

WID Information

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RESEARCH NOTES

Mexican Women's Role in a Grassroots Housing Initiative

By Lora Schmid-Dolan

This report is based on my on-going field work at a grassroots housing cooperative in Mexico. La Unión Housing Cooperative is a completely autonomous self-help housing project planned, organized, financed, administered, and constructed by a group of two hundred members and their families; 62% of the members have a sixth-grade education or less. The overwhelming majority possessed very few resources at the initiation of the project. La Unión is located in Santa Catarina, one of nine municipalities that make up the



Gateway to one of the cooperative's homes.

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ALUMNA'S REPORT

Urban Women's Housing and Small Businesses in Jamaica

By Eleanor Allman, Ph.D.



This paper focuses on Jamaican women's strategies of using their homes to run small businesses. In Jamaica there are no laws prohibiting women from owning property. Women acquire ownership through purchase, inheritance and sometimes through marriage. One of the ways that women become more economically viable is through

self-employment. In 1992 women-owned businesses made up 60% of the small businesses in Jamaica.

This study is based on a survey in the early 1990s of 45 women (aged 26-55) in Kingston, Jamaica who received credit from the National Development Agency of Jamaica to open small businesses. Eighteen of the women were involved in manufacturing (mostly garment production); the other 27 were in the retail and services sectors. About one-third of the women were in their early twenties. The majority was single. The women, on average, had two children.

Some of the women were encouraged to go into business by their families, friends and mentors. When asked why they decided to open a business, respondents stated that they wanted to have more flexibility and time to help in the

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WID Seminar Series 2000

To promote the discussion of issues related to women, gender, and international development at the University of Illinois, the WID Office is initiating a monthly seminar series this semester. The presentations are open to all students, faculty, staff, and interested community members. They will be held at noon at 101 International Studies Building, 910 South Fifth St., Champaign. Schedule:

Tuesday, February 15: A Cooperative Path to Home Ownership: La Unión Housing Cooperative in Mexico, by Lora Schmid-Dolan, Graduate Student in Social Work with a GRID Concentration, UI. (See article above for a summary of key issues examined.)

Monday, March 6: Where Will She Go? What Will She Do? Muslim Women Encounter the Family Law in an Indian City, by Sylvia Vatuk, Professor of Anthropology, University of Illinois at Chicago

Tuesday, March 28: The Gender Roles in International Development Graduate Concentration (GRID) and Student Research, Interactive Panel of GRID Faculty Representatives

Tuesday, April 11: Globalization and Gender Inequality, by Caren Grown, Senior Program Officer, MacArthur Foundation

WID ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The WID Office is co-sponsoring the **Joint Area Centers' Symposium, "Gender and Globalization," April 14-15, 2000** at Levis Faculty Center, Urbana. **Amrita Basu**, Amherst College, will be the keynote speaker. Panels include 1) Theory intersections of globalization and gender; 2) Environment, ecology and reproduction; 3) Sexuality, globalization, and changing family structures; 4) Economy and society; 5) Media and culture; and 6) Political empowerment

The WID Office will celebrate its 20th anniversary with **Women in International Development Symposium 2000: "Risks and Rights in the 21st Century"** to be held on October 20-21, 2000. **Lourdes Beneria**, Cornell University, will be the keynote speaker.

The WID Office has received a grant from the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies to hold a workshop entitled **"Acting for Change: Chinese Women in Local Politics and the Media,"** that will be held at the Illini Union on Sunday, October 22, 2000.

Dr. Carmen Ramos Escandon, Senior Researcher at the Centro de Estudios Superiores in Antropologia Social in Guadalajara, Mexico, will give a MillerComm Lecture on **"Gender Duties and Daily Life in Late Nineteenth-Century Latin America: Women, Law, Property and Family in Mexico"** on Thursday, **April 6** at the Levis Faculty Center, Urbana. This event is sponsored by the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies and is co-sponsored by the WID Office as well as other campus units.

The Africa-in-Academics Student Association's Third Annual Graduate Student Conference: **"Africa's Road to the Millenium: Challenges and Changes"** will take place on **February 18 - 19, 2000** in the Illini Union. Keynote speaker is **Prexy Nesbitt**, Dean of Students, Francis W. Parker School, Chicago. The WID Office is co-sponsoring this event.

Jamaica from page 1

education of their children or that they had special talents that they believed that they could use to better themselves.

Most of the women had prior work experience outside their homes. Many of them started businesses in the area where they had experience. The women produced shirts, bed linens, hats, crafts, purses, place mats, souvenirs, baking products, cosmetics, and toiletries. Others sold confectioneries or medical supplies. Some provided services, such as hair styling and clerical work.

Many of the surveyed women opened businesses in their homes because of the high cost of renting other locations. The Planning Institute of Jamaica notes that "small enterprises are at a disadvantage with respect to market location. They cannot afford factory space because of high rental costs.many have to operate from virtually inaccessible and unsafe, non-commercially zoned areas where poor transportation and communication make it difficult for goods and services to reach consumers".

Since 1976, the National Housing Trust (NHT) has subsidized home ownership by selling houses and giving loans to women and men either for purchasing other housing or improving their own homes. Under the NHT act, employers are required to deduct 2% from the wages of their employees and 3% of their own wages and submit the funds to the NHT monthly. Houses that are built by the agency are for individuals who have not previously owned a home. Even young women in their twenties often are able to purchase homes through this program.

About 60% of the women in the study had taken out more than one loan. They used the funds for improving or expanding their businesses as well as their homes. Seventy-three percent of the women perceived themselves as being successful in their businesses. Forty-four percent believed that they were very profitable or profitable; 49% were at break-even stage. Longevity of the businesses was a sign of success. Thirteen percent of the businesses were in operation for over 12 years; 35% had existed for 6 to 11 years. The women stated that they were better able to take care of their children by giving them better education and health care.

The study showed that women were able to improve their well-being and that of their families by operating small businesses from their homes. The housing authority loan program made it possible for many women to buy homes who otherwise might not have had a site for developing their businesses. The women in the study stated that training in running a small business would be helpful.



Orange Bay, Hanover

Source: <http://www.nht.com.jm>

greater Metropolitan Monterrey area. Often self-help housing projects, including cooperatives, involve a certain degree of outside intervention, either from the State through the provision of land and basic services or a church or other organization that provides seed money and construction materials.

Such was not the case with La Unión. The people of La Unión looked only to themselves to obtain what the State was no longer committed to or able to provide: quality low-cost housing for some of the poorer members of society. Collectively they constructed two hundred single-family homes, installed the concomitant basic services of water, sewage, electricity, and street pavement, and managed to repay the bank loan in about nine years.

Each family of La Unión has one member representative. Membership requirements include ten hours of labor and support per week in construction, attendance at administrative meetings, and cooperative education activities along with regular financial payments. Spouses, children, relatives, and friends help individual members meet their required weekly quota. These demands on time are in addition to members' regular paid employment. A typical workweek for factory and industrial workers is forty-eight hours, but for others, such as women employed as domestics, the number of hours worked often stretches into sixty or more.

La Unión originally purchased nearly twenty acres of barren, solid rock land that stretched from a main highway to the base of a jagged-peaked granite mountain. The cooperative used just a fraction of the originally purchased land to construct the housing units and retained about three acres of land for future use at the base of the mountain.

I have employed a qualitative approach to examine the ways in which La Unión housing cooperative has offered women and their families the opportunity to acquire quality low-cost housing while combining the necessary flexibility to fulfill their responsibilities in reproductive, productive, and community management work, what Moser (1987) calls women's "triple role."

The women of La Unión played an instrumental role in the construction of the two hundred houses. They were not relegated to easier and less taxing tasks as often happens in self-help construction projects; they participated in all aspects

of construction along side the men. Although few, if any, of the women had construction skills before joining the cooperative, they quickly learned.

One problem that women in self-help housing projects often run up against is resistance from men in the project to women's participation in construction work, which is often seen as "men's work" in México. For the most part, this did not appear to be the case with La Unión. Interviews with women and men found that the men overwhelmingly respected and supported the women's work. Women were not limited to construction. In addition, they participated in decisions, such as the location of the cooperative, and in organizational and administrative meetings. Some occupied challenging managerial council positions.

Women's productive role as primary or secondary wage earners in large part depends upon their use of their home to generate income-producing activities because of the increased reliance on the informal sector economy to support low-income families. An inventory of La Unión's home-based businesses revealed a beauty salon, a home office that also distributed Herbal Life products, five small grocery stores, a video rental store, two mobile food stands, three homes that sold take-out food, one small restaurant, one home that distributed laundry and personal hygiene products, and a store that sold items such as school



A basic house in the cooperative.



The original pilot house owned by a woman who has added the second floor for her son and his wife; she has also added a small beauty salon on the side and made extensive renovations to the basic unit.

supplies, toys, etc. Women manage the vast majority of these businesses. In addition, some of the female members interviewed told me about a woman who provides laundry services and others who prepare and deliver food to factory workers in the area.

As the state reduces its role in the provision of basic services such as water and health care, women as community managers have been instrumental in organizing at the local level to attain these items of collective consumption. La Unión, however, did not ignore the need for these services. The cooperative's master plan included the

acquisition of basic services of water, electricity, sewage, and paved streets. Cooperative members installed the water and sewage lines. For electrical service, La Unión purchased the necessary materials such as the transformers, posts, and wiring, but hired a firm that subcontracts with the state's federal electricity commission to install the service, as this is highly technical work. The same was true for



Future construction area

paving the streets. The cooperative purchased the necessary materials, but a specialized firm completed the work.

Ten years after the last home was constructed, a problem arose that required women's community management skills. As previously mentioned, the cooperative originally purchased nearly twenty acres of land, but needed considerably less to build the two hundred homes. It retained another plot, approximately three acres in size, for future construction plans. In the spring of 1996, individuals began to illegally occupy the land and attempted to claim it for themselves. The women of La Unión organized round-the-clock vigil groups to protect it from squatters and maintained them for two years.

The success of La Unión housing cooperative and the active participation and contribution of the women demonstrates that organized low-income people, including female heads of households, collectively and systematically working together can obtain quality low cost housing. The members of La Unión give renewed meaning to the popular sayings "*¡Sí se puede! ... Sí se puede!*" and "*El pueblo unido jamás sera vencido*"—"We can do it! ... Yes we can!" and "The people united will never be defeated."

Bibliography

Moser, C. (1987). "Women, human settlements, and housing: A conceptual framework for analysis and policy-making," in C. Moser and L. Peake (Eds.), *Women, human settlements, and housing*. London: Tavistock Publications.



Lora Schmid-Dolan is a second-year doctoral student in Social Work, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign specializing in international social development with a particular interest in gender and housing issues in Mexico. She has visited, travelled, and lived in Mexico for over 17 years. She plans to return to Monterrey to help low-income populations

organize around issues concerning self-help housing projects and pursue the feasibility of introducing alternative construction materials and solar energy.

The Fourth International Conference on Language and Development – Hanoi, Vietnam, October 13-15, 1999 by Silvana Dushku, College of Education, UI

Since 1993, a new series of conferences has been organized with a focus on language learning and teaching applications and research in developing countries. The conferences have provided a forum for the exchange of ideas among language practitioners and researchers, and development specialists on enhancing cooperation to implement change in development contexts. The main theme of the Fourth International Conference on Language and Development in Hanoi was partnership and interaction in language and development. This conference aimed to promote networking and strengthen ties among language and development professionals and contribute to the dissemination of ideas and experience on applications of development projects in these contexts.

Several researchers from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign made their contributions with paper presentations and panel discussions during this conference.



Susan Gonzo, Numa Markee, Earl Kellogg, and Silvana Dushku from UI at the Conference

Among them, the Associate Provost for International Affairs, Dr. Earl Kellogg, led a panel on development aspects of education projects. In her presentation, Associate Provost Dr. Susan Gonzo focused on a case study to illustrate the need to promote multilingualism as an instrument of development in the USA. Also, Dr. Numa Markee, Director, Language Learning Lab, made the concluding plenary speech on theoretical foundations of language and development. The presentation by the WID research assistant, Silvana Dushku, emphasized the effectiveness of synergetic aid project development in high-uncertainty contexts.

During the days of the conference, Dr. Kellogg and Silvana Dushku contacted several WID-related non-governmental and governmental organizations such as the UNDP, the Ford Foundation, UNICEF, OXFAM, the Socio-Economic Development Center, the Center for Family and Women's Studies, UNFPA, the World Bank and the Vietnam Women's Union. These discussions aid in building networks to cooperate in studying socio-economic and gender aspects of transition policies. They contribute to expanding the outreach

activities of the WID Office and promote cooperation among women, gender, and development specialists in both countries.



Silvana Dushku met with Vietnamese researchers, Ms. Tran Thi Van Anh, one of the contributors to the recently published book, Women's Rights to House and Land: China, Laos, Vietnam (edited by Irene Tinker and Gale Summerfield, 1999), and Ms. Tran thi Que, from the Socio-Economic Development Center.



Silvana Dushku,
College of
Education,
University of
Illinois.

JOIN THE GRID TEAM!

Take a graduate concentration (minor) in Gender Roles in International Development

Develop the skills needed to address gender issues in research and policy analysis. Learn how to evaluate development policies based on different paradigms. Apply the skills and concepts to new contexts. Use the theories to analyze socio-economic issues and evaluate development policies. Students interested in scholarship and employment in such areas as public policy, comparative education, comparative social science, international economic development, international agriculture, community health, and human resource development are invited to enroll in the GRID Graduate Concentrations: Gender Roles in International Development. These interdisciplinary concentrations (at the master's and doctoral levels) are co-sponsored by more than twenty participating departments at the University of Illinois,

Urbana-Champaign. To participate in the GRID program, a student must be enrolled at the University. Each sponsoring department has a GRID representative who works with the student and the WID Office. GRID students satisfy their department's requirements while also developing competence in issues of gender and development relevant to that discipline. Upon completion of their studies, they are awarded GRID certification as well as their disciplinary degree.

The requirements for both the master's and doctoral level GRID concentrations are:

- completion of the GRID Core Seminar
- one course from a broad list of approved GRID electives
- competence in a foreign language or 2 graduate units in quantitative methods

For the doctoral concentration, students must also take an advanced GRID research seminar and address relevant international gender issues in the dissertation. For further information, contact the WID Office by calling (217) 333-1994 or check the WID web page at:

<http://www.server.ips.uiuc.edu/ips/wid/index/html>

GRANTS/FELLOWSHIPS

Kathleen Cloud International Research Fund, competition for dissertation grants for graduate students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Graduate students selecting the Gender Roles in International Development Concentration (GRID) offered by the WID Office are eligible to apply for grants of \$1,500 or less for dissertation research expenses outside the United States addressing issues of women, gender, and international development. To apply, submit a proposal of the research project, one letter of reference and a budget including other funding applied for or received; send materials to the WID Office by April 3, 2000. (Information about the GRID program is provided in the preceding column and on the WID Office web page.)

2000 NEWW Legal Fellowship Program for the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) for recently graduated women interested in a career in women's human rights advocacy in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). The goal of this four to five month Fellowship Program (August to December 2000) is to help bridge the gap between

theory and practice by providing selected women attorneys from the FSU and CEE with the opportunity to acquire additional skills needed to work effectively on women's rights in their own countries. Applicants must submit the following materials (in English): a CV; evidence of fluency in English (such as school records or examination results); two letters of recommendation (in English, or accompanied by English translations) including author's contact information; a personal statement. The completed application packet should be sent by email to ebarclay@neww.org if possible. If email is not possible, please send one copy of the complete application packet by regular to Erin Barclay, Executive Director, Network of East-West Women, Legal Fellowship Program, 1601 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 603, Washington, D.C. 20009. The deadline for applications is February 15, 2000. Applicants are advised to inform Erin Barclay, NEWW Director in Washington, D.C. by e-mail when they have posted their application packets by regular mail if possible. For more information about the Network of East-West Women, see web page at <http://www.neww.org>.

IWID Fellows Program from the Institute of International Education, is an excellent opportunity for 12 months of hands-on development experience in an international setting. Ideal participants for the fellowship include U.S. mid-career professionals and Ph.D. candidates with significant sectoral/technical expertise. Specific USAID areas of emphasis include: environment, economic growth, democracy and governance, girl's education, and population - health and nutrition. Participants will receive a grant to cover living expenses, housing, insurance, international transportation, required inoculations and visa costs. Fellows will attend an 8-day orientation as well as a 3-week gender-in-development training course in Washington, DC prior to departing on assignment. The Washington, DC orientation will prepare Fellows for their international assignments and familiarize them with USAID. Eligibility and Qualifications: Applicants must meet the following basic requirements: U.S. Citizenship, Availability for year-long worldwide or Washington, D.C. deployment, Practical and/or academic experience in at least one of the following sectors: environment, economic growth, finance, democracy & governance, girl's education, and population - health and nutrition, Strong interest in development and gender issues, commitment to developing countries Leadership/Supervisory skills: Ability to initiate / self-starter, ability to communicate / motivate Applications Due 3/31/00. For more information, contact: Candida Mannozi, Program Administrator or Portia Persley, Program Coordinator, IWID Fellows Program, Institute of International Education, 1400 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, Tel: (202) 326-7710, 326-7855, E-mail: iwid@iie.org or cmannozi@iie.org

JOB OPENINGS

The Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA) seeks an International Program Fellow, responsible for carrying out assignments integral to the International Women's Program, including program administration and providing system support. The International Fellow will assist the Women 2000 Coordinator and other International Program staff as needed. Primary assignments include preparing resource materials; maintaining databases and files; organizing materials, assisting the Women 2000 Coordinator in developing an Issue Forum during the Women 2000 Conference, arranging meetings, providing logistical support for CPA conference and meetings, and working on the development of a global leadership institute. The International Program Fellow is expected to work 25 to 30 hours per week. Fellows will be paid a stipend. A minimum 3 to 4 month commitment is required. A commitment through the end of June is desired.

Women 2000/Beijing +5 Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating the major program/project components of CPA's participation and leadership in all activities related to the UN Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women and the Women 2000 conference. The coordinator will work closely with the manager of the Women's Agenda and International staff to ensure integration with all CPA work. This is a senior position, the responsibilities of which include administration, policy development, fundraising, program planning and development, and visibility. Pending funding, the coordinator will also be responsible for coordinating CPA's international training programs and conferences for women in the political, policy and economic arenas. This is a six month project with the possibility of becoming a full-time position -- funding permitting -- with a broader focus on women's economic and political participation and leadership internationally. Salary range is commensurate with experience in a range of the low 40's to high 50's. Women of color are strongly encouraged to apply. For both positions, send writing sample and resume with cover letter to Center for Policy Alternatives, Attn Anne Mosle, 1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 710, Washington, DC 20009, Fax (202) 956-7277. If you have any questions, please call Kristine Hansen at (202) 387-6030.

Public Policy Analyst: National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA) seeks a committed, creative individual to be part of the public policy team. Responsibilities include newsletter production, monitoring legislation and regulations related to women's health, grassroots activities, maintenance of organization's web site, representing organization in advocacy efforts, and responding to information requests. Requirements: College education (BA, BS, etc.); Legislative/Hill experience a plus. Send or fax cover letter and resume to NFPRHA, 1627 K St. N.W., 12th floor, Washington D.C. 20006, fax (202) 293-1990. No phone calls. Deadline, February 15, 2000.

The Institute of Development Studies at Sussex is seeking one or two economists, social economists, or political scientists, to work on improving institutional accountability to women through either public sector budget management, or corporate sector production and labour standards. Candidates should have a doctoral qualification or a master's degree in economics, political economy, or public policy/administration, and experience in gender and development research, development policy work, or gender equity activism (candidates with Master's degrees should demonstrate ten years experience). The positions will be full-time and fixed-term for 4 years in the first instance. The salary will be in accordance with the universities research faculty scales to be determined by age and experience, with opportunities for income enhancement. Closing date: 25 February 2000; Interview date: 22 March 2000.

For further particulars <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/news/recruit/gen.html>; phone ++ 44 1273 606261 x4176 Fax:++ 44 1273 621202

RESOURCES

Hopkins Report: Violence Against Women Widespread

A new report from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) entitled **ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN** calls on the world's health care community to respond to physical and sexual abuse as "a major public health concern and a violation of human rights." Based on the most comprehensive overview to date, the report states that "without exception, women's greatest risk of violence comes not from 'stranger danger' but from men they know, often male family members or husbands."

Ending Violence Against Women was prepared by Lori Heise, Mary Ellsberg, Lic. Med. Sci, and Megan Gottemoeller, MPH, of the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE). Population Reports is an international review journal of important issues in population, family planning, and related health matters. It is published four times a year in four languages by the Population Information Program at the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP) with support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID administers the US foreign assistance program, providing economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 80 countries worldwide.

For more information, interviews with the authors, or printed copies of the full report contact Stephen M. Goldstein at Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, 111 Market Place, Suite 310, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, USA. TEL410 659-6300 (After hours 301 984-1470; cell phone 301 633-4380); Fax 410 659-2645; E-mail PopRepts@jhuccp.org. For further

information about JHU/CCP and full text of this report, please visit the Center's web site at <http://www.jhuccp.org>

Join AWID's E-mail Network ! "Find out more about The Association for Women in Development's E-mail Network by sending a blank E-mail to awid.info@reply.net. Access the latest Career Opportunities, Resources and more in the Gender and Development field at the touch of a button. The Association for Women in Development is an international membership organization committed to gender equality and a just and sustainable development process. AWID facilitates a three-way exchange, or "trialogue" among scholars, practitioners and policymakers in order to develop effective and transformative approaches for improving the lives of women and girls worldwide." For more information, contact AWID, 666 11th Street, NW, Suite 450, Washington, DC 20001, USA, or <http://www.awid.org>.

NEW BOOKS:

The following new books are available in the WID Research Room, 323 International Studies Building, and can be checked out locally or ordered from the publishers:

Inequity in the Global Village: Recycled Rhetoric and Disposable People, by Jan Knippers Black, 1999. "As globalization rapidly replaces the cold war paradigm, disturbing aspects of this transition are often glossed over. Jan Black illuminates the problems that have arisen such as growing refugee populations, increased nationalism, and describes how the narrow distribution of benefits from globalization has created a yawning gap in wealth and power both among and within states. She works on the premise that this disturbing and growing gap is partly the product of a globalized capitalist system run amuck and which she describes as 'mobile money and immobilized political leadership.'" Kumarian Press, <http://www.kpbooks.com>.

Gender at Work: Organizational Change for Equality, by Aruna Rao, Rieky Stuart, David Kelleher, 1999. "This book presents an analysis of the institutional barriers to gender equality. It describes how to uncover the hidden values and cultures – the 'deep structure' – in order to stimulate and entrench new, gender-equitable ways of working. It lays out strategies and approaches for transforming organizations into cultures expressing gender equity and describes how these approaches have been applied in five separate interventions. These cases include BRAC, a large Bangladesh development organization; CIMMYT, the international wheat and maize research center in Mexico; The Body Shop, a multinational beauty products organization; the National Land Committee in South Africa; and a large Canadian urban social housing organization. The book concludes with an analysis of the techniques and approaches used in the cases and examines what was learned from these experiences which can be applied now and used to create even greater gender equality in the future." Kumarian Press, <http://www.kpbooks.com>.

