

SUNGA SUNGA REPORTS

Working & Living Conditions of Sugarcane Workers in the Dominican Republic

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Publication of this report was made possible through a collaborative effort of Sunga Sunga, USA and Conclusions, perspectives and points of view expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of collaborators, funders or grant supporters.

August 2022

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Important Terms	4
Introduction	5
Significance	6
Literature Review	6
Summary of Findings	7
Methodology	9
Survey Instrument	11
Data Processing & Analysis	12
Data Details Findings	12
Survey Conclusions	21
Other Observations	22
Overall Conclusions	24
Case Study	25
Appendix	26
Bibliography	29

Abstract

Our task was to conduct a comprehensive, scientific investigation of Working and Living Conditions of Sugar Cane Workers (Caneros) in the Dominican Republic, in particular those employed by the Central Romana Corporation. Specifically, we wanted to understand the presence and existence of working conditions that meet the criteria of “forced Labor” or “modern slavery” as established by international convention and accepted practice. These elements of “forced labor” and/or “modern slavery” are outlined and detailed in the International Labor Organization (ILO) Forced Labor Protocol Article 1 (3) Convention of 1930 as reiterated in 2014.

The convention criteria established as key, the following:

- Acceptance of Work based upon False Promises
- Labor performed Involuntarily
- Labor performed under Menace of Penalty
- Labor performed under Threat of Violence
- Manipulated Debt
- Withholding of Identification Papers as a Pressure Tactic to force Compliance
- Threat of Notification to Immigration Authorities as a Pressure Tactic to force Compliance

It is noted that all of the above criteria need not exist but the presence of any one will suffice for the definitional purpose. The research therefore reached conclusions based on the existence of the presence of a single criterion or multiple criteria in the ILO’s definition. The research was conducted in light of multiple anecdotal reports including by journalists suggesting widespread exploitation in the industry (See bibliography references).

The research involved two streams of scientific enquiry. One stream involved the conduct of a quantitative survey questionnaire of Caneros. The other involved qualitative recorded interviews. The selection of Caneros to be interviewed was arrived at using a scientific approach of stratified, randomized sampling; this approach comports with generally accepted norms in academe.

We selected Bateyes across the greater La Romana/ San Pedro de Macoris area of the Dominican Republic. All the Bateyes selected were owned and administered by the Central Romana Corporation (CR/CRC), the single largest operator in the industry. Our visits took us through a total of 37 Bateyes. Our interviewee cohorts were representative of the demographics of interests reflecting a mix of gender; location; time of arrival; number of years in the field; age.

This Report seeks to discuss the presence of Haitian labourers in the agricultural fields of the Dominican Republic, particularly on the sugar cane plantation communities known as Bateyes as constituting forced labour under ILO standards. The specific criteria of ILO standards are detailed as well as are the specific conditions of work among these labourers. The report concludes that under ILO standards, as well as Dominican Republic law, the living and working conditions of ethnic Haitians in the agricultural fields of the Dominican Republic constitute forced labour.

Some Important Terms

Batey: Sugar Plantation & Sugar Cane Workers Community

Buscones: Smugglers & Recruiters

Caneros: Sugar Cane Workers

Carnet : Temporary Work Card

Carreteros: Workers transporting sugarcane in cart

Colomado: small shop

Colonos: sugar cane producers who sell to the mills

CAC: Consorcio Azucarero Central (Central Sugar Corp)

CAEI: Consorcio Azucarero de Empresas Industriales (Industrial Sugar Corp)

CR/ CRC: Central Romana Corp. Ltd.

CEA: Consejo Estatal de Azucar (State Sugar Corporation)

CDL: Centro de Derechos Laborales (Center for Labor Rights)

CNM: Consejo Nacional de Migracion (National Migration Council)

UTC: Union De Trabajadores Caneros (Union of Sugarcane Workers)

Downtime: non-harvest season

Ingenios: Sugar Cane Factory

Kongo: recent migrant

Metric Ton: 2,250 pounds (amount expected/required for a day's work)

Vale: Promisory Note used to purchase items

Zafra: Sugar Cane Harvest Time (December – June)

Introduction

Forced labour or modern slavery is not a figment of the imagination. It occurs all over the world and it is especially true here in the Dominican Republic. (See bibliographic references). As to what exactly constitutes forced labour may be unclear to some but to the thousands of caneros and carreteros trapped in it, the men and women working in the sugarcane plantations of the

Dominican Republic, there is no mystery about it. They are familiar with long work days, with days that start early and not end until quite late. They are the recipients of low wage and unsure and non-guaranteed wages. They have no benefits they can rely upon, neither health care, social services, education for their children nor and form of pension or social security. They complain little and when they do their complaints most often fall on deaf ears or meet with harsh retributions. Their employers care little about their living conditions and the government seems to care even less. They have only themselves to turn to for assistance. What little assistance they get from international human rights organizations or from advocacy groups hardly make up for the want that is pervasive in their homes, in their batey communities and in their everyday lives. They are part of a larger ethnic community within the Dominican Republic that prefers to have them exist as second class citizens or forcibly removed. Their toleration in the larger society is necessitated by the contribution they make to the service economy and to the agricultural and hospitality industries which together comprise the backbone of the Dominican economy. (See bibliographic references). They live in a society where popular opinion and law are openly hostile to their presence and deny them the rights and social opportunities granted to others. (See bibliographic references). The sugarcane workers understand their place in contemporary Dominican society and most often choose not to rock the boat for fear of risking deportation.

Against the looming background of deportation, even though many are second or third generation residents, they simply endure the vagaries of life in the bateyes and the seemingly unjust working conditions that are a part of it. Employed as migrant workers and regarded legally as transients, (See Bibliographic references on DR constitutional & judicial rulings) they have little option but to let their labor power be super exploited with seeming impunity.

There are international and domestic standards and rules. The ILO has established specific conditions that constitute forced labor. These are spelled out in the 1930 and 2014 Protocols. Among the conditions stipulated by the ILO are involuntariness of work, an inability to leave and work under conditions of threat or coercion. These are not standards unknown to the Dominican government or to the sugarcane corporations (CAC; CR/CRC; CAEI;CEA) that directly employ their labor. The litany of complaints against these entities is long and repetitive; it does not seem to matter (See bibliographic reference). The plantation owners know that the laborers have little choice and that the government is on their side. The government fears little from international condemnation especially from its largest trading partner, the United States, which has always been reluctant to do the only thing that matters, that is, sanction the import of forced labor products from the Dominican Republic. The caneros have little hope to look forward to; to many newcomers, Kongos as they have been called, it's a huge surprise. Even the existence of codified local Dominican rules and standards forbidding their mistreatment do not act as deterrents to their super-exploitation.

Significance

The exploitation of Black workers in the Dominican Republic has existed for the better part of the last hundred years. In many ways, the Dominican economy has been based historically upon the labor of these migrants from Haiti and successive generations of their children. Overworked, underpaid and denied basic rights and freedoms, these communities get trapped into cycles of

poverty while enriching a plantocracy that cares little or nothing about their existence. Neither do the employers of this laboring force observe any of the accepted norms of behavior regarding labor standards. The plight of these workers continue unabated both within the domestic sphere of the Dominican Republic itself as well as the international community which for the most part have allowed it to continue with impunity. It is important that the miserable and illegal conditions in which these communities work be publicized, internationalized, addresses and redressed.

Literature Review

“Harvesting Oppression – Forced Labor in the Dominican Sugar Industry”, a 1990 report by Americas Watch concluded that “Haitian sugarcane cutters in the Dominican Republic continue to suffer under an abusive system controlled by the state-run sugar industry with the aid of the Dominican military.” It also found that the use of force was a regular practice. The researchers visited five ingenios but did not spend much time in the Central Romana (CR) cane fields or for that matter with the caneros.

An earlier report by Verite stands as the most significant to date. This report looked at various productions in various places. Specifically, the Shrimp Industry in Bangladesh; Nuts, Cattle and Corn in Bolivia; Fish Industry in Indonesia; Rubber in Liberia; Tuna in the Philippines; Sugar in the Dominican Republic. Conducted between 2009 and 2011, it was intended to determine the existence or scale of forced labor.

The primary objectives of the Verite investigation in the Dominican sugar cane industry were the following: (a) generate information on the Dominican Republic sugar industry; (b) create a methodology to study the presence of indicators; (c) identify and document indicators of forced labor. (d) document the broader living and working conditions; (e) determine risk factors for exploitation.

The investigation by Sunga Sunga USA, Inc. had different and more targeted goals and included the following:

- (1) Determine and document the presence and persistence of forced labor utilizing International Labor Organization (ILO) and Dominican Labor Law standards.
- (2) Document the Living Conditions of sugar cane plantation workers.
- (3) Document the Denial of Rights, Opportunities and Privileges for sugar cane workers, their families and the general ethnic Haitian population in the Dominican Republic.
- (4) Identify Movements and People in the opposition to current conditions.
- (5) Propose Recommendations to counter the presence and persistence of forced labor , exploitative working conditions and sub-standard living conditions.

Important Dates

1991 – DR Decree No. 233-91 (expulsion of all undocumented Haitians under 16 or over 60)

1999 – Bilateral Protocol on the Expulsion of Haitians (guaranteed non-separation of families)

2004 – DR Migration Law (deny identity documents to ethnic Haitians born in the Dominican Republic)

2010 – DR Constitution Ruling (Modification of Nationality Law denies citizenship to children born in the Dominican Republic of “illegal” parents)

2010 – ILO Finding (DR in violation of protocols and agreements)

2013 – Supreme Court of Justice Ruling 168-13

2021 – Supreme Court of Justice Sentence #120

Summary Findings From The Surveys

The hope of Caneros before leaving their homes in Haiti was to find a way to improve their lives. They were encouraged/invited to come to the Dominican Republic to work in the sugar cane plantations by buscones. They heard about these opportunities from family, friends and recruiters many of whom had never themselves been to the Dominican Republic but were repeating what they had heard from others. They were promised work, working papers, enough pay to send remittances back home to support families left behind, the right to stay in the Dominican Republic, rights and opportunities including the ability to have their children grow up in the Dominican Republic with all the rights and privileges of regular citizens, and living conditions that were better than that which they left behind. They had no intention of returning to Haiti as it was a life from which they were trying to escape. These turned out to be false promises in most cases.

For the most part, their expectations were not met. During the Zafra, (harvest time) the work day and working hours were longer than anticipated or described and they pay was much less. Often they were not paid at all or very infrequently going as much as 6 months without pay. The average wage was 200pesos (US\$3.63) a day for a set amount of cane tonnage cut. Certainly it did not leave anything to remit. During “downtime”, there was no guaranteed wages for as many as six months.

The average number of hours worked per day was between 10 and 12 starting as early as 5:00am and going as late as 7:00pm. On average, the work week consisted of 6 days. Caneros are paid once a week on Saturdays. Most pay stubs revealed a weekly pay averaging 1000 – 1,100 pesos or US\$18.00 -US\$20.00.

Many Caneros work well into their 80s and beyond. Although they arrive at the Dominica Retirement Age at age 65, they are forced to continue work as most do not received the pension to which they are entitled. Promises of pensions and increased wages often are nothing but

promises and fail to encompass legitimate demands. Any number of devices are used to restrict them from getting the otherwise entitled pensions, most common is the claim that they are unable to produce valid work papers even though they have work identification cards and pay slips to show. It is not uncommon to find these Caneros holding on to all their pay slips in their pockets and on their person which they seem to carry every day in a bid to prove their entitlements if the opportunity arises. For the many Caneros who have advanced beyond retirement age and who are denied pensions their continued labor amounts to “involuntary work”.

The lack of “valid” documentation and national identity cards create additional burdens on this community of workers and their families. These limitations and hardships include the following: They are unable to find regular, legitimate employment outside of the cane fields. They receive no pensions. Free health care is unavailable to them. Higher education opportunities are denied to their children. They do not receive the benefits of national and local social services. They are deemed as “in-transit”, “temporary visiting workers” even though they might have been on the Bateyes for 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, generations or even born there. This categorization denies them legal residency and citizenship with all the rights, privileges and opportunities attached thereto.

The absence of proper documentation, that is, work permits and national identification is known to the major employer for whom most work, the Central Romana Corporation. The corporation is very much aware of their documentation situation and is in the position to change this condition by assisting with the necessary paperwork but refuses. It is a means of ensuring a labor pool tied to the sugar fields as without that documentation they are not employable elsewhere. The unlimited supply of labor arising from these conditions also allows the corporation to minimize its labor costs and thereby maximize its profits.

Under these conditions, the Caneros not only cannot look forward to increased and improved opportunities, but additionally, because of their captive status by the Central Romana Corporation, they can never expect to obtain the coveted and absolutely necessary Cedula or national identification card.. The withholding of proper identification papers ensure this.

Caneros generally view their working and living conditions as unfair and exploitative. Many use the term “slavery” to describe their existence. Indeed, the fact that they are paid way below the national standards, are involuntarily tied to the land, endure a number of working hours and a number of working days in excess of the requirements of international norms and national codes, obtain no paid leave for sickness or holidays, collectively support a conclusive classification of their situation as “modern slavery/ forced labor”. Even so, they seldom complain either to the CRC or to governmental authorities about their grievances.

The general view on complaining can be summed up in the words of an interviewee, “complaining doesn’t change anything; you would only lose your job or maybe sent back to Haiti and how would you feed your family?”. The interviews revealed that complaints, if made, are swiftly and decisively dealt with. A threat of physical abuse does not seem to be normal; none of the interviewees could point to a single incident that they knew of personally. Actually, it does not appear to be necessary. It seemed more likely that investigators like ourselves and

workers union as the UTC would meet with harassment by CRC officials who view us as unwelcomed troublemakers and were extremely stern in their warnings to us and demands that we immediately leave the premises. The Caneros, for the most part, did not express the demeanor or interest in making complaints to authorities. Instead, they willingly and eagerly expressed why. They recounted incidents of fellow workers being dismissed from employment, removed from their housing, being threatened with deportation or actually being deported for having complained. It is clear, they suggest, that everyone knows what happens when you complain. Caneros first interest is in feeding their families, having a place to live and possibly having the ability to send some remittances to families left behind in Haiti. All these interests are threatened by complaining.

The real fear of complaining extends to any association with unions or organized labor activity dedicated to fighting for the interests of Caneros. They are all familiar with the existence and activities of the UTC and its leader Jesus Nunez. They know of the protests marches demanding higher wages, pensions, health care, better working conditions that have regularly been held in San Pedro de Macoris, Greater La Romana and the capitol, Santo Domingo. They applaud the efforts but doubt that much will come of them because they also know about the trials and tribulations of Jesus Nunez who is treated as a pariah by the government constantly facing charges and accusations. Maybe the labor leaders, unionist and legal advocates can afford the high personal and financial costs; the ordinary caneros cannot. Their concerns are much more mundane; their issues are truly bread and butter. Besides, promises of better pay and working conditions by the government are often undermined by some manufactured criteria that leave most ineligible.

Methodology

A research team from Sunga Sunga USA, Inc (SSUSA), a United States based based non-governmental organization (NGO) conducted the study. SSUSA concentrates its mission on human rights advocacy, justice, equality and economic development of exploited African communities in the Caribbean. The research was overseen by the Director of Programs/ Project Director of SSUSA in consultation with JR Associates, a Research Methodology firm. The survey was carried out in the field by a team of ten research assistants/consultants in the various bateyes. Research assistants included individuals who were conversant in English, Spanish and Kreyol to accommodate communication between and among the US based project directorate and local workers who spoke either Spanish or Haitian Kreyol.

The research was informed by both quantitative and qualitative approaches but emphasized quantitative data. Probability sampling was used and designed to be statistically representative of the target group. The findings are not biased as such as the entire subset of bateyes were likely to be included.

Data gathering was accomplished in three phases from 2017 -2022. Data gathering was not confined to a particular season but was done throughout the work cycle of laborers (planting and

harvesting seasons) on the numerous bateyes and sugar cane plantations in the provinces of the Greater La Romana region and San Pedro de Macoris.

Phase I involved travel to the various bateys to make connections with local representatives and to gain familiarity with the batey plantations. In addition connections were made with local and union representatives at the bateyes.

Phase II involved methodological aspects of cohort selection, survey questionnaire design and selecting and preparing project assistant teams.

Phase III involved the implementation of the survey itself, analysis of the data and preparation of the final report.

A total of 3200 preliminary interaction surveys were administered to workers and residents on 37 bateyes. The final selection was drawn from these.

Our methodological approach was information gathering and analysis through on-site survey. We began by creating a questionnaire instrument based upon the ILO definition of “forced labour” but did not confine the issues to those. The questionnaire was prepared in Haitian Kreyol, Spanish and English to accommodate the needs of the population being surveyed, the data intake workers and the communication needs of the study director. We then employed methods of randomization and stratification in obtaining the data. After inspecting the dominant batey regions, we decided upon the La Romana region as it is home to one of the largest batey communities in the country and run by one of the largest private-public growers association, the Central Romana Corporation. A total of twenty Bateyes were randomly selected from the batey environ of Guaymate, in the Central Romana region. In each of these bateyes, the dwellings were marked separately with identification numbers. Those identification numbers were then selected taking every odd number or every even number until a total of 600 homes were obtained from all bateyes for a total of 600 homes to be surveyed. From each home 2 adults were identified. Key criteria for selection were interviewees being foreign born and arriving for the specific purpose of accepting work on the plantations. Our cohort of interviewees consisted of approximately 1200 individuals.

Most respondents came from the following bateyes: Cacata; Belme; Nigua; #16; #20.

Prior to conducting the surveys, we assembled a team of four (4) survey takers/ data collectors. The team underwent an hour long training session on the purpose of the study, familiarity with the survey instrument itself, the criteria for selection of laborers, and possible issues as well as responses that may arise from the workers.

The survey team travelled as a group to each of the bateyes. Prior to our arrival, a liaison was identified at each batey who briefed the batey dwellers on our impending presence, the purposes and goals of our presence and obtained their permission. The survey was conducted over a period of six days.

The data collected were categorized and collapsed. It was then entered into the selected analytic program by a data input staff. SPSSX (the Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was

used to analyze the data collected. Some data collection and data input were done by students from the undergraduate programs at Howard University in Washington, D.C. who had traveled on study abroad/mission trips to the Dominican Republic.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument took into consideration the research goals. It contained 40 close-ended questions and 17 open-ended questions. There were 25 of sections covering distinct topics. Topics emphasized in particular on the instrument included mode and methods of recruitment, purposes of migration, experiences of migrant workers in the Dominican Republic and living conditions of migrant workers in the Dominican Republic.

Sample Size

The total cohorts size included all sugarcane workers (braceros) on the bateyes and their families. This included a range of 30 thousand to 50 thousand to obtain a sufficiency of sample universe. The particular cohorts were arranged by age, gender, time on the plantations. We employed a stratified sampling methodology of Bateyes. A random selection of Bateyes was done obtaining 20 Bateyes for the final selection from which were selected a total of 1200 survey targets. The randomization process involved the selection of particular dwellings on each Batey whereby every other dwelling beginning with the first then with the second on alternate Bateyes. Surveys were conducted on both weekdays and weekends and different times of day for an equal chance to catch residents who were likely to be gone on certain periods.

Survey staff were bi-lingual and tri-lingual conversant in Spanish, Kreyol and English to accommodate communication with the languages common to the Bateyes as well as to the investigators.

Questions regarding the quality of life in the Dominican Republic referred to year-round activity, not just harvest season as the impact, either positive or negative, occurs every day.

Response rate on surveys approximated 100% on most items. The surveys were conducted at the dwellings, some outside, some inside, with individuals and in group settings. Willingness and openness of respondents showed no obvious difference. Privacy and confidentiality were assured in every instance.

Data Processing & Analysis

Completed surveys were counted and transferred to the Washington offices of Sunga Sunga, USA, Inc. The surveys were reviewed, coded and a tabulation plan created. The data were processed by a Data Capture Program (Epidata) which operates on a Windows platform and

exported to SPSS for tabulation. The data processing was closely monitored by double digitalization of 20% of the instruments.

Responses to survey questions were analyzed in accordance with ILO guidance on “Identifying Forced Labor Practices” as described in the “Presence of Forced Labor” section. The Final Report was drafted by SSUSA staff under the supervision of the Director.

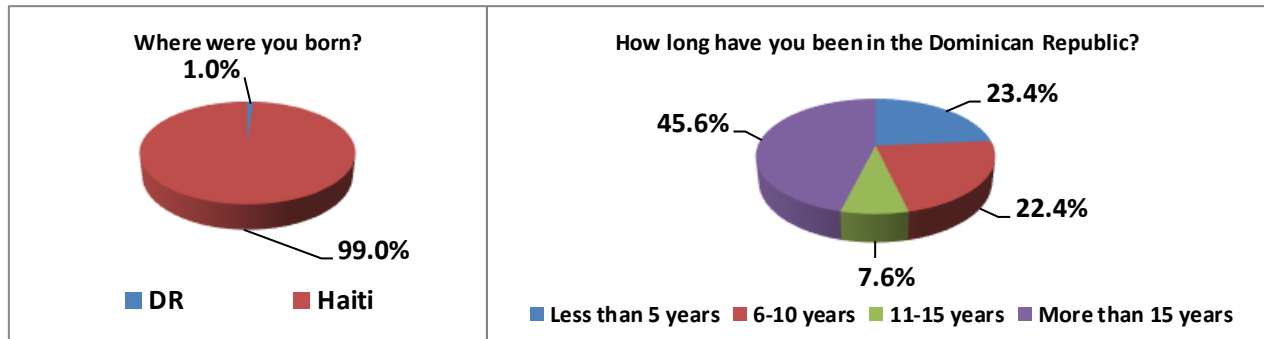
Because the research was statistically representative, no bias in the study exists from the quantitative data obtained; all Bateyes, all workers, all pertinent issues, all demographics had an equal opportunity to participate. Regarding the qualitative issues surveyed, there did not appear to be any hesitancy on the part of respondents.

Both males and females were included in the survey. Although an overwhelming number of workers in the fields were male, an equal number of women were surveyed since they gave insight into living conditions and shared the impact of working conditions experiences of their male counterparts as they were wives, daughters, mothers or partners of the male workers.

FINDINGS/ Details from the Data.

Arrival Time

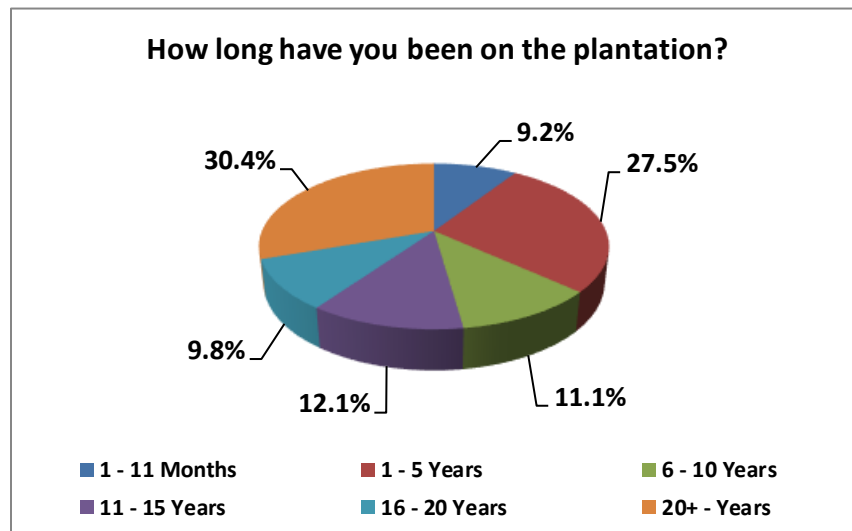
Of the workers surveyed by researchers, almost all (99.9%) were born in Haiti. The majority (45.6%) have been in the Dominican Republic 15 years or longer. The next longest group of residents (23.4%) have been present for less than five years. The third longest group (22.4%) were there between six and ten years with those present between eleven and fifteen years (7.6%) being the smallest group. The combined grouping of workers present over fifteen years (53.4%) indicates that the bulk of the population has been caneros and resident in the Dominican Republic for a substantial amount of time. These then are people who have established roots and families in the Dominican Republic with offspring who are born there without any physical reference to any other country.



Existence as a Caneros

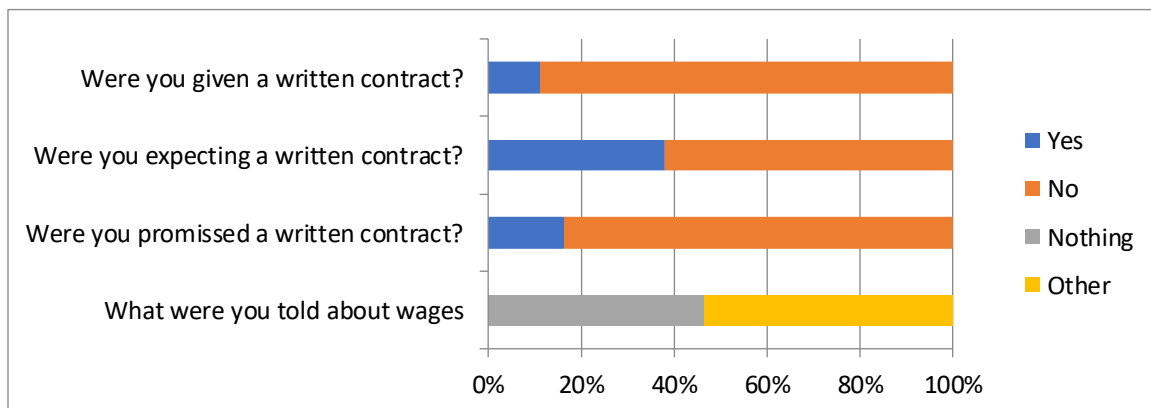
More than half of caneros (52.3%) surveyed have been in the fields for over ten years. The bulk (30.4%) have been caneros for more than 20 years with significant percentages on the

plantations between sixteen and twenty years (9.8%) and between eleven and fifteen years (12.1%).



Promises & Expectations

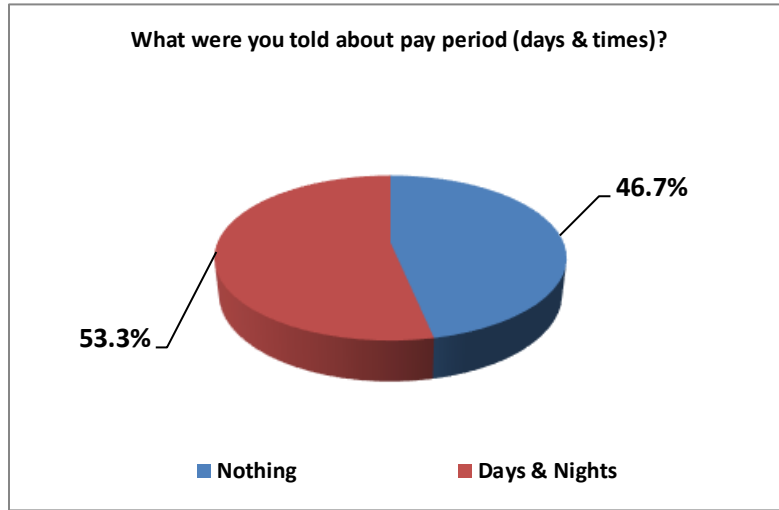
Of the workers surveyed by researchers, the issues of promises & contracts elicited very strong responses especially on the qualitative surveys. Their eagerness to get what they thought was a great opportunity overshadowed discussion of it even though they had clear presumptions of what their living and working conditions were supposed to be. Most (88.7%) were not given any written contract outlining expectations although more than one-third were anticipating one (36.9%). Many (16.3%) reported having been promised a contract. Most (69.1%) were told nothing in writing about wages although they had clear expectations of what those wages should be. Their expectations, for the most part, were not met.



Working Days

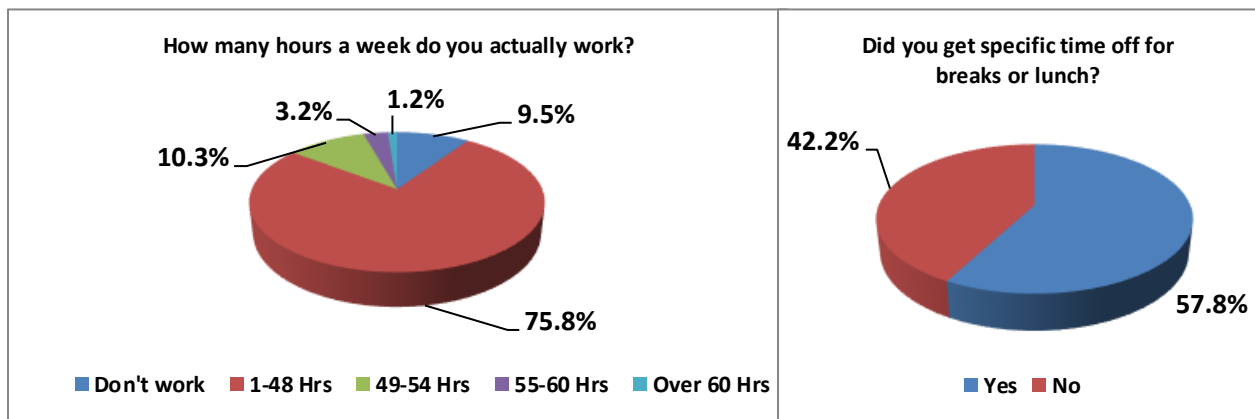
Of the workers surveyed by researchers, about half (46.7%) reported having been given information about pay periods; days and times. In most cases, they indicated that the

working days were much more than they expected or had been made to believe prior to their arrival.



Working Hours

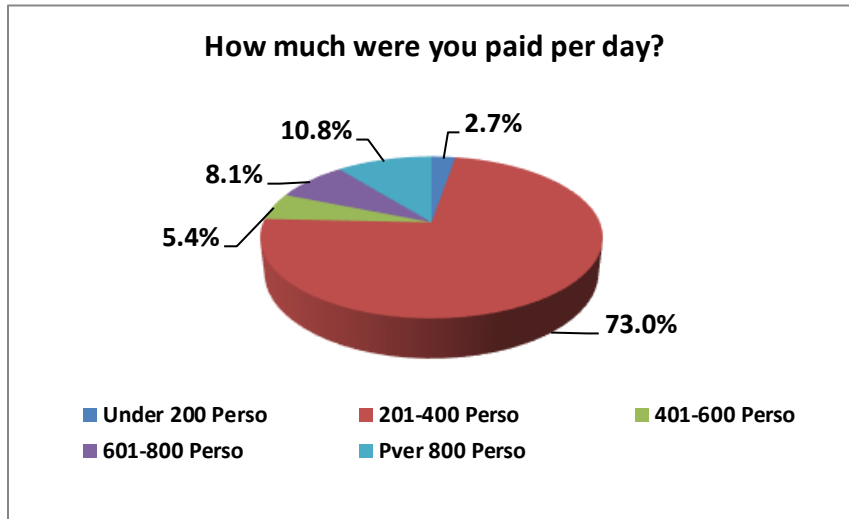
Of the workers surveyed by researchers, most reported working more than fifty hours per week. Starting times varied but generally could be from 5am to 7pm each day. Many reported working throughout the night. While more than half (57.8%) reported getting a specific break time, a large amount (42.2%) indicated that no specific break time is given. While working long hours in and of itself was not a bother to them, most were not expecting nor were they prepared for the extensive amount of hours per day they would spend in the fields. This was compounded by the fact that the long hours were not reflected in significant or greater pay.



Wages

Of the workers surveyed by researchers, the majority (75.7%) reported a wage of 200-400 pesos per day (US\$3.50-US\$7.00). The average weekly wage is, therefore, US\$20 - US\$40.

As in other instances, an exact amount of pay to be received was largely unknown, however, statements from the Buscones led them to believe that it would likely be much more than they actually received. Additionally, the amount of pay received was often heavily manipulated by deductions made for miscellaneous expenses including outstanding “vales” (IOUs) from the on-site Colomados.

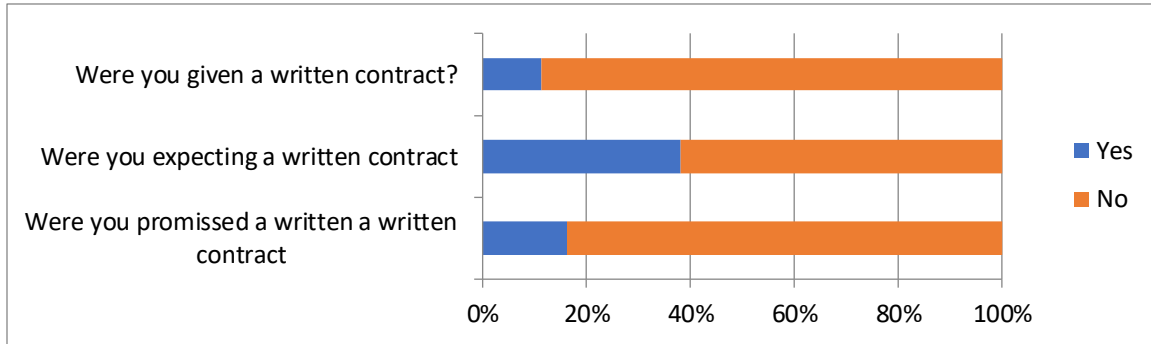


Pay Periods

The workers surveyed by researchers reported that pay was often on Saturdays at no particular hour and it was never known exactly how much a caneros would get and they had no idea of deductions that were being made or how many of their work days were being counted as having met the required metric tonnage threshold for each day.

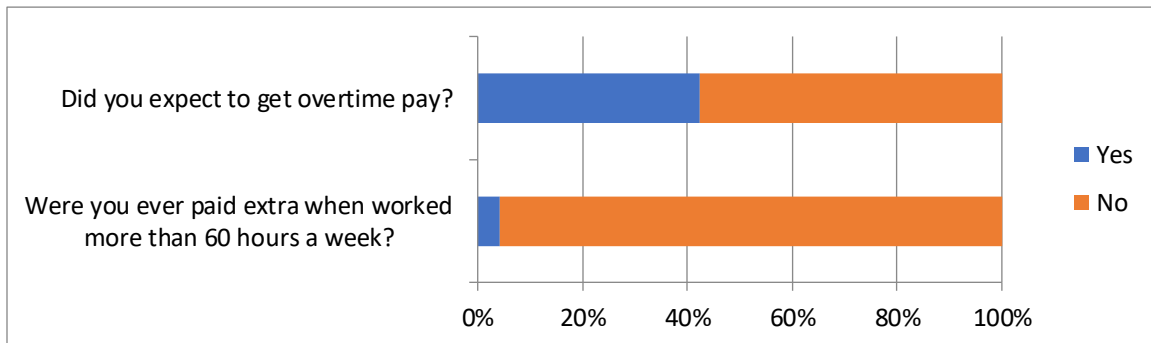
Existence of Contracts

Of the workers surveyed by researchers, most (88.7%) were not given any written contract outlining expectations although more than one-third were anticipating one (38.2%). Many (16.3%) reported having been promised a contract.



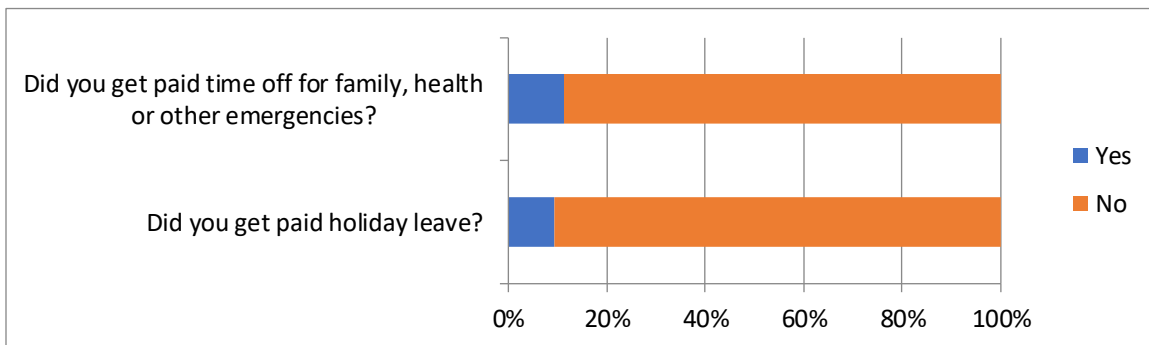
Overtime Pay

Of the workers surveyed by researchers, for most, overtime pay was an unknown concept or practice. Although work above 60 hours per week was frequent, and many (42.4%) expected overtime compensation, very few (4.1%) reported receiving extra wages for work above 60 hours per week.



Time Off

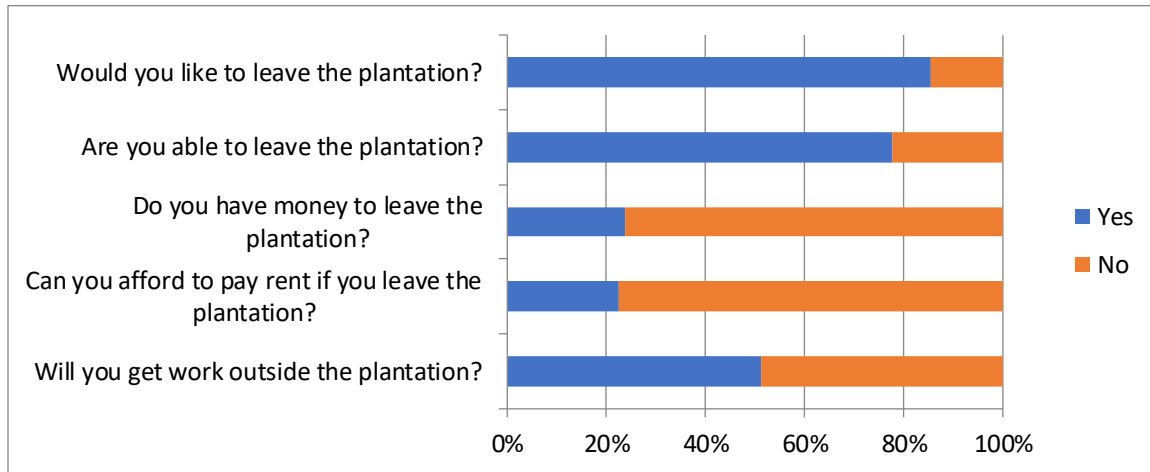
The overwhelming majority (88.6%) indicated that they did not get paid time off for family, health or other emergencies. Similarly, the vast majority (90.6%) indicated that no paid holiday leave was given. Most expected to have adequate paid time off for holidays, illness, or family emergencies which were never given.



Willingness & Ability to Leave

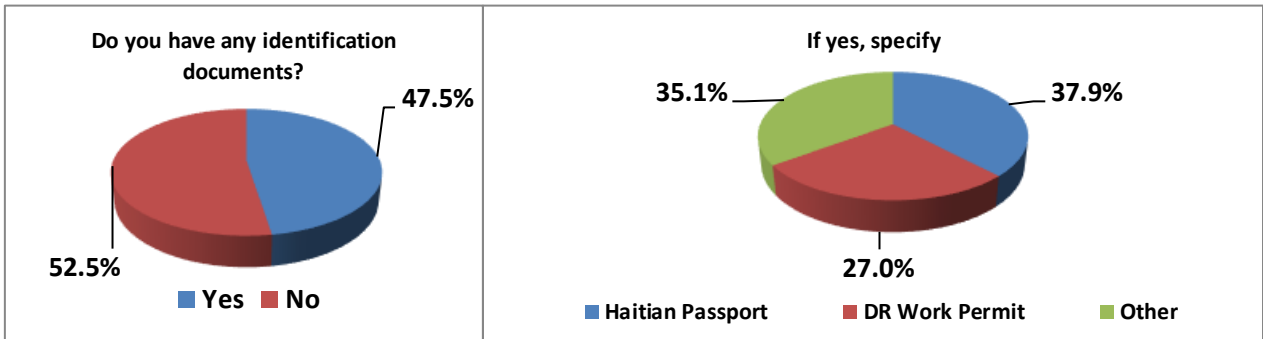
Of the workers surveyed by researchers, most (85.5%) would like and be willing to leave the plantations. The most frequent reasons given were mostly because of the low pay, poor working conditions and lack of opportunities for themselves and their families. While most, (77.6%) believe that while they are free to leave, the bulk of them (76.3%) do not believe that they can in fact financially afford to leave as most (77.5%) could not pay a rent.

Approximately, half (51.3%) thought that they could find work outside the plantation but not having acceptable identification papers tied them to the plantation. Having no ability to reasonably finance a move away from the plantation, and having a place to live that is dependent upon existence as caneros, the labour they provide is involuntary as they have no choice but to stay. The survey suggests that given the slightest opportunity, most would leave.



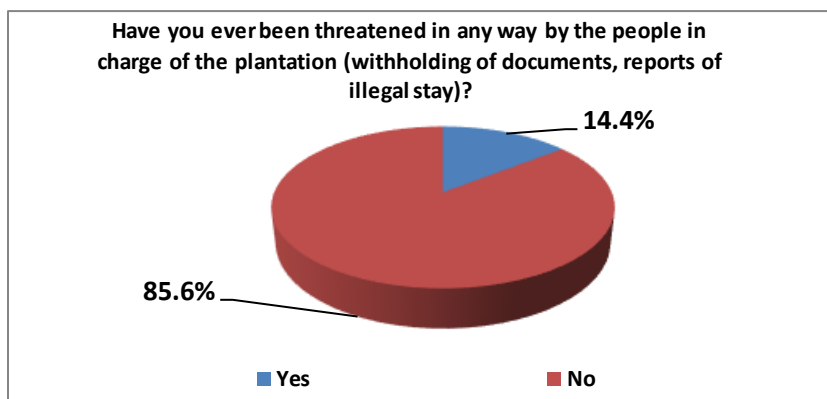
Identification Papers

Of the workers surveyed by researchers, most (52.5%) lack identification papers of any type. The most common identification papers held are Haitian Passports (37.9%). A few (27.0%) have Dominican Republic Work Permits. Still others (35.1%) have other forms of identification, often a Haitian Birth Certificate. The absence of legitimate identification papers that would allow them to stay in the country and work off the plantations enforces their involuntary presence in the cane fields. Often, the only Dominican form of identification held by the Caneros, the Carnet, is withheld as a pressure tactic to enforce compliance and assure their stay in the fields against those who would otherwise think of leaving.



Open or Implied Threats

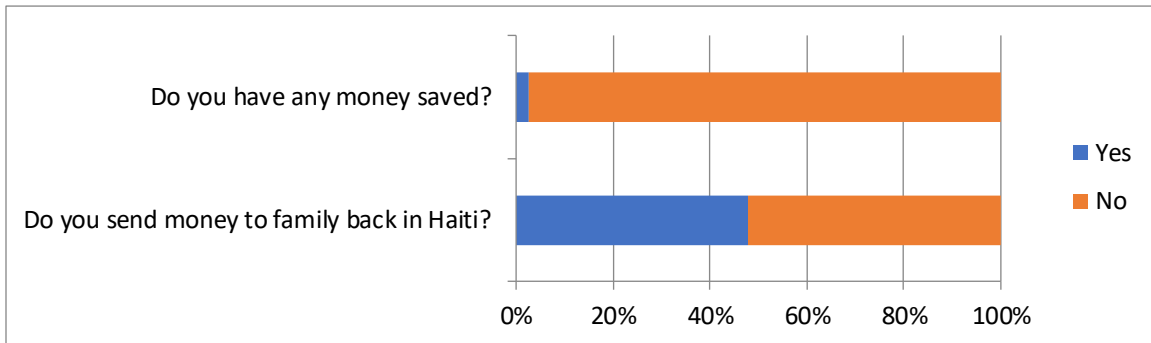
Of the workers surveyed by researchers, only a small percentage (14.1%) reported having ever been openly threatened by people in charge of the plantations. However, when probed further, it became clear why such a low level of open threat exists; it's not necessary as everyone knows the unwritten rules. Most indicated that they do not engage in behaviors (complaints/ protests) that would bring retribution because it is well understood what the consequences of such actions and activities will likely be. Complaining or engaging in protest activities are certain to result in job dismissal, leading to loss of residence and possible deportation. The qualitative survey clearly indicated that threatening to report people who lack proper documentation to the authorities is a standard tool of enforcement among Colonos.



Savings & Remittances

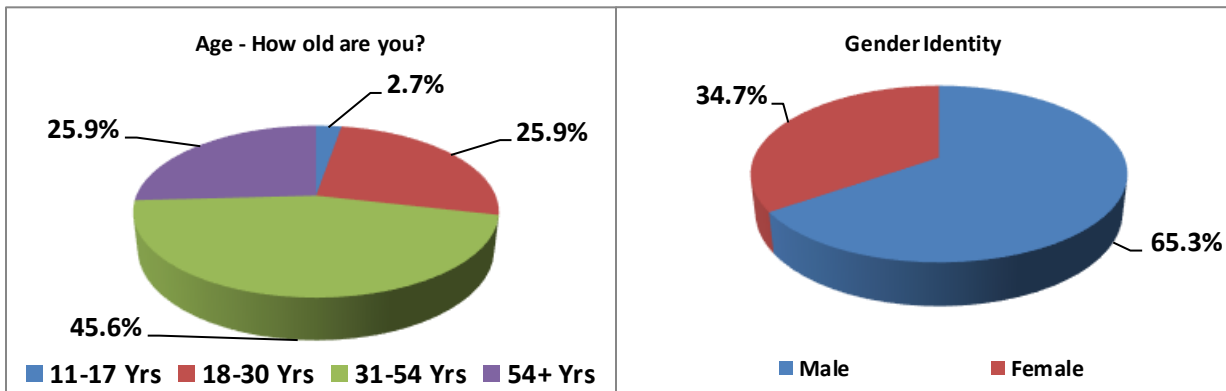
Of the workers surveyed by researchers, almost no one, (97.4%) reported having any savings. Likewise, most (52.1%) made no remittance to families back home indicating that what they received was hardly sufficient for their own upkeep. In the minds of most prior to arriving in the Dominican Republic, the wages to be received was supposed to be sufficient to have

enough to support themselves adequately and send support back to their families in Haiti. It was a major and clear recruitment strategy but this has not been the experience.



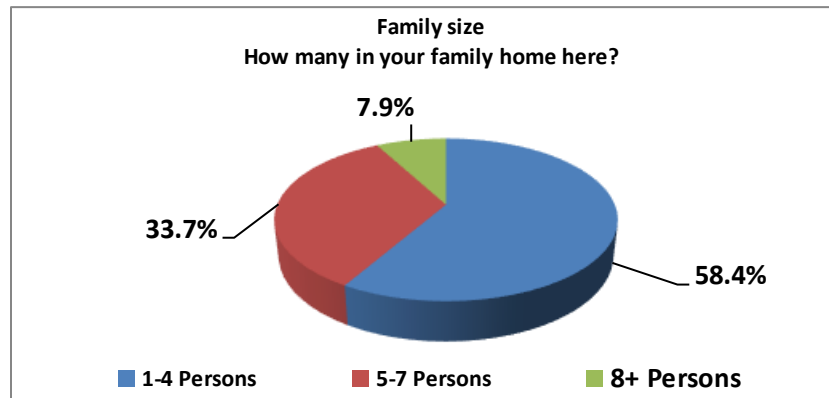
Age & Gender

Almost three-quarters of the individuals surveyed (74.2%) were between ages eleven and fifty-four with the largest group (45.6%) being between thirty-one and fifty-four, and the second largest group (25.9%) being eighteen to thirty. An equal amount (25.9%) of caneros were above fifty-five years of age. Most of the workers (65.3%) were comprised of males with females comprising the lesser percentage (34.7%).



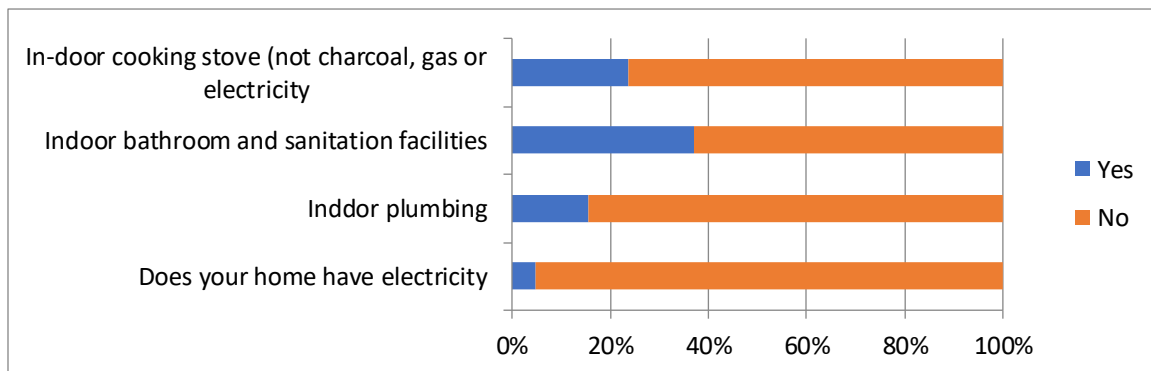
Family size

Family sizes are commonly up to 7 persons in a household (92.1%) with the majority (58.4%) being one to four persons households and many (33.7%) being five to seven persons households.



Amenities

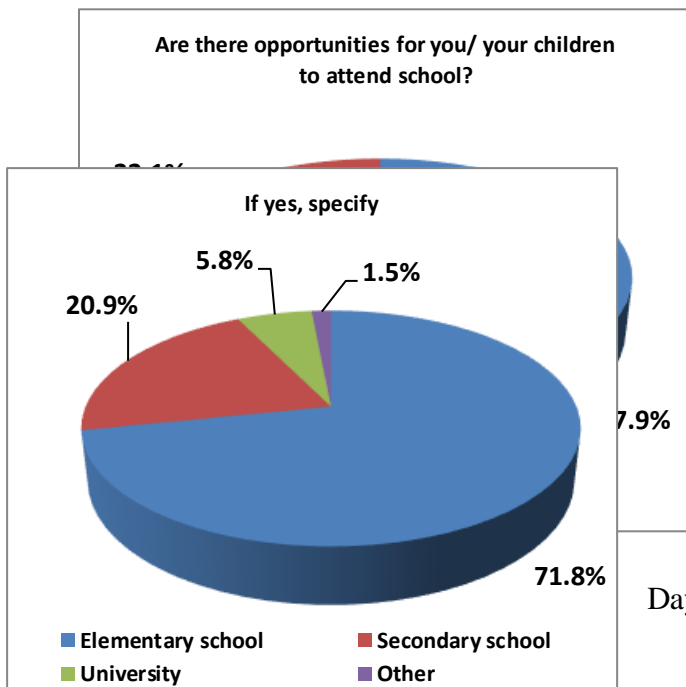
Of the workers surveyed by researchers, very few reported modern-day amenities of any kind. Less than five percent (4.8%) had electricity with most (94.2) having no electricity in the home. Most (84.4%) did not have any in-door plumbing with only a few (15.6%) having such facilities. In-door bathing and sanitation facilities were unavailable to most (62.8%) relying mostly on out-houses and standpipes. Likewise, for most (76.3%) their cooking was done on outdoor appliances such as charcoal stoves or charcoal on the bare ground. A few, (23.7) managed to have a propane tank appliance.



Educational Opportunities.

Of the workers surveyed by researchers, some educational opportunities were available to most (77.9%). However, those opportunities were very restricted to mostly elementary

education (71.8%) and some secondary school (20.9%). Opportunities for higher education/ university education were almost unknown (5.8%).



Survey Conclusions

INDICATORS OF FORCED LABOR

The survey uncovered and documented significant evidence of forced labor in the following arenas:

- Misrepresentation on Number of Work Days
- Misrepresentation on Length of Work Days
- Misrepresentation on Wages to Be Paid
- Misrepresentation on Pay Periods & Dates
- Misrepresentation on Work Contract
- Misrepresentation on Work Permit
- Misrepresentation on Overtime Pay
- Misrepresentation on Break Time
- Misrepresentation on Family Leave & Sick Time
- Restriction on Work Location/ Movement

Restriction on Living Area Relocation
Restriction on Job Change
Restrictions on Residency & Citizenship Papers
Real/Implied Threats of Dismissals for Work Protest Activity
Real/Implied Threats of Dismissal/Deportation for Union Activity
Real/Implied Threats of Dismissal/Deportation for Official Complaints
Refusal or Long Delay in processing residency/work documents
Onerous process and requirements for document application.
Excessive/ Unaffordable cost of document application

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Poor Housing & Living Environment

Restriction on Residency & Citizenship for Self & Family
Restrictions on Social Service privileges
Restrictions on Social Welfare privileges (health)
Restrictions on Social Mobility privileges (education)
Desire & Inability to Leave
Inability to Support Family left Behind
Inability to Amass Savings

On Living Conditions

The living conditions of ethnic Haitians on the Bateyes of the Dominican Republic are extremely sub-standard not sharing characteristics of life in mainstream Dominican society: roads; electricity; sanitation & toilet facilities; indoor plumbing; cooking facilities; education; recreational facilities; health care; social services.

On Dominican Society & Attitudes toward the Black Migrant Community

Dominicans in general seem to hold ethnic Haitians in low regard. Their view is that ethnic Haitians are culturally inferior and not fit for or deserving of the benefits and opportunities that the society offers. Neither are ethnic Haitians seen as deserving of rights or

privileges enjoyed by the mainstream. This view is not only reflective of the civil society but reflected in the laws and actual denial of equality by all branches and levels of government: national & local; legislative, executive, judicial.

On Dominican Law and Black Migrant communities

The history of Dominican law and practice has historically been one that sought to discriminate against people of African descent. Contemporary laws reflect past practice as evidenced by the treatment of ethnic Haitians as “transients” rather than permanent residents. Equally noteworthy, is the fact that Dominican law changed to mandate citizenship based on a principle of jus sanguine rather than jus solis specifically to disenfranchise and deny residency/citizenship rights to ethnic Haitians who would otherwise be thus entitled.

On the Current Dominican Economy

The Dominican economy historically was heavily based on agriculture and specifically on sugarcane production; it remains the second largest producer in the Caribbean next to Cuba. As ethnic Haitians represented essentially 100% of the manual laboring force in this industry, they represented as well the backbone of the Dominican economy. Late in the 20th century and increasingly in the 21st century, reliance on sugarcane production as the major element in the Dominican economy began to change and the Dominican Republic became less and less of a monocrop economy than it had been in the past. While agricultural production remains significant and continues to be among the largest employers of domestic labor as well as important for export earnings, tourism and the service sector have advanced in terms of importance for the Dominican economy. Sugarcane production while the largest is shared with cocoa and tobacco production as important agricultural crops.

The United States remains the largest trading partner for the Dominican Republic accounting for 40% of total trade and through the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), it attracts US Direct Foreign Investment upwards of 400b dollars each year. Tourism revenues from the United States itself accounted for almost US\$8b annually before the pandemic of 2020 and has recovered to that amount currently.

The major trading partners for the Dominican Republic are the following countries in descending order of dollar value: United States, China, Switzerland, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Haiti, Spain, Netherlands, Canada, Brazil, Germany.

On the International Community & the Dominican Republic

The international community has largely ignored the plight of ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic. The United Nations and other regional and international Human Rights bodies have all held hearings and issued positions condemning the atrocities and breaches of international norms by the Dominican government. However, for the most part, none has taken major steps to hold the Dominican Republic responsible for its perpetuation of human rights

violations or maintained consistency of action directed at changing the situation. Neither has any of the major trading partners sought to impose trade sanctions or travel bans.

On Prospects for Change

Given the trajectory of Dominican Republic policy and law to date, there is nothing to suggest that change or an improvement in the lives of ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic in general or their outlook in batey communities will occur soon. The best prospects for change are likely to result from international pressure in the form of trade sanctions and travel bans, which, as noted before, is not apparent.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The working conditions and everyday life of Caneros in the Bateyes of the Dominican Republic operated by the Central Romana Corporation whom we interviewed and observed, display all the classic signs of “forced labor”. We can report the following:

- (1) They accepted Work based upon False Promises;
- (2) Their Working Days & Number of Daily Working Hours exceed accepted National & International norms;
- (3) Their Wage Earnings are Below National & International norms/requirements;
- Many are involved in the Performance of Involuntary Labor;
- Many Labor Under Menace of Penalty;
- Most live in Fear of Retribution for Complaints;
- They are routinely subjected to Denial/Deprivation of Valid/Acceptable Identification Papers;
- They are routinely subjected to Denial/Deprivation of National Identification Papers;
- They are routinely subjected to Denial/Deprivation of Access to Social Services.

The data collected clearly demonstrated the following:

- 1. Agricultural labor performed by Blacks in the DR does represent human exploitation.
- 2. Working conditions of Black agricultural workers in the DR amount to economic exploitation.
- 3. Escape from the present work environment for Black agricultural workers in the DR does not seem likely.
- 4. Cycles of poverty appear to be most likely to continue among Black agricultural workers in the DR.

- 5. The conditions of work for Black agricultural workers in the DR constitute “forced labor” under ILO standards.

CASE STUDY #1: Meet Caneros Jean Louis

Caneros Jean Louis is 78 years old. He arrived in the Dominican Republic 40 years ago as a young man. Jean Louis did not have much to keep him in Haiti; in fact, he had nothing. Nothing except the young family he had created and whose lives he was looking forward to improving. He had heard stories about work in the cane fields of the Dominican Republic from many in and around his village, all were lofty, all from people who had never been there before, most all of which were untrue. He had no way of knowing that at the time.

When a recruiter for the Central Romana Corporation approached him with the prospect of work, it was all he needed to hear. The recruiter told of unlimited work, pay good enough to send support back home, free housing, and the opportunity to start a better life for his family in the Dominican Republic. It was all very promising.

Taken to the Bateyes of Guaymate, at first glance he knew it was not all it was made up to be, but that would not deter him. He was prepared to work long and hard, he never complained of that. What he did not expect was to receive so little pay, for so much work, for so long a time. Even that he could tolerate. What angers him now is the fact that he never got the pay he expected, sometimes he never got paid at all. He can't understand why he has been denied his pension for the approximately ten years that he's been asking for it; he doesn't exactly remember how long. He's been angry for some time.

Now, at age 78, when he decided to take his unhappiness to the CRC directly, after 40 years working in the cane fields of the CRC, he was informed of his dismissal and given an envelope with 330 pesos (US\$6) as his final pay. He has no idea what the future brings except uncertainty. Will he have a place to live? How will he eat? What about his health needs? Is he even going to be allowed to stay in the Dominican Republic? Of these concerns, he knows little. All he knows is that he doesn't know.

CASE STUDY #2: Meet Caneros Pierre Gabriel

When Pierre Gabriel left his home in poverty stricken Haiti some 40 years ago, he was certain it was to be for a better life. At least that's what he had in mind. He was recruited by fellow Haitians (Buscones) who worked for plantations owners just across the border. Left behind were his wife and five kids who he hoped to send help to in the weeks and months ahead. In time, maybe even get them out of their situation. He promised his wife that he would be back

in some months and would send some money until his return. His was the only promises that were intended to be kept. The recruiters had made big promises as well; most of which would not be kept nor intended to be kept. He was told that a work contract would be given. He was promised documents to stay legally in the country, instead he got a Carnet, a temporary work card. He was promised a decent wage; regular pay; good housing; the right to leave whenever he wished. It's what so many others were promised and never received. Instead, he ended up on a sprawling plantation in the middle of what seemed to be nowhere. Acres and acres of sugarcane fields surrounded his new home, the Batey, where he was to spend a lifetime overworked, underpaid, denied adequate resources and social services, threatened with deportation if he chose to be a troublemaker and without a pension that forces him to work as a cane-cutter into his eighties. His life does not reflect an exception, it is reflective of the norm.

Appendices

A. ILO Forced Labor Protocol Article 1 (3) Convention of 1930 & 2014 :

- Labor performed involuntarily
- Under menace of Penalty
- Under threat of Violence
- Manipulated Debt
- Withholding of Identification Papers
- Threat of Notification to Immigration Authorities
- Acceptance of work based upon False Promises
- Involving any Activity, any Industry, formal or informal.
- Prohibits use of Forced Labor for purposes of economic development.

B. Major Issues Probed on SSUSA Survey

- Arrival Time
- Promises Made
- Working Days
- Working Hours
- Wages
- Pay Periods
- Existence of Contracts
- Overtime Pay
- Time Off
- Ability to Leave
- Identification Papers
- Desire/ Willingness to leave
- Open or Implied Threats
- Savings
- Money sent back home
- Age
- Length of time here
- Family size
- Amenities
- Educational Opportunities & Health Care.

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