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THE SUITCASE TRADERS IN THE FREE ZONE OF
CURACAO

This document was prepared by Monique Lagro and Donna Plotkin, Consultants of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean. The views expressed in this work are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily coincide with those of the Organization.

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FOREWORD

The Women in Development (WID) Unit of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) - Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, initiated studies on female traders¹ in the Caribbean since 1984. The project is regarded as a priority area in ECLAC's work programme, endorsed by member governments of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC) at its eighth session, held in 1984, and further supported at its ninth, tenth and eleventh sessions held in 1985, 1987 and 1988, respectively.

Initial research activities on the subject indicated that:

- (a) women dominate the informal trade sector in wearing apparel and light goods, commonly referred to as "the suitcase trade", and fresh agricultural produce;
- (b) the economic contribution of the traders in the informal sector has been seriously under-estimated as they are classified as self-employed and are not included in the statistics;
- (c) traders engaged in the inter-island trade are facing serious problems; and
- (d) there is a need to investigate further the situation of the inter-island traders in the Caribbean.

The possibility of extending the study on these traders was found within the ECLAC/WID project sponsored by the Government of the Netherlands, The Establishment of a Database on Selected Areas of Women's Participation in Social and Economic Development (Phases I and II). Within the scope of that project, specific data on the inter-island traders was collected in Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, the Leeward Islands, Haiti and Curaçao.

The project's main activity in 1989 was the implementation of a regional socio-economic survey on the inter-island traders in the Caribbean. The survey focused on the inter-island traders in agricultural and non-agricultural produce in the Caribbean who purchase, export, import and market their merchandise themselves and operate in the informal sector.

This document is based primarily on the ECLAC survey of the suitcase traders who shop in the Free Zone of Curaçao.² Such traders originate mostly in Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname. They travel by air to Curacao to purchase merchandise for resale in their own country.

¹ Also known as *traffickers* or *speculators* in Grenada and St Vincent and the Grenadines, *hucksters* in Dominica, *higglers* in Jamaica and *Madam Sara* in Haiti.

² A separate document on the outcome of the survey on the agricultural traders has been published (see document CONS/90/3).

I. INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades, the increasing demand for low-cost consumer goods and imported food products in the larger, urbanizing Caribbean countries has given rise to a growing number of small-scale, independent entrepreneurs who travel outside of their country to purchase merchandise to sell in their home territory and/or in other countries. While the majority of these traders (variously called, higglers, hucksters, traffickers, speculators, suitcase traders, maleteros, and Madam Sara) are women who are the sole supporters of their family, there is evidence that an increasing number of men are entering this trade. Until recently, little research had been done on this dynamic and diverse sector, or on its impact on the national and regional economies.³

Recent research has revealed that most of these traders are from Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic and travel to such places as Curaçao, Panama, Miami and Puerto Rico to purchase clothing, footwear, household goods and cosmetics. Most operate in the informal sector, comprised of all non-registered, commercial and non-commercial enterprises or activities without formal structure which are generally family-owned and small-scale. In addition to their lack of access to formal banking, credit and insurance institutions, many traders operate on the fringes of, or outside the law and do not pay taxes.

The informal inter-island trade in manufactured goods is of significant economic importance for the individual countries involved as well as for the Caribbean region as a whole, particularly because it provides opportunities for self-employment to women with a relatively low level of formal education and few employment options in their home country. The trade thus provides a sector of enterprising women, and increasingly of men, with an opportunity to develop entrepreneurial skills, to earn income and to travel abroad. Their activities also provide employment and income-earning opportunities to a variety of service areas in both the home and host countries: airline and ground-transportation personnel, customs workers and brokers, hotel and restaurant workers. In addition, the trade provides employment to thousands of intermediaries in the home countries who buy goods from the traders for sale in the local markets.

The first part of this report situates the traders within the wider social and economic context of the national and regional economies in which they operate. In order to explain how and why their numbers have been growing rapidly over the past 15 years, the phenomenon of informal-sector, female traders is placed in the context of recent patterns of female employment in the Caribbean. The impact of this trade in the home country of the traders is also assessed. As

³ See recent ECLAC reports by Holder (1988) on the Guyanese traders, Pineda (1988) on the Dominican traders, Plotkin (1989) on the Haitian traders and Taylor (1988) on the Jamaican traders. In addition, see LeFranc et al. (1985), Whitefield (1987) and Geyer (1986) on the Jamaican higglers and Werleigh (1985) on the Haitian traders.

most of the traders come from Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, recent economic trends and changes in female labour-force participation in those countries are discussed.

The second part of the report presents the results of ECLAC's social and economic survey of male and female traders, originating mostly in Haiti, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, who were interviewed during one of their shopping trips to Curaçao. Appendices I and II provide information on the methodology of this research. The survey data permit an understanding of the socio-economic characteristics of the inter-island traders, their trading practices and problems. The data have been disaggregated by sex, so that similarities and differences between female and male traders and their enterprises could be ascertained and specific issues concerning women highlighted. While language and cultural differences and national boundaries may separate these women, they share many problems and constraints in their struggle to raise families and earn a living by trading.

Finally, recommendations are made for improvements in the situation of women engaged in informal-sector, inter-island trade.

II. BACKGROUND

A. The regional economy

During the last two decades, the Caribbean region, like other areas of the developing world, experienced economic decline unprecedented in the post-war period. While this decline may be attributed to factors both internal and external to the region's economies, a major cause has been the repercussions of economic recession experienced by industrialized countries. The resulting reduced demand led to deteriorating terms of trade for many Caribbean countries. These conditions, in turn, produced growing internal deficits and foreign debt, reduced growth rates and growing unemployment.⁴

The implementation of economic austerity measures and export-led development strategies advocated by multinational lending agencies to generate debt repayment has led to a high proportion of the countries' meagre export earnings going towards the servicing of foreign debt and incentives to foreign investors. The cost of living has increased, social services have declined, and in some cases per capita incomes and living standards have fallen back to the levels of the 1970s.⁵

Efforts at structural adjustment have often been accompanied by worsening social and economic conditions for most inhabitants, and particularly for women and children who make up the majority of the

⁴ Mones & Grant (1986:35).

⁵ McAfee (1989:6).

region's poorest. Women are often hurt most because many are responsible for the economic support of their family, they also have fewer opportunities for employment in the formal sector and are concentrated in the least remunerative sectors of the economy.

Importation of manufactured goods by women in the informal sector flourished at a time when the formal import channels were suffering from a lack of foreign exchange.

1. Economic profile of Haiti

While income distribution is highly skewed in all three countries, inequality is the most extreme in Haiti, where 1 per cent of the population receives 44 per cent of national income but pays only 3.5 per cent of taxes collected.⁶ According to World Bank figures for 1984, 75 per cent of the population lived below the poverty level and 65 per cent of the adult population were illiterate.⁷

Although an estimated 70 per cent of the Haitian population work in agriculture, the contribution of this sector to GDP was only 32 per cent in 1986.⁸ Production in the sector stagnated during the last decade due to a combination of factors, including increasing demographic pressure on a shrinking land base, rudimentary methods of cultivation, extreme parcelling of land, deforestation and soil erosion as well as extremely unequal distribution of income among classes.

During the past 40 years, these factors have led to declining agricultural yields, a decline in both women's and men's employment in the sector, increasing rural poverty and a growth in the rate of migration from rural to urban areas. Between 1950 and 1985, the population of Port-au-Prince increased from about 100,000 to 1,000,000.⁹ While 4.6 per cent of Haiti's total population lived in the capital in 1950, by 1982 this figure had increased to 14.2 per cent of the population.

The economic data for Haiti clearly indicate that rural migrants to Port-au-Prince are predominantly women, a trend confirmed in the literature on migration in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁰ The predominance of women among such migrants can best be explained by their high activity rate, the limited rural employment opportunities available to them and the fact that urban employment opportunities

⁶ Prince (1985:51).

⁷ EIU (1988b:27).

⁸ Prince (1985:43); EIU (1987:29).

⁹ Anglade (1986:129).

¹⁰ Plotkin (1984)

(i.e., small-scale commerce, domestic service and assembly-industry work) attract more women than men.¹¹ During the 1970s, the establishment of the assembly industries created tens of thousands of jobs, encouraging the process of migration, one result of which is that in the capital, women outnumber men by 30 per cent and 40 per cent of households are headed by women.¹²

Table 1

Percentage distribution of the employed
Haitian population by sex and branch of activity
for 1971 and 1982

Branch of Activity	Female		Male	
	1971	1982	1971	1982
Agriculture	61.6	49.6	83.1	76.1
Mining	0.0	1.3	0.1	0.8
Manufacturing	7.6	7.4	4.8	5.9
Electricity, gas & water	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Construction	0.0	0.5	1.7	1.7
Trade, restaurants & hotels	19.7	29.4	1.8	5.8
Transportation	0.1	0.3	1.1	1.3
Finance & insurance	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2
Services	10.5	8.0	6.1	5.8
Other	0.5	3.3	1.0	2.4

TOTAL 100.0 100.0 100.0 100.0
N= (890,246) (753,391) (1,058,754) (1,116,064)

Source: IHS (1979) and IHSI (1984)

The 1982 National Census revealed that in the metropolitan area, services (32 per cent), trade (31 per cent) and manufacturing (23 per cent) accounted for 86 per cent of female employment. From the time of the 1971 Census, the number of women employed in manufacturing industries in the formal sector in Port-au-Prince had doubled to 24,000, accounting for about half of the industrial labour force. The number of female traders overall had increased from about 175,000 to 221,000, while the number of male traders had grown from 19,058 to 64,731 during the same period.¹³ With the drop in the proportion of women involved in trade from 90 to 78 per cent between 1971 and 1982, there was a corresponding increase in men's involvement in this sector which women have traditionally predominated. Likewise, the proportion of self-employed women in the labour force increased

¹¹ Ahlers (1979).

¹² Plotkin (1984).

¹³ Plotkin (1984:12.)

between the two censuses from 34.1 to 59.9 per cent, while the proportion of self-employed men rose from 56.1 to 65.5 per cent with a corresponding decrease in the proportion of unpaid female family workers from 46.9 to 11.2 per cent.¹⁴

Due to increased political instability since 1986, many of the factories in the assembly/export sector have been closed, leaving thousands of females unemployed. It appears that many of the Haitian suitcase traders come from this sector of the population.

2. Economic profile of Jamaica

Income distribution data reveal that 10 per cent of Jamaicans received one third of the national income, while 50 percent receive only 19 per cent.¹⁵ Fifteen per cent of the adult population were illiterate.

In recent years, Jamaica's economy has been constrained by falling bauxite production, a decline in export earnings, rising debt payments and high unemployment. While the mining of bauxite has been Jamaica's largest industry and export earner, the depressed world market for the mineral led to a fall in production. Tourism became Jamaica's main source of foreign exchange and a major source of employment.¹⁶

In 1986, while agriculture employed 32 per cent of the Jamaican population, its contribution to GDP was only 8.6 per cent. The three next largest employment sectors were services (27 per cent), commerce (15 per cent) and manufacturing (13 per cent), accounting for 43, 15 and 16 per cent, respectively, of GDP.¹⁷

Women constituted 45 per cent of the labour force in 1975 and 46 per cent in 1986. They represented 69 per cent of the unemployed in 1975 and 66 per cent in 1985.¹⁸

Despite recent increases in formal-sector employment opportunities for women in the assembly industries and in data entry, women continue to predominate in the ranks of the unemployed: in 1985, about 37 per cent compared to 16 per cent of men. Of employed women,

¹⁴ This decrease is most likely due, in part, to the fact that the 1982 census under-reported on active women and to increased school attendance by rural girls (Plotkin, 1984:13).

¹⁵ Statistical Institute of Jamaica, Report on Household Expenditure Surveys, 1975-77, cited in Boyd (1988:99-100).

¹⁶ EIU (1988a:6).

¹⁷ Planning Institute of Jamaica, Economic and Social Survey, cited in EIU (1988a).

¹⁸ Statistical Institute of Jamaica, The Labour Force, 1985, cited in Taylor (1988:12,15).

68 per cent did unskilled labour and earned less than J\$30 per week. Some 30 per cent of women were de facto heads of households.¹⁹

An examination of the Jamaican labour force data for the years 1975 and 1985 indicates a trend similar to that in Haiti: a decline in women's participation in agriculture (from 17.6 to 15.1 per cent), public administration (from 14.8 to 11.2 per cent) and services (from 31.2 to 26.9 per cent) and an increase in their participation in commerce (from 15.8 to 18.9 per cent). These four sectors accounted for 80 per cent of the active female labour force in 1975 and 72 per cent in 1985. Less women than men worked in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction and transportation and communications.²⁰

Between 1975 and 1985, the proportion of the economically active female labour force engaged in commerce increased from 16 to 19 per cent, while the men's share rose from 6.9 to 7.4 per cent. In absolute figures, this represented an increase from 60,782 to 91,795 women and from 31,926 to 41,743 men. According to one author, the increase of women in commerce accounted for a large share of the increase of self-employed women. In 1985, the self-employed category constituted 43 per cent of the employed labour force.²¹

While the total labour force increased by 24.7 per cent between 1972 and 1980, the rate of growth of the self-employed category was 37.7 per cent.²² Since this was a period of rising unemployment and falling net investment, the latter increase appears to represent a relative expansion of informal sector-employment.

¹⁹ Reddock (1986:29).

²⁰ Taylor (1988:8).

²¹ Taylor (1988:11).

²² Department of Statistics, The Labour Force, 1980, cited in Boyd (1988:101).

Table 2

Percentage distribution of the employed
Jamaican population by sex and industry group
for 1975 and 1985

Branch of activity	Female		Male	
	1975	1985	1975	1985
Agriculture	17.6	15.1	38.7	38.1
Mining	0.2	0.2	1.7	1.1
Manufacturing	7.3	7.5	12.4	15.5
Construction	0.3	0.3	11.6	8.4
Transport, Comm. & Public Utilities	2.2	1.4	5.5	6.1
Commerce	15.8	18.9	6.9	7.4
Public Administration	14.8	11.2	11.1	8.1
Other services	31.2	26.9	8.7	8.3
Other*	10.5	17.9	3.4	7.1
TOTAL	100	100	100	100 ²³
	N = (384,700) (485,700) (462,700) (564,100)			

* Combined survey categories "Industry not specified" and "No previous industry."

Source: The Labour Force, 1985. Statistical Institute of Jamaica, cited in Taylor (1988:9-10).

3. Economic profile of the Dominican Republic

Income distribution is highly unequal in the Dominican Republic: 10 per cent of the population receive 38.5 per cent of the nation's income, while 50 per cent receive only 18.5 per cent.²⁴

Manufacturing provides the largest share of GDP (more than 17 per cent) and about three quarters of the industrial labour force work in the sugar mills. While nearly 50 per cent of the population are engaged in agriculture, this sector accounts for only 17 per cent of GNP. The service sector, including government, are important sources of employment.²⁵

²³ Percentages may not add up to 100, due to rounding of the decimals.

²⁴ EIU (1988b:10).

²⁵ EIU (1988b:10)

As in Jamaica, the unemployment rate in the Dominican Republic is about 25 per cent, while up to 30 per cent of the work force may be under-employed.

4. Women in informal-sector employment

The economic crisis has led to changes in the structure of the labour force of many of the Caribbean economies, as increasing numbers of women enter the informal sector, turning to "higglering" and "hustling" in order to make a living. The informal sector has been the most important source of income for the majority of women who have little or no formal education or training and who therefore are most affected by the lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector. In Jamaica, it has been estimated that 10 per cent of the population are supported directly by higglering.²⁶

The phenomenon of female suitcase traders in the Caribbean is therefore a reflection of the growth of the informal sector and of women's prominent participation in it. This trade is of interest, not only because the female traders have created their own employment, but also because they have taken over an important place in an activity formerly dominated by established commercial interests in the formal sector.

5. Origins of informal-sector trade

The present predominant role of women in overseas trade in the Caribbean has its roots in the colonial and post-colonial periods when, on many islands, internal market trade became a traditional occupation of women. There have, however, been shifts in the number of people involved in the trade, in the male/female ratio of the traders, in the commodities traded, in the way in which the trade has been organized and in the countries and territories involved.

In Jamaica, towards the end of the period of slavery, when slaves were given a small plot of land to cultivate their own provisions, women began to sell their surplus produce in the town markets.²⁷ In Haiti, it has been claimed that women took over the urban marketing of crops after emancipation, because men were in great danger of conscription into military service and forced labour if they ventured into town.²⁸ In both these countries, internal trade and marketing continue to the present day to be largely female occupations and where female employment has been expanding the fastest. Not only is trade in the internal market an important source of employment for a large sector of Caribbean women, it is also a vital part of the

²⁶ Ross (1982).

²⁷ Ellis (1986:4).

²⁸ Leyburn (1941:202), cited in Mintz (1971:256).

region's economy and in the case of Haiti, important for the country's survival.²⁹

Much of the experience and skills that generations of women brought to internal market trade was readily transferable to overseas trade opportunities that opened up during the 1970s as a direct response to the conjuncture of political, economic and demographic pressures in the Caribbean region.

6. Conditions facilitating informal-sector trade

A variety of factors have facilitated the commercial activities of the suitcase traders during the past few years and have contributed to the expansion of this sector. These include a heavy demand for consumer goods from various sectors of the societies, a parallel market for foreign currency at a time when foreign exchange was scarce in the formal markets, liberalization of import procedures and the availability of reasonably priced airfares on regularly scheduled commercial flights on several airlines to commercial "free zones", as well as to other manufacturing and distribution centres.

7. Demand for imported goods

In many countries, the growing urban demand for clothing, shoes, cosmetics, foodstuffs and household items is tied to the rapid growth of metropolitan centres due to the decline of traditional agriculture and rural-urban migration. In addition, the growth of urban export-oriented assembly industries and public and private service sectors resulted in the expansion of a salaried labour force with disposable income and a taste for imported goods.

The demand of urban consumers for imports was also stimulated by the constant flow of imported goods into the home countries by visiting expatriates, nationals returning from holiday abroad, or labour migrants. The taste for imported consumer goods, formerly available only to the elite at high prices in exclusive shops in these countries, spread among the masses.

Due to a variety of factors, Haiti and Jamaica produce only a limited variety of manufactured goods for local markets. However, compared with many imports, these goods are often higher-priced and/or of inferior quality. In addition, locally produced goods are often in short or erratic supply. Obstacles to the development of industries to supply local demand include such factors as lack of government protection and subsidies to national industries, inefficiencies in government and private monopolies, high import duties for raw materials and the small size of the national markets. Severe shortages of low-cost imported goods also exist due to government policies of import restrictions and/or to monopolies on imports.

In Haiti, manufacturing for the local market, often based on obsolete technologies that produce shoddy goods, includes the

²⁹ Ellis (1986:4); Girault (1984:177); Anglade (1986:162).

production of foodstuffs and beverages, household goods and building materials. Before 1986, inefficiency in the government and private monopolies, combined with high protective import duties, tariffs and quotas, resulted in high prices and an erratic supply of goods and encouraged smuggling, especially from the United States and the Dominican Republic.³⁰

While Jamaica has a relatively well developed manufacturing sector, in recent years its performance has been seriously undermined by high interest rates, depressed levels of local demand, the high cost of utilities, shortages of foreign exchange and fierce competition from imports. Domestic production is based on food processing, beverages and tobacco, chemicals, metals, construction materials and textiles.³¹

The Dominican Republic's manufacturing sector has a heavy domestic bias and is protected by tariff barriers. Sugar-refining accounts for almost half of manufacturing GDP. Food, beverages, tobacco, construction materials, textiles, clothing, leather and footwear are the major manufactures produced for the local market.

In recent years, the export assembly industries in these three countries which supply the United States market have become increasingly significant and in Haiti, they have been more dynamic than those supplying the domestic markets.

8. The parallel market

In all three countries, the shortage of foreign exchange has affected capacity to import consumer goods and other inputs vital to the productive sectors, through the legally established channels. The unavailability of foreign exchange has resulted in the growth of a parallel economy in which an informal floating exchange rate provides foreign exchange to economic agents who import a substantial quantity of the goods and other inputs needed by consumers. The small-scale traders are at the bottom of a hierarchy of importers who operate in the parallel economy. In Haiti, large amounts of staple foods and consumer goods are imported through a system of institutionalized fraud or are openly imported illegally by members of the armed forces, the commercial elite, as well as the informal-sector small-scale traders. It has been estimated that nearly 50 per cent of all commercial transactions between Haiti and other countries are carried out at the informal floating exchange rate.³²

³⁰ EIU (1988b:34).

³¹ EIU (1988a:14-15).

³² Beaulieu (1988:8).

Unconfirmed reports link the parallel market trade in Jamaica to the music industry as well as to illicit exports of marijuana.³³ In Haiti and the Dominican Republic, imports are allegedly financed by profits made in the transshipment of cocaine between Colombia and the United States.

9. Liberalization of import restrictions

The United States is the largest market for exports from Haiti, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic and is also the dominant source of their imports. Imports are about double exports in all these countries, reflecting large bills for petroleum and food and falling export revenues from bauxite and alumina in Jamaica, coffee in Haiti and sugar in the Dominican Republic.

Until 1986, most imports into Haiti were subject to an ad valorem duty or surcharge. However, in December 1986 new regulations were announced, allowing the import of manufactured goods and raw materials either free of duty or with duty payable at 10-20 per cent. Duty of up to 50 per cent continued to be payable on food items and quota restrictions were maintained on food and some other domestically produced goods. Importers have to deposit cash to the full value of the credit when opening letters of credit.³⁴ In the framework of an IMF programme of structural adjustment, restrictions on imports imposed in 1981 have gradually been relaxed, resulting in large-scale smuggling.

In the Dominican Republic, all imports of goods have required the prior authorization of the Central Bank since 1987. For a large range of consumer items, a commercial letter of credit is required. Import tariffs constitute a large share of government revenue and are used to protect local industry. Imports are subject to tariffs levied on an ad valorem basis, a 6 per cent tax on manufactured goods, plus other taxes, levies and customs duties. An additional import tax is levied in the form of internal revenue or consumption charges.³⁵

The Jamaican Government has recently pledged to encourage foreign investment and agreed to reform import tariffs in compliance with its latest agreement with the IMF. Import duties will continue to be progressively reduced, so that by 1991, maximum duties for consumer goods will be 30 per cent, down from the current 200 per cent.³⁶

³³ Taylor (1988:20-21).

³⁴ EIU, (1988b:42).

³⁵ EIU (1988b:24).

³⁶ EIU (1988a:22).

B. The phenomenon of the suitcase traders

Suitcase traders are small-scale entrepreneurs who operate in the informal sector. The formal economy is beyond their reach due to the costly fees and labyrinthine bureaucratic procedures required to establish themselves in trade legitimately. Many of them, especially the Haitians who have the highest level of illiteracy, are unfamiliar with or intimidated by the paperwork required to obtain a commercial licence.

1. The Madam Sara of Haiti

During the past few years, large amounts of staple foods and consumer goods have been entering Haiti either "legally" through a system of institutionalized fiscal fraud, or openly illegally imported through action by members of the armed forces and the commercial elite. This situation contrasts with the smuggling of primarily luxury consumer goods formerly practised by a few high-level officials and privileged businessmen under the Duvalier regime.³⁷

In the context of political and economic chaos, oppressive social relations, economic exploitation and extreme poverty, a dynamic and heterogeneous group of women has found a niche in international commerce and has adapted to supply the growing demand in the capital and other towns for inexpensive imported consumer goods and foodstuffs. These Haitian traders travel mostly to the Dominican Republic, Panama, Curaçao and Miami, where they purchase light manufactured goods and food products and transport them back to Haiti to sell, mainly in Port-au-Prince. They sell their goods either retail to consumers, or wholesale to other intermediaries or shops. They sell from their homes, in the indoor and outdoor markets, outside of factories, as well as to shop-owners. That these traders are able to conduct their activities with little or no formal education or business training, limited access to banks and formal credit and virtually no government services or protection and are willing to risk scarce savings is testimony to their dynamism and ambition, as well as to the unavailability of more secure or profitable avenues of investment.³⁸

The involvement of working and lower-middle class women in the importation and distribution of goods in Haiti is not an entirely new phenomenon, but one which has greatly expanded under the present conditions of the open market and the unrestricted flow of imports into the country.³⁹ Under the rule of the Duvaliers, the growth of an

³⁷ Americas Watch (1989:110), cited in Plotkin (1989:8).

³⁸ Plotkin (1989).

³⁹ Elite women, who own fashion, house-wares and luxury item boutiques and travel to the USA or Europe several times per year, have also benefited from the current situation of customs fraud, as can be seen in the proliferation of their shops in Petionville, a suburb of

urban middle class and a sector of low-level salaried government and private-sector employees resulted in more women having disposable income to travel abroad. Those who were able to obtain US visas, travelled once or several times a year to visit family-members, to maintain visa status, as well as to buy consumer goods to bring back to Haiti to sell from their homes and offices. This trade enabled them to cover their travelling expenses and to earn a small profit.

Another sector of women that has become involved in international trade on a part-time basis is comprised of workers in the assembly factories of Port-au-Prince and piece-workers labouring at home. The growth of the assembly industries during the 1970s and early 1980s led to the creation of a relatively large, salaried, predominantly female, labour force that appears to have turned to part-time trade as a means of supplementing meagre earnings and of investing scarce savings.

2. The "independent commercial importers" of Jamaica

During the late 1970s, as macro-economic trends made formal-sector employment increasingly difficult to obtain, many low- as well as middle-income households in Jamaica began to depend on "higglering" and "hustling" for income. During this period, Jamaican traders began travelling to Nassau, the United States, Panama and the Cayman Islands to sell Jamaican produce and/or to buy consumer goods for resale in Jamaica.⁴⁰ This trade was a response to severe shortages of imported food, clothing, footwear and household goods brought about by economic instability and the Jamaican Government's policy of exchange controls and import restrictions. As import restrictions have been removed, the value of goods imported into Jamaica has increased tremendously.

Prior to 1982, most of the traders brought goods into the country illegally, by declaring them as personal effects, thus avoiding duty and foreign exchange and licensing requirements. However, traders often suffered heavy losses when goods were confiscated by airport and customs officials. This small-scale importing was nevertheless encouraged by the laxity of the authorities and ease of obtaining United States currency in the black market, which was supplied primarily by tourists and marijuana exporters.⁴¹ As controls on currency trading were relaxed and as import restrictions were removed, the number of traders grew.

However, in 1982, due to pressure by local manufacturers and established importers and shopkeepers, the Government took measures to control the traders by issuing them quotas of foreign exchange for import and requiring them to obtain import licences.

Port-au-Prince.

⁴⁰ Boyd (1988:101).

⁴¹ Ross (1982).

To facilitate traders' operations, a special customs facility was established at the Kingston airport to clear their goods and two shopping arcades were built for them to sell their merchandise. In addition to giving the traders legal status, the Government also upgraded their social status by renaming them "independent commercial importers."

In response to these measures, two traders' associations were formed to lobby for the traders' interests: the Jamaican Association of Higglers and the United Vendors Association (UVA). Membership in the UVA has increased considerably in the past few years since the identity cards issued by the Association are required by the embassies when considering visa applications.

C. The Curaçao Free Zone

The Free Zone is a private organization, owned and operated by the Curaçao Industrial and International Trade Development Company (CURINDE) since 1980. CURINDE functions without any financial support from the Curaçao Government, which is, however, its main stockholder.

The main goals of CURINDE are:

(a) To promote the international trade and duty-free enterprises within the Free Zone and encourage more diversification of companies to make the zone more attractive; and

(b) To promote industrialization by attracting industries to the industrial park.

Goods imported into the Free Zone are completely duty-free. No duties are levied on goods exported from the zone to foreign countries.

The Free Zone, covering 68 acres, is adjacent to the port and eight miles from the airport. The suitcase traders travel to Curaçao mainly by air, while other exporters operating in the formal sector make frequent use of the shipping lines.

The entrance to the Free Zone is controlled by customs officials and security guards. While the zone is open from 7 a.m. until midnight, the customs office is open from 7 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.

By 1988, there were 88 companies in the Free Zone. Products offered for sale and the number of companies that offered them included: clothing (37); electronic goods (32); excise goods (19); leather goods (15); jewellery (14); shoes (12); textiles (12); cosmetics (11); toys (11); household articles (9); sporting goods (5); pharmaceutical products (5); auto parts (5); watches (3); handbags and accessories (3); perfumes (2); foodstuffs (2); stationery (2); furniture (2); photographic equipment (2); film, table linens (1); embroidery (1); optical goods (1); car-parts, diesel and gasoline motors (1); and tyres (1).

In spite of the wide range of products offered for sale in the Free Zone, CURINDE is facing tough competition from the Free Zone in Panama, which offer a wider variety of products. According to Free Zone shopkeepers, prices in Panama are somewhat lower than in Curaçao, due to the fact that Panama sells in larger quantities. Venezuela is also attracting traders who go to buy such goods as cook-ware, kitchen utensils, shoes and clothing. Plans are being developed to set up a Free Zone at the Curaçao airport in the very near future.

D. Means of transportation and overseas markets of the suitcase traders

Traders begin their career by buying goods in Curaçao. As they develop their trade, they tend to travel more to Panama, where they can purchase a larger variety of goods at lower prices than in Curaçao.

Many of the Haitians travel by road or air to the Dominican Republic then go to other islands en route to and from Curaçao. Some go first to San Juan, Puerto Rico, where they buy jewellery that they sell on credit in Curaçao. In recent years, as traders have found it increasingly difficult to meet the stricter eligibility requirements for visas to Puerto Rico and Miami, more of them have been travelling to Curaçao and Panama.⁴² As airfares to Panama from many countries are significantly higher than to Curaçao, only successful traders can afford the extra operating expense.⁴³ However, in recent years, the number of Haitian traders going to Curaçao has been declining, due in part to the difficulty and expense of obtaining foreign exchange. These often prefer to go to Panama where they can buy more for their money and have less problems with the airline companies.

Traders from Guadeloupe and Martinique travel through St Maarten. From Curaçao, they fly back to St Maarten on the Dutch side and travel by road to the French side, where they take a boat home.

The Grenadians travel to Curaçao with ALM. The Guyanese who travel with BWIA for transit in Trinidad, also travel through Suriname in order to enter Guyana illegally. The Surinamese traders travel with either ALM or SLM⁴⁴.

The suitcase traders use ALM flights to Curaçao from Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, St Maarten,

⁴² Plotkin (1989).

⁴³ In 1989, round-trip airfares from Haiti were \$119 to the Dominican Republic, \$169 to Puerto Rico, \$195 to Curaçao, \$268 to Miami, \$329 to Panama and \$359 to Venezuela.

⁴⁴ They often purchase two tickets from different airline companies, so as to have more options for return flights to their country. In other words, they have the dates on the tickets changed and use them during two business trips to Curaçao, if necessary.

Suriname, Venezuela, Colombia, Aruba, Bonaire, Miami, New York and San Juan. Since November 1988, ALM also flies to Grenada.⁴⁵

ALM provides six flights a week to St Maarten, four to Haiti, three each to the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, two to Suriname and one to Grenada.

Other carriers provide an additional 13 flights to Curaçao from Jamaica (Air Jamaica), nine from the Dominican Republic (VIASA, Dominicana and LVP), eight to St Maarten, three each to Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname (SLM).

In addition to travelling to Curaçao, 63 per cent of the traders questioned had also travelled to other countries to buy merchandise. One third of the traders had travelled to Panama, 12 per cent to Puerto Rico, 12 per cent to Haiti, 8 per cent to the Dominican Republic and 2 per cent to Guadeloupe. The large majority of the traders who had travelled to other countries continued to travel to them to purchase goods.

Whereas among the Haitians and those from the Dominican Republic, the female traders had higher rates of travel to other countries than the men, Jamaican men had a higher rate of travel elsewhere than the women (83 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively).

Table 3

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and other countries visited

Country	Jamaicans	Haitians	Dom. Rep.	ALL
Panama	39	29	26	33
Haiti	26	-	9	12
Puerto Rico	1	21	8	12
Dominican Republic	2	57	-	8
Guadeloupe	-	14	-	2
	(N=82)	(N=28)	(N=58)	(N=250)

As indicated in Table 3, 57 per cent of the Haitian traders (69 per cent of the women and 42 per cent of the men) had travelled to the Dominican Republic, while 29 per cent had travelled to Panama, 21 per cent to Puerto Rico and 14 per cent to Guadeloupe. Most of the traders who travelled from the Dominican Republic to other countries had gone to Panama and small proportions had gone to Puerto Rico (8 per cent) or Haiti (9 per cent). Most of the Jamaican traders had

⁴⁵ Round-trip airfares to Curaçao were \$383 from Paramaribo, \$155 from Port-au-Prince, \$193 from Santo Domingo, \$175 from Kingston, \$170 from Port-of-Spain and \$175 from Grenada.

travelled to Panama and Haiti (39 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively).

The Haitians appeared to have travelled to the largest number of countries (2.7), followed by traders from the Dominican Republic (2.6) and the Jamaicans (2.0).

Table 4

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and number of other countries visited

No. of Countries	Jamaicans	Haitians	Dom. Rep.	All
One	46	32	32	34
Two	18	16	7	14
Three	10	5	25	11
Four +	26	47	36	41
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
	(N=50)	(N=19)	(N=28)	(N=156)
(Est. Mean	2.0	2.7	2.6	2.6)

III. THE SUITCASE TRADERS

A. The size of the trader population

Since many traders do not pay income taxes or apply for commercial licences or import franchises, there are no accurate statistics on the total number who operate or on the volume of business. There are, however, several sources of data that permit rough estimates of the size of various segments of the trader population.

1. The size of the trader population in Jamaica and Haiti

There are records of the Jamaican traders, registered with the Revenue Board to obtain import quotas and commercial licences. For the number of them who travel to Panama, there are estimates of the number of visas issued by the Panamanian consular office.

Records of the Jamaican Revenue Board indicate that in 1987, 3,084 independent commercial importers were registered, 9 per cent of whom were male.⁴⁶ This figure probably represents only large-scale traders and does not include those not registered, who import smaller quantities of goods under the guise of pleasure or business travel.

⁴⁶ Taylor (1988:8).

Officials at the Panamanian consular office indicated that in 1988, between 3,000 and 4,000 visas a month were issued at peak travel time.⁴⁷ However, the survey revealed that because a new visa is required for each trip and as some traders travel several times a month, this figure represents the number of trips made rather than the number of traders involved.

For the Haitian traders, there are rough estimates of the number of vehicles that pass the border into the Dominican Republic and records from the international airport on passengers to Panama and Curaçao.

According to a travel agent in Port-au-Prince, most Haitian traders taking commercial flights go to Panama and Curaçao, while a smaller number go to the Dominican Republic, Miami, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Aruba, Martinique and Guadeloupe. Since the fall of Duvalier and the recent "democratization" of contraband, the number of traders travelling to Panama and Curaçao has increased significantly, while the number of those journeying to Miami has declined, due to the tightening of requirements for United States visas and visa-renewals.⁴⁸

Since 99 per cent of passengers to Panama and the majority of passengers to Curaçao are traders, the total number of the latter's trips may be estimated from airport passenger manifest lists. According to the Port-au-Prince international airport records, in 1987 an undetermined number of individuals flew 48,762 times to Curaçao and 57,985 times to Panama.⁴⁹ Since traders travel several times a year and often to both countries on the same trip, this indicates also that their number lies in the thousands. To determine the exact number of traders involved and the frequency of their travel would require examination of lists of passenger's names.⁵⁰

There are indications that the proportion of male Haitian traders travelling by air has increased from 3 per cent to 10 per cent over the past several years. In many cases where the husband and wife work together, the husband often travels and the wife goes to the airport Customs House to negotiate duties and to pick up the merchandise, which she then sells in the internal market.

⁴⁷ Taylor (1988:5-6).

⁴⁸ Interview by Plotkin, 19 January 1989, cited in Plotkin (1989:19).

⁴⁹ The peak seasons for travel in 1987 appeared to be in February and from September through November to Curaçao, and in February, April, May and September to Panama (source: "Statistique de Trafic" (report by Monique Lagro, WID/ECLAC, 1987).

⁵⁰ Another source of this information might be the ticket agencies that specialize in serving the Madam Sara.

Since the border between the two countries was (unofficially) reopened in 1987, many Haitian traders travel to the Dominican Republic by bus. Approximately 200 Haitian trucks and other vehicles pass the border at Malpasse to the Dominican Republic during three-day holiday weekends.⁵¹ Since the trucks carry 25-30 passengers the majority of whom are traders, one can estimate that there are roughly 5,000 traders on these trips.⁵² While the more successful full-time traders may travel from one to four times a month, the smaller, part-time traders do so less frequently.

2. The size of the trader population buying in the Free Zone of Curaçao

The main sources of data on the number of traders from the different Caribbean countries who travel to Curaçao are the records of CURINDE on total annual visits to the Free Zone and passenger records from ALM which serves most of the traders.

Table 5

Visitors to Curaçao arriving on ALM flights
from five Caribbean countries
(April - October 1988)

Country of origin	No.	%	Percentage of visits to Free Zone
Trinidad	4,648	9	5
Haiti	8,210	16	19
Surinam	8,509	17	4
Jamaica	12,951	26	57
Dom. Rep.	16,434	32	15
TOTAL	50,762	100	100

Source: ALM Statistics, 1988⁵³

Table 5 reveals that most trips to Curaçao were made by visitors from the Dominican Republic (32 per cent), followed by nationals of Jamaica (26 per cent), Suriname (17 per cent), Haiti (16 per cent), and Trinidadian and Tobago (9 per cent). Visitors from the Dominican Republic were the largest group using ALM, but they accounted for only 15 per cent of the visitors to the Free Zone. Some of the women from

⁵¹ Plotkin (1989:19).

⁵² It is not known what the volume of traffic is across the border post at Ouanam in northern Haiti.

⁵³ Lagro (1988b:7).

the Dominican Republic who were interviewed, admitted to being involved in prostitution.⁵⁴

Most of the visits indicated in Table 6 below were made by suitcase traders⁵⁵. While Jamaicans constituted the smallest of the five groups in 1985, accounting for 7.1 per cent of all visits, they became the largest group by 1987 and their number may have continued to increase. The number of visits by Haitians and Dominican Republicans more than doubled between 1985 and 1986, then declined over the next two years. During 1987 and 1988, visits by Jamaicans and Haitians together accounted for more than half the total from all countries; during the four-year period, there was a steady decline in both the number and proportion of visits from Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

Table 6

Number of annual visits to the Curaçao Free Zone and percentage of total annual visits from all countries to five countries between 1985 and 1988

Country	Number of visits							
	1985		1986		1987		1988 ⁵⁶	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jamaica	3,279	7.1	16,642	20.5	41,507	46.5	38,328	45.0
Haiti	7,073	15.5	16,803	20.7	13,600	15.2	12,114	14.2
Dom. Rep.	7,920	17.3	18,371	22.6	9,507	10.6	8,389	9.8
Trinidad & Tobago	9,324	20.4	6,979	8.6	6,041	6.1	3,904	4.5
Venezuela	10,817	23.7	7,902	9.2	4,717	5.3	4,611	5.4
	(N=45,728)		(N=81,237)		(N=89,314)		(N=85,183)	

Source: Curaçao Industrial and International Trade Development Company (CURINDE)

Visitors from all countries currently have difficulty in obtaining foreign exchange. Venezuelans had constituted the largest group of wholesale "buying tourists" in the stores of Willemstad before devaluation of their currency in 1983. With the decline in

⁵⁴ "Where else can a woman get her money from?" said one suitcase trader from the Dominican Republic who started crying when asked if she had other jobs besides trading.

⁵⁵ Lagro(1988)

⁵⁶ Figures for 1988 do not include visits made in December, which is the peak month for arrivals from Jamaicans, Haitians and residents of the Dominican Republic.

their numbers, many of the shopkeepers moved their business in the Free Zone to cater to the suitcase traders whose numbers were growing rapidly. The businesses in town now cater mainly to European and American tourists, while the Free Zone caters to the suitcase traders.

The average number of monthly visits of Jamaicans to the Free Zone in 1987 was 3,458, corresponding roughly with the number of commercial licences issued by the Revenue Board and the number of visas issued monthly at the Panamanian consulate.

B. The socio-economic characteristics of the suitcase traders

The survey of suitcase traders covered a total of 250 female and male traders from ten countries. Traders from Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic formed the three largest groups interviewed, accounting for 33 per cent, 23.5 per cent and 11.3 per cent, respectively. Smaller numbers of traders from Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Guyana, St Maarten and Grenada were also covered in the survey. The survey results are usually presented for the entire group of 250, with comparisons made between the three major groups.⁵⁷ When possible, data have been disaggregated by gender. To facilitate discussion, all percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.⁵⁸

1. Sex

The survey sample reflects the fact that women constitute the majority of the suitcase traders: 73 per cent female and 26 per cent male traders. Due to the small size of the sample from each country, the gender ratios may not reflect those of the entire population of these groups. Caution must therefore, be taken when interpreting any differences between genders, as well as differences between national groups.

There are indications that there are more males among the Haitian traders than in the other groups⁵⁹. The impression of airport personnel and travel agents in Port-au-Prince is that the number of male traders has been on the rise during the past few years.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Mean values were systematically calculated for profits per trip through a computer programme. Mean values for other variables were estimated by using the mid-points of each range and the lower end of open-ended ranges of values.

⁵⁸ Percentages in tables may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

⁵⁹ Interviews by Lagro (1989:a)

⁶⁰ Plotkin (1989).

Table 7

Percentage distribution of traders by sex
and home country

Sex	Country			
	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
Female	93	57	78	73
Male	7	43	22	26

2. Age

Of the 245 traders who responded to the question on age, 49 per cent were between 26 and 35, 36 per cent were between 36 and 50 and 13 per cent were in the 21 to 25 age group, with 1 per cent under 21 and over 51, respectively. Male traders tended, on average, to be slightly more represented in the two youngest age groups.

Table 8

Percentage distribution of traders
by age and sex

Sex	Age-group					
	>21	21-25	26-35	36-50	51+	
Female	-	11	50	36	3	(N=179)
Male	1	17	46	35	1	(N= 66)
TOTAL	1	13	49	36	1	(N=245)

3. Educational background

Thirty-two percent of the traders did not respond to the question regarding their educational background. This reticence may have been an attempt to conceal a background of little or no formal schooling.⁶¹ Of the 169 traders who did respond, 4 per cent claimed to have had no schooling, 36 per cent to have attended only primary school and 47 per cent to have had some secondary education. The rate of secondary school attendance was greater for women (50 per cent) than for men (40 per cent). Although the overall percentage of traders who had formal education beyond the secondary level was low (13 per cent), the men were more likely to have done so (17 per cent) than the women (12 per cent).

⁶¹ The traders between 21 and 25 years constituted the largest group of those who did not respond to the question on schooling, indicating, perhaps, that this group was the most sensitive about the issue.

Table 9

Percentage distribution of traders by sex and level of schooling

Level*	Female	Male	TOTAL
None	3	4	4
Primary	35	38	36
Secondary	50	40	47
Post Sec.	12	17	13
TOTAL	100 (N=122)	100 (N=47)	100 (N=169)

* Indicates that the traders claimed to have attended at least some classes at this level.

Of the three main groups of traders, those from the Dominican Republic had the most formal education and those from Haiti, the least; among the former 55 per cent had attended secondary school, as compared with 41 per cent of the latter. This lends support to the findings of previous studies regarding the low level of formal education of many of the Haitian traders.⁶² By contrast, the proportion of Jamaican traders who had attended secondary school (41 per cent) was nearly equal to that of those who had attended only primary school (38 per cent). Of the three groups, Jamaicans had the highest rate (17 per cent) of post-secondary education. This may indicate the presence of more middle-class traders among them than in the other two groups.

Table 10

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and level of schooling

Level*	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.
None	4	6	5
Primary	41	53	32
Secondary	38	35	55
Post Sec.	17	6	8
TOTAL	100 (N=53)	100 (N=17)	100 (N=40)

* Indicates that the traders had attended at least some classes at this level.

⁶² Plotkin (1898); Werleigh (1985).

4. Household type

Of all traders questioned, 67 per cent were involved in some form of union: 46 per cent were married, 17 per cent in common-law unions and 4 per cent in visiting unions. Twenty-six per cent were single and the remaining 6 per cent were divorced, separated, or widowed. The highest rate of union was among the Haitian traders (85 per cent), and the lowest was among the Jamaicans (58 per cent) of whom 40 per cent were single.

Male traders were more likely to be married (57 per cent) or in common-law union (19 per cent) than were their female counterparts (42 per cent and 16 per cent respectively). The highest rate of marriages (64 per cent) was among the Haitian traders and the lowest (25 per cent) among the Jamaicans.

Table 11

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and union status

Union status	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
Common-law	26	14	14	17
Visiting	7	7	2	4
Married	25	64	49	46
Single	40	14	19	26
Divorced	2	-	9	5
Separated	-	-	2	1
Widowed	-	-	5	2
TOTAL	100 (N=81)	100 (N=28)	100 (N=57)	100 (N=245)

Seventy-six percent of the traders had children. Male traders claimed a higher rate of childlessness (34 per cent) than females (20 per cent), and had, on average, fewer children.⁶³ The highest rate of childlessness was among the Jamaicans who, on average, also appeared to have fewer children than their counterparts from Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Of the traders with children, 52 per cent had daughters nine years and younger and 40 per cent had sons the same age, while 11 per cent had sons and 19 per cent had daughters over 17 years old.

Table 12 gives the distribution of traders with children by sex and country. Percentages are based on the total number of traders in each group.

⁶³ The estimated mean number of children for the male and female traders was 1.8 and 2.2, respectively.

Table 12

Numbers and percentages of male and female traders with children by home country

	Country							
	Jamaica		Haiti		Dom. Rep.		ALL	
		%		%		%		%
Females	55	72	13	81	39	87	147	80
Males	3	50	10	83	8	62	44	66
Total	58	71	23	82	47	81	191	76

Table 13

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and number of children

No. of children	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom.Rep.	ALL
None	29	18	19	24
1-2	40	36	29	38
3-5	26	43	50	34
6+	5	3	2	4
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
	(N=82)	(N=28)	(N=58)	(N=250)
(Estimated Mean	1.9	2.5	2.6	2.2)

5. Occupational history

Eighty per cent of the female traders and 78 per cent of the male traders claimed to have no other employment than trade. Of the 50 traders who did have other paid work, 42 per cent were self-employed and 58 per cent had salaried jobs. The lower-status and lower-income occupations included: domestic worker, restaurant worker, seamstress, hairdresser and factory worker. The more middle-class occupations included: accountant, secretary, driver, teacher, mechanic, electrician, fashion designer, pilot and hotel manager.

Forty-seven per cent of the traders claimed to have had no employment prior to their trade. Of the 131 traders who had had previous employment, two thirds had had salaried jobs and one third had been self-employed. While equal proportions (35 per cent) of men and women had held salaried jobs, 25 per cent of the men had been self-employed, compared with 14 per cent of the women.

Eighty per cent of the traders claimed that they had begun trading as a way to improve their economic status. Seven per cent said they traded because it provided them with a means of self-employment. Only 9 per cent of all the traders claimed that they liked this line of work. None of the male traders from Haiti or

Jamaica and only one male trader from the Dominican Republic claimed that they liked trading. The men's negative attitude toward trading may, in part, be due to the fact that trade is still very much regarded as women's work.

At the time of the survey, 32 per cent of all the traders had been travelling to Curaçao for a year or less. Twelve per cent of the 249 traders had first begun travelling to Curaçao during the six months prior to the survey. Sixteen of the newcomers (12 Jamaicans and 4 from the Dominican Republic) were on their first trip at the time of their interview. However, 59 per cent had already been travelling to Curaçao for at least two years. Sixty-five per cent of the men and 51 per cent of the women had been travelling for two or more years.

Table 14

Distribution of traders by home country and number of years travelling to Curaçao

Years trading	Country			
	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom.Rep.	ALL
< 0.5	18	-	16	12
< 1	23	43	14	20
1.5	15	-	5	9
2	21	21	23	24
> 2	23	36	42	35
TOTAL	100 (N=82)	100 (N=28)	100 (N=57)	100 (N=249)

Table 14 shows that 65 percent of the traders from the Dominican Republic and 57 per cent of the Haitian traders had been travelling to Curaçao to trade for at least two years. In contrast, the Jamaican traders appear to have entered trade almost continuously for over at least a two-year period.

Fifty per cent of the Haitian women and of the Jamaican men, respectively, had been travelling to Curaçao for one year or less.

6. Traders' income

In general, the traders were reluctant to divulge information about their average profits per trip. As many traders do not keep records of their costs and receipts, it is possible that many are unable to calculate profit. In addition, it is possible that male traders claimed to earn more than they did and that female traders under-reported their earnings.

Only 66 per cent of all the traders responded to the question on profit per trip. Fifty-six per cent of those responding claimed to make an average profit of less than \$500. As a group, the Jamaican

traders appeared to be the most successful, as none reported profits under \$200 and 26 per cent claimed profits of \$1000 or more. Traders from the Dominican Republic had the highest proportion (28 per cent) earning less than \$200 per trip and the Haitians, the highest proportion (14 per cent) of those earning profits under \$100. Mean profits per trip for the three groups of traders were: \$727 for the Jamaicans, \$474 for those from the Dominican Republic and \$377 for the Haitians.

Table 15

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and profits per trip in US dollars

Profit per trip	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	All
<100	-	14	7	4
100-200	-	9	21	7
200-300	16	18	14	15
300-500	26	41	24	30
500-1000	32	9	19	26
1000+	26	9	14	18
TOTAL	100 (N=38)	100 (N=22)	100 (N=42)	100 (N=167)
(Mean	\$727	\$377	\$474)	

Male traders overall earned higher average profits per trip than the females (\$842 and \$611, respectively). A larger proportion of the male traders (86 per cent) than female traders (68 per cent) earned profits above \$300. There were also higher proportions of men than women in the highest-profit categories and lower proportions of men in the lowest profit-ranges.

Table 16

Percentage distribution of traders by sex and profit per trip in US dollars

	Profit per trip						TOTAL
	<100	100-200	200-300	300-500	500-1000	1000+	
Females	6	8	18	28	24	16	100 (N=115)
Males	-	6	8	34	31	21	100 (N=52)

(Mean: Females= \$611; Males= \$842)

A comparison of the mean profits of men and women for each of the three groups reveals that male traders from Jamaica and the Dominican Republic made the highest average profits (\$1450.5 and \$829.7, respectively), which were more than double those of female traders from the same country (\$641.4 and \$376.8, respectively).

Haitian males and females from the Dominican Republic earned the lowest mean profits per trip (\$372.2 and \$376.8, respectively). Haitian females' average profits were only slightly higher than those of the other two groups (\$380.8).

Table 17

Average profits per trip in US dollars
by home country and sex

	Jamaica	Naiti	Dom. Rep
Female	641.4 (N=34)	380.8 (N=13)	376.8 (N=33)
Male	1,450.5 (N=4)	372.2 (N=9)	829.7 (N=9)

Although there appears to be no clear relationship between a trader's age and his or her profits per trip, the oldest traders (more than 51 years old) had the highest percentage (60 per cent) of profits over \$1,000 as well as the highest average profits (\$2,240), while the 26-35 year old traders had the lowest average profits (\$452). However, 29 per cent of the traders aged 21-25 earned profits of more than \$1,000 as compared with 21 per cent of those aged 36-50 years; average profits for the younger group were therefore higher than for the older group (\$894 and \$793, respectively).

Table 18

Percentage distribution of traders by
age of trader and profits per trip in US dollars

Profit	AGE					TOTAL
	<21	21-25	26-35	36-50	51+	
<\$100	-	-	6	3	-	4
\$100-200	-	12	5	7	-	7
\$200-300	-	13	21	11	-	15
\$300-500	100	25	35	28	-	30
\$500-1,000	-	21	24	30	40	26
\$1,000 +	-	29	9	21	60	18
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100
(Mean:	(N=1) \$300	(N=25) \$894	(N=78) \$452	(N=57) \$793	(N=5) \$2,240	(N=165) \$683)

A comparison of the mean profits of the three groups of traders in each of the five age-groups reveals that among the Jamaicans and Haitians, the oldest traders made the highest average profits, while among traders from the Dominican Republic the highest average profits were earned by the 21-25 year-olds.

Table 19

Mean profits of suitcase traders in US dollars by age-group and country of origin

	Age-group					TOTAL
	<21	21-25	26-35	36-50	51+	
Jamaica	300	751	608	925	-	727
Haiti	-	275	365	444	-	377
Dom.Rep.	-	942	375	387	600	474

There was no clear relationship between the length of time trading and average profits per trip. While traders travelling to Curaçao for more than two years earned the highest average profits (\$951), the lowest average profits were made by those who had been travelling for two years (\$412).

Neither was educational background clearly linked to average profit. While traders who claimed to have had no schooling earned the lowest average profits per trip (\$350) and those with several years of secondary schooling had the highest (\$699), traders with only a primary school education earned higher profits (\$487 for those with fewer years of schooling and \$668 for those with more) than those with low secondary and post-secondary schooling (\$371 and \$447, respectively).

Marital status appeared to have some effect on traders' average profits. The 117 traders with partners earned average profits of \$691, compared to \$523 for the 48 traders without partners. Traders who claimed to receive financial help from their partners had only slightly higher average profits than those who had no help (\$680 and \$673, respectively).

Traders' profits per trip were clearly linked to their investment per trip, as indicated by the amount they spent for merchandise in the Free Zone.

IV. THE TRADER'S ACTIVITY CYCLE

A. General description of the work of the traders

The suitcase traders generally undertake a number of activities in preparation for, during and following each buying trip. While these activities vary depending on the country of origin of the trader, they comprise, overall:⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Activities in parentheses are optional activities.

In the home countries:

- Investigating market conditions to determine what merchandise sells well locally and at what prices;
- (Taking pre-paid orders from shop-owners and other customers;)
- (Collecting payment from credit customers and those who took merchandise to sell on consignment;)
- (Purchasing merchandise to sell in Curaçao;)⁶⁵
- Purchasing airline ticket;
- Obtaining exit visas from home country and entry visas to Curaçao;
- Obtaining foreign exchange from banks or on the black market;
- Arranging for child-care during absence;
- (Placing advance orders to shops in Free Zone in Curaçao;)
- Travelling by air to Curaçao.

In Curaçao:

- (Selling merchandise brought from home country;)
- (Placing orders in Free Zone while waiting to collect payment for goods sold;)
- Purchasing goods;
- Arranging for transportation of goods to the airport;
- Repacking goods in preparation for flight home;
- Return flight to home country.

Back in the home country:

- Retrieving goods from customs house;
- Transporting goods home or to market or depot;
- Selling goods to shops, in the markets and/or from home or work.

B. Procedures for buying in the Free Zone

After a trader buys goods in a shop in the Free Zone, the shop-owner hands in to the Customs Office a form indicating the types of goods purchased, their prices and the number of parcels in which they are packed. After the customs officer checks the goods for conformity with this information, the parcels are then sealed and transported in a closed van to the airport. Some traders hire their own cars to transport the goods. Goods can be stored at the baggage depot at the Curaçao airport for \$0.75 per parcel. Traders receive all their purchases from the Free Zone at the airport and have to repack the goods themselves or hire others to do so before they can be loaded onto the plane. There is a room at the airport that is used by some traders for packing, but it is too small and inconvenient. Haitians tend to repack their goods outside the airport.

⁶⁵ It is known that the Haitian traders often bring wooden statues, women's underwear and sandals to sell in Curacao.

C. Work schedule

1. Frequency of buying trips to Curaçao

Thirty-nine per cent of the traders travelled to Curaçao once a month, 16 per cent every two months, 13 per cent once every two weeks and thirty per cent six or less times a year. The estimated mean number of trips to Curaçao a year was 14.7.⁶⁶

While nearly equal proportions of male and female traders travelled once a month (38 per cent and 42 per cent respectively), men were more likely than women to do so once every two weeks (10 per cent and 23 per cent respectively). Men made a higher estimated mean number of trips per year (16.2) than women (14.0).

The Haitian traders were the most likely (29 per cent) to travel twice a month and those from the Dominican Republic were the most likely to do so once a month. The latter made the highest estimated mean number of trips per year (17.6), followed by the Haitians (14.3) and the Jamaicans (10.4).

Guadeloupeans generally travelled to Curaçao once every three months and Grenadians about once a month.

Table 20

Percentage distribution of traders
by home country and frequency of travel

	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom.Rep.	ALL
	%	%	%	%
First trip	15	-	6	7
Once/week	1	-	9	5
Once/fortnight	4	29	16	13
Once/3 weeks	2	7	6	5
Once/month	36	36	40	39
Once/2 months	22	14	13	16
Once/3 months	14	14	5	10
Other	6	-	5	4
TOTAL	100 (N=81)	100 (N=28)	100 (N=55)	100 (N=246)

The peak months for visits to the Free Zone and for shipments of cargo by air from Curaçao were December and July.

⁶⁶ Estimated mean was calculated on the assumption that all traders travelled for one 52-week year. Traders on their first trip and in the "other" category were not included.

2. Days spent away from home

Most of the traders claimed that they spent from three to five days away from home during each of their buying trips. Of the 134 traders who answered the relevant question, 53 per cent spent three days away, 34 per cent five days and 13 per cent 2 days. While 52 per cent of those from the Dominican Republic and 60 per cent of the Jamaicans were away for 3 days, 78 per cent of the Haitians were away for five days.

3. Time spent in the Free zone

Seventy-two per cent of the traders spent either two or three days in the Free Zone. Female traders spent an average of 2.9 and male traders an average of 2.5 days. On average, the traders from the Dominican Republic spent the most time (3.1 days), followed by the Jamaicans (2.9 days) and the Haitians (2.6 days).

Sixty-four per cent of the traders claimed to spend at least eight hours per day in the Free Zone. Another 26 per cent claimed they spent from five to seven hours a day and the remaining 11 per cent claimed they spent from one to four hours. The Haitians spent the most number of hours per day on average in the Free Zone followed by the Jamaicans and those from the Dominican Republic.

4. Time taken to sell goods at home

Sixteen per cent of the traders took one week to dispose of their merchandise following their return home, 27 per cent took two weeks and 21 per cent took one month. For the group of traders as a whole, the average time required to dispose of goods was 4.3 weeks. On average, male traders took less time (3.8 weeks) to dispose of their goods than the female traders (4.5 weeks).

Table 21

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and time taken to sell goods

Time taken to sell	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom.Rep.	ALL
1 week	5	7	29	16
2 weeks	11	33	26	27
3 weeks	18	15	14	12
1 month	19	33	17	21
2 months	23	11	12	15
3-4 months	14	-	-	6
5-6 months	3	-	-	2
Do not know	7	-	2	3
	(N=79)	(N=27)	(N=58)	(N=244)

Traders from the Dominican Republic sold their goods fastest and the Jamaicans were the slowest. The estimated average length of time

it took to dispose of goods was 6.4 weeks for the Jamaicans, 3.4 weeks for the Haitians, 3.0 for traders from the Dominican Republic.

D. Lodgings in Curaçao

Fifty-six per cent of the traders found accommodation in inexpensive hotels in Curaçao. Nearly one half of the Jamaican traders slept in guesthouses and thirty six per cent from the Dominican Republic claimed to stay with friends or family.

Table 22

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and type of lodgings in Curaçao

Type of lodgings	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom.Rep.	ALL
Guesthouse	49	32	12	28
Hotel	48	54	52	56
Friend/family	2	14	36	16
Other	1	-	-	*
TOTAL	100 (N=82)	100 (N=28)	100 (N=58)	100 (N=250)

* Less than 1 per cent

Forty-seven per cent of all the traders paid between \$6 and \$10 per night for accommodation. On average, the Haitian traders had the least expensive and the Jamaicans the most expensive accommodation per night (\$7.14 and \$10, respectively).

Table 23

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and cost of accommodation per night

Cost per night	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
>\$5	10	29	38	21
\$6-10	72	57	29	47
\$11-15	12	14	22	20
\$16-25	4	-	9	8
\$26+	2	-	2	4
TOTAL	100 (N=82)	100 (N=28)	100 (N=58)	100 (N=250)
(Est. mean: \$9.96	\$7.14	\$8.42	\$9.58)	

E. Financial support

The partners of traders were an important source of financial support. Thirty-eight per cent of the females and 12 per cent of the males claimed that they received financial help from their partner. Only 11 per cent of all the traders claimed to receive financial help from other family members.

Forty-four per cent of the Haitian female traders claimed to receive financial help from their partner to carry on their trade, compared to 31 per cent of those from the Dominican Republic and 29 per cent of the Jamaicans. While 17 per cent of the Haitian male traders and 15 per cent of those from the Dominican Republic said they received help from their partners, none of the Jamaican male traders did.

F. Child-care arrangements of the traders⁶⁷

Of the whole sample of 191 traders with children, 52 per cent claimed that their partner provided financial support for their children. Of the 147 female traders who had children, 58 per cent claimed that they received financial support for their children from their partner: 64 per cent of the Jamaicans, compared with 51 per cent of those from the Dominican Republic and 46 per cent of the Haitians. Of the 44 male traders who had children, 30 per cent said they received financial help from their partners.

Of all the traders with children, 43 per cent relied on their partner, 34 per cent on their mother and 12 per cent on paid domestic labour⁶⁸ (12 per cent) for child-care services while they were away from home. Only 13 per cent claimed to rely on their older children, other relatives, or friends for child-care. Of those who relied on their mother for child-care, 49 per cent were from the Dominican Republic, 29 per cent Jamaican and 13 per cent were Haitian.

Twenty per cent of the 177 traders who addressed the question as to whether they paid regularly for child-care while they were away from home responded in the affirmative. These included only 11 per cent of the 42 male traders as compared with 22 per cent of the 135 females. Of the three groups of trading mothers, the Haitians had the highest rate of paid child care (64 per cent), followed by the Jamaicans (25 per cent) and those from the Dominican Republic (17 per cent).

While female traders with children considered their male partner an important source of financial support, only 49 (33 per cent) of them relied on their partner for child-care during their absences. By

⁶⁷ In the following discussion, percentages are based on the number of traders in each group who had children (see Table 12).

⁶⁸ Servants or baby-sitters

contrast, 77 per cent of the 44 traders who were fathers relied on their female partner for child-care.

Only 20 per cent of the 183 traders who responded to the question on their feelings about being separated from their children claimed to be very dissatisfied with their child-care arrangements, sentiments varied between groups. The female traders expressed dissatisfaction more frequently (23 per cent) than the men (11 per cent).⁶⁹ Of the three groups of female traders, the Haitians were the most (46 per cent) dissatisfied with leaving their children, followed by those from the Dominican Republic (26 per cent) and the Jamaicans (24 per cent). The greater proportion of dissatisfaction among Haitian women may be related to the low rate of partner support and the high rate of reliance on paid child-care arrangements.

G. Types of merchandise purchased by the traders

Half of the traders in this survey who purchased goods from the shops in the Free Zone, also did so in the shops of downtown Willemstad.

1. Types of goods purchased in the Free Zone

Clothing, shoes, textiles and cosmetics were the goods most frequently purchased by traders in the Free Zone. Nearly all of the traders (93 per cent) purchased clothing, while 46 per cent purchased shoes, 40 per cent purchased textiles and 31 per cent purchased cosmetics. Traders often bought a variety of goods, rather than specialize in only one type.

There were no striking differences in the types of merchandise most frequently purchased by female and male traders, respectively, with the exception that male traders purchased electronics goods more frequently than females did (28 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively) and females tended to be the dominant buyers of toys. It is not known whether male and female traders specialize in clothing and shoes of their own gender, or if both buy mostly women's clothing and underwear. It appears, however, that the trade of male as well as female traders is geared towards a largely female-oriented market.

Seventy-six per cent of the traders buy goods from three to 10 different shops in the Free Zone. This was true for 80 per cent of the Jamaicans, 72 per cent of the Haitians and 84 per cent of traders from the Dominican Republic.

⁶⁹ These proportions seem to mirror the proportions of female and male traders who pay for child-care.

Table 24

Percentage distribution of traders by home country
and type of goods purchased in Free Zone

Type of goods	Jamaica (N=82)	Haiti (N=28)	Dom.Rep. (N=58)	ALL (N=250)
Clothing	98	96	90	93
Textiles	27	57	50	40
Shoes	45	75	62	46
Jewellery	7	7	19	10
Electronic goods	6	14	21	14
Leather goods	16	21	22	14
Car parts	4	-	-	1
Household goods	28	18	19	19
Toys	11	18	14	9
Sports articles	6	14	21	10
Gift articles	9	7	17	8
Watches	10	11	19	10
Cosmetics	26	25	40	31
Excise goods	5	-	-	2
Foodstuffs	7	-	3	4
Furniture	1	-	-	*
Other goods	2	-	3	2

Table 25

Percentage distribution of traders by type of
goods purchased in Free Zone and by sex*

Type of goods	Female (N= 183)	Male (N=67)
Clothing	95	90
Textiles	42	34
Shoes	48	40
Jewellery	9	13
Electronic goods	8	28
Leather goods	16	9
Car parts	2	-
Household goods	20	16
Toys	12	1
Sports articles	12	8
Gift articles	10	5
Watches	11	8
Cosmetics	32	30
Excise goods	3	-
Foodstuffs	6	-
Furniture	*	-
Other	2	2

* Less than 1 per cent

The Haitian male traders often brought such items as wooden sculptures, underwear and sandals to sell on credit. They then waited (normally one week, but up to 17 days), to collect their money and place an order in the Free Zone.⁷⁰

2. Goods Purchased in downtown Willemstad

Fifty-one per cent of all the traders (40 per cent of the females and 52 per cent of the males) bought goods in the shops of downtown Willemstad which cater to European and American tourists. Most of the traders purchased clothing (67 per cent), foodstuffs (20 per cent) and cosmetics (8 per cent).

Table 26

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and type of goods bought downtown

	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
Clothes	65	82	68	67
Cosmetics	12	-	4	8
Foodstuffs	24	18	14	20
Shoes	-	-	4	1
Jewellery	-	-	11	3
Other	-	-	-	1
	(N=34)	(N=11)	(N=28)	(N=110)

H. Value of traders' purchases

1. Purchases made in the Free Zone

The amount spent most frequently per trip by the traders in the Free Zone was between \$500 and \$1,000, (43 per cent of all expenditures). The next most frequently spent amount was between \$200 and \$500 (23 per cent of the traders' total purchases per trip). For the group as a whole, the average amount spent in the Free Zone was \$1,247. The smallest total amount spent in the Free Zone was \$100 and the largest was \$20,000.

On average, male traders spent more per trip than females. Half of the men spent more than \$1000 per trip, compared with only 24 per cent of the women. The average amount spent per trip was \$1,525 for males and \$1,146 for female traders.

A comparison of the expenditures of female and male traders from the three countries reveals that on average, the Haitian women spent the most per capita per trip (\$2,528), followed by the Dominican men (\$1,746), the Haitian men (\$1,608), the Jamaican men (\$1,000), the

⁷⁰ Lagro (1989:b).

Dominican women (\$904) and the Jamaican women (\$753). The Guyanese and Surinamese are also known for buying in large quantities valued at up to US\$20,000.⁷¹

Table 27

Percentage distribution of traders by sex and amount of US dollars spent in the Free Zone

Amount spent in Free Zone	Female	Male	TOTAL
<\$200	3	-	2
\$200-500	27	12	23
\$500-1000	45	38	43
\$1000-1500	12	17	13
\$1500-2500	8	20	11
\$2500-5000	4	14	7
\$5000+	1	-	*
TOTAL	100	100	100
(Mean	(N=180) \$1,146	(N=66) \$1,525	(N=246) \$1,247)

* Less than 1 per cent

According to CURINDE, the traders from Jamaica are relatively small buyers, with an average purchase of \$US 500 per visitor, and prefer to travel with their baggage on the flight. Shopkeepers, in the Free Zone indicated that the total sales from Jamaican traders had dropped by 40 per cent compared with previous year, due to the economic crisis and the recent devaluation of their currency.

Table 28

Percentage distribution of traders by amount spent in Free Zone and by home country

Amount spent in Free Zone	Jamaica N=82	Haiti N=28	Dom. Rep. N=57
<\$200	4	-	5
\$200-500	33	21	19
\$500-1000	50	32	46
\$1000-1500	8	7	12
\$1500-2500	4	4	11
\$2500-5000	1	29	7
\$5000+	-	7	-
TOTAL	100	100	100
(Mean	\$771	\$2,134	\$1,096)

⁷¹ Lagro (1988b).

Table 29

Average amount of money spent in Free Zone
by home country and sex

	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
Female	\$ 753 (N=76)	\$2,528 (N=16)	\$ 904 (N=44)	\$1,146 (N=181)
Male	\$1,000 (N= 6)	\$1,608 (N=12)	\$1,746 (N=13)	\$1,525 (N= 66)

The amount of money spent in the Free Zone, up to \$1,000, appeared to be linked to that of the trader's profits: the larger the investment, the larger the profit. However, those traders who purchased goods for more than \$1,000 appeared to reap a smaller percentage return for their investment than traders who spent smaller sums.

Table 30

Percentage distribution of traders by amount spent
in Free Zone and profits per trip

Profits/ trip	Amount Spent in Free Zone (US\$)						
	<200	200-500	500-1000	1000-1,500	1500-2500	2500-5000	5000+
<\$100	25	12	1	5	-	-	-
\$100-200	50	12	6	-	5	9	-
\$200-300	25	21	21	-	5	9	-
\$300-500	-	21	44	21	14	18	100
\$500-1000	-	29	14	58	52	9	-
\$1000+	-	6	15	16	24	55	-
TOTAL	100 (N=4)	100 (N=34)	100 (N=73)	100 (N=19)	100 (N=21)	100 (N=11)	100 (N=2)
(Mean	\$129	\$417	\$548	\$617	\$816	\$2,009	\$400)

* Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

2. Amount of purchases made downtown

Fifty-three per cent of the traders from the Dominican Republic, 50 per cent of the Jamaican and 39 per cent of the Haitians purchased goods in the shops in downtown Willemstad. In general, the average value of traders' purchases downtown (\$285) was smaller than those in the Free Zone. Sixty-seven per cent of the 117 traders spent less than \$200. The smallest value per trader was \$10 and the largest was \$4,000. The Haitians spent the most on average (\$525), followed by the traders from the Dominican Republic (\$197) and the Jamaicans (\$164).

Table 31

Average amount spent downtown
by home country and sex

	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
Female	\$165 (N=30)	\$691 (N=3)	\$195 (N=25)	\$256 (N=80)
Male	\$153 (N=3)	\$463 (N=8)	\$208 (N=5)	\$346 (N=37)

Average expenditure of male traders was more than that of the female traders (\$356 and \$246, respectively). Haitian female and male traders spent the most, on average, per trip (\$691 and \$463, respectively), followed by the male and female traders from the Dominican Republic (\$208 and \$195, respectively) and the female and male Jamaicans (\$165 and \$153, respectively).

Table 32

Percentage distribution of traders by amount spent in
downtown Willemstad and by home country

Amount spent Downtown	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
<\$200	82	46	73	67
\$200-500	12	27	27	26
\$500-1000	6	9	-	4
\$1000-1500	-	18	-	3
\$1500-2500	-	-	-	-
\$2500-5000	-	-	-	-
\$5000+	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
	(N=41)	(N=11)	(N=30)	(N=117)
(Mean	\$164	\$525	\$197	\$285)

3. Weight of goods shipped per trader

Fifty-four per cent of the traders shipped a total of 21 to 60 kilograms of goods back to their home country, 23 per cent shipped a total weight under 21 kilos and 23 per cent shipped over 61 kilos. The average weight of goods shipped per trip was 79 kilograms. The smallest weight shipped was 10 kg and the largest was 2,000 kg.

On average, male traders made heavier shipments to their home country than female traders did (90 and 75 kilograms, respectively). However, the Haitian female traders had the heaviest shipments on average (233 kg). Of all the male traders, Haitians made the heaviest shipments, on average (176 kg).

Table 33

Average weight (in Kg) of traders' goods
by home country and by sex

	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
Female	32.7 (N=55)	232.7 (N=16)	49.0 (N=39)	74.9 (N=152)
Male	34.6 (N=5)	175.7 (N=12)	72.2 (N=12)	90.2 (N=59)

Of the three groups, the Haitian traders shipped the most and the Jamaicans the least weight home. More than half of the Haitian traders each shipped more than 91 kilograms of goods. The estimated average weights of the traders' shipments per trip were: 33 kg for the Jamaicans, 208 kg for the Haitians and 55 kg for the traders from the Dominican Republic.

Table 34

Percentage distribution of traders by home country
and weight of baggage shipped home

Weight of baggage (kg)	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
<10	-	-	4	2
11-20	40	4	26	21
21-40	36	7	23	23
41-60	16	26	28	30
61-90	7	7	6	7
91+	-	56	13	17
TOTAL	100 (N=55)	100 (N=27)	100 (N=47)	100 (N=192)
(Mean	32.8	208.3	54.5	79.2)

4. Air freight/excess baggage charges

The Haitian traders paid the highest average freight charges (\$154) to send their goods home, followed by the Jamaicans (\$67) and those from the Dominican Republic (\$65).

Table 35

Percentage distribution of traders by home country
and amount paid for excess baggage in US dollars

Amount paid to airline	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom.Rep.	ALL
<\$20	16	4	16	10
\$21-40	18	15	28	25
\$41-60	29	4	25	17
\$61-100	16	18	16	15
\$101-150	13	7	6	11
\$151-250	8	15	3	9
\$251	-	37	6	13
TOTAL	100 (N=38)	100 (N=27)	100 (N=32)	100 (N=144)
(Est. mean	\$66.9	\$153.6	\$65.1	\$92.6)

I. Market outlets in the traders' home countries

The traders often had multiple strategies to dispose of goods in their home country. Sixty-six per cent of the traders said that they sold goods from their home to friends and neighbours. Fifty per cent claimed they sold goods to intermediaries or consumers in the streets and markets. Eighteen per cent said they sold the goods from their own shop and 16 per cent sold goods to other shops. Only 2 per cent claimed to sell goods door-to-door. Eight per cent of the traders sold goods in other countries.

Table 36

Percentage distribution of traders by sex and
by method of disposing of goods imported

Place of sale	Female	Male	ALL
Street/market	54	39	50
In shops	15	21	16
In own shop	15	28	18
At home to friends	64	55	62
At home to customers	3	5	4
Door-to-door	2	5	2
In other countries	6	13	8
	(N=183)	(N=67)	(N=250)

* Percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses.

The female traders were more likely than the male traders to sell their goods in the streets/markets (54 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively) and at home to their friends (64 per cent and 55 per

cent, respectively). Male traders were more likely than females to sell goods to shops (15 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively), in their own shops (15 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively) and to customers from their homes (3 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively). In addition, the male traders were more than twice as likely than females to travel to other countries to sell their goods (6 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively).

Of the three main groups of traders, those from the Dominican Republic were the most likely to sell goods to friends from their home (71 per cent) and from their own shops (21 per cent). The Haitians were the most likely to sell their goods in the streets and markets (82 per cent), to shops (39 per cent) and in other countries (21 per cent). The Jamaicans were the most likely to sell their goods to customers from their home (6 per cent) and to consumers door-to-door (6 per cent).

Table 37

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and by method of disposing of goods imported

Place of sale	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
Street/market	55	82	43	50
In shops	4	39	26	16
In own shop	9	11	21	18
At home to friends	66	50	71	62
At home to customers	6	-	2	4
Door-to-door	6	-	-	2
In other countries	2	21	2	8
	(N=79)	(N=28)	(N=58)	(N=250)

* Percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses.

Table 38

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and by source of advance orders for their goods*

Source of advance orders	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.	ALL
None	35	32	26	32
Street customers	11	32	12	12
Shops	2	11	10	9
Own-shop customers	4	11	10	12
Friends	52	32	59	49
Other	2	-	-	**
	N=79	N=28	N=58	N=250

** Percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses.

* Less than 1 per cent

1. Advance orders

Sixty-six per cent of all the traders took advance orders for goods purchased in Curaçao from one or more sources; 49 per cent from friends, 12 per cent from street customers and shop customers, respectively and 9 per cent from shop-owners. The male traders were more likely than females to receive advance orders from customers (78 per cent and 65 per cent respectively), particularly from shop-owners (18 per cent and 6 per cent respectively) and from their own customers (22 per cent and 9 per cent respectively).

J. Level of formalization of the traders' enterprise

1. Trade association membership

Only twelve per cent of all traders claimed to belong to a traders' organization or association. The Jamaican traders had a membership rate of 21 per cent and those from the Dominican Republic, (5 per cent). None of the Haitian traders in the sample claimed to belong to any organization.

Eighty-five per cent of those who belonged to traders' associations were either married (61 per cent) or in common-law union (25 per cent).

2. Credit

Eighty-four per cent of the traders claimed to have no access to formal credit. Seven per cent had credit from shopkeepers in the Curaçao Free Zone (7 per cent of the females and 10 per cent of the males), 4 per cent had bank-credit, (3 per cent of the women and 8 per cent of the men) and 5 per cent had credit from other sources. Eighty-eight per cent of the traders who had credit from other sources and 81 per cent of those who had credit from Free Zone shopkeepers had profits per trip of more than \$300. Of the traders who had bank-credit, 50 per cent had profits of less than \$200 and the remainder had profits of more than \$500. The overall impression is that this trade is heavily based on cash transactions.

3. Insurance for merchandise

Seventy-nine per cent of the traders claimed that the goods they bought in the Free Zone were not insured. Twenty-six per cent of the traders from the Dominican Republic, 21 per cent of the Haitians and 9 per cent of the Jamaicans claimed that their goods were insured.

4. Paid employees

Seventy-two per cent of all the traders had no paid employees to assist them with their trading activities. Twenty-four per cent had one or two employees, 3 per cent had three to five and less than one per cent had six or more employees.

Male traders were more likely to have paid employees than the females (39 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively). Only among the Haitians were the female traders more likely to have paid employees than the males (25 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively).

Table 39

Percentage distribution of traders by sex and number of paid employees

No. of employees	Sex		Total
	Female	Male	
None	76	61	72
1-2	22	30	24
3-5	2	6	3
6+	-	3	*
Total	100 (N=182)	100 (N=64)	100 (N=246)

* Less than 1 per cent

The traders from the Dominican Republic were more likely to have paid employees than either the Jamaicans or the Haitians (26 per cent, 22 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively).

Ninety-four per cent of the 69 traders who had paid employees had enterprises that were objectively assessed as either well organized (61 per cent) or organized (33 per cent).

The proportion of traders with paid employees was highest among traders with the highest profit per trip. While only 19 per cent of the traders with profits less than \$300 had paid employees, 36 per cent of traders with profits between \$300 and \$1,000 and 65 per cent of the traders with profits in excess of \$1,000 had paid employees.

K. Level of organization of the trader's enterprise

The level of organization of each trader's enterprise was assessed by means of a rating system that accounted for the presence or absence of several attributes: one point was given if the trader took orders for shops or shop customers; two points were given if the trader kept any records or business accounts; three points were given if the trader kept records of prices, items bought and sold and costs; two points were given if the trader possessed either a van, a shop, or a market stall; and three points were given if the trader owned at least two of the aforementioned items.

The traders were thus categorized according to the level of organization of their enterprise. Sixty per cent of the traders' enterprises were found to be organized in some fashion (i.e., 19 per cent well organized, 30 per cent organized, 8 per cent not well organized). The enterprises of male traders were more likely to be

organized than those of the female traders (76 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively).

Table 40

Percentage distribution of traders by sex and level of organization of their enterprise

Level	Female	Male	Total
Well organized	14	33	19
Organized	33	36	33
Not well organized	7	7	8
Not organized	46	24	40
TOTAL	100 (N=183)	100 (N=67)	100 (N=250)

The enterprises of the traders from the Dominican Republic were more often organized (62 per cent) than those of the Jamaican (47 per cent) or Haitian traders (43 per cent). In each of the three groups, the female traders had a lower proportion of organized enterprises than the male traders. The Haitian female traders had the lowest proportion of organized enterprises of all three groups, including both genders.

Table 41

Percentage distribution of traders by home country and level of organization of their enterprise

Level of organization	Home country			
	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom.Rep.	ALL
Well organized	13	14	14	19
Organized	34	25	36	33
Not well organized	1	4	7	8
Not organized	51	57	38	40
TOTAL	100 (N=82)	100 (N=28)	100 (N=58)	100 (N=250)

The oldest traders (51+) had the highest proportion of well organized enterprises and the lowest proportion of unorganized enterprises (43 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively). However, there was no clear relationship between level of organization and age. While the youngest traders (21-25) had the highest percentage of unorganized enterprises (48 per cent), the percentage of their enterprises that were well organized was higher than that of the two next oldest age-groups (29 per cent, compared to 16 per cent for both the 26-35 and 36-50 year-old traders).

The level of organization of a trader's enterprise appeared to be related to the trader's level of education. The combined percentage of well organized and organized categories increased with

each level of schooling (from 16 per cent for traders with no formal education to 68 per cent for those with secondary education. Traders with post-secondary education, however, did not have the highest proportion of well organized enterprises.

Table 42

Percentage distribution of traders by schooling and level of organization of enterprise.

Educational level	Level of organization			TOTAL
	High/Middle	Low	Not org.	
None	(--+16) 16	16	68	100 (N=6)
Low Primary	(8+40) 47	2	50	100 (N=40)
Primary	(10+38) 48	14	38	100 (N=21)
Low Secondary	(22+33) 55	15	31	100 (N=55)
Secondary	(20+48) 68	4	28	100 (N=25)
Post Secondary	(27+32) 59	-	41	100 (N=22)
No answer	(24+27) 51	6	43	100 (N=79)

1. Advance orders placed to shops in the Free Zone

Only 8 per cent of the traders claimed that they placed orders to shops in the Free Zone in advance of their arrival. The male traders were more likely to place advance orders than the females (13 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively). Only one (1 per cent) of the Jamaicans, three (11 per cent) of the Haitians and five (9 per cent) of those from the Dominican Republic claimed to have placed advance orders.

2. Record keeping

Seventy-six per cent of the male traders and 75 per cent of the females claimed they kept some kind of records of their trading activities. Female traders differed somewhat from their male counterparts in the kinds of records they kept most often. A higher percentage of men than women kept records of items bought, costs and other details, whereas female traders were more likely than males to keep records of items sold.

The Haitians were the least likely and the Jamaicans the most likely to keep any records. While those from the Dominican Republic were the most likely to keep records of prices, items bought and costs, the Jamaicans were the most likely to keep records of items sold and of other details.

Table 43

Percentage distribution of traders by sex
and type of records kept*

Type of records	Female	Male	TOTAL
None	25	24	25
Of prices	13	13	13
Of items bought	14	21	16
Of items sold	13	8	12
Of costs	13	18	14
Other	23	25	24

(N=183) (N=67) (N=250)

* Percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses of traders.

Table 44

Percentage distribution of traders by home country
and type of records kept*

Type of records	Home country		
	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep.
None	27	32	26
Of prices	9	7	17
Of items bought	15	18	19
Of items sold	16	7	10
Of costs	10	4	12
Other	27	32	23

(N=82) (N=28) (N=58)

* Percentages do not add up to 100 due to multiple responses of traders.

3. Capital investment in the trade

The traders' capital investment in the trade is low. Twenty-six per cent of the traders claimed to have a shop, 33 per cent to have a van and 32 per cent to have a fixed market-stall. Traders from the Dominican Republic were more likely to own shops (35 per cent) and vans (40 per cent) than the Haitians (14 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively) and the Jamaicans (10 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively). However, the Jamaican traders were more likely to have a market-stall (48 per cent) than traders from Haiti or the Dominican Republic (39 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively).

Table 45

Percentages of traders by home country,
sex and capital investment

Capital Invest.	Jamaica			Haiti			Dom. Rep.		
	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T
Shop	9	17	10	-	33	14	36	31	35
Van	17	17	17	13	41	25	33	62	40
Stall	47	50	48	44	33	39	29	15	26

(N=76) (N=6) (N=82) (N=16) (N=12) (N=28) (N=45) (N=13) (N=58)

* F = female; M = male; T = males and females combined.

Male traders were more likely than females to have a shop among the Jamaicans and Haitians, but not among those from the Dominican Republic. While male traders were more likely to have a van among the Haitians and those from the Dominican Republic, equal proportions of male and female Jamaican traders owned a van. Greater proportions of the female than male traders from Haiti and the Dominican Republic had a stall. Among the Jamaicans, the male traders were more likely to have a stall.

L. Traders' perceptions of their success in trade

Fifty-five per cent of the traders considered themselves successful most of the time. Only a small percentage (9 per cent) considered themselves unsuccessful and the remaining 36 per cent considered themselves successful some of the time. Male traders were more likely to consider themselves successful than the female traders (67 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively).

Table 46

Percentage distribution of traders by sex
and assessment of success

Successful	Female	Male	Total
Yes	50	67	55
No	10	6	9
Sometimes	40	27	36
TOTAL	100 (N=179)	100 (N=67)	100 (N=246)

Table 47

Percentage distribution of traders by country
and assessment of success

Successful	Jamaica	Haiti	Dom. Rep
Yes	27	50	72
No	16	7	5
Sometimes	57	43	23
Total	100 (N=79)	100 (N=28)	100 (N=57)

Traders from the Dominican Republic considered themselves successful the most often (72 per cent), followed by the Haitians and the Jamaicans (50 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively).

These self-assessments appeared to have less to do with an objective assessment of how well their enterprise was organized than with their profits per trip. Traders in the higher-profit categories were more likely to consider themselves successful than those in the lower-profit range. It is not clear, however, why only 52 per cent of the traders who made more than \$1,000 in profits per trip considered themselves successful. While a more precise and objective indicator of success might be the ratio of a trader's profits to investment, this ratio could not be computed.

Some of the reasons that traders gave for their lack of success had to do with the difficulty of selling goods fast enough in the home country, high prices of goods in the Free Zone, high prices for foreign exchange and difficulty in collecting payment from credit customers.

Table 48

Percentage distribution of traders by self-assessment
of their success as traders and profits per trip

Successful	Profits per trip				
	<\$200	\$200-300	\$300-500	\$500-1,000	\$1,000+
Yes	32	56	62	73	52
No	16	8	2	9	3
Sometimes	53	36	36	18	45
Total	100 (N=19)	100 (N=25)	100 (N=50)	100 (N=44)	100 (N=29)

V. PROBLEMS OF THE TRADERS

A. Traders' dissatisfaction with the airlines

Although the traders travelled to Curaçao on a variety of airlines, 68 per cent used ALM flights.

Table 49

Percentage distribution of traders by
airline used to travel to Curaçao

Carrier	% Traders
ALM	68
Air Jamaica	9
BWIA	7
AE	4
SLM	3
Dominicana	3
DA	2
VIASA	1
KLM	*
LP	*

(N=248)

* Less than one per cent

ALM serves as an agent for BWIA, Air Jamaica, VIASA and Dominicana. In addition, ALM provides a range of services to other international carriers, including cargo-handling, catering, ticket sales, maintenance and ground service for passengers at the Curaçao airport.⁷²

All of the 248 traders interviewed were dissatisfied with a variety of services provided by the airlines in Curaçao, including:

- check-in procedures at the airport;
- arrival times of the flights into Curaçao;
- departure times of flights out of Curaçao;
- the number of flights between Curaçao and the home countries;
- the attitude of the airline personnel;
- the security of the baggage transport; and
- the storage and packing facilities for baggage at the airport.

In addition, traders complained that airline ticket prices were too high, maximum luggage weight allowance was too low, overweight

⁷² Lagro (1988b:3).

luggage charges were too high, food in the airport was too expensive, flights were often not on time, there were too few flights between Jamaica and Curaçao, return flights to Jamaica were scheduled too late in the day, more personnel were needed for check-in and customer service, porters required bribes to handle baggage and the packing area at the airport was too small.

Table 49

Percentage distribution of traders by recommendation to airlines for improvement

Recommendations	% Traders
Greater punctuality of flights	14
Earlier exit flights	11
More flights	7
Lower overweight charges	9
Less expensive food	6
Less expensive airline ticket	-
Improve baggage handling	*
Increase personnel	15
Increase check-in counters	-
Larger packing area	-

(N=248)

* Less than 1 per cent

B. Traders' dissatisfaction with the Free Zone

Almost all of the traders were dissatisfied with what they considered high prices for low-quality merchandise. Most traders also lamented the lack of adequate toilet, restaurant, or internal transport facilities in the Free Zone. Most traders also mentioned the late delivery of their goods at the airport, so that they had little time to repack them prior to departure to their home country.

Table 50

Percentage distribution of traders by dissatisfaction with Free Zone services

Area of dissatisfaction	% Traders
Facilities	94
Quality of merchandise sold	90
Price of merchandise sold	81
Transport of goods from Free Zone to airport	81

(N=250)

Most of the traders' suggestions for improvements in the Free Zone focused on the need for a better entry procedure, adequate facilities, higher quality and a wider variety of goods. In addition, they suggested that the snack bar serve higher-quality and less expensive food and provide clean, shaded eating areas. Traders complained that they had to wait in long lines from early in the morning in order to enter the Free Zone. Some traders complained that the prices in the Free Zone fluctuated frequently.

Table 51

Percentage distribution of traders by suggestions for improvement in Free Zone services

Areas that need improvement	% Traders
Entry procedure	54
Facilities	45
Food area	21
Variety of goods sold	20
Quality of goods sold	50
Prices	7

(N=250)

C. Traders' perception of unfair treatment

Forty-eight per cent of the traders believed that were treated unfairly by customs officers in their home country. They reported that they were often charged high import duties on their goods, which were confiscated if they could not pay. Traders also reported that they were often treated unfairly by a variety of other personnel, including customs officers at the Curaçao airport and Free Zone, airport personnel at the check-in counter and in the storage area, Free Zone shopkeepers, flight attendants, transport drivers and hotel and guesthouse workers.

Table 52

Percentage distribution of traders by personnel whom they believe treat them unfairly

Personnel	% Traders
Customs officers in home country	48
Customs officers in Curaçao airport	15
Flight attendants	8
Curaçao check-in personnel	12
Personnel in airport storage/packing room	11
Customs officers in Free Zone	5
Free Zone shop personnel	12
Transport drivers	4
Hotel/guesthouse personnel	5

(N=250)

D. Problems in the traders' home country

Obtaining foreign exchange in their home country was the problem cited most often by traders. Several traders suggested that foreign exchange should be available from banks in the Free Zone.

Table 53

Percentage distribution of traders by problems faced in their home country

Problems	% Traders
Obtaining foreign exchange	12
Import restrictions on quality of goods	4
Import restrictions on quantity of goods	7
Import licence	7

(N=250)

E. Summary of traders' problems

1 The goods purchased in the Free Zone often arrive too late at the airport:

(a) ALM claims that the Free Zone shopkeepers send the goods too late. Shopkeepers claim that the ALM check-in procedure begins too late. In any event, the late arrival of the goods leaves little time for the traders to repack their goods.

(b) Each shopkeeper uses his or her own transport vehicle to transport traders' goods to the airport. Some companies transport traders' goods only if their total value is \$200 or more. Traders who spend less than \$200 have to make their own transport arrangements, which often cost them more in time as well as money.

2 The merchandise offered in the Free Zone is often of inferior quality.

3 Excess baggage rates are expensive: 1 per cent of the first-class tariff (ca. 25 guilders per kg.). In contrast, sea transport by freighter is 1,5 florins per kg.

4 The airline cannot handle the transportation of all the traders' goods adequately:

(a) In an effort to minimize loss of boxes or delays in shipment, many traders prefer to have all their baggage, including excess baggage, transported on the flight they use. This is sometimes not always possible due to lack of space on the aircraft. Thus, traders often have to send their goods by air freight, which carries a higher risk of loss.

(b) Traders' goods are often lost during air transportation. This seems to happen to the Haitian traders more often than to the Jamaicans.

(c) Traders who have suffered loss of goods often have great difficulty getting refunds from the airline companies.

5 Traders have difficulties importing goods due to trade-restrictions in their home country:

(a) Many of the traders have difficulty obtaining foreign exchange in their country. In the past, Curaçao accepted foreign currency against high discount rates. However, there were difficulties and the practice was discontinued. Since Haitian traders cannot obtain foreign exchange at home, they rely on the black market or go to Nassau or the Dominican Republic to change their money.

(b) Import restrictions are imposed on the traders. Jamaicans are allowed to bring in one package. However, they have found ways to bring in more, sometimes carrying as many as 25 airway bills, all with different names.

(c) A restricted amount of money may be taken out of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Any surplus discovered is confiscated by customs officials.

(d) The traders from Guadeloupe are not allowed to import goods made in China. As a great deal of the goods sold in the Free Zone are from Taiwan, these traders are severely restricted in their purchases.

6 The services provided by the airlines are insufficient:

(a) The traders of Suriname and those of Guyana who pass through Suriname on their way back home can only fly once a week with ALM. Tickets bought with SLM are not endorsable to ALM, since these companies have no bilateral agreements. This restricts the flexibility of travel of the traders. To get around this problem, the traders buy round-trip tickets from both airlines.

(b) The Haitian traders would like more flights between Curaçao and Haiti during the Christmas season.

(c) Air Jamaica flies to Curaçao at 2 a.m. when there is an inadequate number of customs officials on duty.

(d) Traders with confirmed tickets who do not get on their scheduled flight because of overbooking complained that they were not provided with refreshments while they waited for the next flight.

(e) There is no communication in French for Haitian passengers on ALM flights.

7 The airport infrastructure is inadequate:

(a) The cargo and storage facilities are inadequate.

(b) The welcome statements at the airport in Curaçao are in English, Papiamentu, Dutch and Spanish but not in French.

8 There is a lack of infrastructure in the Free Zone:

(a) No proper toilet facilities;

(b) No transportation for shoppers to get around;

(c) No telephone service;

(d) No first aid for traders who fall ill;

(e) No rest-rooms;

(f) No proper restaurants or place to sit down and eat.

9 There is no proper sleeping accommodation for the traders, although it appears that this is not perceived as a problem by traders themselves.

10 Traders are often treated disrespectfully by government officials in Curaçao:

(a) There seems to be a stigma attached to traders from the Dominican Republic and Haiti and they are treated disrespectfully: the Haitian traders are perceived as unhygienic and those from the Dominican Republic are all assumed to be prostitutes.

(b) The traders from the Dominican Republic have problems with the Immigration Office in Curaçao as they are suspected of planning to stay longer than they are allowed. Their passports are often confiscated by Customs (which according to the law should not be allowed).

(c) The Jamaican traders, especially the males, complained of being searched by customs officials in a rough manner.

11 The Haitian traders seem to have communication problems due to language.

12 Fluctuating prices for goods in the Curaçao Free Zone and the relatively high costs of food and lodging (compared with Venezuela and Panama).

F. Problems of the Free Zone

The Curaçao Free Zone competes for traders with Panama and Venezuela. The Haitians prefer to go to the Free Zone in Panama, where they get an airline ticket if they buy above a certain amount.

Within the Free Zone, there is some tension between the companies and the Curaçao International Trade Development Company (CURINDE). The companies believe that CURINDE should provide facilities for the traders, while CURINDE believes that the companies should be responsible for the provision of facilities.

The customs officers in the Free Zone require a more efficient system of informing visitors of the rules and regulations in the Free Zone.

G. Problems of the business community in Curaçao

According to members of the business community, tax-free goods bought by the traders find their way back into the local market. The repacking of the goods at the airport by the traders provides this opportunity.

The business community is unhappy with the fact that local people can buy in the Free Zone.

The business community wants better control in the Free Zone where, they believe, shopkeepers illicitly sell goods to the traders retail, thereby cutting into their sales. The traders are supposed to buy retail only in the shops in Willemstad.

H. Problems of the airlines

ALM has difficulty getting money received in local currency for purchase of tickets out of some countries. These transfer problems lead to losses for ALM.

ALM has difficulty with the traders from Guadeloupe who use cumbersome packages of 300 kilograms. Since the airline can transport only one package of this size per passenger, many traders have to send their goods by air freight, which causes dissatisfaction.

ALM is unable to handle the volume of claims it receives from the traders for loss of goods.

VI. Summary

A. The suitcase trade

- Various sources of data indicate that the Caribbean suitcase traders number between 5,000 and 6,000.
- While the majority of the traders are female, there is some evidence that the percentage of male traders is on the rise.
- Most of the traders are from Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

- The increase in the number of traders during the past several years appears to be linked to economic decline in the home country of the traders.
- Most of the traders travel to the Free Zones of Panama and Curaçao and/or to Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Haiti to buy merchandise to sell in their home country.
- Fifty-two per cent of the traders interviewed in Curaçao travelled to three or more countries to buy merchandise.
- Fifty-five per cent of the traders travelled to Curaçao once a month or every two weeks. Traders made an estimated average of 14.7 trips to Curaçao a year. Male traders tended to travel more frequently than females. Traders from the Dominican Republic travelled more frequently than Haitian or Jamaican traders.
- Eighty-seven per cent of the traders spent three or five days away from home during each buying trip to Curaçao.
- Eighty-four per cent of the traders stayed in hotels and guesthouses in Curaçao and 68 per cent of them spent \$10 or less per night on accommodation.
- Seventy-two per cent of the traders spent two or three days buying goods in the Free Zone.
- Sixty-four per cent of the traders took up to one month to dispose of all the merchandise purchased abroad in their home country. On average, the traders from the Dominican Republic disposed of their goods the fastest and those from Jamaica took the most time (6.4 and 3.0 weeks, respectively).
- Most of the traders purchased clothing, textiles, shoes, cosmetics and household goods in the Curaçao Free Zone.
- The traders' most frequent total expenditure per trip in the Curaçao Free Zone was between \$500 and \$1,000. The average expenditure was \$1,247. On average, male traders spent more than the females (\$1,546 and \$1,146, respectively). On average, Haitian traders spent the most per trip (\$2,134), followed by those from the Dominican Republic (\$1,096) and the Jamaicans (\$771).
- Only half of the traders who travelled to Curaçao purchased goods (mainly clothing and foodstuffs) in the shops of Willemstad, for an average of \$285. The Haitians made the largest purchases.
- Traders whose expenditure was under \$1,000 appeared to earn larger relative returns on their investment than traders who spent larger sums.

- Following each shopping trip to Curaçao, traders took an average of 79 kilograms of merchandise back to their home country. Male traders tended to take back the heaviest weights than females. On average, Haitian traders took back the heaviest weights (and paid the most in excess-baggage and air-freight charges).
- Sixty-two per cent of the traders sold the merchandise from their home to friends and neighbours and 50 per cent did so in the streets and markets of their home country. Male traders were more likely than females to sell goods from their own shop or to other shops, or in other countries. Haitian traders were the most likely to sell goods in the markets, to shops and in other countries.
- Sixty-eight per cent of the traders took orders for goods prior to their shopping trips. Most advance orders were from their friends.
- Only 8 per cent of the traders placed advance orders to the shops in the Curaçao Free Zone.
- Twenty-eight per cent of the traders had paid employees who helped them during some phase of their trading enterprise.
- Only 12 per cent of the traders claimed to belong to a traders' association in their home country. The Jamaican traders had the highest membership rate (21 per cent) followed by those from the Dominican Republic (5 per cent). None of the Haitian traders belonged to an organization.
- Fifty-two per cent of the traders' enterprises were organized.⁷³ Male traders tended to have better organized enterprises than females. The enterprises of traders from the Dominican Republic were more likely to be organized than those of the Jamaicans or Haitians.
- Eighty-four per cent of the traders had no access to credit. Seven per cent had credit from shopkeepers in the Free Zone, 4 per cent had credit from banks and 5 per cent had credit from other sources.
- Only 16 per cent of the traders claimed that the goods they bought in the Free Zone were regularly insured.
- Capital investment in the trade was low: 33 per cent had a van, 32 per cent had a market stall and 26 per cent had a shop. Male traders were more likely to have shops and vans than the females, who in turn were more likely to have market stalls. Of the three groups, the traders from the Dominican Republic were the most likely to own shops and vans.

⁷³ This refers to the percentage of traders who ranked in the "well organized" and "organized" categories created by using a combination of weighted variables.

- Twenty-eight per cent of the traders paid employees to assist them with their trading activities. Male traders were more likely than females to pay employees. Traders from the Dominican Republic were the most likely to pay employees.
- Seventy-five per cent of the traders kept some kind of records of their trading activities. Of the three groups, the Jamaicans were the most likely and the Haitians were the least likely to keep any records.
- Fifty-five per cent of the traders considered themselves successful most of the time, 9 per cent considered themselves unsuccessful and 36 per cent considered themselves successful some of the time. A larger proportion of men than women evaluated themselves as successful (67 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively). The traders from the Dominican Republic rated themselves successful more often than the Jamaicans or the Haitians (72 per cent, 50 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively).

B. Socio-economic characteristics of the traders

- The average age of the traders was 34. Most of the traders began travelling to Curaçao when they were in their early thirties.
- Sixty per cent of the traders who answered the question on education had at least some secondary school education. The traders from the Dominican Republic were, on average, better educated than those from Jamaica and Haiti.
- Thirty-three per cent of the traders were either single, separated, divorced or widowed. Male traders were more likely than their female counterparts to have a partner.
- Seventy-six per cent of the traders had children. On average, the Jamaican traders had fewer children than the Haitians and those from the Dominican Republic.
- Seventy-nine per cent of the traders claimed that trade was their sole source of income. Twelve per cent also had salaried jobs and nine per cent earned income through self-employment.
- Forty-seven per cent of the traders had no employment prior to commencing their trading activities. Two thirds of the previously employed traders had salaried jobs.
- Eighty per cent of the traders began trade as a way to improve their economic status. Only nine per cent claimed to like trade as an occupation.
- The traders' average profits per trip was \$683. On average, males earned higher incomes than females (\$842 and \$611, respectively). The Jamaicans earned the highest average profits (\$727), followed by those from the Dominican Republic (\$474) and the Haitians (\$377).

- Thirty-one per cent of the traders received financial help for their trade from their partner. The Haitian traders were the most likely to receive such help.
- Six per cent of the traders received financial help for their trade from their parents, 4 per cent received help from other relatives and 2 per cent received help from banks.

C. Child-care

- Fifty-seven per cent of the partners of traders with children did not take care of the children during the trader's absence. On the other hand, 77 per cent of the male traders relied on their partner for child care.
- Twenty-two per cent of the traders with children relied on paid child-care arrangements during their absences due to trade. Female traders were more likely to pay for child care than the males. The Haitian traders were the most likely to pay for child care (64 per cent) compared to those from Jamaica (25 per cent) or the Dominican Republic (17 per cent).
- Thirty-four per cent of the traders with children relied on their mother for child care.
- Twenty per cent of the 183 traders who answered the question expressed dissatisfaction with their child-care arrangements. Among the dissatisfied 46 per cent were Haitians, 26 per cent were from the Dominican Republic and 24 per cent were Jamaicans.
- Fifty-two per cent of the traders claimed that they received financial support for their children from their partner. Female traders were more likely than male traders to receive this kind of support. The Jamaican traders were more likely to receive financial support for children than those from the Dominican Republic or Haiti.

D. Problem areas

In Curaçao Free Zone:

- Inadequate facilities:
 - (a) No proper toilet facilities;
 - (b) No transportation for shoppers to get around;
 - (c) No telephone service;
 - (d) No first aid for traders who fall ill;
 - (e) No rest-rooms;
 - (f) No proper restaurants or place to sit down and eat.
- Traders claimed that the prices for goods in Curaçao Free Zone were too high.
- Traders claimed that the quality of the goods was often low.

- Transport of goods from the shops of the Free Zone to the airport was often too late to allow traders adequate time to repack their goods before their flight.

E. The airlines

- Round-trip airfares were too high.
- Flight arrival and departure times were often inconvenient.
- There was often an inadequate number of flights between Curaçao and the home country.
- Flights were often not on time.
- The maximum luggage weight allowance was too low.
- Overweight luggage charges were too high.
- Airline personnel often treated traders disrespectfully.
- Storage and packing facilities for baggage at the airport were inadequate.
- Food in the airport was too expensive.
- The number of personnel at customer-service and check-in desks was inadequate.
- Inadequate security often resulted in loss of baggage.
- Traders often had difficulty obtaining compensation from airlines for lost baggage.

F. In the home country

- The high premiums paid for United States currency in the parallel market considerably reduce the traders' spending power abroad.
- Traders have difficulty obtaining United States visas to travel to Puerto Rico and Miami.
- Traders have extremely limited access to commercial credit for starting trade, recurrent expenses, or trade expansion.
- Many of the traders suffer from a lack of education, business training and governmental services.
- In Jamaica, there is inadequate space in the shopping arcades to accommodate all the traders, who have been prohibited from selling goods on the streets.
- Customs duties in the home country are often too high, resulting in confiscation of goods when traders cannot pay.

G. Concluding Remarks

While women predominate in the suitcase trade in terms of numbers, male traders appear to be more successful than them. The survey data revealed that, compared to the females, male traders made larger purchases and profits per trip, had better organized enterprises and were more likely to consider themselves successful. They were more likely to have shops, vans and paid employees and to take advance orders from customers. They were also more likely to sell their goods in their own shop and to other shops than the female traders. They were not significantly better educated than the women. They tended to have fewer children.

The traders from the Dominican Republic had, on average, better organized enterprises and were more likely to consider themselves successful than traders from the other two groups. According to calculations made using the survey data, their average rate of profit was 43 per cent.⁷⁴ They tended to have a higher capital investment in trade (in terms of owning shops and vans), they travelled the most frequently to Curaçao, sold their goods the fastest and appeared to be the best educated.

The Jamaican traders are an enigma. Although they had the lowest average expenditure per trip of the three groups, they made the highest average profits per trip. Their average rate of profit was 94 per cent.^{*} However, they were the least likely to consider themselves successful. Only about half of them had organized enterprises. They were the least likely of the other two groups to have a shop or a van, but the most likely to have a market stall. They had the lowest rate of conjugal unions and the lowest average number of children.

The Haitian traders seemed to be the least successful of the three groups. Although they made the largest average purchases, they made the lowest profits per trip. Their average rate of profit was 16 per cent. Their enterprises were less frequently organized. They also invested the most time and effort into their trading activities: they travelled to more countries, spent more days away from home and more hours in the Free Zone than the other two groups. They appeared to be the least educated. However, of the three groups, they had the highest rate of conjugal unions and the highest rate of financial support for their trade from their spouse.

Child-care did not appear to be a major constraint for traders. When partners, parents and extended family were not available to care for children during their absences, paid labour was employed. While traders were not happy with the situation, it did not prevent them from trading. The Haitian traders had the highest rate of paid child-care arrangements and were the least satisfied with being separated from their children during their absences due to trading.

⁷⁴ Average rate of profit was calculated by dividing the mean profits per trip by the mean amount spent in the Free Zone.

The differential success in trade of the three groups and the two sexes cannot be easily explained without further research on the traders' costs and risks and on the market conditions and other constraints in the different countries.

Due to continuing economic decline in many Caribbean countries, women's participation is likely to continue to grow in the informal sector faster than in the formal sector. Women's and men's participation in the suitcase trade is likely to continue to grow due to the lack of alternative employment and to the economic rewards of this activity. While increased competition will lead to higher drop-out rates among the poorly capitalized traders, this sector will persist unless the governments of the traders' home country take strong measures to curtail it.

The suitcase traders constitute one of the most dynamic and resourceful sectors of the Caribbean region's informal economy. Because they satisfy the demand in their home country for relatively low-cost imported consumer goods during a period of severe lack of foreign exchange, they have been tolerated by their respective governments, even though their activities often border on the illegal and thus often challenge the primacy of established commercial sectors. In Jamaica, the government has tried to accommodate both the formal-sector businesses and the traders by prohibiting traders from selling on the side-walks outside of shops and has built shopping malls in which the traders can sell their goods. The customs duties paid by the Jamaican traders, in addition to the fees for import licences, provide the government with an additional source of revenue.

In Haiti traders have the least protection from abuse. They are similarly often abused by authorities and business people in the Dominican Republic and other host countries. Any technical assistance provided to the traders should be not only for the purpose of increasing benefits, but also for improving the fabric of society so as to eliminate the degrading circumstances which they encounter.

VII. Recommendations

A. In the home country

- Attempts should be made to increase employment opportunities for women in the home country of the traders.
- Women's access to basic education and to vocational and technical training should be increased in the home country of the traders.
- Support should be given, if requested, to women's organizations for activities related to enhancing the awareness of women, literacy and occupational training.

- Traders should be encouraged and assisted to form autonomous traders' associations in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, in which traders could discuss their problems and find solutions.
- Efforts should be made to provide organizational and managerial training to the Jamaican United Vendors Association.
- Efforts should be made to establish or support existing credit facilities for small businesses. Such facilities should also provide information and training to help women become aware of how they can invest their capital better, either as individuals or in co-operative ventures.
- Support should be given to organizations that provide services and training to women, including foreign language workshops in which traders could learn English and/or Spanish technical terms and vocabulary related to their practical needs as traders and foreigners abroad and training in how to behave abroad in order to decrease the likelihood of ridicule, discrimination and abuse.
- In Jamaica, space should be provided and more shopping arcades should be built to accommodate the traders.
- The persons and properties of the traders should be respected and protected by government officials and military personnel in the traders' home countries and in the host countries.
- Steps should be taken to eradicate the taking of bribes at the airports and customs areas in Haiti and Jamaica and standard rates of import tariffs should be applied.

B. In the Curaçao Free Zone

- Adequate rest-room, food service and transport facilities should be provided.
- Goods from the Curaçao Free Zone shops should be transported to the airport in a timely manner to allow traders an adequate period to repack their goods before departure.
- All traders should be provided information, in their native languages, concerning rules and regulations in the Free Zone.
- Free Zone customs officials and sales personnel should treat all traders in a respectful manner.

C. Airlines

- Airlines serving the traders should provide greater security for their baggage and should respect the traders' need for timely transport of their parcels, as well as speedy reimbursements in the event of loss of baggage.

- French and Haitian Creole-speaking airline personnel should serve the Haitian traders on flights to Curaçao.
- Flights to Curaçao should be scheduled according to the needs of the traders, since they constitute the bulk of passengers.

D. Curaçao airport

- Storage facilities and space for packing goods should be expanded to accommodate the needs of the traders.

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APPENDIX I

General objectives of the survey

The long-term objectives were:

- (1) . To highlight the contribution of female inter-island traders in the Caribbean to national and regional economic development; and
- (2) To formulate and strengthen programmes and policies oriented towards improvement of the position of the female inter-island traders in the informal sector.

The immediate objectives were:

- (1) To provide a regional overview of the inter-island trade in the Caribbean;
- (2) To gather information on the socio-economic characteristics of the inter-island traders and relate this to their trading practice; and
- (3) To describe the main problems of the traders with reference to problems related to child-care.

Target group and geographical setting of the survey

The regional socio-economic survey focused on the inter-island traders in agricultural and non-agricultural produce in the Caribbean. The majority of the traders purchase, export, import and market the produce themselves. They operate in the informal sector. This sector comprises all non-registered, commercial and non-commercial enterprises or activities without formal structure, which are generally family-owned, small-scale, and heavily reliant on indigenous resources.

For the purpose of the research, the inter-island traders were defined as individuals who operate in the informal sector and who purchase merchandise in one country, co-ordinate its transportation and travel to sell in another country.

The research did not cover those traders who exported or imported produce without travelling overseas.¹

Methods and techniques of research: survey

A sample survey was executed: "the collection of data from a defined population by recording appropriate information about some members of that population" (Casley and Lury, 1981:4). In three countries data were collected by interviewers with the help of a

¹ The agricultural traders of Barbuda who trade with Antigua, the traders of Nevis who trade with St Kitts and those of Tobago who trade with Trinidad were not covered by the survey.

questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a sequence of open and closed questions in English, French/Creole and Spanish.

The open questions in the questionnaire were re-coded after the survey by the Women in Development Unit of UNECLAC and computerized.²

The survey was conducted during the months of April-June 1989 in one of the overseas markets³ of the suitcase traders namely: the Free Zone of Curaçao.

Sample frame and sampling

Data collected in the Free Zone of Curaçao⁴ indicated that of all suitcase traders visiting the Free Zone in 1988, the three main groups were from Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The Jamaican traders were in the majority. The impression was obtained that 25 per cent of the traders were male.

Taking this into consideration, it was decided to concentrate two thirds of the survey on traders from Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Haiti⁵ and to reserve one third of the survey for the suitcase traders from other countries. Also, it was decided to include approximately 25 per cent males in the survey.

The research took place in the Free Zone of Curaçao. The respondents were chosen at random. Most of the interviews were conducted during lunch-hours at the "snack-bar restaurant". The Haitian suitcase traders were, however, additionally interviewed at their sleeping accommodation.

The total number of suitcase traders interviewed in Curaçao was 250: from Jamaica, 82; the Dominican Republic, 58; Haiti, 28; Venezuela, 29; Trinidad and Tobago, 25; Surinam, 11; Guyana, six; St Maarten, six; and other countries, five.

Personnel structure of the survey

The survey was set up and monitored by Consultant, Monique Lagro, for the Women in Development Unit of UNECLAC.

In Curaçao, the Departments of Labour and Foreign Relations formed the institutional base for project implementation. The

² A special programme that enabled the entry of survey data and the generation of tables was designed by Dr Morris, Professor at the Statistical Department of the University of the West Indies.

³ The survey was conducted in the overseas markets of the traders in order to exclude those traders who did not travel overseas.

⁴ Lagro (1988-b).

⁵ The sample of Haitian suitcase traders was smaller than planned, the availability of French/Creole-speaking interviewers in Curaçao being limited.

interviews were conducted by a team of 17 interviewers. Mr Etienne Goilo of the Department of Labour, was responsible for the overall co-ordination of the survey in Curaçao.

Statistical advice was provided by Dr Morris with regard to the computation of the results, the calculation of the two-three-way tables and the chi-square test values.

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUITCASE TRADERS

Country Int.no. Resp.no. Date

TRADE BACKGROUND

1. In which country do you live?

Home country: _____

2. In which parish do you live?

Parish: _____ 3a. Since when have you been coming to Curaçao?

- less than a half year
- a year
- one and a half year
- two years
- otherwise: _____ years

b. Have you travelled to other countries than Curaçao for your business?

- no [If no, skip (c) and (d)]
- yes

c. To which countries did you go?

- Panama
- Puerto Rico
- Guadeloupe
- Dominican republic
- Haiti

o other countries: 1: _____

2: _____

d. Are you still going to these countries?

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Panama | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| <input type="radio"/> Puerto Rico | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| <input type="radio"/> Guadeloupe | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| <input type="radio"/> Dominican republic | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| <input type="radio"/> Haiti | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| <input type="radio"/> other countries: 1: _____ | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| 2: _____ | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |

4. Why did you start trading?

5. What type of work did you do just before entering the trade?

- no work
- own account work namely: _____
- salaried work namely: _____

6a. Do you at this moment still do other work besides your trading activities?

- yes
- no [If no, skip (b)]

b. What kind of other work do you do?

- own account work namely: _____
- salaried work namely: _____

TRADING ACTIVITIES IN Curaçao

7. How often do you come to Curaçao?

- once every week once every month
 once every two weeks once every two months
 once every three weeks once every three months
 otherwise: _____

8a. How many days do you usually spend in the Free Zone while you are in Curaçao?

- 1 day 4 days
 2 days 5 days
 3 days other: _____ days

b. How many hours do you stay each day in the Free Zone?

- From _____ hour to _____ hour

9. Where do you usually sleep in Curaçao?

- guesthouse: (name) _____
 hotel: (name) _____
 with family/friends
 otherwise: _____

[If with family/friends, skip question 10]

10. How much do you pay per night?

_____ without breakfast
 _____ with breakfast

11. What do you usually buy in the Free Zone:

- clothing (underwear..)
- textile: linen, tablecloths, sheets,curtains (..)
- shoes
- leatherware: bags, belts
- jewelry
- electronics
- car-parts
- household articles
- toys
- sport-articles
- gift articles
- watches
- cosmetics: perfumes; hair-products
- excise goods: alcoholics, cigarettes
- foodstuff: tea, coffee, milk
- furniture
- other; _____

12. How many shops do you buy at in the Free Zone?

_____ SHOPS

13. Do you get any credit facilities for your business?

- no
- yes from shopkeepers in the Free Zone
- yes from banks
- yes from: _____

14. How much do you spend more or less in the free Zone during a visit to Curaçao?

_____ US dollars?

15a. Do you also buy downtown (Willemstad) ?

- no [If no, skip (b)]
- yes

b. What goods do you buy downtown and how much do you spend more or less during a visit to Curaçao?

Goods: _____

US dollars: _____

16. How many kilos of baggage do you take back on the airplane and how much do you have to pay the airlines for the transport of your goods?

Baggage: _____ Kilos Price paid: _____

kilos

US

17. Are the goods you buy in the Free Zone insured?

- no
- yes
- sometimes

18. What kind of business records do you keep regularly?

HOME COUNTRY SUITCASE-TRADER

19. In your home country are you:

- o a street/market vendor ?
- o a shopkeeper?
- o other: _____

20. In your home country do you have :

- o a shop
- o a car or van/truck
- o a fixed stand/stall

21a. How many days does it take you to sell the goods you bought in Curaçao in your home country?

- o 1 week
- o 2 weeks
- o 3 weeks
- o 1 month
- o 2 months
- o otherwise: _____

b. To whom do you sell in your home country the goods you bought in Curaçao?

- o Customers in the street/market
- o shopholders
- o customers in your shop
- o relatives/friends/neighbours
- o other: _____

c. Do you sell in other countries than your home country?

- o no
- o yes in : _____

d. Which of your customers places an order to you beforehand?

- no customers place an order beforehand
- customers in the street/market
- shopholders
- customers in my shop
- relatives/friends/neighbours
- other: _____

22. How many persons do you pay in your home country to work in your trade business?

Number of paid workers; _____

23. Do you place orders with the shops in the Curaçao Free Zone before coming to Curaçao?

- yes
- no

PROBLEMS

24a. Do you think you are a successful trader?

- yes [If yes skip (b)]
- no
- sometimes

b. Why not?

25. How much profit do you get from one business trip after taking out your expenses?

Profit of one business trip:

26. Do you get financial support from:

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> your partner? | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> your children? | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> from others? _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | |

27. Which of the following persons do not always treat you fairly?

- custom officers in your home country
- custom officers on the airport in Curaçao
- air plane personnel on the plane
- Curaçao airport personnel who check you in
- people at the storage/packing room at the airport in Curaçao
- custom officers in the Free Zone
- shop personnel in the Free Zone
- transport drivers
- hotel or guest house personnel in Curaçao

[Introduction: We would like to ask you some questions on what you think about the airline companies]

28. With which airline company do you usually fly to Curaçao?

Name of airline: _____

29a. Are you satisfied about:

- o the check in procedures at the airport in Curaçao?
- o the arrival time of the flights in Curaçao?
- o the departure time of the flights in Curaçao?
- o the number of flights between Curaçao and your country
- o the attitude of the airline personnel
- o the security of baggage transport
- o the storage/packing facilities for baggage at the

airport



b. What improvements would you like to recommend to the air companies or the airport managers in general?

[We would like you to ask some questions about the Free Zone]

30a. Are you satisfied about :

- o the transport of your merchandise from the Free Zone to the Curaçao airport?
- o the facilities in the Free Zone
- o the quality of the goods you buy in the Free Zone
- o the prices you pay for the goods in the free zone



31. What kind of improvements would you like to be done in the Free zone

32. What problems do you have in your home country that affect your trade business?

- o problems in obtaining licence
- o problems in obtaining foreign exchange
- o problems to import certain goods
- o problems to import a certain quantity of goods
- o problems with high import duties/taxes
- o other: _____

33. Are you a member of any traders association?

- o yes
- o no

34. What other improvements would you like to be done to make the trade business easier for all of you. ?

PERSONAL DATA / CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS

35. How far did you each in school?

Primary school: _____ standard

Secondary school: _____ form

*Post*secondary education: _____ standard

36a. How many children do you have? Number: _____

[If no children, go to question 21]

b. What age are they?

Age of boys: ____/____/____/____/____/____/____

Age of girls: ____/____/____/____/____/____/____

young/old

boys

girls

37. How old are you? _____ [in completed years]

[If children are older than 15 years, go to question 43]

38. How many days are you generally away from home when you go on a business trip?

- 2 days away from home
- 3 days away from home
- 4 days away from home
- 5 days away from home
- otherwise: _____ away from home

39. How do you feel about being separated from your children, while you are trading?

- I feel okay; I have no problems with the separation;
- I do not like it too much but have to cope with it;
- I do not like it at all.

40. Who takes care of the children while you are trading?

- no one
- paid employee (servant/babysitter)
- partner
- elder daughters
- elder sons
- mother of trader or of partner
- aunt/niece
- friends
- other: _____

41. Are you paying for these childcare services

- yes
- no
- sometimes

42. Who helps you financially to raise your children?

- no
- partner
- elder children
- mother
- father
- other: _____

43. Are you:

- in a common-law relationship
- in a visiting relationship
- married
- single
- divorced
- separated
- widowed

THANK YOU

44. [to be observed] Sex: M / F

45. [to be observed] Ethnicity: _____