

## UAF-LA Contributes to the Recognition of the Rights of Trans Women in Latin America

Thanks to the hard work and tireless struggle of trans organizations and activists in Bolivia, the country now has a “*Law of Gender Identity*”<sup>1</sup>, or Law 807, approved by the Bolivian Plurinational Assembly on May 21<sup>st</sup> of this year. This Law establishes that, through a personal-administrative procedure, it is possible to make changes to the name, data regarding the sex, and the image of transsexual and transgendered persons.

This Law represents a significant step forward in guaranteeing the rights of trans women struggling against discrimination based on gender identity, and an advance in the recognition of the rights of trans people in the region.



Photo Network (Red) Trebol 1

As the Urgent Action Fund<sup>2</sup>, we have supported initiatives from trans women’s organizations at crucial moments so they can advocate, and establish legal precedents, for the recognition of their rights. The UAF-LA, through a Rapid Response Grant for the **Trans Network of Bolivia- Trebol Network**<sup>3</sup> (*Red Trans de Bolivia- Red Trebol*), contributed to the effective development of political

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<sup>1</sup> [http://issuu.com/fondodeaccionurgente-al/docs/ley\\_807\\_bolivia/1](http://issuu.com/fondodeaccionurgente-al/docs/ley_807_bolivia/1)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fondoaccionurgente.org.co/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://transredbolivia-trebol.blogspot.com/> an organization that works for the vindication of the rights of women transvestites and transsexuals in Bolivia.

advocacy and public education initiatives in order to counter campaigns by religious and ideological fundamentalist groups, which were attempting to truncate approval of the project during discussion in the Plurinational Assembly of Bolivia.

In the words of Raiza Torriani García, President of the Trebol Network:

*“The support we received from the UAF-LA was one of the great contributions for the approval of the Law on Gender, since the evangelical churches were demonstrating strong opposition to it (...). Later, in December, when they managed to paralyze discussion in the Chamber and Senate, we proposed reactivating the debate by circulating a petition signed by many people in favor of this proposed Law. Later we joined together with women colleagues from several regions of Bolivia in a manifestation against the churches. And finally, we stood in front of the National Congress of Justice where the country’s legislative power met, and demanded that discussion not be paralyzed by these fundamentalists”.*

However, despite this enormous success, there is still a lot to do, and as Raiza states, the advance of fundamentalisms is a huge threat for the probability that the Law may be revoked, due to the activities of religious groups that insist on delegitimizing this approved legal mandate.

The Trebol Network has called for reflection and solidarity, recognizing the importance of urgent grants in order to stand up against these setbacks in the region:

*“For the agencies, organizations, and international civil society, it is important to recognize their support, since it is with their economic or political contributions, that we activists can undertake advocacy initiatives, continue our work, and motivate debate around the demands of trans women’s groups as a necessary issue, as one that requires legislative changes (...); this is work that requires constant support and our perseverance (...). In the case of Bolivia, it is the result of these joint endeavors, but there is still a long way to go (...). This is an issue about life and rights!; not just for one person, but for a real change”.*

### **Peru and Chile: The Struggle for Recognition Continues**

Just as the **Trebol Network**, along with other organizations in Bolivia, promoted the *Law of Gender Identity*, organizations supported by **UAF-LA** in Chile and Peru continue to mobilize for this same cause. For example, the **Macro Regional Coordination of Feminist Trans Women of Northern Peru** mobilized around political advocacy initiatives to get the Peruvian Congress to approve the *Law of Gender Identity* and to recognize the legal situation of Peruvian trans women.



Photograph Macro Regional Coordination 1

The **Macro Regional Coordination of Feminist Trans Women of Northern Peru** likewise received a Rapid Response Grant to file an Initiative before Congress on this Law, taking advantage of its new composition after recent elections. Together with other organizations, on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, in Lima, they organized a huge rally and the *First National Political Forum of Trans People* in order to have their demands before Peruvian jurisprudence incorporated into the political debate, since doctrinal consensus and procedures to deal with cases of identity of trans women are lacking.

*“What is requested of State entities is that such rights be respected, guaranteed and protected and in this way, inequities to which we are currently subjected, corrected”.* (Miluska Luzquiños Tafur- Director of the Macro Regional Coordination.

Similarly, Chile, despite being a country that has recognized unions between same-sex couples, demonstrates enormous gaps in the Law establishing measures *Against Discrimination*. After including the concept of “*Gender Identity*” in 2011, work has been carried out to promote a Law of Gender Identity. As such, in 2013, a proposal for such a Law was filed, which would allow not only recognition of trans adults through administrative procedure, but also of boys, girls, and adolescents, within a family tribunal, a topic which was not included in the original submission.

In 2015, the **UAF-LA** supported **Organizing Trans Diversities- OTD**<sup>4</sup>, a Chilean organization of trans people that works for the recognition of the Human Rights and wellbeing of this population, and that undertakes advocacy initiatives in the Chilean National Congress in order to promote the *Law of Gender Identity*.

**OTD** is a member of the Front for Sexual Diversity, FDS (acronym in Spanish), the main network of LGBTI organizations in Chile. Thanks to their dissemination and advocacy initiatives, in May, 2015, they were successful in getting Congress to grant highest priority to this bill. It is hoped the Chilean Legislature will follow the example of other countries in the region so that next year this law will be a reality in the country.



Photograph OTD Chile 1

### **A Plea from Trans Bolivia**

From the **Trebol Network** emanates a plea for transformation in Latin American societies for the inclusion of trans people and recognition of their rights, as well as a message of solidarity to other organizations in the region working to promote this cause:

*“To our sisters in the region who are struggling for this recognition of gender identity, I hope you persevere, sister strugglers, that you do not allow religious fundamentalisms to smother your efforts (...) Our work produces results, everything I was always told about this being a country where the trans theme is unthinkable, everything they told me about it not being possible...”*

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<sup>4</sup> <http://otdchile.org/>

*It was accomplished! It is important to work with the media, to educate the citizenry; in Bolivia, a first step was taken but it's not the last; so we must remain united in this desire to be how we really feel and to be recognized as such (...). We are giving happiness to many trans women who are yet to be born, leaving them all with the right to live in dignity". (Raiza Torriani Garcia, Trebol Network President).*

For this reason, at the **Urgent Action Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean**, we are committed to continuing our support for trans women's organizations and their initiatives for genuine transformations in the continent that favor their rights.

