

AIDING MIGRATION

The Impact of International Development Assistance on Haiti

Josh DeWind
and David H. Kinley III

International Studies in Migration

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Aiding Migration

Acronyms

ADIH:	Association des Industries d'Haiti
AID:	U.S. Agency for International Development
C/CAA:	Caribbean/Central American Action
CGCED:	World Bank, Caribbean Group for Cooperation in Economic Development
DAI:	Development Alternatives, Inc.
GAO:	U.S. General Accounting Office
HACHO:	Haitian American Community Help Organization
HAMCHAM:	Haitian American Chamber of Commerce
HDF:	Haitian Development Foundation
IACHR:	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
IDB:	Inter-American Development Bank
IDEA:	Institut d'Education des Adultes
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
IFC:	World Bank, International Finance Corporation
LARRC:	Latin America Regional Reports, Caribbean
LCIHR:	Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights
MODECBO:	Movement pour le Developpement de la Communaute de Le Borgne
NCHR:	National Coalition for Haitian Refugees
ONAPI:	Office National pour La Promotion des Investissements
OPIC:	Overseas Private Investment Corporation
UNIDO:	United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Preface

In the early morning darkness of February 7, 1986, Haiti's President-for-Life, Jean-Claude Duvalier, with an entourage of family members, close associates, and bodyguards boarded a U.S. Air Force transport plane and flew to France to seek asylum. Forced to leave Haiti by an unprecedented popular uprising, President Duvalier left behind the nation which he and his father before him had ruled despotically for nearly three decades. With the Duvaliers gone, most Haitians, including hundreds of thousands of those who had previously fled abroad, began to hope that Haiti would also soon be rid of the political repression and poverty that they have endured for so long. But the prospects for democracy and economic development in Haiti remain uncertain.

The Haitian people must still overcome the legacy of Duvalier rule in the form of government institutions and policies that block progress. Jean-Claude Duvalier personally selected the members of the military-civilian junta that succeeded him, the Conseil National du Gouvernement, and he left intact his regime's control over all levels of the government. Popular protests forced the junta to announce it would undertake democratic reforms, including the abolishment of the infamous militia known as the "Tontons Macoutes," a halt of government repression of both free speech and independent political parties, and a promise for future elections. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether or not the junta will have either the political ability or will to carry out the *dechoukage*, or uprooting, of the Duvalier regime that has been demanded in public protests as a guarantee that the promises for democracy will be fulfilled.

In addition to carrying out political reforms, the Haitian people face the challenge of reorienting the government's economic policies to meet the needs of the impoverished majority instead of a privileged few. Although the elimination of corrupt or incompetent officials of the Duvalier regime may be necessary, it will not be sufficient in order to establish an equitable approach to economic development. In order to

begin to eliminate poverty in Haiti, the strategy for promoting economic growth that was instituted during Duvalier's rule will also have to be redesigned. This task will be doubly complicated by the preponderant influence that the United States and international development agencies, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) and the World Bank, have had in establishing this strategy.

The United States and the international development agencies began to intervene most forcefully in Haitian affairs in 1980 after it became clear that the nation was in an economic and political crisis. An obvious manifestation of this crisis that motivated the U.S. government was the increasing number of Haitians who were fleeing Haiti. By 1980, nearly half a million Haitians had settled in the United States, most illegally, and in that year alone, more than 25,000 Haitians were apprehended desperately attempting to sail to Florida in small, overcrowded boats. The U.S. government's response, under President Ronald Reagan, was to begin an interdiction program to return the boat people to Haiti.

Officials in Haiti of the U.S. Agency for International Development warned that the interdiction program could have unintended political consequences. They feared that closing the migration "safety valve" would result in urban population growth and increased demands on the already overwhelmed urban infrastructure. Unless some solution were found for this problem within five years, the officials predicted, the international aid donors and the Haitian government would have to face increased migration, despite enforcement efforts, and internal unrest. The warning was prescient.

The United States and the international agencies designed and began to implement a new approach to economic development for Haiti, but their strategy was apparently unsuccessful in alleviating the political and economic problems that have forced so many Haitians to flee their country. Our investigation of international development assistance and migration in Haiti has found that the new strategy has actually intensified the crisis faced by the majority of Haiti's impoverished population. After 1980, the flow of migrants continued unabated, and internal unrest grew until it forced Duvalier to flee Haiti. The popular unrest continues still.

In this book, we have examined the political and economic legacy of the Duvalier regime with the intention of clarifying its implications for Haiti's future development. Brutal and self-serving as the Duvalier family may have been, its departure has by no means provided a solution to Haiti's political and economic problems, but only a disruption in the status quo that may enable the Haitian people to establish democratic institutions and policies. Reforming the nation's economic development strategy to address the needs of the poor majority is one of the most difficult political tasks that Haitians will face.

The book is organized in the following manner:

Chapter I presents the historical background of the political and economic causes of recent migration from Haiti to the United States and the response of the U.S. government.

Chapter II explains why internationally sponsored economic assistance programs in Haiti during the 1970's failed to avert a severe economic and political crisis.

Chapter III describes the new, export-led economic development strategy designed by the international agencies and how this strategy has been imposed on Haiti.

Chapter IV examines how the new development strategy has been applied to agriculture and how it has affected Haiti's "food security."

Chapter V evaluates the potential of the assembly industry to contribute to increasing employment, raising workers' standard of living, and promoting Haiti's economic development.

Chapter VI explains why the export-led development strategy is likely to maintain or exacerbate the political and economic problems that motivate Haitians to migrate.

Chapter VII outlines principles for an alternative development strategy that would follow Haitian rather than foreign priorities in addressing the political and economic problems that cause migration.

Numerous people have helped us to produce this book. We are especially thankful to Glenn S. Smucker who introduced us to Haiti as a guide, colleague, and friend. We offer thanks to Harlan Hobgood, director of the AID mission to Haiti from 1981 to 1984, and to Carl Braun of Capital Consult for their thorough and critical readings of a preliminary draft. Michael S. Hooper, Paul Miller, and Paul Latortue also provided equally useful comments on parts of the manuscript. The point of view and any faults that remain in this book are entirely the responsibility of the authors.

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The Political Economy of Haitian Migration

The sunbathers could hardly believe their eyes. Heads raised up from the hot sand and eyes widened in amazement all along Pompano Beach on the posh eastern coast of Florida north of Miami. It was December 12, 1972 -- the Christmas season well underway -- when vacationers, slick with suntan lotion, gazed uncomprehendingly at the unpainted, battered fishing smack riding low in the water among the sleek white cabin cruisers. So crowded with black people, the small boat looked like a cartoon of Washington crossing the Delaware. The boat ran right in on the surf and grounded on the white sand beach, spilling black people. Dressed in rags, they carried little baskets and bundles, and spoke a strange, mellifluous language, which sounded like French until you listened to the words (Powers 1976:62).

The language was Creole, and the voyagers were among the first of thousands of Haitians who would flee their country by boat and seek refuge in the United States over the next decade. By mid-1981, more than 45,000 Haitians were known by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to have arrived in the United States by boat or occasionally by other means without legal sanction (Table I:3). Many more presumably have arrived undetected. A large portion of the undocumented Haitians, perhaps 10 thousand (Helton 1985), have applied for political asylum in the United States.

Under the successive administrations of Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan, the INS policy has been to deny asylum to the Haitian boat people and to seek their deportation back to their home country. This policy was first challenged in 1974 by the National Council of Churches and the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, who sent a team of lawyers to Miami to defend Haitians' claims for political asylum. Opposition to the policy of deportation broadened in 1980 to include

numerous human rights, religious, immigration, union, and political groups when, in stark contrast to the treatment of Haitians, President Carter welcomed 125,000 Cuban "Marielitos," who had also come by sea to Florida without legal entry documents. Subsequently, the controversy over whether or not undocumented Haitians should be allowed to stay in the United States has grown to involve Constitutional rights and complex political issues that have not yet been resolved.

ECONOMIC MIGRANTS OR POLITICAL REFUGEES?

The U.S. government contends that the Haitian boat people, except in a very few cases, have not demonstrated that they are fleeing political persecution, which would entitle them to asylum in the United States. The United Nation's 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee entitled to asylum as a person who,

...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

The United States signed this Protocol in 1968 and the Congress adopted similar language in the Refugee Act of 1980. To avoid calling the boat people "political refugees," U.S. government officials have described them as "economic migrants" who are fleeing poverty rather than persecution (Fagen 1984:23; Loescher and Scanlon 1984:24-5).

The Haitians' supporters have argued that the boat people have not been provided full and fair hearings on their claims for asylum as required by the U.S. Constitution and international law; and that if such hearings were granted, the vast majority of the boat people would be found to be refugees entitled to asylum. An example of the unfair hearings given the Haitians occurred in the Haitian Program, which was established in 1978 by the INS to process a growing backlog of cases. Under the program, up to 150 cases were daily presented to only five immigration judges, a pace that allowed approximately 15 minutes for each hearing. The Haitians' lawyers were not allowed to speak for their clients, and Haitians who spoke for themselves were often given inadequate translations or none at all (Loescher and Scanlon 1984:16-17,22). When these proceedings were challenged in the courts, Florida Judge James L. King found that rather than provide fair hearings,

the goal of the Haitian Program was to expel Haitian asylum applicants as rapidly as possible... regardless of

the cost to due process (*Haitian Refugee Center v. Civiletti* cited in Fagen 1984:23).

In a case before the U.S. Supreme Court, *Jean v. Nelson*, the U.S. Government did not contest that the INS discriminated against Haitian asylum applicants. Rather, the Supreme Court was asked to decide whether such discriminatory treatment is lawful. At issue was whether or not Haitian boat people, as "excludable aliens," were entitled to the full and equal protections of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution. The Supreme Court remanded the case to the lower courts without defining the Constitutional rights of Haitian boat people to due process of law, and the issue remains unresolved.

U.S. officials have defended their deportation policy, claiming that, when first apprehended, Haitian boat people say that they came to the United States to escape poverty and find work, and that they do not mention a fear of persecution until their lawyers advise them to apply for asylum (Fagen 1984:31). That Haitians with legitimate claims to asylum are reluctant to describe their persecution becomes understandable in the context of an immigration hearing where they must contend not only with extreme cultural and language differences, but also with government authorities whom they may not trust to either understand or try to resolve their problems. The difficulties confronting the boat people become clear in a description of a typical hearing by Tom Powers, one of the first journalists to write about the Haitians' plight:

It is not easy to communicate with Haitians. Most of them speak only Creole, which bears about the same relation to French as Yiddish to German; and even those who speak English are at first difficult to understand. Part of the problem is the clipped, musical West Indian accent, which can take a familiar word like "harbor" and sail it right past an American ear. What is this "hah-bo" you're talking about? The hah-bo, mon! Don't you know hah-bo? Where dey tie op de but? The what? De but in de hah-bo! De feeshen but! Ahh, the fishing boats, now I see....

When you can't understand your own interpreter telling you, in your own language, about working on the boats in the harbor, your interpreter naturally concludes you're slow and makes allowances. She or he stops trying to interpret literally; and sums up a long, impassioned Creole statement in English that a three-year-old could understand: "He say de *Macoutes* come