



Introduction

The Haitian revolution pioneered a movement for human rights in Haiti. It shook the barriers of whiteness and instilled a notion of liberation that was unbeknownst and paradoxical to the Eurocentric structures that dominated colonial empires in the late 18th century. However, after having endured foreign occupations, political corruption, capitalist exploitation, environmental disasters, and crippling debt, its sentiments were quickly ousted as Haiti struggled to secure a strong and sustainable future. Though there have been improvements over the last 20 years, Haiti is still the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, unable to build infrastructure for basic needs, like formal employment. According to the World Bank, about 47% of the Haitian labor force are employed informally, in private informal sectors. However, there is little evidence that accurately accounts for the contributions of these workers in the Haitian economy. Most of this is due to a lack of legitimate systemic assessments on Haiti's informal sector.

While the revolution did much to disband race as a symbol of personhood in Haiti, it did little for gender. Although all Haitians had won their freedom, the Haitian woman was still condemned – as the privileges of freedom only pertained to the Haitian man. Consequently, while much of Haiti's revolutionary covenants have unintentionally dwindled, negative constructs like gender inequality remain one of the most prominent issues in Haiti today. This project examines the role of women in Haiti's informal workforce, and their rights as working members of the Haitian society in accordance with the International Labor Organization [ILO] and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also discusses the barriers women face in entering Haiti's formal economy and possible implications for the future.

Country Profile

Total Population	11.18 million
Gross Domestic Product [GDP] (\$US)	\$9.659 billion
GDP per Capita (\$US)	\$870 per capita
Population living below poverty line	6 million
Labor Force Participation (2016)	67.8%
Estimated Salaried/ Waged Workers	11.8%

World Bank, 2019

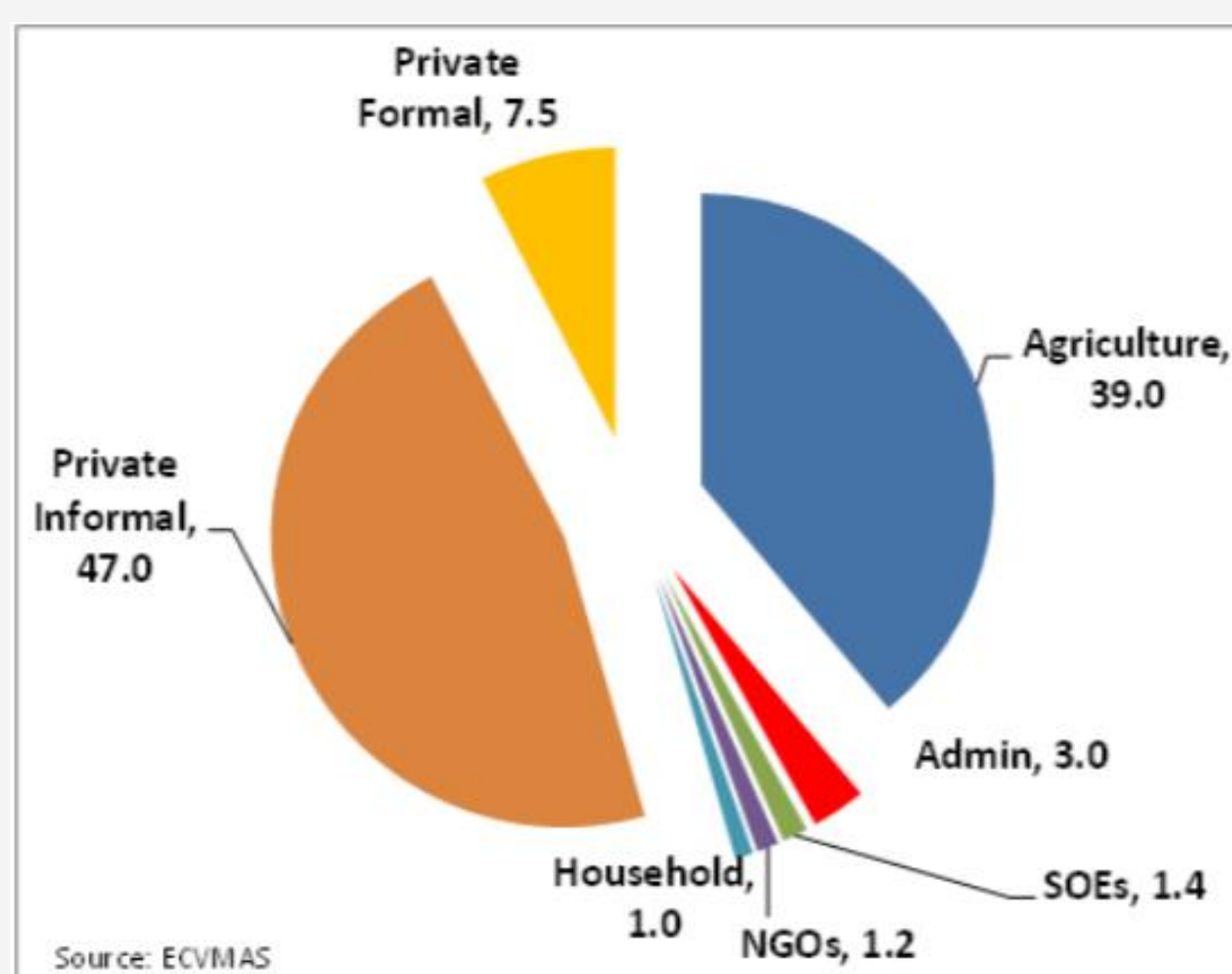


Figure 1. Composition of Haiti's Labor Market, Ages 15+ (2012) Source: World Bank, 2015

Haiti's Informal Sector

- About 47% of Haiti's workers are employed informally (World Bank, 2015).
- Earnings in the informal sector are on average 20% greater than earnings in agriculture and are 50% less than the formal sector (World Bank, 2015).
- Most often, workers in the informal economy lack social protections, workers' rights, and decent working conditions.
- But despite its high risk, people work in the informal economy as it requires little skill and generates more private revenue.

Employee Protection Laws and Ratified ILO Conventions

Constitution of the Republic of Haiti of 1987 (Amended 2012)

- Article 35: Every Haitian citizen has the right to work and free choice of work.
- Article 35-1: All private and public employees have the right to a fair wage, rest, paid annual vacation, and a bonus.
- Article 35-2: All workers are entitled to equal working conditions regardless of sex, beliefs, opinions, and marital status.
- Article 48: Every public and private employee is entitled to a retirement pension.

Haiti's Ratified International ILO conventions

- 25 total ratified conventions
- All 8 fundamental conventions
- Forced Labor, Freedom of Association, Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining, Equal Remuneration, Abolition of Forced Labor, Discrimination, Minimum age, Child Labor



Figure 2. Photo of a Madan Sara tending to her son while at work. Source: Twitter @MadanSarayiti

Women in Haiti's Informal Economy

- Women are 6% more likely to work in the informal sector than men (World Bank, 2015). Most women in the informal economy work as market women known as Madan Saras. Others work as domestic workers, family workers, etc.
- Madan Saras are the pillars of economic life in Haiti, they are the most reliable means to transport goods from rural areas to urban cities (Dupain 2015).
- They operate on foot, in makeshift booths, or spread out on tarps buying and reselling food, clothes, household products, etc., in populated areas such as Port-au-Prince (Coleman & Iskenderian 2010).
- Most households below the poverty line are dependent on the income generated by Madan Saras in the informal economy (Dupain 2015).

Challenges Women Face in the Informal Economy

Gender based violence:
Rape, Physical Abuse,
Sexual Harassment

Lack of Security:
vulnerable to theft and
other abuses, lack of
police/policy protection

Lack of trade
associations

Financial Exploitation:
High interest loans &
risky collateral, gender
pay gaps

Hazardous Working
Conditions: vulnerable
to injuries and illness

Discrimination/
Prejudice

Barriers

Gender-blind policy-making: Most of Haiti's employment protections apply to the formal sector where men are most likely to hold positions.

Under Investment in Human Capital: 45.7% of adults do not have formal education, women are disproportionately represented, forcing them into less skilled jobs (World Bank, 2015)

Inadequate Transportation Infrastructure: Lack of all-weather roads for transportation to and from market areas .

Representation in the Public Sphere: Women are not fairly represented in positions of power

Public Formal Employment: There is a shortage of jobs in the public sector and women are less likely to attain available jobs.

Inadequate Healthcare Systems: Lack of contraception/ no maternity leaves

Recommendations

Haiti needs to invest in human development, to create more skilled jobs, with more skilled workers. Such investments should also focus on women in the informal economy, to create women led markets and trade associations, so woman can openly voice concerns. seek help and protection from abuse. For example, in Liberia the Market Women Fund was specifically made to uplift woman in the informal economy. Other efforts should be made to increase women representation in high political positions, to increase funding to Woman's Ministry and to increase literacy and health programs for women. Efforts should be made to reduce gender-based violence, by enforcing strict sanctions for abusers and reducing tolerance for lack of police protection.

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