





Research remains at the heart of progress and allows for the continuous development of societies. Conducting this field study in the Dominican Republic to examine the discourse around the empowerment of women and identify possible ways forward for the advancement of women's rights in the country would have not been possible without the support of the Margaret Gada Slosberg Charitable Foundation. As long as the curiosity and ambition of determined, motivated, entrepreneur, change-seeking youth is trusted by such influential development partners, we can only move closer to the world we want by 2030. On a more personal level, the opportunity of designing and executing my own research proposal, and the experience of the field visit itself, have substantially contributed to my professional growth. They also created a space and time for me to connect with myself in a time when decisions about future needed to be made. In fact, the experience further confirmed my passion for gender issues and my dedication to transforming socially constructed discriminatory stereotypes and advancing equality regardless of one's sex. For it all I emphasize my gratitude to the Margaret Gada Slosberg Charitable Foundation for the support.

I also thank the three selected Dominican organisations, *Asociación Dominicana para el Empoderamiento de la Mujer* (ADOPEM ONG), *Fundación Aldeas de Paz* and *Asociación Pro-Desarrollo del Limón* (ASODELIM) for facilitating access to their centres, files, workshops, meetings and most key informants to this work, and for taking me in as one of them, being "a la orden" at all times and always available to help and exchange.

The institutional support received from the University of Paris, and



*Description of the project*

The Dominican Republic is among the countries with highest rates of gender-based physical violence against women in the Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) region and an epicentre of machismo. Yet, femicides – as the most extreme expression of violence against women – are only the visible tip of a much greater and complex iceberg. A wide range of other more subtle ways of discrimination integrated in society lay under the surface but equally push women back from having access to equal opportunities as men. These include, for example, the belief that women are natural caregivers and ought to shoulder the burden of unpaid care and domestic work alone; the condescendence and paternalism with which women are treated throughout their daily lives and at work, even if they are far more qualified; the unequal distribution of power and decision making





at least align with it while they interact with the targeted group, since their vision on the matter substantially affects the women's. Additionally, they should not succumb to the risk of limiting their action to 'copy and pasting' strategies that worked in other scenarios, and take into account the particularities of the Dominican Republic and the concrete community they are working with.

Being present at the workshops organised by the three organisations facilitated an evaluation of the rationale behind their design, their content and how implementation plays out e.g. how workshop attendees received the material suggested and distributed for each activity. This allowed for an assessment of major challenges and elements that, I argue in my thesis, would need to be reviewed in order to achieve a positive, sustainable change, not only in the lives of the women involved, but also in societal relations at a larger scale.

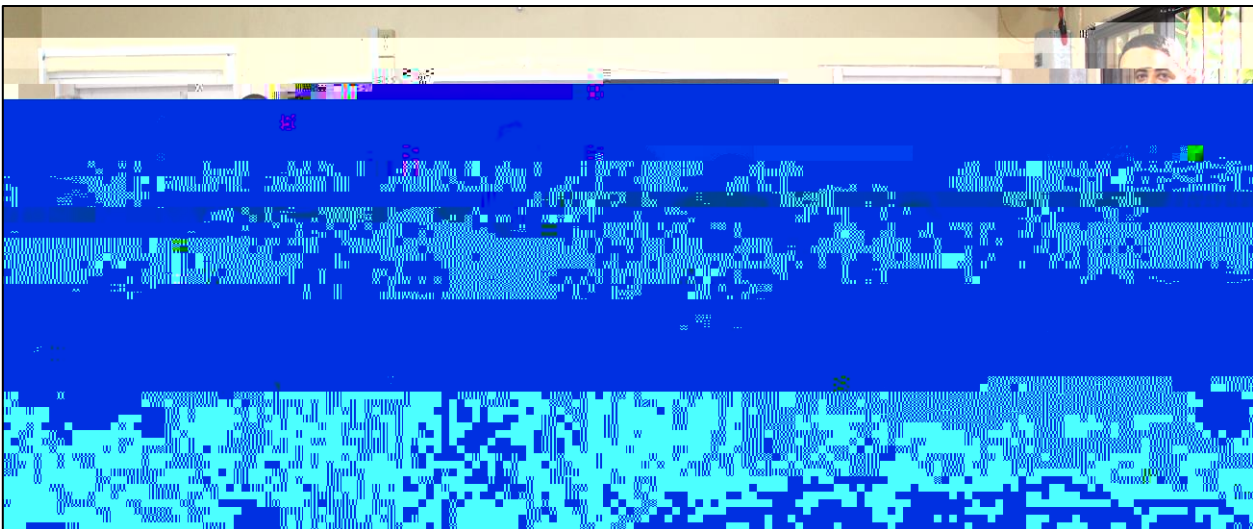
### *Limitations*

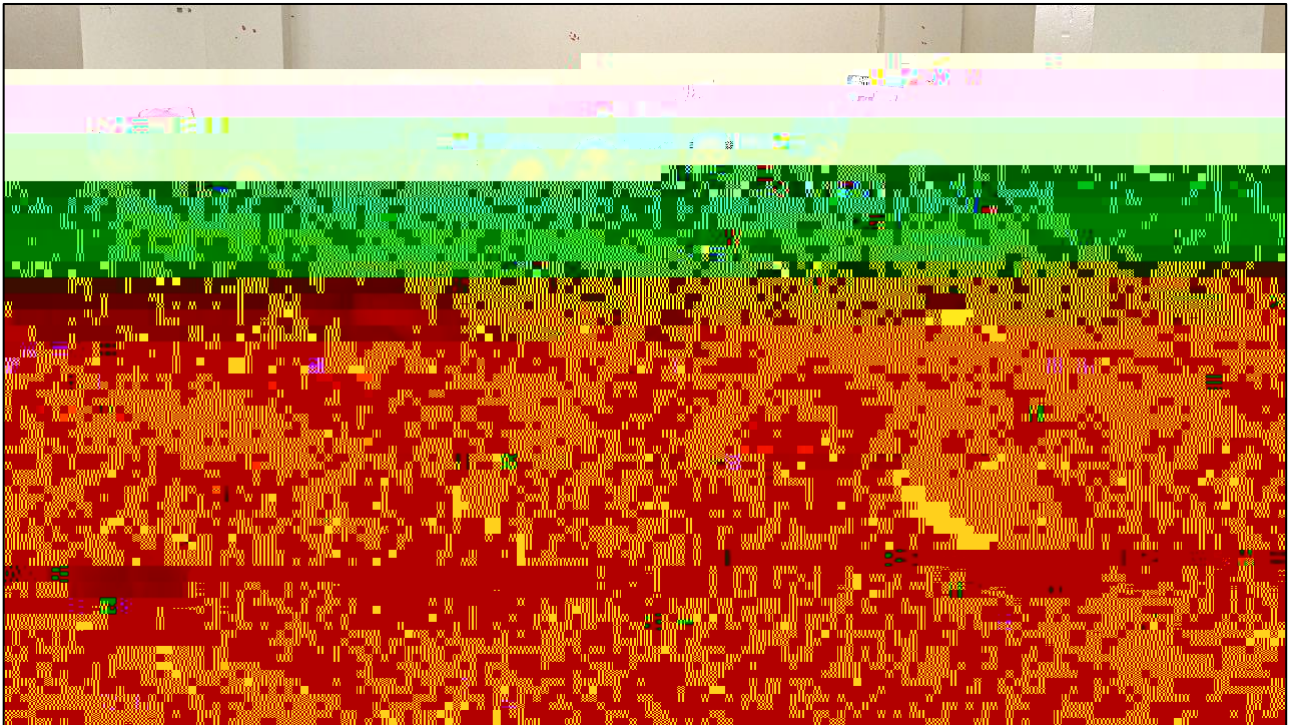
Although access to the three groups of key informants – programme beneficiaries, NGO staff and 'general public' – was not a problem, there were other limitations to this research, mainly concerning time and resources: it was only one researcher conducting the field investigations and in a period of two months, which make it impossible to cover the whole complexity of the issue in the country. Despite these limitations, however, more than sixty interviews were conducted, which set the base for conclusions and enabled generalisations to a certain extent after having established a pattern and axis upon which differences were identified.

Another major limitation was access to State officials and government-run projects relevant to the area of interest, denied after several attempts: meetings were arranged with representatives of both the Ministry of Women (MM) and the Gender Unit of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development (MEPyD) but cancelled with a very short notice. Clearance to access a State shelter home for survivors of domestic violence and their children was denied and postponed until it was no longer possible to visit the facilities (discussions started after my field trip finished), although I had followed the right official procedures.



*Patricia during her workshop 'Tools to dismantle machismo and develop a feminist self-esteem' in the scope of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) led Project 'Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment and Participation in Valverde'*





*Patricia and Marina de los Santos (ADOPEM) with the attendees to the workshop on entrepreneurship and budget planning in El Seibo*



*Patricia, Marina de los Santos and Miguelina Oviedo (ADOPEM) with the attendees to the workshop on entrepreneurship and budget in Sánchez*





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