



Research article

Female entrepreneurship in a forced displacement situation: The case of Usme in Bogota



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ABSTRACT

This article identifies the characteristics of internally displaced women' entrepreneurs. It was made a literature review about the principal categories and a semi structured interview with ten internally displaced women in Usme – Bogotá. The exposure to violent episodes conditions the internally displaced women' entrepreneurship processes, making them different from the entrepreneurs of women in other social contexts.

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Capacidad empresarial femenina en situación de desplazamiento forzado: el caso de Usme en Bogotá

RESUMEN

Este artículo identifica las características de las capacidades empresariales de mujeres en situación de desplazamiento. Se realizó una revisión bibliográfica de las categorías principales y se aplicó una entrevista semiestructurada a 10 mujeres de la localidad de Usme en Bogotá. La exposición a episodios violentos, específicamente el desplazamiento interno, condiciona los procesos emprendedores de las mujeres y los convierte en notoriamente diferentes a las capacidades empresariales de mujeres en otros contextos sociales.

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Introduction

According to [Martha Lamas \(2000, p. 2\)](#) gender is “a set of ideas, performances, practices and social prescriptions that a culture develops from the anatomical difference between women and men, to symbolize and socially build what is “own” of the men (masculine) and “own” of the women (feminine)”.

The symbolism built translates into differences in the conception of what men and women should do. A clear case of this segmentation is entrepreneurial activity; women who start such activity usually face negative attitudes, on one side of their male counterparts who consider them incapable to successfully manage a business, and secondly other women considering that these activities break the roles assigned to women ([Kargwell, 2012, p. 1](#)). The perception of the women as mother and wife proportioning care affects the propensity of women to undertake and develop activities outside their homes.

The vulnerable situation of women entrepreneurs is accentuated when dragging a past of violence and entrepreneurship does not arise as a result of influences and a successful business past, as described by [Jia, Parvin, and Rahman \(2012\)](#), but of adverse environmental factors to address the lack of opportunities to join the formal sector leaves them as the only alternative of subsistence self-employment.

Evidence of this is described by [Ibañez and Moya \(2010\)](#) who found that domestic abuse rates are higher in households where women in situations of displacement, in the presence of her husband, are the heads of household. This is because men by not fulfilling their role as facilitators of food are relegated and use the mistreatment as a mechanism for ratification of its command and control within the family structure.

This article makes an initial approach to the life stories and the characterizations of undertakings of ten women victims of forced displacement in Colombia. To that end, this article is divided into five sections, the first is a description of the methodology used, in the second an empirical review of the situation of women victims of forced displacement is done, in the third the theoretical background of female entrepreneurship is review, the fourth presents a statistical description of the displaced population, then the results of the qualitative study are presented and finally concluding remarks in the light of the findings are made.

Methodology

The characterization of female entrepreneurship in displacement in Usme locality was done in two stages. In the first, was made a statistical review of the displaced population in Bogota from the data of the Secretariat of Government of the Capital District.

In the second stage, a semi-structured interview was applied to 10 women entrepreneurs in Usme locality in 2012. The selection of Usme locality it was done for two reasons: The first is that this locality is the fifth with the largest number of displaced population (8%); the second reason is the possibility of access to the population, which is justified by the work as a rectory secretariat of this research practitioner, Claudia

Reynel, in the District Educational Institution Eduardo Umaña Mendoza of the locality.

The instrument used for data collection was divided into three categories taking as reference the factors that influence entrepreneurship, cited by [Jia et al. \(2012\)](#). Firstly it was investigated by the history of displacement suffered by women entrepreneurs to understand the impact of the above influences and the importance of previous work experience in the creation of their entrepreneurship. Secondly information about their socioeconomic conditions was collected to analyze the environmental factors that influenced the decision to undertake. Finally, thirdly we sought to know the stories of entrepreneurship and its particular characteristics.

Conditions of women in situations of displacement

“War is a social activity. Wrap the mobilization and organization of men, for the purpose of inflicting physical violence, involves regulation of certain types of social relations and has its own particular logic” ([Kaldor, 2001, p. 13](#))

The Colombian armed conflict became the engine of the national economy. The generation of wealth in the country is from the coexistence of economies of international aid, criminal economy (led by criminal actors engaged in activities ranging from drug trafficking to monopolistic trade practices), informal economy and the remaining formal economy ([Kamphuis, 2005, p. 186](#)).

In addition to the economic implications of the armed conflict it has permeated all instances of Colombian society to the point that the country revolves around war and its consequences for the entire population. One of the most dramatic problems is the forced displacement that Law 387 of 1997 in its article 1 defines as:

Anyone who has been forced to migrate within the national territory, abandoning his place of residence or habitual economic activities because their live, physical integrity, safety or personal freedom have been violated or are directly threatened, during any of the following situations: internal armed conflict, internal disturbances and tensions, generalized violence, massive human rights violations, breaches of international humanitarian law or other circumstances originating from prior situations that can dramatically alter or disturb public order

In Colombia according to the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement – CODHES between 1980 and 2010 It occurred the dispossession of 6,638,195 ha by violent actions of illegal armed groups. In 2010, 280,041 people were forcibly displaced who arrived to 1014 municipalities of the country, that for an average of 778 displaced people in the country every day ([CODHES, 2011, p. 8](#)).

Another source, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR – says that in Colombia are registered 3.2 million of displaced people, of which about 83% are women and children. For 2008, 43% of families in this situation have a woman as head of household, and 68 of 100 cases, these women are alone ([UNHCR, 2009](#)).

CODHES estimates that in the 1985–2010 period 5,195,620 persons (1,039,124 households) were displaced in Colombia

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