous peoples are the ones most affected by the phenomenon.

⁵⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰ Jonas Bergmann et al., *Assessing the Evidence: Climate Change and Migration in Peru*. Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), and International Organization for Migration (IOM) (Potsdam and Geneva: 2021), 154. <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/assessing-the-evidence-peru.pdf>

⁶¹ National System for Disaster Risk Management (SINAGERD), Presidency of the Council of Ministers (PCM), Secretariat for Disaster Risk Management (SGRD), National Centre for Disaster Risk Estimation, Prevention and Reduction (CENEPRED), National Institute of Civil Defence (INDECI), *Plan Nacional de Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres (PLANAGERD) 2014–2021* (Lima: May 2014), 33. https://www.preventionweb.net/files/37923_39462planagerd201420215b15d1.pdf

Climate change is becoming the main cause of poverty in the country, dismantling years of progress made in the region. It also contributes to exacerbating gender inequalities at all levels of the society, reinforcing patriarchal structures of power which find their roots in machismo. Furthermore, due to increasing temperatures, people will be forced to move resulting in higher rates of displacement and migration. The events connected with El Niño phenomenon, such as flooding, rainfalls, and droughts, will leave the population without food, access to water, and a place to live, worsening poverty and generating a divide in the society between those who can have access to resources and those who cannot.⁶² If such event corresponds to the relationship of power already present in Peru, this mean that the gender gap will get wider since men occupy positions of power and women are marginalized to the domestic sphere. On account of this, since women, especially Indigenous women, are often occupied in agriculture and businesses strictly connected with the environment, climate change could cause them to lose their occupation and take on themselves the role of caretakers of their homes, heightening their exclusion from the public and political life.⁶³

Climate change in Peru is a risk multiplier, in that it reproduces and exacerbates vulnerabilities and inequalities already present in the society. In fact, it is recognized and acknowledged as a threat for the country. Precisely for this reason, Peru has taken action at multiple levels of governance.

At the international level, Peru has signed (12 June 1992) and ratified (7 June 1993) the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).⁶⁴ The UNFCCC recognized the importance for states to concretely act in order to preserve humanity in the face of climate change,

⁶² *ibid*

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ The convention opened for signature at the “Rio Earth Summit” in 1992 and entered into force on 21 March 1994.

recognized as a “*common concern of humankind*”.⁶⁵ Its main goal, to be achieved “*within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner*”, is the “*stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system*”.⁶⁶ According to the convention, developed countries should lead the other nations in the realization of such goal. The Conference of Parties (COP), in which every member state is represented, is the supreme decision-making body of the convention. The UNFCCC is an important step in the path of the fight against climate change, in that it paves the way for considerations of adaptation to climate change. On account of this, Peru was among the first countries to establish climate change adaptation goals as part of its commitments, indicating responsibility in realizing the goals of the convention.⁶⁷

Also at the international level, the country signed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda, which comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 Targets, aims at eradicating poverty, inequality and injustice, and fighting against climate change. The SDGs are interrelated and indivisible and balance the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainable development.⁶⁸ In order to realize its goals, the 2030 Agenda is based on five pillars (‘5 Ps’), that is People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. Since its approval in 2015, Peru has conducted reviews on progress concerning the SDGs on the territory and submitted two Voluntary National Reviews in 2017 and 2020, suggesting a true commitment in the realization of the goals and targets.

⁶⁵ United Nations, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. FCCC/INFORMAL/84 GE.05-62220 (E) 200705, (1994). <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>*

⁶⁶ *ibid*

⁶⁷ Known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

⁶⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015). <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

At the national level, in 2015 Peru adopted the 'Estrategia Nacional ante el Cambio Climático' (ENCC) which transposes the commitments undertaken by the state with the UNFCCC at the local level. Its aim is that to act against climate change in an integrated, transversal, and multisectoral way, giving attention to adaptation strategies. In fact, the National Strategy recognizes the catastrophic effects that climate change can have on people and the economy, and it proposes procedures in order to foster resilience among the population and the environment.⁶⁹ Furthermore, in 2021, Peru's Ministry of the Environment (MINAM) approved the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), a strategy with the purpose of reinforcing the resilience of the environment and the population while improving the wellbeing of the people and of the economy of the state at the same time. In addition, the NAP poses a focus on opportunities of sustainable development and on the disproportionate impacts on climate change on those who are strictly dependent on the environment for their survival, such as Indigenous peoples.⁷⁰

In the end, having more than 70% of all the world's climates, 71% of the world's tropical glaciers and more than 75% of all recognized living areas, Peru faces serious threats connected with climate change. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the country responds to such challenges with adaptation strategies and resilience in order to transform climate change from a menace to an opportunity of development and growth at all levels of the society and for everyone.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), *Estrategia Nacional ante el Cambio Climático* (2015). [https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/385666/Decreto Supremo N ENCC-011-201520191013-25586-1clgxul.pdf](https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/385666/Decreto_Supremo_N_ENCC-011-201520191013-25586-1clgxul.pdf)

⁷⁰ NAP Global Network, *Peru Launches its National Adaptation Plan (NAP)*, (11 June 2021). <https://napgloablnetwork.org/2021/06/peru-launches-its-nap/#:~:text=On%20June%209%2C%20the%20Ministry,predicted%20impacts%20of%20climate%20change.>

⁷¹ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), *(documento preliminar) Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú (PAGCC-Perú)*, (2015), 23-28. https://www.climate-links.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2015_IUCN_Climate-Change-Gender-Action-Plan-Peru.pdf

1.4 State of the Art

In recent years, the relationship between gender and climate change has seen a growing interest among the international community, mirrored in an expansion in the literature on the matter. In fact, the topic has been the subject of several studies and debates, also at the United Nations level. Indeed, the recognition of the disproportionate impacts that climate change has on women has been recognized in the framework of the UNFCCC. In this regard, 'Gender Day' was established to be held during the Conference of the Parties "*dedicated to raising awareness on the importance of gender-responsive climate policy and action as well as highlighting women's contribution and leadership in climate action*".⁷²

The interrelation between Indigenous peoples and climate change has also seen developments and growth in literature, which is mainly focused on Indigenous sustainable means of life and adaptation strategies. Nonetheless, studies and scholarly works do not pose attention to climate change as a possible way to include Indigenous peoples at the decision-making level of the society, but only focus on Indigenous knowledge and ancient traditions as a fundamental contribution for sustainable development and for the fight against the climate crisis, particularly related to women. This means that such literature neglects the role of Indigenous women as possible agents of social change in the context of climate change. As a consequence, they are considered as individuals disproportionately affected by climate hazards, that is victims, but able of nurturing and healing the planet, that is caretakers, at the same time, indirectly reinforcing the patriarchal representation of women as the only responsible for the care and sustainment of their households.

As a result, the literature on Indigenous women and climate change connected to social change is not extensive.

⁷² United Nations Climate Change, *Gender Day* (Madrid: 10 December 2019). <https://unfccc.int/event/gender-day>

On account of this, further research needs to be done. Precisely for this reason, this thesis is intended to analyze whether climate change can trigger social change for Indigenous women in Peru, a country with extensive literature on and active associations of Indigenous women. To do so, policies and action plans of the Peruvian Ministry of the Environment will be analyzed. Particular attention will be reserved for national and international legislation regarding women, Indigenous peoples, and climate in Peru, to have a clear understanding of the country's obligations and commitments in this sense. In particular, the National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (PAGCC-Perù) will be analyzed.

In order to formulate an answer to the research question previously highlighted, articles, government briefings and documents will be taken into consideration. Particular emphasis will be put on firsthand experiences of Indigenous women in Peru, collected through videos, articles, and conferences of the association 'ONAMIAP'.⁷³

⁷³ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú

Chapter II: An analysis of the role of Indigenous women in the Peruvian society through the reports of CEDAW and the current legislation at multiple levels of governance for the protection of their human rights

2.1 The condition of Indigenous women in Peru

In October 2017, the Peruvian National Institute of Statistics and Computer Science (INEI) carried out the ten-year National Census.⁷⁴ In this occasion, ethnic self-identification was included for the first time ever to list the population which self-identified as members of the Indigenous or Native Peoples of the Andes and the Amazon, as well as of the Afro-Peruvian Population.⁷⁵

According to the 2017 National Census results, the male population of Peru comprised 49.2% of the total population, while the female population counted for 50.8% of the total population of Peru.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the document '*La Autoidentificación étnica: población indígena y afroperuana*', underlines the census' findings that the population above 12 years of age which self-identified as Indigenous or Afro-descendent amounted to almost 6 million persons, meaning 25% of the population. Of this total, 48,5% are men, and 51,5% are women.⁷⁷ Based on these data, it is possible to affirm that Indigenous Women make up a large share of the Peruvian population. On account of this, in order to proceed with the research on whether their

⁷⁴ 'Censos Nacionales: XII de Población, VII de Vivienda y III de Comunidades Indígenas'.

⁷⁵ The 'Self -identification' criteria was included in the National Census as a way for the government to gather statistical data in order to formulate policies, programs, and projects which included the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Descendent.

⁷⁶ INEI, *Perù, Resultados definitivos de los censos nacionales 2017* (Lima: October 2018), 36. https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib1544/

⁷⁷ "The population that identified itself as belonging to an indigenous or native people of the Andes, in CPV 2017, reached a total of 5,771,885 people, equivalent to 24.9% of the census population of 12 years and older in the country. Of this total, 2,801,412 are men (48.5%) and 2,970,473 are women (51.5%)". "Peruvian Ministry of Culture, INEI, *La Autoidentificación étnica: población indígena y afroperuana. Censos Nacionales: XII de Población, VII de Vivienda y III de Comunidades Indígenas* (Lima: December 2018), 45. https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib1642/"

activism connected to climate change can bring about social change, it is crucial to analyze their condition and role within the society. Accordingly, the next section of this chapter will focus on the traditional conception of gender roles which has shaped the Peruvian society across history and the resulting feminist movements that have developed in opposition to it. This analysis is necessary for the purpose of comprehending the actual condition of Indigenous Women in Peru, which will be explored through the reports, general recommendations, and agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

2.1.1 The traditional gender roles in the Peruvian society: Machismo and Marianismo

According to the UN Women Training Centre's Glossary, gender roles "*refer to social and behavioral norms that, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex. These often determine the traditional responsibilities and tasks assigned to men, women, boys and girls. Gender-specific roles are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, occurrence of conflict or disaster, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions [...] gender roles can evolve over time, in particular through the empowerment of women and transformation of masculinities*".⁷⁸ Gender roles are not natural but learnt through socialization. In this sense, society shapes the way people understand how women and men should behave and what characteristics they should embody.

⁷⁸ UN Women Training Centre's Glossary, *Gender roles*. In: *Gender Equality Glossary* (n.d.). <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=search&hook=gender+roles&fullsearch=1>

In Peru, the concept of gender roles has developed in line with two factors which have influenced the social behavior of sexuality of all Latin America, that are '*Machismo*' and '*Marianismo*'.

It is believed that '*Machismo*' finds its roots in the process of European colonization of Latin America, meaning that the attributes that this factor entails were not new and were transposed from a continent to another. In particular, machismo was linked with the Spanish conquerors who, having arrived in Meso and Latin-America, exhibited traits of violence, aggressiveness, and arrogance by abducting and raping Indigenous women and, consequently, creating a new race, the '*mestizos*'. The mestizos suffered marginalization from both Indigenous peoples, who considered them as the outcome of violence and illegal conquest, and the Spanish conquerors. As a result, they developed psychological insecurities which they tried to fill by way of proving their virility and dignity and behaving like the conquerors.⁷⁹

Throughout history, this developed as the culture of machismo, that is the cult of virility.⁸⁰ Machismo is a set of values, expectations, and beliefs on what it means to be a man and what is masculinity. Its most important characteristics are arrogance, strength (intended as the ability to hurt and annihilate as well as humiliate someone else), dominance, sexism, sexual prowess, and invulnerability. Furthermore, machismo implies the fact that men must not show any emotions and they must keep all their feelings to themselves, resulting in hermetic beings. In addition, men must be intransigent in interpersonal relations and in relationships with women, who must remain in traditional roles. As a consequence of this, the culture of

⁷⁹ Alfonso Moisés, *Sexualidad en Mesoamérica: machismo y marianismo*, In: *Científica*, vol. 1, n. 1, época 2 (2012), 46. <http://www.redicces.org.sv/jspui/bitstream/10972/2204/1/Sexualidad%20en%20Mesoamerica%3A%20machismo%20y%20marianismo%20.pdf>

⁸⁰ Since machismo can be a complex concept in that it also entails positive connotations, such as honor and bravery, some authors prefer to use the term toxic machismo or toxic masculinity. "Madison Wilson, *Women rise against 'toxic machismo' in Latin America. How women in Peru are taking steps toward a more equitable world* (n.d.). <https://www.fairtradecertified.org/news/latin-america-machismo>"

machismo has encouraged and exacerbated aggressiveness and gender-based violence against women, and it has aggravated the concept of male dominance on women, reinforcing a patriarchal structure of the society.⁸¹

The other cultural concept which contributed to reinforce machismo and establish gender roles in Latin America is 'Marianismo', that is the cult of female spiritual superiority.⁸² The historical roots of marianismo are to be found in the colonization period, where Spanish conquerors brought Christian values into the new lands they discovered. Therefore, marianismo was conceived on the basis of the figure of the Virgin Mary, considered as a nurturing and spiritual woman.

This concept gained a foothold in the Hispanic American culture and the ideal woman needed to resemble the archetype of the Virgin Mary.⁸³ As a result, stereotypes related to sexuality and the work of women stemmed from such conception. In fact, women were considered lustful, sinful, dark, secret, passive, and with the intention to sexually attract men, but marianismo coincided with the concept of virginity and modesty, which were to be preserved at all costs since no men wanted to marry a woman who had already lost her virginity to someone else. Together with virginity, marianismo implies that women must be passive and submissive to their husbands and their only concern must be that of nurturing and taking care of their families and houses.⁸⁴ Precisely for these reasons, both machismo and marianismo contribute to reinforcing a system of social power based on patriarchy, where men, who need to be respected as figures with authority,

⁸¹ Alfonso Moisés, *Sexualidad en Mesoamérica: machismo y marianismo*, In: *Científica*, vol. 1, n. 1, época 2 (2012), 46. <http://www.redicces.org.sv/jspui/bitstream/10972/2204/1/Sexualidad%20en%20Mesoamerica%3A%20machismo%20y%20marianismo%20.pdf>

⁸² The term marianismo was coined in 1973 by political scientist Evelyn Stevens.

⁸³ It is important to note that the figure of the Virgin Mary which was idolized as the ideal woman was a false one, since the Virgin Mother is not an example of a submissive woman or traditional mother in the Bible.

⁸⁴ Alicia Nuñez et al., *Machismo, Marianismo, and Negative Cognitive-Emotional Factors: Findings From the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos Sociocultural Ancillary Study*. In: *Journal of Latina/o psychology*, 4 (2016), 202–217. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5102330/>

exert their dominance over women and the latter are relegated to the domestic sphere and in need of the protection of their male counterparts. Therefore, “*machismo and marianismo are intertwined, co-existing constructs that describe socially acceptable norms and beliefs that support men and women in traditional gender roles emphasizing a patriarchal power structure*”.⁸⁵

These two cultural factors have developed throughout history and have shaped the way people perceive genders. In fact, according to an inquiry of sociologist Hernan San Martin carried out in various Latin American countries, people attributed to masculinity characteristics such as ‘hard’, ‘intellectual’, ‘strong’, ‘aggressive’, ‘generous’, ‘polygamous’, ‘deeply absorbed by business’, ‘expert and experienced in love-making’, ‘stable’; and they attributed to femininity features like ‘gentle’, ‘emotional’, ‘superficial’, ‘cautious’, ‘self-denying’, ‘monogamous’, ‘faithful’, ‘virgin’, ‘inconstant’.⁸⁶

Machismo and marianismo also influence the economic system. Indeed, since men need to be strong and business oriented, women suffer a disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities, which prevents them from participating in the economy of their nation. As a consequence of this, relationships between the sexes tend to become hierarchical, with men having access to resources and power, and women having to take care of their household and their families by being mothers. Specifically in Peru, machismo and marianismo are responsible of forcing women into the informal sector because of the lack of social protection schemes and policies. In this case, they cannot escape the paradigm of marianismo and cannot develop social mobility.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *ibid*

⁸⁶ Hernan San Martin, *Machismo. Latin America's myth-cult of Male Supremacy*. In: *El Correo de la UNESCO: una ventana abierta sobre el mundo*, XXVIII, 3 (1975), 28-32. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000049661_spa

⁸⁷ “In Peru, 51 percent of all jobs are generated by the informal economy, a sector that has a female face, as more than 60 percent of the women workers in the country are forced into informality, with only 15 percent having health coverage and a mere four percent

Finally, by contrasting the figure of the tireless worker man with that of the caregiver woman, men use their power to exert dominance over women. One of the ways in which they do so is through gender-based violence. In this regard, the '*Encuesta Nacional Demografica y de Salud Familiar*' (ENDES) of Peru found that in 2020 54.8% of Peruvian women suffered gender-based violence from their husbands or partners, 50.1% of which suffered psychological and verbal violence, 27.1% physical violence, and 6.0% sexual violence.⁸⁸

Gender roles in Peru are therefore perceived and understood in accordance with machismo and marianismo, portraying men as strong and cold figures who hold power and demand respect, and women as submissive wives and mothers who are deeply spiritual and should only care about the wellbeing of their households.

2.1.2 The evolution of Feminism(s) in Peru

Having analyzed how gender roles are perceived in the Peruvian society due to the culture of machismo and marianismo and having set the context, the present thesis will now focus on the evolution of feminism in Peru.

First and foremost, it should be highlighted that "*the Peruvian women's social movement does not reflect a homogeneous process, but a plurality of processes showing the diversity of women's realities throughout the country. In this respect perhaps we should refer instead to several women's social movements*".⁸⁹

enjoying retirement benefits". "Maritza Asencios, *Peru: Women Workers forced into Informal Economy*. In: *Inter Press Service News Agency* (Lima: 2 December 2009). <https://www.ipsnews.net/2009/12/peru-women-workers-forced-into-informal-economy/>"

⁸⁸ INEI, Perú. *Encuesta Nacional Demografica y de Salud Familiar ENDES 2020* (2020), 263-264.

https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitaes/Est/Lib1795/

⁸⁹ Virginia Vargas, *The Women's Movement in Peru Streams, Spaces and Knots*. In: *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Del Caribe / European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 50 (June 1991), 9.

The origins of the feminist movements which developed in Peru can be traced back to the first decades of the 19th century. In fact, in 1838 Flora Tristan was the first woman to write about Peruvian women in the context of the Republic, and years later María Jesús Alvarado fought to obtain material equality between men and women. Between the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, feminism in Peru reached a stalemate, but it re-emerged during the 1970s as a result of women's awareness of their situation of subordination.⁹⁰ The main goal of feminism in the region was to redefine reality from a different perspective, that is without deforming reality according to patriarchal standards. Indeed, men viewed the world from a privileged position compared to women. For this reason, feminists wanted to analyze reality from different perspectives, namely the perspectives of the most marginalized within the society and the ones who had less power and access to resources in order to achieve recognition and justice.

Throughout the 1970, the so-called feminist movement of the second wave impacted the Peruvian society as the most subversive phenomenon of the century, in that it entailed a break of paradigm with the political culture which was profoundly authoritarian, and it questioned the relationship between human beings and the socio-political, economic, sexual, and cultural contexts which surrounded them.⁹¹ It is important to highlight the fact that Peru saw the rise and development of different feminisms, with their own rhythms and strategies.

At the beginning of the feminist movements, feminists belonged to middle and upper class, and they were an expression of modernity. In this case, women belonging to lower social classes, such as Indigenous women or

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/25675492.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A166cf7f4b5eab85a91261b090ac5ace1&ab_segments=&origin=

⁹⁰ Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, *25 años de Feminismo en el Perú: Historia, confluencias y perspectivas: seminario nacional* 16-17 de septiembre 2004 (Lima: December 2004).
[https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con4_uibd.nsf/C08CBB7DF991A3FF05257B1700675D74/\\$FILE/BVCI0003574.pdf](https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con4_uibd.nsf/C08CBB7DF991A3FF05257B1700675D74/$FILE/BVCI0003574.pdf)

⁹¹ *ibid*

Afro-descendants, did not have an active role concerning feminism in this particular timeframe.

The first feminist mobilizations saw a large participation due to the partnership between feminists and workers, miners, and teachers. During this time, the focus was put onto social class issues in the interest of male-dominated party politics, and women's issues were side-lined. Indeed, Peruvian feminism has socialist roots and is close to leftist parties because of the fact that many women were workers and, together with their fellow male workers, they demanded labour's rights. The situation changed when women started to advocate for their own agenda of rights. For instance, as Peruvian feminist and sociologist Virginia Vargas recalls, the day feminists pronounced for abortion rights, the mobilization comprised only 50 people and, at the end of the day and after a violent aggression against those who were present, it got down to 20.⁹²

During these years, the distrust of political public spaces, such as the state, was strong, and this feeling was exacerbated by authoritarian and dictatorial governments. As a consequence, feminists decided to distance themselves from leftist political parties and gathered together in solidarity and self-awareness groups to address women's demands through social action which was to be carried out outside of the political sphere.⁹³ In these settings, they begun building their own discourse and agenda centered around the priorities of gender equality and democratization of the government while forming organizations focused on the advancement of

⁹² Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, *25 años de Feminismo en el Perú: Historia, confluencias y perspectivas: seminario nacional* 16-17 de septiembre 2004 (Lima: December 2004), 11. [https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con4_uibd.nsf/C08CBB7DF991A3FF05257B1700675D74/\\$FILE/BVC10003574.pdf](https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con4_uibd.nsf/C08CBB7DF991A3FF05257B1700675D74/$FILE/BVC10003574.pdf)

⁹³ During the 1970s it is possible to distinguish between 'militantes', that is feminists who remained within the parties and tried to gain rights from there; and 'feministas', that is feminists that fought for their rights and emancipation distancing themselves from political parties.

women in the society.⁹⁴ Two examples of associations who moved away from political parties to concentrate on women's activism to enact social change are the '*Flora Tristán Center for Peruvian Women*' (1979) and the '*Manuela Ramos Movement*' (1980).

At this historical moment, three streams of feminist activism emerged: the first one condemned the subordination of women caused by a gender-classified social system; the second one explored practical answers to women's demands caused by traditional gender roles; the third one advocated for more female participation at decision-making levels in traditional political spaces.⁹⁵ Even though women belonging to the different streams felt a sense of belonging to the same gender, the process was not easy since it "*mixed different realities, experiences, influences, and take on specific forms of expression in their interrelation with the contradictions underlying women's lives, such as class, race, age, geographic location, etc.*".⁹⁶ In this sense, diversity between women was a driving force of Peruvian feminism.

The 1980s saw a growing interest of feminists toward the issue of democratization, which coincided with the struggle of women to move from denial to recognition, making public the subordination of women in the private sphere and the following lack of feminine presence in the political and public context. Indeed, the feminist debate centered around the themes of domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape in marriage, and the feminization of poverty. In addition, feminists gained growing awareness of their women's human rights thanks to the effects of the United Nations

⁹⁴ Shelly Grabe, *Feminist Approaches to Gender Equity in Perú: The Roles of Conflict, Militancy, and Pluralism in Feminist Activism*. In: *Frontiers in Psychology* (18 March 2022). <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.834763/full>

⁹⁵ *ibid*

⁹⁶ Virginia Vargas, *The Women's Movement in Peru Streams, Spaces and Knots*. In: *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Del Caribe / European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 50 (June 1991), 10. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/25675492.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A166cf7f4b5eab85a91261b090ac5ace1&ab_segments=&origin=

Women's Decade which started in 1975 and advocated for them accordingly. In particular, they focused on gender equality to which it had to correspond a redistribution of political power to include women in democratic institutions. Democracy was a preeminent issue in Peru due to the constant presence of authoritarian and military regimes (masked as republican governments) and armed conflict, which contributed to reinforce the patriarchal structure of the society and a culture of machismo, according to which women should be relegated to the household and subjugated by male dominance.⁹⁷

During the 1980s gendered projects took place throughout all Latin America, one of them being the previously mentioned 'Encuentros'. The second regional Encuentro took place in Lima, Peru in 1983 posing its attention on Latin American patriarchy in all its forms and expressions and gender power relations, taking into consideration the diversity of women's experiences.⁹⁸

Over this period, grassroots social movements gained momentum and were crucial in highlighting the importance of arguing for women through an intersectional approach which takes into account that women are different and experience things differently depending on their class, status, ethnicity, religion, and so on. On the contrary, *"to 'argue globally for woman in unspecific ways contributes to the oppression of women'. In a region as diverse as Latin America, with its 'pluricultural and multiracial' society, 'to speak of the oppression of the Latin American woman is to speak of a generality which hides the hard reality lived by millions of black and Indigenous women'"*.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ The political history of Peru is characterized by several military coups, such as those of Augusto Leguía y Salcedo (1919) and Alberto Fujimori (1992), and by an ongoing conflict between revolutionary armed groups, such as Maoist Sendero Luminoso and Marxist Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru, and the state.

⁹⁸ Shelly Grabe, *Feminist Approaches to Gender Equity in Perú: The Roles of Conflict, Militancy, and Pluralism in Feminist Activism*. In: *Frontiers in Psychology* (18 March 2022). <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.834763/full>

⁹⁹ Annalise Moser, *Happy Heterogeneity? Feminism, Development, and the Grassroots Women's Movement in Peru*. In: *Feminist Studies* 30, no. 1 (2004), 214.

Peruvian feminisms in the 1990s continued to focus on democratization of the government and institutions while giving attention to the formal recognition of their women's human rights. Indeed, even though there was a lack of guarantees and social changes, the state recognized their rights. For instance, in 1996 the Peruvian Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP) was established.

One of the main issues feminists argued for was abortion. In fact, abortion is illegal in Peru unless the life of the mother is at risk due to the pregnancy. Even though abortion is still illegal to this day, feminist activism has made it possible to discuss the issue in the public socio-cultural arena, distancing it from the traditional biomedical vision. Furthermore, they made visible the need for public policies to incorporate human rights, gender, and reproductive rights.¹⁰⁰

During these years, globalization had an important and contradictory impact on the Peruvian feminist movements. On the one hand, it allowed for the United Nations international conferences concerning human rights (Vienna 1993), population (Cairo 1994), and women (Beijing 1995) to place themselves as effective tools to bring awareness to and, consequently, counteract women's subjugation and exclusion. On the other hand, it fragmented and complicated the feminist discourse, which seemed to disappear from the public sphere. In this case, new expressions of feminism emerged and highlighted the life experiences of those who had been marginal in the discourse up until that moment, that is lesbians, Indigenous

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3178571.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ad3dae3c3d70a89686138713508efe5cf&ab_segments=&origin=

¹⁰⁰ Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, *25 años de Feminismo en el Perú: Historia, confluencias y perspectivas: seminario nacional* 16-17 de septiembre 2004 (Lima: December 2004), 96.
[https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con4_uibd.nsf/C08CBB7DF991A3FF05257B1700675D74/\\$FILE/BVCI0003574.pdf](https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con4_uibd.nsf/C08CBB7DF991A3FF05257B1700675D74/$FILE/BVCI0003574.pdf)

women, and black women. Indeed, their inequality in power, access to resources, and visibility was clear.¹⁰¹

In this regard, with particular reference to Indigenous women, according to Tania Pariona Tarqui, a young Quechua leader, feminist, politician, human rights activist and former Congressperson, *“the denial, indivisibility, repression, territorial dispossession, the extractive presence, where there is always social and environmental responsibility, is making the Indigenous leadership emerge with force. What becomes oppression and a problem, for us also becomes an opportunity”*.¹⁰²

The feminism carried out by Indigenous women in Peru is a postcolonial and militant one, which purpose is to promote an approach between gender and culture which takes into consideration the previously unheard voices of women.¹⁰³ Its colonial origins involved the penetration of colonizers into foreign territories to which corresponded their dominance over the bodies of Indigenous women who inhabited those territories. Here the connection between the subjugation of women and the exploitation of nature is evident and it has shaped the Peruvian society up to the present day. In fact, according to the Ombudsman’s Office, the majority of conflicts in Peru are related to the environment, in particular to extractive activities which Indigenous women often denounce due to the violence and sexual harassment that the men involved in these activities carry out against them.¹⁰⁴ Precisely for this reason, some Indigenous women in Peru

¹⁰¹ Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, *25 años de Feminismo en el Perú: Historia, confluencias y perspectivas: seminario nacional* 16-17 de septiembre 2004 (Lima: December 2004), 12. [https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con4_uibd.nsf/C08CBB7DF991A3FF05257B1700675D74/\\$FILE/BVC10003574.pdf](https://www2.congreso.gob.pe/sicr/cendocbib/con4_uibd.nsf/C08CBB7DF991A3FF05257B1700675D74/$FILE/BVC10003574.pdf)

¹⁰² Shelly Grabe, *Feminist Approaches to Gender Equity in Perú: The Roles of Conflict, Militancy, and Pluralism in Feminist Activism*. In: *Frontiers in Psychology* (18 March 2022). <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.834763/full>

¹⁰³ Here militant feminist is intended as someone who actively participates and show an active commitment to engage feminism as a platform for action.

¹⁰⁴ Patricia I. Vasquez, *Extractive industries and conflicts in Peru: and agenda for action* (October 2010). <https://www.un.org/es/land-natural-resources-conflict/pdfs/Peru%20background%20paper%20UN%20EU%20partnership%20october%202010.pdf>

advocate for Community ecofeminism, which denounces extractive activities and the abuses they entail.¹⁰⁵

To summarize, feminism in Peru has faced an ongoing evolution and adaptation always working to obtain change in the society. According to Shelly Grabe's research, Peruvian feminist activism entails three key principles that feminist in Peru have employed towards change: "(1) *awareness of context-specific patterns of conflict was used to progress goals, rather than being viewed as situations that presented obstacles, (2) self-labeling as a 'militant' emerged as an important way to declare an ideological and active commitment to engaging feminism as a legitimate platform for action and, (3) feminist activists approached liberation through the practice of pluralism, or an approach that was inclusive of the diversity of women's realities and experiences throughout the country, rather than using a homogenous process or one that celebrated individual efforts and ideas*".¹⁰⁶ Finally, feminist movements in Peru have made it possible to raise awareness about the situation of inequality and submission of women in the country and they have gained institutional results concerning the recognition of women's human rights. Nevertheless, a culture of machismo and marianismo persists.

2.1.3 Current reality of Indigenous women in Peru through the lens of CEDAW's concluding observations

¹⁰⁵ Alejandro Zapata, *Cambios, avances y retos del feminismo en el Perú: análisis al rededor del ecologismo y la diversidad cultural* (3 March 2021). <https://conexionambiental.pe/cambios-avances-y-retos-del-feminismo-en-el-peru-analisis-alrededor-del-ecologismo-y-la-diversidad-cultural/>

¹⁰⁶ Shelly Grabe, *Feminist Approaches to Gender Equity in Perú: The Roles of Conflict, Militancy, and Pluralism in Feminist Activism*. In: *Frontiers in Psychology* (18 March 2022). <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.834763/full>

As already mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Indigenous women constitute a large part of the Peruvian population. Nonetheless, they face several challenges in the enjoyment and exercise of their human rights.¹⁰⁷ For the purpose of analyzing the condition of Indigenous women in Peru, it is of utmost importance to be aware and recognize the multidimensional character of the discrimination they suffer. In fact, the category of Indigenous women entails two dimensions, that of gender (women), and that of ethnicity (Indigenous). Precisely for this reason, they find themselves at the “*intersection of two conditions of disadvantage and discrimination*” which are mutually reinforcing and contribute to their situation of inequality and high vulnerability.¹⁰⁸ Indigenous women comprise both the issues which concern Indigenous peoples and the issues specific of women. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that different dimensions of oppression and discrimination, such as gender, ethnicity, origins, class, and sexual orientation, intersect with their category. Accordingly, the intersectionality of the identity of Indigenous women should always be taken into consideration when referring to their condition and the reluctance to address the gender dimensions of Indigenous peoples should be overcome.

First and foremost, it should be noted that, while the country has made progress throughout the years, gender equality is far from being achieved in Peru. Indeed, in 2021 the nation scored 0.72 in the gender gap index, meaning that women are 28% less likely than their male counterparts to have equal opportunities. Moreover, the gender gap regarding political empowerment amounted to 69%, highlighting overall limited rights for women.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women, *Gender and Indigenous Peoples: an overview. Briefing note no.1* (New York: February 2010). https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/BriefingNote1_GREY.pdf

¹⁰⁸ International Labour Organization (ILO), *The labour situation of Indigenous women in Peru: a study* (Geneva: 2016). https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_546285.pdf

¹⁰⁹ Teresa Romero, *Gender gap index in Peru from 2014 to 2021*. In: *Statista* (5 July 2021). <https://www.statista.com/statistics/802936/peru-gender-gap-index/>

In the Peruvian society, Indigenous women encounter many barriers and face serious violations of their rights.

The first hurdle they have to overcome is that of the language. The official language of Peru is Spanish; however, Indigenous women usually speak Indigenous languages such as Quechua and Aymara. This barrier prevents them from having access to education, justice, healthcare, institutional structures, and the labour market.¹¹⁰ In this regard, the language barrier exacerbates the equality gap between men and women since the former leave their homes to go to school and get an education in the official language, while the latter remain at home and focus on creating a family, often from a young age. Moreover, the issue of language promotes high levels of illiteracy among Indigenous women, which prevents them from getting information on and understanding of their rights as both women and Indigenous.¹¹¹ The issue is remarked in CEDAW's concluding comments of 2007 and concluding observations of 2014, which denounce how illiteracy disproportionately affects Indigenous and rural girls due to their low educational level and high percentages of school dropouts.¹¹² The two documents give attention to the disadvantages Indigenous and rural girls face in accessing quality education and the consequent lack of educational opportunities, highlighting the fact that girls are often victims of abuse and violence on their way to school.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Bryan Boggiano, *Indigenous women's rights in Peru*. In: *The Borgen Project* (17 October 2020). <https://borgenproject.org/womens-rights-in-peru/>

¹¹¹ "In rural areas, 33.7% of women are illiterate, against 10.9% of men". Dalton Dunning, *8 Facts about women's poverty in Peru*. In: *The Borgen Project* (21 July 2020). <https://borgenproject.org/womens-poverty-in-peru/>

¹¹² CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/PER/CO/6. Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Peru* (2 February 2007). <https://www.refworld.org/publisher,CEDAW,CONCOBSERVATIONS,PER,45f90bfd2,0.html>

¹¹³ CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/PER/CO/7-8. Concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Peru* (24 July 2014). https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEAW/C/PER/CO/7-8&Lang=En

It is also important to underline the fact that language barriers prevent women to get a proper and age-appropriate sexual and reproductive education, resulting in high rates of teenage pregnancies, rape, domestic violence, and child marriages.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the issue of language causes Indigenous women to have limited access to reproductive and maternal healthcare, thus being obliged to rely on traditional practices and men.

Concerning sexual and reproductive rights, a 1999 survey conducted in Quechua communities highlighted that 44% of the interviewed women had been forced to have sex at least once, and only 15% of them said they had had an active role in the decisions concerning their sexual relations, the use of contraceptives, and the number of wanted children.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the 2007 concluding comments affirm CEDAW's concern regarding the "*inadequate recognition and protection of reproductive health and rights of women*", condemning the limited availability of contraceptives in rural areas.¹¹⁶

Another issue, one of the most pressing ones, that Indigenous women have to face is that of gender-based violence (GBV).

First and foremost, it is fundamental to recall one of the most atrocious forms of GBV that Indigenous women in Peru suffered between 1996 and 2001 under former president Alberto Fujimori, that is forced sterilization. Under the cover of the 'Programa de Salud Reproductiva y Planificación Familiar' (Program of Reproductive Health and Family Planning-PSRPF), the government forcibly sterilized around three hundred thousand Indigenous, rural, and poor women with the goal to destroy that specific part of the Peruvian population. Those who underwent the procedure were

¹¹⁴ Bryan Boggiano, *Indigenous women's rights in Peru*. In: *The Borgen Project* (17 October 2020). <https://borgenproject.org/womens-rights-in-peru/>

¹¹⁵ Astrid Bant, Françoise Girard, *Sexuality, health, and human rights: self-identified priorities of indigenous women in Peru*, *Gender & Development*. In: *Routledge*, 16:2, 247-256, DOI: 10.1080/13552070802120426 (2 October 2008). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13552070802120426?needAccess=true>

¹¹⁶ CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/PER/CO/6. Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Peru* (2 February 2007). <https://www.refworld.org/publisher,CEDAW,CONCOBSERVATIONS,PER,45f90bfd2,0.html>

misinformed of the practice and had not given their consent.¹¹⁷ Such program caused long lasting effects on the lives of Indigenous women, making their villages unstable. Furthermore, according to CEDAW's 2014 concluding observations, there have been no effective investigations on the matter and the victims have not received any compensation, depriving them of justice and allowing impunity.¹¹⁸

Violence and discrimination characterize today's Peruvian society due to permissive attitudes rooted in a machista culture. Indeed, persistent sociocultural patterns justify and allow for violence against women, particularly domestic violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and incest, followed by high rates of impunity for perpetrators.

Violence against women is a pervasive issue in Peru: between 2009 and 2015, more than seven hundred women were killed due to domestic violence and GBV in the nation, with higher numbers in rural areas.¹¹⁹ The phenomenon of GBV against Indigenous women is so widespread that, although CEDAW does not make specific reference to them, the Committee's concluding observations often mention Indigenous women in relation to violence and recommends Peru to take concrete action in order to eradicate it. Specifically, CEDAW's 2022 concluding observations criticize the absence of a comprehensive law on violence against women to prevent violence, protect the victims, and punish the perpetrators. The document focuses on the multiple discriminations faced by Indigenous and rural women on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation, underlining the prejudice they face when seeking redress and compensation for the crimes suffered. The committee notes the high

¹¹⁷ Nusta P. Carranza Ko, Making the Case for Genocide, the Forced Sterilization of Indigenous Peoples of Peru. In: *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*, Vol. 14: Iss. 2: 90-103 (2020). <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1740&context=gsp>

¹¹⁸ CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/PER/CO/7-8. Concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Peru* (24 July 2014). https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEAW/C/PER/CO/7-8&Lang=En

¹¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Peru. Events of 2016* (2016). <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/peru>

prevalence of intimate partner violence, explaining that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation leading to an increase in the number of femicides, disappearances, and sexual violence. In particular, CEDAW notes with concern “*the inadequate progress made in addressing the disproportionate levels of violence experienced by disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women and girls in all areas of their lives and who are also facing historical and intersecting forms of discrimination, namely indigenous and Afro-Peruvian women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons, rural women, refugee and migrant women and women and girls in detention*”.¹²⁰

Connected with discrimination and violence, it is important to notice that Peru is an origin, transit, and destination country for human trafficking, often for the purpose of prostitution. In this regard, Indigenous women living in rural areas are among the categories most at risk of becoming trafficked for such purposes. Indeed, a CEDAW expert noted that “*in Amazonian Peru, 93.8% of women and girls were victims of trafficking, with the majority being teenagers trafficked for sex. Indigenous Peruvians were particularly vulnerable to trafficking as were foreign girls, lured in with false job promises*”.¹²¹

The stereotypes about gender roles according to which the woman must stay at home and take care of the household while the man must have a dominant role in the public sphere are also responsible for women’s exclusion from the public and political arenas. Indeed, women do not have sufficient decision-making power and financial resources as men, and while some progress has been made regarding their political

¹²⁰ CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/PER/CO/9. Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of Peru* (1 March 2022). https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEAW%2fC%2fPER%2fCO%2f9&Lang=en

¹²¹ UNHCHR, *Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women commend Peru on efforts to establish Gender Equality in Government and ask about Human Trafficking and Forced Sterilization* (16 February 2022). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/02/experts-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-commend-peru>

participation, they are still underrepresented in the judiciary and in the public administration for the presence of structural barriers which prevent them from accessing institutions. It is worth mentioning that even when they are included at the political level, such as with the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Groups, they are reserved a low budget compared to that of men. Another factor which prevents them from having access to the decision-making level, claim nationality, and social benefits, is that many Indigenous women do not have documentation registering their births.¹²²

One more issue concerning Peruvian Indigenous Women is poverty, which disproportionately affects them. Even though women are the majority of the population living in poverty, policies regarding its eradication lack a gendered approach.¹²³

Poverty is particularly pressing because of women's traditional caring roles and difficulties in accessing the labour market. In fact, Indigenous women face difficulties in the field of employment. They are strongly related with rurality and the land. It follows that they are largely engaged with agricultural work in the fields and in the forests in order to sustain their families. According to the International Labour Organization, "*42 per cent of indigenous women are engaged in work related to agriculture and livestock, forestry or hunting as their principal economic activity*".¹²⁴ Indigenous women engage in additional activities, such as artisanal manufacturing and retail trading.

These types of employment bring with them several disadvantages. For instance, Indigenous women are responsible for the survival and wellbeing

¹²² CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/PER/CO/6. Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Peru* (2 February 2007). <https://www.refworld.org/publisher,CEDAW,CONCOBSERVATIONS,PER,45f90bfd2,0.html>

¹²³ Dalton Dunning, *8 Facts about women's poverty in Peru*. In: *The Borgen Project*. 21 July 2020. <https://borgenproject.org/womens-poverty-in-peru/>

¹²⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO), *The labour situation of Indigenous women in Peru: a study*, (Geneva: 2016). https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_546285.pdf

of their families, meaning that they are vulnerable to exploitation in order to sustain their household. In this regard, CEDAW calls out forced child-labour of rural girls in the mining field.¹²⁵ In addition, they form the majority of unpaid workers in the region. Furthermore, there is a lack of gender dimension in land ownership: as a result of being women, they have access to less land and less machinery than men, hence discriminating them and exacerbating existing inequalities. It is also important to note that, because of all the above-mentioned reasons, only few women are employed in the public sector, but their presence would be fundamental to promote improved service and develop cultural understanding.¹²⁶

Since Indigenous Peruvian women mainly rely on agriculture, livestock, and forestry as their main occupation (and as part of their culture and identity), climate change, together with extractive activities like oil spills and oil palm cultivation, threatens their survival. As a matter of fact, “21% of Peru’s territory consists of mining concessions, which are superimposed upon 47.8% of the territory of peasant communities. Similarly, 75% of the Peruvian Amazon is covered by oil and gas concessions”.¹²⁷ In rural areas, women tend to secure already scarce resources like water and food, but environmental hazards prevent them from doing so, contributing to make Indigenous families vulnerable. For these reasons, in Peru Indigenous women live in precarious conditions, which, as a result, force them to maintain their role of caretakers and refrain from accessing the public sphere, reinforcing gender-based discrimination and racial stereotypes. Furthermore, climate change interferes with the possibility to access healthcare, education, justice, and employment.

¹²⁵ CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/PER/CO/7-8. Concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Peru* (24 July 2014). https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/PER/CO/7-8&Lang=En

¹²⁶ International Labour Organization (ILO), *The labour situation of Indigenous women in Peru: a study*, (Geneva: 2016). https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_546285.pdf

¹²⁷ IWGIA, *Indigenous peoples in Peru* (n.d.). <https://www.iwgia.org/en/peru.html>

In this regard, CEDAW recognizes the differentiated gender impact of climate change and underlines the devastating effects that oil extraction and large-scale agricultural industries have on the wellbeing and the ecosystem of Indigenous women.¹²⁸ Besides, their exclusion from the decision-making and political level prevents them from sharing their ancestral knowledge and creating adaptation and risk-reduction strategies.

Despite all this, the condition of Indigenous women in Peru has seen little improvements throughout the years and has gained importance. In this respect, Peru submitted an input to CEDAW for the Draft General Recommendation on the rights of Indigenous women and girls, which goal is the self-determination of Indigenous women and girls, seen as leaders in and outside of their communities. In doing so, the country demonstrates a commitment to improve the situation of Indigenous women.¹²⁹

2.2 Legislation for the protection of women and Indigenous people's rights at multiple levels of governance

To further examine the condition of Indigenous women in Peru, it is useful to analyze the legislation concerning them at different levels of governance. Therefore, the following section will focus on both the legislation concerning the protection of women's human rights and Indigenous people's collective rights, so as to provide a comprehensive framework of the protection offered to them in a multilevel governance perspective.

¹²⁸ CEDAW, *CEDAW/C/PER/CO/9. Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of Peru* (1 March 2022). https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fPER%2fCO%2f9&Lang=en

¹²⁹ CEDAW, *Draft General Recommendation No. 39 on the rights of indigenous women and girls*, (2022). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/calls-input/draft-general-recommendation-rights-indigenous-women-and-girls>

2.2.1 International legislation on women and Indigenous Peoples

At the international level, the first instrument to establish women's human rights is the United Nations Charter, that is the founding document of the United Nations Organization which was signed in 1945 in San Francisco. Indeed, its preamble affirms the principle of equality between women and men: *"To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small"*.¹³⁰ Such principle was later reaffirmed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Despite the fact that such document is not binding upon member states of the United Nations, it is of the utmost importance since it sets out universal human rights to be protected, it provides a comprehensive framework of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and it expresses the fundamental values of the international community. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets up the protection of women's human rights by declaring the principle of equality between women and men in its preamble and its articles. Indeed, the preamble affirms the *"equal rights of men and women"*. Accordingly, article 1 states that *"all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"*, to which article 2 and 7, respectively, add the specific *"without distinction of any kind"* and *"all are equal before the law and protection"*.¹³¹

The first two binding instruments which, although not devoted to it, contributed to the establishment of women's human rights are the two 1966 Covenants, that is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). For the Purpose of this thesis, it is useful to know that since Peru ratified both in 1978, their provisions are binding upon the state.

¹³⁰ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International court of Justice* (San Francisco: 1945). <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf>

¹³¹ United Nations General Assembly, *A/RES/217 Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Paris: 10 December 1948). [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_217\(III\).pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_217(III).pdf)

Article 2.1 of the ICCPR aims at ensuring the respect and implementation of civil and political rights without discriminations of any kind, including sex. Furthermore, in article 26 it states the equality of women and men before the law and their entitlement without discrimination to the protection of the law; also, it establishes that law must prohibit any kind of discrimination and guarantee protection from it.¹³²

Article 2 of ICESCR affirms that the rights enshrined in the covenant must be guaranteed to everyone without discrimination. In article 7 (i) the treaty goes on to establish equal remuneration for work without distinctions connected to sex, specifying that women must enjoy the same working conditions as men.¹³³

It is interesting to note that both covenants present the same text with regards to article 3, that is they declare that state parties to the treaties undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all the rights enshrined in each document.

It is important to underline that these instruments were not devoted to the protection of women's human rights. Indeed, throughout the years a process of progressive specification occurred at the international level, in order to finally include women's human rights as an "*inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights*" in the international system from the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.¹³⁴

In 1953, a specific instrument was adopted in order to codify an international standard concerning women's political rights, that is the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women, to which Peru acceded in 1975. The convention implements the principle of equality by affirming

¹³² United Nations General Assembly, *A/RES/2200 (xxi) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (16 December 1966). <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/ccpr.pdf>

¹³³ United Nations General Assembly, *A/RES/2200 (xxi) International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (16 December 1966). <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cescr.pdf>

¹³⁴ The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 25 June 1993* (Vienna: 25 June 1993). <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/vienna.pdf>

women's rights to vote, to be eligible for elections, to hold public office, and to exercise all public functions.¹³⁵

In 1982 Peru ratified one of the most important conventions concerning women's human rights, that is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 and entered into force in 1981. Before CEDAW, the UN's approach to women's rights had been one of protection since women were considered a group which needed special protection. With CEDAW such approach changed and aimed at empowering women through the granting of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights to them. The treaty was adopted in the framework of the UN's struggles against discrimination; indeed, its main goals are the support of women's human rights, the elimination of discrimination against women, and substantive equality.

CEDAW is extremely important for the advancement of women's human rights in that it brings the specificity of women's experiences of discrimination into focus, advocating for their de facto equality with men, while reiterating the dignity and worth of the human person.

It should be noted that the convention implicitly adopts an intersectional approach to the issue of discrimination. In fact, it is possible to talk about intersectional discrimination since women's experience of it is inextricably linked to other factors, identities, and circumstances such as race, social class, poverty, and so forth. Precisely for this, CEDAW's commitments include the elimination of intersectional discrimination and states' responsibility for its implementation.

The structure of the convention is divided in sections: from articles 1-5 it focuses on non-discrimination and state obligations, from articles 6-16 it sets out specific substantive areas for the protection of women's human rights, from articles 17-23 it establishes the Committee and the rules of

¹³⁵United Nations General Assembly, *A/RES/640 (VII) Convention on the Political Rights of Women* (New York: 31 March 1953). https://treaties.un.org/doc/treaties/1954/07/19540707%2000-40%20am/ch_xvi_1p.pdf

procedure, and finally from articles 23-30 it lists administration and interpretation rules.

CEDAW affirms provisions concerning the guarantee of basic human rights and freedoms (article 3), sex role stereotypes and prejudice (article 5), prostitution (article 6), political and public life (article 7), representation (article 8), nationality (article 9), education (article 10), employment (article 11), health (article 12), economic and social benefits (article 13), rural women (article 14), law (article 15), and marriage and family (article 16).¹³⁶ Furthermore, it establishes an agenda for action so that states are bound to guarantee the elimination of discrimination and women's enjoyment of human rights, that is they have the obligation to respect, protect, promote and fulfill a non-discriminatory condition for women. In this regard, it should be highlighted that the convention does not make reference to the issue of violence against women.¹³⁷

Finally, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for action approved at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing represents a worldwide commitment to achieve equality, development, and peace for women at the global level. The document adopts the approaches of women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming in order to reach equality while recognizing women specificity.¹³⁸ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action affirms that human rights are women's rights and aims at removing obstacles which prevents women from enjoying and exercising their social, economic, cultural, political, and civil rights in both the private and public sphere. It establishes strategic objectives and connected action for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality focusing on 12 critical areas of concern, that is women and poverty, education and

¹³⁶ United Nations General Assembly, *A/RES/34/180 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (18 December 1979). <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cedaw.pdf>

¹³⁷ Violence against women will be recognized as a form of gender-based discrimination in CEDAW's General Recommendation No.19, which will be updated by General Recommendation No.35.

¹³⁸ The two approaches should be at the basis of the adoption of public policies in order to guarantee the advancement of women.

training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment, and the girl-child.¹³⁹

Focusing on the international legislation concerning Indigenous peoples, in 1994 Peru ratified the 1989 International Labour Organization's (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No.169). Such convention aims at improving the situation of Indigenous peoples globally by recognizing them the right to self-determination within a nation state. It also establishes minimum standards for governments to protect Indigenous peoples' economic, social, cultural, and political rights.

The structure of the 1989 convention mirrors the rights of Indigenous peoples enshrined within; indeed, part II focuses on the land, part III on employment, part IV on vocational training, handicrafts and rural industries, part V to social security and health, part VI to education and means of communication, and part VII to contacts and co-operation across borders.¹⁴⁰ The document is of the utmost importance because it establishes the principle of free, prior, and informed consent, meaning that Indigenous peoples must be consulted on issues that affect them and they must give their consent.

Finally, the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the most comprehensive international instrument for the protection of Indigenous peoples' rights. Although not binding, the document establishes a universally accepted standard for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous populations. In doing so, it adapts

¹³⁹ Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration* (Beijing, China: 15 September 2015). <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm>

¹⁴⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO), *C-169. Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No.169)*, (1989). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:55:0::NO::P55_TYPE,P55_LAN_G,P55_DOCUMENT,P55_NODE:REV,en,C169,/Document

already existing human rights standards to the specific situation of Indigenous peoples, thus creating an environment for their respect and protection.

The Declaration affirms the Indigenous right to be free from discrimination of any kind (article 2), the right to self-determination (article 3), the right to education (article 14), the right to participation in decision making (article 18), the right to land (article 26), civil, political, economic, and socio-cultural rights.¹⁴¹

2.2.2 Regional legislation on women and Indigenous Peoples

In order to understand what the rights of women in Peru are, it is useful to focus on the regional level of legislation concerning them.

At the Ninth International Conference of American States on 2 May 1948 in Bogota (Colombia), the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (American Declaration) was adopted and the Organization of American States (OAS), of which Peru is a member, was created. The declaration is not a legally binding instrument, but it sets out fundamental principles on human rights shared by all member states, namely economic, social, and cultural rights.

Looking at the rights of women, article 2 enshrines the right to equality before the law, stating that “*All persons are equal before the law and have the rights and duties established in this Declaration, without distinction as to race, sex, language, creed or any other factor*”.¹⁴² It is interesting to note that the declaration refers to women as mothers and not as human rights bearers. Indeed, article 7 affirms the right of mothers and their children,

¹⁴¹ United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/61/295 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (New York: 13 September 2007). https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

¹⁴² Ninth International Conference of American States, *American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man* (Bogota, Colombia: 2 May 1948). https://www.oas.org/dil/access_to_information_human_right_American_Declaration_of_the_Rights_and_Duties_of_Man.pdf

during pregnancy and the nursing period, to special protection and care.¹⁴³ The same day, but entered into force in 1954, the Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Political Rights to Women was adopted, which Peru ratified in 1956. Such document establishes that “*the right to vote and to be elected to national office shall not be denied or abridged by reason of sex*”.¹⁴⁴

It is possible to find provisions devoted to women in the American Convention on Human Rights, adopted at the Inter-American Specialized Conference on Human Rights in 1969 and ratified by Peru in 1978. The Convention enshrines several rights, such as the right to life (article 4), the right to humane treatment (article 5), the right to privacy (art.9), and the right to nationality (article 20).¹⁴⁵ Specifically, article 1.1 affirms that every individual under the jurisdiction of member states shall enjoy the exercise of the rights enshrined in the convention without any kind of discrimination based on sex, language, religion, political opinion, nationality, social class, birth, or any other social condition. In this regard, article 27.1 establishes the possibility of suspending the guarantees in cases of war, public danger, or emergencies provided that such measures do not cause any discrimination. Finally, article 6.1 declares the right to freedom from slavery, specifying the prohibition of slave trade and traffic in women.¹⁴⁶

In 1994 the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) was adopted and was ratified by Peru in 1996. This instrument is of the utmost importance since it defines what violence against women is, while affirming the right of women to live free from violence in both the private and public spheres. Indeed, according to article 1, “*violence against women shall be*

¹⁴³ *ibid*

¹⁴⁴ Ninth International Conference of American States, *A-44 Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Political Rights to Women* (Bogota, Colombia: 2 May 1948). <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-44.html>

¹⁴⁵ Organization of American states (OAS), *B-32 American Convention on Human Rights “Pact of San José, Costa Rica”* (San José, Costa Rica: 22 November 1969). <https://www.cidh.oas.org/basicos/english/basic3.american%20convention.htm>

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*

understood as any act or conduct, based on gender, which causes death or physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or the private sphere".¹⁴⁷ In this case, VAW includes physical, sexual, and psychological violence. Moreover, the convention understands violence as a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms and it affirms that human rights are women's rights, including civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

The Belém do Pará convention is revolutionary in that, for the first time, it imposes duties on state parties for the establishment of mechanisms of prevention, protection, punishment, and eradication of VAW and discrimination, while addressing the social and cultural factors which justify and exacerbate the phenomenon.

Looking at the regional legislation concerning Indigenous peoples, it is possible to find only one instrument, that is the 2016 American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is a comprehensive regional human rights instrument that sets out specific protections for Indigenous peoples, adapting already existing rights to their particular condition. It affirms the rights to self-determination, to cultural identity, to education, to spirituality, to self-government, to the land, to territories and natural resources, to the protection of Indigenous ancestral knowledge, and the right to health. The declaration specifically addresses Indigenous women in article 7 'gender equality'. Indeed, it affirms that "*Indigenous women have the right to the recognition, protection, and enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms provided for in international law, free from discrimination of any kind*".¹⁴⁸ It goes on to declare that violence against Indigenous peoples,

¹⁴⁷ Organization of American States (OAS), *A-61 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women "Convention of Belém do Pará"* (Belém do Pará, Brazil: 9 June 1994). <https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-61.html>

¹⁴⁸ Organization of American States, *AG/RES.2888 (XLVI-O/16) American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: 15 June 2016). <https://www.oas.org/en/sare/documents/DecAmlND.pdf>

particularly women, seriously hampers the enjoyment of human rights. Therefore, it calls on states to adopt, together with Indigenous communities, measures to eradicate violence and discrimination in all its forms, in particular with regards to women.

2.2.3 Peruvian national legislation on women and Indigenous peoples

This last section will focus on the national level, providing a framework of the protection offered to the rights of Indigenous women by the state of Peru.

The 1993 Political Constitution of Peru affirms equality between men and women and the principle of non-discrimination. Article 2.2 states: *“Every person has the right to equality before the law. No person shall be discriminated against on the basis of origin, race, sex, language, religion, opinion, economic situation, or any other distinguishing feature”*.¹⁴⁹ In addition, thanks to the reform of article 191, the document introduces the principle of gender representation, implying the state’s responsibility to eliminate obstacles and discrimination which impede the realization of the right to equality: *“The law determines the minimum percentages to facilitate representation of women, rural and indigenous communities, and aboriginal peoples in regional councils. The same applies for municipal councils”*.¹⁵⁰

In 2002, with the National Agreement, that is a set of state measures, plans, and strategies which elaboration in a democratic perspective involves dialogue and consultations with civil society and consensus at the national level, Peru established different policies focusing around four objectives,

¹⁴⁹ Translation of article 2.2 of the Peruvian Political Constitution of 1993. Peruvian Government, *Constitución Política del Perú* (1993). [https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/198518/Constitucion Política del Peru 1 993.pdf](https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/198518/Constitucion%20Politica%20del%20Peru%201993.pdf)

¹⁵⁰ Translation of article 191 of the Peruvian Political Constitution of 1993. Peruvian Government, *Constitución Política del Perú* (1993). [https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/198518/Constitucion Política del Peru 1 993.pdf](https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/198518/Constitucion%20Politica%20del%20Peru%201993.pdf)

that is democracy and the rule of law, equity and social justice, economic competitiveness, and an efficient, decentralized, and transparent state. On the matters of equity and non-discrimination, the National Agreement sets up the policy on Poverty Reduction, according to which the State commits to combat discrimination and inequality on the basis of ethnicity, sex, age, creed or disability, adding that the reduction of poverty infers equity between men and women. The 2002 document also establishes the policy on the Promotion of Equal Opportunities without Discrimination, by which Peru prioritizes the promotion of equal opportunities for everyone while recognizing that the discrimination against women, children, and persons belonging to ethnic communities is a pressing issue in the country. Precisely for this reason, the state affirms its commitment to offer equal economic opportunities to men and women, to strengthen the participation of women at the political level and to provide them with equitable access to resources and employment, while developing systems for their protection.¹⁵¹

Peru strengthened such responsibility with the 2007 law n°28983 on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. The purpose of such law is to establish a normative, institutional, and public policy framework in a multilevel governance perspective, that is at the national, regional, and local level, in order to provide men and women with the guarantee of the exercise of their rights to equality, dignity, free development, welfare, and autonomy. In this regard, every form of discrimination is to be prevented in all spheres of life. In order to implement law n°28983, policies, plans, and programs must be adopted integrating a gender perspective. It is worth noting that this legislation highlights gender-based violence as a form of discrimination and establishes that the Public Administration sector and the Judiciary must

¹⁵¹ Peruvian Government, *Act of subscription of the AN*. In: *Acuerdo Nacional. Unidos para crecer* (22 July 2002). <https://www.acuerdonacional.pe/politicas-de-estado-del-acuerdo-nacional/acta-de-suscripcion-del-an-22-de-julio-del-2002/>

allow for a fair and effective procedure of denunciation, punishment of the perpetrators, and reparation for the victims.¹⁵²

As part of the implementation of the law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, between 2012 and 2017, the state of Peru adopted the National Plan for Gender Equality (PLANIG), which establishes eight strategic objectives to achieve gender equality and sixty policy outcomes which must be fulfilled by different public sector entities, such as ministries, regional and local governments, and autonomous constitutional bodies.¹⁵³ Its goal is to mainstream the gender approach into the public policies sector of the state at the national, regional, and local level, ensuring equality and the protection of human rights, which includes the respect of the principle of non-discrimination and the full development of the individual potentialities and capacities. It is interesting to note that strategic objective No.8 focuses on the relationship between women and the environment, highlighting the importance of valuing the contribution of women and rural women in the sustainable management of natural resources.¹⁵⁴

In 2015, Peru adopted law n°30364 to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Violence against Women and Members of the Family group. Through the setting up of mechanisms, measures, and policies, its aim is that of preventing, punishing, and eliminating all forms of gender-based violence both in the private and in the public sphere to ensure a life without violence and the possibility to exercise human rights. Particular importance is given to the reparations for the victims and the prosecution and re-education of

¹⁵² Peruvian Government, *Ley n°28983* (2007).
https://www.mimp.gob.pe/files/programas_nacionales/pncvfs/legislacion/nacional/ley_28983_lto.pdf

¹⁵³ Ministerio de la Mujer y de las Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan Nacional de Igualdad de Género 2012-2017* (2012), 11.
https://www.mimp.gob.pe/files/planes/planig_2012_2017.pdf

¹⁵⁴ Ministerio de la Mujer y de las Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan Nacional de Igualdad de Género 2012-2017* (2012), 45.
https://www.mimp.gob.pe/files/planes/planig_2012_2017.pdf

perpetrators.¹⁵⁵ The law allowed for the creation of a Gender Justice Commission composed of women judges.

The most recent laws on women in Peru are the 2019 National Gender Equality Policy (decree 008-2019-MIMPA) and the 2020 Gender Parity Law (law n°31030). The former aims at eliminating structural discrimination acting on the root causes of gender inequity. In doing so, it establishes six priority objectives: reduce violence against women, guarantee the exercise of their rights to sexual and reproductive health, guarantee their access to and participation in decision-making spaces and processes, ensure the exercise of women's economic and social rights, reduce institutional barriers to equality between the sexes in both the public and private spheres, and reduce discriminatory socio-cultural patterns.¹⁵⁶ The latter amends the electoral legislation to ensure gender parity and alternation in candidate lists, requiring that 40% of candidates be women by 2021, 45% by 2026, and 50% by 2031.¹⁵⁷

There are specific laws concerning women and employment, such as Act 30709 which prohibits wage discrimination between women and men, law n°27942 for the prevention and punishment of sexual harassment, law n°30367 which protects working mothers against arbitrary dismissal and extend their period of rest, and law n°29896 which establishes spaces for breastfeeding in the public and private sectors.¹⁵⁸ It should be mentioned that these laws portray women as victims and mothers, reducing their

¹⁵⁵ Peruvian Government, *Ley n°30364*. In: *El Peruano* (2015). <https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/normaslegales/ley-para-prevenir-sancionar-y-erradicar-la-violencia-contra-ley-n-30364-1314999-1/>

¹⁵⁶ Ministerio de la Mujer y de las Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Política Nacional de Igualdad de Género. Decreto supremo n° 008-2019-MIMP*. In: *El Peruano* (2019). https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sit_accion_files/peru_-_politica-nacional-igualdad-de-genero.pdf

¹⁵⁷ Peruvian Government, *Ley n°31030*. In: *El Peruano* (2020). <https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/normaslegales/ley-por-la-que-se-modifican-normas-de-la-legislacion-elector-ley-n-31030-1872881-1/>

¹⁵⁸ Silvia Pérez, *Día Internacional de la mujer: Las cinco leyes que la protegen en el plano laboral*. In: *Gestión* (Lima: 8 March 2020). <https://gestion.pe/economia/management-empleo/dia-internacional-de-la-mujer-las-cinco-leyes-que-las-protegen-en-el-plano-laboral-noticia/>

complex identities to the role of caretakers and reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes.

Focusing on the legislation concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples, article 2.19 of the Political Constitution of Peru affirms that every person has the right *“To his ethnic and cultural identity. The state recognizes and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Nation. Every Peruvian has the right to use his own language before any authority by means of an interpreter. Foreigners enjoy the same right when summoned by any authority”*.¹⁵⁹

In 2002, law n°27811 establishing the Regime for the Protection of Collective Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples Linked to Biological Resources was adopted. Its main objectives are promoting the respect, protection, preservation, application and development of Indigenous peoples' collective knowledge, promoting a fair and equitable distribution of the benefits derived from the use of such collective knowledge and use it for the benefit of both indigenous peoples and humanity, promote the strengthening and development of the capacities of indigenous peoples and of their traditional practices while ensuring the prior informed consent of Indigenous peoples.¹⁶⁰

In this regard, in 2011 Peru transposed and developed into its national legislation the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples's Convention (n°169) with law n°29785 on the Rights to Prior Consultation of Indigenous Peoples. This law affirms that when legislative and administrative measures that affect Indigenous peoples' rights are

¹⁵⁹ Translation of article 2.19 of the Peruvian Political Constitution of 1993. Peruvian Government, *Constitución Política del Perú* (1993). [https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/198518/Constitucion Política del Peru 1 993.pdf](https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/198518/Constitucion%20Politica%20del%20Peru%201993.pdf)

¹⁶⁰ Ministerio del Ambiente, *Ley n°27811*. In: Sistema Nacional de Información Ambiental (2002). <https://sinia.minam.gob.pe/normas/ley-que-establece-regimen-proteccion-conocimientos-colectivos-pueblos#:~:text=Ley%20N%C2%B0%2027811%20.,vinculados%20a%20los%20recursos%20biol%C3%B3gicos.&text=El%20presente%20dispositivo%20establece%20un,vinculados%20a%20los%20recursos%20biol%C3%B3gicos>

being taken, they have the rights to prior (consultations must occur before taking the decision and performing the action), free (Indigenous peoples must not be pressured or influenced in the process), and informed (Indigenous peoples must receive complete and reliable information) consent. The aim of law n°29785 is to reach an agreement between the State and natives through and intercultural dialogue in order to adopt legislative and administrative measures which are inclusive, respectful of their rights, and are in line with their practices and ways of life. The right to be consulted in advance allows for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples at the decision-making level of the society. The implementation of such right is to be seen as a process, that is the state must first identify a legislative or administrative measure and the Indigenous peoples to be consulted, then it must provide them with exhaustive and true information in order to start a dialogue, at the end of which a decision will be taken.¹⁶¹

It is interesting to underline that legislation on climate, the management of natural resources and land often dedicates particular attention to Indigenous and native peoples, such as law n°26821 which regulates the sustainable use of natural resources, law n°28611 on the environment, law n°26834 on natural reserves, law n°26839 on sustainable conservation and harnessing of biological diversity, and law n°29763 on forestry and wildlife. This indicates an inextricable link between Indigenous peoples and the environment.¹⁶²

Given this overview on the national legislation concerning women and Indigenous peoples, it is possible to notice that, although both types of legislation apply to Indigenous women, there is a lack of specific provisions concerning them. Peruvian legislation fails to acknowledge the intersectional identity of Indigenous women, and there is absence of a

¹⁶¹ Peruvian Government, *Ley n°29785*. In: *El Peruano* (2011). https://leyes.congreso.gob.pe/Documentos/ExpVirPal/Normas_Legales/29785-LEY.pdf

¹⁶² Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales – DAR, *Serie: derechos de los pueblos indígenas en el Perú. Cartilla 1: los pueblos indígenas y sus derechos* (May 2018). https://www.dar.org.pe/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Cartilla-1-Derechos-de-los-pueblos-indigenas-aprobada-14_05_18_R.pdf

gendered approach to Indigenous people's issues. This fact can result in discrimination against Indigenous women and their further marginalization within the Peruvian society.

Chapter III: The relationship of Peruvian Indigenous women with climate change

3.1 Debate on Climate change in Peru within an intersectional gender-based approach

The debate on climate change does not always consider gender. Indeed, it often tends to leave such issue aside, overlooking the gendered impacts that climate change has on people. In doing this, as previously mentioned, women are disproportionately affected by the effects of the climate crisis and there are no policies specifically protecting their rights in such a situation. Therefore, it would be crucial to adopt a gender mainstreaming approach to the issue, that is the *“(re)organization, improvement, development, and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking”*.¹⁶³ As a result, it would be possible to analyze and understand the differentiated effects of the phenomenon and adopt adaptation and resilience measures and policies accordingly, while reducing the gender gap at once.

The relationship between women and climate change and the disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis on women are also recognized at the international level.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women with priority theme *‘Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes’* affirms the importance of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all

¹⁶³ Council of Europe (CoE), *What is Gender Mainstreaming?* (n.d.). <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>

¹⁶⁴ The CSW 66th session’s agreed conclusions mention specific challenges that women face in the context of climate change, that is displacement, separation from support networks, homelessness, increased risk of all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, reduced access to employment, education and essential health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health-care services, and psychosocial support.

women and girls connected with climate change to enact sustainable development and develop peaceful and inclusive societies. The agreed conclusions acknowledge that women face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, highlighting the diversity between women, their situations, their priorities, and needs. These discriminations trigger women's marginalization and gender-based violence, while excluding them from the public sphere where decisions are taken. On this matter, the document advocates for the inclusion of women and girls at the decision-making level connected with environmental issues. As a result of this, it would be possible to establish policies which are gender-sensitive and aimed at adaptation, resilience, and risk reduction, therefore playing an active part in reducing poverty and promoting economic growth and productivity. In this regard, the agreed conclusions of the CSW 66th session state that "*women and girls play a fundamental role as agents of change for sustainable development*", underlining that states should mainstream gender into their policies and programs concerning climate change and the environment, while ensuring women's active participation and leadership in policy making.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, it calls on nations to take into consideration the intersectionality of women's identities, in order to create gender-responsive strategies which are comprehensive.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the debate on climate change in Peru is heated because of the nation's high vulnerability to its impacts. Indeed, the conformation of the territory and human activities such as extractivism threaten the environment and the people. On account of this, the state has adopted and implemented several policies concerning climate

¹⁶⁵ Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), *Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. CSW 66 Agreed conclusions* (25 March 2022). https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/CSW66%20Agreed%20Conclusions_Advance%20unedited%20version_25%20March%202022.pdf

change, like the National Adaptation Plan and the National Plan for Disaster Risk Management.

In the last years such debate has widened, and it has started to focus on the relationship between women and climate change, recognizing women as the most affected by its effects. The major contributors to the inclusion of gender in the climate change discourse in Peru have been women, particularly Indigenous women.

Indigenous women have an ontological relationship with nature. In fact, they are inextricably linked to the land because they have grown up on there. As a consequence, they have developed a deep attachment to it. The connection between Indigenous women and nature is reciprocal: Mother Earth (*Pachamama*) gives them life and provides for them with its water, fruits, and seeds, and they provide for *Pachamama* through sustainable means of life and the nurturing of the land. The gifts of nature are conceived as living things which Indigenous women help to develop and grow as if they were persons who needed care. Indeed, Tania Pariona Tarqui, a social worker, Quechua leader, and human and women's rights activist, affirms that Indigenous women refer to seeds, animals, and water as elements that they care for their own.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, according to Indigenous rights activist Tarcila Rivera Zea, Indigenous women believe that everything that comes from the earth must be returned to the earth, so that *Pachamama* can keep on generating life.¹⁶⁷ In this regard, there is something spiritual in the relationship between Indigenous women and nature, therefore the environment deserves respect. In other words, land means life.

Indigenous women are highly dependent on the environment, both for their sustenance and that of their families and for work, since they are mainly employed in the fields of agriculture, livestock, and forestry. Furthermore,

¹⁶⁶ Alberto Acosta et al., *Indigenous Women and Climate Change* (Peru: January 2020), 137. [https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous Women and Climate Change IWGIA.pdf](https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous_Women_and_Climate_Change_IWGIA.pdf)

¹⁶⁷ Alberto Acosta et al., *Indigenous Women and Climate Change* (Peru: January 2020), 128. [https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous Women and Climate Change IWGIA.pdf](https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous_Women_and_Climate_Change_IWGIA.pdf)

they are the main responsible for ensuring food for their communities. Precisely for their attachment to the land and their roles in their communities, they are put in a condition of vulnerability in the face of climate change. In fact, if extreme weather events cause the destruction of crops and the scarcity of water, Indigenous women remain without employment and without food, while having to meet their families' needs at once. Moreover, they remain alone since their husbands leave the community to find work in the urban areas. Such circumstances might force them to flee from their homes to search for better living conditions, moving them away from the land which they are deeply linked with. In addition, Indigenous women's traditional knowledge, such as traditional knowledge of seeds, is disappearing due to changes in the ecosystem. On this subject, it is interesting to note that while knowledge is being lost, new knowledge is being created because of adaptation to climate change. Tarcila Rivera affirms that "*it seems that, on the one hand, knowledge is being lost but, on the other, new knowledge is also being generated from the same practice. This is why we say that indigenous knowledge is not static; [we have] this capacity to observe and innovate and respond to the new context*".¹⁶⁸ Indeed, Peruvian Indigenous women have always been depositories of ancestral knowledge, particularly with regard to the land, and they are the custodians of nature and its biodiversity. Despite this, they are often excluded from the decision-making level concerning climate change policies, and those policies which include their points of view and experiences struggle with their implementation. Nonetheless, they are the ones advocating the most for concrete changes and policies against climate change inclusive of a gendered approach. In doing so, they propose themselves as powerful agents of change due to their knowledge and practices of adaptation and resilience which are fundamental to survive the potentially lethal effects of the climate crisis. Indeed, they call on the

¹⁶⁸ Alberto Acosta et al., *Indigenous Women and Climate Change* (Peru: January 2020), 127. https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous_Women_and_Climate_Change_IWGIA.pdf

government to include their perspectives on this issue and to actively participate in the design of measures to protect the environment. Since Indigenous women are the ones suffering the most the effects of climate change, they should be included in every process which concerns such issue. Therefore, both the rights of Indigenous peoples and women's rights should be respected and taken into consideration when establishing policies aimed at mitigating the effects of climate hazards. In order for these measures to be effective and successful, the government of Peru should cooperate with Indigenous women in order to understand in which direction and towards what areas to direct funds and efforts. As a positive example of this, the 'International Indigenous Women's Forum: Land and Climate Change: Challenges and opportunities towards COP20' which took place in Lima in July 2014, called on the Peruvian government to adopt a gendered approach when dealing with climate change issues and adopt gender-sensitive policies in the context of the COP20. The Forum centered around three key matters, that is the "*effective participation of Indigenous women communities in decision-making on climate change policy at the national and international level, the collective rights of women to land and forests, and the integration of Indigenous women's vision and management of natural resources in public policies*".¹⁶⁹ On account of this, the participants elaborated a series of recommendations to the government to ensure compliance of climate change policies with the rights of Indigenous peoples and women's rights, to ensure Indigenous women's participation through participatory mechanisms, and to respect their intersectional identity. Following from these recommendations, at the December 2014 COP20 to the UNFCCC held in Lima, Peru strongly advocated for gender-responsive climate change action. In this context, the 'Lima Work Program on Gender (LWPG)' was adopted to "*advance gender balance and integrate gender consideration into the work of Parties and the secretariat in implementing*

¹⁶⁹ IWGIA, *Peru: Indigenous women address critical role in combatting climate change* (22 July 2014). <https://www.iwgia.org/en/peru/2095-peru-indigenous-women-address-critical-role-in-com.html>

the Convention and the Paris Agreement so as to achieve gender responsive climate policy and action".¹⁷⁰ Following from this, after consultations with civil society, women, and Indigenous women's organizations, in 2016 Peru adopted the National Gender and Climate Change Action Plan to promote equal opportunities and capacity building in the context of climate change. In this case, it is possible to affirm that Peruvian Indigenous women have been agents of change in the climate arena. In this regard, it is important to note that the CSW 66th session's agreed conclusions affirm that Indigenous women are disproportionately affected by climate change, and they are fundamental for the maintenance of ancestral knowledge and practices of resilience. As a consequence, it urges states to take into account the perspectives of all Indigenous women when creating climate-related policies and to ensure their participation in the process, therefore recognizing their role also at the international level.¹⁷¹ Notwithstanding all of this, Indigenous women in Peru are still the ones suffering the effects of climate change the most and the most excluded from the political and decision-making sphere. Precisely for these reasons, it would be crucial to mainstream gender into climate change policies while also adopting an intersectional approach inclusive of the perspectives and traditions of Indigenous women, in order to promote adaptation and resilience strategies.

¹⁷⁰ The LWPG sets out objectives under five priority areas: capacity building, knowledge management and communication; gender balance, participation, and women's leadership; coherence; gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation; monitoring and reporting. "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Lima Work Program on Gender (LWPG)*, (n.d.).

[https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NWPStaging/Pages/Lima-Work-Programme-on-Gender.aspx#:~:text=The%20Lima%20Work%20Programme%20on%20Gender%20\(LWPG\)%20was%20established%20in,responsive%20climate%20policy%20and%20action](https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NWPStaging/Pages/Lima-Work-Programme-on-Gender.aspx#:~:text=The%20Lima%20Work%20Programme%20on%20Gender%20(LWPG)%20was%20established%20in,responsive%20climate%20policy%20and%20action)

¹⁷¹ Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), *Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. CSW 66 Agreed conclusions* (25 March 2022). <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/CSW66%20Agreed%20Conclusions%20Advance%20unedited%20version%2025%20March%202022.pdf>

3.2 “Sumaq Kawsay” or the “Buen Vivir” of Indigenous people

The ancient Quechua word ‘Sumaq Kawsay’, or ‘Buen Vivir’, represent the Indigenous way of living in harmony with other living beings, with the ecosystem, and with ‘Pachamama’, that is mother nature. It can roughly be translated with the expression the good life or the plentiful life.

Sumaq Kawsay is a principle of reciprocity among living beings with and within nature. As opposed to the western tradition which considers nature as an object to be exploited, this Indigenous way of living regards nature as a subject, and as such worthy of respect and care. It is precisely for this reason that a mutual relationship develops between living beings and nature; indeed, nature provides for the sustenance of its inhabitants, and in return the inhabitants protect nature and use its resources sustainably. The result is a harmonious life and a healthy ecosystem in a context of reciprocal gratitude among beings.

The Buen Vivir has developed as a synonym of food security, agroecology, and sustainability in Andean studies, which refer to such concept as an ethical model of life.¹⁷²

In recent years it has evolved as an alternative to the western model of development. In fact, Sumaq Kawsay questions consumerism, the commodification of nature, and the centrality of men as the only subject worthy of rights while criticizing the separation of society and nature, which it considers as community comprising both human and non-human beings. In doing so, it rejects colonialism and its practices of ill treatment of the environment and the people, and it defends interculturality and the value that each tradition and knowledge enshrines.

In Peru, several Indigenous communities have utilized the concept of the Buen Vivir to advocate for their right to self-determination and the right to

¹⁷² Karl S. Zimmerer, *The Indigenous Andean Concept of ‘Kawsay’, the Politics of Knowledge and Development, and the Borderlands of Environmental Sustainability in Latin America*. PMLA 127, no. 3 (2012), 601. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41616852>.

their lands against extractives practices. In this way, the concept has transformed itself into a political project of Indigenous groups to be used in negotiations with the government and the market. Following from this, it is possible to affirm that Sumaq Kawsay is a collective notion which opposes the western individualistic idea of development in order to preserve nature with its resources and to promote Indigenous participation and self-determination rights.¹⁷³

3.3 How climate change affects Indigenous women's rights in Peru

Indigenous peoples, in particular Indigenous women, are disproportionately affected by climate change while being the ones contributing less to the phenomenon. Due to their dependence and interrelatedness with the environment and its resources, the climate crisis threatens their existence and survival. Indeed, with the erosion of territories and the scarcity of natural resources, Indigenous women face forced displacement and migration, obliging them to leave their houses and knowledge behind. In this case, climate change does not only impact the livelihood of Indigenous peoples, but it also attacks their culture and traditions, undermining their collective identity. The phenomenon causes the loss of resources and land and, as a consequence, of food and water. In this regard, it is important to underline that women are the primary responsible for the collection of the means of sustenance for their families in Indigenous communities. As a result of this, they find themselves in a condition of higher vulnerability to climate change, which outcome is the exacerbation of the difficulties they already face. Indeed, Indigenous women in the context of climate change are subjected to higher rates of poverty and inequality, lack of recognition and rights, unemployment, discrimination, and socio-economical exclusion. Owing to

¹⁷³ Caterina Rondoni, Carmen Forlenza, *Buen vivir: un'alternativa andina allo sviluppo?* In: *Amistades-Centro studi per la promozione della cultura internazionale* (2 November 2021). <https://www.amistades.info/post/buen-vivir-alternativa-andina-allo-sviluppo>

this, Indigenous women are at higher risk of gender-based discrimination and violence.

Climate change in Peru deeply affects the rights of Indigenous women. The next section of the thesis will focus on two of the main issues concerning Indigenous women's human rights violations connected with the climate crisis, that is the problem of extractivism and its relationship with land rights, and gender-based discrimination, including gender-based violence.

3.3.1 The Indigenous right to land and the issue of extractivism in Peru

At the international level, the Indigenous people's rights to land, territories, and natural resources are recognized under laws and human rights instruments. In this regard, ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (169) refers to land rights from article 14 to article 19, underlining Indigenous people's right to ownership, use, and management of their lands, their right not to be subjected to forced displacement from their lands, and their right to prior consultation on issues concerning their territories and resources.¹⁷⁴ In addition, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples puts great emphasis on the right to land, framing it as a human right issue for Indigenous peoples. Such right is enshrined in articles 25 to 32, and it implies state's legal recognition of Indigenous territories and the respect of their customs, traditions, and land management.¹⁷⁵

Although widely recognized as one of the most important collective rights of Indigenous peoples, the right to land is often disregarded by national governments. Indeed, they exploit the resources and materials present on Indigenous territories in order to gain profits from it without consulting with

¹⁷⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO), *C-169. Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention* (No.169) (1989). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:55:0::NO::P55_TYPE,P55_LAN_G,P55_DOCUMENT,P55_NODE:REV,en,C169,/Document

¹⁷⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *A/RES/61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (New York: 13 September 2007). https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

the local populations, ignoring their right to prior and informed consent at once.

The main activity with the potential to threaten such right is extractivism, that is “*economic activities that remove large amounts of a nation’s natural commons for sale on the world market with little or no processing*”.¹⁷⁶ Usually, such activity involves mineral resources and petroleum, but it also acts on land resources, forestry, and fishing.

Extractivism has roots in colonialism and reflects a machista and patriarchal culture of development through predatory practices since it allows the conquest and control of the territories in which it takes place. Indeed, such economic activity tends to concentrate power and wealth in the hands of just few men, contributing to increase poverty and the social exclusion of women. In particular, extractivism intersects with the right of Indigenous people to land in that governments allow for extractive activities on Indigenous territories, dispossessing them of the ownership and access to the land. For instance, the Peruvian government has conceded 51% of Indigenous lands to mining corporations.¹⁷⁷ In this way, since they are strictly connected with the environment in which they live, rural populations face the threat of the deprivation of their identity, culture, and means of sustenance.

It is important to highlight the fact that extractivism has severe impacts on the environment and nature. In fact, it contributes to the depletion of the soil, to the loss of biodiversity, to deforestation, and to increases in the global temperatures. Furthermore, due to the production of toxic chemicals and heavy metals, it contaminates and pollutes water. As a result of this, the Indigenous populations living on the territories interested by extractive activities find themselves with less food (often contaminated), scarcity of

¹⁷⁶Extractivism has increasingly formed the base of Latin American economies under neoliberalism. IGI Global, *What is extractivism* (n.d.). <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/might-the-keys-to-peace-open-the-doors-to-extractivism/52203>

¹⁷⁷ Alberto Acosta et al., *Indigenous Women and Climate Change* (Peru: January 2020), 34. [https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous Women and Climate Change IWGIA.pdf](https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous%20Women%20and%20Climate%20Change%20IWGIA.pdf)

drinking water, and lack of access to the land, indirectly affecting the local economies at the same time. Such activities also have repercussions on healthcare, with Indigenous peoples getting sick due to the polluted environment. In the end, this condition obliges them to move away from their lands.

Indigenous women are the ones suffering the worst effects of extractivism. First of all, they already dispose of less land and resources than their male counterparts. With extractive activities and their effects on the environment, their access to the land is reduced even more. Furthermore, as reported by the ILO's report on the labour situation of Indigenous women in Peru, since Indigenous women are mainly employed in agriculture, livestock, forestry or hunting, which are all activities associated with the land, their lack of access and ownership of the land connected with extractivism causes them to lose their jobs, consequently being relegated into the private and domestic sphere.¹⁷⁸ Secondly, the side effects of extractivism are related with the role of Indigenous women within their communities. Indeed, Peruvian Indigenous women are the caretakers of their families and need to provide for them with food and water. If they cannot provide sustenance for their households, they will not fulfill their roles. As a result of this, they face further exclusion and marginalization from their communities and within the state. In addition, as mothers and bearers of life, the harmful toxic effects of extractivism can be passed down from Indigenous women to future generations, making them even more vulnerable.

Thirdly, the phenomenon of extractivism exacerbates and increases violence against Indigenous women. Indeed, local men who work for the extractive companies are often exploited and under-paid in contexts where they are exposed to pollution and to contact with male workers from different areas who bring with them different types of masculinities. As a result, local

¹⁷⁸ International Labour Organization (ILO), *The labour situation of Indigenous women in Peru: a study* (Geneva: 2016). https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_546285.pdf

men become more violent towards Indigenous women, as proven by the high rates of GBV in rural areas. In addition, those men who do not work for the extractive companies face expropriation of land and pollution of their food and water, causing them to transfer their frustration on women through violence. This 'masculinization of the territories' increases harassment, sexual violence, and teenage pregnancies.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, extractive activities are mentioned in connection with prostitution, trafficking of women and children, Indigenous women's lack of freedom, increase in the use of alcohol and drugs, and psychological and physical violence.¹⁸⁰

Extractivism is imposed by the government as a promise of progress, but in reality, it violates territories and the rights of Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women. This generates socio-environmental conflicts. Indeed, Indigenous women have shown to engage in protests against such practice to preserve and protect their lands with their biodiversity, and their rights. Their anti-extractive struggles take place as mobilization, political participation, organization of popular assemblies and consultations, marches, and occupations through which they take part in the national and global social movements of women. Indigenous women act as the spokespersons of all those who suffer the consequences of capitalist economies and activities which deprive them of their identities and means of life. In doing so, they advocate for a more equitable distribution of development costs which takes into consideration the effects on the environment and their right to prior consultation.¹⁸¹ In particular, Indigenous women in Latin America propose the Quechua 'Sumak Kawsay' or 'Good

¹⁷⁹ Melissa Moreano Venegas, Miriam Lang, Gabriela Ruales Jurado, *Climate justice from the perspectives of Latin American and other Southern Feminisms*. Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (Quito: November 2021), 10-16. <https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/images/Dossiers/Klimagerechtigkeit/COP26/ClimateJusticeLASouthFeminism2021.pdf>

¹⁸⁰ Enara Echart Muñoz, Maria del Carmen Villarreal, *Women's Struggles Against Extractivism in Latin America and the Caribbean* (May-August 2019), 303-318. <https://www.scielo.br/j/cint/a/xryLFTDmtg6hpnkz7fy3wKz/?format=pdf&lang=en>

¹⁸¹ *ibid*

Living' model, that is a way of living in harmony with nature and in solidarity with other beings, while embracing Indigenous traditional knowledge and lifestyle.

Their struggles find the opposition of the government. As a matter of fact, protests, and resistance to extractivism are often criminalized by the state. As a result, Indigenous women's attempt to fight for the respect and implementation of their rights is met by the government trying to silence them, also through the means of socio-political violence. Indeed, Latin America is one of the most dangerous places for environmental defenders, which are often Indigenous women.¹⁸² That is the case of *Máxima Acuña de Chaupe*, a Peruvian human rights defender who fought to maintain the property of her own land against the *Yanacocha* mining company, who intimidated and threatened her for years. Due to her resistance, she was charged with illegally occupying land. Eventually, the Supreme Court of Peru acquitted her in 2017.¹⁸³ As a result of their activism, they become a point of reference for the fight against climate change connected with their rights as Indigenous and as women. It is therefore possible to affirm that Indigenous women's anti-extractive struggles challenge the sexual and gendered structures present in their communities and in the wider society.

3.3.2 Discrimination and gender-based violence against Peruvian Indigenous women

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) affirms that women should be free of discrimination of any kind. In the specific, article 2 condemns discrimination against women declaring states' responsibility in eliminating the phenomenon in the fields of education, healthcare, and in women's economic and social

¹⁸² *ibid*

¹⁸³ Frontline Defenders, *Case History: Máxima Acuña de Chaupe* (n.d.). <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-maxima-acuna-de-chaupe>

conditions.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, with General Recommendation No.19 (1992), CEDAW framed violence against women as a form of gender-based discrimination. By recognizing the use of gender-based violence as a way to oppress and subjugate women, the issue was rendered part of the public sphere discourse for the first time in history. Indeed, until that moment GBV had been confined to the private sphere. In 2017, General Recommendation No.35 was created to update No.19. It understands that the prohibition of GBV has become a norm of international customary law and it has expanded to include the violation of reproductive and sexual rights of women. General Recommendation No.35 underlines the necessity to change social norms which support and justify violence against women, invoking states' responsibility.¹⁸⁵

For the purpose of this research, it is important to highlight that CEDAW does not refer to Indigenous women in its provisions. In this regard, in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it is possible to find article 22.2, which declares that "*States shall take measures, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, to ensure that Indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination*".¹⁸⁶

On account of this, as previously mentioned, Indigenous women are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination for being both women and Indigenous. In this sense, such discriminations intertwine and reinforce each other due to the intersectional identity of the subject. Therefore,

¹⁸⁴ United Nations General Assembly, *Res.34/180. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women* (1979). <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>

¹⁸⁵ UNHCHR, *Launch of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19* (2017). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/launch-cedaw-general-recommendation-no-35-gender-based-violence-against-women-updating-general>

¹⁸⁶ United Nations General Assembly, *A/RES/61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (New York: 13 September 2007). https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

Indigenous women are highly vulnerable to discrimination and gender-based violence.

Peruvian Indigenous women are a good example of how discrimination and violence violate their women's human rights and their Indigenous rights. According to the 2019 Ombudsman's office report on Peru, Indigenous women suffer more violations than non-Indigenous women. Indeed, more than half of the Indigenous female population in the country has suffered family violence, of which 6.8% suffered sexual violence. Moreover, in 2018 the Public Ministry reported 526 cases of sexual violence against indigenous women. Another pressing issue occurring in Peru is that of the disappearances of women and Indigenous women, which worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁸⁷ Besides, it should be added that their specific condition of discrimination and violence is shaped by the historical context of colonialism. Indeed, the conquerors were males, and they were the ones with authority. Therefore, Indigenous peoples experienced a masculine and machista power which wanted to impose itself on the territories, on the resources, and on the bodies of native peoples. This male-oriented dominance on the environment brought the consequence of domination over Indigenous peoples, particularly Indigenous women, therefore creating a connection between the conquest of the territory and the conquest of women's bodies. In this sense, violence was a mean through which exercise such dominance and obtain control over resources and peoples, thus creating a gendered and racialized context in which gender-based violence against Indigenous women was accepted and justified.¹⁸⁸ As a matter of fact, gender-based violence is a widespread and multidimensional human rights issue in Latin America, with a lack of disaggregated data and just a

¹⁸⁷ Defensoría del Pueblo, *Situación de los Derechos de las Mujeres Indígenas en el Perú*. Nota de Prensa N° 391/OCII/DP/2019 (Lima: 19 December 2019). <https://www.defensoria.gob.pe/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NP-391-19.pdf>

¹⁸⁸ Alberto Acosta et al., *Indigenous Women and Climate Change* (Peru: January 2020), 64-74. [https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous Women and Climate Change IWGIA.pdf](https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous_Women_and_Climate_Change_IWGIA.pdf)

few policies aimed at eradicating it while taking into consideration the realities of Indigenous women.

Climate change contributes to exacerbate the condition of high vulnerability to violence and discrimination of Indigenous women in Peru. Indeed, the impacts of climate change and GBV interact with and reinforce each other. As previously mentioned, one of the effects of climate change is that of forced displacement. Indeed, with the depletion of the soil, the loss of biodiversity, and the consequent lack of job opportunities, Indigenous peoples are obliged to leave their homes and move somewhere with better living conditions. This can mean that Indigenous women might risk human rights abuses. Indeed, with their homes uninhabitable, they are forced to live under temporary tarps or plastic sheets, hence being more exposed to violence from strangers. Furthermore, in order to comply with their gendered role of mothers and caretakers, they might need to walk longer distances to find the food and water with which to sustain their families, again being more vulnerable to violence. In this regards, Indigenous women in Peru can become victims of trafficking for the purpose of exploitation and prostitution. In addition, they might engage in prostitution and sex labour in order to gain money to buy food.¹⁸⁹

Climate change also endangers the economic independence of Indigenous women: with the loss of jobs in the agricultural field due to the effects of climate hazards, they do not have access to the economic means which make them independent. Without an income, they are forced to remain in the private and domestic sphere, subjected to men. On top of that, as the only ones able to sustain their families in such a situation, men might feel entitled to assert their dominance over women, often through violence. It

¹⁸⁹ IWGIA, *IWGIA inputs to the Report on violence against women and girls in the context of the climate crisis, including environmental degradation and related disaster risk mitigation and response. Written submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes & consequences* (March 2022). <https://iwgia.org/en/resources/publications/4628-iwgia-written-submission-unsrvaw-climate-report.html>

should also be noted that the aforementioned issue of extractivism present in Peru brings with it the risk of higher vulnerability of Indigenous women to GBV. Indeed, different masculinities interact with each other and create an environment of discrimination against women, which perpetuates and justifies violence. Lastly, the subjection of Indigenous women to GBV connected with climate change triggers mental and physical issues, lowering their sense of self-worth and, consequently, their possibility of earning an income and actively participate at the decision-making level.¹⁹⁰ In the case of Peru, specific GBV is targeting human rights defenders, which are often Indigenous women. Peruvian Indigenous human rights defenders strongly advocate for the fight against climate change, in particular extractive activities. As a result, they are targets of discrimination and violence precisely for their work. With human rights defenders at risk, democracy, peace, and equality are seriously threatened. On account of this, it is important to underline that Indigenous women contributed to make the issue of GBV connected with climate change public by linking gender violence with the struggle for land rights and environmental justice, for example with the '*Mi cuerpo, mi territorio*' (My body, my territory) campaign.¹⁹¹

To sum up, Indigenous women face discrimination and violence for being women and for being Indigenous, and climate change aggravates their condition of vulnerability. Nonetheless, they are the ones actively recognizing a link between the effects of climate change and GBV, therefore bringing the issue into the public sphere and advocating for their rights as women and as Indigenous.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*

¹⁹¹ The campaign '*Mi cuerpo, mi territorio*' aims at empowering women to take control both of their territories and lands, and of their bodies. It recognizes a strong link between land grabbing and gender-based violence and aims at eradicating it by empowering women within their communities and at the decision-making level. "International Indigenous Women's Forum, *Inputs for Report on violence against indigenous women and girls* (n.d.). <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/IWIF.pdf>"

Chapter IV: Peruvian Indigenous women's climate activism for the promotion of social change

The focus of the present chapter is Peruvian Indigenous women's activism in the context of climate change. Indeed, their actions directed at mitigating climate hazards and developing resilience of the ecosystems might be useful to promote participation and inclusion of Indigenous women at the decision-making and social level. So as to provide examples of climate activism carried out by Indigenous women, the next section will carry out an analysis of the '*Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú*' (ONAMIAP) concrete actions on the matter. Following from that, the PAGCC-Peru will be examined in order to understand the positive social effects that activism related to climate change can have on Indigenous women, that is participation in the drafting of national policies and measures and the adoption of a gendered approach to the issue. Furthermore, a brief interview of ONAMIAP's president Melania Canales Poma will offer a first-hand perspective and point of view on the relationship between Indigenous women and climate change in Peru, highlighting the connection between Indigenous women's human and collective rights violations and the climate issue. Finally, gaps and future perspectives related to the matter will be pointed out.

4.1 Indigenous women's activism against climate change through the example of the '*Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú*' (ONAMIAP)

The National Organization of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous Women of Peru (ONAMIAP) is a Peruvian grassroots organization which aims at realizing, implementing, and exercising the individual and collective rights of Indigenous women. In doing so, it empowers youth and underlines the

importance of ancestral Indigenous knowledge. ONAMIAP focuses on making Indigenous women's demands and proposals visible while influencing the public agenda through representation at multiple levels of governance.

The organization was born on November 25, 2009 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) as a consequence of long debates, training, and articulation between Indigenous women coming from all regions of Peru. Owing to this, ONAMIAP was able to give voice to the thousands Indigenous women which had been silenced and made invisible throughout the years. Indeed, their agenda and priorities are defined by Indigenous women's proposals, demands, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.

Over the years, ONAMIAP has gained greater public representation at the national, regional, and international level, strengthening its structure and articulation. As a matter of fact, its work focuses on two areas, that is internal organizational strengthening of its bases, and external advocacy to influence the public agenda to adopt an intersectional approach which takes into consideration the necessities of Indigenous women.¹⁹²

It is interesting to note that the organization aims at developing strong leadership skill within its communities through intergenerational dialogue of its members, consequently contributing to the transmission and maintenance of ancestral and traditional Indigenous knowledge. Precisely for these reasons, the state and civil society organizations have often consulted with ONAMIAP, and convened processes related to the rights of Indigenous women, social issues, human rights violations, and the climate crisis.

Related to the last point, such entity was chosen for this thesis as an example of organized efforts and activism against climate change through the empowerment of women and the respect of women and Indigenous'

¹⁹² Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), *Our History* (n.d.). <https://onamiap.org/nuestra-historia/>

rights. Indeed, ONAMIAP has taken part in all United Nations Conference of Parties on Climate Change (COP), starting from 2014 at COP20 which took place in Peru. During these meetings, it has presented concrete proposals which adopt the Indigenous point of view of the earth as a subject of rights and strive for the achievement of the 'Buen Vivir'. In doing so, it strongly advocates for an effective participation of women in the policies and measures connected with climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies at different levels of government and in different sectors of the public life, while reinforcing cultural identity of Indigenous women and their ethnic self-identification.¹⁹³ ONAMIAP's work for the protection and promotion of women's human rights and Indigenous' rights pushes towards the elimination of all forms of violence, of racism and discrimination through the reappropriation and protection of the territory and the respect of the principle of free, prior, and informed consent. As a result of this, the organization aims at promoting and achieving the political participation of Indigenous women in all spaces, from the local, to the international one. Thanks to such efforts, it has had the possibility of becoming part of spaces for dialogue and advocacy. For instance, at the state level, ONAMIAP is part of the National Commission on Climate Change and of the Working Table for the Promotion of the Rights of Indigenous Women, and at the international level it has participated at the United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (New York, 2014), at the International Land Coalition (ILC), at COP20 (Lima), and all other COPs.¹⁹⁴

ONAMIAP'S efforts of empowerment and advocacy based on climate stem from the Indigenous women's vision and experience of the effects of climate change. Indeed, as already mentioned, Indigenous women are the ones suffering the climate crisis the most, while contributing less to it. Such issue is disrupting their lives, their lands, their rights, and traditions. Precisely for

¹⁹³ *ibid*

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*

this reason, they actively fight the phenomenon by contributing to the creation of awareness conducive to policies and plans aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change while preserving the ecosystem and its biodiversity. By participating at COPs, Indigenous women of ONAMIAP have made visible the Indigenous agenda concerning climate, which addresses gender inequality connected with the phenomenon (COP20, Lima, and COP21, Paris), Indigenous territorial rights and governance (COP22, Morocco, and COP23, Bonn), and advocates for more participation of Indigenous women in the drafting and implementation of climate policies.¹⁹⁵ To promote this, the Indigenous Climate Platform of Peru was created, in order to manage, exchange, articulate, systemize, and disseminate Indigenous peoples knowledge and practices, while collecting recommendations and proposals for the elaboration of adaptation and mitigation measures. Such strategies include the protection of forests and lands, and the reduction of greenhouse gases emissions, to be achieved with accessible information, with the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous communities, and the respect of human and Indigenous' rights. For this reason, an intercultural and intersectional approach to the issue of climate change is fundamental.

To ensure Indigenous women's contribution in the management and conservation of natural resources and their empowerment to participate in decision-making spaces to protect their ecosystem through sustainable livelihoods, ONAMIAP has promoted several actions related to the fight against climate change, some of which will be briefly described hereinafter. In this regard, it should be noted that if Indigenous women are given a voice in the debate on the climate crisis, they are more likely to accelerate

¹⁹⁵ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), OXFAM, *How Indigenous women in Peru are tackling the climate crisis* (Peru: 2019), 4-5. https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/peru.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/How%20indigenous%20women%20in%20Peru%20are%20tackling%20the%20climate%20crisis.pdf

sustainable development and foster democracy, thus creating a starting point for social change.¹⁹⁶

The organization's activism ranges from advocacy, to participation into local, regional, and international panels on climate change, to projects and training activities.

In 2021, ONAMIAP promoted the '*Training School for Territorial Defenders*' within the project '*Defending environmental defenders, we protect the Amazon*'. The goal is to strengthen the capacities, skills, and participation of Indigenous women in the different spaces of representation through education on cultural identity, individual and collective rights, and interactive dynamics based on ancestral knowledge and practices. In this regard, Indigenous women are trained as territorial defenders who fight to maintain their territories healthy and their right to land respected. Indeed, the Shipibo people of the Tahuania district which took part in the project, highlighted the issues of illegal logging and the incursion of drug traffickers in their territories, which threatened their livelihoods and rights. As a result, the project insists on teaching Indigenous women their right to self-determination, land management, and free, prior, and informed consent in order to reclaim them and defend their territories accordingly. This has contributed to the strengthening of the capacities of Indigenous women and to make their roles as territorial defenders visible and recognizable. In this case, the fight and resistance against the effects of climate change, which are often caused by human activity as in the case of illegal logging, has promoted the empowerment of Indigenous women and stronger participation and advocacy for the protection of their rights.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Ana Paula Canestrelli, Manuel Mavila, Andrea Egan, *Hear her voice: securing rights of Indigenous women in rural Peru enhances environmental action and livelihoods*. In: *Stories of the GEF small grants program, UNDP* (Puno, Peru: 8 March 2021). <https://sgp.undp.org/resources-155/our-stories/649-hear-her-voice-securing-rights-of-indigenous-women-in-rural-peru-enhances-environmental-action-and-livelihoods.html>

¹⁹⁷ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), *Shipibo Indigenous women prepare to become territorial defenders* (4 November 2021). <https://onamiap.org/2021/11/mujeres-indigenas-shipibas-se-preparan-para-convertirse-en-defensoras-territoriales/>

In the setting of COP26 (Glasgow, Scotland), during the side event '*Learning about communication actions and ancestral knowledge in the Amazon, the Andes and the Himalayas*', ONAMIAP made the impacts of climate change on the territories, rights and lives of Indigenous women known. Indeed, the organization addressed extractive activities imposed by the state as the cause of land dispossession and forced displacement of Indigenous women in Peru, thus threatening their existence and that of Mother Earth. On account of this, ONAMIAP pointed out how Indigenous women have become leaders in the fight against climate change as territorial and human rights defenders, but their activism is seen as a menace to capitalist development by the state. As a result, in the last two decades there have been nearly ninety-six Indigenous territorial defenders' murders, which were neither investigated nor punished. The Peruvian state is thus held accountable for not ensuring the respect of Indigenous rights and for contributing to land dispossession in favour of mining corporations.¹⁹⁸ It is precisely for this reason that Indigenous women support the concept of the '*Buen Vivir*', since it aims at preserving diversity and resilient environments by living in harmony with nature and it contraposes to the individualistic idea of development carried out by the state. Consequently, ONAMIAP advocates for Indigenous women's participation in decisions concerning climate so as to help find sustainable solutions through ancestral knowledge, science, and technology and preserve the planet for future generations.

One of the feasible solutions highlighted by the organization is energy transition. Indeed, Indigenous women wish to socialize the problem of extractivism as an issue which exacerbates the effects of climate change and make the violations of human and collective rights which it entails visible. In this regard, ONAMIAP contributes to raising awareness about the

¹⁹⁸ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), *ONAMIAP at COP26: our ancestral science guarantees present and future lives* (5 November 2021). <https://onamiap.org/2021/11/onamiap-en-la-cop26-nuestra-ciencia-ancestral-garantiza-las-vidas-presentes-y-futuras/>

imperative necessity to move towards the use of renewable energies through the exchange of communal experiences of energy transition. In this case, their ancestral science and technology become the focal point in order to generate alternatives to extractive activities and transition towards renewable energy. Therefore, it is possible to notice that Indigenous women's reciprocal relationship with nature and their related knowledge evolve as a form of resistance to human activities which worsen the climate crisis and violate their territories and rights.¹⁹⁹

Concerning the practice of extractivism, ONAMIAP has favoured the meeting of Indigenous women coming from all regions of Peru in order to identify and assess the impacts of climate change and extractive activities on their lands and lives. In this context, Indigenous women have articulated demands and proposals to the state. For instance, they ask for local and regional governments to elaborate plans and agendas for the energy transition and to set deadlines for the exploration and exploitation of gas and oil. Moreover, they propose compensation for the damages such activities have caused to their territories and rights, and, since they are directly affected by it, they demand to be included in any decision-making process involving climate. On account of this, the respect of the principle of free, prior, and informed consent is of the utmost importance. Furthermore, their ancestral knowledge and science should be incorporated into climate policies, and a proper budget allocated to implement such measures. Following from this, Indigenous women should be recognized and respected as part of the solution to climate change. Consequently, they request that the criminalization of their efforts to protect the environment as territorial defenders ceases and that their necessities as the ones most affected by climate change be heard.²⁰⁰ For these reasons, ONAMIAP

¹⁹⁹ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), *Energy transition from the ancestral science and technology of indigenous women* (9 November 2021). <https://onamiap.org/2021/11/transicion-energetica-desde-la-ciencia-y-tecnologia-ancestrales-de-las-mujeres-indigenas/>

²⁰⁰ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), *Indigenous women towards the energy transition* (Lima, Peru: 12 November 2021). <https://onamiap.org/2021/11/mujeres-indigenas-hacia-la-transicion-energetica/>

works to guarantee the exercise of individual and collective rights of Indigenous women and to reach the 'Buen Vivir' by considering nature as a subject of rights.

Indigenous women have shown to be fundamental to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Indeed, in Lamarate (Peru) they have adopted ancestral farming techniques with the support of UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality. As a result, they have gotten healthy crops while improving the local economy and Indigenous women's participation in decision-making spaces. In this way, they have been able to influence policies, boost the economy and their sense of empowerment, while gaining a preeminent position in the society which makes them able to actively fight for their rights as women and Indigenous.²⁰¹

It should also be added that ONAMIAP's activism has contributed to the recognition of the gendered impacts of climate change and the development of the Lima Work Program on Gender, according to which UNFCCC parties commit to the adoption and implementation of gender-sensitive climate policies and gender mainstreaming. Owing to this, the organization played a key role in the consultations for the drafting and adoption of the Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (PAGCC-Peru), which will be analyzed in the following section.

These example of activism against climate change have contributed to a social change for Indigenous women. Indeed, their recognition, participation, and visibility has increased, giving importance to their culture, and making them credible at once. Furthermore, their voices have become stronger, especially at the grassroot level, fostering an environment conducive to leadership and empowerment. This has led them to acquire conscience on their rights as Indigenous peoples and as women, which they then bring into national, regional, and international arenas. In these settings,

²⁰¹ UN Women, *Indigenous women in Peru combat climate change and boost economy* (9 August 2016). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/8/indigenous-women-in-peru-combat-climate-change-and-boost-economy>

their knowledge and point of view on gendered issues has progressively gained more importance and allowed for their inclusion at the decision-making level. Indigenous women can thus be considered an important resource for the fight against climate change due to their skills and capacities, which are often strengthened by training and capacity building, and their intergenerational approach to the issue.²⁰²

In this case, Indigenous women's activism against climate change in Peru through the actions of ONAMIAP can be seen as the first step to promote a social change. Indeed, their fight against the climate crisis is deeply connected with their human and individual rights, thus creating a possibility to bring about change in the social structure of the state. For instance, their activism has contributed to give them a voice at the public level, to enhance their self-awareness, and to strive for the exercise, implementation, and respect of their rights. Furthermore, their increased participation and leadership roles in their communities show that a social change through the fight against the climate crisis is possible. Nonetheless, it is of the utmost importance to underline that, despite the potential for change at the social level for Indigenous women in Peru, important gaps and difficulties still remain.

4.2 An overview of the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change PAGCC-Peru

One of the most important achievements and positive examples of Peruvian Indigenous women's activism in the context of climate change is the adoption of the '*Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change PAGCC-Peru*'. As a matter of fact, Indigenous women's contribution was key to adopt a gendered approach to the issue and develop a national strategy which

²⁰² Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), OXFAM, *How Indigenous women in Peru are tackling the climate crisis* (Peru: 2019), 7. https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/peru.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/How%20indigenous%20women%20in%20Peru%20are%20tackling%20the%20climate%20crisis.pdf

recognizes that the climate crisis hits on women and Indigenous people the most.

The process which led to its adoption finds its origin in the 'International Indigenous Women's Forum: Land and Climate Change: Challenges and Opportunities towards COP20', organized by ONAMIAP (National Organization of Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru), AIDSESP (Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana), and RRI (Rights and Resources Initiative) in July 2014 in Lima (Peru). More than sixty Indigenous women from Latin America, Asia, and Africa took part in it, together with experts, members of civil society organizations, non-governmental organization, and Peruvian government representatives.²⁰³

The focus of such forum was calling on governments to include Indigenous women's perspectives and participation in the adoption of national and international policies on climate change, especially regarding adaptation and mitigation strategies. In doing so, Indigenous women advocated for their effective participation at the decision-making level, taking into consideration their intrinsic relation and right to the land together with their vision and management of natural resources. Indeed, the respect and integration of Indigenous women's ancestral knowledge and sustainable livelihoods is considered fundamental for the success of climate policies and economic development initiatives. Accordingly, the participants to the forum developed recommendations for the Peruvian government to promote at the December 2014 Conference of the Parties (COP20) in Lima. Such recommendations focused on the respect of Indigenous women's collective rights, including their rights to land and territories, their right to self-determination, and free, prior, and informed consent. Following from this, they demanded active, effective, and equal participation at all levels of decision-making, through the creation of participatory mechanisms inclusive

²⁰³ IWGIA, *Peru: Indigenous women address critical role in combatting climate change* (22 July 2014). <https://www.iwgia.org/en/peru/2095-peru-indigenous-women-address-critical-role-in-com.html>

of the Indigenous' worldview and of the principle of equality in order to preserve and protect the ecosystem and its biodiversity.²⁰⁴

As a result, during the 20th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Peru emerged as a strong proponent of gender-responsive climate change actions. Consequently, the Lima Work Program on Gender (LWPG) was established to “*advance gender balance and integrate gender consideration into the work of Parties and the secretariat in implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement so as to achieve gender responsive climate policy and action*”.²⁰⁵ The program indicates objectives under five priority areas, that is capacity building, knowledge management and communication; gender balance, participation, and women's leadership; coherence; gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation; monitoring and reporting. In this regard, parties to the UNFCCC commit to advance the implementation of gender sensitive policies at all levels and in all areas of their work. As a consequence of this, on 9 December 2014 (COP20'S Gender Day), the Government of Peru pledged to develop a Gender and Climate Change Action Plan to mainstream gender into all of the state's plans while addressing climate change at once.²⁰⁶

Peru was the first Latin American country and the 19th at the global level to adopt a specific plan targeting climate change through a gendered approach. The process which led to its adoption included wide-ranging consultations with civil society, among which women and Indigenous women's organization. Indeed, the Ministry of Environment (MINAM) and

²⁰⁴ *ibid*

²⁰⁵ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Lima Work Program on Gender (LWPG)*, (n.d.). [https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NWPStaging/Pages/Lima-Work-Programme-on-Gender.aspx#:~:text=The%20Lima%20Work%20Programme%20on%20Gender%20\(LWPG\)%20was%20established%20in,responsive%20climate%20policy%20and%20action.](https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NWPStaging/Pages/Lima-Work-Programme-on-Gender.aspx#:~:text=The%20Lima%20Work%20Programme%20on%20Gender%20(LWPG)%20was%20established%20in,responsive%20climate%20policy%20and%20action.)

²⁰⁶ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, FCCC/CP/2014/10/Add.3 Conferencia de las Partes. Informe de la Conferencia de las Partes sobre su 20° período de sesiones, celebrado en Lima del 1 al 14 de diciembre de 2014 (2 February 2015). <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2014/cop20/spa/10a03s.pdf>

the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable populations (MIMP) established priorities at the national level in terms of climate change and gender equality to then draft gender-sensitive climate policies to be discussed at two participatory workshops with civil society and different organizations.²⁰⁷ The outcome of the workshops were indicators and actions for eight priority areas fundamental in order to develop adaptation and mitigation strategies, that is forests, water resources, energy, food security, solid waste, health, education, and disaster risk management. Such results were then presented to stakeholders in four macro-regional workshops to obtain validation. In this way, the workshops served the dual purpose of “*informing the plan’s focus and actions while also promoting dialogue on gender and climate change in ways that strengthened participants’ capacities, knowledge, and contributions*”.²⁰⁸ The process gave a voice to women and Indigenous communities, usually excluded from policymaking, and brought their issues to the attention of the government, thus enhancing their capacity building and creating a space for shared knowledge and confrontation. Following from these consultation processes, in 2016 Peru adopted the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change PAGCC-Peru.

The plan was developed in the framework of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It proposes comprehensive and multisectoral solutions built based on collective consensus. Indeed, the PAGCC-Peru is the result of a democratic exercise of participation in the elaboration of public policies, with women, including Indigenous women, having a fundamental role in that they are considered as agents of change.

²⁰⁷ Gillian Morello, Margaux Granat, *Mainstreaming Gender into Climate Policies: Lessons from Peru. May 2019, case study*. NDC Partnership (May 2019), 4. [https://api.knack.com/v1/applications/5b23f04fd240aa37e01fa362/download/asset/5ceee8ace77c060006bd5eb5/mainstreaming gender into climate action lessons from peru.pdf](https://api.knack.com/v1/applications/5b23f04fd240aa37e01fa362/download/asset/5ceee8ace77c060006bd5eb5/mainstreaming%20gender%20into%20climate%20action%20lessons%20from%20peru.pdf)

²⁰⁸ *ibid*

The underlying premise of the plan is the awareness that climate change is inextricably linked with women, and that they are the most affected by such phenomenon. In fact, women are the most vulnerable to the issue given that they have fewer resources to deal with adversities and given the sexual division of labour, which deepens in the case of Indigenous women. Consequently, gender must be mainstreamed into climate policies to tackle climate change's differentiated impacts in a more just and sustainable way. As a result, the PAGCC-Peru is an essential policy measure which guides different entities of the Peruvian state by providing guidelines to set out mitigation and adaptation's responses and strategies with the aim of realizing sustainable development and gender equality.²⁰⁹ The plan links international agreements and national policies on gender and climate change to develop solutions and synergies through cross-cutting and multisectoral approaches, that is a gender approach, a territorial approach, an intergenerational approach, a sustainable development approach, and an interculturality approach.²¹⁰ Following from this, the Peruvian state, at its three levels of government, aims at incorporating a gender perspective in climate change policies articulating its action through four specific objectives, namely Information Management, Capacity Building, Policies and Tools' Management, and Adaptation and Mitigation Measures.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), (*documento preliminar*) *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú (PAGCC-Perú)*, (2015), 14-16. https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2015_IUCN_Climate-Change-Gender-Action-Plan-Peru.pdf

²¹⁰ An interculturality approach seeks to recognize cultural differences to develop reciprocal relationships between different groups, while eradicating discrimination. Such approach is fundamental to adopt an intersectional lens to the issue of climate change connected with women, in that it highlights their different situations and realities to develop tailored solutions.

²¹¹ Information Management aims to promote the production, access and use of information on the differentiated impacts of climate change on the sexes, decision-making, and population's response; Capacity Building aims to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the context of climate change and promote men and women's dialogue, training and decision making related to the issue; Policies and Tools' Management aims to adopt a gender approach to create opportunities for everyone and address adverse impacts of climate change; Adaptation and Mitigation Measures aims to mainstream gender into climate policies and programs. "Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), (*documento preliminar*) *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú (PAGCC-Perú)*, (2015), 31.

As previously stated, the consultation processes identified eight priority areas according to impact, gender gaps, and feasibility, around which the plan is structured.

The first priority area is Forests. Indeed, Peru has more than 73 million hectares of forests and it is the fifth country in the world with the largest area of primary forests which cover more than half of the national territory. Furthermore, Peruvian forests present great biodiversity, provide essential goods and services for the entire country, and offer a shelter and a home for a large share of the population, especially for Indigenous peoples. Despite this, deforestation is increasing. Since forests provide for the livelihoods of millions of people, especially those living in extreme poverty, such practice directly threatens their resistance and survival. Moreover, deforestation is responsible for 35% of Peru's greenhouse gases emissions. It is important to note that forests management activities are often differentiated by gender, with men marketing timber products and women managing non-timber products for subsistence, food, and health. In addition, women are the bearers and guardians of specialized knowledge concerning forests due to their dependance on forests' resources. Nonetheless, they do not participate in decision-making spaces and their knowledge and concerns are often disregarded.²¹²

The second priority area is water resources. In Latin America, Peru has the highest per capita availability of renewable fresh water; however, water's distribution is asymmetric, with the majority of the population concentrated in areas characterized by scarcity of water. Moreover, aquifers suffer degradation due to over exploitation and water contamination from industrial and extractive activities. Connected to water, glaciers are receding and

https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2015_IUCN_Climate-Change-Gender-Action-Plan-Peru.pdf

²¹² Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú*, (2016), 32-33. <https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/12/PLAN-G%C3%A9nero-y-CC-16-de-JunioMINAM+MIMP.pdf>

reducing. As a result, Peru is undergoing a problem of water stress, which climate change contributes to exacerbate. It is important to underline that the lack of water means loss of productive soils, hydrobiological resources and agrobiodiversity, low quality and limited access to drinking water, acceleration of the process of desertification, and exacerbation of climate catastrophes. The management of water is differentiated, with women being its main users for domestic purposes, agriculture, and health. In this case, the effects of climate change on women will limit their activities and their resources, thus forcing them to spend more time at home and preventing them from participating in educational, recreative, and income-generating activities. Also in this case, women are often excluded from water-management policies.²¹³

The third priority sector is energy, one of the main factors contributing to the development of Peru's economy. Energy deeply relies on fossil fuels, which account for a large share of greenhouse gases emission and the exacerbation of the climate crisis, while renewable energies are often kept aside. It should be highlighted that those living in rural areas, mainly Indigenous communities, do not have access to electrification services, meaning that they are forced to depend on other sources of energy, such as biomasses. Even though the state of Peru has promoted a culture of energetic efficiency, the transport sector and subsector contribute to 10.42% of national greenhouse gases emissions, meaning that the energy sector is strictly connected with the issue of climate change. The roles of men and women in relation to energy are differentiated: the former consume energy for productive activities, while the latter mainly use it for domestic purposes. As a consequence of this, there is a situation of energy poverty among women, particularly rural women, which exacerbates gender gaps and exposes them to risks, such as health damages. For instance, women

²¹³ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú*, (2016), 48-50. <https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/12/PLAN-G%C3%A9nero-y-CC-16-de-JunioMINAM+MIMP.pdf>

are more prone to suffer pulmonary diseases connected with air pollution in the air caused by the use of alternative forms of energy (for example, biomasses). Besides, women have limited access to systems and means of transport, further hindering their participation in energy production, distribution, and consumption.²¹⁴

The fourth priority area is food security. The effects of climate change seriously hamper food security. Indeed, by damaging the agricultural and fishing sectors, many people find themselves without jobs and without access to food. Moreover, food contamination due to industrial waste makes it impossible to have healthy nutrition. As a consequence, hunger and malnutrition will increase, affecting the resilience and adaptation of people. In Peru, the sectors most at risk are fishing and agriculture. The latter, even though they have limited access to the land, is usually carried out by women and Indigenous women, meaning that they are amongst the ones at higher risk due to climate change. Furthermore, with less food, prices will increase, causing an exacerbation of poverty and creating a divide between small-medium farmers who have limited access to financial resources, and large agricultural enterprises, who, thanks to the possibility to access the financial market, will be able to adapt to extreme events. In addition, due to high rates of poverty and loss of jobs, women will not be able to provide for their families' sustenance, therefore being exposed to further marginalization and discrimination. The root cause of such problem is the gendered division of labour according to which women are connected to reproductive roles. It should be noted that women, particularly rural ones, have developed great knowledge on the use and management of natural resources, thus being the key for the elaboration of resilience and adaptation policies. Nonetheless, their face exclusion from the decision-making level and their

²¹⁴ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú*, (2016), 58-63. <https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/12/PLAN-G%C3%A9nero-y-CC-16-de-JunioMINAM+MIMP.pdf>

work is not valued, hence undermining men and women's equal opportunities and participation.²¹⁵

The fifth priority area is solid waste. Indeed, the generation of such waste has increased throughout the years following the economic growth. Solid waste generates two types of emissions: those from landfills and dumps, and those from waste waters. Peru does not have appropriate policies concerning solid waste; therefore, recyclers are fundamental in this scenario. Up to four million people in Latin America live from informal recycling in dangerous conditions, with women making up a large share of such number. As a matter of fact, there are barriers to their access to formal recycling and disparities in access, control, and benefits of the resources since men are usually the ones gaining profits from such activity. In addition, informal recycling poses women at risk due to unhealthy conditions and insecurity. In order to reduce emissions and improve the livelihoods of women, they should be included, and social, economic, and cultural barriers eliminated.²¹⁶

The sixth priority sector is health. Climate change threatens health, and this affects the most vulnerable, that is boys and girls, women, elderly, poor, sick, and rural populations. As a matter of fact, the climate crisis exacerbates health conditions and illnesses, increasing deaths related to issues such as heat waves, cancer, and respiratory allergies. On account of this, Peru faces difficulties regarding the health system and its response, mainly in remote areas, due to contaminated water, shortages of food, limited access to energy resources, and supplies' damage.

It should be noted that health problems connected with climate change affect women as the primary responsible for the care of their families.

²¹⁵ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú*, (2016), 70-77. <https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/12/PLAN-G%C3%A9nero-y-CC-16-de-JunioMINAM+MIMP.pdf>

²¹⁶ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú*, (2016), 84-87. <https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/12/PLAN-G%C3%A9nero-y-CC-16-de-JunioMINAM+MIMP.pdf>

Indeed, such problems mean that their domestic work increases exponentially contributing to their further exclusion from the public life. In addition, women often face difficulties in accessing health services, for instance maternal healthcare.²¹⁷

The seventh priority area is education. Educating the population on the risks connected to climate change empowers them to face its effects and develop resilience and adaptation strategies while integrating knowledge. Through education, it is possible to promote participation in all activities concerning the fight against the climate crisis. In this way, habits can be modified in order to adopt new sustainable ones. Furthermore, access to quality education is a human right conducive to the elimination of inequality and discrimination. In this context, climate change tends to exacerbate already existing gender gaps in education, causing disparities and poverty. Indeed, rural and Indigenous women often do not participate in the school system, resulting in a condition of deprivation and marginalization. Such situation is worsened by a high level of illiteracy, which prevents rural women from participating in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of the nation and blocks cooperation among different groups aimed at mitigating climate change.²¹⁸

The eight and last priority area is disaster risk management. As already mentioned in the previous chapters, due to its conformation and geographical characteristics, Peru is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as droughts and floods. In this case, disaster risk reduction and adaptation strategies are fundamental to ensure the survival of the entire country. To do so, cross-cutting and coordinated actions by the Peruvian state and civil society are necessary. It should be underlined that

²¹⁷ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú*, (2016), 94-99. <https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/12/PLAN-G%C3%A9nero-y-CC-16-de-JunioMINAM+MIMP.pdf>

²¹⁸ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú*, (2016), 106-109. <https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/12/PLAN-G%C3%A9nero-y-CC-16-de-JunioMINAM+MIMP.pdf>

poverty and gender inequality increase the vulnerability of a nation. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to act on them to foster resilience and sustainable development. Since women and Indigenous women are the ones affected the most by climate change, it is fundamental to include them in the processes of policy making and train them to become leaders of their communities in the fight against the phenomenon. On account of this, disaster and risk reduction strategies should adopt a gendered approach which contributes to the reduction of the vulnerability of women and of the entire country.²¹⁹

For each priority area, the PAGCC-Peru outlines indicators and actions to be taken, such as the elaboration of national studies and guidelines, the creation of platforms to enhance women's participation, and the dissemination of accessible and transparent information, in accordance with the four specific objectives. The Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations are the responsible for the monitoring and implementation of the plan. The Gender and Climate Change Action Plan has a time horizon to 2021 in order to comply with other national plans on gender and climate change. Such limit is conducive to a reflection on the outcomes of the plan and its implementation, bearing in mind that the PAGCC-Peru is the first step to establish more concrete policies to achieve gender mainstreaming at all levels of government and in all programs and measures.

Focusing on the plan's implementation, 18 gender-related activities outlined in the document were undertaken through 2018, for instance, training for ministry officials and elaboration of guidelines by the government on mainstreaming gender and climate change across sectors. Moreover, national policies such as the Framework Act on Climate Change, have

²¹⁹ Ministerio del Ambiente (MINAM), Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, *Plan de Acción en Género y Cambio Climático del Perú*, (2016), 116-120. <https://www.minam.gob.pe/cambioclimatico/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/12/PLAN-G%C3%A9nero-y-CC-16-de-JunioMINAM+MIMP.pdf>

considered gender in their approach.²²⁰ It is therefore possible to affirm that Peru's commitment to integrate gender into climate change policies has been evident and effective, showing a strong political will. To provide an additional example, the state established the NDC Multi-Sectoral Working Group, which role includes integrating a gender perspective through concrete actions.

In spite of all of this, the PAGCC-Peru "*is not being fully implemented in the country because the sectors in charge of its management have failed to put a process of vertical integration in place*".²²¹ Also, the plan usually refers to women as '*victims*' of climate change and '*vulnerable*' to its effects, implicitly belittling their roles as agents of change and resilience. Moreover, a specific budget for its implementation is absent and bias about its applicability and effectivity persist at all levels of government. In addition, the social component of the relationship between climate change and gender is often disregarded, and such thing is reinforced by the fact that the plan's provisions are not binding on the programs and projects of the Peruvian state.

Ultimately, it is possible to affirm that the PAGCC-Peru is a positive example of how women and Indigenous women's activism in the context of climate change can contribute to giving them a voice at the multiple levels of governance while enhancing their participation in the decision and policymaking arenas. In this case, climate change can be a possibility for social change concerning Indigenous women in Peru, but that is only possible if the state's political will is realized in concrete actions to

²²⁰ Gillian Morello, Margaux Granat, *Mainstreaming Gender into Climate Policies: Lessons from Peru. May 2019, case study*. NDC Partnership (May 2019), 5. [https://api.knack.com/v1/applications/5b23f04fd240aa37e01fa362/download/asset/5ceee8ace77c060006bd5eb5/mainstreaming gender into climate action lessons from peru.pdf](https://api.knack.com/v1/applications/5b23f04fd240aa37e01fa362/download/asset/5ceee8ace77c060006bd5eb5/mainstreaming%20gender%20into%20climate%20action%20lessons%20from%20peru.pdf)

²²¹ Gillian Morello, Margaux Granat, *Mainstreaming Gender into Climate Policies: Lessons from Peru. May 2019, case study*. NDC Partnership (May 2019), 6. [https://api.knack.com/v1/applications/5b23f04fd240aa37e01fa362/download/asset/5ceee8ace77c060006bd5eb5/mainstreaming gender into climate action lessons from peru.pdf](https://api.knack.com/v1/applications/5b23f04fd240aa37e01fa362/download/asset/5ceee8ace77c060006bd5eb5/mainstreaming%20gender%20into%20climate%20action%20lessons%20from%20peru.pdf)

mainstream gender into climate policies and promote cooperation with women from different communities and realities. If this does not happen, gaps will persist.

4.3 Interview with Melania Canales Poma, president of the National Organization of Indigenous Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru

On May 6, 2022, I had the opportunity to interview via ‘zoom’ the current president of ONAMIAP Melania Canales Poma.

Melania Canales is the leader of Quechua People in the Ayacucho region of Peru and coordinator of the Southern Region of the Continental Link of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA SUR) and part of the ECMIA collegiate council. Her work focuses on cultural identity of Indigenous women and their representation within and outside their communities, on the autonomy and exercise of women and Indigenous’ rights, on the empowerment of younger generations through ancestral Indigenous knowledge, and on the recognition and acknowledgement of traditional Indigenous culture in global spaces of decision making.²²²

The following interview, which can help to better understand the effects of climate change on Indigenous women in Peru and their activism in such context through a firsthand experience and perspective , was conducted and subsequently translated from Spanish into English by the present author.

Could you please explain what exactly is ONAMIAP (Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú) concerned with?

ONAMIAP is a women’s organization that rightly works to defend collective and individual political rights, and that also means working internally, by

²²² International Land Coalition, *Melania Canales Poma*. In: *Informe Trienal de la ILC 2019-2021: Tierras, personas y planeta* (n.d.). <https://www.landcoalition.org/es/about-ilc/governance/regional-committees/melania-canales-poma/>

strengthening the organization, and externally, which has to do with the making of proposals and the promotion of changes. That is the goal of ONAMIAP, and for that it has thematic axes, or you can say an agenda, and within the agenda we have land-territory, land collective territory, above all. So, this is part of our struggles, and it has to do with climate change, it has to do with security and food sovereignty, all within the framework of land and territory, because climate change affects our territory, it also affects our food security and sovereignty. This is one of the thematic axes. Another axis has to do with the political participation of Indigenous women. Another axis is intercultural education and health, indeed we Indigenous women have our science, technology, and ancestral knowledge. Usually, science is thought to be studied and practiced only by professionals, but we also have professionals, just without a university degree. Another axis is the fight against all forms of violence. We do not only focus on gender-based violence, but also on class violence, racist violence, colonialist violence, and extractive violence experienced by Indigenous women. I think we have seen that feminism is often focused only on gender-based violence and it does not pay attention to these other forms of violence that we experience and fight. Another issue is what has to do with a sustainable economy and solidarity with Mother Nature, especially thinking about future generations. Finally, cultural identity crosses all these axes; we are constantly resisting and reflecting on our cultural identity as part of Indigenous peoples who have been excluded from this society. So, these axes are part of our Indigenous women's agenda.

In my thesis I affirm that climate change affects women more than men, and Indigenous women even more. Do you agree and, if so, what are the reasons according to you?

When we talk about differentiated impacts, of course I agree. Why Indigenous women? Indigenous women live in the territory, a collective

territory. Climate change affects our territories, the land, and the fresh core. For instance, there is no water, there are diseases... So, us women, what are we going to prepare food with? Generally, ours is a subsistence type of agriculture, meaning that we consume what we produce, and if there is no rain, or the ice falls, or suddenly torrential rains damage our crops, we are left with nothing. It affects our work above all, because it is in the hands of women to protect the family and to feed the family. And it is especially in the hands of Indigenous women because men leave the communities to look for paid work, and those who have to worry about food, clothes, cleaning, education, and health are us women. Even sick women must continue to care for families, and with them they also care for our territories. We also say that climate change is produced by accelerated emissions of greenhouse gases that cause global warming, and these gases are produced by industries, and that's one thing you don't see. It's the industries, it's not us. Industries produce these gases which affect the ozone layer, but we also see that in our territory extractive activity pollutes and adds to climate change. We have seen dead rivers, that there is no more life, we are seeing heavy metals in people's blood, we are even seeing that our lands with these contaminations no longer produce our food. So, all of this adds to climate change and us women are permanently living there, because men go out looking for paid work outside of communities.

We are undoubtedly living through a period of great climate change. In your opinion, how does this affect your human and collective rights as both women and Indigenous peoples?

One of the things I have seen is that women are sometimes forced to migrate from our territories, because the territories are no longer producing as they should. Another thing is food shortages. There are many seeds that are disappearing, many animals are disappearing because the heat is no longer the same as before and has risen in grade, and sometimes it

happens that it rains but the rain destroys all the crops, and the water is not retained in the mountains as it used to. Indeed, now when it rains, all the lakes' water quickly goes to the sea. Women and Indigenous peoples are the most affected because many migrate to cities, but in cities they suffer racism, sometimes they suffer human trafficking, slavery, loss of cultural identity. That is a really important topic. Also, sometimes you have to 'whitewash' yourself a little to find jobs opportunities, losing your cultural identity. Other violated rights are connected with the lack of quality health and education, because when there are diseases, we do not have a health center or some hospitals in our villages. Then the consequences are malnutrition, anemia, low educational quality... The food system is no longer produced on our land. So, I think that climate change is going to affect us, it's going to affect our territories with the loss of food, the loss of water, the loss of animals, the loss of identity, and forced displacement.

Could you please illustrate some concrete examples of your activism towards climate change as an organization?

I believe that one of the things that we have been fighting to avoid accelerated global warming, because there has always been global warming, by the way, but this warming used to increase every 200 years, but now almost annually. So, one situation that we have been promoting, for example, is no deforestation in the territories. If there are forests, those are Indigenous territories, but sometimes governments continue to give concessions or there are also illegal logging people, and there are no clear regulations. Then there is our struggle for the recognition of Mother Earth. Mother Nature is important to us. For us the territory has life, plants have life, animals have life. But the western world does not see it in this way, so for us it is a concern because the western world only thinks about nature as a resource and does not see it as an entity with rights. But without Mother Nature, our life is not possible. So that is part of our struggles. Also, the

collective territory, meaning that one single person does not take over the territory because that will prevent us from having access to and producing food. And part of our struggle is this, the collective integral territory. I say integral because lately there have been some institutions that only think about the forest, because now with this 'carbon capture' they see it as a business, 'the green business'. But they are not seeing it in a comprehensive way. The forest does not live without water. In addition, the Amazon cannot live without the Andes or our mountains, the snows, or the sea. I mean, for us the territory is totally integral, that is part of our struggle. What happens is that they have divided Mother Nature to weaken our struggles as such.

Do you think that this activism in the field of climate change can cause changes at the social level? For example, greater participation at the decision-making level and greater social inclusion of Indigenous women in Peru?

I don't know if change can occur because we, as Indigenous peoples and women, are aware of the problem internally, but the issue is that we are not the ones who promote global warming. Global warming is caused by big businesses or those who have privileges, so that's where they need to be aware of how they are destroying lives just because they want to enjoy privileges or have wealth. That's what we see. If it were up to us, women, and Indigenous peoples, maybe it would be different; for example, we would say to them "listen I need you to respect my collective territory, our autonomy, our self-determination". But those who do not allow us that freedom, those who murder us when we defend mother earth, those who kill us when we want the rivers or the seas not to be polluted are those who are above, those who have money, those who have wealth. It is them who should be aware of this whole situation, but it seems they are not. Therefore, it is our concern.

And do you think that other than this lack of awareness, are there any obstacles to the social participation of Indigenous women?

There are many obstacles to our participation: the rules, the laws that are given in our country are not collected from below according to our needs and according to our proposals. The rules are in the interest of the big businesses or the ones who have money, even justice is in the interests of the ones who have money. This is a reality! Why is the climate crisis happening? Is it because the Indigenous peoples are cutting down the trees? Is it because the Indigenous peoples are polluting the rivers, or making gas emissions? No. Who pollutes the environment? It is them. Also, when we raise our voice, take care, and protect the environment, they persecute us, murder us, and kill us.

I have one final question: according to you, what could some future prospects be looking at the current situation of Indigenous women and climate change and the relations with the Government?

I would like people to be aware of how they destroy their habitat, for the benefit of a few and not the vast majority. And there must be regulations that recognize the rights of Mother Nature, there must be regulations that protect lives, not only the life of the human being but the life of everything, animals, plants... For us, for example, the hills have life, the mountains have life, but for others they have no life, and they are resources to be exploited. They exploit our Mother Earth; they also exploit our strength and the strength of our children. We would really like there to be a paradigm shift, a change in this system of exploitation and oppression where the benefits and powers lie in just a few. We would like this to happen because we seek the 'good life', the 'plentiful life'. And there will be no full life while others oppress us, others exploit us, and not only us but our Mother Earth. They destroy

us, they murder us, they persecute us, they criminalize us. The laws are unfortunately made to measure and at the request of those who have money. The justice of our country does not work for justice, but it works for power positions, and such positions reveal whom it is convenient to defend. So, we would like this paradigm to change, this capitalist, neoliberal, oppressive, slave-owning, racist, class-based system to change.

And then in this way we can still give continuity to life and Mother Earth. For it will stop raining, it will cease to occur, all living beings will have died, but She will regenerate; I do not know how many years will pass, but She will regenerate. But nevertheless, human beings come and destroy things.

4.4 Peruvian Indigenous women and climate change: current gaps and future perspectives

Following from the previous sections, it is possible to understand that, even though Indigenous women's activism in the context of climate change in Peru can be a powerful tool to promote social change, important gaps remain, hindering Indigenous women's participation and inclusion.

For instance, despite improvements, the Peruvian society carries on being a strongly machista one, and this is confirmed by the high levels of discrimination and gender-based violence registered in the country. Indeed, in 2020 54.8% of Peruvian women suffered gender-based violence from their husbands or partners.²²³ Therefore, gender inequality is one of the main gaps in the realization of Indigenous women's engagement in the public and decision-making arena.

There are several other factors which prevents a true social change in the nation.

First of all, the roles imposed on Indigenous women. When they try to actively participate in the society by giving their contributions, such as by

²²³ INEI, *Perù. Encuesta Nacional Demografica y de Salud Familiar ENDES 2020* (2020), 263-264.

https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib1795/

taking part in meetings and undergoing training, they are frowned upon by their other community members, including other women. This is due to the gender role which is attributed to them, that is that of mothers and family carers. Consequently, their engagement with society is considered a distraction from their responsibilities and duties.²²⁴ As a result of this, Indigenous women are not able to create their own leadership and tend to replicate men's one. This causes gender roles and gender stereotypes to be reinforced and replicated throughout the years, contributing to further gender inequality and women's discrimination.

It is important to note that, even when Indigenous women successfully manage to be included in the Peruvian society, their representation is weak or only serves to fulfill gender quotas. This is true especially in those areas in which their participation would be essential in order to develop effective policies and strategies. For instance, their presence in the development of mitigation and adaptation measures is low, also meaning that those who are responsible for the design of such policies lack the knowledge and understanding of climate of which Indigenous women are guardians. As a result, adaptation and resilience strategies will be less successful.²²⁵ Moreover, despite them being the ones present on the territory to defend the environment, they are excluded from the negotiations concerning climate policies. In addition, the financial resources devoted to such policies, which are strictly connected with Indigenous women's wellbeing, are often scarce, and there is a lack of support from national and sub-national authorities.²²⁶ In this case, their work as territorial defenders and guardians of ancient knowledge is disregarded. On account of this, it should be highlighted the historical debt that the Peruvian society has towards Indigenous women as the ones carrying out adaptation and mitigation

²²⁴ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), OXFAM, *How Indigenous women in Peru are tackling the climate crisis* (Peru: 2019). https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/peru.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/How%20indigenous%20women%20in%20Peru%20are%20tackling%20the%20climate%20crisis.pdf

²²⁵ *ibid*

²²⁶ *ibid*

measures since ancient times. Indeed, their actions and livelihoods have contributed to the preservation of the ecosystem from capitalist practices of exploitation and degradation. Nonetheless, such work is not recognized by the state.²²⁷ The result is that Peruvian Indigenous women are underrepresented, and they are not listened to at the decision-making level, thus widening the gap between men and women and preventing a real change in the society.

These gaps clash with a state that seems to want to commit itself to greater participation and inclusion of women, for example through the process of the drafting and adoption of the PAGCC-Peru. Of course, such commitment will remain on paper if the situation is not changed, and disparities are not addressed. A real change requires effective measures which include Indigenous women, since their contributions are fundamental in decision-making spaces, especially the ones devoted to public policies on climate change. Indeed, to create successful measures to prevent and fight the climate crisis, it is essential that Indigenous women's work and management of nature is recognized and seen as a resource.²²⁸ In other words, to effectively tackle the climate issue, Indigenous women must be recognized and included at the decision-making level as agents of change.

Having established which are the gaps, it is now possible to focus on some future perspectives, in particular pointing at what should be done to favour social change for Peruvian Indigenous women in the face of climate change. It would be of the utmost importance for the state to adopt a transversal perspective inclusive of gender and interculturality when designing public policies, especially those related to the climate issue. In this way, the effective participation of women would be promoted at multiple levels of government, enhancing the transparency and equity of decision-making

²²⁷ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), *For the effective participation of Indigenous women in climate management* (4 February 2021). <https://onamiap.org/2021/02/por-la-participacion-efectiva-de-las-mujeres-indigenas-en-la-gestion-climatica/>

²²⁸ *ibid*

processes. As a result of increasing Indigenous women's participation in the society, discrimination, gendered and racial stereotypes, and gender-based violence would be reduced.

To be effective, their participation in the society should respect and guarantee Indigenous' own organizational structures and processes, to preserve their cultural identity while encouraging an inclusive community.²²⁹

Focusing on climate change policies, in order to promote social change, it would be fundamental to integrate an Indigenous perspective to not only adaptation, but also mitigation strategies to address the issue in a more comprehensive manner. Indeed, incorporating the recognition of the intersectional roles of Indigenous women in the fight against the climate issue, especially regarding matters such as food sovereignty and biodiversity preservation, will contribute to their empowerment and capacity building as community leaders.²³⁰ A precondition to obtain such result would be to bridge the digital and competence divide between men and women, demonstrating a strong-willed and real commitment of the state to obtain equity. In fact, equity is a prerequisite of climate justice and the basis for the success of climate-targeted policies.²³¹

Since Indigenous women are the guardians and transmitters of ancestral knowledge, hence fundamental for climate change's adaptation processes, it would be necessary to recognize the differentiated impacts of the phenomenon while providing accessible and reliable information which reflects their concerns, necessities, and proposals. This would also imply

²²⁹ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), OXFAM, *How Indigenous women in Peru are tackling the climate crisis* (Perú: 2019). https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/peru.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/How%20indigenous%20women%20in%20Peru%20are%20tackling%20the%20climate%20crisis.pdf

²³⁰ *ibid*

²³¹ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), *For the effective participation of Indigenous women in climate management* (4 February 2021). <https://onamiap.org/2021/02/por-la-participacion-efectiva-de-las-mujeres-indigenas-en-la-gestion-climatica/>

that climate change information incorporates Indigenous knowledge and practices.²³²

On account of this, it would be important to develop climate projects, for example forest management projects, with the contribution and participation of Indigenous women, to favour the transmission of such knowledge and practices to the whole community. It would be fundamental that these programs and projects adopted an intercultural, intersectional, and gendered approach, so that climate change measures become the first step to mainstream gender at all levels of decision-making and communication, therefore contributing to social change.²³³

A real change in the Peruvian society presupposes the participation of Indigenous women, considered one of the most important elements for the realization of such goal. Indeed, ONAMIAP has elaborated the report "*Towards the operationalization of the participation of Indigenous women in the implementation of the instruments of integral management against climate change*" to contribute to the effective, inclusive, and representative participation of Indigenous women in climate change policies at multiple levels of governance. According to the report, Indigenous women's participation must be ensured to provide the government with their observations and views, contributing to feeding the available information with their traditional knowledge and territorial management practices. Furthermore, the document underlines the importance of gender equity to be guaranteed in national, regional, and international spaces, and in all other spaces which may affect their lives and livelihoods.²³⁴ Therefore, a

²³² Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), *Participación de las mujeres Indígenas en espacios de decisión sobre el cambio climático* (October 2020). <https://onamiap.org/2020/10/como-operativizar-plan-de-accion-de-genero-y-cambio-climatico-desde-la-mirada-de-mujeres-indigenas/>

²³³ *ibid*

²³⁴ Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú (ONAMIAP), *¿Cómo operativizar el Plan de Acción de Género y Cambio Climático desde la mirada de las mujeres indígenas?* (8 October 2020). <https://onamiap.org/2020/10/como-operativizar-plan-de-accion-de-genero-y-cambio-climatico-desde-la-mirada-de-mujeres-indigenas/>

gendered approach must be adopted to enhance Indigenous women's participation in decision-making spaces. In order to do so, gaps in terms of opportunities must be closed, skills must be developed through capacity-building activities, and women must be empowered.

In the context of climate change, the report highlights the importance of developing indicators to collect information on climate management which are able to identify gender inequalities. In addition, all the information regarding the climate issue must be available for everyone and be accessible, meaning that the language must be inclusive and the presence of both men and women be visible.

Finally, it is of the utmost importance to recognize and value the role of Indigenous women as guardians of culture, identity, and the territory, therefore making their viewpoint and experience fundamental for the design and implementation of climate change's adaptation and mitigation strategies.²³⁵

All of the above-mentioned perspectives for a change in the Peruvian society concerning Indigenous women can only be realized if the government and the big businesses who pollute the environment and exploit the territory become aware of the devastating impacts of their actions and the destruction they cause. Only if capitalistic profit and gain is not the main goal it will be possible to have social change. Despite Indigenous women pushing for it through their activism, only those who hold positions of power within the society are the ones able to adopt effective measures and create spaces of dialogue and participation. Therefore, until awareness among those in power is generated and, consequently, concrete actions taken, for example financial support to Indigenous women-led programs, the situation will probably remain the same and real change will not be possible.

In this regard, it is possible to affirm that climate change can be an opportunity to close gender and racial gaps by recognizing Indigenous

²³⁵ *ibid*

women as agents of change, by making their voices heard, and by promoting their participation and inclusion in the society. But all of this can only be feasible if the ones exploiting the environment acknowledge their responsibility and commit to a true change.

Conclusion

The climate crisis affects every individual being and every region of the world, but its impacts are differentiated and not everyone experiences it equally. This is mainly due to a series of factors which intersect with social processes, therefore contributing to characterizing a person as vulnerable. For instance, culture, socio-economic status, discrimination on the basis of gender, class, or ethnicity, account for the exposure of an individual to the effects of climate change. In this regard, women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, children, and migrants are examples of vulnerable beings. Consequently, it is possible to affirm that the climate crisis disproportionately affects certain categories of individuals.

Following from this, it can be observed that the climate issue presents gendered impacts, but it should also be noted that not all women experience its effects in the same way. Hence, it is fundamental to adopt an intersectional approach which takes into consideration the different elements of one's life, such as gender, ethnicity, and class, that shape the experience of such phenomena. Therefore, Indigenous women represent one of the most vulnerable groups suffering the effects of climate change, while contributing the least to it. That is true especially in contexts in which there are high levels of gender inequality, gender-based discrimination, and violence. Precisely for these reasons, Peru represents a perfect background for the research.

As a matter of fact, Peru is particularly vulnerable to climate change due to its geographical location and the conformation of the territory. Moreover, the Peruvian society is deeply rooted in 'Machismo' and 'Marianismo', that is, the traditional gender roles. According to such concepts, Peru presents a machista culture which excludes women from the public arena and relegates them to the private sphere as caretakers, thus reinforcing gender stereotypes. As a result of this, the Peruvian society is deeply entrenched with discriminatory and violent attitudes against women, and this is

reinforced at the institutional level, with women being deprived of the enjoyment of their rights. In particular, due to their identity, Indigenous women face mutually reinforcing difficulties and human and collective rights violations as both women and Indigenous peoples.

Moreover, the development of feminism(s) in the region contributed to the further exclusion of Indigenous women from the feminist discourse. In recent years, they have gained a preeminent role and have acquired a voice, becoming the ones actively fighting for the recognition and implementation of women's and Indigenous' rights and for the acknowledgement of their intersectional identity. Therefore, the current feminist discourse is rooted in the needs of Indigenous women, meaning that they adopt an anti-patriarchal and anticolonial attitude.

For the purpose of this research, it should be underlined that one of Indigenous women's main concerns is climate. Indeed, the protection of the environment is considered a fundamental element in fighting patriarchal oppression. Moreover, this is connected with the Indigenous conception of the world, according to which everything is alive and deserving of respect, and relationships between human beings and nature should be reciprocal. As a result of this, Indigenous women are bearers of ancestral knowledge and practices which contribute to maintaining a healthy and resilient ecosystem. In this regard, Peruvian Indigenous women actively work to mitigate and adapt to climate change through their activism, particularly with reference to forests and water. Indeed, their livelihood and their rights as women and Indigenous peoples are deeply entrenched with the land; hence, they work against the destructive effects of the climate crisis. Such activism includes advocacy, peaceful protests, influencing the public agenda, and active participation at forums and spaces for dialogue at different levels of governance.

The present thesis aimed at answering the question of whether Peruvian Indigenous women's activism in the context of the climate crisis could promote social change.

Based on the elaboration of the available data, it is possible to affirm that such Indigenous women's activism in the context of Peru can be considered as a first step towards social change, in that it has helped to increase their participation at the decision-making level, and it has helped to promote their inclusion in the public space. For instance, Peruvian Indigenous women's activism has led to the international recognition of the inextricable link between climate change and women at COP20 and the subsequent adoption of the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change PAGCC-Peru. Their contribution was fundamental in order to adopt a gendered approach to the climate issue which acknowledges the differentiated impacts of the phenomenon which hits the hardest on women and Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, their role as bearers of traditional knowledge was recognized and taken into consideration in the formulation of the plan. Therefore, Peruvian Indigenous women's activism in the context of climate change has encouraged the adoption of gender-sensitive policies in the nation and it has offered ancestral expertise for the elaboration of adaptation and mitigation strategies. As a consequence of this, their further participation and inclusion has been fostered and encouraged, resulting in a change at the social level.

On account of this, it should be noted that a true social change is only possible when Indigenous women are recognized as agents of change, meaning that their knowledge and practices are concretely taken into consideration, and they are deemed essential elements for the realization of goals, in this case the preservation of the environment and the ecosystem.

In this regard, engaging with Indigenous women is of the utmost importance to formulate culturally appropriate and gender responsive policies and strategies. Indeed, the context-specific culture and institutions are the main

responsible for shaping patterns of exclusion, marginalization, and gender-based discrimination and violence. Therefore, working in synergy with Indigenous women “*throughout design and implementation of research and operations are critical to ensuring that the programs operating in these contexts work to address rather than reinforce existing patterns of inequality and exclusion*”.²³⁶ In order to realize such objective, it would be critical to develop educational programs aimed at empowering Indigenous women to become agents of change, codify and promote their ancestral knowledge and practices at all levels of governance, and enhance capacity building programs to foster leadership, inclusion, and participation. Indeed, the Indigenous economy based on sustainability together with their unique skills can lead to the creation of effective measures to counter climate change. As a precondition for the concretization of such goal, Indigenous peoples should be granted social protection, together with the recognition and implementation of their rights, the creation of sustainable businesses, the eradication of poverty and discrimination, and the partnership and cooperation at all levels of governance.²³⁷ Unfortunately, what prevents a change at the social level are profit and capitalism which take primacy over the safeguarding of the environment and the recognition of Indigenous peoples.

To conclude, it is possible to affirm that the activism of Peruvian Indigenous women can be the first step to achieve social change, for instance greater inclusion and participation in public life and at the decision-making level, and greater recognition of them as agents of change and essential for the preservation of nature. All of this, however, depends on the concrete

²³⁶ Climate Investment Funds (CIF), *Empowering indigenous women to integrate traditional knowledge and practices in climate action* (May 2021), 52. https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/cif_enc/sites/cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/indigenous_women-tkt_report.pdf

²³⁷ International Labour Office-Gender Equality and Diversity Branch, *Indigenous Peoples and climate change. From victims to change agents through decent work* (Geneva: 2017), 31-35. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_551189.pdf

commitment of the Peruvian government to acknowledge and take advantage of Indigenous women's ancestral knowledge as a powerful resource. Truth of the matter, they are often considered burdens in the face of pure capitalist economic enrichment, and, as a consequence, excluded and disregarded. Therefore, those who occupy positions of power within the government should take responsibility for their actions, since such a course of action contributes to worsening the climate crisis.

Moreover, it is fundamental to highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming in climate measures and strategies. In the context of Peru, this can signify a real will of the government to obtain concrete change.

If the government acts by mainstreaming gender into its policies, by recognizing their role as agents of change, by hearing their voices, and by making good use of their traditional knowledge and practices, it would be possible for Peruvian Indigenous women to see their rights as both women and Indigenous peoples respected and implemented, while resulting in decreased gender inequality and poverty, together with greater participation and social inclusion, while preserving the ecosystem at once. In other words, a social change would be possible. In this sense, climate change can be an opportunity to close gender and racial gaps.

On the contrary, if the government exploits the environment with its capitalistic logic of profit and violation of human and collective rights, the activism of Indigenous women will be an end in itself.

In order to observe and analyze what the future reality for Peruvian Indigenous women in the context of climate change will be, further research is needed.

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