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Honduras

Abstract

Honduras is located in Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea between Guatemala and Nicaragua and bordering the Gulf of Fonseca (North Pacific Ocean) between El Salvador and Nicaragua. It is 43,278 square miles (112,090 sq. km), consisting of mountains in the interior and narrow coastal plains. It has a population of 8,893,259, and a high percentage of Hondurans live in the two major western cities of San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, the capital city (CIA 2016). Ninety percent of the Honduran population is mestizo, or mixed Amerindian and European descent. The remaining inhabitants are 7 percent Amerindian, 2 percent black, and 1 percent white. Spanish is the nation's official language. Several indigenous Amerindian languages, including Garifuna and Miskita, are also spoken (Westmoreland 2016). There are many indigenous populations: the Lenca, Pech, Tawahka, Xicaque, Maya Chorti, Misquito, and Garifuna. "The Garifuna are of mixed, Afro-Carib origin and were moved to the area during the colonial period. There is also an Afro-Honduran Creole English-speaking minority group of around twenty thousand who live mainly in the Honduran Bay Islands" (Minority Rights 2017).

Disciplines

English Language and Literature

Comments

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Honduras

Overview of Country

Honduras is located in Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea between Guatemala and Nicaragua and bordering the Gulf of Fonseca (North Pacific Ocean) between El Salvador and Nicaragua. It is 43,278 square miles (112,090 sq. km), consisting of mountains in the interior and narrow coastal plains. It has a population of 8,893,259, and a high percentage of Hondurans live in the two major western cities of San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, the capital city (CIA 2016). Ninety percent of the Honduran population is mestizo, or mixed Amerindian and European descent. The remaining inhabitants are 7 percent Amerindian, 2 percent black, and 1 percent white. Spanish is the nation's official language. Several indigenous Amerindian languages, including Garifuna and Miskita, are also spoken (Westmoreland 2016). There are many indigenous populations: the Lenca, Pech, Tawahka, Xicaque, Maya Chorti, Misquito, and Garifuna. "The Garifuna are of mixed, Afro-Carib origin and were moved to the area during the colonial period. There is also an Afro-Honduran Creole English-speaking minority group of around twenty thousand who live mainly in the Honduran Bay Islands" (Minority Rights 2017).

Honduras was originally inhabited by a Mayan civilization and colonized by the Spanish in the early 1500s. It gained independence in 1821, becoming part of a short-lived confederation of Central American states before

becoming a separate republic in 1838. Modern Honduran history has included military coups, rebellions, and dictatorships since gaining independence from Spain. From the late 1800s through the mid-20th century, U.S. fruit corporations exerted great control over the country. In 1969, during a World Cup soccer match between Honduras and El Salvador, troops from El Salvador invaded Honduras. In reality, the subsequently dubbed “soccer war” was more about land disputes and demographic and immigration issues than a sport rivalry (Westmoreland 2016).

In 1997, Carlos Flores Facussé became president, and soon after, in October 1998, he had to cope with the catastrophic destruction to Honduras brought by Hurricane Mitch. Thousands were killed and many more thousands left homeless when Tegucigalpa was flooded with water levels that reached 10 feet. Landslides covered entire towns, and nearly three-quarters of the country’s crops were destroyed, which had a devastating economic impact. In the aftermath, the United States became the primary source of economic and logistical aid (History 2009). Ricardo (Joest) Maduro came to power in 2002 with intentions of economic and social reform. However, problems in the essential agricultural sector and rising crime caused people to lose faith in the Maduro government.

Manuel Zelaya was inaugurated as the new president in January 2006 (Westmoreland 2016), but he was forced out of office during a coup d’état in June 2009. On November 29, 2009, Porfirio “Pepe” Lobo Sosa was elected president. Although Human Rights Watch has criticized some actions of his presidency, Lobo did hire a human rights adviser, and he organized a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate the coup. Zelaya returned to Honduras in May 2011. In 2013, Juan Orlando Hernández became the president of Honduras (Westmoreland 2016).

Indigenous History

“The current territory of Honduras cuts across what was a pre-Columbian boundary between Mesoamerica and the more dispersed indigenous communities to the south” (Minority Rights 2017). There are now many distinct indigenous descendants. Among these are the Lenca, Maya, Chortí, Mayagna (Sumu), Tolupan (Xicaque), and Pech (Paya), whose original ancestral communities were organized around fishing, agriculture, and trade. These divisions remained largely intact until the arrival of the Spanish in 1540, who in their quest for silver and gold killed tens of thousands and enslaved as many as 150,000

for the mines and as exports to other countries (Minority Rights 2017). The Spanish also brought the first Africans with them as forced labor. The Afro-Honduran Garifuna society developed in 1797. The Afro-Caribbeans who came to Honduras from St. Vincent continued to speak their own language and preserved their own cultural traditions. In the 1840s, a group of English-speaking free black people from the Cayman Islands also migrated to Honduras’s Bay Islands, forming a distinct group that was self-sufficient. They also maintained their own Creole language and Afro-Caribbean culture (Minority Rights 2017).

Hondurans are 97 percent Roman Catholic and 3 percent Protestant. Honduras is the second-poorest country in Latin America, with approximately 65 percent of the population living in poverty and a per capita income that is one of the lowest in the region. The income gap is vast: 60 percent of the national income is earned by the wealthiest 20 percent of the nation, while the poorest 20 percent earn just 2.02 percent of the income (UNHRC 2015). It also has the world’s highest murder rate (CIA 2016).

Overview of Women’s Lives

In 2015, the UN Development Programme ranked Honduras 131st out of 187 nations based on the Gender Inequality Index (GII, 0.48) among other indices (UNDP 2014). According to the UN Human Rights Council’s *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences*, “Violence against women is widespread and systematic and affects women and girls in numerous ways. A climate of fear, in both the public and private spheres, and a lack of accountability for violations of human rights of women are the norm, despite legislative and institutional developments” (Manjoo 2015, 4).

Girls and Teens

Girls in Honduras rank roughly equally with boys in the educational setting. They have similar literacy, enrollment, dropout, and grade repetition rates. The Education Policy and Data Center included a study of how Honduras compared to other low- and middle-income countries that included two factors: the primary school net enrollment rate and youth literacy. According to these measures, Honduras ranks at the 68th percentile in access to education and at the 50th percentile in learning (EPDC 2014). Many girls do not finish school; the primary school dropout rate is 6 percent for girls. By secondary school, this number had

more than quadrupled to 34 percent of female youth who are out of school (EPDC 2014). This leaves them vulnerable to low-wage work in future.

Education

In Honduras, the overall educational statistics indicate that universal primary education has yet to be achieved, despite being set as one of the important UN Millennium Development Goals. Nevertheless, statistics also indicate that girls outrank boys in many educational indicators, such as enrollment, transition, and literacy rates. The academic year runs from February through November. Children officially enter primary school at age 6, and the primary school cycle lasts for 6 years (ages 6–11). Students then move into the lower secondary cycle, which lasts for 3 years (ages 12–14), followed by the upper secondary cycle, which lasts for 2 years (ages 15–16). According to the 2014 National Education Profile compiled by the Education Policy and Data Center, there were 1,876,000 students enrolled in primary and secondary education, of which 1,217,000 (65%) were enrolled in primary education. Of youth ages 15–24, 2 percent have no formal education, and 16 percent have attained an incomplete primary education at most. In total, 19 percent of 15- to 24-year-olds have not completed primary education in Honduras (EPDC 2014).

Honduras spends 5.9 percent of its GDP on education expenditures. Primary school enrollment is near 100 percent, and the school life expectancy from primary to tertiary education is 11 years; however, the educational quality is poor, the dropout rate and grade repetition remain high, and teacher and school accountability is low (CIA 2016). While primary enrollment levels are at or near 100 percent, this number also reflects the high level of grade repetition and overage that occurs within the primary education system. The enrollment rate drops to 75 percent in lower secondary school, and the number of students who transition to secondary school is only 70 percent for girls (66% for boys). By upper secondary school, the gross enrollment number for girls is 82 percent (60% for boys). Grade repetition and overage is not as high in secondary school as in primary, but it is still a statistical factor (EPDC 2014).

The Education Policy and Data Center tracked the percentage of students who were out of school in Honduras. This was defined as students who were not currently enrolled in any schooling, which indicates what proportion of children are not currently participating in the education

Women's Voices

Maria Alicia Calles

Maria Alicia Calles, despite her limited education, founded the Unión de Mujeres Campesinas Hondureñas (UMCAH) to give rural Honduran women a voice in their communities. UMCAH works for agricultural reform for female and male farmers and seeks equal standing for women. The organization ensures that illiterate rural women understand their rights and works for expanded land rights and political representation so that women can provide for their families and communities.

Calles's activism includes the presidency of Consejo Coordinador de Organizaciones Campesinas de Honduras (COCOCH), the Coordinating Council of Peasant Organizations of Honduras. Calles has said, "We are a vulnerable sector of the world. Because others speak on our behalf, they decide what they think is necessary for us. That is why we are vulnerable" (IFAD 2010).

—Jane Harris

IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development). 2010. "Promoting Women's Leadership in Farmers' and Rural Producers' Organizations." Retrieved from <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/498cfa01-fbda-410e-b356-df1203cdf976>.

Women Thrive Alliance. 2016. "Maria Alicia Calles." Retrieved from www.womenthrive.org/maria-alicia-calles.

system and thereby missing out on the benefits of school. For primary school-aged girls, the number was 6 percent. By secondary school, this number had more than quadrupled to 34 percent of female youth who are out of school (EPDC 2014). Both in primary and secondary schools, the greatest disparity can be seen along class lines. The poorest children are out of school at exponentially higher rates than the richest children. For example, of the secondary school students who missed school, 62 percent were in the poorest quintile of income versus 10 percent in the richest (EPDC 2014).

Additional measures include the number of times and the number of students that repeat a grade. Students are more likely to repeat first grade in primary education, with a repetition rate of 8.1 percent for girls (10.4% for

boys). The repetition rate drops for each subsequent year of primary school. The average rate across all five grades of primary school is 4.4 percent (EPDC 2014). The dropout rate, defined as the proportion of students enrolled in a given grade in a given year who are no longer enrolled the following school year, is also a concern in primary school. The dropout percentage for girls is 6 percent (7% for boys) (EPDC 2014).

Another indicator of achievement in education is the literacy rate. In a 2015 estimate, the literacy rate (defined as able to read and write at age 15 and over) is 88.6 percent for women (88.4% men) (CIA 2016). UNESCO reported similar literacy rates: 88 percent for both women and men; however, it also provided more complex age analysis. For the youth population, defined as those aged 15–24, 98 percent of girls were literate as of 2015 (96% of boys). For the population 65 years and older, 50 percent of women were literate (54% of men). The study also demonstrated that for the youth population, the literacy rate has increased each of the 8 years a study was recorded since the first in 2001. The illiterate female population (15–24 years old) is recorded as 15,983 as of 2015 (male 33,142) (UNESCO 2016). It also reported that the youth literacy rate (defined as ages 15–24) is 95 percent, which is higher than that in other lower middle-income countries (EPDC 2014).

The Education Policy and Data Center included a study of how Honduras compared to other low- and middle-income countries that included two factors: the primary school net enrollment rate and youth literacy. According to these measures, Honduras ranks at the 68th percentile in access to education and at the 50th percentile in learning. The most recent Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) test assessment results were administered in 2006 to grade 6 students; it displays “the percentage of test takers that have fallen below the lowest performance levels and the percentage of test takers that have exceeded the highest performance levels in these assessments” (EPDC 2014). When compared to other countries that took the same reading assessment and fell below the lowest benchmark by 13 percent, Honduran test takers fell below by almost double the number, nearly 26 percent (EPDC 2014).

Gangs

According to a 2012 report on the Status of Gangs in Honduras, more than 4,700 Honduran children and young people belong to gangs, including 447 who are incarcerated in

detention centers. Women make up 20 percent of the overall gang population, and of the 4,700 participants in the study who were women, none were in positions of higher authority (UNICEF 2012). Most had joined between 11 and 20 years old. There are numerous motivations for joining: poverty, coercion, lack of opportunities, and a lack of access to public services. Some join out of social exclusion, likening it to a familial experience. “We were adopted,” they say (UNICEF 2012).

If it is a family experience, it is not a safe one. Over 80 percent of gang members reside in two cities: San Pedro Sula (60%) and Tegucigalpa (21%), the capital, some in neighborhoods known as “lawless zones” where there are no police (UNICEF 2012). Young girls are often inducted into gangs, where they are subjected to levels of violence, including rape. They are often pressured to have sex with other gang members or otherwise sexually exploited. They are forced to carry drugs and are routinely killed in acts of vengeance to settle disputes between rival gang members. Girls are subject to torture, mutilation, and decapitation to erase identity (Manjoo 2015). Gangs are responsible for a great deal of overall violence connected to drug trafficking, extortion, and kidnappings. They also contribute to Honduras having the highest homicide rate in the world at 82.1 killings per 100,000 inhabitants (UNICEF 2012).

For girls who are able to leave gangs, few options are available. There is a high level of retaliation from gang members for leaving. If they can, they have limited opportunities due to their lack of education or the lack of rehabilitation services in prisons. Most who were interviewed for the report on the Status of Gangs stated their sole desire as finding a job and stressed the lack of study aids, counseling, and legal advice that could be provided by government rehabilitation services to help them reintegrate into society. Leaving gangs and leading more productive lives would require this assistance in addition to a shift in the cultural stigma of gang affiliation (UNICEF 2012).

Health

Maternal Health

According to a 2016 estimate, the birth rate in Honduras is 22.8 births per 1,000 population, and the mother’s mean age at first birth is 20.4 in a 2011–2012 estimate (CIA 2016). The maternal mortality rate is 129 deaths per 100,000 live births (2015 estimate), placing Honduras at 69th out of 184 for its country comparison. The maternal mortality rate is the annual number of female deaths per

100,000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes) (CIA 2016).

The infant mortality rate is 17.7 deaths per 1,000 live births (male 20 per 1,000; female 15.2 per 1,000) in a 2016 estimate. The infant mortality rate compares the number of deaths of infants under one year old in a given year per live births in the same year. This rate is often used as an indicator of the level of health in a country. Honduras ranks 96th out of 225 countries in the country comparison ranking (CIA 2016).

The teen pregnancy rate is 24 percent for girls aged 15–19, making it one of the highest rates in Central America. According to a 2012 report, Honduras has 108 live births for every 1,000 women in this age range, and 30 percent of the pregnant population is under 18 years old. Such a high rate of teen pregnancy has potential immediate and long-term implications for both the health and education of teen girls. It contributes to perinatal, infant, and maternal mortality and contributes to the cycle of poverty through the likelihood of increasing lack of attendance and dropout rates at school (USAID 2016).

Maternity Leave

Mothers are legally entitled to six months of maternity leave, and maternity benefits from social insurance are up to 66 percent of previous earnings. They are also required to receive two paid nursing breaks of 30 minutes each when on the job. Two-thirds of maternity leave is paid for by social insurance and one-third by the employer. There is no parental or paternity leave. Pregnant women are legally protected from dismissal while on the job, during maternity leave, and during a period after they return from maternity leave. Employers who have more than 20 female workers are also required to provide nursing or child care facilities at their workplace or a reimbursement for child care costs. Pregnant and breastfeeding workers are also prohibited from performing dangerous or unhealthy work or from working at night, but the law does not provide for any alternative (ILO 2014).

In practice, there is a significant gap between the number of women who actually receive maternity leave and those who are legally eligible for it. In 2013, the share of employed women who were legally covered by statutory maternity leave was 33–65 percent. However, the number of women who benefited from maternity leave, 10–32 percent, demonstrates that implementation of the law often

does not happen, and the number of women who have access to it is significantly lower than those who are legally entitled to it. Furthermore, vulnerable populations of impoverished pregnant women, such as domestic workers and those working in the *maquiladoras*, frequently work long hours, including night shifts, well into their pregnancy. There are no maternity leaves, and once they have given birth, they continue to work without sufficient nursing breaks or child care facilities. Some workers reported being required to take a pregnancy test prior to employment to circumnavigate the law. This may be in part because an employer is responsible for the full payment of maternity leave cash benefits for women who are not covered by social insurance but otherwise qualify for maternity leave. Additionally, women are not legally guaranteed the right to return to the same or an equivalent position after returning from maternity leave (ILO 2014).

Diseases and Disorders

HIV/AIDS

In 2015, there were an estimated 20,000 Hondurans living with HIV/AIDS and 1,000 HIV/AIDS related deaths. Honduras ranks 74th out of 133 countries that are monitored for the adult prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS. This ranking compares the percentage of adults (aged 15–49) living with HIV/AIDS, which in Honduras is 0.37 percent in the 2015 estimate (CIA 2016). The CIA ranks countries comparatively based on the percentage of adults (aged 15–49) living with HIV/AIDS. “The transgender population is the most affected by the HIV epidemic in Latin America, with a prevalence rate of 35 percent. To put an end to the epidemic, it is essential to ensure the fulfillment of human rights as well as access to health services that respect gender identity” (IAA 2012).

Major Infectious Diseases

There is a high risk of food and waterborne diseases, such as bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever. Dengue fever and malaria are the most prevalent vector-borne diseases, and active local transmission of Zika virus by infected mosquitoes has been identified in the country as of August 2016 (CIA 2016).

Employment

In a 2010 estimate, 60 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. The unemployment rate is 4.1 percent

(2015 estimate), but approximately one-third of people are underemployed (CIA 2016). The 2013 estimated GDP was USD\$18.55 billion, making it the second-poorest country in Central America (Manjoo 2015). As of a 2015 estimate, employment is composed primarily of agriculture at 13.9 percent, industry at 26.6 percent, and services at 59.5 percent. Major exports include apparel, coffee, cigars, bananas, fruit, lumber, shrimp, gold, lobster, palm oil, and automobile wire harnesses (CIA 2016).

There is a high overall level of poverty, which is particularly true in female-headed households. Women head approximately 32 percent of households (Manjoo 2015). The Honduran National Statistics Institute indicates that 64 percent of female-headed households are poor (58.8% of male-headed households). Of the 17.6 percent of total households living in extreme poverty, 17.6 percent are headed by single females (9.2% by single males and 73.2% by households of both sexes). There is a greater number of women among the rural poor, and the rates of both unemployment and underemployment are also two-thirds higher for women than for men. In all households, women have fewer employment opportunities and greater food insecurity. Decisions over family resources and family income are more likely to be made by men, and there is an equally significant gender gap in decisions on access to credit (USAID 2016).

Government protections for gender equity have been enacted; however, while there are some legal statutes, much gender inequality still exists. A National Policy on Women and a Second Plan for Equality and Gender Equity (2010–2022) have been adopted by the government to empower women and promote their economic development. Both the Honduran Constitution, in Article 123 (3), and the Labor Code, in Article 367, support the principle of equal pay for equal work for all workers without discrimination. In reality, there is an extremely unequal distribution of income and high levels of income disparity. Women are paid on average 67.6 percent of the wage earned by men and have an unemployment rate that is double that of men, despite having equal literacy levels (Manjoo 2015).

Maquiladoras

Two major industries in which women are employed are in *maquiladoras* (factories) and in domestic work in private homes, both of which are generally less subject to regulation, which puts women at greater risk to a host of issues: low wages, lack of job security, poor working conditions, and possible exploitation and violence (Manjoo 2015).

Maquiladora plants (*maquilas*) often exist in export processing zones (EPZs). As an industry, they employ roughly 125,000 people, 65 percent of whom are women and most of whom are between 17 and 25 years old and from rural areas (Manjoo 2015). When interviewed for the *United Nations Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences*, the women reported a lengthy list of repeated violations of their rights: “verbal and physical abuse by supervisors, sexual harassment, being subjected to pre-employment pregnancy tests, unfair dismissal and discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy, and denial of maternity leave and other social benefits. . . . They often worked long hours without rest. They also witnessed co-workers succumb to chronic fatigue, depression and musculoskeletal disorders as a result of the hazardous working conditions” (Manjoo 2015, 12).

Women working in EPZs also face a lack of benefits because employers often do not contribute to the social security fund. This leaves workers without access to health care rights, including access to maternity leave, while earning a minimum wage that is less than USD\$0.70 per hour—between 28 percent and 51 percent less than the required minimum wage. Social attitudes about gender impact women’s treatment, including unequal pay: “Employers justify lower wages for women with the stereotype that women’s work is less demanding than men’s work” (Manjoo 2015, 12). Women workers in the EPZs face constant monitoring and scrutiny, reportedly are allowed only two timed bathroom breaks per shift, and are unpaid for any overtime work if they have not met the production requirement for their shift. They also face harassment, blacklisting, and firing for any attempt to form unions or organize a protest (Manjoo 2015).

Domestic Work

“Legislation prohibits discrimination in employment based on sex” (ILO 2014). However, many Honduran women work in private households, and like those who work in the *maquilas*, they are at a high risk of exploitation and subject to low pay, long hours, poor treatment, and lack of benefits. Of the approximately 64,000 domestic workers in Honduras, 20,000 are women. Domestic workers are covered by “social legislation” under Article 131 of the Constitution, but in practice, many are denied such protections. This preempts them from health coverage for illness and maternity or allowance for family members,

including the elderly and orphans. As the law also covers lockouts, accidents, unemployment benefits, occupational diseases, and any other contingencies that could impact employability, not having access to it severely impacts the quality of life (Manjoo 2015).

Child Labor

According to a UN report, there is a high level of child labor, defined as children ages 5–14, in Honduras. The 2012 report indicated that 300,000 children are working, with the highest percentage of them (63%) in the agricultural sector. Child labor within indigenous communities was also prevalent, according to the report (Manjoo 2015).

Family Life

Marriage

According to the UN Global Database on Violence against Women, the child marriage rate in Honduras is 34 percent. This statistic is calculated as the percentage of women between 20 and 24 years old who were first married or in a union before the age of 18 (UN Women 2016).

Same-sex marriage is not legal; in fact, since May 2005, the Honduran Constitution explicitly prohibits marriage or a union between people of the same sex (Equaldex 2017).

LGBT Rights

To determine the degree to which Honduras is protective of or a persecutor of homosexual rights, it is important to examine the constitutional protections afforded to gays, whether they have civil or political rights, whether advocacy exists within the country, and the degree of societal persecution that exists. Considering these criteria, Honduras has made significant legal ground in the past few years; however, there is still a high degree of societal persecution. According to Equaldex, homosexuality was legalized for both men and women in 1985. There is housing and employment discrimination protection for both sexual orientation and gender identity. Since February 2013, the penal code (Article 321) was amended to protect LGBT individuals from discrimination, although no implementation of this law has been found. Similarly, homosexuals are not restricted from serving openly in the military, but they do experience harassment. People also have the legal right to change gender, but doing so requires surgery. Conversion therapy is also legal. But

same-sex adoption is not legal in Honduras. All of this suggests an intermediate level of legal rights for LGBTI people (Equaldex 2017).

Queer Advocacy

Regarding advocacy groups, after 15 years of struggle, on August 28, 2004, the Honduran government finally granted legal recognition to three gay, lesbian, and transgender associations, despite significant protests. Legal recognition is a means by which gay, lesbian, and transgender organizations, like other segments of civil society, can acquire and own property, pay salaries, and take part in legal disputes. It also gives such organizations (and their constituencies) a place and face in society as a whole and gives their membership the power to enjoy full status as citizens and full belonging in their communities (Outright 2017).

Politics

In Honduras, de jure gender equality and nondiscrimination rule, but there is still a great deal of de facto inequality, including in the legal and political spheres. While the constitution establishes equality among the sexes, in practice, women are often relegated to positions that are not fully equal.

2009 Coup

Politically, the coup that occurred on June 28, 2009, further undermined the position of women: “In a historical context of poverty, underdevelopment and citizen insecurity, the 2009 coup further resulted in serious human rights violations being committed” (Manjoo 2015). Manuel Zelaya, the president at the time of the coup, was forced out of the country by military forces under the claim that he planned to organize a poll on the possibility of holding a referendum on constitutional reforms prior to the November 2009 elections. After his exit, the then Speaker of Congress, Roberto Michelitti, was sworn in as the new president of Honduras. These actions were perceived as a military coup by many in the international community, and sanctions and other economic pressure was imposed on Honduras that further negatively impacted a country with a history of poverty. The socioeconomic impact on citizens contributed to and were exacerbated by high levels of violence from organized crime and gang activity (Manjoo 2015).

Coup's Impact on Women

Reports indicate that hundreds of people were brutally repressed by police both during and in the aftermath of the coup and that several women who had been arbitrarily detained were sexually abused. Illegal arrests, kidnappings, torture, and other kinds of intimidation were also reported. "This type of behavior further served to intimidate women into avoiding the public arena, thus affecting women's effective participation in decision-making processes, both in the public and private spheres" (Manjoo 2015). The military and security forces that were also charged with breaking up demonstrations were reported to be violent as well, and reports indicate that more than 10 people died. In addition to the fatalities, there were also women who disappeared, an occurrence that is happening with increasing frequency. The overall rate of disappeared women in 2008 was 91. In 2013, it was 347, a 281 percent increase in the number of women who have simply vanished (Manjoo 2015).

Position of Women in Government

In 2000, for the first time, the Equal Opportunities for Women Act (EOWA) established a minimum 30 percent quota for women with respect to posts filled by popular vote. Women held 3 out of 17 ministerial positions before the government's restructure, and despite the EOWA, in 2001, women represented only 7.1 percent of elected officials in Congress. It was clear that there was non-compliance with the act. To combat this, a reform of the Elections and Political Organizations Act in 2004 made it a mandatory requirement for political parties to comply with the provisions on participation by women. In 2005, women comprised 24.2 percent of the elected candidates, but women's representation in parliament dropped to 19.5 percent in 2009 (Manjoo 2015). This year was not without gains for women, however, as Honduras had its first female chair of parliament in 2009 (WIP 2017).

At no time has the 30 percent quota established in 2000 been achieved. Nevertheless, in April 2012, Congress increased the minimum quota of women candidates from 30 percent to 40 percent for primary elections by approving an amendment to Article 105 of the elections law. The amendment also specified an increase to 50 percent for future election processes (Manjoo 2015).

In the 2013 general elections, women comprised 40.4 percent of candidates for Congress and 20.8 percent of

candidates for mayor. The results indicate a continued gender gap: women were 24.2 percent of the Congress and 6.7 percent of the mayors in local governments. The judiciary demonstrates greater gender equity. Of the 798 judges and magistrates in Honduras, 398 are women. At the highest level, however, gender inequality persists. There are only 3 women of 15 Supreme Court magistrates; however, in September 2010, a gender unit was established within the Supreme Court (Manjoo 2015).

Issues

Violence

According to the UN Global Database on Violence against Women, as of 2014, Honduras has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) rank of 99th out of 152. The Gender Inequality Index reflects inequality between men and women in reproductive health, empowerment (as measured by government seats and educational obtainment), and labor market production. Honduras has a Global Gender Gap Index rank of 80th out of 145 as of 2015. The Gender Gap Index measures gaps in economic, political, education, and health criteria (UN Women 2016).

Rape

In 2006, one of the primary findings of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was the high level of sexual abuse, particularly incest and rape, against women and girls (Manjoo 2015). Reports indicate that such crimes are increasing, growing 21 percent between 2007 and 2011 (USAID 2016). Of the more than 16,000 complaints related to violence against women that the Statistical Observatory of the Office of the Public Prosecutor received in 2012, almost 20 percent of them were for sex crimes (Manjoo 2015). Between 2011 and 2013, the online database of the judiciary indicates that 2,850 cases related to sexual offenses were registered; however, statistics vary. Honduras' Centre for Women's Rights indicates that 2,851 complaints were filed in 2013 alone (Manjoo 2015). The U.S. Agency for International Development reports that, in 2011, women were victims in 81 percent of the sexual violence cases, and 74 percent of sexual violence victims are between the ages of 10 and 19 (USAID 2016).

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the leading crime that is reported at the national level. Of women aged 15–49, 27 percent

stated that they had been subjected to physical violence at some point in their lives. The Statistical Observatory of the Office of the Public Prosecutor received more than 16,000 complaints related to violence against women in 2012, with 74.6 percent related to domestic or intrafamily violence. Between 2009 and 2012, 82,547 domestic violence complaints were filed, disproportionately by women. In 2013, for instance, of 19,458 cases, 92 percent were filed by women compared to 8 percent (1,712) filed by men. There are also a small number of convictions: there were only 134 convictions from 4,992 registered complaints during the 2012–2014 time frame (Manjoo 2015).

Femicide

Women are being murdered in Honduras at an alarming and ever-increasing rate. In 2005, 175 women were murdered. The femicide rate jumped a staggering 246 percent to 606 deaths by 2012, and 97 percent of these cases remain unsolved (USAID 2016). According to the *United Nations Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women*, femicides across many categories in Honduras have steadily risen (Manjoo 2015). In 2012, the 606 cases of femicide is an average of 51 women murdered each month. In 2013, that number had risen to 629 and the femicide rate to 263 percent. While domestic and intrafamily violence were the leading causes of femicide, new causes such as sexual violence, organized crime, and gang-related violence have emerged as contributing to higher numbers of femicides. One in five femicides is linked to domestic violence, while an estimated 7 percent are tied to sexual violence and an overwhelming 60 percent to organized crime. Access to guns was also cited as a contributing factor. Hondurans are allowed to register up to five firearms, and the majority of those are owned by men (Manjoo 2015).

In February 2013, the Honduran Congress amended the chapter of the Criminal Code on homicide to include the offense of femicide, which is applicable when men have carried out killings motivated by hatred and disdain for women. This offense is punishable by 30–40 years' imprisonment and has been on the statute books since April 2013. Since 2011, 203 convictions have been obtained by the Public Prosecution Service of 549 cases that have been brought to trial involving killings of women (UN Women 2016).

Human Trafficking

Honduras is both a source and transit country for men, women, and children, according to the 2011 *Trafficking*

in Persons Report, which showed that the routes used for human trafficking coincided with those identified with other illegal activities, such as weapons, drugs, and organized crime. Honduras ratified a law against human trafficking in 2012, but no national systemic or consistent data exists on prevention, assistance to victims, or the criminal prosecution of perpetrators (USAID 2016).

Honduran Women's Movement

There is no question that an unprecedented level of violence against women exists. Equally troubling is the inability of the justice system to address the problem as well as efforts to suppress those who protest: "The Honduran government is using its institutions to silence people who speak out and to perpetuate violence against women. The judicial system is one of the greatest obstacles to applying international instruments that would protect women" (Ruiz-Navarro 2015). In response to such oppression, there is an active organized women's resistance movement that aims to change the legal and cultural position of women. One of the central groups is *Movimiento de Mujeres por la Paz* Visitación Padilla (Visitación Padilla Women's Movement for Peace), whose general coordinator for many years was Gladys Lanza, a leader with more than 30 years of political activism in the women's rights movement. In 2012, Lanza explained the purpose of the organization: "We work with women at the political level, at the organizational level. We have at least 5,000 activists in our movement. We are known as 'chonas.' That's become a byword in Honduras for strong, determined women. Many more women support us and will join our demonstrations but it is the 'chonas' who are the bedrock of our movement" (LAB 2012).

CEDAW, the UN entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and is described as "an international bill of rights for women [that] defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination" (UN Women 2009). Its 2016 report on Honduras concluded that there are significant barriers to women's access to the justice system. In the summary, the committee stated concern

about the barriers to women's access to justice, particularly in cases of gender based violence. It is concerned that the lack of independence and impartiality of the justice system is reinforced by insufficient resources,

poor infrastructure, and lack of specialized units and personnel, including police, prosecutors and judges trained on gender issues, resulting in a dysfunctional and corrupt judiciary and an overall culture of impunity. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of proper investigation, evidence collection, and forensic facilities and capacities, causing lengthy delays in legal proceedings and re-victimization of women. It is concerned about women's reluctance to file complaints due to discriminatory attitudes among law enforcement personnel. (CEDAW 2016)

In the face of such enormous barriers to gender justice, the need for change, and the activism to create such change, is immense. Yet opposition to activism is great: since the 2009 coup d'état against President Manuel Zelaya, more than 5,000 Honduran activists have been criminalized, including Gloria Lanza (Torres 2016). For more than 30 years, in the face of vast oppression, including torture, intimidation, death threats, imprisonment, and, in 1991, a bomb that destroyed her home while she was in it, Lanza has been instrumental in human rights defense. Together with Movimiento de Mujeres and other human and women's rights groups, Lanza has fought for women's increased political representation, recognizing that women's position cannot change until women share equal political power (LAB 2012). In 2012, she commented, "We want to get through Congress a law that increases the quota of female politicians from 30% to 50% and makes it obligatory for men and women to alternate in power, that is, if a man gives up an elected office, then he has to be replaced by a woman. And vice versa. We won't succeed in the short term but we'll go on trying" (LAB 2012). Lanza, who died on September 20, 2016, at age 74—at the time still challenging a conviction against her—did not live to see the day of full gender equality, but other activists continue the fight.

Violence against LGBTI People

Of greatest significance for LGBT people is the lack of physical safety. In 2011, Oscar Alvarez, the minister of security of Honduras, announced that he would create a special unit to investigate crimes against journalists, LGBT people, and other vulnerable groups. Members of the security forces and judicial bodies met with the minister of justice and human rights to discuss the creation of this unit, which was composed of approximately 150 security officers who were to investigate the deaths of women,

journalists, youth, members of gay groups, lesbians, and travesties (transvestites), that had previously not been investigated sufficiently (Outright 2017).

To help combat LGBT violence, international organizations also work with local Honduran organizations. According to a November 2013 report, the Irish-based international human rights organization Front Line Defenders said that since the 2009 coup in Honduras, there had been 101 crimes motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity between 2010 and 2012. To help combat such violence, the group created a radio campaign in support of local Honduran LGBTI rights defenders. The campaign consisted of a series of public service announcements (PSAs), short radio spots designed to promote the recognition of LGBTI rights defenders as engaged in legitimate and necessary work to end discrimination and violence and to foster human rights defense. The campaign featured "eight human rights defenders [giving] their testimony to illustrate the reality faced by the LGBTI communities and those working to promote their rights and end violence and discrimination" (ILGA 2013).

According to the Human Rights Watch's (HRW) *World Report 2016: Honduras*, homophobic violence continues to be a major problem. Between 2009 and 2014, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) received reports of 174 bias-motivated killings of LGBTI people. While the government had set up a special unit in the attorney general's office to investigate and prosecute such killings in August 2013, out of the 42 cases that had been brought to court, only 10 people had been convicted of such crimes by October 2014. According to the HRW report, "Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals are among those most vulnerable to violence. Government efforts to investigate and prosecute violence against members of these groups made little progress in 2015" (HRW 2016).

Most murders remain unsolved, and research shows that transgender individuals are particularly vulnerable: in the cases of 61 murders of LGBTI individuals reported between 2008 and 2011, only 10 people were brought to trial, and none for the death of transgender women, even though they accounted for two-thirds of the cases (IAA 2012).

Transphobia across government structures at every level is facilitating a systematic climate of impunity with regards to human rights violations committed against transgender activists. Such impunity, which manifests itself in a culture of silence leads to a failure

to file complaints, a failure to adopt a differentiated approach when dealing with such cases, ineffectiveness in the justice system, the existence of discriminatory legislation, and the absence of legislation on gender identity. (IAA 2012)

Violations of Rights of Indigenous People

According to the Minority Rights Group International, indigenous people have gained greater legal and cultural acceptance nationally. Nevertheless, there are several key areas that impact their overall well-being and security, particularly in the context of the systemic historical marginalization and lack of social investment in these populations. Each indigenous community is distinct and has unique concerns, but there are key issues that overlap, some of which are intensified by intersections of ethnicity/race and class with gender. For example, Garifuna students more commonly obtain medical training in Cuba because they traditionally have difficulty gaining entry to the medical faculty of the Honduran National University. Additionally, the first hospital built for Garifuna people did not open until August 2008 under the Honduras-ALBA initiative with President Manuel Zelaya Rosales (Minority Rights 2017).

A widespread concern among many indigenous groups is land rights. While many agreements have been reached between the government and indigenous groups, the issue often remains unresolved or contested. Access to landownership is difficult for indigenous people, and this appears especially true when ethnicity intersects with race. Between February and August 2010, 1,487 landownership deeds were issued to farmers, but less than one-third of these were awarded to women. During this period, women were allocated 28.4 percent of the ownership rights for agricultural land. “Some sources argue that women are largely denied access to and control of productive resources and that, in most cases, they are unable to obtain credit to enable them to be successful farmers. This results in their dependency on their husbands or male relatives being reinforced, and renders them vulnerable to violence” (Manjoo 2015).

Indigenous organizations are concerned about international financial organizations such as the World Bank that have funded an initiative called the Program for the Administration of Lands in Honduras (PATH). The concern with PATH is that it encourages individual landownership over the communal landownership that is traditionally practiced by many indigenous communities (Minority Rights 2017).

Not only do indigenous groups have to contend with financial organizations, they also must deal with other landowning interests, such as national tourism organizations. As some of Honduras consists of land that is remote and difficult to access, such as the northern coast that is inhabited by at least four Garifuna communities, it had a pristine coastline that ultimately attracted a tourist industry intent on developing it. To do so, deals were made to change communal Garifunal property to individual plots of land; pressure was then applied to individual families to sell, and as many families were impoverished, the economic pressure succeeded. According to the Minority Rights Group International, these communities “are under unprecedented threat of disappearance” (2017).

In addition to the threat of the loss of a way of life through the disappearance of traditional cultures, many indigenous populations are also under the threat of harassment and physical violence. In response to the loss of land rights, indigenous activists have worked to retain their land and culture. Garifuna leaders, for example, while working to defend communal territory and resources, have had property destroyed by arson. The Prisoners of Conscience, an indigenous group of human rights defenders, is recognized as an at-risk group by international human rights monitors. In some cases, authorities appear unable to properly pursue justice in response to threats and harassment received by land rights activists, even high-level harassment claims that include “fabricated criminal charges against community leaders that include land seizure and murder. In 2008, Amnesty International continued to cite instances of the use of politically motivated criminal charges to detain indigenous people in an effort to ‘obstruct the efforts of indigenous leaders to secure recognition of communities’ claim to communal land titles” (Minority Rights 2017).

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