

# WATER INSECURITY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:

Exploring links and steps for prevention.  
A Comparative Study of Indonesian and  
Peruvian Women

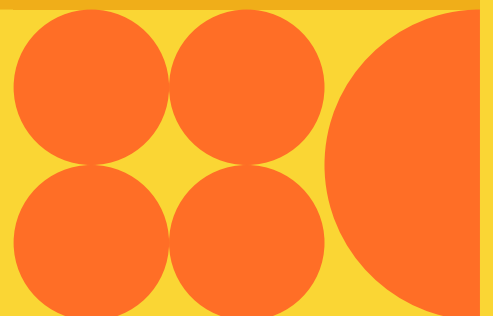
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## Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most prevalent public health threats in the world today, with as many as one in four women affected. Household water insecurity is the inability to access and benefit from affordable, adequate, reliable and safe water for well-being and healthy living. Thus, this research seeks to explore whether water insecurity is associated with gender-based violence in the home and, if so, under what circumstances in Sumba, Indonesia, and Tambogrande, Peru.

For this, a mixed methodology was designed, with qualitative and quantitative instruments. In the case of Peru, 358 surveys were applied to adult women from two populated centers, Santa Ana, which has a total population of 1,771, and Jesús del Valle, which has a total population of 941, both located in rural areas from Tambogrande, Piura. 51 in-depth interviews and 5 participatory workshops were also carried out with the communities and local public servants. With this, it is sought that the results help to identify policies and practices that contribute to the vulnerability or resilience of women.

## Gender Violence and Water Insecurity in Households

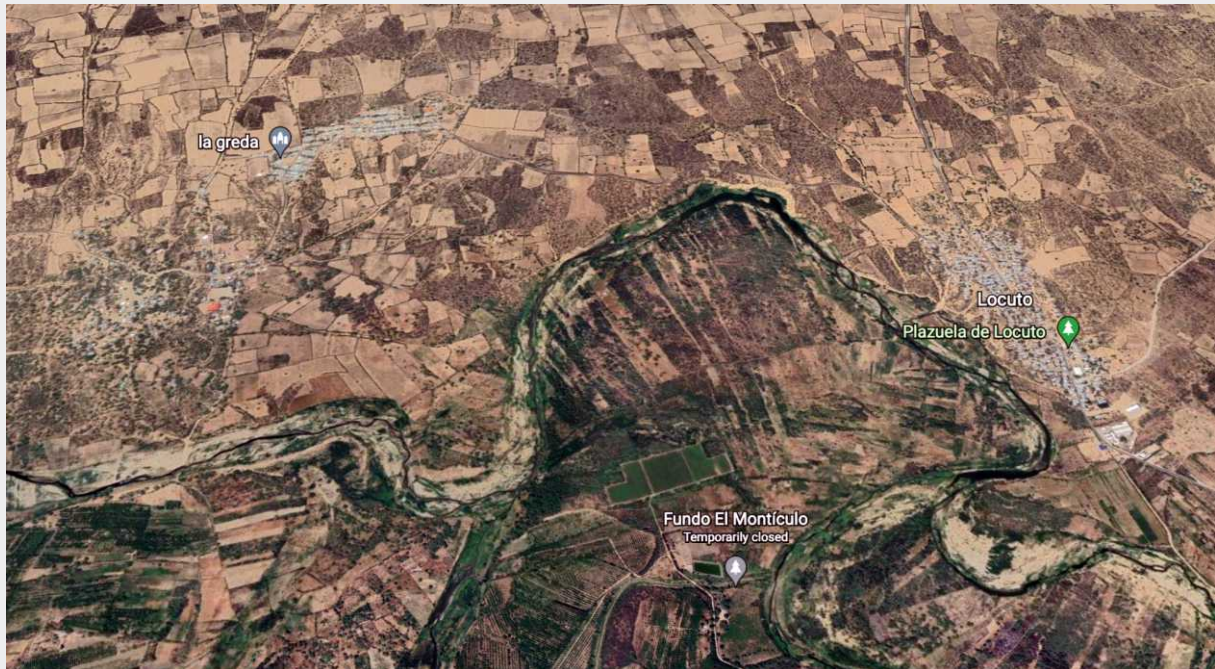
For the purposes of this study, gender-based violence is understood to be any action or conduct based on gender and aggravated by discrimination stemming from the coexistence of diverse identities (race, class, sexual identity, age, ethnicity, among others), that causes death, harm or physical, sexual or psychological suffering to a person, both in the public and private spheres.

***"It is about that violence that occurs in a context of systematic discrimination against women and against those who confront the gender system, whether within families or outside them, regardless of their sex, which does not refer to cases isolated, sporadic or episodic violence, but rather refer to the prevailing gender system, which refers to a structural situation and a social and cultural phenomenon rooted in the customs and mentalities of all societies and which is based on conceptions referring to inferiority and subordination of women and the supremacy and power of men".(MIMP, 2016, p.25).***

It is also a profound health problem that depletes women's energy, compromises their physical and mental health and erodes their self-esteem. In the long term, it generates chronic pain, drug and alcohol abuse, and depression.

Human health is based on water, which is why problems with water availability (scarcity, flooding), access (affordability, reliability) and contamination (chemicals, pathogens) directly contribute to the global burden of disease. Household water insecurity, defined as the inability to access and benefit from affordable, adequate, reliable and safe water for well-being and healthy living, is a concept that captures

the multiple dimensions of water acquisition and use in the level at which they are experienced. The scale used to measure household water insecurity, HWISE, for its acronym in English (Household Water Insecurity Scale Experiences) has a range of 0 to 36, with greater insecurity at higher values and a cut-off point of 12 indicating the presence of water insecurity.



## Main results

### *High rate of water insecurity in households on the left bank, in Tambogrande*

The district of Tambogrande has a population of approximately 107,495 (INEI, 2017), with 59% of the inhabitants residing in rural areas and living in divided between the right bank and the left bank of the Piura River. Agriculture is the main economic activity of the district (Municipality of Tambogrande, 2020). Tambogrande has the San Lorenzo water reservoir and a treatment plant that supplies the entire urban population and a large part of the rural population, with the exception of the left bank. The municipality of Tambogrande is in charge of the water supply in the jurisdiction. According to the Diagnosis of Infrastructure Gaps and/or access to public services of the Municipality of Tambogrande (2021), 85% of the rural population does not have access to drinking water service through the public network and 14% of the urban population does not have this service. Table 1 identifies this problem in the populated centers of this study, Santa Ana, located on the left bank, and Jesús del Valle, located on the right bank of the Piura River.

**Table 1.** Drinking water and sewage services in the population centers under study

Center	Total dwellings	PO	Total Population	Drinking water - population		Sewerage - population	
				SI	NO	SI	NO
Jesús del Valle	225	224	941	639	302	647	294
Santa Ana	486	477	1771	7	1764	282	1489

Source: modified from Municipality of Tambogrande (2021)

This shows the challenges in relation to access, infrastructure and equitable distribution of this resource, which are contrasted with the results of this study:

- In this study, a participant from the local administration organization of water on the right bank mentioned that they have access to water in their homes that comes from the water channels of the irrigation system for agriculture and that "there are pipes that reach each little house, they have their little key and the water arrives" (PO2); while a representative of an NGO that works in the area indicated that "...on the left bank, they have to collect their water in cisterns and sometimes, the municipality also delivers water through cisterns but it is once a week, so it is very little..." (PO5).
- On the left bank, the water does not reach the homes, an official from the local municipality indicates that "... it is provided through cisterns, they have a commission and collect, they buy the water cistern and store it in some cement reservoirs and there they store the water and from there they distribute it, they arrive with their gourds, with their barrels, with their buckets and they fill and take them to their homes..." (PG16) the inhabitants must go to collect the water at the established times.
- The result of the study showed that the populated center on the left bank of the Piura River has a high rate of water insecurity, with a HWISE score of 19, where women and children are the most affected. In contrast, the populated center on the right bank of the river is not considered water insecure (HWISE = 6), but they do not have water every day of the week. Likewise, it is important to indicate that at the housing level, in both localities some households with water insecurity can be found, despite being on the right bank and vice versa.



## Normalization of gender-based violence against women in Tambogrande

Although statistics indicate that the evolution of family violence in women has decreased between 2009 and 2019, this continues to be a major problem in the country. According to statistics from the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP), in 2019 the Tambogrande CEM filed 49 complaints of psychological, physical and sexual violence. It is reported that reports of rape have been increasing in the 2017-2019 period (Municipalidad de Tambogrande, 2021). This information is contrasted with the results of this study:

- **There are daily complaints of violence against women and** an increase in violence in recent years, a police representative stated that
- There is a lot of machismo, and many women do not work away from home and do not have enough resources to support the home, so they end up accepting the situation of violence. Thus, a health worker affirms that

*"...there is not a day without violence..."*  
(PG24)

"The women here depend a lot on the man. They are women who never went out to work" (PG4)

## High degree of machismo and stereotype about gender roles in the home in Tambogrande

According to the National Survey on Social Relations (ENARES), as of 2019, 18.8% of all adult women, over 18 years of age, surveyed, currently in a relationship, stated that they had been victims of economic violence by their husband/partner. Likewise, 52.7% think that "the woman must fulfill the role of mother and wife, then her dreams" and 18.6% think that the man is jealous of his wife or partner because that is how he shows her that he loves her" (INEI, 2019).

- A representative of the health center affirms that **"Violence is normalized here" (PG1)** in all its forms, and **"Another serious problem is that there is a lot of machismo here... in the end sometimes there are many helpless mothers... and it comes to nothing... because sometimes they don't have enough money to go to trial" (PG28)**. The economic dependence of women on their partners means that they do not file complaints out of fear and shame. This contributes to the increase and tolerance of violence, even reaching death threats.

- **Women are in charge of care work at home**, caring for their sons and daughters, cooking for their partners, among others. A worker at the mental health center affirms that this can trigger violence since *"women have certain responsibilities at home... and she has to go collect water... because if I don't cook, then when my husband can hit me"* (PG5).
- Also, **most women, and even adolescents and girls, are in charge of collecting water for home consumption.** This is an activity that requires physical effort, since they must walk and carry several gallons of water, known as "porongos", to their homes. Thus, a regional government official indicates that *"the woman is the one who has to get up first thing in the morning and go look for the water to bring home and be able to attend to the different daily activities within the home. So, it is the woman who is the most affected, because they have to go find the resources anywhere, if it's far they still have to move."* (PG9).
- All these roles established for women limit their possibility of professional and personal growth, which generates a cycle of dependency with their partner. This is reaffirmed by a regional government official who indicates *"... this type of work that limits the possibilities of women to interact outside or access training, their personal development generates a dependency on them"* (PG8).

## Consequences, the opportunity costs for the women, girls and adolescents of Tambogrande

### Impacts on education

Official figures indicate that there are still several challenges in education since there are still 20% of illiterate women, which corresponds to twice the figure of illiterate men. Likewise, illiteracy is concentrated in rural areas (18.2%), which shows that women in rural areas are the most disadvantaged. Regarding school attendance, the population that attends the most are boys and girls from 6 to 11 years old, this figure decreases in the older population. (Municipality of Tambogrande, 2020).

Of the 358 women surveyed in this study in Tambogrande, 21.6% have completed primary school, 20.7% completed secondary school and/or have other studies, and 19.6% have no

education. Of this total, 175 belong to the Santa Ana town center, located on the left bank of the Piura River, who, compared to the women interviewed in the Jesús del Valle town center located on the right bank of the Piura River, have a lower percentage of people who have completed their studies, 22.9% do not have studies and 47.4% have not completed primary school.

**Children and adolescents from the left bank sacrifice their studies to dedicate themselves to housework** and the different responsibilities they have at home. Many times they miss school, arrive late or, in some cases, drop out of school to collect water while their mothers and fathers go

to work outside from home. This is reaffirmed by a representative of the Tambogrande UGEL who indicates that "These children also travel sometimes considerable distances to obtain water and that will still distract them from their studies" (PG26). In the same way, a woman from Santa Ana emphasized that this occurs, with greater emphasis, in girls and adolescent women "because sometimes the mothers want to go to work to bring another livelihood to the house... Then, perhaps they no longer he gives that girl studies in order to leave her in charge of the households as a housewife and the main factor that is her obligation to that person [is] to stay is to look for water" (PW\_SAW).

## Adolescent pregnancy

In Peru, in the last ten years, the global fertility rate has decreased considerably; Despite this, the gap between urban and rural areas remains wide due to women's less access to education, lack of information, less access to contraceptive methods and culturally established gender roles. In this scenario, the department of Piura ranks eighth among departments with the highest global fertility rate, with a fertility rate of 2.3 children per woman. These results are closely related to socioeconomic inequalities, in particular with the educational level of women (INEI, 2021).

Although the percentage of Peruvian adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age who are mothers or pregnant has also decreased considerably, it is still higher in rural areas (INEI, 2021). According to the report of the Roundtable for the Fight against Poverty (2021), Piura is the third region with the highest number of births in adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age, a figure that doubled in 2021 compared to 2020. The district Sullana reported the highest number of deliveries and Tambogrande is in the eighth district with 112 reported deliveries. These figures coincide with the results of the study:

**There are high rates of teenage pregnancy in Tambogrande** "... *Tambogrande is the district with the highest number of adolescent pregnancy ...*" (P05), particularly in the populated center of Santa Ana, on the

**left bank.** Even "...there are cases of pregnant 12-year-old girls, more often on the left bank with a 40, 50-year-old guy!..."

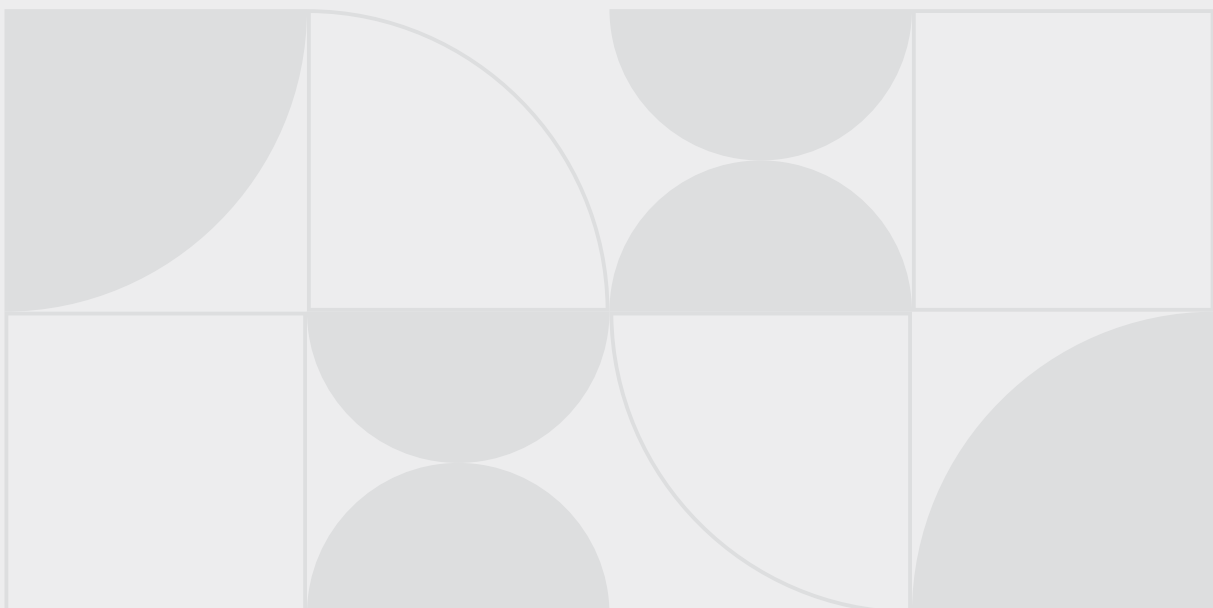
**Pregnant adolescents drop out of school.** This puts them in a disadvantaged situation and hinders their chances of entering the labor market, contributing to the increase in poverty on the left bank. *"...sometimes we know they are imposed motherhoods and that they are causing many women to assume and if they are adolescents they no longer go to school, they no longer study, their educational level is less and what does that cause, that if later they want to join in the labor market they will always be at a disadvantage"* (P05).

**Many of the cases of unwanted adolescent pregnancy** in Tambogrande, even in those under 15 years of age, **are the product of sexual violence.** A study carried out in 2017 by the NGO Centro Ideas, indicates that *"...The children under 15 who participated in the study had all been products of rape. So, yes, many of these pregnancies are, when they are under 14, they are sometimes pregnancies imposed by rape. ..."* (P05). Despite this, the complaints do not always culminate their process, *"...Of the 7 cases, only 1 case the aggressor had ended in sentence, the rest did not. That the families were very disappointed in the judicial system."*(P05).

## Recomendations

- In the workshop held with local government officials, the participants indicated that it is necessary to combat the high degree of machismo and promote education with a gender approach that contributes to combat violence against women and family. Empowerment strategies and information on women's rights are required.
- It is urgent to provide information and raise awareness about sexual and reproductive health to adolescents, particularly on the left bank. Schools are required to have sex education plans and sexual and reproductive health programs.
- It is necessary to work on the education of children and adolescents, especially on the left bank, in environmental education, and raise awareness about water care.
- It is important to strengthen the technical skills of young people that contribute to increasing their chances of finding a job.

Based on the evidence of the proven positive effect of Fe y Alegría schools on the performance and personal development of their students (Grade, 2013), the results of the study suggest that there would be an important benefit expanding the rural network of Piura and having a Fe y Alegría school on the left bank. This will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the future of all the population centers and families located in that area, which have the highest rates of poverty, teenage pregnancy, violence against women and water insecurity in the district.





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