

BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET1. CONTROL NUMBER
PN-AAJ-2892. SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION (300)
DG00-0000-G320

3. TITLE AND SUBTITLE (240)

Social responses to economic crisis in Latin America and the role of low income women: a case study in Bonao, Dominican Republic

4. PERSONAL AUTHORS (100)

Kennedy, J. K.

5. CORPORATE AUTHORS (101)

League of Women Voters. Overseas Education Fund

6. DOCUMENT DATE (110)

1980

7. NUMBER OF PAGES (120)

55p.

8. ARC NUMBER (170)

DR331.4.K35

9. REFERENCE ORGANIZATION (150)

League

10. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES (500)

11. ABSTRACT (950)

12. DESCRIPTORS (920)

Dominican Rep.
Latin America
Unemployment
Women in developmentCase studies
Participation Employment
Women

13. PROJECT NUMBER (150)

598059100

14. CONTRACT NO.(100)

AID/lac-G-1352

15. CONTRACT TYPE (140)

16. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (160)

PN-AAJ-289

DR-
331.4
K35

SOCIAL RESPONSES TO ECONOMIC
CRISIS IN LATIN AMERICA AND
THE ROLE OF LOW INCOME WOMEN:

A CASE STUDY IN BONAO
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

BY

JANET KERLEY KENNEDY

FINAL REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
CONTRACT #AID 517-4

SEPTEMBER 30, 1980

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AS A CONTRIBUTION TO FAMILY SURVIVAL . .	6
III.	WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS.	22
IV.	CONCLUSIONS.	32
V.	RECOMMENDATIONS.	37
	APPENDIX A — METHODOLOGY	40
	TABLE 1 NUMBER AND PERCENT OF WOMEN ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE	47
	TABLE 2 PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC . .	48
	TABLE 3 PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ACTIVE IN THE LABOR FORCE, BY EDUCATION AND PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT	49
	TABLE 4 LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION BY AGE . .	50
	TABLE 5 NUMBER AND PERCENT OF WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS AMONG EMPLOYEES	51
	FOOTNOTES	52
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.	53

I. INTRODUCTION

The effects of economic crises in modern capitalism, caused by the now accepted phenomenon of business cycles, is again becoming a topic of interest as a generation of workers untouched by the depression, experience the jarring blow of sudden unemployment. It is a crisis forcing change not just in the personal economies of individuals and their families but in the social fabric of their lives as well. The problem of individuals realigning their lives to accommodate a reduction in economic resources extends beyond that of unemployment due to market forces to include inflation and political upheaval.

Economists have studied the problem at length, discussing the causes and prescribing the cures. The experience of the Depression, and the shattering decline of Appalachia stand side by side with extensive analysis of monopoly capitalism and the world economic order. Yet as a social phenomena, these economic crises have received relatively little attention.

In the industrialized countries, the responsibility for the care of the unemployed has increasingly been thrust onto institutions of the State. One study of the early 20th century England describes "governments striving to cope with newly revealed social problems - bad housing, old age, under-nourishment, and unemployment" which had until then been borne by "private charitable bodies" or individual

"self-reliance. (Brown:1971:Introduction). By 1914, England had openly admitted its responsibilities, legislating for those of its citizens who had no work." As Brown commented, "The outcomes of their strivings was the foundation albeit, somewhat shaky, of the modern Welfare State." (1971:164)

The situation is similar in the United States, where today the effects of the closing of a plant are mediated by government assistance, both State and Local. Programs of unemployment insurance, social security, welfare benefits and food stamps, plus expanded services from the State Employment Office decrease the amount of individual suffering. (The Washington Post: 1978b)

In many parts of the developing world, where organized State welfare assistance is lacking, different strategies are observed. When the copper mines in Northern Rhodesia reduced production "the number of hours of work were reduced for the European labor, but the excess African workers" were discharged and "given travel rations to tide them over until they returned to their villages." (Baldwin:1966:84) Also, the company did not encourage workers to establish their families permanently in the mining area. Thus many women and children remained in the rural areas, maintaining the subsistence agriculture. It is clear that this measure was an escape valve consciously

used in times of recession, and it would be fair to say that the family and village were institutionalized by the company as the welfare system for the industrial sector.

Hendricks, in The Dominican Diaspora, uncovered another variation for coping, direct migration from a rural Caribbean village to New York City. While this migration is not in direct response to a specific industrial decline, it suggests the very real possibility that in a crisis precipitated by international events the solution will be trans-national as well. Cohen's work on migration patterns to the United States indicates that women form a substantial part of this international movement. She comments:

Whereas the typical pioneers of immigration in the past have been men, approximately two-thirds of the Central and South American newcomers are women. Moreover, they are not widows or young single persons....Rather they are mostly women who established households and then left children behind under the care of maternal grandmothers or other kin.

(Cohen:1977:27)

A recent study in Mexico (Kennedy and Russin:1977) discovered that when the construction phase of a development project was abruptly halted, causing widespread

unemployment among men, women from all classes sought employment or increased their part-time employment in order to carry the family through the crisis.

A striking commonality in the preceding examples is the degree to which the wife/mother plays a major role in the crisis situation, presenting the paradox of women finding work in a period of high male unemployment. In this body of literature, however, little systematic analysis is given to her role. Rather the discussion is generally phrased in terms of the effects of unemployment on the principal wage earner.

The following study describes in detail the ways in which a group of women in a Latin American community coped with the crisis of sudden unemployment. In the community, a large multinational mining company found it necessary due to a drop in the world market price of their product to lay off a substantial number of the employees. Few women were affected directly by the lay-off primarily because the workforce of an extractive industry is dominated by men. In this company, for instance, only 3% of those fired were women.

Nevertheless women as wives or mates, mothers and daughters suffered the impact of the male unemployment. Earlier studies led to the hypothesis that women were also a family reserve to be called upon in times of austerity.

In an analysis of U.S. women's employment rates since World War II, Ferber and Lowry found that women have for various reasons "fared relatively better during periods of high unemployment." (p. 227) A study of female labor force participation in Latin America shows that "the necessity for a woman to work to supplement family income is an inverse function of the per capita income of other family members. (OAS Study, in Shields:1977:46)

A study of middle class women in the capital city of the Dominican Republic suggested that a woman's decision to be active in the labor force depended upon a variety of factors that encompassed the woman's life, including the opportunity for employment that is congruent with her training and social status, i.e., finding employment which the woman considers "appropriate." However, the needs of the children and household responsibilities were balanced against the need for supplemental income and the appropriateness of the position to determine whether a woman would seek or take employment offered. (Kennedy-Russin:1976)

The material which follows on women's employment will discuss these issues as well as the extent to which the women's contribution were needed for family survival.

II. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AS CONTRIBUTION TO FAMILY SURVIVAL

Labor Force Participation Rates of the Sample

Of the male employees interviewed⁽¹⁾, 34% had spouses who were active in the labor market at the time of the study. (The two male spouses of female employees are not included in this figure.) Slightly over half (24) of these women were employed outside the home; the remainder earned money from activities realized in the home. Four had more than one job outside the home; three working at home had more than one activity that produced income.

(Table I)

Twenty-six of the women, or nearly 60% of the employed women began their current employment after their husbands became unemployed and as a direct result of that unemployment. Another nine, who had been employed prior to the lay-off, became the sole support or the major support of the family for the period of male employment.

Comparison of Sample to National Figures

The rate for the sample is higher than the national figures for all women in the country. Nationally, twenty-six percent of the women were reported as economically active in 1970, an increase of fifteen percent from 1960.

Surveys of special groups in the country, show that the labor force participation rate can vary considerably when disaggregated. For example, data from the National Fertility Study on women's labor force participation show an overall labor force participation rate of 21.7% for all women active in the labor force. However this rate differed greatly depending upon educational level. Seventeen percent of those with some primary school education were economically active while 45% and 74% of the women with a high school and university education, respectively, were active. Another study found social class an important variable, for in this group of middle-class women in the capital, labor force participation was 45%. Presumably access to opportunities in the capital which are not available in smaller cities or rural communities influenced the participation of this class. (Kennedy and Russin:1976)

Employment statistics by geographic areas of the country are not available, so the current rate of female unemployment in the mining town cannot be compared to other towns. However, a case study of the town completed in 1970 provided data on the employment of women prior to the mining company's major influence. In 1970, 9.8% of the women between the ages of 15 and 60 had remunerated occupations. But, continued the authors

of the report, "a series of occupations which tend to be undertaken by women and which do not require her to be out of the house were also found, such as seamstress, domestic servant and teacher." This suggests that the rate of employment in 1970 may have been higher than stated, although it was not possible to determine the number in each category. (2) (Bona:Una Ciudad Dominicana:1972)

Relationship of Individual Characteristics to Labor Force Participation

In Latin America, many studies have analyzed the relationship of individual characteristics with female employment. (Elizaga:1974; Sweet:1978; Standing:1978; Chang and Ducci:1977) Some of the major variables and their predicted correlation with female labor force participation will be compared with the group studied in an attempt to further clarify the issue.

Education

A linear relationship between education and employment is normally found, i.e., as the amount of education increases, the rate of female participation in the labor force also increases. (In some countries, it is also not uncommon to find a bimodal distribution, i.e., high rates

for illiterate and educated women but lower for women in the middle class.)

The women in this group are well educated compared to the total population in the Dominican Republic. Only ten percent could not read or write, whereas 34% of the women in the country are illiterate. (ONE/AID Data Book: 1977) Forty-one percent had attended primary school and 41.5 percent had attended secondary school. A small number, representing seven percent had attended or finished the university.

The expected relationship between education and employment did not hold for the group of women studied. The illiterate women and the university-educated women show a nearly identical rate, 36% and 33% respectively. The women with a secondary education show a higher rate of 42%. (Table 3) However, educational level influences the location of the activity. The lower the educational level, the more likely she is to be employed inside the home (Table 3) presumably because she lacks the necessary skills for finding employment in the formal sector.

Age

Another expected pattern of labor force participation in Latin America is high participation for young women, with labor force participation decreasing as age increases. The

drop often occurs at the age women marry or when the first child is born. In this case study, an unusually large number of young women are not working (66%-79%), whereas 66% of the women over 50 are employed. (Table 4) In many cases the younger women had small children and no one able to care for them thus limiting their ability to work outside the home. Other cases were those of couples with no children where the wife returned home to weather the crisis with family.

Work Before Marriage

Prior working experience, particularly before marriage, has also been shown to be significant in predicting a woman's labor force participation in later life. The relationship continues to hold true with this group. Only 36 percent of the women had worked prior to marriage, but of those now gainfully employed, 49 percent had worked prior to marriage. Of those not now working, 90 percent had not worked prior to marriage.

Types of Employment

The activities of the women in the town today are similar to those of ten years ago, although a larger number are occupied in office jobs. Two groups, roughly paralleling the division of the labor market into informal and formal could be identified.

Formal Labor Market

The most responsible positions were held by the primary and secondary school teachers, although they were not necessarily the highest paid. The largest number of women working in the formal labor market were office workers (6), followed by teachers (4). Women were also employed as factory workers, one was a member of the clergy, and another the owner of a beauty shop.

This distribution reflects the national trend, which shows that the greatest increase in employment opportunities for women in the last twenty years has been in salaried employment. This has been due to an increase in office jobs, as secretaries, receptionists, data processing personnel and a wide range of white collar jobs that have developed for educated women (Table 2).

Shops

The work performed by a sub-group of women, that of shopkeeper, fell between the formal and informal. Eight women had opened stores, which varied in size and location. Three were completely independent of the home, like the yard goods store located in the central market. Others were indistinguishable from the home. One beauty shop was located in the living room, while several of the

small grocery stores were extra bedrooms or the garage converted into a store.

Colmados

The most common store was the grocery store, commonly known as a "colmado, pulperia or ventorillo" if it is very small. It is one of the most frequently opened, expanded and closed depending upon the financial situation of the owner. It requires very little capital to become a vegetable or fruit seller. All that is needed is the willingness to buy wholesale at the market and resell at retail prices. The amount of capital invested depends directly upon the amount the person has to invest that day. A careful calculation of the demand and a street corner suffices to earn enough to buy the day's food. For several years the wife of one employee "kept herself busy" selling vegetables in this manner. From time to time she also made her own recipe of Dominican "saison" (a spice mix used to season meat), bottled it and sold it. When her husband was laid off and no employment was immediately found, her income or potential income became much more important to the family economy. A portion of his severance pay became the basis for expanding her "ventorillo" into a small grocery store, with a greater variety of products and a permanent

structure. For several months, the income produced by the "colmado" was the major support of the family. Even though the husband has been re-employed by the company, she continues to run the profitable "colmado."

The other "colmados" were established in direct response to the husband's unemployment. The severance pay, or part of it, was used as the capital, and wives and children generally ran them, while the husband looked for odd jobs. Some of the wives went along with the idea reluctantly, to say the least. However, they understood, perhaps more than the husband, the need to increase the family income. They also saw the impossibility of their finding work elsewhere, except as domestic servants, which neither paid well nor combined with their domestic responsibilities. Lack of child-care for small children (one grocery store owner had six, ages 4-12) and lack of preparation left this group with running a grocery store as the only alternative. Not surprisingly, two of these stores closed as soon as the husband was re-hired by the company or found other permanent employment.

Two other women, faced with the same situation, need for increased income, lack of preparation and lack of child-care, were led in a different direction, that of selling chicken. These enterprising women buy the

chickens live, slaughter, clean and butcher them for other families in the neighborhood. Since Dominicans eat their main meal at noon, the major part of the business is done during the morning, leaving the afternoon free for housework and other activities. Also, explained one, business continues in the afternoon, when clients come to the house, instead of the stand on the street. The more ambitious of the two calculated that on an average morning, she can sell about RD 20 worth of chicken. On a good morning she will gross RD 30. On the other hand, the second business nets enough for the woman to buy all the food for the family, as her husband has devoted his time since the lay-off to his pastoral duties which provides no salary.

Pawn Shops - "Compra-Venta"

A common store found in even the smallest of villages is the pawn shop, but they are usually run exclusively by men. Two in the mining village are now run by women, wives of ex-mining company employees as circumstances of the woman's family led two women into this business. Both stores were owned by the women's father. In one case the father died; in the other, he immigrated to Venezuela. Had the husbands been employed, it is very probable that neither woman would have chosen

to continue the business. Both spoke of the difficulties for a woman in the business. "Often you have to deal with people who are desperate for money, who have been drinking and who are argumentative." Nevertheless, faced with the necessity of working on the one hand, and an established business with clientele on the other, both chose to continue their father's business. Indeed, for one it has become a personal challenge to succeed as a woman, and to maintain her father's integrity in what is usually a usurious business.

Informal Labor Market

Personal service figured into much of the work done by the women. In many cases, their activities are a direct extension of their role as housewife. Like the grocery store owners, these activities expand and contract to fit the financial need of the individual. When income is needed, food can be made for sale, or housework can be done for another. In more prosperous times, the activities become acts of friendship or unpaid housework for one's own family. Women charge for setting a friend's hair, for pressing a wedding gown, for a jar of coconut sweets. (See Lourdes Arizpe for a full description of

this process in Mexico City.) In this category were a sizable group selling home-produced products, such as jams from seasonal fruits, fresh eggs, ice cream, fried pork skins and meat cakes. Women also worked part-time as laundresses, earning between .60 and .75 per dozen pieces washed. Seamstresses, too, fell into this category. Women who had sewn only for the family turned to mending clothes and sewing for others.

"San" - Informal Credit Associations

The San, a variation of a rotating credit association, was used by many women as a way of generating money quickly during the crisis, although the San is by no means used only by the poor. It is best described as a form of forced savings, akin to a Christmas savings account, except that it is based on mutual trust among a group of people instead of trust in a formal banking institution. The San can take many forms and has many variations, but all follow the same basic rules.

When someone decides to "open a San", s/he decides the number of people who will "play", invites people s/he trusts, determines the amount of money involved and the length of time the San will last. Each person who agrees to "play" obligates herself to pay a certain sum

of money for a specified period of time. In return, once during that time she will collect the full value of the San, as will everyone else who plays. Thus, for example, a San of one hundred pesos, for ten months would obligate ten people to pay ten pesos every month. Each month, a different person collects one hundred pesos. Numbers are drawn when the San begins to determine the order in which payments are made.

The person who stands to lose is the one who opened the San, because s/he must pay even if someone drops out. The excuse that one of the members dropped out is not accepted, because the others, who have paid faithfully, expect their money. Therefore, the person who initiates the San usually takes the first number, receives the money and keeps it in reserve in case one of the people fails to pay on time or drops out.

The poor play a "San de poco dinero", a San involving smaller sums of money for a shorter period of time, usually measured in weeks, not months. Often it is a form of accumulating a small sum of money. The most frequently encountered San among the poor was a San lasting six weeks and costing two pesos a week. The woman who initiated the San collected twelve pesos each week, but paid only ten. At the end of each San, she had earned twelve pesos, providing everyone kept her word.

A frequently encountered variation for slightly more affluent people was the San for 12.50 a week, which would net its initiator 250 pesos, while it would cost each person who played one hundred and twenty-five to earn one hundred.

In other Sans the individual does not pay in more than s/he is going to receive. In this case, the motive for opening and participating in one is to raise a sum of money immediately. Such was the case of one woman who opened a San for one hundred pesos in order to pay her daughter's school expenses. She added, "I will probably only collect \$75...." meaning that she expected to lose in the end, but the purpose for opening it was met, i.e., she paid the tuition when it was due in September. In many Sans such as this, people deliberately take the last number in order to have money on a given date. This forces them to save and assures them of having the money when they need it. The San of this type is commonly used to save the money needed for deposit in a bank account in order to qualify for an American visa, and explains how a person of modest means can suddenly deposit RD 500 in a savings account. Generally speaking, the Sans involving larger sums of money, as high as a thousand pesos, do not charge more than they pay. Rather, they are used as a way of raising money for some type of business investment.

Another variation is the San of consumer goods, where instead of receiving a sum of money, the players receive sheets, glassware, china or anything else people will play for. The initiator makes money by buying the articles for less than they are sold for. The wife of one unemployed mechanic paid for her schooling while he was out of work by buying sets of sheets for RD25 and charging 40 per person for the San making a profit of RD15 on each number played.

The obvious advantage of the San is that it provides access to money for people who do not qualify for credit in an established financial institution. It can be a fast way to raise money and can be considerably cheaper than a loan-shark. The reasons for using a San as a savings mechanism are less obvious. Logically, a person who can pay ten to twelve pesos or even two every week to a San could also put the same amount in an interest-bearing savings account and make money instead of losing or breaking even. The key element appears to be the strong obligation that is created in the relationship with the other members of the San which forces an individual to pay every week/month. This sense of social obligation does not exist with a banking institution, and it is far easier to succumb to the temptation to not save or withdraw some of the money already accumulated.

Failure to keep one's obligation to a San is equivalent to declaring oneself untrustworthy, and tarnishing one's reputation seriously. The social pressure is increased by the fact that a San is only played among people who are well known to one another. The obligation to pay the San is so strong, that a wife can talk a reluctant husband out of money that might otherwise have gone for rum or a billiards game.

Although the San was the most common strategy using money to make money, it was not the only way women found to multiply their capital. One woman played the lottery faithfully every week, and won enough to feed the family for three months. An unemployed secretary invested a portion of her severance pay in the money-changing business. Given the existence of an open "black market" or parallel market, the Capital as well as the secondary city have several agencies and innumerable street vendors engaged in changing pesos to dollars and dollars to pesos. The dollar fluctuates in value between 15 and 25% more than the peso. Thus dollars are bought or sold at a percentage point or two below the "market" rate. The person seeking to change earns more than if s/he changed the money at the bank at a par, and the person who has invested the money with the money changer earns a percentage or two on each transaction. The working capital for the agencies and the

independent street vendors comes in many instances from individuals who invest their money for a percentage of the money made on the transactions. The amount gained is considerably above the interest rate paid by the commercial banking institutions..

Migration

In spite of the well documented migration patterns of Dominicans, few women found this a viable route to follow. As most were married with obligations to family, it was difficult to leave. More likely was the situation of men leaving for jobs in Venezuela where heavy equipment operators are in great demand. Those who could demonstrate their ability went legally. Many others left illegally. Only one woman had gone to Venezuela where she was working as a secretary. Her husband stayed behind with the children.

III. WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

A phenomenon which is becoming more visible is the existence and possible increase of female-headed households, where the woman becomes responsible for her own economic support and for the family unit.

A recent study completed on female-headed households (Buvinic et al:1978) attempted to quantify the problem by analyzing aggregate data for 73 developing countries. The authors were able to measure only "potential" female family heads, or "all widowed, divorced, separated and single mothers," as opposed to "de facto household heads" who "because of abandonment, male marginality and male seasonal migration" assume economic responsibilities. (1978:37) In comparing data from the various countries, it was found that "the percentage of potential household heads who are women varies from a low ranking of 10% to a very high ranking of 48%." (1978:39)

For the Central American and Caribbean countries studied, "the average percentage of potential heads of household who are women is 20%." (1978:39) Specific data for the Dominican Republic were not reported (the census data were not adequate to be included in the study), but there are no known cultural differences

between the Dominican Republic and other Central American countries which would lead to the conclusion that the rate would be significantly lower. In fact, among the poor women of the country who have a pattern of consensual union similar to that of the Commonwealth Islands, the percentage may be higher than 20%. Several studies have documented the fact that these women change male partners frequently and are far more likely to be the primary economic support of the family over a long period of time, than in middle and upper class families where the ideal of a male-supported family is closer to being realized. (See Brown: 1973; Blake:1961; Blumberg:1977; Slater:1977; Nieves:1977)

Data from this study provide qualitative evidence of this phenomenon in the group studied.¹ The categories used to define a female headed household are more specific than those used by Buvinic et al, as the data were gathered for this specific purpose, not taken from aggregate census data with their inherent limitations. It was therefore possible to include not only households with no male present, but also "de facto" female-headed households, in which women assumed full economic responsibility due to a temporary absence or unemployment.

1. The reader is reminded that the group represents all economic levels in the society, although the middle-lower and lower groups predominate.

In the group, twenty percent (20%) of the households were headed by women. (Table 5) The largest number of female-headed households are those in which the man and woman are temporarily separated because one or the other had sought work away from the town in which they live. The second largest group is that of families where the male is present in the home, but the woman is the major or sole economic support. In this study, half were unmarried sons who continued to live with or had moved back in with their mother, who supported him along with other children. Half were cases in which the economic role had been reversed and the wife had assumed full responsibility or primary responsibility for supporting the family.

The smallest group is that of households where no male is present, including divorced, widowed, separated or single women. Many of these cases, although not all, were female employees who were laid off. Due to the small number of female employees in the mining industry and consequently the small number affected by the lay-off, these figures do not allow an accurate interpretation of the number of women in the labor force who may be working to raise a family without male help.

At first glance, the percentage appears to be low, considering that this figure represents both the potential

and de facto female-headed households, while Buvinic's statistic reflects only the potential female-headed households. Part of this difference is explained by the nature of the sample drawn, which because it is representing a specific and relatively well-paid group within the labor force, cannot be used for generalizations to the whole population.

What was not accurately documented were the numbers of second and third households which many men could afford to support when they were earning good and steady salaries. Once the salaries were cut off, the support to the other families also stopped. Twenty men responded positively to a question about other families that they maintained, indicating that they had sent money to children of a previous union, but it is suspected that a large number of second families were concealed. When wives were present at the interview or when the employee suspected that maintaining appearances during the interview was important, other children and women were not mentioned.

An apparent coincidence provided evidence of this in one case. The former mistress of one employee lived in a village some distance from him. Both were interviewed. He lives comfortably with his legal wife and four grown children and he acknowledges no others. His

former mistress lives sparsely with her young children, fully acknowledging him as the father and lamenting his lack of support. She was doubly hurt by the lay-off, as she lost her job with the company as well. (See attached case study.)

In some cases, the current wife/mate herself made references to other women who came asking for the now nonexistent support.

Case Studies of Two Female-Headed Households

Dolores grew up in the rural area of a medium-sized town in the Cibao Valley, which allowed her the luxury of attending school until she completed seventh grade. She worked little outside her own home before she began living with the man who fathered her first child, now sixteen years old. He, like her second mate, was "un hombre ajeno," a man who belonged to someone else. When they split permanently, she left her daughter with her mother and moved to the mining town where she found work as a live-in maid. The teenager has been virtually raised by her grandmother and now spends most of her time there.

Her second mate was a man whom she met at the plant. When she set up housekeeping with him in the mining town, she was unaware that his first wife and children lived in one of the nearby villages. Although he left her three

years ago with two young children, she managed well on her own salary and with the support he sent. Both were caught in the personnel reduction, and the irregular support she had been receiving from him stopped completely as he reduced expenditures to meet his own crisis.

The alternatives were considerably more restricted than when her first mate had left her alone to support a family. Working as a live-in maid was no longer possible, for while relatives were willing to take care of one child, three were too many, especially when one was retarded. Dolores decided to move back into her own house in the "campo", a rural area which is next door to her mother, and look for day work in the area.

While the rural area offered the advantages of free housing and some family help with the children, there was little work. The majority of the women in the neighborhood were in the same situation as Dolores, needing work but only qualified as day maids or laundresses. They were competitors economically, yet provided a close support system for the rest of daily living.

Many students of poverty have suggested that life is easier in the "campo" because in addition to a low cost of living, it offers space for small gardens and animals like chickens and pigs. This is valid only when there is land available and the necessary capital for the initial

investment. However, for women like Dolores, who had neither, and whose only "skill" is that of unskilled personal service, "life in the campo is hard." She explained, "at least in the city there is some chance to wash clothes or clean, if only on Saturdays."

Trapped by circumstances, Dolores scrapes by. The nine hundred pesos which she received in severance pay carried her through several months. With her income now reduced to less than 100 pesos a month, she has withdrawn one child from school, not paid the electric and water bill for two months and has reduced the amount of food the family eats.

A younger version of Dolores, Rosa, lives in the mining town with her mother to whom she returned when she no longer could stand the frequent beatings her "husband" meted out. From a family that was once relatively well off, Rosa ran away with the man who became her common-law husband when she was thirteen to get away from a family situation that had deteriorated. Her father had owned a prosperous real estate office in the capital which provided the family with enough money so that neither the mother nor Rosa and her brother and sisters had had to work. The situation changed dramatically when, at the age of eleven, her father died, and her mother lost the business, their own house and three others which the family owned,

to her paternal grandfather. They returned to her mother's family in the mining town. Two years later she ran away with her "husband."

She had three children by him. Two died as infants of diarrhea, a common yet fatal disease if left unattended. A third, now three, lives with Rosa and her mother, who has become the child's caretaker. The various tragedies of her young life are viewed philosophically by Rosa and her mother. Her mother explained, "It's just as well that they never married...she'd have all the trouble of getting divorced." The same pragmatic attitude was voiced towards the death of the two children. "How could she possibly feed three? It's just as well they died."

Rosa's husband, also a young man, had worked as a laborer for the company for four years. When laid off, he received a substantial sum of money which he used to buy the house they were living in. During the six months that he was unemployed, for he was rehired in June by the company as a temporary worker, he worked on and off at a friend's garage. His unstable work situation led him to drink more than before and to become involved with other women. It was during this time that he began beating his wife. Although they had not had serious marital problems before the lay-off, they did afterwards. When she could finally take no more, she left.

Her future is uncertain, yet more hopeful than for Dolores. She is finishing the first year of high school and if economic pressures don't force her to stop, she may realize her goal of becoming a nurse. She had finished primary school before she left home, but her "husband" would not permit her to continue studying or to work. She knew that the company cooperative offered courses for wives, but he would not permit that either.

Until just prior to the interview, she had been working as a sales clerk in one of the many food stands that together form a major rest-stop between the capital and the north. In spite of the fact that these jobs are hard to come by (she was hired only because her aunt is the owner), she quit. The working hours made it impossible to study. Two women ran the stand, one working from 6 in the morning to 6 in the evening and the other working from 6 in the evening until 6 in the morning. The shifts alternated every other week.

Her only other potential source of income is the father of her child, who by law is required to pay ten pesos a month for support. Last month it took such a long and bitter fight to get the ten pesos, even though he is earning over a hundred pesos a week, that she has decided to do without. The house which he continues to live in is legally half hers, but he refuses to give her any money as

compensation and refuses to return the furniture and belongings she claims are legally hers.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The labor force participation rate of the wives/ mates of unemployed men was high — higher than the participation rate of women in the country (34% vs. 27%) — but lower than that of some sub groups studied in other circumstances. Significantly, however a large number (60%) of those employed at the time of the research had begun their current employment after the man lost his job.

Thus, women were a reserve resource and an important one to many families during the period of crisis. In many cases they became responsible for supporting the family economically for large periods of time. In other cases their supplemental income earned from part-time employment was crucial in making ends meet.

Further in two areas, age and education, actual behavior did not conform to the predicted — that younger, more highly educated women would be more to be employed. This suggests that in time of crisis, the women did whatever they knew how to do to help. It may also be possible that what is cited as a "normal" labor force participation curve for women only holds for periods of relative economic stability.

However, in one significant area, behavior did follow the expected. Women who had worked prior to marriage were far more likely to be found in the labor force than those who had not. An examination of several cases in depth shows that these families needed the income the woman could have provided. This suggests that "working before marriage" is a powerful predictor of a woman's labor force behavior in an economic crisis.

Also, of interest are the types of jobs that women held. The few professional teachers remained in the same job, but increased their teaching load from half to full-time or full-time to overtime. Many other women accepted employment where it was found and paid little attention to the fact that the job was not congruent with her actual social status.

In a period of economic prosperity or relative stability at both the macro and micro level (state and family) it appears that a woman's choice of occupation is conditioned by the same series of factors as for men: financial remuneration, social prestige afforded, personal satisfaction, appropriateness of the work for one's position. Women with another source of support (husband, father, son or daughter) are perhaps even more free to condition their employment on these factors, than on need. If employment meeting the conditions is not found, women have a socially acceptable

alternative — housewife and/or mother.

Women also appear to be more ready to ignore these factors than men. In this specific case study many of the families had achieved a higher standard of living and a higher social status since they had begun working at "the plant." While some women with professional training had continued their employment, the overwhelming majority who had been maids had "retired." Faced with the necessity of buying food for the children to eat, the status factors were set aside. Many women worked at jobs that they now found "beneath them", or which their husbands would not have permitted under different economic circumstances.

Men on the other hand tended to look for jobs of a similar skill level and salary level, and other types of work were viewed as degrading and rejected. In fact, many allowed their wives to work in low status jobs while they continued to look for the right job. Only sheer desperation drove men to the field as agricultural laborers or such.

Nevertheless, the labor force participation rate was lower than expected at the onset of the project.

The decision to such employment was not made unilaterally by women faced with economic hardship. Rather the decision to seek employment or not seems to be the result of an interplay of several factors including: the amount of money

the employee received in severance pay, the manner in which that was spent (was it invested in an income-producing enterprise or spent on consumer durables), the ability of the employee to find another job quickly at a similar salary, the number of people dependent upon the adults in the household, the opportunity for the woman to find work and her preparation. All of these entered into the decisions to return to paid employment, or increase that which they already had.

For example, many of the more skilled workers found jobs elsewhere immediately. For them the lay-off did not represent a hardship. Indeed for a few it was a positive change, even allowing for one woman to leave her job to return to medical school full time. These wives continued their lives and activities with virtually no changes.

Data from the larger study show that a wide variety of coping strategies were utilized by families, and women were responsible for carrying out many of these strategies.

If the husband earned less, for example, the family spent less. In most cases, the women monitored the change in consumption patterns by buying cheaper cuts of meat or serving it less often, by mending clothes rather than buying new ones or even tutoring young children instead of paying for tuition and uniforms. Or extreme cases when

the daily question was "what do we eat today!", the woman bargained for more credit at the market. In other families, the woman moved back to her family with the children, leaving the husband to live more cheaply in a boarding house.

By analysing these additional factors it is clear that the women's contributions to family survival cannot be counted solely in terms of income received from employment. Were the analysis limited to just labor force participation, a false picture of the significance of the woman's role would be portrayed.

V RECOMMENDATIONS

As in many other reports prepared on women's issues, this author recommends serious consideration be given to solid programs to increase women's employment opportunities.

It is clear that in times of personal/family economic crisis, women seek paid employment and that this employment is crucial to family survival. It is also clear that they are restricted in their earning abilities because of two factors: opportunities and individual preparation.

Income generation programs can address both issues. In semi-urban areas of the country, such as Bonao where employment opportunities in the formal sector are limited, well designed programs could emphasize the skills needed to build an already existing skill into a small business.

The success of these programs rests on understanding the complex factors motivating a woman to enter the labor force and/or leave it. For instance, it appears that periods of personal economic crisis do not necessarily correspond with macro level crisis. Thus what might appear to be a causal factor at the macro level may in fact be affecting the household unit differently in which case the woman would find training irrelevant. This assumes, of course, that other aspects of the program design are well executed.

It seems inappropriate to consider programs in agriculture for women in the medium and small towns in the country. No examples of women turning to agriculture were found and of equal significance is the fact that few tended home/household gardens. Not only is there little tradition of farming among this group (urban poor), they have virtually no land to use for such purposes.

Inside patios or court yards have fruit trees and platano trees and while the family consumes these, this produce is a long way from being a major source of food.

This is not to negate the value of programs in the rural areas where women do tend home gardens and care for livestock. It is only to emphasize that it is not a way of life, even for poor women, in the urbanizing parts of the country which Bonao represents.

It is a well known fact that the country will shortly have a larger percentage of the population classified as urban than rural. Without land use patterns, agrarian reform and migration patterns, this author hesitates to recommend that more or less resources be allocated to either sector.

However, it is very clear the majority of small towns in the country are experiencing a period of stagnation, out-migration of the young and motivated population (male

and female) and seriously need the attention of national planners if the rural-Santo Domingo/Santiago migration is to be stemmed. If these communities were to become true centers of activity -- economic, social, and cultural--they would serve the real needs of their inhabitants and the rural areas surrounding them, without the increasingly expensive and draining move to the capital.

This problem requires far more than many small programs for women outside the mainstream of development planning for the country. Rather, it deserves a serious consideration of the factors involved in reviving these small communities -- factors which involve women as much as men.

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

A variety of methods was used to gather the data for this study. Initial interviews with the company personnel officers provided the basic information on the procedures used during the lay-off. They provided a list of the affected employees which gave the last known address, and the person's occupation. This list was the basis for drawing a random stratified sample. A computer list provided information on the age, number of years working for the company, marital status, number of dependents and occupation for each employee.

Of the 480 people on the list, 214, or 45%, were selected for interviewing. A high number was chosen for two basic reasons. First, several of the major hypotheses of the study were based on the supposition that occupational status and geographic location of residence would have a direct bearing on the kind of coping strategy used and therefore would have an impact on the role of the woman. Second, the experiences of other researchers in studies of unemployment suggested that a larger number of potential interviewees was selected than was needed for analysis to insure that a sufficient number would be interviewed. During the actual interviewing process, the

problem of locating people was compounded in the mining town by the absence of accurate addresses. Streets without names and houses without numbers coupled with the Dominican practice of using nicknames, not a given name, made the task triply difficult.

The basic occupational divisions used in the company formed the basis for the stratification of the sample. All professionals and foremen, and fifty percent of the office workers were to be interviewed, as their numbers were small in the total number of employees laid off. The total number selected from the remaining occupational categories, mechanics, operators, helpers and laborers, was a function of the number in each geographic area to be studied.

In Boano, where over 60% of the unemployed lived, a 30% sample was taken of these groups. In the Capital, nearly all the operators, helpers and laborers were interviewed and over 60% of the mechanics, for the numbers of all these were small. In the secondary city, where only six employees lived, all were to be interviewed. Also, in the small villages surrounding the mining town, all the employees were selected.

Originally, employees living in other cities were also to be interviewed. This was not done, as the amount of time needed to locate and interview one person

per city was disproportionate to the information likely to be gathered.

The interviewing was done by the principal investigator, with the assistance of four native Spanish speakers. Two were trained social workers with interviewing experience. The third had had extensive experience in interviewing gained from working on national level surveys. The fourth and most effective was the research assistant, a student of social work, who was lent to the project by the Research Center at the Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra in Santiago. All four received training in interviewing techniques appropriate to this research.

The interviews in the villages surrounding the mining town were completed from October through December of 1978 and in April 1979. The interviewing in the Capital and secondary city were done from November 1978 to January 1979 and the interviewing in the mining town which form the major basis for the report were completed from December 1978 to April 1979.

Of the 214 people initially identified, 188 were visited. One hundred and fifty-five interviews were completed; 124 were completely finished while 31 were partially completed. Three people refused outright to be interviewed and 30 people were not located.

Of the 155 people interviewed, some were employees and some were spouses. In 49 cases, the employee was interviewed alone. Eight were women; ten were men not married or living with a mate and 31 were men living with wives or mates who were not interviewed. In 48 cases, the female spouse was interviewed alone. In 42 cases, both the employee and spouse were interviewed. Information on 17 cases was given by someone else other than the employee or spouse, such as another family member or neighbor. (Table 2) The total number of women interviewed was 98.

<u>NUMBER AND PERCENT OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED</u>		
<u>Person</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Female Employee	8	40
Male Employee	41	22
Married/Mate 31		
Not Married 10		
Employee and Spouse	48	25
Female Spouse, Only	42	23
Other (Relative or Neighbor)	<u>49</u>	<u>26</u>
TOTAL	188	1000

A greater number of female spouses was interviewed in the mining town and in the surrounding villages than in the other areas and correspondingly, a larger number of male employees with spouses or mates but interviewed

alone is found in the cities than elsewhere. There were no other differences by geographic area in persons interviewed. The one difference is explained by the difference in interviewers. Those done in the mining town and surrounding villages were done by the principal investigator and the research assistant who spent the extra time needed to ensure that the women were interviewed. The men were only too eager to cooperate, especially if they believed that the interview might lead to their being rehired. If the wife was present, she was more likely than not to defer to her husband and if he came in during an interview begun with her, she withdrew. Some found in this situation apologized profusely to their husbands for discussing the issue. Nevertheless, it became apparent that women were giving more truthful and more complete answers about their lives since the lay-off than the man who hid or slanted answers depending upon his perception of the reason behind the interview.

Interviews Completed by Geographic Area

The highest rate of return was obtained in the mining town and in the surrounding villages. Of the 96 people visited in the town, 81 interviews were completed. In the villages, 29 of the 30 persons selected were interviewed. In the capital, 34 interviews out of 50 were

completed, while in the secondary city, 4 of the 6 were finished. In the intermediate-sized town nearby, 8 of the 13 selected were interviewed.

Other Sources of Data

Company

Personal interviews were held in the initial stages of the research with Senior Management officials of the company, including the Plant Superintendent the superintendents in charge of the major functional divisions of the plant (mining, processing plant and power plant), and the Senior Manager in charge of Public Relations. The Head of the personnel office and the division chiefs responsible for employee relations and the payroll department were interviewed. The Director of Public Affairs and the assistant were also interviewed. Finally three staff members of the quasi-company cooperative were also interviewed.

Community

Key community figures were identified and interviews held with the following people:

1. The Mayor.
2. Representatives of the Government sponsored Office for Community Development.

3. Director of the University Extension.
4. Principal, Company Sponsored School.
5. Head, Association for the Development of Bonao.
6. President, Kiwanis Club.
7. Community Development Workers (3).
8. Union Leaders (2).
9. Informal Community Leaders (3).
10. Principals, Public High School (1).
Elementary Schools (2).
11. Head, Office for Electric Company.

TABLE 1

Number and Percent of Women Economically Active		
<u>ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE</u>	<u>NUMBER^a</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Employed, outside the home ^b	25	20%
Employed, inside the home	19	15
Not currently employed, but has been in the past	29	23
Never employed	<u>53</u>	<u>42</u>
TOTAL	126	100%

Source: Author data.

(a) Excluded from this table were 23 employees who had no spouse/mate and 35 employees on whom no information was available for this question.

(b) This group includes two women actively seeking employment.

TABLE 2

Percentage of Women Economically Active in the Dominican Republic		
<u>OCCUPATION</u>	<u>1960^a</u>	<u>1970^b</u>
Professionals	13.8%	5.0%
Salaried Managers	.5	.2
Clerical Workers	8.2	8.
Sales Persons	10.4	3.9
Farmers, Fishermen and like workers	9.8	29.5
Transportation	.0	.95
Mining	.2	na ^c
Operatives	12.9	6.8
Day Laborers	1.5	8.7
Personal Services	41.7	12.5
Unspecified	.8	24.2
	<u>99.8</u>	<u>99.9</u>
	(N=88,490)	(N=315,048)

Sources: a. Luis Gomez. "La Mujer Dominicana Y Su Papel Economico." In Hermanas Mirabel. p. 43.

b. Censo de Poblacion, 1970. Oficina Nacional de Estadistica, Republica Dominicana, Tabluacion, 17.

c. This category did not appear in the 1970 census.

TABLE 3

Percentage of Women Active in the Labor Force
by Education and Place of Employment

EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND LOCATION	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL					
	ILLITERATE	PRIMARY	7-8th GRADE	SECONDARY	UNIVERSITY INCOMPLETE	UNIVERSITY
Employed, Outside the Home	9%	4.5%	21%	31%	25%	33%
Employed, Inside the Home	27%	20.5%	21%	11.5%	0%	0%
Not Employed	64%	75.0%	58%	58%	75%	66%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Author data

TABLE 4 4

Labor Force Participation by Age								
<u>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</u>	<u>17-19</u>	<u>20-25</u>	<u>26-30</u>	<u>31-35</u>	<u>36-40</u>	<u>41-45</u>	<u>46-50</u>	<u>50+</u>
Employed	33%	27%	36%	31%	70%	0	25%	66%
Not Employed	66%	73%	66%	69%	30%	100%	75%	33%
TOTAL	99	100	99	100	100	100	100	99

Source: Author data

TABLE 5

Number and Percent of Women-Headed Households,
Among Employees

HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED BY WOMEN	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent of total Number of Households*</u>
NO MALE PRESENT (Divorced, widowed, single, or single mothers)	8	5%
MALE TEMPORARILY ABSENT	14	9
MALE PRESENT BUT UNEMPLOYED (Wife or mother supporting family)	<u>10</u> 32	<u>6</u> 20%

Source: Author data

* The total number of households used as a base is 160, representing all cases on which some data were available, allowing for a determination of a household headed by a woman or not.

FOOTNOTES

1. 131 male employees were interviewed, of whom 121 were married.
2. In an attempt to accurately reflect women's employment rate, this author counted as economically all women actually earning money whether from activities realized outside the home or inside the home. Thus the seamstresses, beauticians and other such occupations were included.