

# The Impact of Tourism on Rural Livelihoods in the Dominican Republic's Coastal Areas

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**ABSTRACT** *Tourism has rapidly grown in the Dominican Republic in recent years. This paper evaluates the impact of tourism on rural livelihoods through a survey conducted in 23 coastal communities covering a range of tourism levels and types. Tourism generally has a positive impact as measured by increased household income and job satisfaction. Personal and community characteristics, such as knowledge of a second language, young age, and predominance of domestic and day-trip tourism, are the most important factors in determining tourism-related employment in the studied communities. Policy implications for pro-poor tourism are discussed, followed by a cautionary note on tourism-induced population displacements.*

## **I. Introduction**

In the Dominican Republic (DR), as in many other developing countries, poverty is concentrated in rural areas, with more than half of the poor households located in the countryside (Santana, 1998). Despite its decreasing contribution to the DR's economy over the last two decades, agriculture remains the main economic activity for the rural poor (World Bank, 2000a). Agricultural productivity in the DR is low, with yields well below regional and world standards. According to the World Bank (2000a), lack of extension work, insecure property rights, and a very concentrated ownership of the country's land in the hands of government and wealthy families are some of the main causes for this low productivity. Furthermore, farming livelihoods have recently been affected by the decline of the sugar industry as well as its subsequent privatisation in 1999, which resulted in thousands of Dominican and Haitian men losing their jobs (Safa, 2002).

In addition to agriculture, rural residents of coastal areas commonly engage in small-scale fishing. Although less information is available on the fishing sector for the DR, there are indications of a steady reduction of commercially important species driven by over fishing, the use of destructive fishing methods and the rapid

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growth in the number of fishermen, boats, and fishing gears (Mateo and Houghton, 2002; Herrera and Betancourt 2003).

The DR is an exceptional case of a developing country experiencing rapid international tourism development, particularly on beach areas. In 1975, Symansky and Burley wrote:

The Dominican Republic, while tropical and attractive in amenity offerings and virtually first in western hemisphere historical precedents, is an outstanding example of a country that has benefited little from tourism. Among Caribbean countries, its tourism is in a stage of development that is appalling in number of tourists annually visiting the country and in available tourist infrastructure. (Symanski and Burley, 1975: 20)

However, this situation dramatically changed during the past two decades, as tourism has grown to become one of the DR's largest industries. With an average growth of 9 per cent in the volume of foreign visitors since 1993, reaching 2.8 million in 2002, and an aggressive expansion of hotel capacity, currently approaching 55,000 rooms, the DR is currently considered one of the leading tourism destinations in the Caribbean (Asonahores, 2003; Banco Central RD, 2004). The DR is now in the top 20 developing countries in terms of visitor arrivals, tourism receipts and per cent contribution to gross domestic product (WTO and OMT, 2001).

The recent growth of the tourism industry in the DR could provide alternative livelihoods to rural people in coastal areas to offset the aforementioned decline of dominant rural sectors, and thus help alleviate poverty and advance the country's development. However, some authors are skeptical that tourism can be a viable development strategy, considering it a form of neo-colonialism (Mowforth and Munt, 1998). Even when tourism is economically advantageous in aggregate terms to many poor countries, its ability to reduce existing inequalities in terms of income and social goods is limited. This is due to substantial overseas leakage of earnings, loss of control over local resources, and the fact that the greatest majority of locals can only participate in tourism through wage labour employment or small, petty enterprises, all of which have low income generating potential, while local elites and foreign interests receive most of the economic gains (Britton, 1982, 1989, 1996; Brohman, 1996).

Nevertheless, increasing attention is being paid worldwide to the potential role of the tourism industry in reducing poverty, an approach that has been termed 'pro-poor tourism' (Ashley et al., 2000; Cattarinich, 2001). According to Ashley et al. (2000), tourism has several advantages for pro-poor economic growth: (1) the consumer comes to the destination, thereby providing opportunities for selling additional goods and services; (2) tourism is an important opportunity to diversify local economies, and can develop in poor and marginal areas with few other export and diversification options, especially since remote areas particularly attract tourists because of their high cultural, wildlife and landscape value; and (3) tourism offers more labour-intensive and small-scale opportunities compared with other non-agricultural activities (Deloitte and Touche et al., 1999) and values natural resources and culture, which may feature among the few assets belonging to the poor. However, most of the cited works on pro-poor tourism come from African case studies, but no pro-poor tourism policies or initiatives are known from the Caribbean.

Furthermore, it has been proposed that tourism labour could be an important opportunity for the advancement of women. Women's rural income earning opportunities in the DR are very few (Mones and Grant, 1987). In fact, the extreme difference between female and male employment in the DR is one of the largest in the Latin America and Caribbean region (World Bank, 2002b). Tourism usually employs a relatively high proportion of women, mainly because tourist resorts are characterised by a large service sector where demand for female labour is high and because of the existence of niches within hotel and restaurant work where women's assumed domestic skills give them an advantage over men (Chant, 1997).

Policy-makers concerned with the poor have noted the importance of directing economic opportunities to female rather than male heads of household since women devote a higher proportion of income to family well-being, especially children's nutrition, rather than to personal expenditures when compared with men (Chant, 1985; Benería and Roldán, 1987; Blumberg, 1988; Espinal and Grasmuck, 1987; Raynolds, 2002). Beyond the benefits of improved family wellbeing and nutrition, female employment can also empower women at the individual, household, and community level. Increased control of household income in developing countries has also been linked to women's greater input into fertility and household decisions, and enhanced self-esteem (Bourque and Warren, 1981; Benería and Roldán, 1987; Blumberg, 1988; Raynolds, 2002). A number of case studies have shown that tourism jobs, by allowing many women to earn an income for the first time, have empowered them at the household and community level and helped them play an increasing role in local development (Cukier et al., 1996; Chant, 1997; Sinclair, 1997; Casellas and Briavel, 2001). In the DR, men make the majority of household decisions and most Dominican women feel that they have very little control over their lives (Brea and Duarte, 1999). Thus, tourism's potential for improving women's and household wellbeing seems significant.

Another impact of tourism-related labour in small communities that is more subjective, is the change in resident's satisfaction towards his or her work. Job satisfaction is considered to be an important component in determining a person's physical and mental health (Kornhauser, 1965; HEW, 1973; Warr, 1987), as well as general well-being (Praag et al., 2003). The level of tourism job satisfaction has been little explored in the tourism literature, even though it might help explain resident's attitudes towards tourism even when other work-related variables (for example salary levels, work type, and so forth) fail to do so.

The recent growth of tourism in the DR provides an important opportunity to investigate many of the issues raised in the above discussion. This paper presents the results of a household survey conducted in Dominican coastal communities experiencing tourism development. Our broad goals are to relate issues central to the literature on development, livelihoods, tourism and gender. In particular, we want to know:

- What is the current occupational profile of these communities in general and as it relates to tourism?
- What are the effects of tourism dependence on the material position of households and job satisfaction?

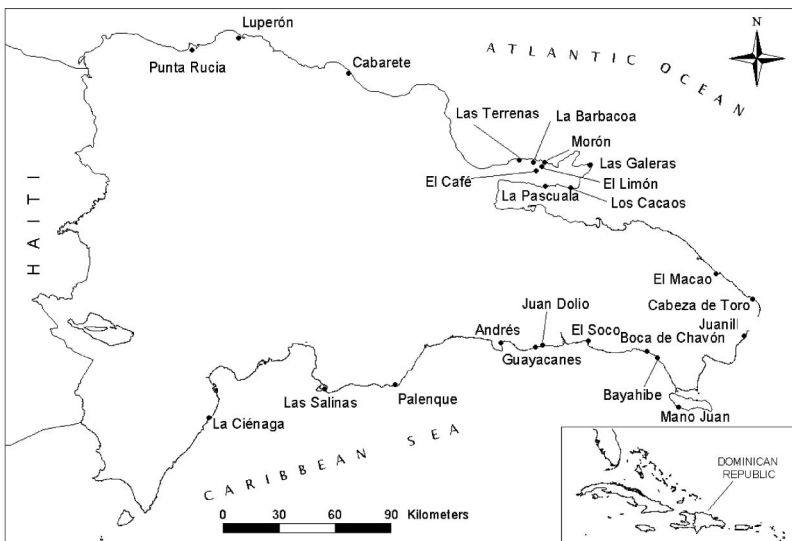
- Which variables influence employment in tourism, in other words, who is more likely to benefit from tourism and why?
- Are there gender differences in the observed livelihood impacts?

## II. Methods

Twenty-three coastal communities were selected for this study (Figure 1). A community was included in the sample provided it was: (1) within 10 km from the coast; and (2) tourism activities took place there or it was located less than 10 km from a tourism area. In addition, during preliminary field visits, we assessed different sites to ensure we covered a range of conditions such as level and predominant type of tourism activities (day trip, beach-resort, domestic, windsurfing, second home, etc). Also, with only one exception, we limited our work to relatively small, rural communities (having less than 1000 households, according to the most recent census data available). Rural communities were preferred because, as stated before, poverty tends to be more concentrated there, and as tourism has a more visible effect than in urban areas (Lanfant, 1980).

### *Data Collection*

We conducted a total of 822 face-to-face household surveys in the visited communities from June to September 2003. Four random starting points were selected in each community, and every other house along the left or right side (randomly chosen) of each street was visited. If a house was not occupied, then it was omitted and the next one visited. We selected for interviewing only heads of household or their spouses to ensure reliable household-level data were gathered.



**Figure 1.** Map of the Dominican Republic showing communities surveyed

Interviews were conducted in Spanish by five trained local enumerators (including the author). The minimum number of surveys to be conducted in each site was pre-determined by calculating the sample size required to approximate the 15 per cent confidence interval, with an alpha level of 0.05.

Demographic variables gathered for household members were sex, age, place of origin, marital status, occupation (and whether or not it was tourism related), education level, knowledge of a second language, skin colour (on a one to 10 scale from light to dark). Household income and material lifestyle variables were recorded to characterise the material position of households. To estimate household income, we followed the DR's Central Bank's methodology from the most recent national household income and expenditure survey (Banco Central RD, 1999). This involved asking respondents to provide the approximate monthly cash income for each of the economic activities in which household members were engaged. A maximum of three activities were recorded per member. Also, income received in the form of remittances from abroad, child support payments or other monetary support (from relatives, government, etc) was recorded. The sum of all income reported for a given household was thus calculated. However, obtaining precise income data for all households was problematic, given the difficulty they had in calculating how much they made in a month, since a part of their earnings was often non-monetary (or in kind, such as fish or produce obtained), and also in sorting out expenditures and auto-consumption of the goods produced or sold by the household. Also, in many cases the female spouse did not know her spouse's income. Accounting for these issues would have required a more detailed survey of household income and productive activities that was beyond the scope of this study. In light of this, we also gathered material lifestyle information to have an alternative means of measuring material well-being. Material lifestyle variables consisted of a checklist of different home construction materials for the walls, roof and floor, household appliances (for example, television, gas stove, refrigerator, etc), and other assets (for example, motorcycle, car, etc). Finally, the survey also gathered information on job satisfaction.

### *Data Analysis*

Relationships between variables were analysed using standard parametric and non-parametric tests. Factor analysis was conducted using the principal components method with varimax rotation and the Scree test (Cattell, 1966) to generate material lifestyle components and scales for every household using material assets and house construction materials. Finally, logistic regression was used to identify associations between community or individual-level variables and having a tourism-dependent occupation.

## **III. Results**

### *Respondent and Household Characteristics*

Survey respondents were more or less evenly distributed between the sexes (55 per cent male: 45 per cent female). Most respondents were of local origin and had mixed

or dark skin colour, conforming to the widespread racial mix of descendants from White Europeans with Black Africans characteristic of Dominican society. Education level was relatively low: 58 per cent of respondents had only attained some level of primary education or less. General literacy rate was about 91 per cent, but for respondents older than the median (43-years-old), it was lower (84 per cent). Most respondents (72 per cent) were married or lived in a stable union. However, many households also included extended family members, especially grandchildren whose parents often worked in the city. The average number of persons living in a household was 3.7 ( $SD = 1.7$ ). Only 14 per cent of households were headed singly by a female. According to reported household income, about a quarter of the surveyed households can be considered poor, and of these, about 8 per cent can be considered extremely poor.<sup>1</sup>

*Productive Activities*

The most common, primary productive activity for over half of respondents was self-employment in non-professional occupations. Of these, farming and fishing were the most frequent (36 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively, of self-employed males). Wage employment was the second most common primary activity. Over half of all wage earners were related to the tourism sector (Table 1). Typical establishments of small business owners consisted of *colmados* (small grocery shops) or food/beverage vending places such as bars, restaurants or *comedores* (local food vending places). Many of these entrepreneurs relied extensively on household property and/or labour without pay. Overall, in terms of skill level, 80 per cent of respondents were engaged in typically unskilled or low skilled occupations.

**Table 1.** Mean household income by sex, occupation category and tourism dependence of head of household

	Tourism dependent			Non-tourism Dependent			All Households	
	<i>N</i>	RDS	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	RDS	<i>SD</i>	RDS	<i>SD</i>
Female-headed households								
Wage earner	18	4,874	2,845	14	4,850	2,592	4,863	2,693
Entrepreneur	8	<u>15,813</u>	10,295	3	<u>6,333</u>	1,528	13,227	9,709
Self-employed	4	<u>5,125</u>	4,008	29	<u>3,291</u>	3,078	3,514	3,188
Housewife	0	–	–	14	3,210	1,727	3,210	1,727
All occupations	30	<u>7,824</u>	7,483	62	<u>3,792</u>	2,722	5,134	5,185
Male-headed households								
Wage earner	71	8,213	6,778	56	7,384	4,730	7,847	5,955
Entrepreneur	16	<u>24,812</u>	15,803	23	<u>9,144</u>	7,520	15,572	13,866
Self-employed	66	<u>9,505</u>	7,685	314	<u>8,070</u>	6,093	8,360	6,428
Housewife	0	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
All occupations	153	<u>10,506</u>	9,772	393	<u>8,182</u>	6,466	8,753	7,326

Notes: Underlined figures indicate a significant difference between tourism dependent and non-dependent occupations. RDS = Dominican pesos, *SD* = standard deviation.

*Household Income and Material Lifestyle*

When household income for all occupation categories is aggregated, both male and female-headed households earn greater average incomes when the head of household had a tourism-dependent occupation (Table 1). This difference seems to be caused by the relatively large difference in income reported by tourism-related entrepreneurs. It is important to note that 24 per cent of households received help in the form of income or food from direct or extended family in the DR (76 per cent) or abroad (24 per cent). Remittances from abroad mostly came from relatives living in Europe (especially Italy and Spain), followed by Puerto Rico and the US. The average amount of monetary aid per month was \$2734 Dominican pesos.

In terms of material lifestyle, factor analysis of the variables related to home construction materials and assets produced two factors that accounted for 41 per cent of the cumulative variance, which we named 'solid home' and 'appliances' (Table 2). In terms of material lifestyle scores, tourism-dependent households (both male and female-headed) had higher *solid home* scores (Table 3). Also, we found significantly higher *appliances* scores in female-headed households dependent on tourism than in those not dependent on tourism (with the exception of the entrepreneurs category).

*Benefit Opportunities From Tourism*

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents said they or someone in their family had benefited from tourism (through jobs, increased sales, demand for their services, etc). Also, many declared having received gifts (usually for their children) from tourists

**Table 2.** Factor analysis results of material lifestyle variables

Asset/material	Solid Home	Appliances
Cement roof	0.81	0.06
Zinc sheet roof	-0.81	-0.05
Ceramic floor	0.73	0.03
Cement walls	0.67	0.22
Cement floor	-0.66	0.07
Toilet	0.65	0.39
Latrine	-0.61	-0.35
Wooden walls	-0.58	-0.29
Refrigerator	0.20	0.67
Television	0.11	0.61
Gas stove	0.04	0.60
Washing machine	0.13	0.59
Fan	0.17	0.59
Woodstove	0.00	-0.51
Phone/cell phone	0.27	0.42
Motorcycle/scooter	0.00	0.39
Radio	0.07	0.33
Cumulative variance explained (%)	29.34	41.29

Notes: KMO = 0.75, Bartlett's test of sphericity = 6002.8.

**Table 3.** Mean material lifestyle scores for tourism and non-tourism dependent households by gender of the household head

Occupation category	Tourism dependent			Non-tourism dependent			All households			
	N	Solid home	Appliances	N	Solid home	Appliances	Solid home	Appliances	Appliances	
				<i>Female-headed households</i>						
Wage earner	16	-0.30 (0.86)	<u>0.16</u> (0.93)	13	-0.32 (0.45)	-0.48 (0.87)	-0.31 (0.69)	-0.48 (0.87)	-0.12 (0.95)	
Entrepreneur	7	0.61 (1.34)	0.62 (0.85)	4	-0.22 (1.01)	0.90 (0.33)	0.31 (1.25)	0.90 (0.33)	0.72 (0.69)	
Self-employed	4	-0.24 (0.58)	<u>0.04</u> (0.98)	24	-0.17 (0.65)	-0.32 (0.98)	-0.19 (0.63)	-0.32 (0.98)	-0.27 (0.97)	
Housewife	-	-	-	23	-0.08 (1.0)	-0.47 (1.28)	-0.08 (1.0)	-0.47 (1.28)	-0.47 (1.28)	
All occupations	27	-0.06 (1.02)	<u>0.26</u> (0.91)	64	-0.17 (0.78)	-0.33 (1.09)	-0.14 (0.85)	-0.33 (1.09)	-0.15 (1.04)	
				<i>Male-headed households</i>						
Wage earner	56	0.23 (0.98)	0.17 (0.95)	66	0.01 (1.09)	0.30 (0.81)	0.13 (1.07)	0.30 (0.81)	0.23 (1.24)	
Entrepreneur	26	0.47 (1.07)	0.38 (0.88)	15	0.74 (1.31)	0.32 (0.95)	0.64 (1.21)	0.32 (0.95)	0.34 (0.92)	
Self-employed	340	0.00 (1.01)	-0.05 (1.07)	61	-0.10 (0.95)	-0.08 (0.99)	-0.09 (0.96)	-0.08 (0.99)	-0.07 (1.0)	
All occupations	142	0.16 (1.0)	0.10 (1.0)	422	-0.04 (1.02)	-0.01 (0.97)	0.01 (1.02)	-0.01 (0.97)	0.02 (0.99)	

*Note:* One standard deviation is shown in parentheses. Underlined figures indicate a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between tourism dependent and non-dependent households. The following comparisons were also made: Student's  $t$ -test between all male vs. female-headed households: (solid home)  $t = 1.34$ ,  $df = 564$ ,  $p = 0.18$ ; (appliances)  $t = 1.54$ ,  $df = 564$ ,  $p = 0.12$ ; and student's  $t$ -test between all tourism dependent vs. non-tourism dependent households: (solid home)  $t = 2.01$ ,  $df = 653$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ; (appliances)  $t = 1.95$ ,  $df = 653$ ,  $p = 0.05$ .



(54 per cent). Twenty-six per cent of heads of household (and 21 per cent of respondents) had a tourism-dependent occupation. Stepwise logistic regression analysis revealed that certain individual and contextual variables were significant predictors of respondents having a tourism-dependent occupation (Table 4). These were: knowledge of a second language (not including Haitian Creole), being younger than the median age (43-years-old), having a predominance of either 'day trip' or 'Dominican' tourism in the community, as well as higher levels of tourism development and rooms per capita.

### *Job Satisfaction*

The majority of respondents (85 per cent) indicated being happy with their current occupation. After the expected reason of making money (26 per cent), being independent (that is, not having a boss, fixed work days/hours) was a common reason cited (20 per cent). Also, we detected a greater proportion of occupation-happy respondents in tourism-dependent occupations. This was particularly so in the case of employed women (Table 5).

Despite generally being satisfied about their current occupations, more than half of respondents did not wish their son(s) or daughter(s) to have the same occupation as them. Other job satisfaction studies, using similar questions, have also found a relatively low percentage of respondents recommending their occupation to their children or other young people (Pollnac et al., 2001; Pollnac and Poggie, 1988). Nevertheless, 41 per cent of those in tourism-dependent occupations wished that their children would have the same occupation versus only 20 per cent of those in non-tourist dependent occupations – a statistically significant difference at 0.1 per cent, reflecting greater satisfaction with their occupation. When a follow-up question asked parents which occupation they would like for their children, most wanted them to go to the university and become professionals (such as doctors, lawyers, etc) or become baseball players, but many simply wanted 'something better' for them, while only 6 per cent of respondents wished for a tourism occupation for their children.

**Table 4.** Beta coefficients and odds ratios for significant predictors for respondents having a tourism-dependent occupation

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>OR</i>
Individual characteristics					
Speaks 2nd language	1.19	0.25	22.24	<0.001	2.20
Older than 43	-0.64	0.22	8.21	0.004	0.53
Community characteristics					
Level of tourism development	0.17	0.04	15.24	<0.001	1.18
Day trip tourism	0.60	0.23	6.5	0.011	1.81
Rooms per capita	0.14	0.05	8.11	0.004	1.15
Dominican tourism	0.79	0.36	4.95	0.026	2.02
Constant	-2.77	0.37	55.41	<0.001	0.06

*Notes:* Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness of fit test = 6.04,  $df=8$ ,  $p=0.643$ . Overall fit of predicted to observed results = 78.7. Overall fit of predicted to observed results (using only significant variables,  $n=640$ ) = 80.6 per cent. *OR* = odds ratio.

**Table 5.** Relationship between respondent's job satisfaction and having a tourism-dependent occupation

	<i>N</i>	Tourism dependent (%)	<i>N</i>	Non-tourism dependent (%)	All (%)
<i>Women</i>					
Wage earner	34	<u>97</u>	41	<u>78</u>	87
Entrepreneur	14	<u>93</u>	22	<u>91</u>	92
Self-employed	16	88	75	83	84
Housewife	–	–	108	66	66
Student	–	–	7	86	86
Family business	2	100	8	63	70
All occupations	66	<u>94</u>	261	<u>75</u>	79
<i>Men</i>					
Wage earner	36	92	34	88	90
Entrepreneur	11	100	18	94	97
Self-employed	49	96	271	90	91
Housewife	–	–	–	–	–
Student	–	–	–	–	–
Family business	–	–	–	–	–
All occupations	96	95	323	90	91

*Note:* Underlined figures denote significantly different proportions of happy respondents with their occupations (Fisher's exact test).

#### IV. Discussion

##### *Impact of Tourism on Material Well-being*

Our results provide evidence that tourism-dependent households have, on average, a higher income than those who are not dependent on tourism. However, this difference does not seem to be caused by direct employment in the industry. In particular, small business owners, and to a lesser degree other self-employed residents seem to benefit the most. There are a number of reasons for this finding. First, a big advantage for small entrepreneurs in our study was that many were able to sell their traditional goods and services to tourists directly. Some examples include Doña Miguelina,<sup>2</sup> who sells raw sugar and cocoa balls to foreign hikers in El Café; or Don José, who sells bottled drinks to tourists in Saona Island from his beachfront *colmado*; or Salustiano, who sells coconuts from his tricycle cart to international tourists in Guayacanes beach. In contrast, a study of informal micro producers in non-tourism areas of the DR by Espinal and Grasmuck (1997) found that this sector produced almost exclusively for the local market and sold predominantly to individuals in the neighbourhood, which greatly limited their growth potential. In our study, the access of some occupations to trade directly with the international tourist market may well signify an important linkage with the national and global economy for these often remote communities, which can be greatly exploited to their advantage.

Second, tourists tend to pay more for goods and services. Most international tourists do not have a good idea of local prices or current exchange rates (which can

fluctuate daily) and typically overpay for many goods and services. Many visitors also pay in foreign currency (or the current exchange equivalent of prices set in foreign currency). During the year of our study, the Dominican peso suffered a drastic devaluation losing about 40 per cent of its value (from US\$0.0480 to US\$0.0279), resulting in high inflation of an estimated 43 per cent for the year. By having access to US dollars and euros, many tourism-related workers were able to offset the impact of the rapidly increasing local prices and maintain their standard of living, unlike the great majority of the Dominican population.

Nevertheless, many tourism employees (with the exception of bartenders, waiters/waitresses, and bellboys) are not usually in direct contact with tourists, and therefore do not benefit from gratuities, which could greatly improve their relatively low base salaries. Also, the type of tourism holiday offered in many Dominican coastal resorts of pre-paid 'all inclusive packages' further reduces the potential for tips, as this makes tourists bring less spending money and often leave their wallets in hotel rooms because they do not need cash to eat or drink all day. This finding agrees with Britton's (1996) analysis of undesirable aspects of package tourism for developing countries, which include a high retention of expenditures by travel companies, confinement of tourists to a small area within the country, and product standardisation that can lead to easy substitution by foreign companies and tourists for competing destinations elsewhere.

### *Gender Differences*

Our study also suggests that tourism brings higher levels of income and material lifestyle to female-headed households. In fact, significant differences in material lifestyle were only detectable in female-headed households. These differences seem to support the conclusions of other researchers that female household heads tend to allocate a larger part of their earnings towards household expenses than male heads. The fact that we only noticed changes in terms of appliances in female-headed households suggests that benefits from tourism might still be relatively modest, not being sufficient for affording significant improvements in house construction. Similarly, Pollnac et al. (2002) found improvements of material lifestyle in terms of appliances but not house structure in Indonesian villages developing seaweed farming. There it was attributed to the relatively recent introduction of seaweed culture.

Nevertheless, some anecdotal observations indicated that women might still not be receiving the full benefits from tourism, lending support to the findings of Grasmuck and Espinal (2000) on the restricting effect of gender ideologies on working Dominican women. Some women complained that even though there were tourism-related jobs available to them, their husbands or partners did not let them work outside the house. Yudelkis, a young woman from Cabeza de Toro, had to quit her hotel job because her spouse did not like her to be outside the home all day and did not want her to be in an environment where she could socialise with other men, especially foreigners. Chea, a woman from Las Galeras, felt that her spouse did not want her to work to prevent her from having her own money, which she could use to go to the hair salon and purchase nice clothes that might make her attractive to other men. This indicates that many women in these communities are still much subordinated to their male partners. Similarly, in a study of tourism impacts on

women in Mexico, Chant (1997) found that some men had a hard time coping with their wives or partners' economic independence and sometimes retaliated by either dropping out of work or scaling down their contributions to household income. This puts many women in a difficult position, as working outside the home already increases their workload, as they are still left with the majority of domestic tasks. Thus, prevailing gender ideologies seem to be keeping some women from reaping the benefits that work and tourism could provide.

Our research also documents a pattern of gender differences in terms of direct jobs in the industry that may also be limiting women's careers. As studies elsewhere have documented (Chant, 1997; Long and Kindon, 1997; Casellas and Briavel, 2001), women in the tourism sector in the DR seem to be disproportionately concentrated within tasks most akin to their domestic labour, such as chambermaid, waitress and kitchen work, which have limited occupational mobility. In contrast, men are found across a wider range of positions with more possibilities for occupational mobility and tips. Nevertheless, our results concerning material position and job satisfaction (see below) make us agree with Chant (1997) in that, despite encountering many limitations, the mere fact that women have access to work is in itself a significant improvement for them.

### *Job Satisfaction*

Tourism related jobs had higher levels of job satisfaction, particularly in the case of women, which could be due to generally higher levels of job satisfaction that are found in women (Clark, 1997; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza 2000), but the lower satisfaction levels of housewives with their occupation could also influence these results.

The generally higher levels of satisfaction in tourism work could be related to some of the resident's ideas of a desirable job as expressed in the question 'which occupation would you like for your sons or daughters'. Besides the expected professional occupations, many respondents said they simply wanted 'something better' for their children. When asked to elaborate on this response, some stated that they wished their children could work in a clean environment, where they could wear nice clothes and smell good, and did not have to work as hard as they did. Many hotels and tourism-related businesses might fit into this description.

In brief, even though most tourism jobs were low-level positions with relatively low salaries, residents were still thankful for them. Receiving a steady income every month, no matter how small, was perceived as being advantageous. Hart (1973), referring to the informal sector in urban Ghana, found that:

The most salient characteristic of wage-employment in the eyes of the sub-proletariat is not the absolute amount of income receipts but its reliability. For informal employment... is risky and expected rewards highly variable. Thus, for subsistence purposes alone, regular wage employment, however badly paid, has some solid advantages; and hence men who derive substantial incomes from informal activities may still retain or desire formal employment. (Hart, 1973: 78)

This reasoning helps account for the tourism job attitudes we encountered.

*Who is Benefiting from Tourism?*

Individuals with foreign language competency, who are relatively young, are more likely to have a tourism-related occupation. Many residents expressed their frustration at not understanding what tourists were trying to say and often expressed a willingness to learn a second language, particularly English, as most tourists would know at least rudimentary English. The importance of knowing a second language to be able to participate in tourism benefits has also been found in other tourism studies (Chant, 1997; Ashley et al., 2000). Thus, our research strongly supports the promotion of foreign language education in public local schools as well as giving preferential treatment to private language schools in order to increase benefits to these communities.

The fact that relatively younger individuals are more likely to have a job in the tourism industry suggests that many households headed by older individuals might be facing an uncertain future in tourism areas. This is particularly worrisome in communities where tourism is competing or displacing traditional land uses and economic activities that are the only livelihood options for older residents, especially if they lack children or other relatives that can support them. This situation places a big burden on the younger generations, as they are forced to support their parents' households in addition to their own.

Also, residents in localities characterised by Dominican tourists and day trip tourism, seemed in a better position in terms of obtaining tourism jobs. In communities exposed to international and domestic tourism (like Boca Chica and Juan Dolio) locals often mentioned how they preferred Dominican tourists, because they tended to be better customers for the local goods and services. Cattarinich (2001) states that there is little research investigating the effects of domestic and regional tourism in developing countries. Some observers contend that the promotion of domestic tourism may reduce leakages, fluctuations in tourist arrivals due to weather conditions or international political or economic crises, and possibly even negative sociocultural and environmental impacts (Ghimire, 1997, 2001; Sha and Gupta, 2000; Roe et al., 2004). By bringing wealthier urban consumers to poorer rural areas, domestic tourism can bring important development opportunities. Also, while domestic and regional tourism in developing countries generally has been taken up by the more privileged classes, in certain parts of the world the 'leisure class' is expanding (Ghimire, 2001). We found evidence for an increasing domestic market in the DR, especially during local holidays and the low season, when beach hotels and tour operators commonly offer discounts that are widely advertised in the local media. This not only allows many more Dominicans to afford a nice vacation, but it also helps tourism businesses operate year-round, offsetting some of the negative effects of tourism seasonality. Also, because domestic tourists may be more accustomed than international tourists to the food, accommodation and general comfort levels that the poor are able to provide, the poor have greater opportunities to cater to their needs (Shah and Gupta, 2000). Thus, policies aimed at increasing domestic tourism by means of promotion inside the country, seem particularly appropriate for achieving pro-poor tourism.

In terms of day trips, these were usually marketed for international tourists from resort areas through a tour operator. Even though the day trips were often pre-paid

at the hotel, they still seemed to generate much more interaction between visitors and locals, and thus more opportunities for benefits, especially in the form of providing tourists home cooked meals. Many day trips consisted of nature-based attractions (for example, a scenic waterfall or lake, or horseback, jeep, or motorcycle tours across the countryside), sometimes combined with agro tours (for example, of cacao or banana plantations in El Café). These are assets that many communities have and with the right training and a relatively small investment, can exploit. Sometimes to get to these attractions, tourists had to travel considerable distances by bus, indicating that there is significant interest by some of the tourists to experience more than a beach resort has to offer. Although not all, many tourists we talked to are keen to enjoy authentic experiences and interact with locals, and these attitudes should be capitalised upon. At the same time, locals should receive more training to develop attractions and businesses that suit their visitor's tastes.

Currently, most successful day trips seem to have been initiated or organised with the help of foreigners, community outsiders or non governmental organisations (NGOs). For example, CEBSE, a Santo Domingo based environmental NGO, with the help of a German technical cooperant played a major role in developing the El Limón waterfall trail in the community of El Café. This is possibly because these agents are more familiar with the tourist's preferences and expectations than locals, and also are able to obtain the initial capital and connections with the tourist industry to start many of these operations. Currently the El Limón waterfall is widely recognised as a good example of community-based tourism by the Ministry of the Environment, which has given additional support to this initiative, now touted as one of its 'co-management' success stories. However, official tourism authorities have largely ignored it and have not promoted similar initiatives elsewhere.

### *Policy Implications*

The high percentage of self-employment and the low skill levels characteristic of most respondents' occupations support the findings of other researchers (D'Amico-Samuels, 1986; Kermath and Thomas, 1992; Dahles, 1999), which underscore the importance of the informal sector in understanding tourism benefits to local communities in developing countries. However, informal vendors in the DR's tourism areas are constantly being threatened by the authorities. Kermath and Thomas (1992), by studying informal tourism vendors in Sosúa (DR), reported that their activities and areas of operation were increasingly being restricted and regulated by the local authorities. Although we could not find written official policies to this effect, in practice, this was very common in many of the communities we visited, namely under POLITUR, the tourism police. Similarly restricting regulation of the informal sector related to tourism has been documented in other developing countries (see D'Amico-Samuels, 1986; Dahles, 1999). Apparently, this stems from the idea of governments and formal sector operators that 'informals' ruin the image of the vacation area for tourists, to which the only solution seems to eliminate them. As Dahles (1999: 5) pointed out, 'whereas national governments in many developing countries promote tourism as a passport to development, the role that these governments attribute to the participation of small and micro entrepreneurs in this development is highly limited'. This reflects the general Dominican government

policy towards tourism, which has been characterised by deregulation at the formal level (effected by fiscal incentives and funding opportunities), countered with restricting regulation of local vendors and small entrepreneurs.

Informal employment can be seen as a response to the unavailability of formal opportunities and low wages and it can advance economic development through its ability to absorb large quantities of labour (Timothy and Wall, 1997). In tourist areas, involvement in the informal sector provides many local residents with their only access to the tourism economy. Furthermore, while many visitors may be frustrated by the persistence of vendors, many also appreciate the opportunity to talk to, bargain with, and buy goods from local people. We concur with Timothy and Wall's (1997) view that the informal sector will not disappear with modernisation because it is an essential component of developing economies. Therefore, the activities of informal vendors in tourism areas need to be accepted and legitimised, albeit in some cases they might need organisation, as other countries have done (Timothy and Wall, 1997), but this should be done with extreme caution.

Our research also suggests that the promotion of domestic tourism policies seems very desirable, given the widespread benefits it provides to local people. Currently, domestic tourism in the DR has grown despite the government's exclusive interest in capital-intensive, international tourism. Our findings on domestic tourism share similarities with those of Scheyvens (2002) and Hampton (2003) on backpacker tourism. Just like backpackers, domestic tourists are usually served by locally-owned tourist enterprises. Thus, communities can provide services and products demanded by these tourists without the need for large amounts of start-up capital or sophisticated infrastructure, and can be viewed as a form of 'pro-poor tourism' (Hampton, 2003). Such patronage gives communities a greater control over tourism and puts them in a better position to participate in local business and tourism organisations through which they can better promote the well being of their community and control the influence held by outsiders. Scheyvens (2002) reasons that aiming 'low' (to backpacker or budget tourism) builds upon the skills of the local population, promotes self-reliance, and develops the confidence of community members in dealing with outsiders.

The greater material wellbeing of tourism dependent households reported here can be explained by the fact that tourism has become not just the most attractive, but the only economic option available to locals in many communities. During our work, many accounts suggested that the decline of the traditional occupations of farming and fishing could be making certain communities extremely dependent on tourism and remittances from relatives elsewhere. For example, residents of Paraíso, one of our study sites, used to rely almost entirely on coffee growing. Due to the collapse of world coffee prices in the early 1990s and the discontinuation of government credit facilities for this crop in recent years, most coffee plantations were discontinued, leaving many laborers without work. Similarly, the drop in coconut oil and copra prices greatly affected all communities in the Samaná Peninsula (almost entirely covered by coconut plantations). And in Andrés and El Soco, the privatisation of the sugar cane industry during the past decade has left many sugar mill workers without a job. And in Bayahibe, it is very likely that the low yields from fishing made switching to ferrying tourists the only way for fishers to make a living. All of this indicates a very deep and possibly irreversible transformation of Dominican rural

communities to rely almost exclusively on tourism to survive. All of this places more emphasis on the need on ensuring that the industry is sustainable in the long-term.

But such an excessive dependency on tourism can be dangerous for the DR. As Britton (1982) has pointed out, when a third world country uses tourism as a development strategy, it becomes enmeshed in a global system over which it has little control. The organisation of international tourism is largely controlled by large transnational corporations such as airline and wholesale tour operators which determine market strategies and even partially manipulate tourism expectations (Britton, 1996; Brohman, 1996). Besides, such heavy reliance on tourism makes countries very vulnerable to global recessions and climatic variations (Brohman, 1996), particularly hurricanes in the Caribbean.

The general policy recommendations that follow from this study are that if tourism is going to help the rural poor, supportive policies and programmes need to be implemented toward the local small scale or informal sector and other entrepreneurial activities in tourism areas (such as credit facilities or investment capital for small scale ventures), that education (particularly in foreign languages) and information necessary for entrepreneurs to generate a tourism product is made available to the community, including networking opportunities and capacity building through skills training. Such support for communities could come from governments, nongovernmental organisations, or the private sector. Also, it is important that older residents and their livelihoods are taken into account when designing these initiatives, as they are particularly vulnerable to being left out from tourism benefits.

Additionally, tourism authorities should start conducting comprehensive tourism planning and evaluation of their current policies and practices, especially those affecting local residents. Also, institutional mechanisms need to be put in place to facilitate the participation of local residents in tourism planning. Currently, tourism planning occurs behind closed doors in Santo Domingo, the capital city, and is carried out by the Ministry of Tourism with foreign or national elite investors. Such plans usually favour large-scale resorts catering to international tourists; approximately 70 per cent of the rooms offered in the country are concentrated in enclave-type resorts that have over 100 rooms (Asonahores, 2003) and do not follow a pre-established strategy or tourism development plan. In most cases, local residents only learn of tourism projects taking place in their communities through rumours, the onset of construction work, or in the worst cases, when notified of their eviction. Also, tourism strategies should not be assessed just in terms of increasing tourist numbers or revenues, but in their contribution to local development and the well being of nearby communities. Lastly, central and regional governments in tourism areas need to consider a diverse development strategy, given the discussed dangers of an excessive dependency on tourism alone for development in the long-term.

In spite of the optimistic results presented on tourism's positive contributions to local livelihoods, we would like to end this paper on a cautionary note. The surveyed communities are in a sense the 'lucky ones.' During our fieldwork, we were not able to conduct surveys on a few communities initially considered because they had disappeared in recent years; this was particularly true in the Bávaro-Punta Cana area in eastern DR. We were able to talk to former residents of Juanillo, one such community that had been recently displaced by a new luxury tourism project known



as Cap Cana. According to residents, Cap Cana representatives offered them two choices: a house in a new housing project constructed for them, or a lump sum of money. When we visited the housing project, known as Nuevo Juanillo, or 'New Juanillo', many residents expressed their unhappiness with their new situation. Fishers were kept from working because the community was placed about 5 km inland, and also custodians restricted their access to the shore. Transportation to and from the project was also a problem. The *colmado* owners had lost business from the beach tourists, especially locals that came on the weekends. Many homes were already vacated or had been rented to the new project's staff, as there were few livelihood options there. Further, many residents were angry because their local cemetery had been bulldozed over and allegedly, only a handful of human remains were returned to their respective families.

A number of studies have highlighted the often catastrophic effects of development-induced displacements in developing countries, given the impoverishing effect they usually have on the displaced (Guggenheim, 1994; Cernea, 1997; Mahapatra, 1999). As Cernea (2003) argues, the conventional 'remedy' of compensation often cannot restore destroyed incomes and livelihoods to where they would be in the absence of forced displacement. Furthermore, resettlement tends to break the social networks that are so crucial for the survival of the poor. Thus, we recommend that more attention be given to these issues, as the economic gains from tourism may not be compensated by such practices.

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### Notes

1. To establish poverty lines we followed the methodology presented by Santana (1998), in which poor households would be those that would have to spend over 50 per cent of their income in the cost of the minimum food basket, and extremely poor households would be those having an income lower than the cost of the minimum food basket. Minimum food basket price (=RD\$1946.34) was obtained by adjusting the minimum food basket cost for rural areas estimated in 1999 to inflation as of August 2003, using consumer price indices reported by Banco Central RD ([www.bancentral.gov.do](http://www.bancentral.gov.do)).
2. No real names have been used.

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