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**The Relevance of Considering a Gender Perspective in Damage Assessment and
Recovery Strategies. A Case Study in El Salvador, Central America.**

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**THE RELEVANCE OF CONSIDERING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN
DAMAGE ASSESSMENT AND RECOVERY STRATEGIES.
A CASE STUDY FROM EL SALVADOR, CENTRAL AMERICA.**

Angeles Arenas Ferriz, October 2001

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I. SUMMARY

Disasters affect all the groups in different ways. The impact on each group depends on its risk conditions. In recovery and in emergency periods, many women suffer from direct lost of property and income.

In an emergency situation, women have to dedicate many hours to satisfy necessities and extend their reproductive roles from the family to the community. Women have to take care of children, older people, sick persons, etc. They have to queue for food supply, to wash clothes, etc. They have to dedicate more time to carry water and firewood, and to take on other community tasks such as cooking and cleaning in the shelter. They assume most of the basic social activities implemented by the government if the normal course of those activities were not to be interrupted by the disaster.

On the other hand, new remunerated employment generated after the disaster (cleaning of rubbles, recovery work, rehabilitation of housings, and so on.) are, in their majority, carried out by men, while non remunerated tasks are in their majority carried out by women.

These considerations are blind in the damage assessment and they are also absent in the financial proposals and recovery plans. This absence has a negative impact on women's recovery capacity and favours the increase of gender inequality. Although woman are directly affected, gender inequality affects indirectly the whole community. To reduce the gender inequality it is indispensable to reduce the social vulnerability against disasters.

This paper resumes the effort to make gender aspects visible in the framework of the socio-economic damage assessment of the January and February 2001 earthquakes in El Salvador by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

This case study is not focused on theoretical aspects about gender and disasters¹. The purpose of the paper is simply to make a quantification of damages related to the informal economy of women who lost their houses. Direct damages have been taken into consideration, but also other elements that have impact on the recovery capacity and could increase gender inequality:

- a) Loss of household goods directly linked to women income generation.
- b) Loss of household goods considered women's property.
- c) Loss of women's regular income during the emergency and relief period.
- d) Women's loans contracted to finance small scale business or house property
- e) Women's time dedicated to emergency and recovery tasks in detriment of the income generation..
- f) Women's participation in decision-making

In order to quantify loss in the household, it is necessary to understand that the household is not only a place for living but also a productive area for women, and plays a key role in the social and economy relations in the community. Although the report emphasizes quantitative aspects, it also considers the qualitative dimension. The micro character highlights an usually hidden aspect in the assessment of the socio-economic impact of the disasters, although it involves almost the whole affected population. The lack of a micro or local level focus in most of the recovery programs and projects contributes to the poorest sectors staying in a permanent way below the poverty line. The results of the investigation emphasize the necessity to bring out gender aspects in damage evaluations. The average damage (valorisation of building not included) for each Salvadorian women that has lost her household during the earthquakes is around 73% of the GDP per capita; if the non-remunerated work in the emergency and rehabilitation is also considered, the estimation is more than the GDP per capita. The total amount of loss in the research (US\$ 1,293,280,885) is

¹ Blaikie, P. et al. (1994) *At Risk: Natural hazards, people's vulnerability, and disasters*. London, Routledge; Bradshaw, S. (2000), *Incorporación del análisis de género...*, informe para la CEPAL, mimeo. Deare, F. (2000), *Methodological approach to gender analysis in natural disaster assesment*, informe para la CEPAL, mimeo; Delaney P. y Shrader E. (2000), *Gender and post-disaster reconstruction: the case of hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua*, informe para el Banco Mundial, mimeo; El-Bushra, J. (1998) *Gender and Humanitarian Assistance*, paper for Eurostep; Enarson, E (1998, 1999, 2000), *Gender and natural disasters*, ILO, Geneva; IDNDR (1995), *Magazine STOP Disasters*, vol. 24 ; Peacock, W. ed. (1997), *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, gender and the sociology of Disasters*, ed. Routledge.

near the ECLAC estimate for the earthquake on January 13, and supposed 9,6% of the national GDP of the year 2001.

The numbers emphasize the necessity to make visible gender aspects in the damage evaluation and to carry out actions that increase women's recovery capacity and decrease gender inequality

In assessment evaluation it is necessary to consider the following aspects:

- Women's income generation (not only married women)
- Subsistence activities (home gardening and animal husbandry) and informal sector
- Household goods and time dedicated to relief and recovery tasks
- Decision-making
- Daily survival strategies

In a recovery proposal, it is necessary to have projects focused on especially vulnerable groups, in order to make the economic recuperation and the social recovery easier. Recovery is not a simple process of relocation; it is an opportunity to build a better society. In this way, actions to reduce vulnerability of social groups and increase gender equality must be included in the recovery proposals. Without this priority, development gains in the process to gender equality will be erased in post-disaster situation.

II. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A combination of primary and secondary information was used in the research for this paper. The primary information was obtained through participant observation, semi-structured interviews and a survey. The secondary information was obtained through the revision of databases and literature.

The research had the following steps:

Participant observation, carried out in two environments: the ECLAC damage assessment team and the shelter environment.

As ECLAC team member and with the specific task of facilitating the incorporation of the gender perspective in the report, I was involved in the production of the report and learned about the obstacles to incorporate the gender perspective in the damage assessment. It is important to highlight the difficulty of obtain existing sex disaggregated information as well as the fact that most of the team members considered gender as an add-on.

The shelter experience allowed me to observe the gender differenced tasks during the emergency. This information was essential to design the damage assessment survey.

Revision of secondary information

ECLAC socio-economic assessments, literature about gender and disasters, El Salvador socio-economic and political assessments and reports elaborated by women's organizations on the implementation of the Beijing agreements were revised. Specific studies focussing on informal income generation were also consulted. Another source of secondary information was the “ Encuesta de hogares de propósitos múltiples” and the database of the 2001 Human Development Report (IDH).

The secondary information provided basic data about the socio-economic situation of women in El Salvador and facilitated the design of the semi-structured interviews and the survey as well as the analysis of the results of the same one.

Key informants interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with women NGOs and development agencies staff, Emergency National Committee staff and other people with responsibilities in emergency tasks and shelters.

Survey

In order to obtain the necessary primary data in the research, a survey was designed (Annex 1). The survey was carried out with women from rural (60% of the sample) and urban areas (40% of the sample) that lost their households as a consequence of the earthquake. The collaboration of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) was crucial. During field visits to follow-up the food supply, they surveyed 123 women of the departments of Cuscatlán, La Paz and San Salvador. The survey was developed, one week after the 13 February earthquake in a total of 7 shelters in the municipalities of: San Salvador, Santa Tecla, San Pedro Nonohalco, Santa María Oruña, San Pedro Masahuat, Santa Cruz Michapa and San Rafael Cedros between the 17 and 24 February 2001.

The sample excludes high and medium class affected population. It is important to consider different vulnerabilities according to gender, economic level and ethnic group. It is important to consider the relative value of the loss in respect to the global property. The recovery capacity of the high and medium classes, with better income, savings and easier access to credits is bigger than for the poor

classes. And, in both cases, the recovery capacity is bigger in men than in women.

Data analysis

The research sample is 123 women from rural and urban sectors, beneficiaries of food supply, that lost their households in the country. Only one woman by household was surveyed, so each survey is considered representative of a household. For the data projection two scenarios have been elaborated. The first of them considers total of 334.886 households, the number of affected households (damaged and destroyed) considered in the ECLAC report. The second scenario reduces the total to 149.528 households, considering only houses reported as destroyed in the ECLAC report.

The main source of information has been the ECLAC assessment of the socio-economic and environmental impact of the earthquake of 13 January in El Salvador and the earthquake of 13 February subsequently. In case of a different source of information, there is a reference in the footnotes.

The survey had the purpose of quantifying damages, loss and time invested in emergency tasks and rehabilitation by women that lost their households. Five months have been considered as emergency and rehabilitation period. The economic valorisation of women voluntary work has been calculated based on the “encuesta de hogares y propósitos múltiples” and the “Human Development Report” as following:

Female urban productive working hour = 12.26 colones per hour (US\$ 1.4) are calculated considering forty working hours a week on the basis of the urban female salary average (1,982.73 monthly colones = US\$226.59). Journey of urban productive work: 90.12 colones (US\$=10.29). Monthly urban female salary average among 22 labour days a month.

Urban reproductive working hour valorisation = 8.85 colones per hour (US\$ 1.01) are calculated considering 56 working hours a week on the basis of the urban female salary average. Journey of urban reproductive work : 66.09 colones (US\$ 7.55). Wage monthly female urban average among 30 labour days a month.

Rural productive female working hour = 6 colones per hour (US\$ 0.68) are calculated considering forty working hours a week on the basis of the rural female salary average (971.54 monthly colones, US\$ 111,03). Day of female rural productive work: 44.16 colones (US\$ 5.04). Wage monthly female rural average among 22 labour days a month.

Rural reproductive working hour valorisation = 4.3 colones per hour (US\$ 0.49) are calculated considering 56 working hours a week on the basis of rural female salary average. Journey of urban reproductive female work: 32.38 colones (US\$ 3.7). Monthly female rural salary average among 30 labour days a month.

III. DAMAGES AND LOSS QUANTIFICATION.

The 2001 January and February earthquakes affected 23% of the Salvadorian population estimated in 6.154.300 persons, 3.134.700, 50,93% are women and 45,1% live in poverty conditions. The number of deaths amounted to 1.159 and 8.023 people were injured. The affected departments were San Vicente, La Paz and Cuscatlán. The earthquakes had major consequences in the rural areas with 42% of the population and concentration of 56,9% of poverty².

III.1. Household composition

The household composition (table 1) presents an average of members in each house of 5,3 in the urban area and 4,8 in the rural area. In most of the cases it is wide nuclear family structures, composed by one or the two parents and the children and other family members like grandmother, grandfather, etc..

Table 1
Household composition and income dynamics

Concept	URBAN	RURAL	Average
Average of members by household	5.34	4.79	5.06
Percentage of household percentage in which the number of female income is bigger that the male ones	49%	56,6%	52,8%
Percentage of household in which the number of male income is bigger that the female ones	51%	44,4%	47,7%

Regarding the income dynamic (table 1), most of the Salvadorian homes have diversified source of income³ as a result of the contribution of several family members. The total of all the female or male economic entries to the home have

² Beneke, M *Dinámica del ingreso de las familias rurales en El Salvador*, Documento de Inbestigación Basis n°1, FUSADES, 2000, San Salvador, p.iii

³ Beneke, M op. cit.

been considered as female or male contribution. A differentiation has been made by gender and not by roles as head of family because as it would be a mistake to consider households economy depending on the head of family⁴. This would not reveal other family members contribution whether they are present or not in the household, as in the case of the USA remittances⁵. The remittances represent the most important contribution to the Salvadorian national GDP.

The results highlight that the female income contributions by household are equivalent or bigger than the male contributions. In 49% of the households in the urban areas and 56,6% in the rural areas the main contribution is female. In the sample, the remittances represent a minority asset, only present in 5 homes of the 123. This fact could be an indicative of structural poverty⁶.

III.2. Damages and loss

Although home gardening is not considered in national bills, consumption and minor scale sale of these products, represent an important source of income and survival for the families. Farming, breeding and fruit and vegetables cropping managed by women have been considered as home gardening activities. (see table 2).

Table 2
Home gardening loss
(in colones and US dollars)

Concept	URBAN	RURAL	Average
Number of families with loss in home gardening	35,4%	23%	29,2%
Average of loss by household (in colones)	1,421.4	3,050	2,235.7
Average of loss by household (in US\$)	162.44	348.57	255.5

35.4% of the households in the rural areas and 23% in the urban areas suffered home gardening loss as a consequence of the earthquakes. With a damage average of 3,050 colones (US\$ 348.57) for rural households and 1,421 colones (162.44) for urban households.

⁴ Gammage, S. *La dimensión de género en la pobreza, la desigualdad la la reforma macroeconómica en América Latina*, San Salvador, 1998., citada en *Beijing +5 informe alternativo, op. cit.* Pp. 24

⁵ Al menos 311.154 hogares salvadoreños reciben remesas, contando con un saldo migratorio en miles de – 3,50 para las mujeres y –3,90 para los hombres.

⁶ Beneke, M. op.cit. pág. 2.

Table 3
Weekly income generation at home and outside
(in colones and US \$)

Concept	URBAN	RURAL	Average
Average of loss of women employment after the earthquake	85%	64,2%	74,6%
Average of female income generated out of the home by week in colones	340	345	342,5
Average of female income generated out of the home by week in US dollars	38.85	39.4	39.14
Percentage of women's revenues generated through productive activities at home and their loss after the earthquake	45,6%	57%	51,3%
Average of female income generated at home by week in colones	212,5	255	233,7
Average of female income generated at home by week in colones	24.28	29.14	26.59

Trade, services, agriculture and farming are the predominant sectors of the sample. 56% (56,25% in the urban areas and 56% in the rural areas) of the surveyed sample work outside of the home and obtain an average of 340 colones (US\$38.85) a week in the urban areas and 345 colones (US\$ 39.4) in the rural areas (table 3). Most of the women with external jobs lost their employment as a consequence of the disaster -85% in the urban areas and 64,2% in the rural areas. Table 3 highlights that 45,6% of the surveyed sample in the urban areas worked at home, mainly in the informal sector (food sale, clothes washing, etc.), with an average income of 212.5 colones a week (US\$24.28). In the rural areas, proportion of women with small business in their homes is more significant, 57% of the surveyed sample obtained an average of 255 colones (US\$ 29.14) a week from this kind of activities.

Table 4
Loss of productive goods and women property
(in colones and US dollars)

Concept	URBAN	RURAL	Average
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Percentage of women that lost goods	94%	74%	84%
Average of loss by home (in colones)	4,957.7	4,429.4	4,693.55
Average of loss by home (in US dollars)	566.6	506.2	536.40

94% of the surveyed sample in urban areas has suffered loss of goods directly linked to women income generation and loss of goods considered women's property (furniture, kitchen, refrigerator and appliances, clothes, etc.). The economic quantification is around 5.000 colones (US\$ 566.6) by home. In the rural areas, 74% of the surveyed sample lost goods with an average value of 4.429 colones (US\$ 506.2) by home.

Table 5
Debts pending of payment

Concept	URBAN	RURAL	Average
Percentage of women with debts pending of payment	43,4%	35,5%	39,45%
Average by home (in colones)	2,098	13,948	8,023
Average by home (in US dollars)	239.77	1,594	916.9

Table 5 highlights the relevance of the pending debts. 43,4% of the surveyed sample in the urban area has pending debts with a value around 2,100 colones by home (US\$ 240). In the rural areas, the percentage of women with debts is smaller (35,5%), however the average quantity is higher, around 14.000 colones (US\$ 1,594) by woman. After the earthquakes a condonation or reduction of the debt has not been offered to any of the persons surveyed. In most of the cases new credits to face the crisis were offered.

Table 6
Total of loss by household and projections
(in colones and US dollars)

Concept	Loss by household in Colones	Loss by household in US \$	Scenario1 in US\$	Scenario 2 in US\$
Home gardening	2,235,7	255.7	24,983,851	11,157,552.3
Loss of income generation by employment (per 5 months)	6,850	782.8	136,319,165	60,878,854.4
Loss of income generation by economic activities at home (per 5 months)	4,674	534.2	91,763,311	40,980,630
Loss of productive and women's property goods	4,693.5	536.4	150,884,190	67,383,457.4
Debts pending of payment	8,023	916.9	121,128,629	54,094,904.3
TOTAL LOSS	26,476.25	3,025.8	525,079,146	234,495,398.4

The total loss amounts to 26.476,25 colones or 3.025 US dollars by home. Considering the first scenario, the total loss at national level would be 525.079.146 US \$. In the second scenario the total loss would be 234.495.398 US \$. (table 6).

III. 3 Time dedicated to emergency and rehabilitation tasks

Another of the elements considered has been the time women dedicated to emergency and recovery community tasks in detriment of the time they dedicated to income generation. The results are the following:

Table 7
Time dedicated to emergency and rehabilitation tasks
and economic quantification
(in colones)

Kind of task	Time by day in urban areas	Value by day (in colones)	Time by day in rural areas	Value by day (in colones)	Economic average (in colones)	Economic average (in US\$)
Queue for food supply	1 hour	12.26	1,5 hours	9	10.63	1.21
Cooking	2 hours	24.52	1,5 hours	9	16.76	1.9
Cleaning shelters and washing clothes	2 hours	24.52	2 hours	12	18.26	2.08
Carrying water and firewood	1 hour	12.26	2 hours	12	12.13	1.38
Taking care of children and injured people	8 hours	98.08	9 hours	54	76.04	8.69
Total by day	14 hours	181.6	16 hours	96	133.8	15.29

The surveyed women in urban areas dedicate an average of 14 hours by day to emergency and rehabilitation tasks: 8 hours taking care of children and injured, 2 hours cooking in the shelter, 2 hours cleaning the shelter, washing clothes, etc., 1 hour carrying water or firewood and 1 hour queuing to have food supply.

On the other hand, women in rural area dedicate a total of 16 hours by day to emergency and rehabilitation tasks; : 9 hours taking care of children and injured, 1,5 hours cooking in the shelter, 2 hours cleaning the shelter, washing clothes, etc., 2 hours carrying water or firewood and 1,5 hour queuing to have food supply. An economic quantification of the women time dedicated to emergency and rehabilitation tasks is 181.64 colones (US \$ 20.75) a day in the urban area and 96 colones (US\$ 10.9) by day in the rural area, where the average female salary is lower.

Considering a five-month-period, the valorised women's work in emergency and rehabilitation tasks would suppose a total of 2.294 US \$ by woman. It would mean US\$ 768,201,739.2 \$in the scenario 1 and US\$ 343,071,658 in the scenario 2 (table 8)

Table 8
Valuation of the women emergency and rehabilitation tasks
during five months in scenario 1 and 2
(in dollars)

Kind of task	By month in colones	By month in US \$	5 months in US \$	Scenario 1 US \$	Scenario 2 US\$
Queuing	318,9	36,4	182,2	61.022.152,8	27.251.918
Cooking	502,8	57,4	287,3	96.211.785,6	42.967.277
Cleaning shelter and washing clothes	547,8	62,6	313	104.822.625,6	46.812.797
Carrying water and firewood	363,9	41,5	207,8	69.632.992,8	31.097.438
Taking care of children and sick people	2.281,2	260,7	1.303,5	436.512.182,4	194.942.227
TOTAL	4.014,6	458,8	2.294	768.201.739,2	343.071.658

III. 3 Impact of damages in transport and educational. Participation in decision-making

Income generation of 60 % of the surveyed sample in the urban areas and 51% of the rural areas was affected by the transport damages. The lack of schooling for children affected women's productive activities: 60% of women in urban areas and 48% of women of rural areas. Although all surveyed women agreed with the suspension of the classes, more than half of them had less time to income generating activities because of the need to take care of children.

The distribution of community tasks reflected the traditional gender division. Women extended their reproductive role from the family to the community with non remunerated tasks (taking care of children and sick people, queuing for food supply, washing clothes, cleaning the shelter, carrying water and firewood...) Although they assumed most of the basic social activities implemented by the

government if the normal course of those activities were to be interrupted by the disaster, they did not increase participation in the decision-making at the community level. Men took on humanitarian and non paid tasks like search and rescue, as well as paid rehabilitation tasks: cleaning of rubbles, recovery work, rehabilitations of housings, and other tasks linked with the decision-making such as the coordination of the relief.

The fact that women have a great participation in the community activities during the emergency and rehabilitation does not imply that they have a relevant role in decision-making. Only 6% of the surveyed sample in the rural areas and 15% in the urban areas participated in decision-making processes of community organization on emergency and rehabilitation tasks, relief distribution and recovery plans.

III.5. Total of damages

The loss average for women (considering direct damages and time invested in emergency tasks and recovery during five months) is US\$5.219,8 by household. Projected to the scenario 1 it implies a total of US\$1.239.280.885, and US\$577.567.056 in scenario 2 (table 9).

Table 9
Damages, missed income generation and monetarization of women
community work in emergency and rehabilitation tasks
by home and scenario 1 and 2
(in US dollars).

Concept	House	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Loss home gardening, productive goods and women properties	792.1	175,868,041.1	78,541,009.8
Missed income generation	1,317	228,082,475.6	101,859,484.3
Pending debts	916.9	121,128,629	54,094,904.2
Subtotal	3,025.8	525,079,416	234,495,398.4
Quantification of women community work in emergency and rehabilitation tasks	2,294	768,201,739.2	343,071,658
TOTAL	5,219.8	1,293,280,885	577,567,056

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The socio-economic assessments of damages, as the ECLAC assessment, play a key role in the resources orientation to recovery plans, in this sense it is very important to make the impact of disasters visible in especially vulnerable groups such as rural and urban marginal women. The lack of this focus (the micro or local level focus) in most of the recovery programs and projects contributes to the poorest sectors staying in a permanent way below the poverty line. Recovery is not a simple process of reposition; but an opportunity to build a better society. In this way, **actions to reduce vulnerability of social groups and increase gender equality must be included in the recovery proposals.** Without this as a priority, in post-disaster situation development gains as to the process towards gender equality will be erased.

In order to quantify loss in the household, it is necessary to understand that the **household is a productive area for women** and a place where to live, and plays a key role in the social and economy relations in the community. The results of the investigation emphasize the **necessity to bring out gender aspects in damage evaluations.** The average damage (valorisation of building not included) for each Salvadorian women that had lost her household during the earthquakes is around 73% of the GDP per capita.⁷ The non-remunerated work done in the emergency and rehabilitation also has to be considered, its estimation is higher than the GDP per capita. The total amount of loss in the research (US\$ 1,293,280,885) is close to the estimation made by ECLAC about the earthquake on 13 January, and suggests an 9,6% of the national GDP of the year 2001.

The research highlights that **would be a mistake not to consider the role of women in the income generation in the damage assessments.** Their economic contribution to households (excluding reproductive activities) have similar relevance than that of men. Women obtain their income through different activities, generally from the informal sector because it allows them the combination of productive and reproductive tasks (this sector has been called **rural subsistence mercantile economy**). One of the direct consequences of the disaster **women's loss of resources** and the decrease of their participation in productive activities in the formal and informal sector because of **direct loss and time** dedicated to emergency and rehabilitation communitarian tasks in detriment of the income generation. This element is usually ignored in the emergency measures and rehabilitation and recovery proposals.

⁷ Estimado en US\$ 4.142 por habitante para el año 1999 en el IDH 2001.

Other usually hidden dimension of the disaster is the **damages to home gardening**. These activities have an important role as part of the subsistence economy. These activities are outside of the financial mechanisms considered in the rehabilitation and recovery plans. A similar situation occurs with regard to women's debts (most of them occurring in the margin of the formal financial market), which increase their vulnerability and have important consequences for their recovery capacities.

Solutions to face the crisis do not differ from the **daily survival strategies** and one predictable is an increase of the male emigration to the USA. Although in long term this solution could increase the household income, it adds to women's vulnerability and responsibilities (most of the times, a new debt is contracted to finance the trip).

Women's time dedicated to the community work has a cost in terms of income generation, but does not entail a bigger participation in the decision-making processes. This indicates an increase of the gender inequality during and after the crisis.

Community tasks distribution during the emergency and rehabilitation respond to the traditional gender division. Women extend their reproductive roles from the family to the community with unpaid and not core decision making duties and assume most of the basic social activities implemented by the government if the normal course of those activities were to be interrupted by the disaster.

With regard to damage assessment it is recommended to **mainstream a gender perspective** and avoid its segregation in a specific chapter dedicated to vulnerable groups. It is recommended to raise awareness and qualify the mission assessment members in order to incorporate the gender focus in their respective sector reports and to recruit a person to facilitate the work with technical assistance.