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Unpaid care work and women's economic empowerment from a rights-based approach: A case study
of the Dominican Republic

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study documents the hardships that women micro entrepreneurs face in the Dominican Republic regarding their double roles as primary providers for their households as well as primary caretakers in their families. By carrying out 14 interviews and a focus group to women participants of an economic empowerment program in the province of Valverde, the goal is to document the drivers behind women engaging in economic activity, and specifically micro entrepreneurship, and to understand the challenges that they face regarding unpaid care work as single heads of household. A rights-based approach is applied to the analysis of the data, laying out how women's income-earning responsibilities, coupled with their role as unpaid care workers can hinder their human rights. The research shows that the women are responsible of earning an income for their families while often working more than one job, and that their children and other women in their community bear the burden of unpaid work when the participants are overwhelmed. Analyzed through a rights-based approach, the data illustrates how the second shift to which these women are subjected hinders their human rights to equality and non discrimination, health, decent work, education and social security. However, the women micro entrepreneurs are very active in their communities, which contradicts the idea that the women are relegated exclusively to the private sphere. The research has shown a need to elaborate policies that transform the gender roles that generate an expectation of women as sole care providers in the household, as well as to elaborate programming that actively works to dismantle this structure.

Key Terms: unpaid care work, economic empowerment, rights-based approach, gender equality, development.

Este estudio de caso cualitativo documenta las dificultades a las que se que enfrentan las microempresarias en la República Dominicana con respecto a sus dobles roles como proveedoras principales para sus hogares y como cuidadoras principales de sus familias. Al llevar a cabo 14 entrevistas y un grupo focal a mujeres participantes de un programa de empoderamiento económico en la provincia de Valverde, el objetivo es documentar los factores que impulsan a las mujeres a participar en actividades económicas (específicamente microempresas), y comprender los desafíos a los que se enfrentan como cuidadoras no remuneradas y jefas únicas de hogar. Se aplica la perspectiva de derechos humanos al análisis de los datos, en el que se describe cómo las responsabilidades de las mujeres en materia de ingresos, junto con su papel como cuidadoras no remuneradas pueden afectar a sus derechos humanos. La investigación muestra que las mujeres son las consideradas responsables de obtener un ingreso para sus familias (trabajando a menudo en más de una ocupación), y que sus hijos y otras mujeres en su comunidad soportan la carga del trabajo no remunerado cuando las participantes se sienten abrumadas. Analizados a través de un enfoque basado en los derechos, los datos ilustran cómo la sobrecarga de trabajo a la que están sometidas estas mujeres amenaza sus derechos humanos a la igualdad y la no discriminación, la salud, el trabajo decente, la educación y la seguridad social. Sin embargo, las microempresarias son muy activas en sus comunidades, lo que contradice la idea de que las mujeres están relegadas exclusivamente a la esfera privada. La investigación ha demostrado la necesidad de elaborar políticas que transformen los roles de género que generan una expectativa de las mujeres como proveedoras únicas de cuidados en el hogar, así como de elaborar programas que trabajen activamente para desmantelar esta estructura.

Palabras Clave: trabajo de cuidado, empoderamiento económico, derechos humanos, igualdad de género, desarrollo.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I: INTRODUCTION	I
Research Problem and Background	I
Objectives and Significance.....	3
Research Questions	4
Structure	5
II: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Agency and Economic Empowerment.....	5
Defining Economic Empowerment.....	5
Economic Autonomy Data in the Dominican Republic.....	7
The “Private Sphere”: Women’s Care Work Responsibilities.....	8
Unpaid Care Work and the Second Shift	8
Care and Micro Entrepreneurship	10
Importing Good Practices on Agency: the Lack of Latin American Data	11
Household Data on the Dominican Republic.....	13
A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development.....	15
A Rights-Based Approach to Unpaid Care Work and the Second Shift.....	18
III: WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN VALVERDE	22
Impulsando and Women Micro Entrepreneurs.....	23
The Role of Unpaid Care Work in Impulsando	25
IV: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	26
Research Approach.....	26
Data Collection Methods and Sampling.....	28
Data Analysis	29
Engagement in Economic Activity.....	30
Motivating Factors	30
Trainings and Learning	31
Public Recognition	32
Unpaid Care Work	32
Women’s Responsibilities and Schedules.....	33
Who Helps?	33
The Role of Men	34
Education	34

Health	35
Political Participation and Leisure Time.....	35
Public Resources	36
VI: DISCUSSION	37
Summary of Findings.....	37
Implications of the Study from a Rights-based Approach.....	38
Suggestions for Future Studies.....	42
Policy Recommendations.....	43
Concluding Remarks.....	45
VII: BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	47

I: INTRODUCTION

Research Problem and Background

Women provide the majority of unpaid care work¹ around the world: they spend disproportionately more time than men in this activity and represent “the majority of unpaid carers around the world”.² The disproportionately large burden of unpaid care work “has an adverse effect not only on the domestic sphere but also on women’s opportunities in public life”.³ For instance, it limits women’s economic autonomy by reducing the time and opportunities available to have formal full-time jobs in the labor market, therefore limiting their access to employment-based social protection benefits.⁴ The unequal distribution of unpaid care work is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures that reinforce the idea of men as breadwinners and female as caregivers.⁵ However, as women have progressively entered the public sphere, becoming either sole or co-breadwinners in their families, there has not been a redistribution of unpaid care work, which still falls mostly on women.⁶ It is crucial to take into account how this burden plays out when women carry out economic activities within or outside the

¹ Although there are different conceptions of which activities constitute “unpaid care work”, this paper uses ECLAC’s definition of the term, which includes “maintenance of the home and domestic goods, physical care and nutrition, socialization, the education and upbringing of minors, the maintenance of social relationships and psychological support for family members.” Sonia Montañó and María Nieves Rico, “Women’s Contribution to Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean” (Santiago de Chile, 2007), 58.

² Laura Addati et al., *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2018, 7.

³ United Nations. Millennium Development Goals. 2006 Report: A Look at Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Santiago de Chile, 2006.

⁴ Ibid., 52-53.

⁵ Rania Antonopoulos. *The Unpaid Care Work - Paid Work Connection*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2009, 1-2.

⁶ Arlie Russell Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (Viking, 1989).

household—such as being employees for a third party or having a micro enterprise— while still bearing the burden of unpaid care work, a phenomenon known as the “second shift”.⁷

Moreover, the characteristics of unpaid care work in each community are intrinsically linked to regional and local social patterns, given that patriarchal norms manifest themselves differently depending on cultural and traditional traits.⁸ Therefore, it is key to generate regionally-based knowledge that allows us to understand the characteristics of the unpaid work that women perform and how this burden affects different aspects of their life such as their health or their political participation.

In the Dominican Republic, 40% of households have females as heads and the majority of these women are separated (45.8%) or widows (20.8%), compared with male heads of household, most of whom are in a relationship.⁹ Data also shows that the majority of divorced, separated and widowed women are economically active, compared to single and married women.¹⁰ Given this data, I infer that that women who are heads of household in the Dominican Republic are usually the only parent in the home (performing the expected unpaid care work) and are also economically active in order to provide for their families. Male heads of household, on the other hand, usually have the support of a partner in the household, given that the majority of them are in a relationship.¹¹

⁷ Ibid. Although the term “double burden” is also widely in academic literature regarding this phenomenon, it is used in several other contexts where individuals or groups are affected by two liabilities, not specifically regarding gender and labor. For the sake of consistency and accuracy, this paper will use the term “second shift” only.

⁸ Susana Martínez-Restrepo et al., *Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment: Critical Lessons from South America*, ed. Susana Martínez-Restrepo and Laura Ramos-Jaimes (Colombia : La Imprenta Ediciones S.A., 2017), 17.

⁹ Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *Encuesta Nacional de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (ENHOGAR-2016)*, Santo Domingo, 2017, 20.

¹⁰ Centro de Estudios Sociales y Demográficos and ICF International, *Encuesta Demográfica y de Salud 2013 (ENDESA 2013)*, Santo Domingo, 2014, 298.

¹¹ Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *Encuesta Nacional de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (ENHOGAR-2016)*, Santo Domingo, 2017, 20.

Objectives and Significance

The lack of studies on women's use of time and unpaid care work that are specific to the Dominican Republic and to the Caribbean in general, coupled with data that shows that a large percentage of women in the Dominican Republic might be affected by the phenomenon of the "second shift", is the main driving factor for this study.

With my research, I intend to contribute to the literature on unpaid care work and the "second shift" by bringing to light an example of the Dominican Republic, examining the how women who own small businesses and bear the majority of the household work perceive their challenges and opportunities. This includes delving into the positive or negative aspects that being economically active might have for women, as well as the consequences of providing for the family while bearing the burden of unpaid care work. I also focus on the issues that female single heads of household specifically go through, given that most of the relevant literature is based on the redistribution of work between a man and a woman who co-habit a household, but there is little discussion of the core burden of women micro entrepreneurs who are also single heads of household. Moreover, I intend to connect the needs of these women to the responsibility that local and international development agencies, as well as governmental institutions, have in relation to liberating women from solely bearing the burden of unpaid care work.

A rights-based approach is used as a lens through which all these topics are conceptualized and analyzed. First, this perspective allows us to understand how an imbalance in the distribution of care work could an effect on women's human rights, including their rights to equality and non discrimination, to health and to political participation.¹² Moreover, this approach transforms the role of caregivers in development policy (who are mostly women), as they become rights-holders who can claim an equal distribution of care work through public policy, and the responsibility becomes the

¹² Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*, UN General Assembly, 68th Sess, UN Doc A/68/293 (9 August 2013).

State's (as the duty bearer).¹³ A rights-based approach leads to “the co-responsibility of the State, the community, the market and families, as well as of women and men, in the provision of care,”¹⁴ therefore furthering the empowerment of women and the transformation of gender roles by liberating them from an unequal distribution of work.

Research Questions

To follow these objectives, I have chosen Valverde province, in the region of Cibao Noroeste, Dominican Republic, as a case study. Valverde has been the object of development projects by agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank due to its bountiful banana production. The Dominican Republic office of UNDP and the Valverde-based organization ADELVA (Local Economic Development Agency of Valverde)¹⁵ started in 2015 the implementation of a program aimed at increasing women's economic empowerment in the province, specifically by offering training and resources to women micro entrepreneurs, as well as educating the community around gender equality. However, the program was not designed to take into account the dynamics of care work in the region and women's unpaid responsibilities.

This case study helps me explore the following research questions:

What are the drivers behind women engaging in economic activity, and specifically micro entrepreneurship?

What kinds of challenges do women micro entrepreneurs face in relation to unpaid care work and the second shift?

¹³ Maxine Molyneux and Sian Lazar, *Doing the Rights Thing: Rights-Based Development and Latin American NGOs* (London: ITDC Pub, 2003), 6.

¹⁴ Valeria Esquivel, “The Rights-Based Approach to Care Policies: Latin American Experience,” *International Social Security Review* 70, no. 4 (2017): 92.

¹⁵ ADELVA is a nonprofit organization aimed at generating employment and wealth with a growth pattern that is equitable and sustainable.

How are these challenges and opportunities connected to the human rights of the women participants of this study?

Structure

The remainder of this thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter II delves into the existing literature regarding women's economic empowerment, the unequal distribution of unpaid care work worldwide and in the Dominican Republic and the importance of understanding how women's care responsibilities can hinder their economic autonomy. It also proposes an application of a human rights-based approach to unpaid care work, laying out how women's income-earning responsibilities, coupled with their role as unpaid care workers can hinder their human rights. Chapter III provides the background information necessary to understand the challenges that women face in the province of Valverde, the reasons for the creation of the *Impulsando* program and the role that unpaid care work played within the the community and the program. Chapter IV deals with the methodological considerations of this study, including the research approach, methods and data analysis. Finally, Chapters V and VI discuss the findings of the study, as well as the implications of the data from a rights-based approach, implications for future studies, policy recommendations and conclusions of this research.

II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Agency and Economic Empowerment

Defining Economic Empowerment

“Empowerment” is one of the most common buzzwords in development discourse. Its origins are deeply rooted in social justice movements in the Global South, and the initial uses of the concept were related to political mobilization of communities aimed at transforming gender subordination and

breaking down layers of oppression.¹⁶ From its inclusion in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it “began to enter the discourse of mainstream development agencies as they sought to mitigate the harsher effects of neo-liberal policies”.¹⁷ However, the lack of a clear definition of what empowerment is has also led to a co-optation by development technocrats, watering down its agency-based component.¹⁸

In this paper, I use a definition of empowerment that is rooted in agency, comprehending both the freedom “to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values [someone] regards as important”¹⁹ and the capacity to make strategic decisions.²⁰ Kabeer’s notion of power encompasses the “ability to make choices”,²¹ which stems from Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach, but is intrinsically a *process* by which a person or group gains an ability to exercise decision-making from a range of alternatives.²² Empowerment is, therefore, a challenge to power structures, a shift in social dynamics by which those oppressed gain control over their lives: it is the process of increasing their capacity to set goals, negotiate, make strategic decisions and choices, and act upon those choices.²³

Specifically, development programming based on women’s economic empowerment comprehends a wide set of policies aimed at improving women’s control over economic resources and strengthening

¹⁶ Gita Sen and Caren Grown, *Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women’s Perspectives* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), 86; Kate Cronin-Furman, Nimmi Gowrinathan, and Rafia Zakaria, “Emissaries of Empowerment” (New York, 2017), 2.

¹⁷ Jane L. Parpart, “Exploring the Transformative Potential of Gender Mainstreaming in International Development Institutions,” *Journal of International Development* 26, no. 3 (April 1, 2014): 383.

¹⁸ Cronin-Furman, Gowrinathan, and Zakaria, “Emissaries of Empowerment,” 11.

¹⁹ Amartya Sen, “Well-Being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 4 (April 1985): 203.

²⁰ Naila Kabeer, “Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment,” *Development and Change* 30, no. 3 (1999): 437.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 436.

²² *Ibid.*, 437.

²³ Naila Kabeer, “Economic Pathways to Women’s Empowerment and Active Citizenship: What Does The Evidence From Bangladesh Tell Us?,” *The Journal of Development Studies* 53, no. 5 (May 4, 2017): 651.

women's economic security.²⁴ Economic empowerment uses diverse resources based on human, financial, social or physical capital, including an increase of women's education, access to loans or saving programs, access to networks or mentors, or access to land or machinery to carry out economic activity.²⁵ Some authors state that increasing women's autonomy through economic autonomy programmes such as micro-finance or conditional cash transfers automatically leads to an increase in their empowerment.²⁶ However, research has shown that while these programs can help women increase their economic autonomy, they do not necessarily lead to a change in gender relations or power distribution.²⁷ In order to *empower* women, programs must also encompass a redistribution of power between men and women.

Economic Autonomy Data in the Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, only 48% of women of working age are economically active, whereas 71% of men are.²⁸ The majority of women work in domestic service, sales and the service sector,²⁹ and a 61.1% works for a third party, compared with 32% who are self-employed.³⁰ In general, the majority (62.4%) of divorced, separated and widow women are employed, compared to single (32.3%) and married (49.2%) women.³¹ Apart from the marital status, having children also has a

²⁴ Srilatha Batliwala, "The Meaning of Women's Empowerment: New Concepts from Action," in *Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment, and Rights*, ed. Gita Sen, Adrienne Germain, and Lincoln C. Chen (Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, 1994), 127–38.

²⁵ Anne Marie Golla et al., "Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework and Indicators," 2011, 4.

²⁶ Linda Mayoux, "Tackling the Down Side: Social Capital, Women's Empowerment and Micro-Finance in Cameroon," *Development and Change* 32 (2001): 421–51.

²⁷ Hirut B Haile et al., "Is There a Convergence or Divergence between Feminist Empowerment and Microfinance Institutions' Success Indicators?," *Journal of International Development* 27 (2015): 1042–57.

²⁸ Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *ENHOGAR-2016*, 49.

²⁹ Centro de Estudios Sociales y Demográficos and ICF International, *ENDESA 2013*, 299.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 301.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 298.

correlation with women's employment: at least 16% more of women from 15 to 49 years old with one or more children work compared to the percentage of women without any children.³²

The "Private Sphere": Women's Care Work Responsibilities

Unpaid Care Work and the Second Shift

Scholars who focus on women's economic contribution to the formal job market, specifically looking at the feminization of labor with the rise of capitalism,³³ have studied changes in gender patterns in societies as women have gradually entered the public sphere and engaged in formal economic activities. One of the most notable findings in this process has been that the inclusion of women in the labor force has not been associated with a redistribution of the household work and care responsibilities (traditionally, the main sphere to which women were relegated).³⁴ Scholars Arlie Hochschild and Machung (1989)³⁵ used the following question to illustrate this situation: "if the person who carries out unpaid household work (in a family that cannot afford household help) starts working full time, how are intrafamilial dynamics affected?"³⁶ According to her research based on participant observation and interviews, Hochschild and Machung observed that the women in such families tended to take care of the planning and execution of daily household tasks,³⁷ whereas men tended to take responsibility of non-time sensitive activities, such as fixing appliances or mowing the lawn, only planning and scheduling those.³⁸ In terms of quantity, Hochschild and Machung calculated

³² Ibid.

³³ Valentine M. Moghadam, "Gender and the Global Economy," in *Revisioning Gender*, ed. Myra Marx Ferree, Judith Lorber, and Beth B. Hess (Sage, 1999), 134.

³⁴ Ibid., 135.

³⁵ Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, 2.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 8.

³⁸ Ibid.

that, counting paid and unpaid work, women worked one month more than men did.³⁹ In terms of quality, she noted that women tended to execute the considered “undesirable tasks”,⁴⁰ such as scrubbing bathrooms or cleaning toilets. Using a metaphor from industrial life, Hochschild and Machung referred to this phenomenon as the “second shift”, equating women’s work in the household as a task with as many responsibilities and intensity as a shift in a formal job.⁴¹

The division of household labor traces back to the idea that women and men belong to separate spheres, with men’s realm being the public sphere and women’s place being the home. This could be justified as simple role theory with egalitarian distribution of the workload among groups (in this case, families). However, when looked through a gender lens, this justification loses its reason as it is proved that women still carry out the bulk of the household and child care work when entering the formal job market full-time.⁴² It is then when gender roles come into place to explain the imbalance in the distribution of household and care work.

Women are believed to be naturally overly competent and energetic (the myth of women as multitaskers),⁴³ communal, “concerned with others’ personal and emotional needs, selfless, and nurturing”.⁴⁴ These are traits that have traditionally been linked to the biological sex “female” and not understood as gendered patterns of conduct related to patriarchy. This has led to the common belief that care work should be attributed to women, as if they were inherently better prepared to take

³⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁴¹ Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, 6.

⁴² Rebecca J. Erickson, “Why Emotion Work Matters: Sex, Gender, and the Division of Household Labor,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67, no. 2 (2005): 337.

⁴³ Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, 24.

⁴⁴ Janet N. Ahn, Elizabeth L. Haines, and Malia F. Mason, “Gender Stereotypes and the Coordination of Mnemonic Work within Heterosexual Couples: Romantic Partners Manage Their Daily To-Dos,” *Sex Roles* 77, no. 7–8 (October 6, 2017): 437.

on these roles.⁴⁵ As a consequence, and as Hochschild and Machung portrayed in their groundbreaking piece, the majority of women are expected to undertake full-time jobs in the formal labor market, as well as perform the bulk of household planning and executing, as well as child care and emotional labor within their families.

Care and Micro Entrepreneurship

Although the literature regarding how the second shift affects women who work in the formal job market is extensive, there is little knowledge regarding how gender roles operate in the households of women entrepreneurs (even more so in the Global South).⁴⁶ In opposition, the majority of academic research around women entrepreneurs is focused on the technical difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs in the running of their businesses.⁴⁷ Literature produced in South Asia suggests that women entrepreneurs suffer from role overload (they are expected to fulfil multiple roles within a limited amount of time), with the spheres of work and private life interfering with each other.⁴⁸ Poor time management and the interference of work with private life pushes women to dedicate all their time to income-generating activities and unpaid care work depending on the needs of each, being

⁴⁵ Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, 24; Ahn et al., “Gender Stereotypes and the Coordination of Mnemonic Work,” p. 437.

⁴⁶ Rincy V. Mathew and N. Panchanatham, “An Exploratory Study on the Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in South India,” *Asian Academy of Management Journal* 16, no. 2 (2011): 81-82; Martin Valdivia, “Understanding the Role of the Couple in Key Decisions and Actions of the Female Entrepreneur in Peru,” in *Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment: Critical Lessons from South America*, ed. Susana Martínez-Restrepo and Laura Ramos-Jaimes, First (Colombia: La Imprenta Ediciones S.A., 2017), 63; Purvi Pareek and Chaya Bagrecha, “A Thematic Analysis of the Challenges and Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs Working in Small-Scale Industries,” *Vision* 21, no. 4 (2017): 469; Sumaira Rehman and Muhammad Azam Roomi, “Gender and Work-life Balance: A Phenomenological Study of Women Entrepreneurs in Pakistan,” *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* 19, no. 2 (May 11, 2012): 210.

⁴⁷ Mathew and Panchanatham, “An Exploratory Study on the Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in South India,” 81-82; Valdivia, “Understanding the Role of the Couple in Key Decisions and Actions of the Female Entrepreneur in Peru,” 63; Pareek and Bagrecha, “A Thematic Analysis of the Challenges and Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs Working in Small-Scale Industries,” 469; Rehman and Azam Roomi, “Gender and Work-life Balance: A Phenomenological Study of Women Entrepreneurs in Pakistan,” 210.

⁴⁸ Mathew and Panchanatham, “An Exploratory Study on the Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in South India,” 94.

unable to keep a set schedule and lacking free time.⁴⁹ Other concerns for married women are the jealousy of the spouse and lack of shared household responsibilities,⁵⁰ while those who are single heads of household express lack of acceptance of their journey as single working mothers, as well as lack of a sufficient support network.⁵¹ In general, both single and non-single women express dissatisfaction,⁵² health concerns⁵³ and improper rest,⁵⁴ which are all neglected “because of role overload as well as time limitations”.⁵⁵ Many women state that with support of their spouse and families, managing the different roles would be easier.⁵⁶

Importing Good Practices on Agency: the Lack of Latin American Data

The literature based on case studies from South Asia can help explain generally how the second shift plays out in a developing country context. However, the scarcity of research based on Latin American experiences makes it difficult to understand the individual and structural barriers that women experience in this region.⁵⁷ In the past, South Asian literature has been used as the theoretical basis

⁴⁹ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁰ Pareek and Bagrecha, “A Thematic Analysis of the Challenges and Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs Working in Small-Scale Industries,” 467; Rehman and Azam Roomi, “Gender and Work-life Balance: A Phenomenological Study of Women Entrepreneurs in Pakistan,” 210.

⁵¹ Pareek and Bagrecha, “A Thematic Analysis of the Challenges and Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs Working in Small-Scale Industries,” 467; Mathew and Panchanatham, “An Exploratory Study on the Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in South India,” 96.

⁵² Mathew and Panchanatham, “An Exploratory Study on the Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in South India,” 94.

⁵³ Pareek and Bagrecha, “A Thematic Analysis of the Challenges and Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs Working in Small-Scale Industries,” 467.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Mathew and Panchanatham, “An Exploratory Study on the Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in South India,” 80. Rehman and Azam Roomi, “Gender and Work-life Balance: A Phenomenological Study of Women Entrepreneurs in Pakistan,” 219.

⁵⁶ Rehman and Azam Roomi, “Gender and Work-life Balance: A Phenomenological Study of Women Entrepreneurs in Pakistan,” 216.

⁵⁷ Martínez-Restrepo et al., *Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment: Critical Lessons from South America*, 14-15.

for development programs aimed at increasing women's economic empowerment.⁵⁸ However, this approach has proved unsuccessful in other instances in the Global South, due to different cultural and social norms, therefore not improving women's overall well-being through economic empowerment tools.⁵⁹

As an example, Martínez Restrepo states that Latin American women are in charge not only of performing household and care work, but of making the everyday decisions of the household, such as requesting and collecting social benefits from their governments. She notes that unlike what South Asian literature suggests (that women are disempowered because they lack decision-making), Latin American women are overburdened by their decision-making duties, limiting the time they allocate for paid work, rest and leisure.⁶⁰ The available research on Latin American women entrepreneurs suggests that empowerment might not be linked only to strategic decision-making, as Kabeer suggested, but to a redistribution of the household and care work that currently causes women to be overwhelmed by the time they spend carrying out unpaid decision-making chores.⁶¹ As observed in Hochschild and Machung's research on the American society of the 1980s, research on Peruvian women entrepreneurs suggests that, even when running a business, women are still the people in charge of tasks such as "washing and ironing, food preparation, caring for sick family members, and house cleaning", as well as caring for minor dependents.⁶² Male spouses, on the other hand, are responsible for occasional house repairs.⁶³

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁶¹ Valdivia, "Understanding the Role of the Couple in Key Decisions and Actions of the Female Entrepreneur in Peru," 64-65.

⁶² Ibid., 76.

⁶³ Ibid.

As observed, Latin American women's care and household work responsibilities are not automatically redistributed when they engage in entrepreneurial economic activities outside the realm of their household. It is necessary, therefore, that the design of economic empowerment programming acknowledges the barriers that women face in the private sphere and addresses the phenomenon of the second shift in its design in order to increase their agency and their empowerment.

Household Data on the Dominican Republic

The rate of single female-headed households in the Dominican Republic is 39.9%, which shows a sustained increasing trend (the rate was 35% in 2007).⁶⁴ This number is higher in urban communities compared with rural environments.⁶⁵ The majority of female heads of household are separated (45.8%) or widows (20.8%), compared with men heads of household, most of whom are in its majority in a relationship.⁶⁶ This means that when women are heads of household, they usually are the only parent in the household, whereas when men are heads of household they typically have the support of a partner.

Data from 2016 shows that men dedicate 9.5 hours a week more than women to remunerated work.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the scarcity of time use statistics in the Dominican Republic prevents me from comparing the the number of hours that women and men dedicate to unpaid care work, in order to analyze the total number of hours that men and women dedicate to both unpaid and paid work. Children (mainly girls) bear part of the burden of household unpaid work: 51.3% of the total time dedicated to unremunerated housekeeping infantile and juvenile work is performed by girls between

⁶⁴ Centro de Estudios Sociales y Demográficos and ICF International, *ENDESA 2013*, 33.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁶ Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *ENHOGAR-2016*, 20.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

5 and 17 years old and 0.5% of children (0.8% of girls and 0.3% of boys) between 5 and 14 years old work more than 28 hours a week in their household.⁶⁸

Regarding the conception of Latin American mothers as *supermoms*,⁶⁹ women in the Dominican Republic seem to lack decision-making power when they live with a male partner, according to the statistical data available. For instance, only half of the women decide on her own what they spend the money they earn on.⁷⁰ However, there has been an increase of decision-making power since 2007 and there is evidence that younger women have more power over these decisions than older women, which shows a positive trend in their empowerment.⁷¹

The Dominican Republic is fifth the country with the highest rate of teen pregnancy in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁷² Data from 2010 shows that 22% of women between 15 and 19 years had been pregnant at least once (including those that did not end up with childbirth).⁷³ Early pregnancy affects teen and young adult women's chances of attending school and university: according to data from 2013, a 20.4% of women between 15 and 19 years old and 22.9% of women between 20 and 24 dropped out of school because of a pregnancy.⁷⁴ Moreover, women who had at least one pregnancy during their teen years start being economically active later than women who had a pregnancy at a later stage.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *Encuesta Nacional de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (ENHOGAR 2009-2010)*, Santo Domingo, 2011, 144.

⁶⁹ Martínez-Restrepo et al., *Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Critical Lessons from South America*, 15.

⁷⁰ Centro de Estudios Sociales y Demográficos and ICF International, *ENDESA 2013*, 302-303.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² The adolescent birth rate per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19 years old of the Dominican Republic is 90, which is surpassed only by Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Venezuela. United Nations Population Fund. *The State of World Population 2018 - The Power of Choice: Reproductive Rights and the Demographic Transition*. New York, 2018, 132-136.

⁷³ Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *ENHOGAR-2016*, 149.

⁷⁴ Centro de Estudios Sociales y Demográficos and ICF International, *ENDESA 2013*, 62.

⁷⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *El embarazo en adolescentes: Un desafío multidimensional en el ciclo de vida*. Santo Domingo, 2017, 75–76.

To this date, the government of the Dominican Republic has not developed a national care policy, unlike some of its Latin American counterparts Chile, Uruguay, Ecuador and Costa Rica.⁷⁶ In July 2018, the Vice Presidency of the Dominican Republic, through the Cabinet of Coordination of Social Policies (Gabinete de Coordinación de Políticas Sociales (GCPS)) started consultations in order to build a nation-wide care system aimed at “closing the gaps in care services required by Dominican families”.⁷⁷

A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development

In order to understand and address how the second shift plays out in women’s economic empowerment programming, it is essential to successfully integrate a rights-based approach. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights defines a human rights-based approach as “a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights”.⁷⁸ The rights-based approach also “seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress”.⁷⁹ This contrasts with a need-based approach to development, which is based on the idea of “charitable goodwill to meet the basic needs of very poor people”.⁸⁰

Rights-based work is composed of some or all of the following elements: an analysis of the organization’s work in terms of rights, a focus on empowerment, a sensitivity towards diversity and

⁷⁶ Karina Batthyány Dighiero. *Las políticas y el cuidado en América Latina: Una mirada a las experiencias regionales*. Santiago de Chile: United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2015.

⁷⁷ “Vicepresidencia impulsa proyecto con enfoque de género para convertir cuidado de la familia en política de Estado,” Gabinete de Coordinación de Políticas Sociales (GCPS), July 15, 2018, <https://gabinetesocial.gob.do/vicepresidencia-impulsa-proyecto-con-enfoque-de-genero-para-convertir-cuidado-de-la-familia-en-politica-de-estado/>.

⁷⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Frequently Asked Questions on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation*. New York and Geneva, 2006, 15.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Diana Mitlin and Sheela Patel, *Re-Interpreting the Rights-Based Approach – a Grassroots Perspective on Rights and Development*. GPRG Working Paper Series, Global Poverty Research Group, 2005, 6.

issues of difference and a shift from service provision to improving the lives of program users as a whole, and a design and implementation of programming directed at increasing the “participation of the target population in formal and informal decision-making processes throughout society”.⁸¹

The rights-based approach is particularly important when developing programming for groups that are systemically marginalized or oppressed and key in women’s empowerment programming. While gender equality, at least as a term commonly used, has been an important part of development programming since 1970s, the approach taken by the Women in Development (WID) stream and the UN Decade for Women—targeted at women’s economic independence and the lessening of their poverty, while not taking their culture and context into account—was closer to a charitable perspective more than the transformative and political approach of human rights.⁸² Contemporaneously, the CEDAW Convention, adopted in 1979, laid out the specific human rights of women with a focus on economic, social and cultural rights, without establishing a connection with development programming designed around women’s empowerment.⁸³ While some international agencies had already started incorporating human rights principles into development work, it was not until 1997 that the Secretary General of the United Nations (the newly elected Koffi Annan) called for a reform of the United Nations that included, for the first time, human rights as a cross-cutting theme, to “fully integrate it into the broad range of the Organization’s activities”.⁸⁴ Simultaneously, during the nineties, women’s rights movements gained confidence about their power to influence the UN system, including a certain gender sensitivity in several UN Conferences, including the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen (1995) and the UN Conference on Human Rights,

⁸¹ Molyneux and Lazar, *Doing the Rights Thing: Rights-Based Development and Latin American NGOs*, 6.

⁸² Jane S. Jaquette and Gale Summerfield, *Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice: Institutions, Resources, and Mobilization*, First edit (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁸³ Anna Carella and Brooke Ackerly, “Ignoring Rights Is Wrong: Re-Politicizing Gender Equality and Development with the Rights-Based Approach,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 2 (2017): 139.

⁸⁴ UN General Assembly, *Renewing the United Nations : a programme for reform: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, 58th Sess, UN Doc A/RES/52/12, 26.

Vienna (1993).⁸⁵ Since then, even though feminist movements and academics have expressed criticism towards whether a rights-based approach can have a real transformative power for women, the design and application of rights-based approaches has been well received by women's rights activists.⁸⁶

Among the reasons for support of this approach are the fact that the principles of "equality and non-discrimination are central to human rights and are included in most conventions", and human rights' focus on protecting and promoting a positive change for those "most marginalised in society", therefore facilitating that women's rights are promoted. A rights-based approach also forces development to be seen as "a political process of building the capacity of women [...] to challenge their gender roles within existing political institutions and to be part of the leadership that challenges unjust political institutions".⁸⁷ It also "brings an ethical and moral dimension to development assistance"⁸⁸ and it places accountability on policymakers "whose actions have an impact on the rights of people's".⁸⁹ Research shows that programming aimed at improving women's development in areas such as education and health is not intrinsically empowering if their human rights are not respected, both in the process but also in the consequences of these projects.⁹⁰ Therefore, applying a rights-based approach to development programming directed at women is key, as it grants women a role as active participating agents of their own development, strengthening their capacity to transform

⁸⁵ Dzodzi Tsikata, "The Rights-Based Approach to Development: Potential for Change or More of the Same?," *IDS Bulletin* 35, no. 4 (2009): 132.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Carella and Ackerly, "Ignoring Rights Is Wrong: Re-Politicizing Gender Equality and Development with the Rights-Based Approach," 144.

⁸⁸ Andrea Cornwall and Celestine Nyamu-Musembi, "Putting the 'rights-based Approach' to Development into Perspective," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 8 (September 2004): 1416.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1417.

⁹⁰ Gita Sen and Avanti Mukherjee, "No Empowerment without Rights, No Rights without Politics: Gender-Equality, MDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda," *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 15, no. 2-3 (July 3, 2014): 191.

oppressive gender structures and placing a responsibility on State actors and other policy-makers to ensure that the rights of all women are respected and promoted.⁹¹

A Rights-Based Approach to Unpaid Care Work and the Second Shift

The literature that applies a rights-based lens to unpaid care work is at an incipient stage and yet to be fully developed. A good starting point is a 2013 report from Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, which tentatively traces the human rights implications of unpaid care work.⁹² Sepúlveda Carmona focuses on women caregivers, paying specific attention to those in poverty, and drawing how States' failure to redress women's unequal care responsibilities violates their human rights as contained in international human rights conventions,⁹³ such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).⁹⁴

Bearing the majority of care work responsibilities can affect women's human right to equality and non-discrimination as contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).⁹⁵ Unpaid care work is borne disproportionately by women, who work longer hours than men when paid and unpaid work are added together.⁹⁶ However, the work done in the home is stigmatized and women are not recognized for their contribution to their global

⁹¹ Morten Broberg and Hans-otto Sano, "Strengths and Weaknesses in a Human Rights-Based Approach to International Development: An Analysis of a Rights-Based Approach to Development Assistance Based on Practical Experiences," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 22, no. 5 (2019).

⁹² The report defines care work as "domestic work (meal preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, water and fuel collection) and direct care of persons (including children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as able-bodied adults) carried out in homes and communities". Sepúlveda Carmona, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*, 3.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁴ "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women," conclusion date: December 18, 1979, *United Nations Treaty Series Online*, registration no. 20378.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, arts. 2 and 3.

⁹⁶ Sepúlveda Carmona, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*, 5.

economy.⁹⁷ This unequal distribution of work reflects relations of power between genders and is based on gender stereotypes, so it should be addressed by States' obligations to ensure gender equality at home, both in the private and the public sphere.⁹⁸ The State's obligation to ensure that women are not subjected to discriminatory treatment, as well as to ensure the full development and advancement of women, is enforceable not only against the State's own laws, but against third parties, ensuring the principle of due diligence.⁹⁹

In the case of women micro entrepreneurs who are the primary caregivers in their household, they become responsible of both jobs, generating a second shift and hindering women's right to decent work¹⁰⁰ as comprised in the CEDAW¹⁰¹ and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).¹⁰² On one side, it could contribute to incrementing the gender pay gap, as women who perform as caregivers tend to have less time to dedicate to their micro businesses.¹⁰³ When men are the caregivers, however, it does not affect their work hours and they don't receive a wage penalty.¹⁰⁴ Another factor that can hinder micro entrepreneur women's rights at work is higher levels of informal work than men,¹⁰⁵ which hinders their right to social security as comprised in ICESCR.¹⁰⁶ The informality to which they are subjected because of their caregiving

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women," arts. 2 and 3.

¹⁰⁰ Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona and Kate Donald, "What Does Care Have to Do with Human Rights? Analysing the Impact on Women's Rights and Gender Equality," *Gender & Development* 22, no. 3 (September 2, 2014): 445.

¹⁰¹ "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women," art. 11.

¹⁰² "International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights," conclusion date: December 16, 1966, *United Nations Treaty Series Online*, registration no. 14531, art. 6.

¹⁰³ Sepúlveda Carmona, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*, art. 9.

¹⁰⁴ Courtney Harold Van Houtven, Norma B. Coe, and Meghan M. Skira, "The Effect of Informal Care on Work and Wages," *Journal of Health Economics* 32, no. 1 (2013).

¹⁰⁵ Sepúlveda Carmona, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ "International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights," art. 9.

responsibilities subjects them to not being included by social insurance, putting them at risk of not having paid parental leave, unemployment insurance or access to certain pensions.¹⁰⁷ According to Sepúlveda Carmona, “under human rights law, States parties are obliged to establish non-contributory schemes in order to uphold this right for the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups”.¹⁰⁸

The unequal distribution of unpaid care work can also challenge women’s right to health as contained in the ICESCR.¹⁰⁹ Research has shown that women experiencing the second shift consider themselves “overworked, sick, emotionally drained”.¹¹⁰ Women can be more sensitive to developing clinical depression, since they are subjected to the time pressure associated with the second shift (e.g. taking care of planning and executing daily tasks).¹¹¹ Research also shows that both men and women caregivers who are employed full-time outside of the household are more prone to consuming higher amounts of all medical drugs,¹¹² and specifically anti-depressants.¹¹³ Finally, women are more prone to being sleep deprived, as the planning aspect and the emotional labor of the second shift, as well as time pressure, can provoke delayed sleep or insomnia.¹¹⁴ States have the obligation to provide access to health facilities, goods, information and services to women with unpaid care work responsibilities, notwithstanding their job status, as well as provide “services that are sensitive to gender and life-cycle

¹⁰⁷ Sepúlveda Carmona, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*, 13.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ “International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights,” art. 12.

¹¹⁰ Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, 9.

¹¹¹ Susan Roxburgh, “‘There Just Aren’t Enough Hours in the Day’: The Mental Health Consequences of Time Pressure,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 45, no. 2 (2004): 126.

¹¹² Hendrik Schmitz and Magdalena A. Stroka, “Health and the Double Burden of Full-Time Work and Informal Care Provision - Evidence from Administrative Data,” *Labour Economics* 24 (2013): 312.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 313.

¹¹⁴ David J. Maume, Rachel A. Sebastian, and Anthony R. Bardo, “Gender, Work-Family Responsibilities, and Sleep,” *Gender & Society* 24, no. 6 (2010): 758.

requirements, including the demands and constraints of unpaid care work, for example by providing childcare facilities.”¹¹⁵

The right to education as comprised in the CEDAW¹¹⁶ and the ICESCR¹¹⁷ can also be hindered by unpaid care work. Due to societal expectations regarding child care and household obligations, girls are sometimes expected to stop their studies in order to perform care work in the household.¹¹⁸ Carrying out these responsibilities “may mean that [women with children] have to forsake skills development, training opportunities and further education in order to undertake childcare and domestic work”. Economic opportunity, therefore, may be compromised due to this lack of access to education and professional development.¹¹⁹ States must ensure that women and girls can enjoy their right to education by adopting concrete measures that ensure that unpaid care work responsibilities do not interfere with their access to schooling and technical training.¹²⁰

Finally, women’s responsibilities regarding unpaid care work can compromise their “right to participation in cultural, social, political and economic life”,¹²¹ as comprised in CEDAW,¹²² ICESCR,¹²³ the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹²⁴ and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹²⁵ The unequal distribution of care responsibilities between men and women can

¹¹⁵ Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*, 12.

¹¹⁶ “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,” art. 10.

¹¹⁷ “International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights,” art. 13.

¹¹⁸ Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*, 11.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²² “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,” arts. 7, 8, 13.c and 14.2.

¹²³ “International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights,” arts. 13.1 and 15.1.

¹²⁴ UN General Assembly, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” December 12, 1948, G.A. Res. 217 U.N. Doc. A/810, arts. 21 and 27.

¹²⁵ “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” conclusion date: December 16, 1966, *United Nations Treaty Series Online*, registration no. 14668, art. 25.

confine women to the domestic sphere, “excluding them from public life and preventing them from participating in important decision-making processes at the community and national level.”¹²⁶ Therefore, States must ensure that women are not excluded from public life and can participate in decision-making “at the national, regional and local levels”.¹²⁷ In order to fulfil women’s right to participation, States must create policies that redistribute unpaid care work responsibilities so they do not become a barrier to women’s participation in public life.¹²⁸

III: WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN VALVERDE

Valverde, in the Cibao Noroeste region,¹²⁹ has a population of 163,030 people,¹³⁰ and the proportion of women is lower than the average of the country (0.48%).¹³¹ It is mainly an urban population (80% of people live in urban areas).¹³² Valverde is one of the poorest provinces of the country: 18.7% of households are in extreme poverty and 37.6% are in moderate poverty, compared to the total of the state, where 10.4% are in extreme poverty and 30% in moderate poverty.¹³³ It also belongs to one of the regions with the lowest rate of employment for women (43.8% of women in 2013 said they were currently employed, compared to the average of 48.1% for the country).¹³⁴ As of 2013, the rate of employment for coupled women of working age was also lower than the average of

¹²⁶ Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*, 15.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *X Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2010: Informe General (Volumen I: Informe General)*, Santo Domingo, 2012, 27.

¹³⁰ Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *Volumen I: Informe General*, 27.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Oficina Nacional de Estadística, United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF, *Perfiles Estadísticos Provinciales: Regiones Cibao Norte - Noroeste*, Santo Domingo, 2012, 193.

¹³⁴ Centro de Estudios Sociales y Demográficos and ICF International, *ENDESA 2013*, 298.

the country: in this region, only 52.8% of women who were married or in a relationship between 15-49 years had a job, compared with the average of the country, which was 59.1%.¹³⁵ Valverde also shows less decision-making power of women than the average of the country: as of 2013, only 42.4% of women in the region where Valverde is located decide on their own what they spend the money they earn on, compared with the national average (51%).¹³⁶

Impulsando and Women Micro Entrepreneurs

In September 2015, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) office in the Dominican Republic and the Valverde Local Economic Development Agency (ADELVA) started the implementation of the program “*Impulsando la Autonomía Económica y participación de las Mujeres en la provincia de Valverde*” [the *Impulsando* program]. The goal of the program was to empower women micro entrepreneurs in the region by strengthening their economic capacities, increasing their political participation and raising awareness about gender equality in the province.¹³⁷

This program was aimed at tackling the feminization of poverty in the region, as well as the “existence of gender inequalities in the development of survival strategies of poor family groups”.¹³⁸ These inequalities stem from several factors, such as an increase of the percentage of households headed by women, the hardships that women face when trying to insert themselves in the provincial value chain and the gender pay gap (when employed, women earn three times less than men).¹³⁹

The principal activities of *Impulsando* were directed towards building the capacities of women micro-entrepreneurs in the municipalities of Mao, Esperanza and Laguna Salada, in Valverde. In

¹³⁵ Ibid., 302.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 304.

¹³⁷ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Agencia de Desarrollo Local de Valverde (ADELVA), *Plan de Iniciación: Impulsando la Autonomía Económica y participación de las Mujeres en la provincia de Valverde*, Santo Domingo, 2015, 3.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

conversations with Martín Peña (Executive Director of ADELVA) and Nicole Rodríguez (ADELVA staff member in charge of *Impulsando*), it was mentioned that micro entrepreneurship is a popular occupation in the area, generating more jobs than bigger enterprises.¹⁴⁰ Specifically, people in Valverde with a low level of studies or without specific technical skills tend to opt for this occupation.

¹⁴¹ In the past, ADELVA had identified groups of women to whom they had given loans to carry out micro businesses, but the women often lacked technical training to carry out these activities.¹⁴² This realization was what motivated ADELVA to carry out a program to assist women micro entrepreneurs demanding trainings to improve the quality of their work.¹⁴³

The program was designed in two phases. The goal of the first phase was to identify the women who could be participants of the program by reaching out to neighborhood councils and local associations and offering public training on economic empowerment and gender equality.¹⁴⁴ During this phase, ADELVA held 38 awareness-raising events for 1058 people, and 13 formative actions on gender equality and local development were held for 770 people (a total of 1828 individuals trained).¹⁴⁵ In the second phase, ADELVA divided the participants according to the product or service offered by their micro-entrepreneurship and formed seven groups: the banana fiber craftswomen, the jewel makers, the candy vendors, the food vendors, the agricultural producers, the sellers of clothing and interior decorators and the beauty experts.¹⁴⁶ After forming the groups, ADELVA offered specialised technical trainings to each group new businesses, as well as general workshops for all participants in

¹⁴⁰ Martín Peña (Executive Director of ADELVA) and Nicole Rodríguez (ADELVA staff member), in discussion with the author, June 2018.

¹⁴¹ Martín Peña and Nicole Rodríguez, in discussion with the author.

¹⁴² Rosa Matos (UNDP staff member), in discussion with the author, August 2018.

¹⁴³ Rosa Matos, in discussion with the author.

¹⁴⁴ Martín Peña and Nicole Rodríguez, in discussion with the author.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Agencia de Desarrollo Local de Valverde (ADELVA), *Plan de Iniciación: Impulsando la Autonomía Económica y participación de las Mujeres en la provincia de Valverde, Fase 2*, Santo Domingo, 2017.

¹⁴⁶ Martín Peña and Nicole Rodríguez, in discussion with the author.

matters regarding their businesses (such as finances, business management, the use of technology and collective mark), as well as awareness-raising trainings in gender equality, gender-based violence and self-esteem, among others.¹⁴⁷

The Role of Unpaid Care Work in *Impulsando*

Training on gender equality was one of the main objectives of the program, and workshop sessions on gender were carried out to groups including men and women in phase one.¹⁴⁸ In phase two, the gender equality sessions to participants became more specific and discussions were had among the women regarding their past and present experiences as women in Valverde.¹⁴⁹ However, unpaid care work was not included in either of the program documents and was not a subject of training to either community members or women participants. The “Care economy” was mentioned as a subject of a training directed to specific women within the community, but was not included in the project document of the second phase of the project, which does not mention “care work” or “care economy” in any of its provisions, differently from the first phase.

The reason behind this lack of programming around care work is, according to its designers and implementers, due to a lack of knowledge of the importance of this issue in women’s economic autonomy.¹⁵⁰ ADELVA staff expressed that care work is not very visible in the area and that they only understood the role it plays in women’s economic empowerment once they started *Impulsando*’s implementation.¹⁵¹ Some of the issues that ADELVA staff found initially were the difficulty of organizing trainings (which could only be scheduled in the afternoon due to the women’s

¹⁴⁷ Martín Peña and Nicole Rodríguez, in discussion with the author; Rosa Matos, in discussion with the author.

¹⁴⁸ UNDP and ADELVA, *Plan de Iniciación: Impulsando la Autonomía Económica y participación de las Mujeres en la provincia de Valverde*, 9.

¹⁴⁹ Martín Peña and Nicole Rodríguez, in discussion with the author; Rosa Matos, in discussion with the author.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Martín Peña and Nicole Rodríguez, in discussion with the author.

responsibilities to prepare meals for their families) and women’s lack of energy during the prepared activities due to their multiple obligations.¹⁵² Rosa Matos, the UNDP officer in charge of the design and monitoring of *Impulsando*, also attributed this lack of attention to care work to the fact that this was a pilot program, as well as to a lack of funding and resources from ADELVA to carry out a more comprehensive program.¹⁵³

IV: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research Approach

This research is based on a case study, using qualitative methods such as focus group and in-depth interviews from a narrative inquiry approach using a rights-based lens.

Quantitative methods used traditionally to measure the impact of women’s economic empowerment programming are not sufficient, since their intention to measure an “objective” outcome often misses the structural elements that could contribute to an increase or decrease of women’s well-being.¹⁵⁴

Qualitative methods, on the other hand, allow the researcher to obtain nuanced information about how women perceive their own experience and enable the researcher to develop conclusions based on data collected, instead of testing hypothesis based on pre-conceived notions (using quantitative techniques).¹⁵⁵ For instance, quantitative data could show an increase in women’s income, as well as a decrease in the hours they spend carrying out unpaid work in the household, which could be deemed

¹⁵² Martín Peña and Nicole Rodríguez, in discussion with the author.

¹⁵³ Rosa Matos, in discussion with the author.

¹⁵⁴ Sandra Harding, “Just Add Women and Stir?,” in *Missing Links* (Rugby, Warwickshire, United Kingdom: Practical Action Publishing, 1995), 306-307; Johanna Yancari Cueva, “What Does It Mean to Jointly Manage Household Expenditures? Evidence from a Financial Education Program in Peru,” in *Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment: Critical Lessons from South America*, ed. Laura Ramos-Jaimes and Susana Martínez-Restrepo (Colombia: La Imprenta Ediciones S.A., 2017), 54.

¹⁵⁵ Gabriela Delgado Ballesteros, “Conocerte En La Acción Y El Intercambio. La Investigación: Acción Participativa,” in *Investigación Feminista: Epistemología, Metodología Y Representaciones Sociales*, ed. Norma Blazquez Graf, Fatima Flores Palacios, and Maribel Ríos Everardo, 2nd ed. (Mexico DF: UNAM, 2012), 199.

a success in terms of their empowerment. However, qualitative techniques can reveal the feelings and thoughts that women have in relation to these changes, how these changes have affected their lives and what they believe are the causes of such changes and perceptions.

Through case study research, my aim has been to expose how the second shift plays out in a specific context. Case study research helps recognize the diversity between individuals in a similar context, and how the different elements that compose their social and personal background can shape their opinions and views on a certain issue or experience.¹⁵⁶ It is useful to “[investigate] a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, the aim is not to assume that findings can be generalized to any other society or context,¹⁵⁸ but to illustrate how specific cultural and social variables shape women’s experience regarding unpaid care work and economic activity, focusing on a very particular region of the Dominican Republic and a particular program implemented there.

By making “narrative” the center of analysis, the focus of the research is not placed on facts that can be confirmed or refuted, but on the value of people’s lived experiences as they are perceived and told by them.¹⁵⁹ This is especially powerful in feminist research, as it recognizes the value women’s experiences, which have historically been marginalized.¹⁶⁰ However, the intrinsic relational nature of narrative inquiry, in which interviewer and interviewee converse through an open-ended structure, can open a space for self-reflection for the interviewee, which can have a symbiotic value.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Robert E Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publications, 1995), 134.

¹⁵⁷ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Second Edition (SAGE Publications, 1994), 13.

¹⁵⁸ Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, 7.

¹⁵⁹ Jerome Bruner, “The Narrative Construction of Reality,” *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 1–21.

¹⁶⁰ Heather Fraser and Christiana MacDougall, “Doing Narrative Feminist Research: Intersections and Challenges,” *Qualitative Social Work* 16, no. 2 (2017): 242-243.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 244; F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin, “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry,” *Educational Researcher* 19, no. 5 (June 1, 1990): 3-4.

Finally, a rights-based approach is applied in order to better understand how development affects the experiences of women as rights-holders, conceptualizing economic empowerment programming as a tool to build women's capacities to challenge or negotiate the gender norms around them.¹⁶²

Data Collection Methods and Sampling

The fieldwork was conducted from June 11th to August 3rd, 2018, in the localities of Mao, Esperanza and Laguna Salada in Valverde province. The primary data consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews (both formal and informal) and a focus group.

Context and background information about Valverde and *Impulsando* was gathered through several informal interviews with Rosa Matos (UNDP officer in charge of the design and monitoring of the program), Martín Peña (Executive Director of ADELVA) and Nicole Rodríguez (ADELVA staff member in charge of the *Impulsando* program).

The sample was composed of 14 women from Valverde province who owned small businesses and had been part of *Impulsando*. To better capture the different experiences of women micro entrepreneurs in the area, as well as to detect common themes across very diverse personal experiences, a maximum variation approach to sampling¹⁶³ was used. The sampling criteria included diversity of age, location and business sector, and with the only shared characteristic of having participated in *Impulsando* and owning a small business. Identification and recruitment of participants for the focus group was carried out with the assistance of Nicole Rodriguez from ADELVA.

A focus group was carried out with the 14 women participants with the aim of gathering information about women micro entrepreneurs in Valverde generally: their socio-economic situation, their

¹⁶² Carella and Ackerly, "Ignoring Rights Is Wrong: Re-Politicizing Gender Equality and Development with the Rights-Based Approach," 144.

¹⁶³ Using a maximum variation approach, the researcher picks a sample that can shed light on how a phenomenon plays out differently by using the most diverse individuals for their study. It follows the logic that "any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program." Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed. (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1990), 235.

perceived role and standing in their community, and their views on cross-cutting themes such as motherhood, unpaid care work and time use. The focus group was carried out in a private office space owned by ADELVA.

Following the focus group, 9 participants participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. This sampling was also purposeful, with the aim of exploring the most diverse experiences regarding women's family backgrounds and their view on unpaid work. Interviews were carried out in the women's homes or workplaces (depending on their preference) and lasted no more than one hour in order to avoid majorly disrupting their schedules.

This field study was reviewed and approved by Columbia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) through protocol IRB-AAAR8788.

Data Analysis

The data analysis began informally while I was conducting field work, after the focus group, where I collected data that both confirmed and contradicted my expectations, based on prior literature review. After this informal analysis, I modified some of the in-depth interview questions I had prepared before starting my field research. After conducting all my interviews, I wrote notes with my impressions and first conclusions, in order to keep a raw view of my research without having formally analyzed it. The data was analyzed again as I transcribed my interviews and focus group, where I wrote my initial conclusions before starting the coding process. I used NVivo as my coding software. I coded my data using a thematic approach and codes emerged as I analyzed my data, even at an informal stage.

In order to integrate a rights-based approach, I also considered how the human rights of women micro entrepreneurs of Valverde are affected by juggling their care work responsibilities with their micro entrepreneurial work. Since the literature on this issue is scarce, the report of Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, was used as a guide in this assessment.

V: FINDINGS

This section presents six themes and several sub-themes that I extracted from the data, namely the women's engagement in economic activity (and specifically micro entrepreneurship), the characteristics and challenges of the unpaid care work they perform, their perceived opportunities and challenges regarding education, health and participation, and their view on public resources spending in relation to lessening the burden of the double shift. The themes and sub-themes relate not only to the women's experiences regarding economic autonomy and unpaid care work, but also show how their circumstances affect and engage their children, their partners and other women in the community.

Regarding the women's characteristics as a group, all the women that were part of this study are older than 40 years old, except three of them. The majority of them are separated or widows, although two of them had re-married. The range of micro businesses they own is very diverse,¹⁶⁴ as is the characteristics in which they perform their work (for instance, some of the women have had their businesses for a long time, while some are just starting with theirs). Apart from their businesses, as explained below, many of them have other jobs with fixed schedules.

Engagement in Economic Activity

Motivating Factors

The motivations of the women to work for pay, whether at a job or through entrepreneurship, vary. The majority of them being separated or widows, they explained that it is indispensable to have a job or a microbusiness to have an income for their families. In many cases, it was not until the death of a partner or a separation that they started working in exchange for pay (before that, the man would be

¹⁶⁴ The majority of the business are carried out within the household and include crafting using banana peel fiber, selling clothes, sewing bedding or having a beauty salon. Some of the businesses that are performed outside of the household include selling home-made food in the street (such as ice-cream or hot dogs) or having a store.

the breadwinner and the woman would work taking care of the family and the household). In general, all women value being independent and able to make their own decisions about money, even though this feeling was expressed more firmly by younger women. One of them mentioned she values “the possibility of having [her] own personal project”.

Regarding micro entrepreneurship, some stressed that it is harder to start a business while living with a partner, as they tend to impose their view over the business. In the view of one of the women, “men prefer to be authorities rather than having equality in the marriage”. Others expressed that they were motivated by working on things that make their customers happy, such as having a manicure and pedicure business or making ice creams and sweets. One of the youngest women explained that she saw entrepreneurship as a “way of life” and that she valued being her own boss.

Some stressed that micro entrepreneurship was the only option for them, due to a lack of technical skills, health issues which prevent them from having long working days, or the ability to combine their micro business with their household chores (when they work from home). One of the oldest women expressed that even though she did not need the income from her banana crafts, it helped her to be active and “not become depressed at home”.

Most of the women have more than one economic activity, either combining a job and her micro business or two or more micro enterprises. The reasons are diverse: some mentioned that having the extra income of a micro business helps them pay for their children’s studies or to re-pay loans. Others expressed that they need it to pay for health bills, due to different health problems, which include cancer or a hernia. The cost of medical assistance became a central topic in these conversations, due to the fact that most of the women do not have health insurances because they don’t have formal jobs.

Trainings and Learning

The importance of receiving trainings also became central in my conversations with the women. All of them expressed being grateful that there were nonprofit institutions such ADELVA and the existence

of the government agency *Instituto Nacional de Formación Técnico Profesional* (National Institute of Technical and Professional Training, known by its acronym INFOTEP) that would offer them free trainings, both in technical skills and in gender equality. Most of them started their businesses after attending one of these trainings. Moreover, many of the women had not graduated from high school or dropped out from university, and they expressed that these trainings helped them advance their skills, both technical and on social areas. The younger women also mentioned the internet as a way to offer products that are innovative in their areas and to train themselves in, for instance, cooking skills.

Public Recognition

In general, all agreed that they have good recognition in their communities and see how people are proud of them. Men in their communities have congratulated them for their work. However, some also stated that while the community appreciated their activities, husbands in the community are not very supportive of their wives engaging with businesses. Also, one of the women explained that when she started a business with her husband, people tended to think she was not the boss, but an employee.

Unpaid Care Work

In general, all the women included in this study except one agreed that unpaid work is as important as work carried out outside the household, as well as expressing that women's role in performing care work is not biological but "learned". Only one of them expressed a negative opinion of women who only carry out unpaid work, stating that "many women [in her town] act as servants of their husbands".

Women's Responsibilities and Schedules

All the women interviewed except one have two children or more. In many cases, their children have lived at home until their early or mid-twenties, even if they had their own job, for various reasons. Apart from their caring for their own children, some of the women are currently taking care of elderly parents and/or grandchildren who live in the same household.

In the case of women who are divorced, the majority express that the father of their children was either totally absent as they grew up or that he helped on certain occasions, such as a grave illness in a child.

As the type of business and family obligations change, the women's schedules do too. Those who have a job, such as being a nurse or working at a school, have shifts from 9 to 12 hours a day. Some of them have scheduled their shifts to be at night so they can take care of the household chores, such as cleaning and preparing food for their family, during the day. Others start working on their businesses around 5 or 6 am, while their families are asleep, and keep working after dinner. In one case, one woman expressed that it was hard for her to get to sleep in the morning, while her children were in school, after working all night.

Those who take care of elderly family members expressed that it is more time consuming than when their children were growing up, and that there are less people available to help them with these activities.

Who Helps?

One of the key questions during the study has been "who helps you when you have more work than you can handle?". During the focus group, the women all agreed that it was their children, as well as their extended family. However, from the interviews I could gather that the people who would help were overwhelmingly female.

Most expressed that their children help or helped them with the household chores, from cleaning to cooking to taking care of their brothers and sisters, and that who carried out which chore depended

on their preferences. The majority of them agreed that their daughters were more active in this task, but the difference was not overwhelming. Some of the children had gotten paid jobs as teenagers to help their mothers economically and kept sending money after leaving the home. However, all women agree that they did not allow their children to drop out of their studies to have a job, as getting an education was their priority for their children.

When reaching out to extended family or community members, the women interviewed noted that it is usually other women (their mother, sister, neighbor) are the ones who help with cleaning, taking care of children or cooking. Two expressed having gone to live with their mothers after a divorce or while studying. Men (such as brothers or fathers) tend to help economically, such as sending money or lending them capital to further their businesses.

The Role of Men

In general, the view on men as partners was not very positive. In the focus group, many agreed that men want to have power but they stay away from responsibilities, as well as that men dictate but then they do not carry out their tasks because they don't want to commit. Others talked about men being "weak", expressing that women have to put the needs of their partners before their own, for instance, with health-related issues. One of the divorced women explained that two of her past partners had been irresponsible with money so she had to find a way to make a living for herself. There was also agreement on the idea that women tend to save more of the money they make than men, who tend to spend it on themselves, whereas women re-invest it in their families and households.

Education

Of the nine women interviewed, the three youngest had either obtained a university degree or were studying at university at the time of the interview. However, only one of the older women had gone to university and three did not finish high school. Even though all the women expressed wanting to

continue their studies, either high school or university, the two most frequently mentioned reasons for dropping out were lack of economic resources and teenage pregnancy and motherhood. Some dropped out after giving birth because of an absent father and others preferred to dedicate their time to take care of their newborns. Two of the women dropped out because of motherhood and started studying again when their children became older. Another woman expressed wanting to go back to studying but having been discouraged by her community.

Health

Having health-related issues was a very central theme in my conversations with the women. Many of them expressed having to leave their jobs because of health problems, and others expressed that the type of business they chose was closely related to their health situation, for instance, the location or activity of the business. Many of them talked about leaving their jobs because they had health issues. Others expressed that they wish they had a job in order to pay for their medical bills with their insurance.

When asked about whether their multiple shifts affected their health, almost all of them agreed, with stress, exhaustion and sleep deprivation being three of the issues. One of the women explained that she had always prioritized getting the work done and having an income over caring for her health and that she was starting to feel the impact now.

Political Participation and Leisure Time

During the focus group, many agreed that they took time off “from wherever they could find it” and stressed the importance of resting, spending time with friends, going to the beach or going to church. One expressed that time off helped her “disconnect from everything”. However, in the interviews the women who take care for elder parents, specifically parents with degenerative illnesses, expressed

having almost no free time. One of them also explained that the little free time she has, she uses to go to trainings and to develop her skills.

Despite the women's multiple shifts, the vast majority of them remain active in community engagement. Almost all of them were active in their neighborhood councils and three of them are the presidents of their councils. One of them is also president of the parents' association in her children's school and one is the president of the banana fiber crafts association (AFAVAL). Some expressed that "it feels good to work for your community" or that they would like to "have one of the most beautiful neighborhoods, instead of all this river of trash". Apart from being part of political organizations, most of the women do volunteering work in some capacity, including being part of the Rotary Club, cleaning the houses of elderly people who don't have any family, to being part of a disability association.

Public Resources

When asked about public resources and government spending, the women agreed that there are two ways in more public spending could improve their lives.

The first one is having more facilities where women could leave children or elderly family members during the day, such as after school hours. Many expressed that they did not like to leave their children at home for safety reasons (one of them had been robbed twice in her house), and ended up having to pay someone to take care of the children while she worked. In case of the women who attended university or high school, they explained that it was very difficult to find someone to watch the children at night while they went to evening classes.

Another of the areas recommended for more public investment was in the women's micro businesses. Some explained that many women would like to start working on their own, but could not because they did not have enough money to invest. Others explained that they needed to take a step forward, such as having their own office, but could not due to a lack of initial investment. They also requested

that they would appreciate it if ADELVA had more funding that they could spend in technical trainings for them.

VI: DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

By carrying out semi-structured interviews and a focus group with women micro entrepreneurs in Valverde, the study found that the majority of women start engaging in economic activity because of a lack of a male figure to provide an income for the household. Almost all the women contacted were widows or separated, an according to ADELVA's staff it is a recurring trend in the province that women micro entrepreneurs usually are. The presence of a male in the household seems to have a deterrent effect on engaging in economic activity in the case of older women, who stated that males want to be in control of the economic activities that their female partners engage in, but not for younger women, who see economic independence as their primary motivation for working outside of the household. Micro entrepreneurship is the preferred option for these women because it allows them to combine their work with their unpaid care work obligations. However, for those of them who perform more than one economic activity, micro entrepreneurship is a way to have extra income to support their children in their studies or to recover from precarious economic situations. In some occasions, the lack of technical skills is a motivating factor in starting a micro business, given that a third of the women interviewed did not graduate high school and two did not attend university, with teenage motherhood and poverty being determining factors. Although the role of public recognition was not discussed as a motivating factor for engaging in economic activity, the data shows that the micro entrepreneurs are highly regarded in their communities for their work, especially by men. This contrasts with the women's perception of male partners as controlling their economic activities, which shows a double standard regarding men's attitudes toward women, depending on their relationship with them.

The findings also uncovered that women bear the bulk of the household work while managing at least one micro business that supports the family economically. The majority of them currently have dependant children or had them when they were started their micro business, and on occasion they have to also take care of elderly parents or grandchildren. The research shows that their children and their female relatives are the ones who help with care work in any capacity when the study participants are overwhelmed, including situations in which their children undertook jobs while being at school to help the family economically. Data also shows that when men collaborate, it is overwhelmingly to provide economic contributions, and that separated women had little or no support of the father of their children while they were growing up. The research shows a pattern of unpaid care work that could be considered a “second shift”, although the irregularity of work hours and schedules makes it more difficult to estimate than it would if examining fixed job schedules. Many of the women interviewed have jobs where they work more than 8 hours a day and work in their micro businesses before their shifts, after or on the weekend, including at night, in order to be able to perform their care work duties. Stress and sleep deprivation is present across the board, and many of the participants have health-related issues (some of which are severe) while having more than one job or micro business. Some also carry out care work for older relatives while suffering from health conditions themselves. While they regard highly the need to have leisure time and most of them recognise having some, those with elderly parents don’t have any time for themselves. In general, they dedicate their free time to trainings (on either social or technical skills) or participating in volunteer activities or in their neighborhood councils, in many cases holding leadership roles.

Implications of the Study from a Rights-based Approach

Given the lack of research on the role of unpaid care work for women micro entrepreneurs in Latin America, this study contributes to the literature by providing a case study based in the Dominican Republic. The research shows that the overwhelming majority of women micro entrepreneurs who

were part of this study suffer from the double shift,¹⁶⁵ as they are expected to perform all care work obligations in their households while still working in either their jobs or their micro businesses. Even though the specificities of this case study—the fact that the majority of participants are single heads of household and that most don't have fixed work schedules—complicate the task of comparing the data to Hochschild and Machung's conception of the second shift, the worries that the women express and the consequences of their multiple obligations are similar to those found by Hochschild and Machung. In this case, the centrality is not on redistribution of power and work with a cohabiting partner, but on their burden as single heads and the redistribution with other members of their families and the community.

The data reflects similarities with South Asian literature, given that many of the women suffer from role overload,¹⁶⁶ they lack set schedules and resting time, have improper rest and health concerns¹⁶⁷ and neglect their own needs.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, they are perceived and expected to act as natural multi-taskers and concerned about the well-being of others,¹⁶⁹ which extends to not only the study participants, but their daughters and the women in their communities, who are the ones who help when the micro entrepreneurs feel overwhelmed.

One primary difference with South Asian literature is the role of men in the community: while that literature suggests negative perceptions of women micro entrepreneurs who are single heads of

¹⁶⁵ Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* .

¹⁶⁶ Mathew and Panchanatham, "An Exploratory Study on the Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in South India", 94.

¹⁶⁷ Pareek and Bagrecha, "A Thematic Analysis of the Challenges and Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs Working in Small-Scale Industries," 467.

¹⁶⁸ Mathew and Panchanatham, "An Exploratory Study on the Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in South India", 80. Rehman and Roomi, "Gender and Work-life Balance: A Phenomenological Study of Women Entrepreneurs in Pakistan," 219.

¹⁶⁹ Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, 24.

household,¹⁷⁰ this study shows that the participants have positive public recognition from their community, and specifically from men, who admire their work and independence. However, this admiration seems to change when the men are the micro entrepreneurs' partner, where the role becomes more controlling. Dominican women (and specifically women in Valverde) also show less decision-making power than one would expect according to the conception of Latin American women as "supermoms".¹⁷¹ Based on the statistical data, it seems that in Valverde families where women and men co-habit as partners, male partners make the majority of decisions, including how their female partners spend the money they make themselves.

Finally, a not surprising but unexpected finding was the impact that taking care of elderly family members has on the study participants, who have even less time than those who only take care of younger family members.

From a rights-based approach, the results show that the participants' human rights to equality and non discrimination, their right to health, their right to decent work, to education and to social security are affected by the second shift they suffer. Regarding their right to participation, the women participants in this study remain very active in their communities. However, while we can conclude that these women do exercise their right to political participation prominently, we cannot state that their unpaid care work responsibilities do not compromise this right in any way.

Their right to equality and non discrimination is compromised by the fact that it is the women who are expected to carry out all the unpaid care work while having economic activities, and this "unequal distribution of care provision is a powerful driver of gender and income inequalities."¹⁷² In some occasions, the women are unaware of care services that could be available to them, and in others they consider that the access to these services is very limited: for instance, some claim that they cannot

¹⁷⁰ Pareek and Bagrecha, "A Thematic Analysis of the Challenges and Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs Working in Small-Scale Industries," 467; Mathew and Panchanatham, "An Exploratory Study on the Work-Life Balance of Women Entrepreneurs in South India", 96.

¹⁷¹ Martínez-Restrepo et al., *Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Critical Lessons from South America*.

¹⁷² Esquivel, "The Rights-Based Approach to Care Policies: Latin American Experience," 88.

access these services for free because they have an income higher than the threshold, but still cannot afford to pay for private care services . Therefore, the State must “take all appropriate measures to ensure that care responsibilities are equally shared by men and women,”¹⁷³ not only by elaborating policies that promote the co-responsibility of care, but by making them accessible and affordable to all caregivers.

Regarding their rights at work, the participants are subjected to conditions in which they do not have access to proper “rest, leisure, reasonable limitation of working hours”¹⁷⁴ because of their household obligations, which do not allow them to have fixed work schedules. These poor work conditions are not caused by a single factor, but are the effect of a lack of care policies that tackle systemic inequality, ensuring that women (especially female single-heads of household) are not overwhelmed by their need to provide an income to their families while bearing most of the care work in the family.

The data gathered shows that the right to health is compromised due to the second shift. The women show signs of stress and improper rest and often put the health needs of others before their own. Even those who suffer from severe health conditions have to work (sometimes more than one job or micro business) while taking care of almost the totality of the unpaid care work in their household. The fact that most of them work outside of the formal economy hinders their access to social security services and health insurance, therefore causing them to work even longer hours to pay for the health services they need. Therefore, the State is failing to ensure that women micro entrepreneurs have access to an adequate standard of health by lacking a comprehensive care policy that ensures not only that women are freed from being the primary (and often only) caregiver in the family, but that they have access to health facilities, goods, information and services notwithstanding their job status.

The research gathered in this study, as well as statistical data concerning the Dominican Republic in general, shows that teenage pregnancy is a factor that limits women’s right to education. Women are

¹⁷³ Martínez-Restrepo et al., *Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment: Critical Lessons from South America*, 5-7.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

more prone to dropping out of high school or university due to their childcare responsibilities after a pregnancy (in some occasions due to the lack of a male parent figure). There is also a low rate of return to school after the children have grown up due to the need to provide for their families and a discouragement from their communities. Therefore, the participants' right to education is not hindered because they didn't have access to school when they were children, but their education was cut short by teen pregnancy and the related care work responsibilities expected of them.

Finally, we observe that the women that participated in the study are very active in the cultural, social and political life of their communities and some of them held decision-making positions in their neighborhoods. Almost all of them are part of their neighborhood council and participate in volunteering programs, often combining these two activities. I cannot ascertain that the women's business and care work responsibilities do not have a negative impact in their participation, since one could expect that if these responsibilities decreased, these women would have more time for community engagement and could reach political positions in their local governments. However, the data shows that these responsibilities do not relegate them to the domestic sphere only since they value community engagement and are very active members in their communities.

Suggestions for Future Studies

This case study was designed to explore how the second shift plays out in a specific region of the Dominican Republic where the participants have very specific demographic characteristics. As any case study, it is not designed to show results that are generalizable, but to contribute to the research on the variables that affect the second shift and its consequences. Regarding the Dominican Republic, there is a need for more research to be done country-wise, specifically through greater use of time use surveys and qualitative studies on unpaid care work, including regional disaggregation, that can shed light on the multiple obligations that women in the country are compelled to juggle. While past public surveys have included sections regarding time use in the Encuesta de Salud, these surveys do not have

a gender perspective and are therefore not designed to capture women's multiple obligations in comparison to men.

In relation to studying unpaid care work generally, it would be interesting to explore the networks of care that are created around female single-heads of household, as well as the family and community members who act as secondary caregivers in this type of household. The role of children in care work is also shown to be important, and I believe this issue should be explored more in-depth regarding the hours that children spend carrying out unpaid care work, what type of work and whether the time they dedicate to attending school or have leisure activities is affected by it.

On another note, the health consequences of the second shift are specifically worrisome in this case study, but the lack of in-depth knowledge on the issue has prevented me from understanding whether the study participants' health issues are directly affected by the type of jobs they do, by their care obligations, or by both. Since this issues are related also to the lack of universal health coverage in the country, it would be important to consider who are the subjects in society who are most damaged by these health policies.

Moreover, it would be interesting to understand the dynamics of political participation in the area, in order to understand the fact that women who are time-deprived still decide to spend what would be leisure time working in their communities. An issue that deserves more investigation is whether women's public engagement stems from their societal expectations as caregivers, not only in the family but in their communities as a whole, as the women stated that men were often not as involved as women in neighborhood councils and that their motivation for public engagement was to transform their areas into better places to live.

Policy Recommendations

One of the key aspects of this study has been to gather the necessary data to understand the needs and challenges of the women micro entrepreneurs of Valverde regarding unpaid care work, and to then

suggest how public policies could lessen their burden. The participants are aware of the role that various public institutions and NGOs play in their personal lives and their businesses, and have clear demands from them that would alleviate their work load. For instance, policy makers should make available public care services where pre-school children could spend time during the day or in the evening, in order to allow teen and young mothers to return to school. Children in school age should be made available free after-school programs in order to allow their mothers to have time available in the evening to attend school or university, work or have leisure time. These types of programs could reduce the amount of hours that women spend at home carrying out childcare duties, and therefore have access to any activities they are deprived of now. The existence of public care services for elderly persons would also ease the women's burden for those who dedicate long hours to elder care, especially those who carry out unpaid care work for dependant children in addition to elder care.

Regarding their professional capacities, given that most of the women micro entrepreneurs are the only providers of their households, there should be a focus on offering them diverse trainings on technical skills in order to help them generate an income, as well as to offer them initial support so they can start their micro businesses. There is also a need to integrate a gender-sensitive and rights-based perspective in these policies that can help disrupt the power dynamics present in their communities.

Finally, this study has shown that economic empowerment programs should have an awareness and be developed around unpaid work component in order to ensure that the second shift is reduced or eliminated. Therefore, public agencies, development actors and NGOs working in women's empowerment should research their target group's care work responsibilities and schedules in order to adapt to them (to offer all women the same opportunities) while developing programming that can redistribute care work obligations in the community.

Concluding Remarks

This study has documented the hardships that women micro entrepreneurs face in the Dominican Republic regarding their double roles as primary providers for their households as well as primary caretakers in their families. The field work of this study has been carried out in the province of Valverde, which is one of poorest provinces in the country, as well as one of the regions with the lowest rate of employment for women and lower levels of decision-making for women than the average of the country. In Valverde, from 2015 to 2018, the Dominican Republic office of UNDP and the local organization ADELVA implemented a program in order to empower women micro entrepreneurs in the region by strengthening their economic capacities, while increasing their political participation and their awareness around gender equality. The lack of an unpaid care work dimension in the program, coupled with the fact that most of the participants are single heads of household, motivate this study, whose objective is to understand the challenges that women micro entrepreneurs face when working outside of the household while being the primary caregivers in their families.

The methodology used in this case study research is qualitative and based on narrative inquiry, in order to obtain nuanced information about how women perceive their own experiences as they are processed and told by themselves. In-depth interviews (both formal and informal) and a focus group were used as data collection methods. Finally, a rights-based approach was used in order to better understand how development affects the experiences of women as rights-holders, and an analysis on the women's challenges and opportunities are analyzed as regarding their connection with human rights.

The research shows how these women, the majority of whom are single heads of their households, often work more than one job or micro business in order to earn an income for their families, to support the children through their studies and to cover their health needs. This study also provides evidence that the unpaid care work obligations of female-headed households fall primarily on women:

when the female household head is overwhelmed with work, the people who help her are usually her sisters, mother or female members of the community, as well as her dependant children. The findings of this study, analyzed through a rights-based lens, also illustrate how the second shift to which these women are subjected hinders their human rights to equality and non discrimination, health, decent work, education and social security. Among other consequences, women suffer from role overload, lack clear work schedules with set resting times, suffer from stress and sleep deprivation and see their chances of education impaired by their unpaid care responsibilities. However, the women micro entrepreneurs are very active in their communities: this finding contradicts the idea that the women are relegated exclusively to the private sphere, but opens a space for reflection about whether unpaid community engagement could also be considered care work. The research has shown a need to elaborate policies that transform the gender roles that generate an expectation of women as sole care providers in the household, as well as to elaborate programming that actively works to dismantle this structure.

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