



## **The Men Matter.... But the Women?**

An Ecuadorian soldier was gravely injured in a confrontation on the northern border. In the emergency room at the public hospital of Lago Agrio, where members of the armed forces should receive prompt medical service, there seems to be serious evidence that the opposite is true, that prompt service lacks, apparently, making it so that the suffering of amputating a leg would be necessary.

The president of the republic and his ministers declared that this situation could not go without a background investigation. According to the president and his ministers it is intolerable that there are this many issues with the proper level of attention at the public hospital. The uprising, none the less, was brought about when recognized that the affected person was a soldier of the fatherland who was completing his commitment.

The public and those hurt by the incident brought forth the noteworthy truth regarding the poor health care, and being such, should receive the support of social institutions and organizations. This is positive that in the government there is a critical position that has been taken regarding the clamorous errors in the public health system.

However, who is going to raise the voices of the dead women who died from pregnancy complications or during labor who did not receive the attention that mercy alone would dictate from the country's health care system?

According to official statistics, one woman dies every 48 hours due to treatable causes. These women are examples of evitable death, if a quality healthy system existed. In Ecuador in 2006, 135 women died, officially. If one were to take into account the sub register of deaths, the most probable number of deaths in a year would be somewhere around 175 deaths due to treatable causes and obstetrical complications, all of this would be avoidable with an adequate hospital.

**Who is Going to Raise the Voices of the Dead Women?**

Who is going to raise the voices of the thousands of women that do not have access to modern methods of family planning, because in health clinics in cities and in the field there are no guaranteed rights regarding family planning? Without family planning, women are left exposed to unwanted pregnancies along with the consequences of greater poverty.

Women users of public health organizations, day in and day out, have proclaimed the lack of attention paid to their right to have free, quality health care, as stated in the new constitution. What would CONAMU and the minister of public health have to say about this?

These situations are forms of institutional violence against women. It seems that the president is not aware of the facts about deaths relating to pregnancy, or of the lack of access to family planning options for women in poverty.

The 25 of November, Day against Violence towards women, is an appropriate date to bring forth a question regarding the health care systems errors. Does the government care about the evitable deaths of women? For the president, the men do matter... but what about the women?