

African Peruvian women carry out a vigil of solidarity for the victims of the earthquake in the south.

One year after the devastating earthquake of August 15, 2007, that levelled the southern coast of Peru affecting the cities of Cañete, Chincha, Pisco and Ica, CEDEMUNEP (Centre for Black Peruvian women, member of the Joining Hands Network PERU and the Collective for Dialogue of African Peruvian Women) carried out a VIGIL OF SOLIDARITY. The ceremony took place on Peruanidad Avenue, August 12 of this year, in the Campo de Marte area of Lima, Peru.

Remembering the Earthquake of August 15, 2007

On August 15, 2007 an earthquake of magnitude 7.9 on the Richter scale shook the regions of Pisco, Ica, Cañete y Chincha causing the destruction of numerous homes as well as the death of more than 500 people. It was felt with greatest force in the city of Chincha and its surrounding districts where almost all the homes, throughout all the rural area, fell to the ground. That was the case in the districts of Grocio Prado and San Benito where nearly 95% of the homes were destroyed. Some residents of the San Benito area within the Grocio Prado district of Chincha recount what happened.

"Here where you see me was my house that fell. That day I was with my family and at around seven at night everything began to tremble and move. Everything shook and the land moved like waves up and down, up and down and you could neither run nor walk. I remained in my house almost to the end, I was the last one to leave with my grandchildren and when I was almost out of the house a sharp piece of the wall fell on my foot. Still, I had just barely gotten out. There is where it damaged my foot and I was brought to the hospital in Chincha, but I did not receive attention because there were so many injured and wounded. I was in the hospital for eight days before they transferred me to Lima. There they operated on me in Cayetano Heredia where I stayed for two months. Now I am in San Benito and it has been seven months since I was in Lima. This earthquake is the strongest one we have felt, there have been others but they have been less strong. This last one has been too strong and all the houses of San Benito have fallen because of it, and now, this whole place is full of mats and a few houses that have remained standing but are likely to fall. There were many injured and two that died, a lady with her little son, who were my neighbours. The majority were saved but all of the houses fell". **Testimony of Mr. Félix Humberto Castile of San Benito, Chincha.**



"Since the time I was born here I have never seen or felt an earthquake like the one on August 15th. It was tremendous. That day we were about to have dinner when the land began to move and my mom said to me that we need to get outside and I was already on my way out the door when a piece of the wall almost fell on top of me, we get out and all the thick walls came tumbling down, along with all the things that I had. Then there was a blackout and we all fell and we were pulling and dragging ourselves since you could not walk because the land moved like waves and the movement did not stop and so we stayed here thrown to the ground. Everything was dark; we stayed sitting here until we woke up. There we were for three days when some bad people came to loot and we had only hidden ourselves behind some trees. We stayed there several days. It was here that my 22 year old niece and her four month old daughter passed away".
Testimony of Mrs. Maria Yolanda Yataco Saravia of San Benito, Chincha.



"I was in bed and I did not pay much attention to the first tremor but with the second I started to worry and then me, my wife and the rest all began to leave the house. And so as we were going, leaving, the walls went crashing and crumbling as they were falling, the walls and the ceiling of my home that, thankfully, did not kill us. I am disabled now where adobe fell on my knees".
Testimony of Mr. Juan Jesús Molina of San Benito, Chincha.



From San Benito, in the Grocio Prado district of Chincha, a delegation of youth from the group "LOS JOVOS" was present at the vigil for the victims of the earthquake and, at the same time, demanded that the central government pledge to help in the reconstruction of the south.

After one year, the sentiment of the people is almost entirely the same. Therefore, the vigil was a way of expressing solidarity with the victims of the earthquake, a way of accompanying them in their rightful demands in opposition to the slow action taken, with regards to the reconstruction, on the part of the Central, Regional, and Local Governments but, over all, to call the attention of the Peruvian authorities so that they might immediately take part in their commitment to rebuild the south.



A Number of public and diverse organizations were present at the vigil, called there by the Collective for Dialogue of African Peruvian Women in Campo de Marte. The young men, members of the group of "THE JOVOS" of the neighbourhood of San Benito were present for the Vigil.



The Joining Hands Network Perú, with their executives and representatives of their affiliates, are present for the Vigil for the victims in the South to remember the one year anniversary of the earthquake of August 15, 2007.

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