



**FWONTYÈ NOU - NUESTRA FRONTERA**

**Sources of Conflict along and across the Haitian – Dominican border**

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## Introduction

The present report deals with pre-earthquake binational relations along the Haitian / Dominican border and with the implication of these patterns for developments along the border in the changed world of the post-earthquake island. The earthquake constitutes a definitive watershed for Haiti. Though nobody yet knows what is in store, post-earthquake Haiti will never be a replica of the country before the earthquake. (Nor does anyone want to restore the dysfunctional economic and political systems or the unbalanced Port-au-Prince demographic concentration of the pre-earthquake society.) But the earthquake will also exert a profound impact, somewhat more predictable, on the economy and demography of the Dominican Republic as well. These impacts are already being sensed, though they cannot yet be fully charted, as these words are being written several weeks after the earthquake.

In a paradoxical way this report has also changed the *modus operandi* – at least the short term *modus operandi* -- of many development agencies – multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, bilateral institutions such as USAID, and the many institutions of the NGO world that either were already functioning in Haiti or came in the wake of the earthquake. Not only have former levels of funding been increased, but program focus has incorporated a level of immediate humanitarian assistance as the immediate program goal, and program philosophies and ideologies that have emphasized education and/or subsidy-free economic sustainability been put aside as the need for immediate and totally subsidized material inputs has come to outweigh considerations of development philosophy.

We will hold off until the final section of the paper discussion of the implications of the earthquake for long term development programs in Haiti. The present report will focus on one particular dimension of issues that has affected the past, and will affect the future, of the development of Haiti: the relations between Haitians and Dominicans on the border area. In that regard the report has several modest, analytically focused objectives: (1) to describe the immediate pre-earthquake state of relations between Dominicans and Haitians who lived along the border, (2) to extrapolate from there as to the likely long-term impact of the earthquake on the economy and social organization of both sides of the border, and (3) to discuss alternative policy measures that would permit different institutional actors on both sides of the border – multilateral, bilateral, public sector, and NGO – to link up and contribute effectively to the agendas of local border communities. If institutions can place in abeyance their own pet agendas and instead focus with careful attention on the economic, educational, and healthcare agendas of local communities, and if they can channel their resources away from the grips of predatory gatekeepers and channel them instead to local communities, the humanitarian attention generated by the tragic earthquake can be an occasion of positive developmental transformation.

The research was originally commissioned before the earthquake, in the fall of 2009, by the Inter-American Development Bank, via a grant made to the Santo Domingo headquarters of the Pan American Development Foundation. The contract had two separate components, both of them dealing with Dominican / Haitian relations. One component entailed an analysis of mutual perceptions and attitudes between members of these two distinct populations. Not only popular media accounts, but also several academic treatments, depict a situation of ancient deeply-rooted hostility between the two nations,

buttressed by racial antipathies, usually attributed by journalists and academics to Dominicans. To anticipate the conclusions, which will be dealt with in another report, this vision of deep rooted binational antipathies is a distorted and ideologically driven caricature of the complex relations, many of them tense, many of them humanly warm, that actually occur in daily life.

During the six weeks of fieldwork all along both sides of the border, I found that the racial interpretative template that is routinely imposed on the question of Haitian / Dominican relationships – “Dominicans hate Haitians for racial reasons” –to be a piece of shallow nonsense derived from an obsession with race that is imported by outsiders, not by Dominicans or Haitians. The tensions and problems that do exist have nothing to do with skin color or hair type. This matter will be discussed at length in a companion report to the present one. The relationship between the two populations on different sides of the border, and between Dominicans and Haitians living in the Dominican Republic, is strong enough to permit cordial and collegial interactions in serious development activities. The image of two hostile populations who cannot interact with each other is a media-generated stereotype based on shoddy information and lack of prolonged contact with real life interactions that occur on the border.

The following pages contain an analysis of what was originally the second of the two assigned topics: conflicts in the border area. The first topic focused on perceptions and attitudes. The current report, dealing more with behaviors, was commissioned to deal with specific domains of conflict that occur between Haitians and Dominicans in the border areas. As so often happens, the initial research question – Haitian / Dominican conflicts – was found to be an inadequate template to capture local realities for three reasons:

- (1) The relations between Dominicans and Haitians in most communities visited were characterized as much by harmony as by conflict. There are tensions in any human community, particularly when there are internal ethnic and linguistic differences. To focus exclusively on conflicts, however, would simply reinforce caricatures and strengthen stereotypes about Haitian / Dominican hostility. Domains of cordial interaction were also made a topic of research probing.
- (2) Not all conflicts observed were between Dominicans and Haitians. Some of the major tensions observed were between members of both populations and their respective governments. The internal conflicts within each country often outweighed the binational conflicts. The concept of “conflict” was expanded to include tensions within each of the national groups.
- (3) The catastrophic earthquake has completely changed the realities on the ground, not only in Port-au-Prince but also in the border areas. The situation documented in the fieldwork of October and November of 2009 is not irrelevant “ancient history”; much is unchanged despite the earthquake. But the earthquake of January 2010 has so radically altered the trajectory of Haiti, and to a lesser degree that of the Dominican Republic, that a serious report has to shift focus and present the information in a new framework, one that addresses the question: where do we go from here?

The first point above is important: there is excessive focus on conflicts between Dominicans and Haitians. The selection of conflict as one of the major foci of the investigation was guided by a widespread perception, both national and international, that relations between the Dominican Republic and Haiti are characterized principally by antagonism and hostility. Despite strong empirical evidence to the contrary, the evidence is often filtered out in favor of stereotypes concerning hostility. Among the indicators of harmony are a strong level of economic interdependence that exists between the two countries, patterns of intermarriage in the border area, informal adoption of Haitian children by Dominican parents, ready acceptance of Haitians in Dominican hospitals, and the presence of large numbers of undocumented Haitian children in Dominican primary schools. This perception of a situation of conflict, despite these domains of warm human interaction, is in part fostered by a series of human rights reports during past decades concerning the alleged systematic mistreatment of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic. Most Dominicans at all social and economic levels dispute this accusation, but the perception exists and the Dominican Republic as a nation has been in effect condemned in the tribunal of international opinion in the world of human rights advocacy.

As will be seen in the current pages, preliminary anthropological observations and interviews on these matters have yielded a portrait that indeed differs from a simplistic victim-villain caricature. The complex relations between Haitians and Dominicans in the border areas which I have visited are characterized more by mutual utilitarian adjustments and in many instances by sustained human interactions than by the aggression that emerges in media portraits, in many human rights reports, and even in many academic treatments of the subject. In this sense the assigned task of “documenting conflicts” runs the risk of prejudging the matter and of skewing findings toward an emphasis on negative elements in Dominican-Haitian relationships and of ignoring those multiple positive zones of interaction that do not contribute to the task of “documenting conflict”.

To protect against such misrepresentation I have adopted a broad definition of conflict that includes not only explosions of verbal or physical violence but that also includes other types of tensions and disagreements that occur in any human community. And I have sought to document such tensions as they occur not only among Dominicans and Haitians but also within each of these groups. The interaction between two economically unequal populations endowed different cultures and speaking different languages does indeed give rise to special cross-cultural and cross-linguistic dynamics that merit documentation. But problems and conflicts between the two groups are best viewed in the broader context of the interpersonal and inter-group tensions and adjustments that occur within any human society.

I will organize the presentation by content domain, beginning with the recently instituted “binational markets” which are paradoxically and simultaneously a vital source of income for members of both groups as well as an arena of binational conflict.

## The “Binational markets”

### *Background*

The misnamed “binational markets”, which would more appropriately be named Dominican border markets, are held each Monday and Friday in Dajabón, Elias Piña<sup>1</sup>, and Pedernales. Haitians are allowed to cross into the Dominican towns to purchase and sell without passport or visa requirements, a situation that has not diminished, but has rather intensified, in the post-earthquake weeks. These biweekly market exchanges are a major source of livelihood for Haitians as well as Dominicans. They are a source of wealth, an institution valued as essential by virtually every Dominican and Haitian interviewed in the course of this study. At the same time, given their current structure and mode of function, they emerged in this research as a major source of tension and conflict. This analysis will therefore begin with a discussion of border market issues.

They border markets as they currently function are of relatively recent origin. With the death of Trujillo in 1961 the strict closure of the border was relaxed. With the fall of Duvalier in 1986 the movement of Haitians and Dominicans across the border increased. Part of the movement consisted of Dominicans entering Haitian border towns to purchase various goods, and a parallel movement of Haitians crossing over to buy and sell in Dominican border towns. I have interviews of Dominicans who established and actually lived in the Haitian border towns when the movement was literally bi-directional.

The bi-directional flow ceased and assumed its current uni-directional mode, in which Haitians cross into the Dominican Republic not only to purchase but also to sell, in the 1990’s. The shift was described to me in part as a result of the political chaos in Haiti and the lack of a state presence in the Haitian border area, which generated a situation of insecurity which made Dominicans reluctant to cross into Haiti. Others view it as well as part of a Dominican governmental strategy to take advantage of the international embargo that was imposed on Haiti and to open up trade circuits by allowing Haitians buyers and sellers to cross freely into Dominican territory. Whatever the multiple causes, the current situation is one of bi-weekly Dominican-controlled markets.

The three major markets are in Dajabón, Elias Piña, and Pedernales. Only in Pedernales do the activities take place in a modern market place instead of in urban streets closed off to vehicular traffic. In addition to these three major markets, other biweekly markets in Dominican territory have also emerged, particularly along the northern border. The markets in Loma de Cabrera and Tiroli are examples. These markets are held on other days of the week so as not to conflict with the major markets of Monday and Friday.

The following paragraphs will list a number of problems and conflict scenarios that emerged in the markets in the course of this study. But it is important to emphasize that in no way is it desirable to eliminate these markets. This biweekly commercial exchange has now become an essential element, an

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<sup>1</sup> Many years ago, the name of the Dominican border town was changed from Elias Piña to Comendador. However all Haitians and most Dominicans refer to the town by its old name. Therefore the name “Elias Piña” will be used in the report to refer to the border town.

economic mainstay, in the lives of tens of thousands of Haitians and Dominicans. If changes are to be made, they should take the form of restructuring, not eliminating, the markets.

### ***Extralegal nature of markets.***

The markets have no legal basis. They arose spontaneously, with no organized planning, in the course of Haitian and Dominican political events. There are no Dominican legal stipulations that justify the existence of the markets. Since they are not explicitly forbidden by law, and since both civilian and military authorities actively participate in the markets, it would be a stretch of the term to call them “illegal”. They operate rather outside of the law.

### ***Difficulty of regulation.***

If there were legislation governing the markets, their dysfunctional elements -- including several blatantly abusive practices – could be challenged and addressed. The fundamental informality of the markets, however, and the absence of formal legal regulation, has opened the door to special interests who have succeeded in imposing their own “regulations” that would be challenged as predatory and/or abusive in a legally regulated system. In the current extralegal situation, the victims of third-party predation and abuse have no legal recourse.

If the international community, in its focused attention on the reconstruction of post-earthquake Haiti, were to grasp the economic potential of the binational markets and make them a specific object of developmental attention, the Dominican government could be moved to create a legal framework for the operation of the border markets. Without such a framework, there is no legal basis for taking the necessary steps that would be required to eliminate some dysfunctional characteristics of the markets as they currently function. If the strengthening of cross border trade is to become an element in post-earthquake reconstruction, steps must be taken to bring these important biweekly markets into a legal framework that makes possible the rectification of some of their problematic elements.

### ***Arbitrary fees on the Dominican side***

Though Haitian vendors who cross the border with small amounts of produce were not, during my observations, stopped and charged customs duties on the produce which they brought into the Dominican Republic, those with larger amounts of merchandise pay customs duties. The amount reportedly changes from day to day. If they fail to sell their merchandise they may have to pay export duties when they take it back across the border and once again pay import duties again on the same merchandise if they bring it back into the Dominican Republic on the next market day. As pointed out above, recommendations for the clarification and regularization of customs duties are more in the nature of an empty ritual given the extralegal character of the entire cross-border market system.

The economic dynamism engendered by these markets could be an important element in the economic reconstruction of Haiti, particularly if the abuses (to be described) can be dealt with by both States. But the internal organization and unwritten “procedural rules” followed by government officials makes it difficult, if not impossible, even for the Dominican government, to intervene. Despite its tendency to centralization, it would be incorrect to view the Dominican government as a monolithic powerful entity that can impose its will on the behavior of Dominican citizens.



The Dominican government is paradoxically quite capable of enforcing laws on the citizenry – logging prohibitions, tax collection, and others. (Its coercive power is limited, however. For example it cannot force citizens in the poorer urban neighborhoods to pay for electricity without triggering off riots and being eventually toppled.) But there are important domains in which the government can effectively control the behavior of citizens. *It is not generally capable, however, of controlling the behavior of officials in its own State apparatus.*

This is particularly true of the behavior of the military. It is well known that Dominican military personnel on the border play a major role, and collect substantial income, in admitting undocumented Haitians into the country for a fee. Military personnel further inland also mount checkpoints which function as virtual extralegal toll booths. Among the major toll payers are undocumented Haitians, who if caught on public transportation are dismounted and made to pay a fee as a condition of proceeding. (Dominican merchants carrying merchandise to border markets are also shaken down.) If one imagines that a presidential order could stop this practice, one is in error. A major element in the strategy of political survival at the highest levels of the government is the practice of looking the other way in matters of illegal behavior on the part of military or other government officials.

In terms of the binational markets, this situation of de-facto institutional autonomy of different sectors of the government would make it difficult even for the President of the country to suppress the practice of arbitrary tax exactions by military or civilian officials at the border.

### ***Privatization of the Elias Piña market.***

The standard national practice throughout the Dominican Republic is for the local municipality to manage any local public market and to collect market fees on sellers who use space in the market. Theoretically the proceeds from these market taxes are used not only to maintain and clean the market but also to improve other municipal structures and services. In Elias Piña, however, the municipality has in effect privatized the market. There is a periodic auction (some said it was annual, others said it was every six months) in which local businessmen compete to “buy” the market for a determined period of time. They pay the municipality a flat fee every month (a knowledgeable source told me that the fee was RD\$200,000 per month). They then treat the market as a private business and extract as much profit as they can during the months in which they control the market.

The major vehicle of private profit for the investor is the imposition of extractive market fees. As a comparative handle, in Pedernales market vendors, both Dominican and Haitian, pay a standard rate of 10 pesos per market day for each market stall, independently of type or amount of merchandise on sale in the stall. In the street market of Dajabón, vendors, whether Dominican or Haitian, are charged (I was told) RD\$20 pesos per square meter of space occupied. In Elias Piña, a Dominican vendor is charged about RD\$50 for a market space. By any standards these are reasonable market tax rates. In contrast I heard from several sources independently, and subsequently verified by direct observation, that Haitian vendors in the Elias Piña market are often forced by the privatized tax collectors to pay RD\$1,000 pesos each market day for their place in the market. This is 20 times more than a Dominican is charged for the same space and 100 times more than the Pedernales municipality charges for its market stalls

What most enraged the Belladere women interviewed on this matter was the arbitrary character of the procedure. The tax collectors demand different fees from different Haitians selling in adjacent spaces of the same size on the street. A Haitian who is known to be an activist, or who is well known to the collector, may be charged less. One Haitian female activist told me that the collectors sent by the market “owner” make her pay only RD\$200 pesos for her place – a price that is still 20 times more than she would pay in Pedernales. The woman sitting next to her occupying the same amount of space can be charged RD\$1,000.

The collection of fees begins around 9:30 or 10:00 A.M. in the market. The tax collectors, large men with intimidating demeanor and rude tones of voice, are accompanied by three other men, at least two of them holding sacks and one with his hands free to confiscate merchandise. The gang goes from woman to woman, as the collector demands payment in an intimidating tone of voice. Haitian women who protest or who are not yet able to pay the fee demanded have a portion of their merchandise immediately confiscated. I observed the confiscation process. An arbitrary and uncounted number of shirts, pants, shoes, vegetables, or other merchandise, are grabbed and stuffed into sacks.

A woman whose sales eventually permit her to pay the required fee can theoretically recuperate her confiscated merchandise. This rarely occurs. No receipts are given during the confiscation. The merchandise of different vendors is indiscriminately stuffed into the same sack. If merchandise is returned to a woman who eventually pays, it is (I was told by several people independently) virtually never the same merchandise that was confiscated. The woman receives either less merchandise than was confiscated or merchandise of inferior quality.

The collection and confiscation process in the Elias Piña market is characterized always by verbal violence and occasionally by physical beatings. It contrasts radically with the peaceful and friendly interactions between Dominican buyers and sellers in the same market.

The violent and abusive scenes are vulnerable to misinterpretation as an example of “Dominican Haitian conflict”. The fact of the matter is that Haitian buyers and sellers interact cordially, courteously, and even jokingly with each other in all three markets observed, including the Elias Piña market.

Six Dominican market vendors whom we interviewed on the matter were fully aware of the discriminatory taxation that targeted Haitians. They were unanimous in their expression of outrage. None of them entered into an anti-Haitian diatribe. On the contrary, I have recorded some eloquent expressions of support by ordinary Dominicans of Elias Piña for Haitians in the marketplace.

At any rate the pattern is clear: the Elias Piña municipality, by privatizing the market, has given an effective license to the renter to extract a profit from the arrangement via exorbitant market fees. Dominicans could not be charged these fees without massive protest and negative political consequences for the mayor. The profit is therefore extracted from Haitians, 90% of them being female.

### ***Predation-generated reduction in the volume of trade***

The above mentioned predatory practices, which enrich those in a position to implement them, not only reduce the income of those Dominicans and Haitians who are directly victimized. They also reduce to a

fraction the volume of trade that would otherwise occur. My interviews are filled with statements by Haitians that they no longer trade in the Dominican border markets because of the economic losses which predatory practices have caused them and / or because of the personal humiliation which they have felt at the treatment which they and other Haitians receive at the border crossing or in the markets themselves. Though the majority of traders in the markets are Haitians, many more would trade if abuses were eliminated.

The extralegal extractive practices of authorities also reduce the volume of Dominican trade. The hotels in Dajabón attribute their current reduction in the volume of Dominican clientele to the string of military collection points between Dajabón and Santiago which target and extract fees from Dominican vendors on the way to the market and to the exclusionary practices of well connected local businessmen who limit the flow of agrarian produce into Dajabón on market days.

In short, both Haitians and Dominicans are being negatively affected by predatory extraction and by barriers to trade. If the extraction ceases and the barriers to trade removed, the volume of trade in the border markets would almost certainly increase.

### ***Complaints about the absence of markets on the Haitian side of the border.***

Haitians from Anse-a-Pitre to Dajabón were virtually unanimous in their desire to have counterpart markets on Haitian territory. They strongly appreciate the existence of these binational markets, but they are furious at the treatment that they receive at the hands of Dominican customs officials and military. (When lashing out eloquently against this treatment during our interviews, the complaints were generalized to all Dominicans – *panyol konn maltrete nou*, “Dominicans mistreat us.” Though there are cordial relations between Haitians and ordinary Dominicans, and though Haitian women are received in Dominican hospitals and Haitian children educated for free in Dominican primary schools, in common Haitian discourse the abusive behavior of soldiers and other State authorities is generalized to all *panyol*, to all Dominicans. )

The mistreatment to which Haitians are subject by Dominican authorities affects Haitian sellers more strongly than Haitian buyers. Those who have to bring merchandise across the border for sale to Dominicans have a much harder time than those who simply go to buy from Dominicans. Haitians therefore are willing to continue going to the Dominican side of the border to purchase, though they have to pay export taxes on commodities that exceed a certain volume. (The commodities change, as does the volume cutoff point.) But it is the sellers whose merchandise is more subject to abuse. Haitians from Anse-a-Pitre to Belladere to Ouanaminthe were unanimous in their cry to have Haitian markets on the Haitian side of the border. But they no longer want to bring merchandise across the border to sell. With astounding (and credible) regularity, Haitians in all border towns complained that their merchandise is arbitrarily taxed and re-taxed, confiscated, and stolen. For this reason many Haitians have ceased selling in the Dominican Republic. Others, more desperate for income, continue to take what they sense to be a constant risk. The most frequently proposed alternative option is

- A market would be established on each side of the border.
- One day of the week would be for the Haitian market, the other for the Dominican.

- Citizens of each country would sell in the market on their side of the border.
- Citizens of each country would cross over only to buy from the other side, not to sell there.
- The Haitian side would be governed by Haitian authorities, the Dominican side by Dominican authorities.

I will discuss the pro's and con's of these propositions in the concluding paragraphs of the paper, which discuss next steps. There is one final observation that must be made. In conversations on the binational market, there is a menacing "gorilla in the corner" that nobody in the room wants to talk about, because it is beyond anyone's capacity to deal with. It's easier to talk about cleaning the window or putting a wedge under the table to keep it from rocking. The unilateral location of the so-called "binational markets" is indeed a problem. But the fundamental problem, the gorilla in the room, is the paucity of agrarian production on the Haitian side of the border. Dominicans come to these binational markets to sell what they produce – industrial goods like cement and iron bars and agro-industrial products and plantains and other vegetables produced in different parts of the Dominican Republic. A majority of Haitians in the markets, in contrast, were observed to be selling goods like used clothes, shoes, cosmetics, etc. that were imported into Haiti and purchased for re-sale in the Dominican Republic. The absence of agrarian and industrial production on the Haitian side is a sabotaging factor that could reduce market-improvement projects to the status of ritual development behaviors that avoid the real problem. The maladaptive features of the markets must indeed be critically examined. However, attempts to improve the markets must be embedded in strategies that deal with the fundamental question, that of agricultural and industrial production. This will be discussed in the concluding paragraphs of the report.

### ***Summary of the complaints of the Haitian population concerning Dominican border markets.***

We can sum up the complaints of the Haitian population under the following rubrics.

- Arbitrary customs and military fees
- Abusively high taxes for places in the market, in the case of Belladère.
- Confiscation and subsequent thievery of Haitian merchandise.
- Verbal and physical abuse on the part of soldiers, customs authorities, and (particularly) tax collectors hired by the "owner" of the market
- Default by Dominicans who take Haitian merchandise on credit, and inability of Haitians to get Dominican authorities to act on their behalf against a Dominican who has defaulted on payment.

## **The fishing economy of Pedernales / Anse-a-Pitre**

### ***The dwindling of pre-colonial fishing traditions.***

Despite their location in the Caribbean Sea, fishing plays a relatively minor role in the overall economy of the Dominican Republic and Haiti today. This entails a departure from pre-colonial times, when most of the protein of the aboriginal population came from maritime species, including both fish and sea

mammals. Lacking the mammalian livestock that had been domesticated in the Old World and that would be introduced by the Spaniards, the pre-colonial population depended heavily on the sea for much of the protein in their diet.

With the virtual extinction of the aboriginal population on Hispaniola and other islands of the Greater Antilles, the culture of fishing dwindled. Spanish protein needs were met through the livestock that they brought with them. The conquistadores had little interest in agriculture, even less in fishing. The African slaves that eventually replaced the indigenous population were largely from inland parts of Africa; the coastal dwellers who would have had fishing traditions were slave captors for the Europeans, rarely enslaved themselves.

Few slaves, in short, brought with them fishing traditions. Paradoxically fish would be an important element in the slave diet, but it was salted codfish, purchased and imported from northern countries. It was a cheaper source of protein than the allocation of land for livestock raising. The slaves on the Spanish colony on the eastern side of the island were assigned largely to the livestock economy of the Spaniards. Livestock became culturally more important than fish. And even the slaves on the western side of the island, in the French colony of Saint Domingue, maintained a cultural familiarity with livestock raising, as an adjunct to the provision plot gardens which they were permitted to grow for their own feeding. With perhaps rare exceptions, fishing skills were neither valued nor cultivated in the economic repertoire of the slaves of Hispaniola.

The colonial economy, in short, lacked the emphasis on fishing that under other circumstances one might have expected in an island archipelago and this lack of emphasis continues to today.

### ***Importance of the fishing economy for Pedernales / Anse-a-Pitre***

The historical sequence of events is unclear, but in certain parts of the island coastal populations on both sides of the border began engaging in fishing. The community of Pedernales, in the far southwest of the Dominican Republic, and Anse-a-Pitre, in the far southeast of Haiti, are two such communities. During focus group interviews on both sides of the border, I was told that a heavy percentage of households in both places are somehow linked to the fishing economy. But in one respect these fishing communities differ fundamentally from all other fishing communities on the island. They are the only communities in which Dominican fishermen come in close contact with Haitian fishermen living in Haiti. In other parts of the coastal Dominican Republic, Haitians may be hired as employees by Dominican fishermen. But in the Pedernales / Anse-a-Pitre area, independent fishermen from both countries meet at sea. To put it mildly, the encounters have not always been friendly.

Part – but only part – of the tensions focus on territorial issues. The land boundaries between the Dominican Republic and Haiti stabilized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The sea boundaries are less clear, and definitely less respected. But the conflicts center more heavily on the issue of different fishing technologies. In the evolution of fishing technologies several different systems have appeared in the Pedernales area. Littoral net fishing is the earliest: the fishers go out in wooden boats propelled by oars or sails or motors of 15 hp, and cast nets not far from the shore. More sophisticated, more dangerous, and requiring more skill is the diving technology that yields lobster and other sea-bed species.

The most expensive technology currently present in the region, however, is the technology of the *balsa*, or the FAD (Fish Attraction Device) in the technical literature. These are raft-like devices that are placed in deeper sea waters after a ride of several hours from shore in a fiberglass boat powered by a 45 hp engine. It is this device that epitomizes the Dominican saying that “el pez grande se come el chiquito.” (Big fish eat little fish.) Tiny fish are used as bait. They are pursued by medium size fish, which when caught, are then used as bait for the deep sea tuna and other pelagic species whose capture presupposes this more expensive technology.

Technological issues, rather than purely competitive territorial issues, enflame tensions between Dominican and Haitian fishers. The Haitians lack the resources – fiberglass boats, 45 hp engines, GPS devices for locating the FADs – to engage in deep sea fishing. Their fishing technology continues to be based on nets and on wicker fish traps placed close to the shore. Having depleted the littoral resources of the Haitian side of the border, they long ago began casting their nets in Dominican waters. Dominicans in their turn freely set their deep-sea FADs in Haitian waters.

The Dominican FADS are generally beyond the reach of Haitian fishers. But not so the nets and fish traps of Haitians who fish on the Dominican side. The principal Dominican complaint is not that the Haitians are competing with them for fish in their territory, but that the Haitian fishing technology kills all the smaller fish which Dominicans may use for bait. Direct confrontations have occasionally taken place; in the 1990's there were killings of some Haitian fishers by Dominicans. (The killings long ago ceased, but Haitians interviewed on the matter did not say *gen pagnol ki te touye ayisyen nan bato yo* – some Dominicans killed Haitians in their boats – but rather *panyol konn touye nou* (Dominicans kill us). It is not only Haitians who cherish memories of bygone abuses. Dominicans interviewed still described for me with rage the manner in which Dominicans were killed by Haitians in the occupation of 1822, as though it had happened yesterday.

During the period in which interviews were held for this report, physical confrontations between Haitian and Dominican fishermen were a thing of the past. Part of the cessation of physical hostilities can be attributed to the creation of the first public dialog between Dominican and Haitian fishermen organized by the Pan American Development Foundation. A Dominican fishing association met with a parallel Haitian association from the other side of the border. The dialog did not result in any permanent linkage between the two groups, nor did it erase Haitian memories of the killings, but physical aggression is now a thing of the past although other types of aggression, such as the destruction by Dominicans of Haitian nets left stretched in Dominican waters still occurs. Tensions continue to exist. Pedernales fishermen interviewed stated that Haitians continue to capture undersized fish in Dominican waters. Haitians hotly denied the claim during my interviews in Anse-a-Pitre.

### ***Dilemmas of the fishing economy***

Though a superficial glance at dozens of boats making their way to sea in the wee hours of the morning could give the impression of a sector consisting of independent fishermen, in reality the sector is controlled by a small number of highly capitalized actors who own most of the boat and who determine the price to be paid for the fish.

The main dilemma is not conflicts with their cross-border neighbors. The main dilemma for both is the absence of capital in most households and consequent dependence of most fishermen on the use of boats owned by others. In a typical arrangement when the crew returns the boat owner first subtracts the fuel cost. The remainder of the catch is then split among the crew, who must, however, sell it to the boat owner, who sets the price. Boat owners in Pedernales also have built the cold storage rooms which are absolutely essential to preserving fish and getting higher prices for the meat.

Can project interventions succeed in modifying this situation? Not without capital, and perhaps not even with capital. With the help of well-informed fishermen eager to establish themselves as independent fishers, I was able to calculate that the capital required for a fiberglass boat, a 45 hp engine, and a deep sea FAD would be about U.S. \$6,000. This is a level of capitalization that far surpasses ordinary local capacity. And national institutions financing microenterprises generally make much smaller first time loans, and require for these loans collateral which the ordinary fishing household simply does not have.

Quite apart from collateral considerations, Pedernales fishers may run into an additional cultural barrier with knowledgeable local lending institutions. There is a public image of the Pedernales fisherman that stereotypes him as a heavy drinking free spirit with an unconventional lifestyle – hardly the image to inspire confidence in lenders.

On the Haitian side of the border a similar situation applies insofar as dependency on a small number of more heavily capitalized actors. The level of capitalization of the boat owners is much lower in Anse-a-Pitre than in Pedernales, but the dependence of most fishermen on the equipment of others appears to hold there as well. One does not get the impression in Anse-a-Pitre that the fishing sector is stereotyped as having maverick lifestyles. But capital is even less available in Anse-a-Pitre than in Pedernales. And the absence of electricity and of fuel makes the Haitian fishing sector entirely dependent on purchases of fuel and ice from Pedernales. For all the economic dilemmas of the Pedernales fishing sector, it is in much more advanced state than its Anse-a-Pitre counterpart.

### ***The conflict generating dimensions of current fishing projects.***

Discussions of conflict in the Pedernales / Anse-a-Pitre fishing sector focus on the above-mentioned tensions between Dominican and Haitian fishers. Though very real, the eventual development of the fishing sector in both countries will be hindered more by internal tensions within each group. There are developmentally problematic organizational factors within each group which limit the income-generating potential of participation in the fishing sector.

The few projects that were observed to have attempted in the fishing sector of Pedernales / Anse-a-Pitre have chosen structurally questionable routes that will engender conflicts, not between Dominicans and Haitians, but between different groups within each of the two societies. It is interesting to contrast the challenge of fishing development with that of agrarian development, as illustrated by the coffee cooperative, Las Tres Hermanas, in Pedernales. In the coffee cooperative each member owns his own private land. Joint action within the cooperative consists principally in the facilitation of loans to farmers who own their own land, and to the collective marketing of the coffee that is produced on these lands.

The structural basis of the fishing sector is different and more conflict-generating. In the first place individual actors do not own – i.e. do not have exclusive rights – to specific sectors of the ocean. This of course is true of fishing economies around the world. Whereas in some countries, access to specific stretches of the sea is limited by community regulatory mechanisms to members of the local community, no such effective mechanisms to limit access exist in the Pedernales / Anse-a-Pitre fishing communities. The territorial barriers are so weak that Haitians regularly set their nets in Dominican waters, and Dominicans set their deep sea FADs in Haitian waters.

Much more serious for development purposes, however, is the above-mentioned dilemma of concentration of ownership of fishing equipment. As pointed out, we are not dealing with independent owner-operators, as is the case in the coffee cooperative. Most fishermen on both sides of the border, dependent on the boats of others, are the equivalent of landless farmers who sharecrop the land of others. Development projects are rarely, if ever, carried out among sharecroppers. The concentration of equipment ownership – boats, FADs, cold rooms –and the consequent power which the owners exert over access and market prices -- would be considered a problem, not a point of departure, for most development planners.

We observed two attempts to break this and to endow ordinary fishers with access to expensive equipment beyond their ordinary reach. These attempts however were based on questionable collectivized ownership arrangements of the core productive property, in this case the boats. Boats were given as a gift to fishing associations.

In the case of Anse-a-Pitre, the Pan American Development Foundation gave a fiberglass boat to the then-existent Haitian fishing association. The logic behind this free gift of collective property was to strengthen the association. But in local tradition boats are not collectively owned, any more than plots of farming land. The local agrarian economy on both sides of the border is based on private ownership of land. When development projects imposed collectivized arrangements on land redistribution, for example, beneficiaries quickly convert the collectivized holding into privatized individual plots. In the case of a collectively owned boat, however, it is not possible to subdivide the boat in the same way that land can be subdivided. The leaders of the association, according to several people interviewed, simply turned the collective property into de facto private property under their control. The fishing association quickly dissolved in the wake of this turn of events. Many factors can, of course, lead to the dissolution of an association. The internal conflict generated by this privatization of the boat was clearly one of the factors contributing to the dissolution of the association. The boat is still visible on the beach, used by its de facto owners. The association that presumably owns the boat is defunct, though it may still be described by the leadership as vibrantly functioning to outside visitors.

On the Dominican side of the border a similar arrangement is being planned. At the time of the research, the fishing organization in Pedernales was awaiting the finalization of a donation from Italy of a deep sea fishing boat. With the current FAD technology, fiberglass boats with 45 hp engines have to travel several hours offshore and return every night with the catch. These daily journeys are expensive in time and fuel. With the large fishing boat, crews of 15 men will be able to spend a week or more on the open sea before coming to shore.



This forthcoming gift, however, can produce dysfunctional results similar to those that occurred with the smaller gift on the other side of the border. Not only is the boat an expensive gift. It is furthermore conceptualized as “common property” gifted to an association with no track record in the collective management of income-generating property. The association leadership described to me their plans for a rotating utilization of the boat. One congratulates the association on the pending acquisition and one wishes them success in the new endeavor. But given the rarity of collectively owned and managed income-generating property in the entire Caribbean, this assumption of conflict-free transition to a collectively managed boat triggers off alarms.

### **The agrarian economy: Developmental priority in both countries**

The earthquake was caused by plate tectonics. But its catastrophic human consequences are a result, not only of the frequently mentioned faulty house construction, but also of the agrarian crisis that drove several million Haitians into the slums in and around Port au Prince. The absence of support for Haiti’s agrarian economy has also driven people to the neighboring Dominican Republic. Haitians interviewed in the Dominican Republic were consistent in expressing their preference to return to Haiti if they were able to practice farming in their home communities. Many Haitians in the immediate border region time their visits into the Dominican Republic to permit them to obtain capital for the next farming season back home.

A parallel agrarian crisis has driven Dominican farmers from the border regions into the cities and into the search for alternative employment. Unlike the Haitians, however, who emigrate to raise capital for farming, the Dominican emigrants from the border area have in effect abandoned agriculture.

The influx of Haitians into Dominican border communities has generated a mixture of harmonious human relations as well as intergroup tensions. Pre-earthquake Dominican media accounts tended to emphasize the tensions; my interviews on the ground found more instances of harmonious interactions.

But in either case the major developmental problem is not that of intergroup conflict. The core issue centers on neglected agrarian systems that cause members of both groups to abandon their communities in search of income not available at home. In both countries, urban-focused public sectors have neglected the rural areas. More specifically they have failed to provide the irrigation and agrarian credit systems that would have permitted farmers in both groups to make a decent income in their home communities. On the Dominican side of the border both types of system (irrigation and credit) once existed but have been allowed to decline. On most of the Haitian side they never existed. With the funding to be made available in the post-earthquake world, the possibility exists for a serious initiative for the creation of viable agrarian systems. These issues will guide the discussion of agrarian relations and agrarian tensions to be covered in this section.

#### ***Haitian land tenure: an overview.***

Haitian land tenure stands out from the typical Latin American country in at least two senses. On the positive side the percentage of landless people in Haitian villages is probably smaller than that of any

other country in Latin America or the Caribbean. Most households have access to at least some cropping land.

There is an international image of Haiti as a country with non-viably small holdings and insecure holdings. Both images are questionable. In terms of tenure, Haitians are paradoxically secure in their land tenure, even though they lack formal deeds for each of their plots. The land tenure system prevailing in the border area is a variant of the locally evolved land tenure system that prevails throughout rural Haiti. All children, male and female, inherit land and subdivide plots among siblings in the presence of community witnesses, but without subsequent formal surveying and deeding of each plot. When a woman enters a conjugal union, she retains ownership of the plots she inherited, except in cases of legal marriage, which are still the exception. Children of informal unions thus inherit separately from both mother and father.

The separation is done in the presence of community witnesses. Such inherited plots are securely held even without deeds. Ownership rights are viewed as so secure that local people buy and sell plots from each other with great regularity. Nobody would lay out money for a plot whose tenure they deemed insecure.

These observations are important for post-earthquake developmental planning, not only in the border area, but throughout Haiti. Transient outside consultants in Haiti -- misinformed perhaps by government officials who themselves may be unaware of rural Haitian land tenure practices -- often state that no rural development is possible with the current land tenure system, that a land reform must first be instituted that surveys every plot and covers it with a separate legal deed. A member of a World Bank post-earthquake needs assessment team told me that he had heard some officials talking about the urgent need for a "land reform". There is indeed need for a reform of developmental planning procedures, but not for the surveying and deeding of every single plot in rural Haiti. This is economically impossible given the millions of unsurveyed plots and the cost that would be incurred in surveying and titling each one of them. It is also unnecessary for development purposes. I personally managed a tree planting project in which tens of thousands of farmers willingly planted fast growing wood trees on their inherited and purchased plots, none of them having individualized legal deeds. Farmers would not plant trees on insecurely held rented or sharecropped plots, but they did plant their own trees on the inherited and purchased plots covered by local land tenure rules.

Are there no conflicts? There are no conflicts between Dominicans and Haitians, of course, on land on the Haitian side of the border. But there are occasional conflicts among Haitians themselves. The majority of conflicts, however, are among kin, not between local farmers and outsiders. These disputes occur at the time of subdivision. They would, however, occur even if there was a formalized land tenure system based on surveys and legal deeds.

In short, the population of rural Haiti has devised its own land tenure system. Reluctance of many farmers to participate in certain development projects is generally due, not to a defective land tenure system, but rather to defects in the project planning process.

Others raise the more legitimate question about holding size. It is often said that the average Haitian holding is too small to support viable agriculture. This also is not correct. As far as size, the average plot may be only third of a hectare. But because of the fragmented nature of the inheritance subdivision process, the average holding has several plots. The average holding size in Haiti is probably between 1 and 1.5 hectares, depending on the region.

Most Haitians have access to some land of their own. But some have more land than others. Within this average, there are land differentials in Haiti. A person with 25 acres (or 10 hectares) of irrigated land would be viewed as wealthy. A holding of 3 to 6 acres of irrigated land would be considered viable. A person with less than an acre of land would be seen as poor. The typical household has access to at least some land of its own. Total landlessness, is rare in Haiti.

### ***Core needs: irrigation and credit***

Despite the objectively small average landholding size, land scarcity was rarely mentioned as an issue in my interviews with Haitian farmers. The farmers near Ouanaminthe are particularly insistent that despite small holdings their land is excellent. It simply lacks irrigation and they would lack the resources to put it into production even if there were irrigation. If a person had water, 3 acres of land would make him a wealthy man in local calculations – much better off than a person with 30 acres of dry land. Even in a dry area such as Thomazeau, in the Cul de Sac Plain, visited in the course of this study, people insist that their land is of high quality. Their main problem is a lack of irrigation. One farmer stated it well.

Se pa valè tè youn moun genyen pou di li alez. Mem si youn moun ta gen 20 karo tè, si li pa jwenn dlo pou awoze tè yo poul fe yo pwodwi, li pap alèz. Aloske mem si youn moun gen youn sel karo tè, depi l jwenn dlo lap alez.

It's not the amount of land someone has that makes you call him well off. Even if some had 20 carreaux of land [about 64 acres, which would be a gigantic holding in Haiti], if he can't get any water to irrigate the plots to make them produce, he won't be well off. Whereas even if a person has only one carreau of land, if he can get water, he'll be well off.

The border area of the Dominican Republic once had functioning irrigation and credit systems, created as part of earlier governmental attempts to “dominicanize” the border area. Subsequent governmental neglect of the area led to the disappearance of both irrigation and credit systems. The exodus of Dominican farmers has led to the current haitianization of the border area.

It is interesting to note that Dominicans in the border area mention both water and credit as the core needs. They had both in the past. Most have neither now. Haitians are more likely to talk about water. The rains give at least some water, enough in some regions to plant. But most Haitians have simply never had access to governmentally or privately mediated productive credit.

In terms of post-earthquake developmental planning in the agrarian sector, the immediate need, still pending as of this writing (early March 2010), is for an urgent infusion of seeds for the coming planting season. But in terms of long term planning and investment in agricultural development, it is not a dramatization to insist that an aggressive international promotion and financing of irrigation and credit

systems constitutes the only hope for the creation of a viable agricultural system, not only in the border areas, but throughout Haiti. Emphasis is on the word *international* here. As will be discussed later in the report, the obligatory involvement of the Haitian government has to be done in a manner that respects the dignity of the Haitian State but simultaneously protects externally donated resources from ingrained systemic habits of predatory extraction of donor resources.

In the following sections I will deal with domains of conflict – conflicts between Haitians and Dominicans in agrarian issues, and conflicts within each of the two groups, particularly between Dominican farmers and their own government. But this must be prefaced with the strong warning that the frequently mentioned antagonisms between Dominicans and Haitians do not constitute the major barrier to development in the border area. With an aggressive internationally financed attack on bolstering agrarian systems on both sides of the border with irrigation and credit systems, the region could become a pole of development, given the simultaneous presence of a vigorous system of cross border market exchange.

### ***Haitian land access on the Dominican side of the border.***

As will be discussed in more detail below, there are now Haitians farming on the Dominican side of the border. But in every instance which we encountered they are working on land temporarily ceded to them by the Dominican landowners for whom they perform wage labor or whose land they otherwise care for. We queried local Dominicans repeatedly about whether there were Haitians invading land to grow their own crops. The answer was uniformly negative. There are many Haitians who now have gardens on the Dominican side of the border, but we were told repeatedly that the land was always ceded to them by Dominicans under one or another arrangement. The matter warrants further discussion below.

### ***Non-agrarian orientation of Dominicans who leave borderland villages***

Young Dominicans are increasingly inclined to abandon borderland villages to seek other employment opportunities. Among the most frequently mentioned options that surfaced during research were moving to nearby towns, enlisting in the Dominican army, and joining the ranks of that increasingly frequently mentioned alternative of motorbike taxis. I was initially surprised and skeptical concerning the frequency of the military enlistment option, but observations have borne out the claim. In fact the current military commander in Puerto Escondido is the son of a prominent local Puerto Escondido farmer.

### ***Haitian insertion via the patrón system***

A heavy percentage of the Dominicans of the border area have emigrated, either to towns in the Dominican Republic, to the capital city Santo Domingo, or to the United States. Those Dominicans who remain are now essentially dependent on Haitian laborers. As the Dominicans leave the Haitians arrive to occupy vacant economic niches. The insertion of Haitians is done extralegally, in the absence of the visas, permits, or other documents that would, in theory, be required for foreigners to enter the country. Nonetheless their initial insertion into the local agrarian economy was structured and orderly. The ideal process was described to me by local Dominicans in the idiom of the “patron”. Among the ideal steps are the following:

- Haitians come and work for a specific Dominican landowner.
- The landowner allocates space on the farm itself for the Haitians to build simple sleeping structures for themselves.
- The landowner allocates to his major Haitian assistant a plot of ground on which the Haitian can do his own farming. In most cases described to me it is a sharecropping arrangement; the Dominican landowner is entitled to a portion of the produce. The coffee growers of Las Tres Hermanas, in contrast, said that they leave the entire crop to their Haitian tenant laborer. (The alternative arrangements will be described below.)
- If the Dominican relocates to Pedernales or to Santo Domingo, he may even turn his house over a Haitian to use as his residence. (This has generated conflict in Mencia, to be described elsewhere in the report.)
- In the ideal arrangement, every single locally resident Haitian would have his own Dominican patron who assumes responsibility for his behavior. A Dominican patron is permitted, and even expected, to intervene with local authorities or local community members on behalf of his Haitian laborer.
- The guiding assumption and actual practice on the border, as described to me in several places, is for Dominican authorities to accept the presence of Haitians who regularly work for a Dominican patron, not to require papers, not to exact informal economic gifts for the privilege of crossing the border.

In this ideal model there are no conflicts between Dominican farmer and his Haitian laborers. Some of the Haitians live in shack like structures out on the fields. But those whose presence is more established may actually rent local houses. Residents of rural communities expressed no sense of discomfort with the presence of Haitians who come to do agrarian field labor and who work for a specific known Dominican patron. Even when such Haitians come to constitute a majority of the population there seems to belittle concern.

### ***The payment of agrarian wages***

Several distinct Haitian labor recruitment arrangements were encountered in the course of this study, each of them with their own special potential for tension and conflict.

- Wage labor (*pago por día*): payment of a daily rate.
- Task labor (*pago por ajuste*): payment by task.
- Sharecropping
- Concession of a cropping plot with no payment required from the tenant

The Haitian / Dominican wage labor arrangements can be formulated in at least two contradictory manners, depending on the ideological stance of the observer.

“Haitians take advantage of the wages available to them on Dominican farms, which are higher than they would receive in Haiti. “

“Dominicans exploit Haitians by paying them lower wages than they would pay to Dominicans for equivalent work.”

Both propositions are partially correct. And both are simultaneously flawed. In the immediate border area Haitians work for low daily wages (RD\$100— about US \$2.80 – plus a light breakfast and a heavier noontime meal that I found to be the going rate all over the southern border). It is true that no Dominican would tolerate this. However this rate, at which urban Dominicans winced in disbelief when I told them, is not only higher than the Haitians would be paid in Haiti. The wage labor is simply not available there at any price. The Haitians who do this work in the western border area are often individuals trying to raise capital for their own farming activities back in Haiti. In some communities they cross back into Haiti every day. In other places they return every two or three weeks. But in such areas the Dominican Republic is functioning as a simple extension to Haiti.

To be more specific, in the border areas of Puerto Escondido and Pedernales, the daily wage rate for Haitian field labor is RD\$100 per day (US\$2.85), plus breakfast and a midday meal. Works begins at 7am and ends at 3pm. Two agro-industrial companies in the Puerto Escondido area pay RD\$150 per day but give no meals. In the community of Los Arroyos I was told that Dominican farmers sometimes pay in Haitian Gourdes, and pay 75 Haitian gourds. That would be less than the rate of RD\$100 per day. Another farmer living in Pedernales told me that even the RD\$100 rate is a recent innovation. Some farmers used to pay only RD\$50 per day.

Dominicans who hire Haitians in other parts of the country were shocked when I reported this wage rate to them. One shook his head and called it abusive. Farmers in his region pay unskilled Haitian field laborers RD\$350 (US\$10) per day. (That level of payment was reported by residents of Constanza, Nagua, and San Francisco de Macoris.) In these other areas work schedules may vary. In one community they begin at 8am and work till 4pm. In Constanza no meals are given, or at most a juice to begin the day. In short, Haitian agrarian field laborers receive different wages in different parts of the country. In some parts the wages are comparable to what is paid to Dominicans.

There can be variations even in the same area. In Puerto Escondido area Haitians appear to prefer the RD\$100 per day with two meals as opposed to RD\$150 per day without meals. But everyone would prefer RD\$350 per day, with no meals, that is standard in other parts of the country. Though it would be considered pathetically low in the context of U.S. agrarian field labor, a daily income of US\$10 per day would be an extraordinarily high daily wage for field labor in rural Haiti.

In areas where the going wage rate is RD\$300 per day, it is indeed the case that Dominican field laborers and Haitian field laborers would be paid the same rate. Those who argue hotly that there is no difference between what they pay a Haitian and a Dominican are absolutely correct. Haitians in those areas are able to negotiate a higher daily rate because of the scarcity of Dominican field labor and the needs of farmers in the region for field labor. Haitians know what the going rate is and demand it as a condition of working.

On the other hand those living in areas where the going rate is RD\$100 per day are absolutely correct in saying that Haitians work for cheaper wages than Dominicans. This does not mean that the farmers are

paying Dominican field laborers RD\$350 and Haitian field laborers only RD\$100 for the same tasks. Dominicans in those areas have simply abandoned field labor. They would refuse to work for those wage rates.

If a hypothetical Haitian field laborer worked a regular six day week at RD\$300 per day, his monthly gross would be approximately RD\$8,000, or US\$230. I interviewed a customs agent in one of the border towns whose monthly salary is RD\$6,800. A Haitian field laborer earning RD\$300 per day could hypothetically have a higher monthly gross than the Dominican customs agent. In real life, of course, the Haitian field laborer might have trouble finding sustained work at that daily rate except during peak seasons. Furthermore the labor rhythms of many Haitians makes them reluctant to spend more than a month away from their homes in Haiti. And as for the customs agent, he probably has other ways of incrementing his modest income. But the case is that field labor in many regions of the Dominican Republic is an attractive economic option for young Haitians.

An unanswered question concerns the source of these regional wage differentials. Why do Haitians in the Puerto Escondido and Pedernales areas continue to live in an area whose farmers pay them only RD\$100 per day, whereas they could earn triple that in another part of the country? How does the daily RD\$150 wage rate paid by the two agro-industrial companies in Puerto Escondido compare with wage rates paid by agro-industrial companies in other parts of the country? If they are lower why do not more companies relocate to the border area? The preliminary findings on wage labor arrangements that have emerged in this study merit further exploration

### ***Conflicts around wage labor arrangements***

The generally harmonious socio-emotional tenor of relations that was observed between Dominican farmers and Haitian laborers is radically different from the anger that was heard by Haitians who go to the Elias Piña market (discussed above). In Elias Piña both Haitians and Dominicans benefit from the market, but there is a furious wave of protest from the Haitians who are not only verbally abused but economically punished and socially shamed by the gangs of market tax collectors who confiscate their goods. I found absolutely no evidence of such intergroup abuse or antagonism in the agrarian labor sector.

That having been said, some problems did surface in the arrangement.

I was told both by Haitians and Dominicans that not only individual Dominican farmers but also agro-industrial companies often are in arrears with respect to the payment of agreed-on wages. This creates a serious dilemma for the Haitian laborers in the Puerto Escondido area. They often live within a three or four hour walking distance of their home community. They want to collect their salary every two weeks and take it back home. If the employer delays a week or two, the worker must either sit around waiting for the wage or continue working. If he continues working, when the payment comes it may still be short of what the total is owed the worker.

Such payment delays are often derived from genuine cash-flow dilemmas on the part of undercapitalized local farmers. The typical Dominican farmer who hires Haitian laborers does so with every intent of paying them the agreed on amount. But he may simply lack the capital for immediate

payment. They may even warn the laborer that they cannot pay immediately. On the other hand, if the farmer does have the capital to pay immediately, such chronic payment delays may be used as a shady vehicle for forcing the laborer to stay on the farm. The worker will not depart for Haiti with wages pending. For the moment I can only report that such payment delays occur, without having precise case-study information on their cause or motivation.

Another conflict reported concerned the length of the work days. In the southern border area the work day has been established by custom. Workers are free to leave at 3pm sharp. Many Haitians will pull out pocket watches to verify the time. I was told of a Dominican farmer who insisted that his laborer take on an additional task after 3pm. The Haitian laborer refused to do the task without extra payment. The Dominican threatened not to pay him for the work that he had already done. The Haitian walked away and lost his salary rather than submit to the demand of the farmer. In such cases a Haitian laborer, even an undocumented laborer, might theoretically be able to challenge the farmer in a local court. But there is a widespread (if erroneous) sense among both Haitians and Dominicans that an undocumented illegal alien has no legal rights in the country and can be abused with impunity. At any rate it is certainly the situation that most undocumented Haitians will walk away from such a situation rather than challenge it with local Dominican authorities.

A sensitive payment issue arises when the employer uses a group recruitment strategy. A farmer may have a small number of Haitians with whom he has established personal ties and close working relationships. These Haitians are generally fluent in Spanish. In moments of peak labor need, the farmer may tell one of these trusted Haitians to recruit 10 or 12 other Haitians for a particular task. In such cases the farmer does not become involved in managing the worker. He may not even know their names. His trusted Haitian acts as both labor contractor and foreman. I was told that in some cases the farmer will simply pay the foreman the agreed on amount for the entire task and it is up to the Haitian foreman to pay the individual Haitian workers the agreed on rate. But cases of deceit have occurred. Individual Haitians have often come to Dominican farmers demanding that he pay them for the work performed. He informs them that he gave the money to the foreman. The worker may claim that the foreman cheated him. The common suspicion in such instances is that the foreman is cheating his fellow Haitians. It is also possible, though less likely, that the worker is trying to secure extra payment. In either case there are Dominican farmers who insist on paying each farmer individually and making a note of the payment, even though they may have been recruited by a Haitian.

When talking with Haitians about wage payment abuses on the part of Dominican farmers or agro-industrial companies, I always made it a point to ask: *se younn younn panyol ki konn fe sa, ou byen se pi fo panyol ki konn fe sa?* Is it an occasional Dominican that does that, or do most of them do it? The answer was almost always emphatic: even among Haitians with a bona fide complaint: the Dominicans that are abusive in wage payments are the exception. There is a distorting tendency, not only among some Haitian activists, but also among national and international NGOs, in the reporting of such abusive events, to portray them incorrectly as the norm. Several Haitian groups with whom I conversed on these matters gave me rational, courteous answers. In those border areas where low wages prevail, they inevitably say – we wish that the wages could be raised. But the general impression is that, given the



terms of the agreement, Haitians are on the whole complying with the task schedule and Dominicans are on the whole complying with the payment schedules.

## **Cross-border thievery**

### ***Livestock thievery***

Cross-border livestock thievery has emerged as a major contemporary source of conflict on the border. It is useful (and depressing) to point out that (1) such cross-border thievery has been a chronic problem and a chronic source of binational stress from the earliest decades of the history of Haiti and the Dominican Republic as two separate countries; (2) that it has occurred in other border settings as well (as in cross-border cattle rustling in the Wild West days of American / Mexican interaction); and that (3) it will continue to occur, in constantly evolving fashion. It can be mitigated and more effectively controlled. It cannot be totally stopped.

As for the historical background, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century cross border cattle rustling lead to several threats of war between the two countries, even when the Dominican Republic was the militarily weaker of the two countries. Haitian cross-border livestock thievery was one of the alleged precipitating factors that led to Trujillo's order to slaughter Haitians in 1937.

The Pan American Development Foundation has made attempts to deal with this problem by organizing in Dajabón cross border dialogue between an association of Dominican cattle raisers and a more recently formed association of Haitian cattle raisers. (It was analogous to a similar cross-border dialogue that the Pan American Development Foundation had organized between Dominican and Haitian fishers in Pedernales / Anse-a-Pitre.) This interesting organizational attempt to deal with cattle rustling in Dajabón led to the first-ever meetings of Dominican *ganaderos* with Haitian livestock owners. But the efforts ceased when the Haitian association dissolved for lack of interest. Whereas on the Dominican side there are bona fide *ganaderos* who derive their income exclusively from livestock, in Haiti livestock are adjuncts to farms. There are few specialized livestock raisers anywhere in Haiti, and none along the border.

Elsewhere efforts were made to coordinate the behavior of authorities on both sides of the border. During fieldwork for the current research, the mayor of Puerto Escondido spoke of meetings which he had had with his counterpart, the mayor of the town of Thiotte across the border in Haiti about the problem of cross-border cattle rustling. The results of those conversations are still pending. But such efforts give evidence to the existence of a binational concern motivated by a bidirectional flow of stolen livestock. Haitian livestock are stolen and brought across the border into the Dominican Republic and Dominican livestock are brought into Haiti. But the evidence seems to point to a greater flow of livestock from the Dominican Republic into Haiti.

On both sides of the border cattle and horses are branded and pigs are earmarked. Occasionally Dominicans whose animals have been stolen venture across into Haiti to try to recuperate them. Dominican cattle are recognized not only by their brands but also by their larger size. Dominican cattle

owners will never go alone but always accompanied by a trusted bilingual Haitian. The presence of the Haitians is as much for security as it is for linguistic purposes. (We encountered some border region Dominicans fluent in Creole, but they are the exceptions. Most Haitians in contrast who live in the Dominican Republic acquire some level of fluency in Spanish.) The Dominican with his Haitian guide normally contacts the local Haitian authorities.

There have been occasions on which local Haitian authorities have confiscated livestock from thieves and keep them penned pending the arrival of their Dominican owners. But interviews with Dominicans who have had experiences in this cross-border recuperation of livestock provoked complaints that the Haitian authorities charge fees that are almost equal the cost of purchasing a new cow. The fees charged are not described by Haitian authorities as a sale price, but rather as costs that the Haitian authorities presumably incurred in the recuperation and feeding of the animals. But the high recuperation costs, as well as widespread reluctance and fear on the part of many Dominicans to cross over into Haiti, make the retrieval of stolen livestock at most an occasional occurrence.

In terms of the identity of the thieves, it is generally recognized by everyone interviewed on the matter that cattle rustling entails a type of binational collaboration of a type not promoted by NGOs. Lone Haitians would never, in the opinion of most, scout out, rob, and transport livestock on their own from Dominican farms. Dominican cattle thieves would be even less likely to operate alone in Haiti. Binational gangs are formed in which the usual arrangement is for Dominicans and Haitians to collaborate in the thievery. On the Dominican side, the Dominican scouts out the availability of animals and may actually carry out the robbery. Haitian allies receive the animals and bring them across the border to buyers. In many cases the buyers have already “ordered” the animals and requested such and such a type of animal. None of these transactions, of course, were directly observed during research. But Dominicans interviewed on the matter never blamed the problem on homogeneous gangs of Haitians, but alluded rather to binational gangs.

Not all cattle rustling is cross-border. Other modes of thievery entail immediate butchering of animals and transportation of the parts to butchers within the Dominican Republic itself.

The problem of livestock thievery in the north is so serious that it depresses the willingness of Dominican *ganaderos* to invest in expensive livestock and to improve their stock. Livestock thievery has recently reached epidemic proportions in the community of Rio Limpio, which is about 12 kilometers inland from the border. The upsurge in livestock thievery is a direct result of a decree from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) which has paralyzed the agriculture of Rio Limpio and cast the farmers of this formerly prosperous and famous organic farming community into abject poverty. Traditional agriculture, based on controlled burning of Agrarian Reform plots ceded in the 1980's was suddenly criminalized the current environmental authorities. MARENA's economically destructive authoritarian decree is enforced by armed rangers assigned to pursue easy-to-catch aging Dominican farmers rather than more destructive and more-difficult-to-catch Dominican / Haitian charcoal extraction gangs.

One of the direct and incontestable results of the governmentally-engendered poverty has been an upswing in the robbery of several types of animals. Cows are difficult to move rapidly across the 12 kilometers between Río Limpio and the border. The objects of thievery are therefore horses, mules, and oxen. To protect against the epidemic of thievery produced by the sudden destruction of their agricultural system, the farmers of Río Limpio have been forced to move their animals to corrals built in the patio of their houses in the midst of the town itself. The stench of the manure shows this to be a measure of desperation.

The case of Río Limpio deserves further treatment in a separate report. But the entire episode illustrates that conflicts in the border area are generated less by Haitian / Dominican hostilities than by the behavior of agents of the State. Destructive interventions on the part of distant authorities comfortably lodged in Santo Domingo can affect and harm their own citizens as seriously as they affect those of the citizens of the nation across the border. It is true that the economic lives of the Haitians in Río Limpio have been devastated by the sudden disappearance of the wage labor on which they depended. But the immediate victims of MARENA's paralyzing intervention have been the Dominican farmers themselves. In this case the damages done to Haitians are secondary side effects of damages done principally to Dominican farmers themselves by their own government.

### ***Theft of motorcycles and solar panels***

In the southern border area I was told that livestock theft had ceased being a major problem. Cross-border thievery however has continued, but focused on other objects. The most common type of cross border theft now concerns motor vehicles. Automobiles and other four wheeled vehicles are more easily controlled and difficult to sneak across the border without cooperation of the local authorities. The most frequent type of theft is therefore that of motorcycles.

Motorcycles have now become the dominant mode of taxi transportation in much of the border region and, indeed, in many parts of both countries. The *motoconcho* has now displaced the automobile as the major form of local taxi services between towns and outlying villages and even between one town and another. One could almost argue that the spread of the *motoconcho* as the major form of local transportation is both a facilitator and a result of the decline of the agrarian economy. The relatively low cost of the motorcycle in comparison to the automobile, and the multiple credit arrangements for purchasing them, permit young people in the rural areas to seek income transporting passengers on motorcycles without working in the fields. The income generated by the *motoconcho* easily surpasses what can be earned through paid field labor on both sides of the border, and is earned with much less physical effort. Today motorcycles compete with automobiles in Pedernales for space on the well paved streets. In Anse-a-Pitre, in contrast, motorcycles dominate the unpaved streets. Four wheel vehicles are few and far between; motorcycles are everywhere. The visitor walking through the streets of Anse-a-Pitre finds himself dodging passenger-carrying motorcycles, not cars.

The theft of a motorcycle may appear to entail less of an objective financial loss to the owner than the theft of an automobile. But subjectively it could be the same. Since motorcycles are not purchased for recreational travel, nor even in many cases for purely domestic travel, but rather as a capital investment

for participation in the transportation sector, a motorcycle thief may be stealing from his victim the principal source of domestic income, one on which the victim furthermore may still owe money.

There may be more totally individualized initiatives in the theft of motorcycles than in the theft of livestock. Haitians are allowed to move freely around Dominican border towns, particularly but not exclusively on market days. The theft of a motorcycle and its cross border transportation is less complicated than the theft of a cow or horse. Networks may also be involved in the thievery of motorcycles, but it is a form of thievery much more amenable to individual initiative than is the case with livestock.

We can safely assume that the penchant to steal motorcycles (1) is stronger among males than among females but (2) is equally strong among Haitians and Dominicans. The following four modes are therefore theoretically possible:

1. A Haitian steals a motorcycle in the Dominican Republic, and sells it in Haiti.
2. A Haitian steals a motorcycle in Haiti, and sells it in the Dominican Republic.
3. A Dominican steals a motorcycle in Haiti and sells it in the Dominican Republic
4. A Dominican steals a motorcycle in the Dominican Republic and sells it in Haiti.

Option 1 is the most likely variant of cross border theft. It is not that Haitian men are more prone to thievery than Dominican men. The difference is that Haitians may move freely through the streets of Dominican border towns, particularly on market day. The converse would not be true. A Dominican wandering around a Haitian town searching for a motorcycle to steal would be conspicuous and at risk. In options 2 and 4 the thief steals in his own country but crosses the border to sell. This implies a pre-existing network of thieves and buyers. Haitians on motorcycles cross with regularity into the Dominican Republic The converse however is not true. We can conclude therefore that the cross border trade in stolen motorcycles is heavily unidirectional, with most incidents entailing the theft of a Dominican motorcycle for sale in Haiti.

The hypothesis receives support from an international incident that occurred when angry Dominicans invaded Anse-a-Pitre to recuperate a stolen motorcycle. This may have been a culminating “last straw” incident, the most recent in a string of cross-border motorcycle thefts.

The incident on the one hand may reflect the higher frequency of thefts by Haitians of Dominican motorcycles. It may also however reflect a differential in local military power. Pedernales has both a heavy army and police presence. An angry Haitian gang would not dare cross into the Dominican Republic When angry, Haitians stand on their side of the river and hurl stones and insults at the Dominicans.

Anse-a-Pitre, in contrast, has no army presence and only a few Haitian policemen. Angry Dominican gangs can and do more easily enter Anse-a-Pitre. Three or four Haitian police will not take on 30 Dominican men with pistols and clubs. The Haitian civilians will have to defend themselves. The Anse-a-Pitre incident, in which Haitian civilians fought off a gang of invading Dominican civilians who took the law into their own hands, was a dramatic representation of what can happen when a population with a

functioning army and police force lives next to a population that is for all practical purposes functionally stateless. And it is also an illustration of how crime in a border region easily gets converted from an individualized victim /villain incident into an escalated conflict between two nations.

### ***Thievery of solar panels***

Along the southern border unexpectedly frequent mention was made of the theft of solar panels. With a defective national electric system in the Dominican Republic, plagued with blackouts, increasing use is being made in both urban and rural areas of solar panels. Houses in the Dominican agricultural colonies that are found all along the border are routinely supplied now with solar panels.

These panels are a major object of thievery. When stolen they are reportedly brought across the border to Haiti.

### ***Petty garden thievery.***

There is a final type of thievery that emerged during dozens of interviews with Dominican farmers: robbery of vegetables and fruit by Haitian field hands. In the southern peninsula Dominican farmers now take it for granted that Haitians, even the Haitians that work for them on a regular basis, will “come with an empty bag and leave with a full one”, having appropriated fruit and other agricultural goods. This type of petty thievery is seen as endemic to Haitians and, from interviews on the matter, appears to have become accepted as one of the normal costs of hiring Haitian labor.

Not all the thievery, however, is done by hired hands. We have already mentioned how, in the community of Río Limpio, now suffering serious economic stress because of the sudden criminalization of their traditional agricultural practices, livestock thievery has reached epidemic proportions. In that same community garden thievery is now common, unlike livestock thievery, however, which entails binational networks, garden thievery is done only by Haitians acting alone, in the view of Dominicans interviewed on the matter. Haitians will leave the community in the morning and come back with filled sacks in the afternoon. There is one Haitian household in particular whose female head regularly returns to town with sacks of fruit and vegetables that she sends to the Loma de Cabrera market on market days. She was out in the rural areas all day. Nobody known to the townspeople has sold the produce to her. But no accusations can be made.

This cluster of events is linked to a widespread image that many Dominicans on the border expressed concerning thievery as a national characteristic of Haitians. This will be discussed in another report.

### ***Thievery, the earthquake, and the NGOs.***

With the desperate economic situation created by the earthquake, and with the flight of more than half a million Port-au-Prince residents to the rural areas in different parts of the country, we can predict an increase of theft within Haiti itself. There is no reason not to expect part of this increase to flow across the border.

One of the questions posed to me at the beginning of this research was the issue of whether NGOs can participate usefully in the mitigation of conflicts between members of the two populations, including in matters of thievery-related conflicts. The dialogue organized by PADF between Dominican and Haitian

livestock raisers was based on the assumption that members of the specific private sector with economic interests in the matter could take steps to reduce the incidence of cross-border thievery. The attempt engendered momentary optimism. With the dissolution of the group of Haitian interlocutors however, the undertaking lapsed.

In terms of self policing, there are strong norms against thievery in rural Haiti. There are two specific mechanisms in place in rural Haiti which reduce the incidence of thievery. The first is the danger of immediate and lethal mob retaliation against a thief caught in the act. In the absence of functioning State authorities, Haitians take matters into their own hand, particularly in the matter of thievery. Secondly there are ritual protections, associated with Haitian Vodou (these will be discussed in another report). Dominican gardens receive neither of these protections.

The scope for truly effective NGO interventions in the issue of cross border thievery must be seen as limited. Helpful meetings can be held to discuss issues that are plaguing people on both sides of the border, and thievery is one of them. The meetings will have the salutary effect of increasing public dialogue between Haitians and Dominicans. But neither group of civilians is really empowered to act against thieves of their own nation. One cannot expect civilians to play the role of policemen to protect the property even of citizens of their own nation, much less that of citizens of the country across the border.

Thievery is not caused by poverty; there are thieves in wealthy countries, and some thieves are well off themselves. Even a sudden upturn in the economic development of the border would not eliminate thievery. But it would certainly mitigate it. The earthquake has triggered off an unprecedented flow of short-term humanitarian relief support, and an unprecedented flow of pledges and promises of long term development assistance. If three conditions are met, the NGOs working on the border will be in a position to participate: (1) the international promises for aid are kept; (2) the money is wisely channeled and effectively managed ; and (3) much of the money is channeled to the border. With the strengthening of border region agriculture, and with the rectification of certain currently dysfunctional aspects of the binational markets, we can hope for a rise in prosperity and a subsequent decline in thievery and other behaviors that cause binational tensions. It will probably be in the arena of economic development, rather than in direct involvement as dispute mediators, that NGOs will be able to play their most effective role in mitigating binational conflicts.

## **Charcoal extraction**

### ***Charcoal mafias***

The extraction of charcoal is technically illegal in the Dominican Republic. Nonetheless it is a major business along certain parts of the Dominican Haitian border. Haitians produce the charcoal – cut the trees, chop- the wood into small pieces, construct the earth kilns in which the wood is stacked and covered with earth, light the fires, extract the charcoal, and place it into bags for transportation. But according to all interviewed on the matter the Haitians who make charcoal on the Dominican side of the border always do so in collaboration with and under the supervision of Dominicans.

The extraction of charcoal appears to be done by binational gangs. Territorial competition has apparently emerged among the different charcoal making gangs. The murder of several Haitian charcoal makers in the mountains above Jimaní during research was reportedly due to territorial competition among different charcoal making gangs. This event triggered off a series of accusations on the Haitian side of the border that will be discussed in another report.

I saw evidence of charcoal extraction in the Baoruco National Forest. A Dominican forest guard, employee of MARENA, gave me an account that suggests a logical evolution of the charcoal extraction procedures to circumvent efforts to stop it. At first Haitian charcoal makers in the Parque Bahoruco would fell the trees, chop the wood into small blocks, erect the kiln, make the charcoal, pack it into sacks, and load it on mules right in the Bahoruco park. When the Haitians lost several animals, confiscated by Dominican authorities who caught them, they began transporting the charcoal sacks on their heads to the Haitian side of the border, to avoid the danger of confiscated animals.

But the rangers would nonetheless still be able to confiscate the charcoal. Some persons interviewed reported that Dominican park agents intentionally wait for the charcoal to be packed in sacks before confiscating it. To circumvent even this the Haitian charcoal makers now reportedly carry the chopped wood to the Haitian side of the border and make the charcoal in sight of the Dominican park guards. This was described to me as a way of taunting the Dominicans.

### ***Destructive potential***

At any rate it should be noted that the charcoal makers who function in Dominican national parks appear to come from the same social class in Haiti that supplies migrants who come to do wage labor. But they have opted for what is probably a more lucrative and physically less demanding activity than working for \$100 pesos per day on Dominican farms.

It is often said in defense of the charcoal makers that “they are driven by poverty”. That is true. But they have opted for a mode of income generation that is fundamentally more destructive than the productive activity chosen by those who come to perform agrarian labor. They should not be demonized; but neither should they be romanticized as victims with no other option. They do have other options, which most other Haitian migrants adopt. If left unchecked by Dominican authorities, Haitian charcoal extractors and the Dominicans who contract with them will end up converting the Dominican side of the border into the lunar landscape that one sees throughout most of Haiti.

### ***Collusion of Dominicans, both civilian and military***

In the rural areas around Jimaní charcoal making was frankly described to us as a normal, ordinary source of income in the local agrarian economy. In that area I learned of sharecropping arrangements. The Dominicans authorize Haitians to extract charcoal from the trees on their land. The Dominican landowner reportedly collects 30% of the proceeds from the sale of each charcoal bag. The going price at the time of the investigation was about RD\$300 pesos per sack. It was said to me quite openly that the local military is aware of this activity and looks the other way. I have no information on what incentive they receive to look the other way.

### ***Haitian destination of the charcoal.***

The charcoal is produced exclusively for the Haitian market. Charcoal may be neither produced nor marketed in the Dominican Republic But current forestry laws make it illegal to transport charcoal within the Dominican Republic. A truck carrying charcoal to a Dominican market would be stopped, the charcoal confiscated, and the driver arrested, It is all sent to Haiti. In the Jimani area it is put on boats on the Dominican shore of L'Etang Saumatre and shipped across to Fond Parisien on the Haitian side. Further north it is carried across either by animal or on the backs of humans.

People interviewed on the matter affirmed that much of the charcoal goes overseas after it reaches Port-au-Prince.

### ***Inadequate policing.***

MARENA has recently increased the number of park guards in the Baoruco park. But the number continues to be too small effectively to patrol the area. As one skeptic put it, if a remote ranger station has two guards, one of them has to be off buying food. I do not have data on the deployment of MARENA personnel, but it would appear that an extraordinarily high percentage of those employed to protect the National Parks carry out their environmentally protective mission of issuing withering denunciations of violators from offices or cubicles in Santo Domingo. And a high percentage of MARENA resources are apparently allocated to the salaries of these urban guardians of the national forests. In the meantime, charcoal extraction by binational gangs continues in the National Parks near the border with relative impunity.

I have conversed about these matters with forest guards and military personnel who have actually detained individuals, whether Dominicans or Haitians, caught involved in the activity and who sent them handcuffed to the nearest *cuartel*. Military personnel in Puerto Escondido indicated that the occasional culprit captured in the process of making charcoal is transported to military headquarters in Duverge. Several people complained that the charcoal makers are regularly released. "They arrive back in Duverge before the guards that were sent to accompany them."

### ***Charcoal and the earthquake.***

What consequences, if any, will the earthquake have on the charcoal market? There are at least two possible scenarios.

The earthquake could at least momentarily decrease the need for charcoal produced on the Dominican side of the border. Over 95% of Haitian cooking needs are met by wood. There are two cooking technologies. In the rural areas firewood is kindled under pots sitting on a "three stone" structure. The pot is above the flame, which emits a great deal of smoke. The wood is not converted to charcoal, but gathered free of cost from local woodstands. There is no strong "firewood" market throughout most of Haiti. Firewood is largely still a free good.

It is principally in towns or cities where charcoal is used. When cooking is done with charcoal, the charcoal is kindled in *recho* (round iron charcoal stands, called *anafe* in Dominican Spanish). The pots sit directly on top of the flameless burning charcoal.



Looking at matters hypothetically, the earthquake killed a quarter of a million urban victims whose food was cooked exclusively with charcoal. That sector of the market is tragically gone. Furthermore most of the half a million or 600,000 persons who fled Port-au-Prince and returned to their home communities probably went back to rural areas where cooking is done with firewood, not charcoal. The pressure on the forest may be the same. But with the death of victims and the return of hundreds of thousands of people to firewood-using communities, the Haitian charcoal market could conceivably take at least a temporary national downswing after the earthquake. Could that be good news for the frontier forests of the Dominican Republic?

Not really. The opposing scenario appears more likely. The need for new sources of income for the displaced population has risen dramatically. Those near the border may join the ranks of those who cross over the border to make charcoal in the Dominican Republic. We should not exaggerate in this matter. Charcoal making is a lower status activity which the vast majority of displaced males would probably eschew. But the supply of potential charcoal makers may rise in the post-earthquake epoch. If the gross demand for charcoal has momentarily dropped, as suggested above, but the supply has increased because of desperate new income needs, the price will drop.

But from the point of view of the Dominican Republic and its National Parks, the potentially increased supply of charcoal extractors could exacerbate the danger to the forests, despite any momentary drop in the gross volume of charcoal needed for a diminished and relocated population.

## **The Post-Earthquake Era: Next Steps**

The present pages have focused on several problem sets that were probed during six weeks of fieldwork along the Dominican - Haitian border: binational markets, fishing dilemmas, Haitians and agrarian wage labor, cross border thievery, and illicit charcoal extraction. Thievery and destructive charcoal extraction are matters in which Dominican authorities have the exclusive capacity to intervene. The first three domains are areas in which international funders and NGOs can play a role as well.

### ***General statement on Dominican-Haitian conflict issues.***

Some major general findings of this “conflict study” are:

1. The domains of warm human interaction in the border communities observed outweigh the incidents of conflict. Because of the conflict focus of the terms of reference, insufficient space has been allocated in the report to the manner in which Haitians are warmly received by Dominicans; to the patients that are received for free in Dominican hospitals; to the Haitian schoolchildren that are received in Dominican border schools and receive the same free materials – books, uniforms, even shoes – that Dominican children receive; to the Haitian children that are taken into Dominican homes as *hijos de crianza* and are treated the same as a Dominican *hijo de crianza*; the many households in which Dominican males raise children with Haitian females; to the manner in which Haitian and Dominican children play together in the park of Puerto Escondido as the monolingual Dominicans jokingly and admiringly try some of the Creole phrases that their bilingual Haitian playmates master.

2. Dominicans on the whole speak more positively of Haitians than Haitians speak of Dominicans (which will be matter for another report);
3. The major problems and abuses are those created by the behavior of the State, not by ordinary Dominican citizen. I have discussed the soldiers and customs agents who shake down Haitians; the municipal authorities of Elias Piña who have turned the market over to extractive businessmen who target Haitians for outrageously high market taxes; the authorities of MARENA who have cast a prosperous Dominican farming community into poverty by an arbitrary prohibition and in the process destroyed the economic base of dozens of Haitian households; the roundups by soldiers of Haitians on the streets who are subsequently dumped with no due process on the other side of the border. Problems between Haitians and Dominicans, and anger of Haitians at Dominicans, are more often than not generated by the self-interested or simply erratic and arrogant behavior of agents of the State. Dominicans themselves are victims of this State behavior, but this is of course rarely perceived by Haitians, who complain regularly in interviews of mistreatment at the hands of “Dominicans”.

The most serious barriers to development on the Dominican - Haitian border are not to be found in the realm of binational or interethnic tensions between Haitians and Dominicans but in the absence of resources. Many have already observed that the tragic earthquake gives to Haiti, and to non-Haitians involved with Haiti, the opportunity to encourage the redesign of the economic and political systems of Haiti. Roads and buildings and water systems and electric systems have to be reconstructed. But nobody wishes to reconstruct the dysfunctional economy and political system of pre-earthquake Haiti.

Decentralization is one of the themes – the dismantling of the destructive and paralyzing political and economic monopoly which the “Republic of Port-au-Prince” had established over the resources of the entire country. International funding agencies may come under local pressure from the political and economic elites that were beneficiaries of the Republic of Port-au-Prince to channel their resources toward the reconstruction of that Republic. It is hoped by others, however, that when the Port-au-Prince rubble has been cleared and some buildings reconstructed there will be international insistence to channel most resources *away* from Port-au-Prince, to create economic opportunities in other cities and towns, and to defuse the power which pre-earthquake Port-au-Prince had to attract economically desperate migrants. Internal migration will continue to be central in the survival strategy of many Haitian households – but hopefully not migration to Port-au-Prince.

A realistic vision of decentralization should focus heavily on the border area. In the following recommendations I will focus on three of the five areas discussed in the report. All five areas should be of concern to the Haitian government. But the three areas selected for this final discussion here are the three in which international funders and NGOs are more likely to be able to have an impact: the agrarian economy, the binational markets, and the fishing economy.

### ***Binational Markets in the post-earthquake era:***

The balance of evidence indicates that the binational border markets place wind in the sails of the economies on both sides of the border. They are now central to the economic lives of tens of thousands of Haitians and Dominicans. Their creation was a stroke of economic fortune to the island, and their existence should be protected.

These markets should become a focus of post-earthquake planning on the part of international agencies searching for ways to assist the birth of a new economy in Haiti. In that regard much attention is correctly being given to the need to encourage the evolution of a newly decentralized Haiti, with a regionally balanced economic system, political system, and demographic balance. But discourse on decentralization is on the whole ignoring what is perhaps the economically most dynamic region in Haiti, the border area. Trade between Haiti and the Dominican Republic is central to the economy of both nations. The binational markets, which originated outside the law and still operate outside the law as part of the informal economy, should now become part of the formal economies of both countries.

Two aspects of the current functioning of the binational markets, however, make them radically dysfunctional and sabotage a large part of their economic potential. On the one hand, their extralegal character gives rise to abusive situations such as that found in the Elias Piña market. And on the other hand, their geographically unbalanced spatial distribution — they occur only on the Dominican side of the border — permits abusive behavior on the part of Dominican authorities. Haitians continue crossing with their merchandise. But they do so with fear and with knowledge that a substantial percentage of their profits will be extracted and that they may be subject to verbal abuse by soldiers or other government officials. They want binational markets. But they want Haitian sellers to be able to sell on Haitian territory, under the supervision of Haitian uniformed authorities.

A modified system with markets on both sides of the border will work only if (1) Dominican buyers will be willing to cross over into Haiti and (2) Haitian sellers will not continue bringing their merchandise to the Dominican side of the border. Danger 2 is likely to materialize if danger 1 occurs. If it takes time for Dominican buyers to cross over the border, Haitian sellers may avoid an interruption of income flows by simply continuing to cross over to the Dominican side of the border to market their wares. An attempt was made in Anse-a-Pitre by frustrated Haitian vendors who cleared a space on the Haitian side of the border and attempted to sell their wares there. The experiment failed and the market is now back in the structure built on the Dominican side of the border.

Nonetheless a more systematic effort in that regard may bear fruit. Thanks to the intervention of the Canadian government in financing the construction of a Haitian governmental complex in the Belladere area of the border, , and to the Pan American Development Foundation which managed the Canadian funds for this purpose and recently cleared a space adjacent to that complex for purposes of the construction of a Haitian market, the groundwork has been laid for an experiment in a truly binational market system that preserves its binational character but eliminates some of its currently dysfunctional elements.

### ***The fishing economy in the post-earthquake era.***

The nearly half a million people that fled Port-au-Prince in the wake of the earthquake will be momentarily unemployed and in search of income. The developmental option of preference is for them not to return to Port-au-Prince, but to find employment locally. Conversations about Haiti's future among those involved in developmental planning all emphasize the need for decentralization. Nobody wishes to reconstruct the demographically aberrant "Republic of Port-au-Prince".

Though figures are not available, it is probable that Anse-a-Pitre and other southern coastal communities east of Jacmel have received many of those who fled. And it is therefore probable that there will be an increase in the number of Haitians who search for income in the fishing sector, either as male fishermen or as female fish marketers.

At least some developmental conversations can be heard about strengthening the fishing sector in southern Haiti. If the protagonists in these conversations and the designers of the programs are specialists in ecological concerns, emphasis will be placed on the complicated issue of ecologically sustainable management of marine resources and the avoidance of overexploitation. The conflicts between Dominicans and Haitians concerning the depletion by Haitians of in-shore maritime species has given rise among Dominicans to a greater sensitivity toward the need for sustainable management. This enhanced ecological sensitivity among Dominican fishers may paradoxically be a secondary effect of the conflict with Haitians.

On the Haitian side of the border, however, the macro-ecological concern are distinctly subordinate to micro-economic agendas. Haitians in Anse-a-Pitre lack access to the capital, electricity, and fuel which has permitted their Dominican counterparts to abandon inshore continental shelf fishing and to move out to deep sea fishing of pelagic species with FADs.

An obvious but important programming insight leaps out from this. Haitians continue to overexploit close-to-shore small fish, not because of ecological ignorance, but because of the resource scarcity that prevents them from using more advanced FAD technology. They do not need ecological workshops. They need the resources that would permit them willingly to abandon their current technology for the ecologically more benign mode of fish procurement used by Dominicans in deeper waters.

But exactly what types of resources would benefit the fishing sector? The answer depends on the nature of the desired outcome. Only a very generalized vision can be proposed here. In terms of technology the desired configuration would be somewhere between the ecologically damaging coastal capture of tiny fish currently practiced by Anse-a-Pitre fishermen and the deep sea fishing of pelagic species, who dwell beyond the continental shelf, currently sought by the commercial fleets of the industrialized world. The current Dominican strategy of small fiberglass motorboats with 3-man crews procuring deep-sea pelagic species via GPS-located FADs seems to be a viable, practical compromise between inshore nets and commercial fleets that spend weeks at sea.

The current organizational structure of Dominican FAD fishing and Haitian net fishing however, cannot be promoted. Those who do the fishing do not have their own boats and are at the mercy of equipment owners who themselves may never go out to sea. A developmentally more defensible model might be

the parallel of agrarian cooperatives, with individually owned productive property, but collectively managed inputs and marketing services. The “new fishing” model would facilitate the purchase of individually owned boats on the one hand, and promote cooperative facilitation, perhaps via credit, of fuel and other inputs, and the facilitation of commercialization via cold storage rooms and other collective marketing services. A sound approach would probably avoid the “collectively owned” boats that surfaced during research. We should avoid dogmatism on such issues, but be aware that there are strong traditions of private ownership of productive resources both in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Collectivized elements in a program should be incorporated as ancillary elements – credit, marketing – to a system based on private ownership of the core productive resources, in this case the boats.

## ***Post-earthquake agrarian economy on the border***

### **Conceptual overview**

In this final section I will deal with the troubling issue that presents the most serious obstacle to border development but that can easily (and conveniently) be ignored to focus on smaller but more manageable issues. In discussing the binational markets, I have alluded to the structural dilemma that all the markets are on the Dominican side of the border. There is, however, an even more serious structural dilemma – the yet unmentioned “elephant in the room” -- that weakens the long term viability of any plans to improve market systems.

Markets assume the production of something worth marketing. In the current binational market system, at least as observed during this research, Haitians have few homegrown products to market. Whereas Dominicans are marketing industrial goods from Santo Domingo and Santiago, and agricultural produce from different parts of the country, Haitians are marketing used clothing, used shoes, cosmetics, and other imported goods. Even when Haitians were selling rice in the binational markets, before the Dominican government prohibited the entry of rice across the border, the rice was for the most part American rice that had been imported into Haiti and had been purchased by intermediaries for re-exportation to the Dominican side of the border.

The agrarian economy throughout most of Haiti, including the border areas, is in shambles. And though the agrarian economy on the Dominican side of the border was once vibrantly supported by government installed irrigation and agrarian credit systems, those are now largely a thing of the past. Credit is gone, irrigation systems are in disrepair, Dominicans are leaving, and Haitians are replacing them. The international funding that will come into both countries as a result of the earthquake creates a window of opportunity to finance the emergence of productive agrarian systems on both sides of the border.

In an “ideal world” run on strict capitalist principles, this would all be done by private sector investment (including foreign direct investment) and the promotion of foreign trade, with a minimum of government intervention and no subsidies. In an “ideal world” run on socialist principles, the government would own and manage everything. Pure socialist models have failed spectacularly even in their countries of origin. We assume a future in both countries based on privatized production for profit-generating markets.

But a prosperous market-driven model will not emerge either in Haiti on the Dominican-Haitian border without artificial developmental interventions. And in neither country has the government shown itself capable of or willing to finance what has to be financed. Just as the outside world, not the Haitian government, provided the major response to the earthquake, so also it is highly unlikely that Haiti will rise economically, or the Dominican - Haitian border will become an economically dynamic region, without long term support from the outside world.

On what should that support— or at least that sector of support aimed at productive (as distinct from educational or medical) goals -- focus? A tripartite answer can be given which is valid on both sides of the border: irrigation systems, agrarian credit systems, income generating tree planting systems. All three require not only funding but also skillful organizational strategies to ensure that the funding produces desired outputs and is not diverted to peripheral or alien goals.

### **The new hope: drip irrigation in Guayajayuco.**

The most encouraging ray of hope that emerged during fieldwork was my encountering of a newly created drip irrigation system that had been installed by World Vision in Guayajayuco, a Dominican farming community just a few kilometers inward from the Haiti border. Local people interviewed on this matter were optimistic – the term “ecstatic” may be justified – at the economic possibilities for productive income generating agriculture that this system creates.

I asked with respectful skepticism: who will use it? Most of you have left for the city? The answer: once the land starts generating substantial income, many of those who left will come back. Does this mean that you will no longer depend on Haitian field labor? No. Haitian field laborers are here to stay. We are glad that they are here. Each of us that has land covered by the irrigation system has already lined up the Haitians that will be hired to work with us.

But what about those locals whose land is outside the range of the system? Answer: as a condition of receiving the irrigation system those of us with land that will be watered have voluntarily ceded the use of part of our land to local people whose land would not receive water. 3 hectares of irrigated land will give me much more income than my 30 hectares of dry land.

This is an arrangement very similar to a drip irrigation system outside of San Jose de Ocoa that I had evaluated for the World Bank. In that instance it was a system of gravity-driven sprinkler irrigation that totally transformed what had been an arid, agriculturally marginal valley into a productive oasis.

On both sides of the border there are hydraulic resources that are being squandered. Modernized drip irrigation systems and gravity driven sprinkler systems are both financially feasible and technically doable. They would transform the productive systems of both sides of the border. Funding agencies interested in exercising a measurable transforming impact on the Haitian – Dominican border should begin with water. It has been done elsewhere; it is doable in this border region in many communities on both sides of the border.

### **Agricultural credit.**

Journalistic accounts of rural Haiti focus on small holdings. I have indicated in the report, however, that Haitians interviewed, not only on the border but throughout Haiti, allude to the lack of capital, not to the lack of land, or to the infertility of the land, as their main problem aside from that of irrigation. The same was found on the Dominican side of the border. Farmers in the agricultural colonies that were established from Pedernales to Dajabón by previous governments were given not only land and houses but also functioning irrigations systems and access to agricultural credit. Several informants admitted that they abused the credit and failed to repay the loans, treating them as a gift, like the houses and the land which they had received for free. Whatever the cause, the credit programs have ceased.

In earlier research I encountered in Pedernales very successful commercial credit programs to poorer women. The loan recuperation rates were high and the participating women waxed ecstatically about how credit has transformed their lives, permitting them to break out and supplement the role of housewife with that of economically productive businesswoman.

Agricultural credit is difficult to manage and is a riskier sector than commercial credit. A diachronic increase that has occurred in draught conditions causes, I was told, more frequent crop failure today than in the past, which could in turn cause involuntary defaults on loans.

Irrigation systems, in contrast, reduce agricultural risks to a fraction. Programs that begin with water can safely follow up with the other life giving input – credit to work the irrigated land.

### ***The tree question: Income generating agroforestry***

The tree question looms large in the radar screen of outsiders who look at Haiti from afar. Long before the earthquake the treeless landscape of Haiti produced comments and concerns. Lecturers with Power Point regularly project a famous aerial photo of the Haitian / Dominican border, with green vegetation on one side and a denuded lunar landscape on the other. In fact both countries have their own “tree problem.” I drew anger on one occasion from an audience of Dominican officials when lecturing on the results of USAID-funded research into the tree situation in the border. The verdant tree stands that have been planted by Dominican authorities on their side of the border function in some places as a green curtain designed and planted to create a visual contrast with denuded Haiti. If one moves several hundred meters eastward into the plantations, one often encounters Dominican landscapes that appear as denuded as their Haitian counterparts. Such tree stands should, I argued to the audience, be classified as ornamental vegetation. I received a stern lecture from the then-director of the local USAID mission for making such an irreverent comment with their funding.

The fact of the matter is that there remains more arboreal vegetation on the Dominican side of the border because of decades of draconian forest protection policies, including the creation of National Parks. As pointed out in the body of this report, the forests that remain in the border region are now coming under serious threat because of the charcoal market in Haiti, supplied by binational gangs of charcoal makers and vendors.

International agencies and NGOs that are moved by the “reforestation” theme would do well to recognize the existence of two distinct types of tree-related programs and *not to confuse them* –

ecologically oriented tree protection and reforestation programs and economically oriented, income-generating tree production programs. The Dominican Republic still has a serious need for tree protection and public reforestation programs. Forest protection programs in Haiti are a bit late. One is simultaneously amused and depressed when institutions with forest protection agendas race with each other to protect the remaining stands of natural forest in Foret des Pins and Pic Macaya. It's the wrong island, or at least the wrong side of the island, for those whose mission is to protect forests.

On both sides of the island, but in Haiti in particular, the **production** of trees is much more important than the **protection** of trees. And the production of wood trees on both sides of the island will best occur in the context of programs that facilitate the planting of trees on private land for income generating purposes. A project of the Pan American Development Foundation that lasted from the 1980's until 2000 demonstrated the massive willingness of even small farmers in Haiti to plant fast growing trees (combined in agroforestry configurations with their food crops) on their land, as long as they were guaranteed ownership rights over the trees and the unimpeded right to harvest and sell the wood when and where they wanted. Having designed and managed that project, I can state with absolute confidence and with no exaggeration that with proper project planning – in particular with a project design that emphasizes wood for income generating purposes rather than for protecting Mother Nature and that provides each participating farmer with several hundred seedlings – a funding agency could within a few years finance the outplanting of tens of millions of trees in Haitian communities all along the border. Wood tree planting is both compatible and enthusiastically received, when done as “agroforestry” in combination with food crops, rather than “reforestation”, within the farming system of rural Haiti.

On the Dominican side matters are paradoxically more complicated. Forest protection laws for years made it a crime to cut any wood tree, even trees on one's own property, *even wood trees which one has planted*. The laws that were designed to protect forests were only marginally successful in that goal. They were totally successful in preventing any rational property owner from planting food trees on his land. Small farmers who saw a spontaneous wood-tree seedling sprouting in their land after the harvest would rush to rip out the seedling, before it became too big. The forestry laws created a hostility between landowner and wood tree.

In recent years the government has relaxed the prohibition and permits tree planting for wood harvesting purposes, but only with government permission. A plantation certificate will be given which presumably endows the owner with the right to harvest the wood trees when they are mature and market the wood.

The behavior of the current government, however, sabotages the credibility of this privatized tree planting and makes it irrational and dangerous for any one in the private sector to plant wood trees. More specifically, the leadership of MARENA (Environment and Natural Resources) , has destroyed the economy of the community of Rio Limpio, a famous and once prosperous organic farming community that rejected chemical fertilizer and instead produced crops on Agrarian Reform plots that they received in the 1980's using as fertilizer the organic ash from controlled burnings. This had been permitted under all previous governments until the current regime, whose leadership descended in helicopter on the



community, was displeased at the sight of smoke, and declared that henceforth those plots, which were declared to be within Park boundaries, could no longer be cultivated in the traditional fashion with organic ash from burnings.

I made three trips to the community and determined that this economically damaging and ecologically useless revocation of the rights given by previous governments has cast the formerly prosperous community into poverty. The ministry boasts in the newspapers about its “reforestation brigades” and “greenhouses” and other silly band-aid solutions in Rio Limpio. The public is unaware that MARENA has needlessly destroyed the economic lives of an entire community.

The point here is that a government that can revoke the right of a community to practice a form of agriculture authorized by previous governments can just as easily revoke the rights of tree-planting landowners to harvest the trees once mature, whatever certificates have been issued. Given the authoritarian and arbitrary behavior of the current environmental authorities in the Dominican Republic, it is not safe for private landowners, particularly smallholders with no political or economic clout, to cover their land with wood trees with a view to harvesting the wood, no matter what certificates are given or promises made. Income generating tree programs will find more fertile ground on the Haitian side of the border.

### ***Systems of economic life, systems of economic death.***

This brings us to the final point in this report: the issue of delivery systems. In this post-earthquake era of promises of billions of dollar in long term aid to Haiti, and of increased aid to the Dominican Republic, to whom do international funding institutions entrust their funding for program implementation? This report was commissioned to study conflicts between Haitians and Dominicans. The real conflict, however, will be between the rights of governments to demand management of the funds on the one hand, and on the other hand the widespread current practice of contracting with NGOs or for-profit contractors to implement projects. The important struggle for the developmental trajectory of both countries is between the Governments vs. the NGO, not Dominicans vs. Haitians,

The issue cannot be solved in the concluding paragraphs this report. I can only point out that, though Haitians vigorously disagree among themselves on most topics, there is one topic on which I found astounding unanimity. I discussed with them the challenge of converting donor funds into local programs. To whom should the donors entrust the money? From the south to the north of the country hundreds of people interviewed on the matter screamed with unanimity: *Pinga nou kite kob-la nan men leta! Ya vole-l. Ya manje-l. Nou pap wè anyen!* (Do not turn the money over to the government! They'll steal it! They'll eat it! We won't see a cent of it!)

Across the border I found another dramatic contrast that addresses this same issue. The border community of Guayajayuco is only 11 kilometers from the community of Rio Limpio. Guayajayuco was vibrant with enthusiasm over the new irrigation system. Rio Limpio was sunk into angry paralysis at the death of their farming system. It was an NGO –World Vision – that brought life giving water to Guayajuco. It was a government ministry, MARENA that gave the kiss of death to Rio Limpio.

In the real world one compromises. The Haitians who pleaded with me not to entrust money to their government – not even their municipal governments, which they claimed were as “hungry” as the national government – agreed with a practical hybrid managerial solution that is already being implemented in many programs. I asked if they would agree with an arrangement in which Haitians are employed in most positions in a project, but that the money continues to be managed by the foreign donors themselves, even by a locally resident foreigner who has control of the local flow of money. Would their patriotic sensibilities be offended? The answer was again unanimous: no. There would be no offense. On the contrary: This would be the arrangement of strong popular preference.

Because of the tragic, devastating earthquake, the money will soon be flowing into Haiti for its long term development. There is little question on that point. The jury is still out, however, on the question of whose opinions will be solicited, and whose voices will be listened to, as to the management of that money.