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"She Helps Me All the Time"

Underestimating Women's Economic Engagement in Rural Honduras

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Abstract

This study aims to understand women's engagement in economic activities in rural Honduras and why these activities may not be accurately reflected in official statistics. The study finds that women underreport their engagement in economic activities, including production for own consumption, production of market goods, and remunerated services and commerce. Simulations suggest that the rural female labor force participation rate in Honduras is likely to be underestimated by 6 to 23 percentage points. Two main explanations are found. First, women identify themselves (and are identified) primarily as housewives, and the concepts of housework and employment are taken as mutually exclusive. Second, given this duality between housework and employment, women define "employment" based on a set of necessary characteristics that exclude many of their own activities. Specifically, work needs to (i) be conducted physically outside the home; (ii) be in exchange for money; and (iii) entail sufficient time commitment. Importantly, these conditions are not binding constraints for men to identify their own activities as economic activity. These results have implications for understanding the low labor force participation of women in rural communities in countries beyond Honduras, suggesting that low rates obscure a significant amount of economic activity in many countries.

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"She Helps Me All the Time": Underestimating Women's Economic Engagement in Rural Honduras[1]

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Accurate measurement of employment and the labor force is critical for guiding well targeted and timely policy making. Indicators like labor force participation, employment, and unemployment measure the degree to which segments of a population engage in economic activities. These are widely used to design and implement programs central to economic development – such as programs that tackle youth unemployment or programs that aim to boost access to markets for small producers. In addition, because a significant component of household income is from employment, inaccurate measurements of employment can lead to mismeasurement of household income. Biased or incomplete identification of these critical indicators can lead to misrepresentations of growth, social development, and poverty.

At the same time, the distinction between employment and economic activity on one hand and other tasks that can increase the well-being of households on the other hand is not always obvious. Small-scale agricultural production for own consumption is a clear example of where the distinction between the two may fail – these are activities that can result in production which may or may not be used for economic exchange. On top of these conceptual difficulties in economic measurement, there are also context-specific definitions of which activities are considered work and who can be a worker. Through these definitions, gender roles and the allocation of household tasks across genders can have a significant impact on the robustness of official employment statistics.

The underreporting of women's economic contributions and work has long been recognized as impacting labor force statistics and national accounts estimates (Boserup 1970, Anker 1983, Beneria 1981, Dixon 1982, Donahoe 1999, Mata-Greenwood 2000). Researchers argue that the very definition of employment excludes some activities that are typically performed by women, including some types of informal activities and domestic work. However, even *within* activities that are included in the definition of employment, women's participation is undercounted because of how the concept of 'employment' is operationalized in surveys and how respondents understand it. This has resulted in a systematic underestimation of women's involvement in agricultural work, especially self-employment and seasonal or part-time work that takes place within the home or family enterprise.[4] Not counting these contributions can have important policy implications by affecting the project design and implementation of productivity enhancing interventions (Koolwal 2019). For example, a participatory study in two Honduran communities in the 1990s showed that male extension workers did not think it was important to deliver extension services to women because agriculture was not a large part of their work (Colverson 1995).

In this study, we consider the specific case of participation rates of women in rural Honduras with the aim of understanding how women engage in economic activities in these communities and, importantly, the reasons why some of these activities are not accurately captured in the official statistics. Despite high poverty rates and a largely agriculture-based economy, female labor force participation in rural Honduras in 2015 was estimated at 39 percent, compared to 90 percent for men.[5] Closer inspection of the data reveals lower participation rates for women whose partners are self-employed or employers in agriculture – that is, low labor participation of women in farm-owning households. Due to the nature of small-scale agriculture, which often relies on active participation from most family members, the fact that these women report especially low levels of participation is puzzling.

[4] There are numerous survey studies that show the underestimation of women's work, including: in India (Anker 1983), in the Arab Republic of Egypt (Anker and Anker 1989, Langsted and Salen 2008), In Cameroon, Mali and Senegal (Comblon and Robilliard 2017), in Tanzania (Bardasi et al 2011), and in Malaysia (Karlsson and Olsson 2014).

[5] Authors' tabulations for the population age 15 and older using the 2015 Honduras Multipurpose Household Survey (EPHPM).

Poverty rates are high among these households; understanding the reasons behind these low levels of economic activity is critical for identifying pathways out of poverty. On one hand, it could be that the high labor intensity of household tasks in areas with few services keeps women from actively contributing to agriculture or other market-oriented activities. On the other hand, these low rates could reflect an undermeasurement of female economic activity. With this in mind, the study explores two complementary questions designed to improve the quality of labor statistics in highly informal areas. First, the study aims to identify women's activities and their labor intensity (time and effort), including: 1) work done outside of the home, both paid and unpaid; 2) production activities undertaken in the home to increase income or consumption; and 3) tasks undertaken to increase the well-being of the household, such as childcare, cooking, cleaning, and fetching water. Second, the study seeks to understand how individuals in these communities determine which activities and tasks are identified as "work" or "employment".

The study finds that most women who report not being economically active are in fact participating in various types of economic activities, including production for own consumption, production of market goods, and remunerated market activities in services and commerce. Most women in the study reported working the equivalent of a part-time schedule across different economic activities, including agriculture, commerce, and services for pay. Based on the finding that many women consider their economic activities as part of their household tasks, simulations suggest that the rural female labor force participation rate in Honduras is more likely between 50.1 and 66.4 percent, depending on the assumptions applied.

The study identifies two main explanations behind this observed discrepancy. First, women are identifying themselves (and being identified by others) primarily as housewives, and the concepts of housewife and employment are taken as mutually exclusive. Second, given this duality between housework and employment, women define 'employment' based on a set of necessary characteristics that exclude many of their own activities. For it to be employment, work needs to i) be conducted physically outside the home; ii) be in exchange for money, this applies to both services and goods; and iii) entail sufficient time commitment. Importantly, these conditions are not binding constraints for men to identify their own activities as economic activity. These results have implications for understanding the low labor force participation of women in rural communities in countries beyond Honduras, suggesting that the low rates hide a significant amount of economic and non-economic work.

Literature survey

Employment and labor force indicators are designed to measure the percentage of the working age population engaged in economic activities, both those who are employed and those who wish to be employed. There is a long literature on the mismeasurement of women's engagement in economic activities and the labor force, both due to underreporting of women's participation in some activities as well as the exclusion of activities undertaken primarily by women from the definitions used for labor force statistics (Boserup 1970, Anker 1983, Beneria 1981, Dixon 1982, Donahoe 1999, Mata-Greenwood 2000). In this study, we focus on the first of these reasons – the underreporting of women's participation in activities that are counted towards employment statistics.

Which activities are considered employment and work is far from straightforward as illustrated by the periodic changes adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2008 and 2013.[6] There is an important distinction between work and employment (Annex 1 details the ICLS 19 categories of work). The currently accepted international definition of employed people is "all those of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit in cash or in kind" (ICLS 19).[7] It is important to note that the threshold for inclusion in terms of amount of time spent working is very low: one only needs to have worked in this type of activity for one hour during the reference period to be considered employed.[8] The phrase "for pay or profit in cash or in kind" is critical, as it excludes activities that were previously included in the definition of employment, including activities for own-consumption.

This definition of employment is relatively new and has not yet been fully operationalized. Rather, as of 2019, most countries' labor force statistics are based on the previous definition of employment (ICLS 13) which, in addition to work "for pay or profit", included production activities for own-consumption such as subsistence agriculture as well as volunteer work. Within this definition, family members who work on the family farm were included as unpaid workers. In other words, under ICLS 13, all working age people engaging in at least one hour of work for monetary remuneration (pay or profit) or to generate goods for own-consumption are considered employed. Both the ICLS 13 and ICLS 19 definitions are considered for the purposes of this study as it was undertaken during a period in which Honduras was making the transition between the two.

In general, women are more likely to be involved in informal or irregular activities for pay or profit (e.g., economic activities performed at home or in the street such as making, selling products or preparing food for sale, washing, doing the laundry or doing the cleaning for another household for pay, animal husbandry, etc.) than men. Because of this, the difficulty in measuring these types of economic engagements has a larger effect on the quality of measurement of women's activities (Chen 2001). Significant evidence shows that women's engagement in agriculture and in the informal sector is undercounted (Dixon 1982; Charmes 1998; Bajaj 1999; Chen, Sebstad and O'Connell 1999; Mehra and Gammage 1999; Standing 1999; Carr, Chen, and Tate 2000; Chen 2001; Carr and Chen 2002; Muller 2002; and Chen 2004; Koolwal 2019).

Earlier work in Honduras shows that women combine several types of work including producing staple foods, selling food, and seasonal paid work especially in the agro-export sector such as in coffee and banana plantations (SAG 2000). And earlier analysis has found evidence of women's work being undercounted in rural Honduras (De Leon et al. 1987; SAG 2000; Irias 2013; Fordham et al. 1985; Campillo 1993; Mayogra and Martinez 1996). Dewalt et al. (1985) and Colverson (1995), for example, find that low labor force participation rates among Honduran women are due, in part, to the underreporting of women's involvement in agricultural production and food processing and distribution. Specifically, Honduran women were found to underreport their engagement in the following activities: Food

[6] The ICLS meets approximately every five years to recommend best practices on methodological procedures (i.e. concepts, definitions, classifications) with the goal of promoting internationally comparable labor statistics and comparability across time within a country. The 18th ICLS was in 2008 and 19th ICLS was in 2013.

[7] 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS 19).

[8] According to the ICLS 19, employment includes all persons who worked for pay or profit: while on training or skills-enhancement activities required by the job; apprentices; through employment promotion programs; people who work in their own economic units to produce goods for sale or barter; persons with seasonal jobs during the off season if they continue to perform some tasks or duties of the job; persons who work for pay or profit payable to the household or family; regular members of the armed forces and persons on military or alternative civilian service.

processing of milk and derivatives, corn, rice, fruits and meat; Small livestock and poultry care (especially chickens and pigs); Home-based agroindustry plants producing tortillas, vinegars, vegetables, soaps, sausages, dairy products and handicrafts; Fish products (salting and drying); Selling of vegetables, fruits, meats, and processed products in local markets; and business activities such as buying of inputs, rental of equipment, and payment of workers (SAG 2000).

In many contexts, there is significant overlap between economic activities that generate production for own-consumption and tasks that are identified as housework. Women doing these tasks might not recognize it as work beyond housework (Shah 1985) as it is informal, unpaid and flexible (Saxena 2012). This problem is aggravated when women's work activity is combined and is intertwined with their household tasks, and as such is viewed as an extension of household duties (Donahoe 1999). Evidence from Bangladesh shows that women's work on their husband's farm might be considered part of household work though it generates income (Anderson and Eswaran 2009). One of the findings of the initiative Women's Work and Employment[9] is that women who often helped with stocking, storing and other farm activities only reported these activities when they were specifically asked about them (Data2x 2017). A qualitative study in Malaysia listed different reasons for why working women called themselves housewives such as: "just helping"; "little business, not serious"; irregularity of income; lack of skills or formal training; not qualified (Franck and Olsson 2014).

Survey design also plays a role in the extent to which these activities are undercounted. The wording of questions meant to measure these activities has been shown to affect female labor force statistics more than statistics for the male population. Researchers have shown that keyword questions such as "work", "job" or "main activities" produce greater variations in female relative to male statistics due to women's widespread engagement in unpaid agricultural and family work (Bardasi et al. 2010). For instance, the term "main activity" to define employment status might lead women to report that they are housewives even if they produce goods for the market (Anker, Khan, and Gupta 1987; Franck and Olsson 2014). Women who are involved in multiple activities are likely to have more difficulties in recalling and reporting economic activities that are relatively smaller parts of their daily routine (Franck and Olsson 2014). The ambiguity of the use of key terms can result in biases on the part of both the interviewer and the respondent which may exclude from consideration unpaid family labor and even part-time tasks done to earn money (Dixon 1982; Anker 1983). Likewise, the presence of others during interviews might also impact respondents' answers (Franck and Olsson 2014).

There is a sizable literature on the importance of cultural factors in explaining female labor force participation (Algan and Cahuc 2005; Antecol 2003; Bayanpourtehrani and Sylwester 2013; Clark et al 1991; Feldmann Boeckmann et al 2014; Fortin 2005; Giavazzi et al 2009; Guetto et al 2015; H'madoun 2010; Nordenmark 2004; Steiber and Haas 2009; Uunk 2015). Cultural norms are important in shaping the perception that women's work is less important or less appropriate to report (Anker 1983; Bardasi et al. 2011; Beneria 1999; Mata Greenwood 1999; Franck and Olsson 2014). Therefore, underreporting is more likely to occur in places where female work is considered undesirable for fear of loss in social prestige (Shah 1985; Rives and Yousefi 1997). For example, women may strategically label their activities as

[9] Under the Women's Work & Employment (WW + E) partnership, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has undertaken cognitive studies in 10 countries, finding that respondents reporting the same work both as employment and own-use production work was more common in rural areas and among less-educated respondents. FAO's work with the WW+E partnership assessed some challenges to establish the boundary between own-use production of goods and employment. The technical summary of activities of Phase 1 of WW+E is described here: http://www.data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/WWE-Technical-Summary-10.2017.pdf.

"housework" as a means of gaining access to work in public places while appearing to comply with the norm that their actual place is in the home or that the man is the family breadwinner (Franck and Olsson 2014).

Women's labor force participation in rural Honduras

Given the definition of employment in use by the Honduran official statistics, which includes work for own consumption,[10] and high reliance on small-scale farming, labor force participation among women in rural Honduras is surprisingly low. According to the 2015 Household Survey for Multiple Purposes (EPHPM), only 39 percent of women ages 15 and older in rural areas report being in the labor force, compared to 90 percent of men. This discrepancy in labor force participation between genders in rural areas is not limited to Honduras. Sousa and Muller (2018) find that rural labor force participation rates of women in most Latin American countries, including the six Central American countries, are below 50 percent. Peru and Bolivia, where these rates exceed 80 percent, are notable exceptions.[11]

A priori, there are two possible explanations for these low participation rates: 1) the majority of women in rural areas are not participating in any activities that would be considered employment (including agriculture for own consumption); or 2) the participation of women in employment activities in rural areas is being undercounted. In the EPHPM 2015, when asked why they did not work or look for a job during the past month, over 90 percent of Honduran rural women not in the labor force reported that the main reason is that they were too busy with household tasks/chores. At first glance, this suggests support for the first explanation - the labor intensity of household tasks is too high to engage in economic activities. However, the survey questions used to identify participation specifically ask that respondents exclude "housework" when reporting their activities. Following the literature cited above, the significant proportion of women who report being too busy with housework could also suggest that, in fact, these tasks in rural Honduras include activities that fall under the definition of employment.

A closer look at the data illustrates the extent to which agricultural work is male dominated in Honduras even in farm-owning despite its critical economic importance for rural households. To better understand

[10] The definition, aligned with ICLS 13, is "all people ages 10 or over who in the week prior to the survey worked at least one hour in a job, own business, or as unpaid family workers… <also those who> were absent during the previous week due to the following reasons: health, leave, vacation, strike, or other factor beyond one's control." (Translated from INE's 2015 EPHPM methodology document https://www.ine.gob.hn/index.php/component/content/article?id=87.) Included as unpaid workers are those who work in product cooperatives, the self-employed, and family members who work in family enterprises including farms.

[11] Paulson's (2003) ethnographic study in the central Andes suggests that gender identity and gender roles in indigenous communities in this region could play a role in explaining higher female labor participation. When residents were asked to describe women's resources and responsibilities, several asked, "What woman? A young woman? Or a mature woman with family?" Others differentiated the rights and responsibilities of widows from those of married women, suggesting that the essentialist category of women does not coincide with the multiple gender identities and resource-management roles at play in the community. When asked whether certain tasks were carried out by men or women, many community members insisted that "everyone is involved in everything". Paulson shows the nested complementarities of women's and men's work in agricultural tasks where men and women specialize in different tasks. However, at vital moments in the agriculture cycle, such as planting and harvesting, women spend a great deal of time and energy on what is considered the male domain of commercial crops. Likewise, at different times of the year, when animals are sheared, treated for parasite or butchered, men spend significant time and energy with animals, which are often considered a female domain.

the division of labor within households in the rural sector, we consider three subsamples from the survey: male household heads, female household heads, and female spouses living with a male household head. Households with a male household head and a female spouse account for roughly two-thirds of families in rural Honduras. Among these, only 35 percent of women report being in the labor force (Table 1). Of those who are working, only 38 percent work in agriculture. Instead, most are self-employed outside of agriculture (57 percent), and less than 10 percent report working in agricultural own-account activities (both self-employment and employer). Their spouses, on the other hand, have far higher participation rates (94 percent) of whom 76 percent report agriculture as their primary activity including high rates of own-account work in agriculture – both with employees (19 percent) and as self-employment (30 percent).

Women without a spouse present in the household are more likely to report working and, specifically, engaging in agricultural work than otherwise similar women with a male spouse present. Female household heads were more likely to be in the labor force (about 57 percent vs 35 percent of women living with a husband) and, among those women who reported being employed, female heads of household were more likely to report agriculture as their primary activity (45 percent vs 38 percent). While self-employment rates in agriculture were similarly low between the two groups of women, 13 percent of female heads reported being an agricultural employer, compared to 19 percent of male heads and less than 1 percent of women living with a husband. Even so, the leading reason for not being in the labor force for female heads was also the intensity of household tasks (82 percent).

The data also reveal that women who report being employed are more likely to report receiving only monetary income from employment and less likely to report receiving just in-kind income than men. The difference is most pronounced for in-kind income for male heads (13.7 percent) and female spouses (2.5 percent). This is aligned with one of the takeaways identified during the qualitative interviews of this study: women are less likely than men to report employment if they do not receive monetary renumeration from that activity (like agricultural work for own-consumption).

Table 1. Characteristics by gender and household role, rural

	Male Head	**Female Spouse**	**Female Head, no spouse**
Mean age	46.9	40.7	51.9
Percentage in labor force	**94.3**	**34.8**	**56.6**
Percentage employed if in labor force	99.0	98.6	96.7
Hours worked last week			
Mean	43.2	34.4	31.3
Median	42	25	21
Std. dev.	21.4	28.8	26.7
Labor income (in local currency)			
Avg. total labor income (monetary)	4,562	2,594	3,038
Avg. total labor income (in-kind)	821	1,112	673
Share w/ just monetary income	34.0	37.9	35.7
Share w/ just in-kind income	13.7	2.5	9.7
Economic activity			
Agricultural and primary activities	76.5	38.3	45.4
Electricity, gas, water, transport	7.4	0.3	1.3
Retail/wholesale, restaurants, hotels	5.8	40.4	29.6
Education, health and personal services	3.8	13.0	13.2
Domestic services	0.4	3.5	4.7

Other	6.1	4.5	5.8
Employment categories			
Private sector employee	34.7	12.8	13.7
Self-employed, agriculture	30.2	8.7	10.3
Self-employed, non-agriculture	9.6	56.5	50.8
Employer, agriculture	18.5	0.7	12.9
Employer, non-agriculture	4.1	3.4	2.5
Public sector employee	2.0	2.9	4.7
Unpaid worker	0.7	12.3	1.3
Domestic worker	0.3	2.7	3.7
Main reason why not looking for a job (last month)			
Very advanced age	39.8	1.3	12.7
Household tasks/chores	23.0	**97.2**	**81.6**
Retired	11.2	0.1	1.2
Disability	10.1	0.2	2.3
Temporary illness	7.3	0.6	1.6
Other reason	8.6	0.6	0.6

Source: Authors' tabulations using the Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples 2015 (EHPM).

Furthermore, inactivity rates for women are higher if their spouse reports being either self-employed or an employer in agriculture – i.e. families with heavy reliance on their own agricultural production (Table 2). This is exactly the type of household one might expect women to have higher rates of employment if they are involved in supporting agricultural production and these tasks are being accurately counted. While we might have expected that women in these households are more likely to be unpaid workers (family members who contribute to the family enterprise without receiving pay), this is actually a less likely outcome than in households where the spouse is running a non-agriculture enterprise (either as self-employed or an employer). One potential explanation is a very strict division of labor where women rarely participate in agricultural activities. This arrangement would differ substantially from the typical agricultural production function of households in which most members contribute, at least in specific tasks or specific crops. This explanation is also not supported by earlier research on Honduran agricultural production as reported above. Instead, the more likely explanation is that there is an undercount of women's participation in agricultural activities specifically.

Table 2. Employment outcome by outcome of spouse, rural households with male head and female spouse

		Occupation of the husband				
		Self-employed, agriculture	Employer, agriculture	Self-employed, other	Employer, other	Wage, private sector
Occupation of the wife	Self-employed, agriculture	5.0	5.0	0.8		1.1
	Employer, agriculture	0.1	0.8			0.2
	Self-employed, other	18.8	18.6	20.6	20.2	20.0
	Employer, other	0.5	0.2	2.2	7.9	0.7
	Unpaid worker	3.0	4.5	14.6	6.1	2.8
	Inactive	69.7	68.6	55.4	57.7	65.3
	Other	2.9	2.2	6.4	8.2	10.0
	Total	*100*	*100*	*100*	*100*	*100*
	Number of observations	*2,876*	*1,562*	*806*	*352*	*3,083*

Source: Author's tabulations using the Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples 2015 (EHPM).
Notes: Numbers represent the distribution of women's employment outcomes conditional on their spouse's (column percentage). The category "Other" includes wage employment, domestic work, and unemployment. The following outcomes for men were not included due to small sample size: public sector wage employment, unpaid status, unemployment, and inactive. This analysis is limited to households with a male head and a female spouse present. They represent 67 percent of households and 73 percent of working-age individuals in the rural sector.

The use of proxy respondents can also elicit biased responses since they do not always provide accurate information for the other household members, which can result in an underestimation of women's participation in work activities (Dixon 1982; Shah 1985; Rives and Yousefi 1997; Franck and Olsson 2014; Bardasi et al 2011). In the case of the 2015 household survey in Honduras, however, men and women report female participation at the same rates.

In 2015 few Honduran women in the rural sector reported being employed with most reporting being out of the labor force. From analyzing the household survey, several hypotheses can be drawn to explain this. First, intensity of household tasks is likely very high limiting the extent to which women can engage in activities outside the home. Second, it is likely that agricultural activities performed by women are not being accurately captured by the survey. In fact, some of these may be considered household tasks. This is further supported by the observation that women are particularly unlikely to report being in the labor force if they live with a husband who has an agricultural enterprise. Third, the lack of difference by gender of respondent suggests that both men and women are inaccurately reporting activities of women.

Methodology

To better understand female employment and economic activity in rural areas and how well this is measured in the household survey, qualitative research consisting of a mix of individual in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD) was conducted.

In all cases, the interviews began with the same questions used by the official household survey to measure employment. The first question was "During the past week, did you dedicate an hour or more to any work or activity with payment in cash or in kind, or did you get any income? (except housework)." The second was "During the past week, did you perform or help carry out any work, with relatives or individuals, without pay? (Except housework)."[12] These were then followed by a series of open questions to better understand the day to day activities of participants, the participants' views of work, employment, contributions to household tasks and agriculture activities. The discussion was designed to cover the following topics:

a) What are all activities (paid and unpaid) carried out by women and men in the community, including:
   - Agricultural processes in all parts of its value chain, both subsistence and agricultural activity oriented to the market
   - Wage jobs
   - Activities carried out at home or outside destined to generate income (micro or small informal businesses/self-employment)
   - Domestic service and production activities carried out in their homes for own use

[12] In Spanish: "1. Durante la semana pasada ¿dedicó una hora o más a algún trabajo o actividad con pago en dinero o en especie, u obtuvo algún ingreso? (Excepto quehaceres del hogar)" and "2. Durante la semana pasada ¿realizó o ayudó a realizar algún trabajo, con familiares o particulares, sin pago? (Excepto quehaceres del hogar)"

b) What are the economic activities that women perform and that they recognize as employment and therefore are declared and eventually registered in household surveys?
c) What are the reasons - according to rural women - for which, certain activities that generate economic returns to the household are not considered to be employment?
d) To what extent are "domestic production or activities" carried out by women (such as caring for children) that require a lot of time and effort a barrier to participation in economic activities?

Interview guides were piloted and adapted after the pilot experience to enhance the potential depth in data emerging from the interviews. Particular attention was paid to identifying and categorizing tasks performed by women that fall into the ICLS 19 definition of work and in the National Statistical Accounts (NSA) production boundary as shown in Figure 1. The activities inside the NSA production boundary are particularly important as they contribute to the measurements of national income, including gross domestic production. In line with ICLS 13, the 2015 EPHPM aimed to identify the activities in the NSA production boundary and included those as employment. At the same time, in 2018 the Honduran National Institute of Statistics (INE in Spanish) was in the process of adopting the ICLS 19 definition of work. Because of this, understanding which tasks were being performed by women and were likely being undercounted would be useful for the NSO.

Figure 1. The ICLS 19 definition of work and the SNA 2008

<table>
<tr><td>Intended destination of production</td><td colspan="2">For own final use</td><td colspan="6">For use by others</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Forms of work</td><td colspan="2">Production work</td><td rowspan="2">Employment (work for pay or profit)</td><td rowspan="2">Unpaid trainee work</td><td rowspan="2">Other work activities</td><td colspan="3">Volunteer work</td></tr>
<tr><td>of services</td><td>of goods</td><td colspan="2">In market and non-market units</td><td>In households producing
goods</td><td>services</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Relation to 2008 SNA</td><td></td><td colspan="6">Activities with the NSA Production Boundary</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="8">Activities inside the SNA General Production Boundary</td></tr>
</table>

Source: ICLS (2013)

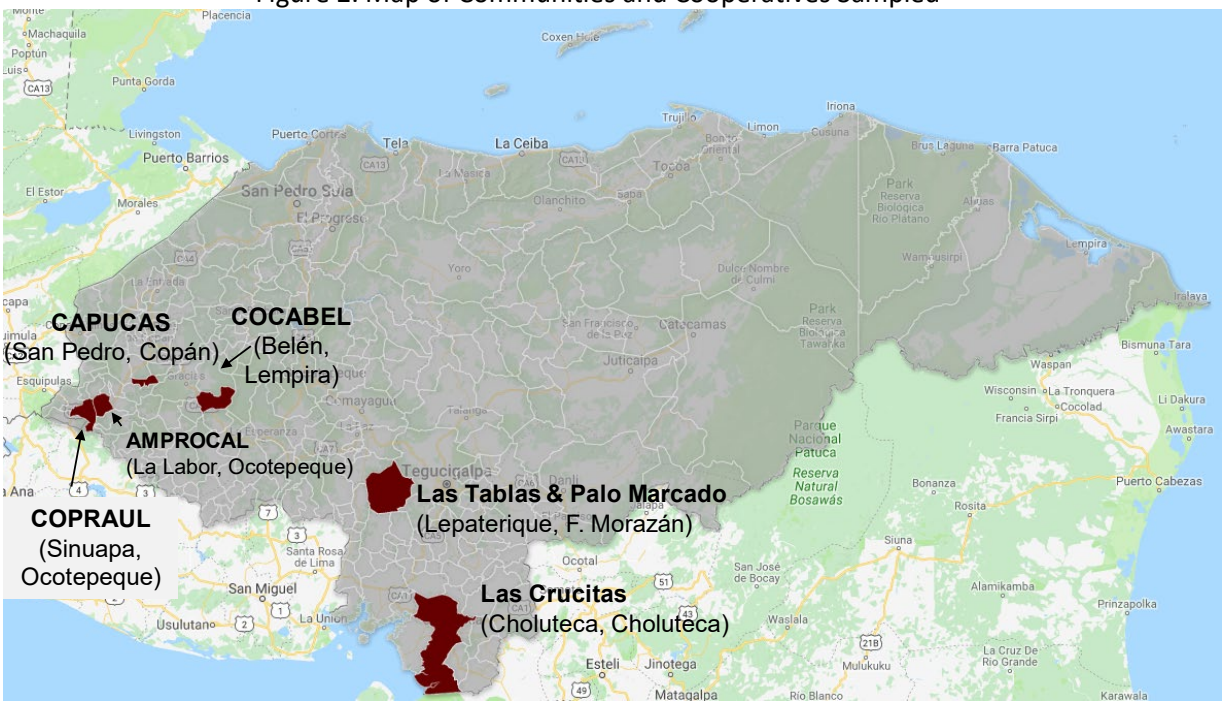
Interviews were conducted between March – April 2018 in 6 communities in southern and western Honduras distributed across 5 departments (Figure 2). The research team partnered with the World Bank team for the Honduras Competitiveness COMRURAL Project[13] to facilitate access to the beneficiary communities (Western Zone) and soon-to-be beneficiary communities of the Corredor Seco Food Security Project[14] (Southern Zone). The Southern Zone, which includes communities in the departments of

[13] The World Bank-supported *Rural Competitiveness Project for* Honduras (COMRURAL) (2008-2020) aims to contribute to increased productivity and competitiveness among organized rural small-scale producers through their participation in productive alliances. The project supports pre-investment activities to: (i) promote the project concept and outreach to the Rural Producer Organizations (RPOs), commercial partners and private financing entities; (ii) create and consolidate productive alliances among RPOs and commercial partners; (iii) identify potential business opportunities, including, inter alia, opportunities with respect to basic grains, on the part of the productive alliance; (iv) fully prepare the business opportunity into a business plan; and (v) build capacity among technical service providers to enhance the quality of their services provided to the productive alliances. The project also provides subproject grants to co-finance the implementation of approximately 150 feasible business plans formulated under the first component.

[14] The World Bank-supported *Corredor Seco Food Security Project for Honduras* (2015-2021) aims to enhance food and nutritional security of vulnerable households in selected areas of the *Corredor Seco*, one of the most drought-stricken areas in Honduras, where 58 percent of children under the age of five suffer chronic malnutrition. The

Choluteca and Francisco Morazán, is characterized by very marked low levels of precipitation. The economic activity of the rural population is a largely subsistence economy, with precarious wage labor, underemployment or low-paying jobs around services demanded locally. The Western Zone, where the departments of Lempira, Ocotepeque and Copán are located, is an economically dynamic area dominated by small/medium agricultural production, mainly export-oriented coffee and horticulture for the local and national market. The persons interviewed in the Western Zone were members of the cooperatives supported by the COMRURAL project. These two types of respondent communities were selected for the study to ensure that both women in areas of subsistence agriculture as well as those in cooperatives with direct links to markets would be interviewed.

Figure 2. Map of Communities and Cooperatives Sampled



Tables 3 and 4 report the communities and cooperatives in which the study was carried out, as well as the number of participants in focus groups and interviews. The communities visited were mostly in municipalities with extreme poverty rates above the national average (45.7 percent) and very similar to the average rural extreme poverty (61.0 percent). A total of 48 individual interviews were conducted: 36 interviews to women and 21 to men, in addition to 6 focus groups with participation of over 40 women from different communities and cooperatives. Women interviewed were between the ages of 18 and 60, this included women with and without a partner, as well as those with and without children. Interviewed men were all either directly or indirectly involved with some agricultural or productive activity, similarly,

project supports small-scale farmers with the introduction of new production techniques, high value crops, and marketing expertise and non-farm income generating activities. In addition, the project provides nutrition education and household hygiene and aims to improve the consumption of nutritious foods and the nutrition status of pregnant and lactating women and children younger than age five years.

all had female partners. All conversations were recorded and transcribed with the previous authorization of the participants.

Table 3. Profile of Communities Visited

Community	*Municipality, Department*	*Extreme poverty (%)**	*Main economic activity*
Palo Marcado	Lepaterique, Fco. Morazán	57.5	Vegetables - subsistence
Las Tablas	Lepaterique, Fco. Morazán	57.5	Vegetables - underemployment
Las Crucitas	Choluteca, Choluteca	44.9	Precarious and temporary wage work
Coffee Cooperative Belen Limited, COCABEL	Belén, Lempira	78.0	Coffee cooperative
Coffee Cooperative Capucas, COCAFCAL	San Pedro de Copán, Copán	56.5	Coffee cooperative
Female Association of Coffee Producers of La Labor, AMPROCAL	La Labor, Ocotepeque	60.9	Coffee cooperative
Cooperative of United Agricultural Producers, COPRAUL	Sinuapa, Ocotepeque	60.4	Vegetable seedlings cooperative

Source: Authors' tabulations. Extreme poverty rates is the percent of households living in extreme poverty in 2014, based on World Bank estimates using the Honduran Population Census and Household Surveys.

Table 4. Number of Interviews by Community

Communities	*Number of individual interviews - Women*	*Number of individual interviews - Men*	*Focus Group Discussions - Women*
Southern Zone: 3 communities (Palo Marcado, Las Tablas & Las Crucitas) Project ACS -PROSASUR	4 Palo Marcado 8 Las Tablas 8 Las Crucitas	5 Palo Marcado 4 Las Tablas 4 Las Crucitas	2 Palo Marcado 1 Las Tablas 1 Las Crucitas
Western Zone: 4 Cooperatives of the World Bank project COMRURAL	8 Cooperative COCAFCAL- Capucas 8 Cooperative COPRAUL-Plan del Rancho	4 Cooperative COCABEL, Belén. 4 Cooperative COPRAUL-Plan del Rancho	1 Cooperative COCABEL, Belén 1 AMPROCAL, La Labor
TOTAL	36	21	6

Interviews and focus groups were conducted in Spanish language and fully transcribed and coded in a coding matrix consisting of key themes and codes identified in early engagement with incoming data which was adapted throughout the analysis process. To enhance consistency in the coding process, a subset of transcripts were coded twice by different research team members thereby facilitating quality checks and mutual feedback processes between team members. The coded matrix containing quotations and themes organized by sample group and topic was then used as the principal basis for analysis and write-up of a draft version of the paper. Preliminary findings were discussed within the research team before a second deep-dive into the qualitative data to further explore specific themes before finalizing the paper.

Findings

Women often underreported their economic activity

The key finding is that most women in the visited communities reported engaging in market activities for pay or in production of goods for own-consumption that fit within the definition of employment. Yet most did not respond affirmatively to the questions posed by the household survey. That is, there is a clear disconnect between the definition of employment as meant to be captured in the labor force survey and the definition used by women (and men) in the rural communities visited for this research.

The interviews began with the two key questions included in the 2015 EPHPM used to measure employment.[15] Women who answered yes to the question of paid work typically reported paid employment outside of the home or working in a part-time paid activity from home such as grinding corn or washing clothes for others. At the same time, the qualitative study found that, overwhelmingly, women in both types of communities (those with and those without the presence of cooperatives) were likely to answer 'no' to the two questions that aim to capture economic activity - despite working in market activities. Significant discrepancies arose between women's initial response to either one of the EPHPM survey questions measuring labor force participation and their later reports of actual tasks performed by them suggesting underreporting of work among women. Specifically, in response to the question "During the past week, did you dedicate an hour or more to any work or activity with payment in cash or in kind, or did you get any income? (except housework)", more than half of individually interviewed women responded 'no' even though they later described having realized activities for pay.

With regards to the second survey question applied to measure employment (During the past week, did you perform or help carry out any work, with relatives or individuals, without pay? (Except household work)"), a discrepancy could also be noted among those who initially responded no, but later reported engaging in economic activities without pay such as helping their partners perform agriculture related activities (watering, collecting and cleaning the production), performing volunteer work in their communities, or engaging in production activities related to sustaining the home (such as collection of firewood and livestock/poultry rearing for own consumption).

In contrast, men more consistently and unequivocally responded 'yes' to the household survey question on economic activity with payment in cash or in kind despite largely working in agricultural self-employment. In fact, the only male interviewee to clearly respond 'no' was a 72-year old man, who stopped working because of age.

[15] Q1: "During the past week, did you dedicate an hour or more to any work or activity with payment in cash or in kind, or did you get any income? (Except housework)";

Q 2: "During the past week, did you perform or help carry out any work, with relatives or individuals, without pay? (Except housework)".

Activities carried out by female and male respondents classified under ICLS 19 Forms of Work framework

Even when they answered negatively to either one of the survey questions on employment, both paid and unpaid, the study found that women engage in a wide range of activities that qualify as 'employment' under the ICLS 13 definition and as 'work' or 'employment' following the ICLS 19 Forms of Work framework. Female respondents reported tasks that intertwine with their household responsibilities, ranging from agricultural activities, to non-agriculture related economic activities, to volunteer work. Women's reported tasks fall under three categories of the ICLS 19 Forms of Work framework, namely: 1) Own-use production of goods; 2) Own-use production of services; and 3) Employment (See Table 5 and Annex 1 for description of each category).

In terms of *own-use production of goods*, many women who responded "no" to the household survey questions, reported activities that involved producing goods intended for final use by their household/ family (see Table 5, row a). Such activities include collecting firewood, livestock/poultry rearing (for own consumption), growing food in their own vegetable gardens, providing farm support (planting, weeding, harvesting, cleaning crops; collecting water for crops; irrigation; fumigation). These are activities very similar to those reported by men in the same communities.

Own-use production of services are activities that were not considered 'employment' under either the ICLS 13 or ICLS 19 definition, but are considered 'work' under the ICLS 19 definition. These encompass many of the tasks typically thought of as domestic work. Among this type of activities, women reported engaging in preparing and bringing breakfast to men in fields, cleaning the house, washing/ironing clothes, cooking for the family, preparing tortillas for own consumption, taking care of children, and maintaining dwelling with adobe, among others (Table 5, row a)[16] These activities fall within the General production boundary but are not part of the System of National Accounts.

In terms of *employment*, many of the women who reported "no" in the household survey do, in fact, engage in paid services or production of goods (Table 5, row b). These initially unrecognized paid activities include collecting and selling berries, raising animals (mainly chickens) to sell, washing clothes for others for payment, domestic work for others (both irregular and permanent) for payment, working in grocery store, running a grain mill (from home), and preparing and selling food one or several days per week (tortillas, *nacatamales*, sweet breads).

Table 5. Women's and men's reported activities in accordance to ICLS 19th Forms of Work Framework

Form of work	Activities – Women	Activities - Men
(a) Own-use production work comprising production of goods and services for own final use;	i) <u>Production of 'goods':</u> • Collect fire wood • Livestock/poultry rearing (for own consumption) • Agricultural production (planting, weeding, harvesting, cleaning crops; collecting water	i) <u>Production of 'goods':</u> • Agricultural production (planting, weeding, harvesting, cleaning crops; collecting water for crops; irrigation; fumigation) • Collect/cut fire wood • Build house

[16] These activities fall within the System of National Accounts; they are considered employment in the ICLS 13 definition but only considered as 'work' under the ICLS 19.

Form of work	Activities – Women	Activities - Men
	for crops; irrigation; fumigation), including "patio" fruit and vegetable gardens • Build house ii) Production of 'services': • Prepare and bring breakfast to men in fields • Clean house • Wash/iron clothes • Food preparation • Grind corn for flour (for own consumption) • Childcare • Maintain dwelling with adobe	ii) Production of 'services': • Help with children • Clear up the yard • Fix house • Fix wire fence
(b) Employment work comprising work performed for others in exchange for pay or profit;	• Collect and sell blackberries • Livestock/poultry rearing (to sell) • Laundry services for pay • Domestic work for others (irregular/ permanent) • Work in grocery store • Run grain mill (from home) • Prepare and sell food (tortillas, nacatamales, sweet breads)	• Seasonal vegetables (to sell) • Vegetable business (middleman) • Construction work • Cow milk (to sell) • Day laborer ○ Work in ranch ○ Cut wood ○ Cut grass ○ Clear pastures ○ Sow plantation fields ○ Spray pesticides
(c) Volunteer work comprising non-compulsory work performed for others without pay;	• Schools – prepare meals, bake sales • Health centers – weighing children • Community organizations – women's groups, cooperatives	• Help sow fields of elderly parents • Help brother mount gates • Build eco stove for a neighbor

Note: Table does not include responses of men and women from the cooperatives.

What explains the discrepancy between answers to the household survey and performed activities by women in rural communities?

The results of the study suggest that there are two explanations behind the observed discrepancy between responses to the survey questions regarding women's employment and the activities in which women in rural communities engage. The first and immediate explanation behind that discrepancy is related to women's and men's perceived identities: Women and men each identify with specific spheres of life. Women commonly identify with the private sphere – and hence, the domestic sphere – while men identify with the public sphere – which in a rural context implies the agricultural sector. This is in line with traditional divisions of gendered life spheres according to which women's role belongs to the private sphere and men's role belongs to the public sphere, including market work and political voice and representation (Adams 2011). While these identities are understood to be mutually exclusive, for the women in this study there is a significant overlap between activities undertaken in the private sphere and economic activities.

A second explanation this study suggests is that women identify 'employment' with a set of necessary characteristics. Those characteristics may not all apply to their own individual cases. They are as follows:

Work needs to i) be conducted physically outside the home; ii) be in exchange for money, this applies to both services and goods; iii) entail sufficient time commitment.

Gendered divisions of work spheres – domestic versus agriculture domains

The results of the study finds that the division of labor by gender with women being responsible for domestic work while men are seen as the producers of agricultural products influences the way respondents report engagement in employment activities. Both men and women unanimously report that division. The significant difference in men and women reporting their activities as 'employment' (or not) suggests the prevalence of gendered interpretations according to which men are engaged "working" and women are "housewives".

When men are asked to define what work means to them, they typically define it through the activities in which they themselves are involved (agriculture, work on the land, etc.). Women define work using similar activities and excluding those in which they participate. This suggests a gendered understanding of what constitutes work, with men's activities automatically considered as 'work' (whether remunerated or not), whereas women's activities (regardless of remuneration) are often not considered to be work.

> *"Work is to plant corn, plant watermelon, to plant beans. That is the work we are talking about." (Male respondent, 65 years old, Community 'Las Crucitas', Municipality Pespire, Department Choluteca)*[17]

All but one respondent (a divorced man living with a son) consider household tasks a woman's main task. While most men recognize the multiple tasks women are engaged in, they state that a woman's main responsibility is to take care of the household.

> "*Look, my wife plants the seeds with me, with my sons. But she first dedicates herself to the home." (Male respondent, 40 years old, Community 'Palo Marcado')*
>
> *"She is a housewife. What she does is maintain the hygiene of the home. Keep the clothes washed, prepare and mind the breakfast, the lunch, the dinner; preparing the tortillas." (Male respondent, 52 years old, Community `Palo Marcado')*

Even in communities where women participate in cooperatives, women shoulder the larger burden of household and care responsibilities. Both men and women report that men rarely contribute to household tasks.

> *Interviewer: "What domestic activities do you do?" Interviewee: "I wash clothes, sweep, mop, make tortillas, make food, all that. When I go to work, I get up very early to make breakfast for my daughters and husband, so they can leave. Afterwards, I go to work [at the cooperative]". Interviewer: "Which domestic activities does your husband do?". "He doesn't do any domestic work. My daughters help me clean the house, wash dishes and all that in the afternoon." (Female respondent, 37 years old, Cooperative 'COPRAUL', Community 'Plan de Rancho', Municipality Sinunapa, Department Ocotepeque)*

[17] All direct citations from interviews with research participants were translated by the authors of this study.

Interviewer: "What activities do you do at home, is it similar to what your partner does?" Interviewee: "No, in the house none." Interviewer: "You do not wash, or take care of children?" Interviewee: "Nothing. None of those things." (Male respondent, 24 years old, Community 'Palo Marcado' Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán).

For both agricultural production and domestic work, contributions from the opposite gender are seen as supporting or helping. In the few interviews where husbands were reported to contribute to domestic tasks, this is described as 'helping out' on occasions when women are not able to perform those tasks themselves. Men's domestic contributions are not only limited in terms of time they dedicate to them, they are also largely limited to specific tasks such as collecting firewood or taking care of children.

"I maintain order in the home. The bathroom, making tortillas, keep the food ready, clean the clothes. My daughter helps me. The husband helps me when I'm dealing with the child who is sick, he minds the ones who are in school. He fetches the wood, the corn, the beans." (Female respondent, [unknown age], Cooperative COPRAUL, Community 'Plan de Rancho', Municipality Sinuapa, Department Ocotepeque)

Interviewer: "And your husband, your partner, which are the activities he performs in the house, domestic activities?" Interviewee: "In the house, sometimes if there is no firewood, you have to go to the farm to look for it... Some things like those, he does them. Also helping the children with some homework, the basic stuff, because I do not know about school really, because I only have sixth grade." (Female respondent, [unknown age], Cooperative COCAFCAL, Community 'Capucas' Municipality of San Pedro de Copán, Department Copán).

Conversely, in agricultural activities, women are seen (by both male and female respondents) as providing support to men, who are the primary actors in that domain. Such supporting activities include harvesting and cleaning crops as well as collecting water. Women are also tasked with preparing and bringing breakfast to men in the fields, sometimes over a mile away. The following citations clearly indicate that the ownership over the domain of agricultural production is associated with men – by both female and male respondents.

"I help him pull [harvest] corn. When we have fertilizer, we go fertilize. I fetch water for him to fumigate and help him bring the corn to the market." (Female respondent, 23 years old, Community 'Las Crucitas', Municipality Pespire, Department Choluteca)

"What I want to tell you is that I have had a big gain, because there she helps me all the time". Interviewer: "And how does she help you?" "One has to clean, take out the weeds. She even helps me sow the field and harvest the crop". Interviewer: "Does she help you in selling crops?" "Yes, yes, she helps me in everything, as if I had a son." (Male respondent, 45 years old, Community Las Tablas, Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

Only in a few agricultural tasks are women seen (by both male and female respondents) as the primary actors, notably those that do not require land ownership. Indeed, access to land (both through ownership and renting of plots) is an essential distinction between men and women, and consequently one that defines (or is a consequence of) their belonging to either sphere – domestic or public.

Interviewer: "What activities do women and men do in this community?" Interviewee: "For men there are more than for women, because they are dedicated to production. Women only work at home. They do not have land." (Woman, 46 years old, Cooperative COPRAUL, Community 'Plan de Rancho', Municipality Sinuapa, Depament Ocotepeque)

Some agricultural tasks associated with women are those that are perceived as belonging to the 'house' and thus to women's domain. They also represent or require less assets or investment. For example, chickens specifically are perceived to belong to the 'house' and consequently are a woman's responsibility according to the interviewees. Cows, on the other hand, belong to the men. Furthermore, blackberries grow wild and do not require investments (like planting or fertilizer) while vegetable and fruit gardens are in small plots rather than large plots like the corn and vegetables grown by men. Those are characteristics of women's tasks – and thereby distinguish theirs from those of men.

"I don't milk the cows, my husband does it. I feed the chickens and sell the eggs because they are mine. Chickens are women's and cows are theirs." (Female respondent, FGD, Community 'Palo Marcado', Municipio Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

"I collect berries and bring them to market. My husband engages in [growing and selling] vegetables, although I help him in that too". (Female respondent, FGD, Community 'Pola Marcado', Municipio Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

Characteristics of employment activities identified by women respondents

In addition to the first explanation behind the observed discrepancy between survey responses and actual tasks women perform, another one emerges: The interviews with rural women reveal some implicit definitions of work which affect how they conceptualize the tasks they themselves perform either on an occasional or on a regular basis. Altogether, the study finds three characteristics that - according to women - need to be in place to allow for certain tasks to be considered an economic activity, including 'employment' and 'self-employment'. Conversely, if not in place, certain tasks disqualify from being identified as economic activities. First, these activities need to be carried out outside the home; second, they require an exchange of money for either goods produced, or services provided; and third, there needs to be a sufficient time commitment for certain tasks to qualify.

While few men and women in these communities seem to have access to regular employment for pay, it is important to note that they still respond differently to the household survey questions. Overall, there is a lack of paid jobs in the communities, and few men and women are involved in activities that secure a regular income. Men in the communities spend their time in precarious activities, either as day laborers or in small-scale agricultural production**.** Activities reported by men in the communities are mainly in agriculture, with about half of men respondents reporting that agricultural production is for self-consumption, and half of respondents reporting that it is to sell in the market. Some men who sell agricultural production to the market complain of exploitative middle-men (coyotes). In the Southern Zones (Las Crucitas) where agricultural production is more challenging, men report working as day laborers in local estates (fincas). But this work is seasonal, exposing them to financial difficulties in seasons when crops are not being sold. Many men also report being landless, and those that can afford it rent plots of land. Importantly though, while some of those characteristics (lack of regularity, lack of direct income) affect women's interpretation of 'work', this does not apply to men's interpretation of their work.

"I live from the little bit that I work, I do not work 100 percent because economic conditions are not good. But yes, I work on my own, sometimes maybe with another person, but not financed by anyone, sometimes with the help of my wife and my children." (Male respondent, 40 years old, Community 'Palo Marcado', Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán).

Interviewer: "And now in summer, is it more difficult [to find work]?" Interviewee: "Yes. In this time now, it is more difficult to find work." Interviewer: "So, you work in one place, another day in another place?" Interviewee: "Yes, and sometimes, weeks go by and we don't get hired (as day laborers)." (Male respondent, 37 years old, Community, 'Las Crucitas', Municipality Municipio Pespire, Department Choluteca)

Based on women's responses to the question of what 'work' means to them, they demonstrate that their interpretation of what does and does not constitute work is disconnected from the activities they carry out. First, work needs to be carried out outside the home – one needs to be physically in a place different from home to carry out work. Given that many of the activities of women are in and around the home, even those that bring a direct income (such as making tortillas, producing other food items for sale, or selling eggs), they do not necessarily travel for work (unlike men whose work is always outside).

Interviewer: "What does employment mean for you?" "It means having a job apart, but we only have the home. The work is that of the home. I'm not going to tell you that I have a job because I'm not going somewhere else for work." (Female respondent, 44 years old, Community Las Crucitas, Municipality Municipio Pespire, Department Choluteca)

Interviewer: "Why didn't you tell me about the mill?" "No, I thought you were referring to an activity outside the house? Inside the house is the mill" Interviewer: "But that is an economic activity. Does that generate income?" "Yes, it does, although it's not much. But that helps my family, my daughters. If they need to but anything for school, that's where I get the money for their schooling". Interviewer: "So, the mill is yours?" "Yes, like I said, long time ago, I borrowed money [for buying an electric mill to grind corn] and little by little I have been repaying it. My husband is also helping me repay the loan." (Female respondent, 49 years old, Community 'Las Tablas', Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

Second, work entails direct remuneration. Even when women contribute substantial time into agricultural activities that support in generating an income, they often are not directly receiving the payment. Men, in contrast, expect to be paid for the agricultural produce that they sell, or engage in day labor or construction activities with a wage. Some of the activities in which women do receive payment (selling tortillas, eggs, etc.) are so irregular, that women may not directly consider it.

"[Work] is to have a business. I mean, an income that is yours. That, one can spend in whatever one wants." Female respondent, FGD, Community 'Las Tablas', Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

"Work is a means of acquiring money, to survive, to get ahead, to pay for the schooling of your kids." (Female respondent, FGD, Community 'Las Tablas', Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

Interviewer: "Why do you not think it [the vegetable garden] is work?" Interviewee: "Because as one is already used to it, one does not say - work - because one does not earn anything from it. When I work with the berries, yes, because I collect them all in one day, and I will leave them to sell and in that they do give me money, otherwise I don't (work)." (Female respondent, 48 years old, Community 'Palo Marcado', Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

Some interviewees state that one needs to produce something to sell for it to be considered work. This essentially excludes all own-use production as well as volunteer work from the definition of work. It also excludes once again the 'support' functions women have in agriculture related activities. Importantly, lack of remuneration is one of the explanations given by women when they disqualify activities within the home. These activities are seen as a woman's obligation, it is taken as inherently a women's duty, and therefore many do not consider it 'work'.

"Work is like what my husband does, he sows and sells in the supermarket."(Female respondent, 18 years old, Community 'Palo Marcado', Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

Interviewer: "What about the activities you mentioned that you are doing, which ones do you consider as 'work'?" Interviewee: "I would say only collecting berry, because I get paid for that." Interviewer: "Why don't you consider the other tasks as 'work'?" interviewee: "Because we get used to doing it, and because we don't earn any money. I do everything in my house but I don't earn money." (Female respondent, 48 years old, Community 'Palo Marcado', Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

Yet, the eventual payment for agricultural production is not in itself enough for an activity to be considered employment for some women. This is most striking when considering the responses of women working in cooperatives. While one may have expected them to be more likely to respond affirmatively and reporting their agricultural production for market, more than half of female respondents working in cooperatives responded to the employment questions negatively. These female cooperative members interpreted the question as asking about engagement in wage or salary employment, which does not coincide with their own business structure in which they receive a dividends payment at a later time.

"No. Only the greenhouse that we work here, but every 4 months we get paid." (Female respondent, 44 years old, Cooperative 'COPRAUL', Community 'Plan de Rancho', Municipality Sinunapa, Department Ocotepeque).

"I think not. We do work but in the greenhouse we have. We do get paid, but we haven't gotten any money right now." (Female respondent, 46 years old, Cooperative 'COPRAUL', Community 'Plan de Rancho', Municipality Sinunapa, Department Ocotepeque).

The third characteristic of employment as identified by female respondents is that work needs to be regular, and sufficient time must be spent on a given task. Women often report that they start their daily tasks at dawn and manage a range of activities throughout the day. This does not leave them substantial amounts of time to dedicate to a single activity (unlike men, who may spend the entire day in the field, or are hired as day laborer from 6-11 am).

Interviewer: "In that activity that your husband does growing and selling vegetables, do you get involved?" "Yes, I help him but only a few hours." (Female respondent, 48 years old, Community 'Palo Marcado', Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

"When they look for me to grind tortillas of others, I do it, but they don't always look for this. Sometimes they look for me to make nacatamales, but not always ... I used to work in Tegu to sweep, mop, wash clothes, iron, (...) They paid me per month." (Female respondent, FGD, Community 'Palo Marcado' Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)

"*I don't work, I only collect berries, a few that you find in the summer." (Female respondent, FGD, Palo Marcado, Municipality Lepaterique, Department Francisco Morazán)*

Implications for survey measurement of employment

The field work reveals that most women of working age in rural Honduras seem to participate in activities that are considered employment, though participation may be only a few hours per week and spread out over a series of different activities. These activities vary from agriculture for own consumption (practically all interviewed women reported have chickens and vegetable gardens in addition to 'helping' in their husband's or other family member's agricultural enterprises) to direct market work like services for pay and small commerce of food. Yet few of these women readily identify these activities when asked the labor force questions.

The survey suggests some key lessons in designing questionnaires to measure female labor force participation. First, the main employment question specifically refers to renumeration, which can exclude activities where people are not being paid or are not being paid regularly. At the same time, the second question specifically asks about unpaid work. Even so, many women appear to not be reporting activities in response to this question. While these two questions could similarly affect responses from men who work in agriculture without regular income, it does not. Men are overall more confident in defining their daily or even irregular tasks as economic activity compared to women. This reflects the first explanation behind the discrepancy found in this study: the importance of gendered division of work spheres in reporting activities.

Second, both survey questions that measure employment explicitly exclude "housework". To the extent that women's household tasks in rural areas include contributions to agricultural production, including this phrase suggests to the respondent a limited scope of what `work' means to the interviewer, preventing female respondents from reporting activities that could otherwise be seen as `work'. There is significant overlap between the tasks that are understood to be in the domestic sphere by the communities and as "employment activities" by the statistical definitions. The explicit exclusion of household tasks seems to limit women from reporting the multiple economic activities in which they engage at home, even if they receive payment for them directly or indirectly.

Third, part-time or irregular activities are underreported by women even though the Honduran household survey asks about any activity which required an hour or more in the last week. Even so, many women who worked half a day or a day per week in market activities (including activities directly remunerated like laundry services and selling berries to intermediaries) did not consider that to be sufficient time to count as employment. Gender differences in willingness to report these types of irregular activities as

employment have been found in very different contexts, such as in the US (Martin et al. 1995). This suggests that adjusting the phrasing of the question is not enough. Rather, interviewer training is needed to address gender differences in the threshold for reporting an activity.

A critical implication is the necessity of including follow-up questions that ask about specific activities – both those that count towards employment and those that count towards other types of work. Studies have found that the use of lists and screening questions can be very useful for prompting the respondent to identify these activities that may otherwise be considered outside the scope of the survey (for example, Dixon (1982); Anker, Khan and Gupta (1987); Anker and Anker (1989); Anker (1990); Anker and Anker (1995); Martin and Polivka (1995); Schwartz (2002); Langsten and Salen (2008); Bardasi et al. 2011; Koolwal 2019); and survey experiments under the WW-E partnership).

This study was conducted at the same time as the National Institute of Statistics (INE) was updating its household survey to reflect the definitions of work and employment based on the ICLS 19. The results from this study are aligned with the changes that were made to the official survey methodology (Table 6). Specifically, beginning with the 2018 EPHPM, 1) the initial employment question no longer mentions payment – this is asked as a follow-up question; 2) the questions on paid and unpaid work no longer explicitly excluded "household tasks", and 3) a follow-up question which lists frequently underreported activities was added.[18]

Table 6. Labor force questions in the 2015 and 2018 EPHPM

	2015	**2018**
Paid employment	During the past week, did you dedicate an hour or more to any work or activity with payment in cash or in kind, or did you get any income? (Except housework)	During the past week, did you dedicate an hour or more to any work or activity?
		During the past week, did you dedicate an hour or more to any of the following activities: <activity list>
		For any of these jobs or in the ones in which you helped last week, did you receive, or will you receive any pay or profits in money or in goods?
Unpaid employment	During the past week, did you perform or help carry out any work, with relatives or individuals, without pay? (Except housework)	During the past week, did you dedicate an hour or more to working in a business, farm, institution, or helping a family member without being paid?

[18] This list was composed of the following options: a) engaged in agricultural work; b) made something to sell (food, crafts, handicrafts, "paletas, charamuscas, chocobananos," (local products) etc.); c) worked or engaged in activities in a business, farm, office, or institution; d) repaired equipment or appliances (irons, stoves, air conditioners, cell phones, computers, etc.); e) cleaned homes, ironed or washed other people's clothes, cared for children, sick people, or the elderly; f) secretarial work, photocopying, washing or caring for cars, pruning grass or trees; g) apply or paint nails, cut hair, sew, repair or mend clothes, wallets, or shoes; h) sold some product (jewelry, perfumes, raffles, by catalog); and i) sporadic work, errands, "chamba" and "remiendo" (local terms for irregular work).

Temporarily away from work	Although you did not work last week, do you have a job or your own business to which you will soon return?	Although you did not work last week, do you have a job or your own business from which you are temporarily away and to which you will soon return?
Unemployed	During the last week, did you search for a job or try to establish your own business or farm?	Did you search for a job or try to establish your own business or farm in the last week or the last four weeks?

Note: Translated by the authors from the questionnaires of the EPHPM 2015 and 2018.

A comparison of the 2015 and 2018 employment outcomes for rural women is reported in Table 7. Assuming negligible changes in female labor force participation between the two years, we can compare the results from the two surveys to draw some inferences on how changes in the questions affected the measurement of female employment. The comparison between the two survey years shows that removing the explicit exclusion of housework did not change how women reported employment in response to the initial question. The addition of the follow-up question which lists different types of underreported activities increases the share of women who report paid employment, but only by 2.1 percentage points. In addition, it is also probable that it increased the share of women who report having unpaid employment (25 percent of the women who reported an employment activity in the follow-up question then identified it as unpaid work). The share of women reporting unpaid work increases from 5.8 percent to 7.2 percent. With these changes, the share of employment increases from 37.4 percent to 41.2 percent.

Table 7. Participation rates in 2015 and 2018, women in rural areas

	2015	**2018**
Employed	30.3	29.6
Employed - follow-up question		2.1
Unpaid work	5.8	7.2
Employed but temporarily out	1.3	2.3
Employed (total)	**37.4**	**41.2**
Unemployed (1 week)	1.6	1.4
Unemployed (1 month)		1.0
In labor force	**38.9**	**43.6**

Source: Author's tabulations using the Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM) 2015 and 2018.
Note: The table reports the percentage of women living in rural areas who are 18 and over.

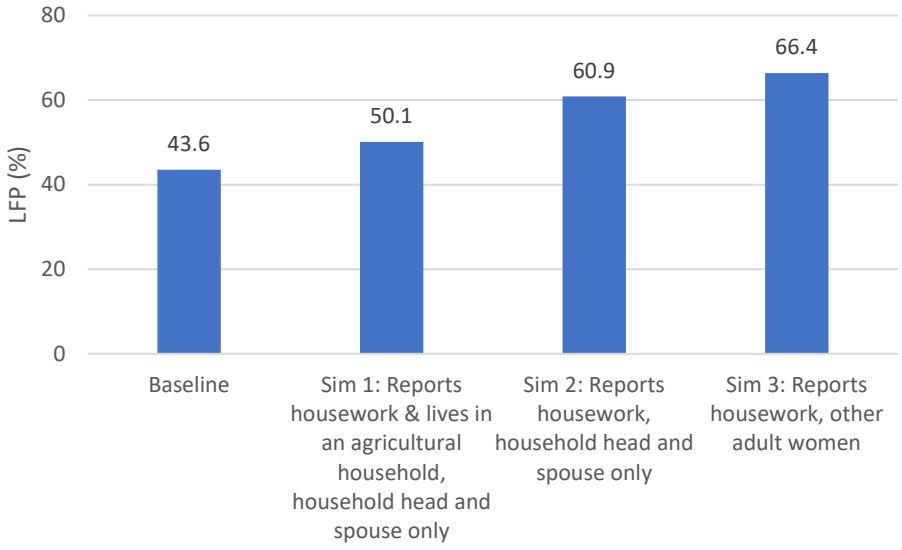
Another change is the expansion of unemployed to include those who searched for work in the past month, not just the past week. After all of these changes, the estimated labor force participation rates for rural women from the 2018 survey are only marginally higher than they had been in 2015 (from 38.9 to 43.6 percent), suggesting that they did not fully solve the issue of underreporting. A total of 24.5 percent of all rural women (accounting for 43 percent of those out of the labor force in 2018) reported that they did not search for work because they were too busy with household tasks. While childcare and domestic

responsibilities can take up the majority of women's time in rural Honduras, the interviews suggest that it is probable that many of these women are also including agriculture and market activities in their daily domestic tasks and not reporting them.

Based on the interviews conducted for this study, more detail should be added to the agricultural activity in the follow-up question to explicitly include the gathering and sale of forestry products (like the blackberries picked by women in the communities) and rearing animals to sell (like chickens and eggs). If the survey is attempting to capture production for own consumption, then the question should also explicitly mention animals and vegetables usually grown by women close to the home. In addition, it is likely that the listing of the task does not overcome the bias by respondent or interviewer that a job needs to be full time and/or outside the home. To address this issue requires also training interviewers to engage with the respondents and explain that activities can be undertaken in the home or irregularly.

Using the EPHPM 2018 data, we can simulate what rural labor force rates would look like if these activities were accurately measured. Figure 3 presents three simulations. Each of these simulations assign employment for women who fit the following conditions: 1) she reports being too busy with household tasks as the reason for not searching for work, 2) she is not enrolled in school, and 3) there are no children under the age of 1 in the household. Under these conditions and given the results of the interviews, it is likely that these household tasks include market-oriented activities or agriculture for own-consumption. The most conservative is Simulation 1, which allocates employment to women in agricultural households, specifically those who satisfy the above conditions and are the spouse/partner of the household head and he reports running an agricultural enterprise (either as an employer or self-employed). These are households where it is probable that the wife is contributing to the agricultural enterprise. This would increase female labor force participation rates by 6.5 percentage points to 50.1. Simulation 2 assumes employment for women outside of agricultural households – that is, female heads and wives of household heads in rural areas who otherwise fulfill the initial three conditions. This would increase the female participation rate by 10.8 percentage points to 60.9 percent. Finally, the third simulation applies the same three conditions to all adult women living in these rural households. This increases the female labor force participation of women in rural Honduras by 5.5 percentage points to reach 66.4 percent.

Figure 3. Simulations of hypothetical rural labor force participation rates



Source: Authors' tabulations for the population age 15 and older using the 2018 Honduras Multipurpose Household Survey (EPHPM). Each of the three simulations assign employment to women who fit the following conditions: 1) she reports being too busy with household tasks as the reason for not searching for work, 2) she is not enrolled in school, and 3) there are no children under the age of 1 in the household. Simulation 1 applies only to spouses of a household head who reports having an agricultural enterprise; Simulation 2 applies to other rural women who are either household heads or spouses of the household head; Simulation 3 applies to other rural women beyond spouses and household heads.

Conclusion

In this study, we investigate some reasons behind the low labor force participation rates of women in rural Honduras, where only about two of five women of working age report being in the labor force. In this, Honduras is not an outlier – there are comparably low rates of labor force participation of rural women across all countries of Central America and most countries in Latin America. Poverty rates are high among these households and hence understanding the reasons behind these low levels of economic activity are critical for identifying pathways out of poverty. From a policy-making perspective, it is important to understand the extent to which these statistics are accurate. If they are accurate, what are the reasons why women are not involved in economic activities? If they are not accurate, then what are the activities in which women are engaging and what can be done to boost their income potential?

The main finding from this study is that women in rural communities in Honduras do not accurately report their economic activities for pay or for own-consumption in response to the two questions asked in the official household survey to measure employment. Simulations suggest that the rural female labor force participation rate in Honduras is underestimated by 6 to 23 percentage points. Significant discrepancies arise once one compares the household survey responses with tasks completed by rural women. Women reported activities ranging from agricultural production, to commerce and services for pay even though they had previously responded negatively to the questions on economic activity. This shows that there is a disconnect between the definition of employment as meant to be captured in the labor force survey and the definition used by women (and men) in the rural communities visited for this research.

The study identifies two main explanations behind this observed discrepancy. First, women and men each identify with specific spheres of life, with women commonly identifying with the private and hence, the domestic sphere, while men identify with the public sphere and thus the agricultural production sphere. Even in those cases where women perform activities within the agricultural production sphere, they define those as 'supporting' activities, as 'helping' their husbands and consequently, not as their own economic activity. The results suggest that women identify themselves (and are identified by others) primarily as housewives, and the concepts of housewife and employment are taken as mutually exclusive. As such, their economic activities are considered to be household tasks.

A second explanation identified through this research relates to women defining 'employment' based on a set of necessary characteristics. Those characteristics may not all be in place in their own individual cases. The necessary characteristics suggested by interviewees' responses are as follows: work needs to i) be conducted *outside* the home; ii) be in exchange for money immediately or in the very short term; and iii) entail sufficient and regular time commitment. Importantly, given the gendered identities and their perceived relationship to work, these conditions are not binding constraints for men to identify their own activities as economic activity. That is, agricultural activities for own consumption and those on crops that

are not yet ready for market are reasons to respond affirmatively to the question when posed to men, but not when posed to women. This is particularly noteworthy with the women who were part of cooperatives growing crops for market. Even though this work occurs outside of the home and is clearly market-oriented, many of these women responded no to the question since they were not being paid until the crops went to market.

A key takeaway from this research is that surveys that aim to measure employment and work need to take into account local definitions of work, especially as relates to differences in gender norms. One especially important tool that has been shown to work in other settings is being diligent with follow-up questions and detailed activity lists. Results from the 2018 Honduran labor force survey suggest that using an activity list and separating the concept of payment from employment improves the measurement of female participation but is not enough to overcome the gendered definitions of work in rural Honduras. Lists need to be crafted to account for local activities – for example, production related to forest products and agricultural production related to vegetable gardens and poultry. In addition to updating the survey instrument to reflect local employment concepts, the training of interviewers should emphasize some of the challenges in measuring women's economic activities given the overlap of economic and domestic activities.

This mismeasurement matters. Across the world, interventions are being designed and implemented to attempt to mitigate poverty through increasing economic productivity in agricultural and informal activities. A naïve look at the labor force statistics of these areas suggests that it is mostly men who are engaging in economic activities – and hence they who can best benefit from interventions designed to increase productivity. What does this imply for the communities that were interviewed in this study? It feeds a misunderstanding of women's role as economically dependent rather than as economic agents, potentially limiting the extent to which interventions target their needs. Consider the case of the community in the study in which women collected and sold blackberries to market intermediaries. The interviews and focus group discussions with these communities suggested that this is an important yet seasonal source of household income where interventions could increase earnings from the activity, by connecting these groups of women directly to markets in the larger cities, for example. The extent to which this type of activity is invisible in the official statistics limits the inclusion of women's activities in interventions designed to increase productivity.

Because mismeasurement has important policy implications and may not be fully addressed with survey modifications, it is important to encourage countries and other providers of economic statistics to report all types of work according to the ICLS 19 rather than focusing only on the headline indicators: labor force participation rates, and employment and unemployment rates. Rather, engagement across all types of work, including unpaid activities for own-consumption, should be included and discussed when designing interventions and policies.

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Annex 1. Forms of Work Framework: Subset of work activities according to the 19th ICLS' resolution

Form of work	Activities
(a) own-use production work comprising production of goods and services for own final use;	Production of "goods" (within the 2008 SNA production boundary): i. producing and/or processing for storage agricultural, fishing, hunting and gathering products; ii. collecting and/or processing for storage mining and forestry products, including firewood and other fuels; iii. fetching water from natural and other sources; iv. manufacturing household goods (such as furniture, textiles, clothing, footwear, pottery or other durables, including boats and canoes); v. building, or effecting major repairs to, one's own dwelling, farm buildings, etc.
	Provision of "services" (beyond the 2008 SNA production boundary but inside the General production boundary) covers: i. household accounting and management, purchasing and/or transporting goods; ii. preparing and/or serving meals, household waste disposal and recycling; iii. cleaning, decorating and maintaining one's own dwelling or premises, durables and other goods, and gardening; iv. childcare and instruction, transporting and caring for elderly, dependent or other household members and domestic animals or pets, etc.;
(b) employment work comprising work performed for others in exchange for pay or profit;	Persons in employment are defined as all those of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit. They comprise: i. employed persons "at work", i.e. who worked in a job for at least one hour; ii. employed persons "not at work" due to temporary absence from a job, or to working-time arrangements (such as shift work, flex time and compensatory leave for overtime).
(c) unpaid trainee work comprising work performed for others without pay to acquire workplace experience or skills;	Persons in unpaid trainee work are defined as all those of working age who, during a short reference period, performed any unpaid activity to produce goods or provide services for others, in order to acquire workplace experience or skills in a trade or profession,
(d) volunteer work comprising non-compulsory work performed for others without pay;	Persons in volunteer work are defined as all those of working age who, during a short reference period, performed any unpaid, non-compulsory activity to produce goods or provide services for others
(e) other work activities (not defined in the resolution).	These "other work activities" include such activities as unpaid community service and unpaid work by prisoners, when ordered by a court or similar authority, and unpaid military or alternative civilian service, which may be treated as a distinct form of work for measurement (such as compulsory work performed without pay for others).

Source: ILO (2013) 19th ICLS