

# WOMEN AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION

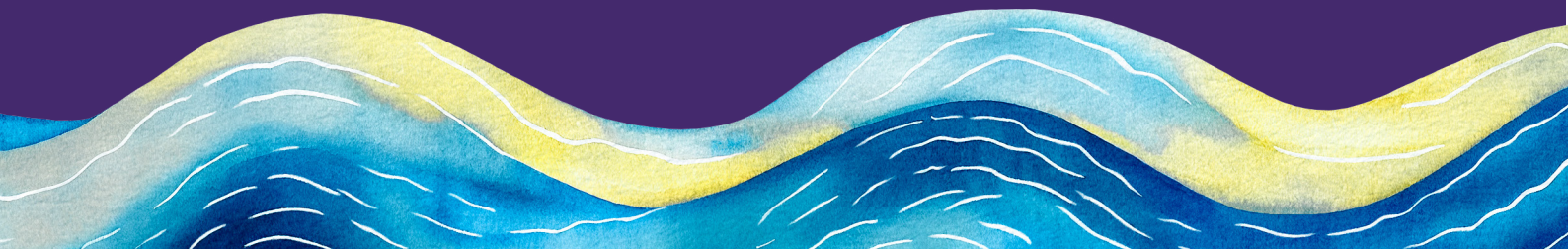
Interview with our member



**MERCEDES  
CASTRO**  
*AGUALIMPIA*

For International Women's Day, HR2W is celebrating women from our organisation by highlighting their work to support the human rights to water and sanitation. Mercedes Castro is a Peruvian economist and the leader of Agualimpia, an NGO that promotes the value of water and its efficient use. She is an expert in the development of high performance projects financed by international cooperation and the private sector, with the purpose of benefiting vulnerable people by having an influence on public policy and perpetual poverty reduction.

Mercedes talks about her experience as a woman working in the WASH sector and the challenges that women face due to the lack of access of these resources and services.



# “WOMEN, WHETHER CHILDREN OR ADULTS, ARE IMPACTED BY THE ENJOYMENT OF THE WATER AND SANITATION SERVICE”

## 1. WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE GENDER-RELATED PROJECT THAT YOU HAVE WORKED ON?

The Crediagua Project has been the one that has left the greatest mark on me, it managed to financially supported thousands of low-income families living in and around the main cities of Peru, so that they could make improvements in water and sanitation infrastructure within their homes.

This relationship was articulated between 38,000 beneficiary families and 2 micro financial entities, with 47% of the loans were granted to women. The State had no intervention, as a result, families built bathrooms and sinks for their kitchens, and women, whether children or adults, were impacted by the enjoyment of the water and sanitation service.

The appreciation for these improvements and this influenced achieving a rate of delinquency with micro financial entities of less than 1%. The Inter-American Development Bank sponsored the execution of the Project and entrusted it to the NGO Agualimpia.

# “WOMEN WANT TO CARE AND EDUCATE WITH RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY”

## 2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TACKLE HUMAN RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION ISSUES THROUGH A GENDER FOCUS?

Women have an extraordinary role in each family and in society. Women want to care, educate, with respect and responsibility, so we need and deserve the means and conditions to develop capabilities and competencies as central axes of the family. Also, as mothers and daughters, and as workers at home and outside of the home.

It is overwhelmingly complex to see the scene of women carrying water in their neighborhoods (from springs, rivers or buying it from tanker trucks at very high prices), powerless in the face of diarrhea and malnutrition in their children that affect them cognitively and neurologically, limiting the capacities and leading them to a future of low productivity, to that perpetual and absurd poverty that we must break in many countries on our planet.

The paths I have walked and the people I have touched, lead me to feel and think that perpetual poverty is a situation that is mainly linked to water and education. It affects all family members who inherit economic misery and women in greater proportion as they are often relegated to tasks such as fetching water for their homes.

It is highly recommended that women trained in technical and social issues, sensitive to water, participate in public positions and have a voice in decision-making about water resources at the level of governance, data and the value of water, to contribute to better public policies.

## **“WOMEN HAVE AN EXTRAORDINARY ROLE IN EACH FAMILY AND IN SOCIETY”**

**3. THIS YEAR’S WORLD WATER DAY THEME IS RELATED TO WATER AND PEACE, HOW ARE WOMEN ESSENTIAL TO PROMOTING WATER, PEACE, AND SECURITY? DO YOU HAVE ANY EXAMPLES WHERE THIS CAN BE SEEN?**

When we think about women creating an environment of peace, we logically relate it to well-being and security, and it seems essential to me that we have equality in the enjoyment of basic services such as water and sanitation, education, health, and others.

I have been able to appreciate a technical assistance project on issues of improvements in water and sanitation systems for the so-called soup kitchens in a district called Pucusana, south of Lima. These ten soup kitchens are managed 100% by women who cook accompanied by other women, all neighbors. These soup kitchens provide food at a very low price to a significant percentage of the population near their premises.

The issue of improvements in water and drainage infrastructure, and bathrooms, has led to dialogue and teamwork in a multi-stakeholder platform where the women leaders of the soup kitchens work as a team with the local government and some private companies to find solutions to issues of greater efficiency in water use, better nutrition, neighborhood safety and social peace, that is, finding common agendas in an environment of cooperation.

## **“A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM WHERE THE WOMEN LEADERS OF THE SOUP KITCHENS WORK AS A TEAM”**

