

**Regional study on women's unrecognized  
contribution to the economy**

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## Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean continues its efforts to raise awareness on gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean by conducting studies related to the various issues that are in compliance with many of the United Nations agreements and conventions, in order to advance policies, legislative reforms to enable equitable societies

This regional study on women's unrecognized contribution to the economy focuses on Barbados, Commonwealth of Dominica, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Women and the economy is one of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, following the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, 1995.

It is imperative for Governments of the Caribbean Region to continue making strategic interventions, and reform laws that discriminate against women and girls. The importance of valuing women's and men's unrecognized contribution to the economy in the non-agriculture sector would be a huge achievement including the recognition of the socio- economic contribution of all forms of work-paid and unpaid. Some developing countries are counting paid and unpaid work in the gross domestic product (GDP), for example, Greece and Hungary.

This study therefore highlights some of the achievements and progress made by governments in the Caribbean with regards to the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) 2000, especially Goal 3, which aims to "promote gender equality, equity and women empowerment." More recently, the International Labour Organization (ILO) conference 2011 on decent work and the ILO convention gave recognition to one of the oldest activities in the informal labour market- domestic workers. The rights of domestic workers are enshrined in the ILO conventions, where Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member States and developed and developing countries are expected to adopt and implement.

The terms of reference of the study pointed out the importance of fully recognizing the economic contribution of all forms of work, paid, unpaid and informal sector labour, as a precursor for achieving gender equality. According to the World Bank (2001) however within the Caribbean region, there is still much gender occupational segregation, where women remain underrepresented in higher paying jobs in the formal sector and over-represented in the informal and non-wage economy. In addition, female employment is on average less stable than the male, and more often women are subcontracted, temporary or casual work, or at home-based jobs. The vast majority of women in the

informal sector in the Caribbean are street vendors or home-based workers. These workers typically lack the social protection provided to those employed in the formal labour force, such as health insurance and retirement pensions.

The terms of reference also highlighted the fact that despite the low average earnings of women in the informal sector, the female informal sector workforce nonetheless contributes substantially to the economy and national accounts, but there is no accurate measurement of this contribution in official statistics.

In the absence of formal risk mitigation programmes potential workers are pushed to alternatives sources of employment, like informal employment. This is exacerbated by gender disparities as women experience additional barriers such as discrimination as well as conflicting responsibilities in the household, which limits their ability to enter the labour force. Yet, women's participation in the labour force is a key element for the achievement of all of the Millennium Development Goals. Employment is not only a source of income but a source of fulfillment and pride and in the case of women a fundamental condition to women's empowerment.

The findings and analysis of this study are based on desk review and secondary data to substantiate this growing phenomenon, especially among the female population. Further the recommendations that will be put forward in this study will be added to the literature and serve as a baseline for further study in the Caribbean region.

The study is sectionalized as follows. Chapter one discusses in brief the demographics, social and economic profiles of Barbados, Dominica, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. This chapter also examines the employment rate, gender and poverty, and the achievements and progress of member states as it relates to the MDGs especially goal number 3. Men are more likely to be employed in the formal sector than women, and earn higher wages and salaries in the labour market despite the fact women may have obtained tertiary level education. The literature showed that women are at home spending more time on child care and other household related responsibilities but this can still be considered employment. This chapter also addresses the achievements and progress of member states as it relates to the MDGs especially Goal 3. Chapter 2 identifies the literature review of related subjects for this study. Chapter 3 discusses the categories and type of labour activities in the informal economies in the Caribbean Region, for example, paid and unpaid work, time use, women working and their caring, responsibilities for their relatives, domestic workers being undervalued and under paid, street and market vendors, micro-enterprises the services sector and commercial sex workers. Chapter 4 examines the importance of social protection for those employed in the informal labour market and the self employed. Chapter 5 provides a preliminary analysis of the findings from this study. Chapter 6 details the preliminary conclusions and recommendations.

## **A. Regional context**

Understanding the increase of the informal economy over the last two decades in the Caribbean particularly in Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, gives meaning to its prominence from an economic perspective and structural adjustment measures. The concept of informal or shadow or underground or parallel economy is used interchangeably but has the same meaning for activities operating outside of the formal sectors. The increase of this phenomenon began in the Caribbean during the 1970's and continued through the 1980s and 1990s. This informal sector has grown in leaps and bounds in the new millennium, which will be further discussed in the chapters of this study.

During the late 1970s and early in the 1980s some of the more developed countries in the Caribbean such as Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago were experiencing some form of economic downturn. Even though these countries are well endowed with many natural resources and which served and continue to serve as their economic pillar, but was evidently insufficient to combat the economic crisis. As a result, some of the Caribbean countries received loans

from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank to ease their economic burdens and payoff external debts. Consequently, these countries were mandated to introduce stringent structural adjustments measures for economic recovery and sustainability. For example, the Governments of Jamaica, Guyana, and Suriname devalued their currencies between 1987 and 1990, unlike the then Barbados government, who never borrowed money from IMF/World Bank to boost their economy, but instituted their own fiscal measures to curb their situation. The new measures included an eleven% (11%) cut in public servants salaries as well as a freeze in the increase of wages and salaries. In this context, economic policies were reviewed and introduced to increase revenue collection on the importation of goods and services. During this time also, the Barbados dollar remained steady for decades and was never devalued as in the case of Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

Following the economic structural adjustments measures imposed by the Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago Governments, these nations saw a rapid increase in activities in the informal economies, such as the commercial importers also known as the “suitcase traders” of goods. For example, in Guyana the streets and sidewalks became market places for street vending from the trading and exchanging of foreign currencies to foodstuff, clothes and other essential items with the majority of vendors being women. In the other countries as well, these types of activities are still very visible and competed with the formal enterprises to some extent. The informal economy is particularly linked to poverty, unemployment and underemployment. Unfortunately the people who operate in the informal economy, especially street vendors, and domestic workers may not have social protection, such as health insurance or pension plan as alluded to in the introduction of this study, which is a cause for concern and will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

## **B. General objectives**

The general objectives of the study are as follows:

- To undertake a situational analysis of the informal economy and particularly the women's participation in this sector and its impact on social and economic development of the Caribbean region, particularly in Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Commonwealth of Dominica an OECS member state.
- To highlight the unrecognized contribution of women to the development of the economy of the Caribbean.
- To accelerate efforts to raise the visibility of this contribution through improved availability and analyses of data on women and informal work; and
- To analysis women's unpaid labour in the home, and the contribution of domestic workers.

## C. Methodology

This study was conducted using a desk review. Data was garnered from secondary sources on the situational analysis of the Caribbean Women's unrecognized contribution of work to the economy. The areas of concern were: unpaid and paid work in the household, domestic work, street vending and the informal economy. The countries reviewed were namely, Barbados, Commonwealth of Dominica, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The following tools and methods were also incorporated in the data collection method:

- a) Web-based Online databases,
- b) Quantitative and qualitative data,
- c) Results findings of surveys on the informal economy

The limitations of this methodology included:

- a) No recent studies were done in the Caribbean Region on women and men unpaid care work, and time use surveys.
- b) No recent studies were done on the size of the informal economy, especially with respect to paid domestic work, street vending, casual labourers and part-time workers from a gender perspective.



# Chapter I

## A. Demographics, social and economic profiles of the Caribbean

The demographics, social and economic profile of the countries provides the context under which the informal sector thrives. The following expands on the country profiles and their achievements of the MDGs to date.

### 1. Barbados

Barbados has a population of 274,000 as of 2006 and 166 square miles. Barbados achieved independence status from the United Kingdom on November 30, 1966. Barbados's main economic income is tourism and offshore activities.

#### a) Labour force and employment

The labour force survey conducted in Barbados for the second quarter of 2011, reported that the total labour force is now estimated to be 145.5 thousand, while the labour force participating rate for April to June 2011 was estimated at 68.1%, and unemployment rate stood at 12.1%. The unemployment rate by sex, females accounted for 12.8%, while males accounted for 11.3%, and the total unemployed persons accounted for 17.6 thousand. The total employed in Barbados is 127.9 thousand, while 68.2 thousands persons are inactive.

### 2. Commonwealth of Dominica

The Commonwealth of Dominica achieved independence in 1978 and is the most northerly and largest of the Windward Islands and is located between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean. Its total area is 754 square kilometers (291 square miles), making it the largest of the English-speaking Windward Islands. Its coastline measures 148 kilometers (92 miles), and its capital and main urban center, Roseau, is located on the southwest coast.

#### b) Population

Dominica's population was estimated at 71,540 in mid-2000, marking a decline of 1.14% from the preceding year and a fall from the official mid-1998 estimate of 73,000. Outward Migration is largely

caused by lack of work opportunities in the labour force, and Dominicans are to be found working in other Caribbean islands (notably the French overseas departments), the United States, and, the United Kingdom.

Dominica is the poorest and least developed of the Windward Islands. Its economy is mainly dependent on agricultural exports, especially bananas.

#### **a) Labour force and employment**

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy labor force and is the largest employment sector in Dominica<sup>1</sup>. Agriculture remains much more important to Dominica than to other Caribbean islands. It accounts for about 18% of GDP, 60% of total merchandise exports and employs 40% of the labour force.

The unemployment rate has been placed at 13.1% by the government (2005) but other estimates suggest that when corrected for seasonal downturns it can be estimated to be 25%, and the poverty head count index is 33%. Dominica ranks 95th out of 174 countries in the United Nations 2002 Human Development Index report.

Much of the unemployment is found to be concentrated among young adult males. The concern is that, if left unchecked, unemployment may lead to further increases in crime, social unrest and increased poverty, which would work against further development in Dominica.

### **3. Jamaica**

The United Nations ranked Jamaica as a middle income small island developing State (SID) in the Caribbean subregion.

#### **a) Population**

Jamaica has a population of almost 2.7 million and it is a Caribbean small island developing State and is considered third among 75 countries prone to natural disaster. Jamaica's main economic pillar is tourism and bauxite mining which accounted for over 85% of foreign exchange. The GDP per capita was US\$4,816.7 at the end of 2007. The banana and sugar industries are in decline mainly due to the ending of the trade preferences.

#### **b) Labour force and employment**

According to the Labor force reports 14.750 job losses in other sectors from October 2008-May 2009. Due to the closing of major bauxite plants, 2850 jobs were lost and 850 staff were on a work schedule of three days a week. The economic and social survey of Jamaica found that women make up 50% of the population and are under-represented in the public and private decision making hierarchy. In terms of employment, female seeking job the rate was 9:0%, while men seeking job accounted for 5:8%. Female accounted for the highest unemployment rate of 14.8% compare to males which was 8.6%.

### **4. Trinidad and Tobago**

#### **a) Population**

The population of Trinidad and Tobago stood at 1,227.505 million as of July 2011 and its GDP stood at \$26,195 billion per capita of \$27,137. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago became an independent country on August 3, 1962, from the United Kingdom and achieved Republican status on August 1, 1976. The pillar of Trinidad's economy is the petroleum industry and the leading industry in the Caribbean region. Tourism and manufacturing are also important to the national economy. Tourism is a growing sector, although not on par or as important as in many other Caribbean islands. Their agricultural products include citrus, cocoa, and other products. It is also known for manufacturing many

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<sup>1</sup> [Dominica Overview of economy, Information about Overview of economy in Dominica](#)

commodities from dairy products to beverages, textile and confectionery, but also supplies manufactured goods, especially food and beverages, as well as cement to the Caribbean region.

### **b) Labour force and employment**

The unemployment rate in Trinidad and Tobago for 2010 was 6.8%, per 100.000. In 2008 unemployment, youth for the age groups 15-24, accounted for a total of 10.47%, and is broken down by sex, males 8.78% and females 12.86%. In this category females accounted for the highest unemployment rate.

The (2005) survey on living conditions report showed that 16.7% of the population fell below the national poverty line, and that 1.2% of the population is indigent. However the figures above revealed a decrease in the poverty line from 1997/1998, which was 24%. In terms of employment, Oil and gas account for about 40% of GDP and 80% of exports, but only 5% of employment.

## **B. Employment, gender and poverty**

According to the MDG Report for 2011 wide gaps remain in women's access to paid work for Latin America and the Caribbean for employees in non-agriculture employment of women accounted for 36% in 1990 (baseline) and 43% in 2009 and a projection of 45% in 2015.

Goal 1 of the MDG states "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger". According to the MDG Report for 2011, for the Caribbean in 1990, 29% of the portion of people living on less than US\$1.25 a day and for 2005, 26% of persons are still living on the same amount a day. The latter showed a slight decrease in this area compare to 1990. (More information and analysis will be included in the second draft of this study).

## **C. Overall achievements and progress on the MDG's**

All the Caribbean countries have signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which is known as the International Bill of Rights For Women, and other international Agreements for gender equality, for example, MDGs, BFFA. Governments in the Caribbean have made commitments to promote and increase gender equality, equity and women empowerment, through implementing policies and programmes, as well as introducing new or reform laws to eliminate gender inequalities.

Following the MDG summit held in 2000, governments made a commitment to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, as one of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. This declaration reaffirmed an international commitment to support and increase women empowerment for achieving the other seven goals.

With regards to human rights, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Family and Law Model legislation have been adopted by the Governments of Grenada and British Virgin Islands through their national women's machineries, particularly the Domestic Violence Law. The definition for domestic violence has been expanded to include persons in visiting relationships, stalking and financial abuse. According to Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago MDGs Action Plan, their vision is to achieve developed countries status by 2020.

Barbados has achieved all of the targets under MDG3. Gender parity has been achieved at all levels of education. At tertiary level, more women are enrolled than men at the rate of 2.5 to one in 2001. According to the 2006 Human Development Report, 17.6% of seats in parliament are held by women.

Approximately, half of the managers, senior officials and legislators as well as professional and technical workers are women. Between 1995 and 2003, over 70% of women were involved in the

non-agricultural sectors (industrial and service sectors). The Government also reports that the number of female applicants for the police force, as well as for other jobs traditionally held by men, continues to increase. According to the Barbados Economic Society, unemployment among women fell over the past two decades and was on course to go below the rate for men for the first time, in contrast with the figures for 1987, when the female unemployment rate was 10 percentage points higher than that for men.

The Commonwealth of Dominica has developed and implemented a Gender Equality Policy in 2004.

Jamaica has reported that poverty and hunger have been reduced by two-thirds and the proportion of underweight children under five years reduced by three-quarters and proportion of food poor reduced by two-thirds.

In terms of achieving universal primary education, target ensure that by 2015 children everywhere boys and girls are able to complete primary schooling, this has been achieved with 90% net enrollment. However lagging behind is Goal 3, with partial achievement.

## Chapter II

### A. The literature review

The literature review provides some insight on the subject of the Caribbean informal economies-women's unrecognized contribution to the economy, paid and unpaid house hold work, domestic workers and other categories of activities in the this sector.

The World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development (2012) posited that gender equality is a major development objective and is considered smart economics. The report underscores the fact that empowering women as economic, political and social actors can influence policy changes and make institutions more representative. The report further stated that gender disparities is evident in many areas, and that richer countries are no exception, disparities in girls schooling, unequal access to economic opportunities, and differences in decision making in households.

While some advances have been made in closing gaps in access to some resources, such as education and health, the Caribbean region still faces challenges in terms of providing employment for those who choose to enter the formal labour market. Where the market is unable to provide opportunities there are people willing to enter the labour force. The global economic crisis has placed additional pressure on the market's capacity to provide work for the most vulnerable in society-women. In the period 2007-2009, unemployment went from 178 million to 205 million (DESA, 2011).

### B. ILO Convention on decent work for domestic workers

Article (12) (2011) states in part “that domestic workers shall be directly paid by legal tender at regular intervals, but not less than once a month”. Article (16) also stipulates that member States shall take all measures to ensure domestic workers are recruited or placed by employment agencies are protected against abusive practices.”

Domestic workers have been for decades considered part of the informal economy and undervalued and underpaid. In some instances they were not excluded from being discriminated against or exploited. With the ratification of the ILO Convention on decent work hopefully it will eliminate the disadvantages of this particular group of workers.

It is not quite clear about the size of the informal economy in the Caribbean, especially from a gender perspective as more studies needed to be done in this particular area to give a good picture of this phenomenon and what measures are crucial to determine its size.

Greenidge, Holder and Mayers (2007) study on estimating the size of the informal economy of Barbados, noted that the informal sector spans all types of activities from domestic workers, to mechanics and gardeners. The study also alluded to the fact that informal economy data are not reflected in the national statistics of the country, and which may lead to misleading macro indicators. The authors further stated that, monetary underground activities, include trafficking in drugs and prostitution also evade self-employed income taxes.

Schneider (2002) study on the size and measurement of the Informal Economy in 110 countries around the world gave an overview of the sizes of the Asian and African informal economies and the type of activities conducted. The author noted that the informal economy is currently unregistered economic activities which contributed to the officially calculated or observed Gross National Product (GNP). The size of the informal economy in Africa in 1999/2000 contributed 42% GNP, while for the 26 Asia countries, Thailand has by far the largest informal economy which accounted for 52.6% of the official GNP. The study pointed out the formal and informal economy activities, such as trade with stolen goods, drugs dealing and prostitutions, while the latter refers to self-employment, wages and salaries from unreported work related to legal services and goods.

The autonomy of gender equality was addressed at the eleventh Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (2010) following which the Brasilia Consensus was adopted. In this regard, a number of agreements were adopted to address the autonomy and gender equality in the workplace.

Agreement (a) states “to adopt all the social and economic policy measures required to advance towards the attribution of social value to the unpaid domestic and care work performed by women and recognition of its economic value”. Agreement (e) states “to promote changes in the legal and programmatic framework aimed at achieving recognition in the national accounts of the productive value of unpaid work, with a view to the formulation and implementation of cross-cutting policies.”

Gómez' (2010) article on The Valuation of Unpaid Work: A Key Strategy for Gender Equality Policy Chapter 1 p.3-19-the Invisible economy and Gender Inequalities: The Importance of Measuring and Valuing Unpaid Work by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), ECLAC and CSIC (2010) the author alluded to the fact that there is a clear relationship between the division of labour by sex and the over representation of women in poor sectors. First since women have primary responsibility for child care and housekeeping, they have fewer opportunities to participate in the paid labour market. Women's absence from the paid labour force gives them less access to economic benefits and social protection, noted the author.

The Quito Consensus (2007), following the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women and Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito, Ecuador, number 12 page. 3, states that “recognizing that the sexual division of labour continues to be a structural factor in the economic inequalities and injustices which affect women within the spheres in the family, labour, politics and community affairs and which pave the way for a failure to value and to remunerate women's economic contribution.”

A seminar on time use surveys held in Ahmedabad sponsored by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (1999), entitled “Towards international guidelines in time use surveys: Objectives and methods of national time use surveys in developing countries”, noted that since 1995 at least 14 developing countries have undertaken national time use surveys. These included six countries in Africa and two in the Caribbean, namely Cuba and the Dominican Republic). Time use survey is mainly used to measure paid and unpaid work performed by both men and women and is crucial to be counted in the national statistics. It is also used to develop policies and count women and men unpaid work. Collecting data on time use during housing and population censuses is pivotal. It was evident that the last housing and population census (2010) conducted in the Caribbean

did not capture the question of time use in the household. It is currently unclear as to how many hours is spent on a daily basis in child care, and other household duties in the Caribbean. To date, Barbados is the only country in the Caribbean that has considered time spent on household duties in their quarterly labour force survey for 2010 and 2011.

In order for women's unpaid work to be counted in the national statistics in the economy, there would have to be an urgent effort by governments, policy makers and other key stakeholders, to develop and implement policies and programmes, also revised laws to include the invisible work of women. Once they adopt the (2010) Brasilia consensus and the Quito Consensus number 12 (2007) also the ILO Convention 2010, it would be a huge achievement for the Caribbean to value unpaid domestic and care work. On the other hand, if unpaid work is not recognized sooner or later that could potentially delay the achievement of gender equality by 2015 as stipulated in Goal 3 of the MDG's.





## Chapter III

### A. Categories and types of labour activities in the informal economy

According to the report on the Progress of the World's Women (2005), women are more likely than men to perform unpaid work in the household in the Caribbean Region and globally. This type of work is not recognized in the economy and is considered part of the informal economy. There is much discussion around men sharing the responsibilities of child rearing and other related duties in the home. Culturally child rearing and household chores are associated with the role of the female. However, this culture is somewhat changing as more and more men are slowly taking up these responsibilities. For example, paid paternity leave was for the first time introduced in the Cayman Islands and the Commonwealth of Dominica for men who are public servants, through Public Service Management Law -2005. While for the British Virgin Islands one month unpaid paternity leave is enshrined in the 2010 revised Labour Code, but the latter is considered discriminatory and could place economic constraints on men.

ILO defines the informal economy as is here to stay and is driven by industrial growth. This sector provides work for the unemployed, mostly the low income groups and it is linked to the formal economy. Most of the men and women in this sector are the unemployed and perhaps are unable to find work in the formal sector. For example domestic workers, market and street vendors, cobblers, unpaid and paid domestic work, they play a pivotal world in providing a social-economic service for their employers by taking care of the household chores ,and child care, thus earning an income, despite being underpaid and undervalued.

The self employed such as the street and market vendors and the cobblers. Although in the Caribbean the informal sector is not counted in the national statistics, the actors in this sector spend their earnings back into the formal sector, such as paying for goods and services, including utility services.

#### 1. Domestic workers paid and unpaid

The International Labour Conference (ILO, 2010 )noted that “domestic work is undervalued, underpaid, unprotected and poorly regulated” The report further suggested that one of the reasons for the low value and status for this is that domestic worker is similar to work traditionally performed by women without monetary compensation.

The Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HATT), a social action organization conducted a survey on the status of household workers. One of the objectives of the study was “to use this study as a means to improve the status of women engaged in household work whether they are paid or not.” The paid household worker occupies one of the most unenviable positions in the employment structure in Trinidad and Tobago, but not only in Trinidad, but the rest of the Caribbean. This category of work put women outside the formal structure of the economy, including the labour legislation, which consider them “invisible”.

The study in Trinidad and Tobago found for example, that the domestic workers:

- Were generally dissatisfied with the standard of service; wages and condition of work.
- Choose domestic work as an immediate need to provide for their families.
- The under 25 years age group accounted for 34% which was the highest followed by 29% for the 35-49 age group.
- With regards to social protection, only 27% or thirty-four of the 124 employers registered their workers with National Insurance Scheme.

Once member States continue to build alliances and in collaboration with non-governmental organization (NGOs) adopt the measures ILO set out in the Convention, domestic workers particularly in the Caribbean will be more respected and enjoy better working conditions. ILO has always been an advocate for domestic workers to be visible and protected in every society and counted in the formal economy. The recently concluded ILO conference (2011) on decent work and the launched of the ILO convention at the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary recognized the economic value of domestic workers. This is a timely and a big milestone for all countries that depend on domestic workers to carry out certain duties while the employers are engaged in full time work in the formal economy. This category of workers was never recognized as a contribution to the formal economy. The ILO Convention stipulated as a condition of work, the employers are mandated to provide social security and health insurance for their workers in this category.

Powell (1996) “Women’s domestic labour, paid and unpaid”(p. 139) posited that for many women in the Caribbean, domestic work or domestic labour especially the unskilled and uneducated, it is the most readily available source of employment, also for the majority of such women caught in poverty. He further said that domestic work provided their entry point into a competitive labour market. Powell also made reference to the women who hire women as domestic workers, and could be classified as the privileged and well off women, who preferred not to be engaged in mundane housework and could afford to pay particularly poor women to do their house chores.

Domestic workers fall in two different groups, for example, the sleep-in or live in workers, whole day workers, half day and part-time workers. Their duties ranged from general house work and caring for the children, laundering, ironing and cooking.

However, it is important to highlight the CEDAW articles in relation to employment.

Article 11(c) states:

*Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular: Article (c) states in part “The right to free choice of profession and employment”...*

## 2. Commercial sex workers

Commercial sex workers are also referred to as prostitution and another type of economic activity conducted in the informal economy, mainly by women and adolescent girls. This type of activity does not count in the national statistics or recognized by the formal sector, in fact it is illegal in many developed countries, and the entire Caribbean. Commercial sex workers are legalized in some parts of

Asia and the Pacific, also in Europe. In Athens, Greece its economy is 25% bigger due to the round-the-clock duties of the country's prostitutes, who were known as hetairai in ancient times. The Greek authorities are revising the country's gross domestic product (GDP) after deciding that the black market should be included in the figures. (Watt, 2009)

Although, the focus of this desk study is not on commercial sex workers it has social, economic and health implications for the spread of HIV/AIDS and other Sexual Transmitted Diseases(STDs) and increase violence against women in the Caribbean.

A number of surveys were done in the Caribbean on the sex trade and tourist industry, for example, the Caribbean Feminist Research Action (CAFRA) (2004) a regional organization, conducted a research survey "on enabling sex workers access to good health care", in Belize, Guyana and Saint Lucia. The survey results found that many of the sex workers were teenagers and older women, and their sex work was as a consequence of poverty, unemployment, underemployment - earning low wages. Many of them were single women and had at least two school age children to provide for their needs.

### **3. Street and market vending in the Caribbean**

Street vending, though it is illegal, is deemed a booming industry in developed and developing countries and the Caribbean is no exception. Street and market vendors conduct the most visible labour activities mainly in the urban and rural areas. The other actors in the informal economy who remain invisible are the casual labourers, or part-time workers and domestic workers (ILO 2002).

Winter and Kirton (1990) noted that the informal economic activities are carried out both within the domestic economy and internationally. They also pointed out that in Jamaica the most visible aspects of the informal economy is the informal commercial importers. An example of the commercial importers, include the Haitians who travel to Panama and Puerto Rico to shop and sell their goods in Haiti and sometimes to Jamaica "higglers", while Dominican Republicans sell food to Puerto Rico and prostitutes for anywhere that the market of tourists exists, said the authors. In the Caribbean, the terms "hawkers" and "higglers" or "street vending" or "huskers" are used interchangeably.

In Guyana, street vending outside the municipal markets is partially regularized and it is mandatory that vendors pay a "stall fee" to the city constabulary, an entity responsible for the markets and its occupants. Street vending along the pavements or sidewalks is prohibited and persons are usually charged and taken to court by the city constabulary for being deviant. In Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, similar rules apply in terms of vendors occupying the sidewalks to sell their goods.

On the crowded streets of cities and suburban areas of the Caribbean especially in Port-of-Spain, Bridgetown, and Kingston, streets are littered with scores of street vendors mostly women selling every conceivable commodity: from cooked food, vegetables, fruits, clothes, music on DVDs, CDs also movies, especially African type movies, which are deemed as mini record bars. Customers have the opportunity to listen to their choice of music before making a decision to purchase a CD or have a preliminary viewing of a movie on DVD. Then they are the seasonal vendors, who sell special items on the occasion of Valentine's Day, Easter, and Christmas.

Street vendors face many challenges with the law, as street vending is illegal and considered an obstruction of pedestrian traffic, and in competition with formal enterprises. The Trinidad Guardian Newspaper (2008) reported vending on the run, mainly because they were in contravene with the Laws. Vendors were on the alert and packed their merchandise in bags and carts and were a step ahead of the law men. Policemen patrolled the streets to ensure that vendors do not return. According to the report, vendors complained of being unable to sell. Many of them are single parents who are struggling to earn a living.

In Guyana also vendors on many occasions had to pick up their stalls or trays and ran from law enforcement officers. These vendors who vouched to earn an honest living continue to challenge law enforcement officers, by returning to the spot to market their goods, when the lawmen are out of sight. There is a major concern of whether persons who work in the informal sector have access to

social protection, such as national insurance scheme, pension and retirement plans and occupational health and safety, like those employed in the formal sector. Social protection in the informal sector will be further discussed in chapter four of this study.

#### **4. Women in small farming/agriculture**

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), stated that women feed the world, they produced the world's food. On International Women's Day in 1998, FAO announced its theme for its annual World Food Day, October 16, which was observed under the theme "Women Feed the World". Accordingly, FAO put women's role in food production and food security at the center of its public awareness campaign, and paid tribute to the skills and dedication of millions of rural women globally. The article also made reference to despite women's overwhelming contribution in this sector they remain invisible, statistically, economically and in the popular media. Available statistics resoundingly contradict the stereotype of the farmer as a man. Globally, women produce more than half the food that is grown, in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean; they produce up to 80% of basic foodstuffs. (FAO archives of news and highlights, 1998)

#### **5. Micro enterprises, cottage industries**

Micro enterprises or cottages industries are used interchangeably to define businesses with less than 10 persons employed and are, in many instances, family members. Entrepreneurs in this sector usually used traditional methods to produce their products. These small enterprises are set up to foster community development.

The Caribbean women are particularly well known for working long hours, from dawn to dusk, as farmers on their own, as unpaid workers on family farms, and as paid or unpaid labourers on other farms and enterprises. They are involved in cash crops and livestock which they produce for the commercial sector and their own consumption. Women enter into small agro-business, such as cottage industries, or home based business, producing, jellies, jams, fruit syrup and drink. These are also marketed on the streets or on a stall in front of their homes. This is evident especially in Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Guyana. Many of these vendors also sell their products outside of primary schools.

Other aspects of the micro-enterprise are those in hairdressing, sewing/seamstress, tailoring, baking of special tarts and pastries, cakes and bread for sale. At Christmas time many women engaged in baking black cake for sale made from locally grown fruits which are processed and preserved for this special occasion. It is a tradition that has never faded over the decades.

Several studies conducted in the Caribbean found that micro-enterprises operated mainly by women. The major disadvantage of this type of business includes no fixed wages or a steady income. Moreover, the lack of social protection, such as maternity and sick leave benefits as in the case of working in the formal sector. On the other hand, the advantage is that the woman is considered her own boss and it is possible to earn a lot of money even more than the highly qualified and educated women in the formal sector.

#### **6. Women working and their caring responsibilities**

It is often wondered how women cope with the dual responsibilities of their reproductivity and productivity roles. The reproductivity is considered a natural task of women to give birth and raise their children. Women are generally more likely than men to face the burden of rearing children and performing other house hold duties. These are in addition to their full time employment in the formal economy. Depending on the size of the household, women may spend inordinately long hours in performing household chores such as cooking, cleaning and caring for their elderly relatives or parents. Neal *et al* (2006) in working couples caring for children and aging parents, posited that dual-earning couples who have responsibilities for dependent children and parents have extreme caregiving burden.

## Chapter IV

### A. Social protection and the informal economy

Social protection encompasses social security, or national insurance scheme, or health insurance, retirement funds, pension funds as in the case of the Caribbean where government and private sectors workers are registered, recognized and make contributions to these social protection safety nets, either on a weekly or monthly basis. Labour policies are in place to protect employees according to ILO standards and regulations and the national labour laws. Occupation Safety and Health is another form of social protection in the labour market. Unlike workers in the informal economy, they are usually unprotected, unrecognized, unregistered and invisible, since they are not protected under labour legislations. Domestic workers, casual labourers, street vendors and the unpaid care work that women perform in their household would fall into this category.

One of the biggest challenges for the informal economy and social protection is that it could increase the vicious cycle of very poor job quality and working conditions for women and men. Their access to good health care will certainly be stymied, because of the lack of health insurance coverage by their employers. Women in their reproductive age in particular, will not be able enjoy maternity leave and other benefits.



## Chapter V

### A. Analysis and presentation of findings

The findings of this study so far are consistent with previous studies conducted on the informal economies in the Caribbean, for example HATT's report (1975) found that not all employers registered their staff under health insurance schemes. It was evident that their human rights were violated and because workers in this sector are not protected, recognized under labour laws, it made them even more vulnerable to be discriminated against.

Governments in the subregion are somewhat committed and have so far complied with CEDAW, BPFA and the MDG's, for example, gender policies were developed and implemented to address the gender issues and eliminate gender inequalities. These policies were done through the gender machineries in Trinidad and Tobago, Commonwealth of Dominica and Jamaica, while Barbados developed a national policy paper/agenda.

There is a paucity of literature or recent research in the Caribbean on counting women's unrecognized work in the economy, for example, paid and unpaid work in the household, time use surveys, size of the informal economy in the Caribbean, particularly the countries under review.

Unpaid house work and time use surveys are crucial to measure the informal economy in the Caribbean Region and to inform policies and decision making. Furthermore the apparent lack of social protection for workers in the informal economy could potentially increase their vulnerability and health risks.

Street vending is here to stay and will continue to grow if the unemployment rate of women and men do not decrease significantly, especially for women. Although some measures have been implemented by governments and United Nations agencies to reduce gender inequalities, there is a lot more work that needs to be done to achieve the MDGs by 2015.





## Chapter VI

### A. Conclusion

The desk review so far has provided a good perspective of where the Caribbean is situated with these cross-cutting issues of gender inequalities, such as women's unrecognized contribution to the economy.

The preliminary conclusions drawn from the findings of the desk review so far are as follows:

- a) It is unclear of the size of the informal economy in the Caribbean Region especially unpaid work.
- b) It is however evident that governments and key stakeholders need to institute policies and reform labour laws to include persons who work in the informal economy, for example micro enterprises- street vending, unpaid domestic work “care work”.
- c) Policies and labour laws reform will potentially eliminate the inequalities that currently exist and give women and men visibility and recognition for their economic contribution to the economy, like countries in Asia and Africa whose informal economies are counted in the GNP.

In the absence of information from time use surveys in the Caribbean there would always be a gap and speculation of the time women and men spent working in the family enterprises, conducting unpaid domestic work “care work”, especially in the household.

As the term of reference highlighted, without innovative and proactive policies to advance women's employment that addresses the intersections of production and reproduction and paid and unpaid work, the region will fall short to fulfilling the MDGs by 2015 particularly on Goal 1, Ending Poverty and Hunger, and Goal 3 the achievement of Gender Equality, and the Empowerment of Women. There is also an intrinsic link between poverty and working in the informal economy, and this link is greater for women than for men.

#### 1. Recommendations: the way forward

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study so far. These are sectionalized by sectors and key stakeholders:

**a) The government sectors**

- That the ministries of labour and economic development should use this study as a baseline to develop and implement policies to regularize the informal economy, also conduct a quarterly labour force survey as in the case of Barbados and other developing countries.
- That statistical bureaus or state planning departments include unpaid household work be included in the next housing and population census 2020.
- That the national insurance scheme engage in a public education and awareness campaign on the importance for self employed in the informal be registered to enjoy sickness and other related benefits.
- That the labour/trade unions develop capacity-building tools to organize workers in the informal sector to be unionized, as in developed countries.

**b) Partnership with civil society and women NGO's**

- That a capacity-building programme of Caribbean women and men in the informal economy in the areas of social protection, entrepreneurial skills, and the importance of paying self employed income taxes and social security or health insurance be developed.
- That time-use surveys are conducted which measures the value of paid and unpaid work in the Caribbean Region. Information gathered from time-use surveys could effectively address major socio-economic issues related to gender equality, such as social security gaps, income gaps and care policies.

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