

Livelihoods in Northern Haiti

Summary
of a participatory
assessment

Vincent M. Mugisha



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Cover photo: Community members and the assessment team collaborated to identify assets and needs. *Vincent M. Mugisha for CRS*

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ABBREVIATIONS

CHAMP Community Health and AIDS Mitigation Project

CNSA National Coordination of Food Security (Coordination Nationale de la Sécurité Alimentaire)

FEWS NET Famine Early Warning Systems Network

IHD Integral Human Development

MYAP multiyear assistance program

PLA participatory livelihoods assessment

PRA participatory rural appraisal

USAID U.S. Agency for International Development

WFP World Food Program

MAP OF HAITI



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Catholic Relief Services conducted a participatory livelihoods assessment (PLA) to collect data on livelihoods in northern Haiti and produce recommendations for future programs. The assessment team received hands-on training in participatory rural assessment data collection, the Integral Human Development framework and an array of analysis methods and tools. The team then traveled to Gonaïves, Port-de-Paix and Ouanaminthe to conduct the assessment in nine communities in the Artibonite, Northwest and Northeast Departments.

Team members gathered quantitative and qualitative data on people's livelihood systems. Team members met with local authorities and community-based organizations. They also conducted large-group and community-level interviews, household surveys and focus groups. Interviewers asked community members to assess their needs and offer ideas about how to strengthen livelihoods. Community members actively participated in activities such as community mapping, institutional ranking and mapping, well-being ranking, analysis of vulnerability, problem identification and formulation of response strategies. The PLA team analyzed the data, wrote profiles of each community and sought feedback on its findings from community members.

Community members and the PLA team produced eight recommendations, summarized below:

- Strengthen communities' capacities to manage risks related to flooding in Aciphat and Cité Maxo.
- Improve community hygiene and potable water conditions in all nine communities.
- Improve each community's access to affordable health services and medical care.
- Enhance the capacity of people who fish along Baie des Moustiques, Dérac and Jacquesyl.
- Enhance vulnerable families' capacities to diversity their livelihood activities in Lacoma, Baie des Moustiques, Jacquesyl, Dérac and Moulin.
- Improve school health and hygiene in Cité Maxo, Aciphat and Gaillard.
- Improve each community's capacity to protect children from exploitation and protect children's rights to a quality education in Gaillard, Dérac, Cité Maxo and Jacquesyl.
- Enhance the livelihood activities of young women and men in Aciphat, Cité Maxo and Gaillard.

The PLA strengthened the ability of CRS local staff, partners and other stakeholders to conduct participatory activities and assessments. Community members gained experience in analyzing their own needs and developing possible solutions.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1954, Catholic Relief Services has been working in Haiti, especially in rural development and food security in the southern peninsula. In 2008 and 2009, CRS opened an office in Miragoâne, Jérémie, Gonaïves and Port-de-Paix to support implementation of the Community Health and AIDS Mitigation Project (CHAMP).¹ In 2010, CRS opened an office in the northeastern border town of Ouanaminthe to support social protection and food security activities for people who were displaced by the January 12 earthquake. CRS continues to offer protection activities for communities in the department.

CRS is now examining programmatic expansion options in northern regions of the country, where many of Haiti's poorest people live. *Livelihoods in Northern Haiti* is the result of a participatory study in zones around CRS offices in Gonaïves (Artibonite Department), Port-de-Paix (Northwest Department) and Ouanaminthe (Northeast Department). CRS will use the assessment to inform future programming decisions.²

The PLA aimed to

1. collect data on assets, structures and systems; shocks, cycles and trends; the vulnerability context and the priority problems in target communities; livelihood strategies and outcomes related to food security; multisectoral data on health and HIV/AIDS; education; water, sanitation and hygiene; social protection; and peace and justice;
2. analyze the data to inform strategic choices, identify priorities and identify programmatic themes in the intervention areas of each of the three CRS field offices in Gonaïves, Port-de-Paix and Ouanaminthe; and
3. actively engage and strengthen the capacity of CRS local staff, partners and other stakeholders in participatory methods and practices.

INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

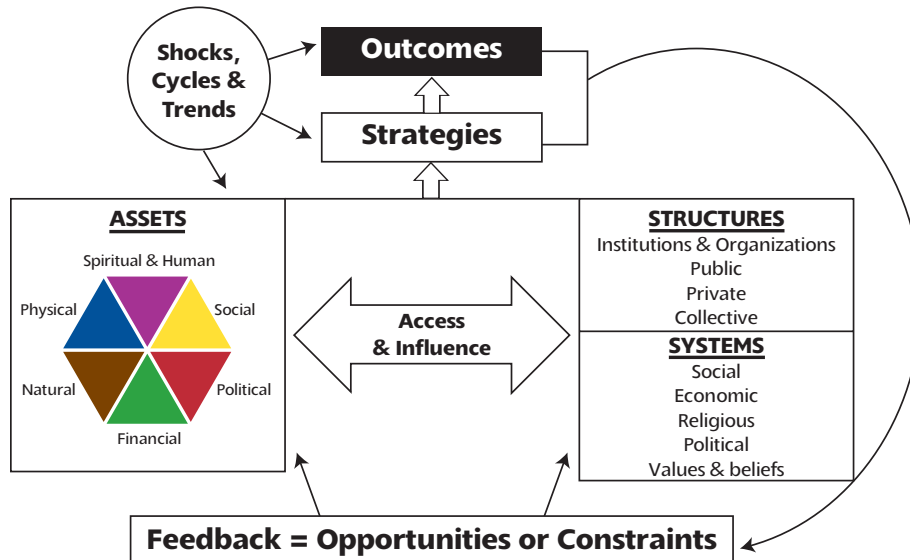
The PLA team used CRS' Integral Human Development (IHD) framework to consider northern Haiti's situation in a holistic way. The IHD approach recognizes that people's needs are intertwined and that human development is multifaceted; personal well-being can be achieved only in the context of just and peaceful relationships. The IHD framework is especially useful for analyzing and explaining complex human development situations. The framework has been instrumental in helping CRS and its partners become more effective in supporting those who wish to improve their livelihood outcomes.³

1 CRS is a subimplementing agency to Family Health International for the CHAMP project.

2 This publication is an extremely condensed version of the complete assessment. To request a copy of the complete assessment, please contact CRSHaiti.Info@crs.org.

3 Gaye Burpee, Geoff Heinrich and Rosanne Zemanek, "Integral Human Development (IHD): The Concept & the Framework" (Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services, 2008).

Figure 1. Integral Human Development framework



Geoff Heinrich, David Leege and Carrie Miller, *A User's Guide to Integral Human Development (IHD): Practical Guidance for CRS Staff and Partners* (Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services, 2008).

Livelihood strategies are based primarily on people's many different assets and needs. Systems and structures are the institutions, rules and social norms that people work within. These factors affect how different assets can be used. In some cases, systems and structures determine who has access to specific assets or resources. Individuals or communities with a lot of assets may also be able to change some of the "rules." People's livelihood strategies have to take into account risks that threaten lives and livelihoods. The framework refers to these risks as shocks, cycles and trends. When people's assets are not strong enough to render them resilient in the midst of shocks, cycles and trends, their vulnerability increases.

CRS seeks to understand and address the primary sources of risk and vulnerability as a vital part of helping people develop successful livelihood strategies and achieve long-term Integral Human Development through relief and development interventions.

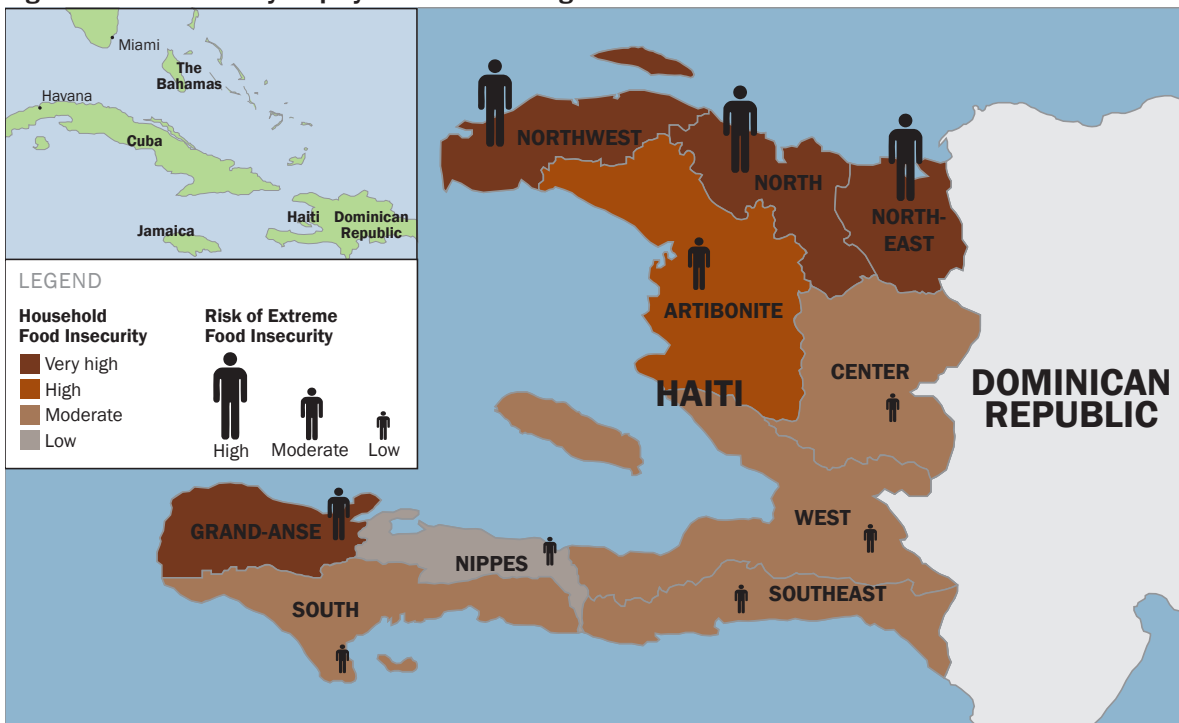
CRS saw the PLA as an opportunity not only to gather information about northern Haiti but also to continue strengthening the capacity of local staff, partners and other stakeholders. CRS hoped to improve team members' understandings of participatory assessments, development strategies and the IHD framework. Likewise, CRS believed that by asking community members to reflect on their assets and to pose possible ways to meet their needs, community members could gain insights about how to improve their situations.

Figure 2. Major livelihood zones in Haiti



1. Dry agropastoral zone, 2. monoculture plains zone, 3. humid mountain agriculture zone, 4. agropastoral plateau zone, 5. agropastoral zone, 6. dry agriculture and fishing zone, 7. sea salt production zone, 8. urban livelihood zone. Adapted from Famine Early Warning Systems Network, *FEWS NET-USAID Report 2005* (n.p.: USAID, 2005).

Figure 3. Food insecurity map by administrative region



Adapted from World Food Program and National Coordination of Food Security, "Executive Brief—Haiti: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis" (New York: United Nations, 2008).

SECONDARY SOURCES

The PLA advisor reviewed other assessments and studies that provided macro and micro perspectives on livelihoods and food security issues. The review also included documents on related multisectoral issues in education, health, HIV/AIDS, water and sanitation in Haiti. The findings provided important information on the vulnerability contexts of different regions in northern Haiti and helped the team and CRS/Haiti staff decide which communities to visit.

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) divided Haiti into eight zones: dry agropastoral zone, monoculture plains zone, humid mountain agriculture zone, agropastoral plateau zone, agropastoral zone, dry agriculture and fishing zone, sea salt production zone and urban livelihood zone. However, for the purposes of CRS' assessment, it was necessary to determine how the three targeted PLA regions fit into the above livelihood zones. According to the map,

- the CRS/Gonaïves office intervention areas mainly fell into the monoculture plains zone, which is predominantly a zone for growing a single crop, such as rice, across a large area;
- the CRS/Port-de-Paix office intervention area fell into the agropastoral and dry agropastoral zones, which are zones where small-scale cropping and livestock keeping are diversified with other activities, such as fishing and charcoal production;
- the CRS/Ouanaminthe office intervention fell in the monoculture plains zone and the dry agropastoral zones.

The review of secondary sources yielded rankings of zones by vulnerability and food security. Both CRS/Port-de-Paix and Ouanaminthe office intervention areas were in the most food-insecure regions of Haiti. The CRS/Gonaïves office intervention areas were in the very food-insecure region. The document review findings on livelihood zones and food insecurity were therefore instrumental in planning the PLA activities and selecting the target communities.⁴

⁴ National Coordination of Food Security (CNSA) created a new vulnerability map of Haiti in 2011. The new report has yet to be published for external use.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

The PLA team used purposive sampling methods to select the communities in which the PLA would be conducted; as such, the results of this assessment are not representative of a larger area. Having identified three departments that have high levels of food insecurity and vulnerability, the team selected three disparate communities from each department for a total of nine target communities. The criteria for the purposive sampling included

- level of vulnerability,
- likelihood that the community would be the site of future interventions by CRS or its local partners,
- availability of CRS and local partners field agents to assist in planning PLA processes,
- diversity of livelihood and agroecological systems, including the mixture of rural, semirural, urban, lowland and highland characteristics,
- accessibility of the area during the PLA period and
- availability and willingness of the communities to participate in the PLA activities.

Table 1. Communities selected for the assessment

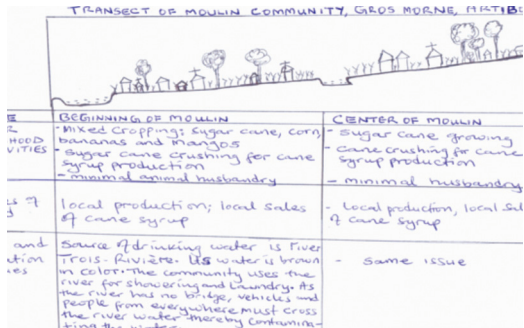
Region	Community	Description	Livelihood Zone*	Distance from Nearest CRS/Field Office
CRS-Gonaïves Intervention Region, Artibonite Department, Gonaïves Diocese	Aciphat	Urban, lowland	Monoculture plains	15-minute drive
	Moulin	Rural, highland	Monoculture plains	70-minute drive
	Ville de Gros Morne	Semirural/semiurban	Monoculture plains	50-minute drive
CRS-Port-de-Paix Intervention Region, Northwest Department, Port-de-Paix Diocese	Baie des Moustiques	Rural, coastal plains	Dry agropastoral	45-minute drive
	Cité Maxo	Urban coastal highland	Dry agropastoral	10-minute drive
	Lacoma	Rural plains	Agropastoral	75-minute drive
CRS-Ouanaminthe Intervention Region, Northeast Department, Fort Liberté Diocese	Dérac	Rural coastal border community	Agropastoral	50-minute drive
	Gaillard	Urban border community	Monoculture plains	10-minute drive
	Jacquesyl	Rural coastal community	Agropastoral	50-minute drive

*Famine Early Warning Systems Network, *Livelihoods Profiles in Haiti* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2005).

PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

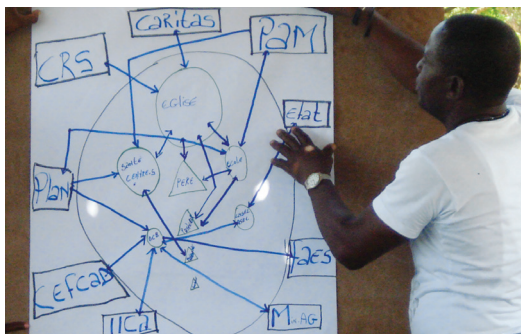
Next, a team development exercise led to the formation of PLA subteams that took into account the need for diversity in gender, background (education and work experience) and employment status (i.e., whether team members are CRS staff or partner staff). Subteam members selected and developed their own roles

Figure 4. Sketch of Moulin



Sketch by Vincent M. Mugisha, July 2011

Figure 5. Institutional diagram of Jacquesyil



Community members collaborated with the PLA team in August 2011 to create this institutional map of Jacquesyil. Vincent M. Mugisha for CRS

as subteam leaders, interview facilitators, interview cofacilitators and note-takers.

The subteams received training in participatory rural assessment (PRA) data collection and in analysis methods and tools. Topics included large-group community interviews, community and institutional mapping tools, focus group interviews based on livelihood clusters, seasonal calendars, well-being ranking tools, key information and household interviews, institutional analysis matrices, vulnerability analysis matrices, livelihood strategies and IHD concepts. Diverse qualitative methods were used in order to triangulate information sources.

After field-testing the tools and processes, team members began conducting the assessment in the three target regions. Team members mainly gathered qualitative data on people's livelihood systems, including the kind and quality of assets that support their livelihoods, the different systems and structures that affect their livelihoods and their vulnerability context in terms of shocks, cycles and trends. The PLA also utilized a small-household survey/interview tool to collect numerical data on the number of households that are headed by men or women, the number of children in the households, the number of children that attend school and the levels of weekly food expenditures.

The PLA team asked community members to assess their needs and offer ideas about how to strengthen their livelihoods. Team members met with local authorities and community-based organizations. They also conducted large-group and community-level interviews, household surveys and focus groups. Community members actively participated in activities such as community mapping, institutional ranking and mapping, well-being ranking, vulnerability analysis, problem identification and response strategy formulation. Then the PLA team analyzed the data, wrote profiles of each community and reported back to each community to share the results and seek feedback.

During the training sessions, the long-term goal was to strengthen staff capacities. The consultant assessed team members' skills and knowledge and then designed the PLA training sessions accordingly. He accompanied the staff into the field to ensure that team members had mastered their new skills and that they could use their new knowledge to train others effectively.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The following summary focuses on major community assets and livelihood activities, food security issues and overall vulnerability.

GONAÏVES ZONE

Moulin

Of the three PLA sites in Gonaïves, the rural community of Moulin is best endowed with natural resources. Fertile soils are evenly distributed throughout the community. During the large-group consultations, community members and the PLA team created well-being rankings to categorize families as very poor, poor and well-off.

Very poor families have very simple houses. The walls are made of mud, and the roofs are made of straw. Very poor families eat at most one meal per day and consume only what they grow. The children are malnourished. Families can't afford basic medical care. They earn money by cutting down trees to burn the wood for charcoal.

Poor families live in houses that have walls made of rocks and roofs made of straw. These families eat at most two meals per day and consume only what they grow. Poor families can afford medical care in the local health center. They often own sugarcane fields and sell local products for cash. They may have access to mutual solidarity financial services.

Well-off families live in permanent structures. The walls are made of rocks, bricks or cement. The roofs are made of corrugated iron sheets. Well-off families eat at most three meals per day and consume food that they grow or purchase. These families can afford medical treatment in Ville de Gros Morne's better medical centers. Well-off families own bigger sugarcane fields. They sell their goods in and beyond Moulin, and they receive money from family members who are living abroad.

Figure 6. Daily meals per household in the Gonaïves zone

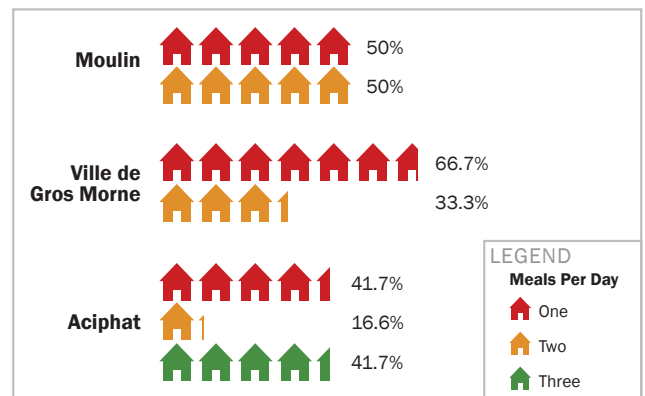


Table 2. Weekly household food expenditures in the Gonaïves zone

Community	Minimum (USD)	Maximum (USD)	Mean (USD)
Moulin	\$8.75	\$122.50	\$44.58
Ville de Gros Morne	\$2.50	\$37.50	\$12.50
Aciphat	\$17.50	\$105.00	\$63.75

The major livelihood activities are sugarcane cultivation, production of sugarcane syrup and production of an alcoholic drink known as *clarin*. Women and men are active in the local sugarcane industry. Men specialize in the manual work of sugarcane cultivation, while women mainly engage in the commercial side of the industry (e.g., vending sugarcane, syrup and *clarin*). Other livelihood activities include growing mixed crops of corn, beans, bananas, avocados and mangoes for local consumption and the local market. On a small scale, residents of Moulin also raise animals such as chicken, pigs, goats and cows.

Many households grow more sugarcane than other food crops because sugarcane products are marketable and are good sources of household incomes. Households therefore spend part of their incomes to purchase food such as rice and cooking oil from local markets—a larger-than-usual weekly food expenditure of \$45, which buys one or two main meals a day.

Moulin is exposed to unexpected drought and tropical storms, which significantly affect the community's activities and cause occasional hunger. Although the community is endowed with two rivers, households do not have a means of using the river water to irrigate their fields during droughts. As a coping strategy, households seek both in-kind and cash credit to enhance their food security. Other challenges include poor hygiene, due to a lack of latrines in the community, and poor access to clean water.

Ville de Gros Morne

Ville de Gros Morne is a provincial trading center; its main community asset is its access to buyers. Very poor families live in houses that have mud walls and straw roofs. These families eat at most one meal per day. Their food comes mainly from small gardens, although they sometimes buy food to supplement their diets. The children are in poor health and are malnourished. Very poor families sometimes earn money from their small-business activities.

Poor families live in houses that have walls made of rocks and roofs made of old corrugated iron sheets. These families eat at most two meals per day. They supplement their diets with rice that they purchase from markets. Poor families can afford basic services that are offered in private and public health centers. They may have access to mutual solidarity financial services.

Well-off families own their homes, which are well constructed and located in residential neighborhoods. These houses have big periurban gardens. Well-off families own generators or other energy sources, and they own a vehicle. They eat at most three meals per day. They buy most of their food (e.g., rice, meats, cooking oil, bread, spaghetti) from markets.

Women engage in food vending activities. Men work in small grocery shops and cultivate crops in the surrounding areas. Men also pursue small trades such as

masonry, carpentry and iron working. They raise animals such as goats, sheep, cows and pigs.

Poor households with weak income-generating activities endure frequent periods of hunger. The surveyed households indicated that the vast majority could only afford one meal a day. People living with HIV and AIDS are among the most vulnerable groups in the community. Many of these people receive different types of assistance, including counseling, medication, food items and children's tuition from the CHAMP project (and from other NGOs' projects).

Many households and their crop fields that are located on the riverbanks are vulnerable to flash flooding during tropical storms and the rainy season. Hygiene is also a huge challenge in the community due to a severe lack of latrines. Community members often suffer from waterborne diseases such as typhoid and, recently, cholera.

Aciphat

Aciphat is an urban community in the city of Gonaïves. Very poor families live in small, poorly built houses that are often badly affected by flooding. These families can afford one meal per day. Sometimes they can afford more meals because of aid from community members and churches. Very poor families sometimes beg to pay for health care and other basic services.

Poor families live in small houses that have walls made of rocks or cement blocks. Their roofs are made of corrugated iron sheets. Poor families can afford one or two meals per day thanks to their small businesses. Some of these families belong to savings groups.

Well-off families live in houses that were built to resist flood damage. They own big businesses such as food depots and hardware stores. These families are financially stable and can afford three meals per day.

Women engage in grocery vending activities. Men perform manual trade activities such as sewing, masonry and iron working. Among the key community assets are good neighborhood relations and solidarity with fellow church members. There are several Christian denominations (with missionary linkages to the United States) that provide resources for the community that enhance household livelihood security.

The main source of food is the market, which is why weekly mean food expenditure is higher in Aciphat than in Moulin or Ville de Gros Morne. Rice, beans and cooking oil are readily available on the market. Affordability is the main issue; poor households with weak income-generating activities can afford only one meal a day, while better-off ones eat two or three meals a day.

Owing to poor drainage and bad waste management, the community is vulnerable to flooding whenever it rains. During the flooding seasons, many people—especially young men and women—leave Aciphat. Other vulnerabilities include poor hygiene due to the lack of latrines among poor households.

PORT-DE-PAIX ZONE

Among the three zones, communities in the Port-de-Paix zone have the highest levels of food insecurity and overall vulnerability.

Lacoma

The most valuable economic asset in Lacoma is the well-built public market, which attracts buyers and sellers from the entire department twice a week. Very poor families live in small houses with walls made of wood from acacia trees and roofs made of leaves from latanier trees. These families struggle to get even one meal per day. They can't afford medical services at the clinic; they use traditional medicine instead. They work small jobs through the *métayage* system.

Poor families live in small houses that have walls of cement blocks or rocks. Their roofs are made of latanier leaves. Poor families grow their own food and generally eat one meal per day. They may supplement their diets with food from the market. They may be able to afford only basic medications from the health clinic. Their incomes come from selling food items and animals.

Well-off families live in houses that have walls made of bricks or cement blocks. The roofs are made of corrugated iron sheets or concrete. Families own their own housing plots, and their houses are permanent structures. Well-off families can afford at least two meals per day. They grow and purchase their food. These families can afford medical services at the clinic, and they have the means to access medical treatment in Port-de-Paix, which is 65 kilometers away. Their incomes come from sales of surplus crops and animals. Well-off families own motorcycle taxis, and they own their own land, which they lease through the *métayage* system.

Market vending is the leading livelihood activity. Women deal in locally produced crops such as corn, manioc and pearl millet, whereas men specialize in selling locally raised animals such as goats, sheep and cows. Men also grow rain-fed mixed crops. Youth and poorer households with no land engage in the system of *métayage*, which enables people to cultivate the owner's land and equally share the harvest.

Food security is largely affected by the community's vulnerability to the vagaries of the weather. Extended drought leads to crop failures and small harvests. The large bridgeless river Trois Rivières, which must be crossed in order to access Lacoma and other communities to the west of Port-de-Paix, often overflows its banks because of the rainwater that flows from the rainy regions outside the department. This affects the market activities in Lacoma

and household food security. The majority of the surveyed households could only afford one meal a day.

Baie des Moustiques

The most valuable community asset in Baie des Moustiques is the sea, and the leading livelihood activity is fishing. Very poor families own poorly built homes that are made of mud and latanier leaves. They may have a few small plots of land that they inherited from relatives. These families struggle to obtain one full meal per day. They can't afford medicine. They use traditional treatments instead. Their children attend public schools, and families struggle to raise school fees. Very poor families own a few animals that they sell to earn money. They also work in fields through the *métayage* system.

Many poor families live in simple houses, many of which are not near the sea. These families can afford one meal per day, basic medical treatment and tuition for their children's enrollment in public schools. Poor families own more animals than very poor families. They sell animals to earn money during hard times. They also seek to organize themselves in mutual solidarity groups to enhance their financial security.

Well-off families live in the center of the community in relatively well-built homes. They can comfortably afford two meals per day and good health care within and beyond the community. Their children go to either the best schools in the community or to Port-de-Paix's private schools. Well-off families own motorcycle taxis and have access to credit facilities, which help them to enrich their businesses.

Fishermen's assets include rudimentary fishing boats, nets and fishing rods. They catch fish mainly to sell them. Men specialize in catching fish while women engage in vending. In order to sell their catch at higher prices than what households in Baie des Moustique can afford, fishermen sometimes risk dangerous waters to sail their boats to Port-de-Paix, Poste Métier and Beauchamp. Sometimes their boats capsize and the fishermen drown. Men also rear animals

Figure 7. Daily meals per household in the Port-de-Paix zone

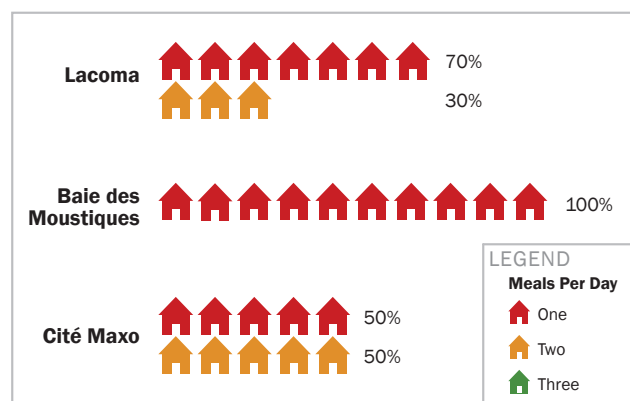


Table 3. Weekly household food expenditures in the Port-de-Paix zone

Community	Minimum (USD)	Maximum (USD)	Mean (USD)
Lacoma	\$5.00	\$75.00	\$37.50
Baie des Moustiques	\$2.50	\$43.75	\$30.00
Cite Maxo	\$17.50	\$125.00	\$50.40

and burn wood to make charcoal as an income diversification strategy. Women sell the charcoal of their spouses.

Baie des Moustiques is the most food insecure among the three communities in the Port-de-Paix zone, and food insecurity is the biggest vulnerability of the community. This is due to the vagaries of nature and the poor quality of their fishing technology. Rudimentary equipment and techniques hinder fishermen from getting into the inner sea where they report that fish are abundant. Nearly all the surveyed households could only afford one meal a day, and their weekly mean expenditure was \$30. Poor health facilities pose another challenge.

Cité Maxo

Cité Maxo is an urban community. The leading livelihood activities are selling food items and other products for general domestic use. Very poor families live in houses that are made of old iron sheets. These families struggle to earn enough for one meal per day. The children sometimes have to beg for food. Some family members earn money by working as porters (*manutentionnaires*).

Poor families live in small houses with walls made of wood and concrete and roofs made of old corrugated iron sheets. They can afford one meal per day and sometimes two meals per day. They earn money from their small, unstable businesses.

Well-off families live in well-built houses with walls made of concrete blocks and roofs made of either concrete or new corrugated iron sheets. They can afford at least two meals per day. These families have collateral and access to credit. They run stable businesses and receive money from relatives who are living overseas.

To cope with the high cost of food in the city, some community members cross the river to the community of Lacogne, where they practice mixed cropping of manioc, bananas, peas and shallots. While women specialize in selling food items and *pé pé* (used clothes) and working in gardens in Lacogne, men run small grocery shops, work in construction and work as moped taxi drivers. Young men also work as porters to earn a living. Women's groups are important assets in the community and, in one case, even led to the establishment of a popular community school.

Food insecurity is a major challenge. The main source of food is the market, where food prices are generally higher than in the other two communities. This accounts for the high weekly mean expenditure. Poor households can afford only one meal per day. Other vulnerabilities include poor sanitation and bad hygiene due to a chronic lack of latrines in the community. The most critical case is the popular community school, which has no latrine and no access to drinking water. Children and their teachers relieve themselves in nature, thus exposing the children and the entire community to health risks.

OUANAMINTHE ZONE

The communities in Ouanaminthe differed greatly from those in the other two zones in that their livelihoods were influenced by their proximity to the Haiti–Dominican Republic border.

Jacquesyl

The sea is the most valuable natural asset and the most significant source of livelihoods security in the community of Jacquesyl. The major livelihood activities are fishing and extraction of sea salt for both domestic consumption and income generation. Very poor families live in small houses with walls made of sticks and mud and roofs made of thatched grass. They are squatters who struggle to afford one full meal per day. These families earn a little money by extracting salt and selling charcoal.

Poor families own sturdier houses that are made of thatched grass or old iron sheets. They may have inherited some small tracts of land. Poor families can afford at least one meal per day. They sell some of their goats, sheep and pigs when they need extra money.

Well-off families own well-built houses that are made of concrete and corrugated iron sheets. These families can comfortably afford two meals per day. They own money-making assets such as salt basins and fishing boats, and they receive money from relatives who live abroad.

Key assets of well-off households are salt basins and fishing boats. Men specialize in catching fish and extracting salt while women engage in the commercial aspects of the industry and sell other food items. Men burn wood from acacia and mangrove trees to make charcoal, and women sell the charcoal produced by their spouses. Community members also grow small-scale rain-fed mixed crops of corn, manioc and beans.

The main source of food for households is the market, which accounts for the high weekly mean food expenditure of \$59.22 among the surveyed households. With income from salt and fish products, households buy rice and flour for domestic consumption. Households have fairly easy access to well-priced food items because the community is located only about 50 kilometers from the Haiti–Dominican

Figure 8. Daily meals per household in the Ouanaminthe zone

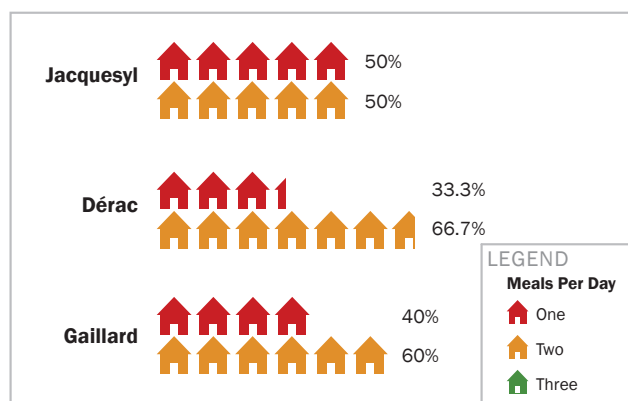


Table 4. Weekly household food expenditures in the Ouanaminthe zone

Community	Minimum (USD)	Maximum (USD)	Mean (USD)
Jacquesyl	\$17.50	\$131.25	\$59.22
Dérac	\$6.25	\$62.50	\$32.90
Gaillard	\$8.75	\$43.75	\$23.63

Republic border. Despite these advantages, there are many poor households in the community that can only afford one meal a day. Households that are more well-off can afford two meals a day.

Households' major livelihood activities are vulnerable because of climatic cycles and the poor quality of physical and social assets. Salt extraction, for instance, is only viable during hot and dry conditions. The fishermen's equipment does not enable them to make the most of the sea. Community members reported frequent occasions in which better-equipped fishermen from the Dominican Republic came and fished in their waters. The local fishermen reported that their fishermen association is too loosely organized to attract assistance from NGOs and government agencies.

Dérac

Dérac is also a maritime community near the small informal border community of Masiani in the Dominican Republic. The sea is the most valuable natural asset. Very poor families live in the old staff quarters that belonged to the Dauphin factory. Others live in simple structures that are made out of sticks, mud, thatched grass or old corrugated iron sheets. Many of these families are squatters who may lose their homes at any time. Fondation St. Vincent provides one meal per day. Family members beg for cash and rely on friends for assistance. Very poor families send their children to other cities as domestic servants. Sometimes the children are able to send back a little money.

Poor families live in similar houses, but their homes sometimes have concrete roofs. These families may have access to land, where they grow mixed crops without irrigation. Many poor families are squatters on the Dauphin factory's land. Depending on the season, they can afford either one meal or two meals per day. They earn money by selling their labor and crops. Poor families also send their children to other cities as domestic servants.

Well-off families live in the community's best houses. They can comfortably afford two meals per day. These families earn their money from diversified livelihood activities, such as fishing, producing charcoal and selling goods. They also receive money from relatives who live abroad.

Men catch fish using their rudimentary equipment such as simple boats and nets, and women specialize in selling the fish products. An important social asset is the good business relationship between the women in Dérac and the business people in Masiani. Women from Dérac are able to get products from their counterparts in Masiani on credit, sell them in their local markets for a profit, pay back their debts and maintain the business cycle.

The community of Dérac was reported to have some of the most vulnerable households. These are families with no solid and stable livelihood activities. To cope with poverty, they send their children to larger towns for domestic servitude, a system known as *restavec* in Haitian Creole. However, these children oftentimes continue living in the cycle of poverty and fail to send any money to their parents.

Many households in Dérac can only afford one meal a day. Their food security is enhanced by a local NGO, Fondation St. Vincent, which operates a community canteen for the poor and provides a daily hot meal to poor households.

Other vulnerabilities in the community include poor access to potable water and medical care. Hygiene is also a huge challenge, as many poor households do not own proper latrines.

Gaillard

Gaillard is a periurban border community in Ouanaminthe. Gaillard's main assets include easy access to well-priced products and manual jobs in the Dominican Republic, the sands on the bed of the River Massacre and the Haiti–Dominican Republic industrial park in the Free Zone (*La Zone Franche*). Very poor families have small houses that are made of mud, wood and old corrugated iron sheets. Their homes are surrounded by small cactus fences. These families do not own their homes and could be evicted at any time. Very poor families struggle to afford one meal per day and are barely able to afford any medical treatment. They earn money by doing manual labor. The children spend much of the day selling water sachets. Some families spend most of their time begging. Parents sometimes send their children to other cities in Haiti or the Dominican Republic as servants.

Poor families own bigger homes that have concrete roofs atop mud walls. Many of these families are squatters. They can afford one meal per day, sometimes two meals per day. They mainly eat food from their urban gardens. Poor families can afford basic medications, such as painkillers. They earn money by selling goods, including food from their gardens.

Well-off families own the land upon which their homes are built. The walls of their homes are made of concrete blocks, and the roofs are made of either concrete or new iron sheets. These families can comfortably afford at least two meals per day. They grow food and purchase food from the market. Well-off families can afford medical treatment from hospitals in the region. The families own grocery shops and have access to the Dominican Republic for legal business activities.

Women conduct small business activities, namely dealing in salami, spaghetti, eggs and soft drinks from the Dominican Republic. Young women work in the garments factory. Other women operate mobile restaurants and sell hot meals as peddlers. Men work as laborers on private farms in the Dominican Republic, collect and sell sand from the River Massacre, rear animals and grow mixed crops in periurban areas along the banks of the River Massacre.

Food security is highly dependent on the market, and access to food depends only on the household's purchasing power. Many poor households with weak income-generating activities engage in low-paying illegal manual jobs in the Dominican Republic. In spite of their hard work, many households can only afford one meal a day.

Among the most vulnerable social groups are children. Many boys and girls from poor households do not attend school, or they drop out of school and beg at the border. Girls sell water sachets as peddlers throughout the day. Boys spend their entire day standing in the polluted River Massacre, guiding people across the river and lifting their luggage for tips. Other vulnerable groups are the men and women who engage in illegal work in the Dominican Republic. Their employers often take advantage of their illegal status and either pay them too little or nothing at all. Women also become victims of sexual exploitation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment team asked community members to identify activities that could reduce their vulnerability. The team then compiled the following recommendations.⁵

Table 5. Recommendations

Recommended Interventions	Vulnerabilities	Causes	Target Communities	
Strengthen communities' capacities to manage risks related to flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct and rehabilitate drainage canals Strengthen communities' waste management capacity 	Flooding during the rainy seasons	Inadequate drainage canals; existing drainage canals are used as garbage pits	Aciphat, Cité Maxo and other similar vulnerable urban communities
Improve community hygiene and potable water conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct community latrines for use in schools and among household clusters Strengthen communities' capacities to maintain community latrines Sensitize communities and raise awareness of key hygiene practices Extract and treat drinking water at natural springs where applicable Drill more community borehole wells and improve access to domestic water treatment substances 	Hygiene-related and waterborne diseases (cholera, typhoid, skin diseases)	Lack of latrines among poor households; limited access to potable water and domestic water purification substances	All communities
Improve community access to affordable health services and medical care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical assistance in the form of medical equipment, medication and personnel Provide mobile clinics to vulnerable households Provide health grants to very vulnerable households 	Chronic sickness; recurrent diseases/sicknesses	Poor access to affordable health services	All communities
Enhance the capacities of people who fish, thereby helping them to manage and sustain their livelihood security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen associative/organizational capacities Improve access to financial/credit services to enable the purchase of improved fishing technology 	Low catches; low revenues; hunger in the home	Inability to access the high seas, where fish are perceived to be more abundant than near the shores	Baie des Moustiques, Dérac, Jacquesyl and all other similar communities in the north
Enhance vulnerable families' capacities to diversify their livelihood activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide in-kind grants (e.g., for drought-resistant agricultural seeds and for animals that are suitable for commercial rearing) Provide training on how to sustain households' livelihood activities Engage vulnerable households in solidarity, savings and internal lending activities 	Persistent hunger and malnutrition	Dependence on only a few sources of food	Lacoma, Baie des Moustiques, Jacquesyl, Dérac, Moulin and other similar communities in the north
Improve school health and hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct latrines in community and public schools Integrate health/hygiene education in school curricula Strengthen schools' capacity to sustain health/hygiene education in the curriculum 	Chronic sicknesses; recurrent diseases/sicknesses	Lack of latrines; poor hygiene in schools with and without latrines	Cité Maxo, Aciphat, Gaillard and other similar communities in the north

⁵ These recommendations do not reflect senior management decisions; all recommendations will be further analyzed and vetted before CRS takes any action. CRS' review process will include an analysis to ensure that any action pursued by CRS will not aggravate vulnerable environmental conditions.

Recommended Interventions	Vulnerabilities	Causes	Target Communities	
Improve communities' capacity to protect children from exploitation, and protect children's rights to a quality education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of risks and consequences of the restavec system • Strengthen/diversify the livelihood activities of vulnerable families that send children to be restavecs • Engage community-based organizations in campaigns to enroll children 	Child exploitation in domestic servitude, begging and petty abusive activities	Poverty in families; ignorance about how child exploitation can threaten a child's future	Gaillard, Dérac, Cité Maxo, Jacquesyl and other communities that have similar situations in the north
Enhance the livelihood activities of young women and men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train vulnerable youth in market-driven vocational skills (e.g., baking) • Provide start-up capital (equipment and tools) to youth • Provide follow-up technical assistance and on-the-job support until youths' incomes begin to improve 	Recurrent youth unemployment	Lack of meaningful income-generation activities for youth	Aciphat, Cité Maxo, Gaillard and other urban communities that have similar situations in the north

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I would like to thank CRS for giving me the opportunity to guide, lead, train, advise and strengthen the capacity of emerging Haitian civil society leaders in participatory rural appraisal methodologies and to conduct a participatory livelihoods assessment in northern Haiti. This project is a true reflection of the hard work and proven capacities of CRS' staff and partners to act as catalysts for local development. They have achieved this by engaging various Haitian communities in critical discussions about their livelihoods and strategies to enhance their local assets and mitigate their vulnerability. I believe CRS' staff and partners who served on the team will be the future trainers, advisors and team leaders on similar assessment interventions for CRS in Haiti. The assessment truly belongs to the 16 Haitian women and men who first attended my training sessions and then traveled with me to the nine communities in northern Haiti. I believe the content of this report will guide CRS to develop an informed strategy and design effective programs for northern Haiti.

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