

**ASSESSMENT OF THE DOMINICAN-HAITIAN DIALOGUE OF THE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT
CHURCHES OR DIALOGUE HAÏTIANO DOMINICAIN DES EGLISES**

FINAL REPORT

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1. Introduction

This assessment was done at the request of the Norwegian Church Aid, entity that —for nearly a decade— has been supporting the actions of the Dominican and Haitian churches in their efforts to improve relations between the two populations, with two persistently stated purposes: preventing the violence that has expressed itself in different ways and serving as a support to the Haitian people in overcoming their difficulties¹. This assessment is made in the institutional context of the beginning of the NCA five-year plan "*Country Plan Haiti-DR 2011 - 2015*" which offers a comprehensive range of possibilities for the management of the Dialogue.

The fieldwork for this evaluation was carried out in the context of new tensions arising in Haiti due to the widespread allegations of electoral fraud by Government forces, but also in the midst of an epidemic of cholera which has claimed more than 2,000 lives in its first two months. These situations, undoubtedly, affected the proposed work, preventing the development of the necessary interviews or making them shorter than would have been necessary to gain a better understanding of the process of the Dominican Haitian Dialogue of the Evangelic Protestant Churches or Dialogue Haïtiano Dominicain des Eglises (hereafter, DDHIE/DHDE).

Nonetheless, the assessment team made up by Luis Alberto Gómez, Colombian consultant, and Eric Levron, French consultant, managed to conduct at least 26 interviews, 10 of them with representatives of Haitian organizations or institutions based in Haiti, and the others in Santo Domingo, Dajabón and Jimani, with representatives of Dominican institutions. We also had access to lots of documentation supplied by the institution that contracted the assessment and by the field coordinators. We visited two of the border work areas, both on the Dominican side. The DDHIE/DHDE responsible persons —in the Dominican Republic and Haiti— made a huge effort to carry out the agenda, and provide the best logistic and security conditions for the work of the assessment team. Later, through electronic means, we carried out interviews with the NCA staff that has been responsible for the follow-up of this process —Ingvild Skeie, Johan Hindahl, and Petter Skauen— in order to analyze in depth the discussion topics that emerged from the field visits.

A new context

It is a commonplace to speak of complexity when referring to the situation affecting the people of Haiti; however, the current moment —marked by the aftermath of the earthquake, the epidemic of cholera and a new demonstration of their institutional instability—, places the Haitian people in a new situation with dramatic consequences: a humanitarian crisis and a decrease in their chances to deal with the reconstruction in a sustained and joint effort between the Haitian society, their

¹ The prevailing idea among those who have accompanied the process from the beginning is that the Haitian problem has been a decisive inspiration for the bi-national actions. The recommendations given as a result of the evaluation suggest the need to change this starting point, focusing on the identification of an agenda for the two national sectors of participating churches.

leaders, and the international community. For some analysts, the earthquake not only shook the buildings and had a serious impact on human lives, but also collapsed in many ways the already fragile public institutions, greatly reducing their ability to control and direct the country, and expanded the scope for international institutions that —day after day— increase their impact on the Haitian society.

On the Dominican side there is the satisfaction of having fulfilled a solidarity duty both within the framework of the post earthquake emergency as in subsequent actions aimed at stabilizing the humanitarian crisis. Irrespective of any argument of convenience or gain for the Dominican Republic, there is no doubt that both public institutions and the Dominican society as a whole threw themselves into an effort of unconditional support during the initial phase of the emergency — without which the history of this crisis would have been completely different. The Dominican Republic provided not only an enormous direct aid with food, healthcare and electrical and communications infrastructure², but also offered the necessary logistical conditions for the international community to have a platform from which to display all sorts of aid (while Haiti's infrastructure was considerably affected). At this stage, any hint of discrimination or rejection disappeared and, instead, a widely recognized in Haiti sense of brotherhood and solidarity arose³.

But the recognition given to the role played by the Dominican Republic and the international community creates the risk of leaving out the solidarity and support displayed by the Haitians themselves, both from within the affected areas as from the peripheral regions. In that regard, it is worth reassessing the role of the domestic support that has been crucial after the earthquake and in the so-called emergency phase, and up to now has been hardly mentioned. In fact, the earthquake affected part of the West, Nippes and Southeast departments. The rest of the country reacted automatically, not only to accommodate thousands of displaced persons who turned to them, but also to help those who were buried under the rubble in Port-au-Prince. There is no advertising on the help given by the Haitians themselves to their fellow citizens after the earthquake, maybe because it is considered something obvious and a fundamental duty of the Haitians themselves. But, although it can be read as something normal, it is easy to fall in a denial of the efforts done by Haitian businesses, churches, individuals —that sacrificed their own needs in order to save lives— and, especially, those of the Haitian Diaspora that has always been the main donor to Haitians —not only in times of crisis. It is also important to recognize that the proper distribution of the aid was made possible thanks to the installed capacity in Haiti and its ecclesiastical processes, both within the framework of the DDHIE, as from other sources.

² According to Inocencio García, from the Dominican Foreign Ministry, during the emergency the Government allocated to Haiti up to 80% of the resources planned for the national soup kitchens plan.

³ Finally, referring to the Dominican aid and taking up again the opinion of several analysts interviewed, it seems to be that there is no contradiction between the assessment of the humanitarian contribution of the Dominican Republic — spontaneous in nature—, which mobilized an entire society to help at the critical moment of the Haitian tragedy, and the advantages that derived and might subsequently derive for the DR in the trade, industry and tourism areas in relation to the attention of the crisis and reconstruction prospects. These benefits could extend even to the political level if they open up a space for more interference from the international community on Haiti. The Dominican Republic could then play an important role and, in fact, it has already done it with its leadership in cooperation and analysis scenarios about the future reconstruction of Haiti.

That being said, it is undeniable that the waters quickly flow once again through their normal course. In the medium term, some of the fundamental characteristics of the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic will manifest again, and they might intensify. Those key features are:

Asymmetry. Whatever the reasons for it, the disparity of opportunities marks the relationship between the two nations. The migration phenomenon is explained by the radical difference in terms of development, productive capacity, institutional framework and livelihood options between the two countries. It is an obvious asymmetry in aspects such as bi-national trade, labor use and environmental conditions, and has a direct impact on issues such as access to safe drinking water, energy resources and the impact of natural phenomena, just to mention a few. This asymmetrical relationship shows its impact in political relations, the migration phenomenon and the mutual image that people have about their neighbors.

Distrust. Historically, this unequal relationship has generated feelings of mutual prejudice, which affect the relations between the two populations in various fields. Apart from the historic circumstances given as a backdrop to argue differences in the development and cultural traits of the two societies, what is truly worrying is their everyday expression: on the Dominican side, a society and institutions that feel as their duty and have the capacity to impose the conditions for the bi-national relationship; on the Haitian side, a society and institutions that feel injured by the asymmetry, distrust the Dominican's intentions and protect themselves resorting to the defense of their dignity.

Potential for violence and jeopardizing human rights. The most worrying element of the differences between the two countries is the persistence of violent episodes and other acts in violation of human rights (degrading treatment) that have affected —not exclusively but mainly— Haitian immigrants in Dominican territory. The critical situation regarding human rights reaches its peak in the lack of a citizenship and statelessness, circumstances that coincide with the lack of protection of its nationals by the Haitian Government —in areas as sensitive as documentation—, and the advantages obtained by Dominican economic sectors of the illegal migration for labor exploitation. The lack of citizenship of the Haitian migrants and their descendants means they cannot act as right and duty bearers, and that exposes them to several forms of abuse and exploitation in the Dominican territory.

This analysis must take a look at the issue of the international presence and cooperation in Haiti. Obviously, Haiti is a fertile territory for arguing all types of interventions on humanitarian grounds, without further consideration for its characteristics or its impact. While most of the major cooperation agencies operate in Haiti with legal recognition, and operate following the parameters set by the United Nations, it is also true that there are thousands of small aid projects⁴ in the Haitian territory that operate with no control or coordination. It is commonly argued that the institutional instability and lack of confidence in the transparency and good management of resources by the Haitian institutions justify leaving out those institutional channels and getting the

⁴ At least 12,000 initiatives of international assistance deployed in Haitian territory are mentioned.

aid directly to the population. However, there are no means to ensure that these aid exercises follow respectful principles, codes of conduct, action without damage (Do no harm), local participation and sustainability requirements; it is also impossible to guarantee that they are not a front for illegal activities such as human trafficking, fund diversion or some kind of experimentation with the population.

Regarding the United Nations, the illegitimacy of the **MINUSTAH** (French: *Mission des Nations Unies pour la STabilisation en Haïti*) is at its worst moment, not only because of the uncertain argument of being responsible for the spread of cholera, but due to countless situations ranging from violations of human rights to acts of sexual violence that are not subject to the Haitian justice. On the other hand, the action of France, Canada and the United States is seen by observers and analysts as an open interference in the political fate of Haiti, with no concern nor respect for its sovereignty. And, once again, the argument justifying the intervention is the institutional fragility. But the intervention has a great responsibility in feeding party divisions and forcing all kinds of political decisions. The weakness, lack of authority, and abuse of power of which Préval's Government is accused create an appropriate environment for further international interventionism.

Haiti's reconstruction operations, discussed in a series of conferences and donor meetings in which the Dominican President —Leonel Fernandez— played an important leadership role, were promised aid for nearly 11 billion dollars, with important offers from the European Union, the United States, Spain, etc. Now, according to former President Clinton, Coordinator of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC), it is known that the aid handed over during the year 2011 will not exceed 500 million.

Bearing all this in mind, it is possible to make a double and contradictory reading: either, that the Dialogue as facilitating and diplomatic strategy is now more necessary than ever, or that the favorable time for the Dialogue, in the terms initially proposed, has ended.

To this seeming contradiction we should add the estrangement between the Dialogue teams of the two countries, whose immediate motivation is based on procedural aspects of the management of the humanitarian aid. Despite the reasons related to the current situation, this crisis is also the expression of equivocal patterns in the mutual relations that were not covered or discussed over time. On the reality of this crisis, there are still different interpretations among Haitian and Dominican pastors. We will be outlining them in this document.

The main findings and conclusions of this assessment will be presented in seven sections:

- Relevance of the Objectives and Strategies
- Results and Impacts
- Conceptual Approach to the Conflict and Gender Relations
- Organizational Structure and Resource Management
- Program Capacity and Efficiency

- Lessons Learned
- Recommendations

2. MAIN FINDINGS

2. Relevance of the Objectives and Strategies

The set of interviews conducted by the assessment team, together with the archives documenting the evolution of the program, report a number of coincident purposes. The DDHIE/DHDE has been conceived as a facilitation strategy that has the ability to mobilize several forces in both societies in order to deal not only with the conflict -in some cases violence- present in the history and current relations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, but also to foster the common will to undertake huge challenges on structural problems, such as the environment, education and the bi-national relations at the borders. Churches, State officials, teachers at the borders, political analysts, as well as the NCA documents, agree on the identification of the purposes of the DDHIE/DHDE; the coincidence stretches in almost all cases to a historical reading that is rooted in the social formation of the two States: both in the logic of the historical colonization process of the territories and in the impact of the process of decolonization and creation of the Haitian and Dominican nationalities. It is very striking that, in both the process documentation and the interviews, there is an invocation of historical causes, based on facts dating back 200 years or more.

However, these were not always the objectives of the Dialogue. At the beginning, the Norwegian participation intended to be a facilitator within the Haitian society in view of its political fragmentation —in the midst of serious institutional problems— and the unending social crisis affecting this Caribbean nation. By the end of the 90's, it aimed to get 110 political parties to discuss and find solutions to overcome the crisis. Norway soon detects the need to involve various sectors of the Dominican society, given the deep interaction and interdependence of the two countries and, particularly, the aggravation of the complaints from the international community about the human rights problems endured in the Dominican Republic by Haitians migrants and their descendants born in Dominican land. The Dialog then appears as the confirmation that the problems affecting one of the countries have an impact in the whole island. Most of them are issues of bi-national impact.

At this point, the Haitian pastors express the existence of a repeated misunderstanding of the international community, including Norway. If, in its origins, the Dialogue was devoted to the cohesion of the Haitians, the international community including Norway think that in order to contribute to the solution of the problems of Haiti it should involve more external actors rather than strengthen the capacity of Haitians themselves to overcome their problems. In this case, by

introducing the Dominican Republic, it is awarded "*an instructor's role in the affairs of Haiti*"⁵ and the administration of the process is given to SSID.

The facilitation process —since the end of the nineties until the middle of the of 2000 -2010 decade— aims to contribute to the transformation of the attitudes and opinions of the decision-makers —meaning the political and business class— and the opinion-makers —mostly intellectuals and journalists. That is the main focus in the origins of the DDHIE/DHDE: those who exert social leadership are somehow responsible for the prevailing attitudes and, therefore, can be —at the same time— the best vehicle for change. A second element found at the basis of this diplomatic facilitation is that exchange events can progress from awareness and mental openness to policies. That is to say, agreements can be devised within the framework of the events and then taken to the sphere of Government and parliament decisions.

Two elements will affect this orientation: first, the perception that after returning from the meetings in Norway, and despite their emotionality and the successful opening-up, no perceptible or significant changes are seen in the policies. Although the press publishes some articles calling for changes in the relationship between the two countries, the truth is that the anti-Haitian policies, particularly in the Dominican Republic, have aggravated during the decade while, on the Haitian side, there are no positive actions from the authorities to protect the migrants, just to cite an example.

Around 2004, the signs of fatigue regarding the transformative capacity of this type of events become evident and the MFA begins to question the value of this facilitation, pressing for a change in the approach which, somehow, means a change in objectives.

2.1 Role of the Churches

In this process, the Protestant churches are seen as a sort of neutral actor, with little history in the political confrontation, but capable of influencing the decision and opinion makers in both countries. The churches would have the virtue of representing moderate positions which can promote a dialogue and generate spaces, without awakening the suspicion of some NGOs which are identified with complaints in the field of human rights or with anti-Haitian discourses.

The DDHIE/DHDE had its first expressions in 2002 and was presented as the continuity strategy of a Norwegian Government initiative, supported by Norwegian Church Aid, and having as its counterpart intelligentsia and political groups that, in time, were used up in the facilitation effort (OEI - ISPOS). This effort is taken up by the Protestant churches, the only participant in the conferences promoted from Norway which assumes the dialogue initiative on its own. It is worth mentioning that in principle there is a greater dynamism and leadership in the Dominican churches and that the progressive approach of the Haitian churches does not always happen as an expression of their own initiative towards this type of process. This must not be understood as a lack of second degree structures among the Haitian churches. Apart from the service missions in

⁵ Phrase used by the Haitian pastors.

some congregations, there were also two networks or coordinating bodies prior to the DDHIE/DHDE, the FPH⁶ and FPEH. Also, as the Haitian ministers emphasized, NCA already had a cooperation relationship with SSID⁷ for the Dominican Republic, and it served as the original basis for the dialogue process. SSID also had cooperation and dialogue relations with several sectors of the Dominican churches which originally served to give momentum to the Dialogue.

The Haitian pastors think that, for future relations, the identification and validation of the organization and representational forms for the dialogue processes must be set out by the Haitians themselves, without interference of the international agencies or the Dominican churches. They do not think it appropriate that Dominicans be responsible for searching or defining the delegates on the Haitian side, far less validating them.

2.2 The Problems of Facilitation

In its origins, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway —MFA— sees the dialogue among several social actors of the two countries as a preventive and proactive peace process, insofar as it creates the possibility of checking the distancing and animosities between the two countries; it sets out a proposal for both States regarding that weakness in their relations. That was the key to the peace process: facilitating meetings that helped reduce the animosity and let them go beyond. But it also starts from the idea that improving the relationship between the two countries could contribute to stabilize the situation in Haiti and, at the same time, the stability of Haiti would have an impact on bilateral relations in fields such as migration, economy and environment.

According to some Dominican officials, since the beginning of the process, Norway's decision to facilitate a peace process or a conflict reduction did not match the reality affecting the two countries. Even though there is a migration problem and violent events do happen, these two Nations have active diplomatic, commercial and educational relations. This has generated difficult moments with the authorities, as was the case at the 2006 bi-national Conference in Oslo and Kristiansand, where the Norwegian facilitation was interpreted as an act of improper interference in their bi-national relations. However, members of parliament, journalists and civil society leaders, including the churches, assessed positively the facilitation process which answers to the obvious tension that accompanies their relations.

Changes in the approach and staff within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway —MFA—, eventually led to the decision of leaving the process in the hands of the Protestant churches, but —in view of the evaluators— without making sure they had gotten over their mutual prevention, suspicion and animosity, and surpassed the imbalance of the initiative among the ecclesiastical processes of the two countries. It was assumed that, somehow, the churches would be above these attitudes —as if they were social agents cut off from their national cultures or from the political and economic dynamics of their respective countries. Leaving the facilitation in the hands

⁶ Federation of Haitian Pastors and Protestant Federation of Haiti.

⁷ Social Service of the Dominican Churches

of the national actors themselves without realizing the state of the process, even inside the Haitian Dominican Churches, led to the facilitation being affected by the same problems it sought to overcome —especially, mistrust and imbalance in the initiative. That is the conclusion drawn today, both by the Haitian side and by independent observers.

The evaluators consider that Norway (the MFA and NCA) partly handed its facilitator role to the Dominican and Haitian high level actors, without first generating some key elements to reinforce the parties and prepare them to deal with the complex conflict that pervades the social and cultural relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It is worth noting that no rules and no legal framework were established. While a document drawn in 2002⁸ succinctly states the principles and purposes on which the dialogue between the churches is based, there is no other document to define the rules of the game and the commitments assumed by the parties. This is especially sensitive in the case of several joint initiatives that have required balanced decision-making agreements. That is to say —and this should be noted as a positive aspect— that the relationship between both parties of the DDHIE/DHDE was based on the free will of the actors, rather than on regulations, and that this good will allowed them to work during these years without major problems.

2.3 The Evolution of the Agenda and the Migration Issue

There is no doubt, and so it was determined since the beginning of the process, that the Haitian problems have defined the evolution of the agenda. Initially, before becoming a bi-national dialogue, the concern was for the political fragmentation and its impact on the deinstitutionalization of Haiti. Later, the migration issue became a mobilizing factor but was never fully addressed in practice, due to its complexity and the sensitivities it awakens: unilateral blame on the Dominican side. Dealing with it meant the risk of trapping and blocking the whole process.

This seems to be another important coincidence among the various actors in the process. The migration subject polarizes, divides and generates resistance, even within the churches. Therefore, it has been avoided as central theme in the process, ensuring that other —less sensible— issues help generate rapprochement and confidence. However, in certain circumstances of violence affecting migrants, the intervention of DDHIE/DHDE has been important as a call for calm and goodwill. Therefore, the migration issue never appears as the central theme in the formulation of agendas, being displaced by environmental issues and education as motivating factor.

The environmental theme seems to be the most recurrent after the issue of transforming the public mind —or imaginaries— (history teaching, radio programs), not only because of its inclusion in various conferences and actions in the border areas, but also because of the reforestation and garbage treatment programs at schools. However, the MFA has warned that it is not interested in including environmental issues in this process, and has blocked cooperation initiatives of the

⁸ See appendix #2. 2002 Agreement. Cooperation Agreement between the Churches of the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

DDHIE/DHDE in this subject. For their part, in recent years women worked on the problem of sexual violence together with researchers and trainers in gender issues.

In recent years, primarily due to policy changes and new attitudes of the MFA staff, the space for "*facilitation and high-level diplomacy*" conferences was reduced and replaced by a strengthening of the work at the grass roots level and of communication within the churches, together with an extension of the border work with economic projects: the Nobel project in schools and the movement of cross-border women, both of unquestionable importance for the border communities but certainly meaning a radical change in the orientation of the DDHIE/DHDE.

3. Results and Impacts

There are several ways to interpret the results shown by the DDHIE/DHDE. First of all, those who have taken part in several meetings in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Norway, agree in the importance of the dialogue and the close and personal relation among the various institutional actors. These exchanges have enabled them to see themselves anew, understand the history of the island from other perspectives, and identify and process the issues that make up the common agenda. Each meeting has served to ratify the need to change the imaginaries woven about each population and the need to address common issues related to the environment, migration, education, and border areas, among others. This type of scenario generates a sense of brotherhood and solidarity which, hopefully, will be reflected in the future acts and behaviors of the participants.

The bi-national meetings, that summoned decision makers and public opinion makers, were held repeatedly since the end of the 1990s and faced several moments of tension associated with situations of violence, misunderstandings in the rapprochement to Governments or problems in the methodology and decision making on the same process. There, we find one of the virtues of the process: the facilitation has been achieved in the midst of tensions and—in all cases— it was possible to overcome them.

However, the opinions regarding the results vary a great deal. First of all, it is admitted that after the meetings in Norway there was no display of an autonomous initiative from the participants as members of their professions (journalists, parliament members, entrepreneurs or representatives of other spheres of civil society) to give continuity to the meeting spaces and bring to fruition the agreements reached. That was precisely the reason—that nothing happened once the people returned to their countries—why the Protestant churches of the Dominican Republic expressed the need to assume a facilitation within their own churches, in order to find—starting from their common faith—the possibility of keeping the spirit and the agreements reached in Norway, and with the prospect of going beyond the churches and reaching other sectors and actors.

The point of view of senior officials and political spokesmen, both in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, regarding the scope of the DDHIE/DHDE is not very optimistic. This does not happen because they do not recognize the value of the meetings, but because—according to several

interlocutors— the methodology does not contribute to ensure sustainable results. The Dominican side declares that the process has lacked consistency, further research and better information that would serve as support to the discussions; both Haiti and the Dominican Republic have research groups and numerous studies on bi-national relations, frontier markets, migration and environmental issues that have not been used to enrich this process. DDHIE/DHDE has not established a dialogue with analysts, researchers and academic institutions.

Another methodological weakness is the lack of a strategy for monitoring the agreements reached. Please note that the meetings have lacked clear objectives and precision on the topics, essential conditions to make them operative in the countries. The process is subject to the personal interest awakened in the meetings and that disappears in absence of follow-up mechanisms duly agreed between the parties.

A third weakness, without failing to recognize the role of the churches as facilitators of the rapprochement between the two countries, has to do with the national Government's representation. The spheres that take part in the process are not the ones that make decisions, so the agreements reached are not binding for the countries. In this sense, the final effect achieved by the DDHIE/DHDE in terms of impact on the decision makers appears as a weakness, since it should contribute to an effective change in the power relations and governmental agreements between the two countries. However, as the Dominican pastors warned, this was not among the objectives of the DDHIE/DHDE, so it is not relevant to evaluate the Dialogue starting from objectives that were not in their plans.

3.1 Nobel Project and Women's Participation in the border area

In the border area, the assessment of the actions undertaken in the education and women's organizations areas is different. In general terms, those who have participated in the border bi-national actions recognize that the meetings and processes have had a profound impact on the minds of the participants. For them, it has been a valuable life experience. The children and youths who took part in cultural and sporting events ask permanently for similar events in the future. Women had access to discussion meetings, training from their gender perspective and encounters with their peers from the border towns. In all cases, the experience, the accompaniment and the training are positively assessed. The general opinion is that the basic experience is much more rewarding and encouraging, because it directly unlocks the imaginaries and cultural patterns that produce estrangement and distrust among people that coexist day after day.

Experiences of broad participation and mutual recognition have been developed with women and are still present in the memory of its participants. At this point it is worth noting that both the Dominican Republic and Haiti considered important to involve experts in gender issues as accompaniment in the women training processes.

The criticism in this case has to do with the episodic and circumstantial character of the activities. A few actions started out with the expectation of becoming processes. Such is the case of the teacher and women training programs. However, the exchanges are always happy and fortunate

episodes but without the continuity necessary to achieve cultural changes and promote sustainable dynamics among the schools or the women in the two countries. In fact, we cannot assert that there is a real cross-border (or bi-national) women's movement that has transcended the encounters. The events —up to now—are the result of the project management and have not managed to reproduce and become sustainable processes.

This criticism of the episodic character of the processes should not be understood as a lack of results. It is undeniable that the activities have awakened the sensitivity and willingness to change attitudes in different social sectors⁹. Young people and women, as well as teachers, have positive memories of the events, the exchange and the people they met, and they are willing to participate in future events.

4. Conceptual Focus Regarding the Conflict and Gender Relations

4.1 The Conflict

Strictly speaking, nothing documents that the DDHIE/DHDE had a conceptual focus to deal with conflicts, one that would provide a methodological perspective, validated tools or a design of the change process. However, it is essential to recognize that one of the main supporters at the beginning of the process, Peter Skauen, had experienced the peace process in Guatemala and his role is prominent in the construction and the facilitation of the process. This contribution is evident in the presence of a series of practices to deal with conflicts, which may be valuable, but are not properly internalized, documented, or systematized. Some, deducted from the talks, are:

- Goodwill Management: the process is based on the support given by actors who offer their mediation and search for solutions without being institutionally obliged. That is good, since it is disinterested management, but has the limitation of not being regulated by a mandate that sets a clear scope and duly established goals. Goodwill management is not binding on the parties and does not create legal obligations; at the most, moral ones.

- Identities based on faith: In the framework of the DDHIE/DHDE, the identities of faith are used — in the best sense of the term— as a means of rapprochement, with the understanding that there are doctrinal points in common that should contribute to peace and the recognition of a brotherhood.

- Facilitation starting from neutrality: both the Government of Norway and the Protestant churches have offered their support from their neutral position, not being a part in the conflict. In the case of the churches, as we have already said, this isn't necessarily true. It is true when it

⁹ During the assessment process we have seen it, above all, on the Dominican Republic side. Due to lack of time and operational design of the assessment, we had no exchange with social sectors on the Haitian side of the border.

comes to a position of facilitation built and developed as recognized by the efforts done by the leaders of the DDHIE/DHDE. But, as it has been stated by the two parties, the relationship between the churches has also expressed asymmetry, prejudices and distrust. There are a number of cases which demonstrate that the churches are not outside the cultural patterns and dominant relationships between the two countries.

- Specification of tension elements and common interests: the dialogue has focused on an agenda dealing with issues that express both the tensions (migration process, rights of the migrants, and access to health and education system) and the common interests (environment, border relations, economic relations). Any dialogue in the context of a conflict tends to derive in an agenda. The difficulty of this process is that the agenda —that has been very consistent over the years— has not resulted in binding agreements whose development can be measured. The participants in the Dialogue just make recommendations to the people and Governments.

- Generate recognition and acceptance among the parties: methodologically, the process seeks to get together the real or alleged opponents trying to gain mutual recognition and acceptance as people who discover each other and, with the rapprochement, can overcome the mutual prejudices that have affected them throughout history. This is one of the most successful aspects of this facilitation. The people who have taken part in the DDHIE/DHDE, both in the spheres of the decision and opinion-makers and in the grass roots work, agree in their assessment of the meeting spaces as an enriching experience of dialogue that leads to mutual recognition.

- Allow them to question and change deep-rooted imaginaries: as it is permanently invoked in the process justification, the DDHIE/DHDE rests on the existence of mutual negative imaginaries which are reinforced every day by tensions and the political or economic use given to the existence of such differences. The participants at the several bi-national conferences promoted by DDHIE/DHDE agree that the process has helped the direct participants to overcome cultural barriers which are a source of estrangement; they also agree on the need to work together in a new interpretation of their history and the transformation of the negative imaginaries. That is the purpose of the border Nobel project, the women's organization, and the work done by the churches on the media, through the radio stations that reach the whole island.

- Postponing issues that lead to polarization and addressing those that bring people together. This is a commonly used tool to build agreement processes and increase acceptance and relationships between conflicting parties. It is clear that the migration issue has historically been a source of tension between the two countries, so the DDHIE/DHDE has postponed it and given way to other issues such as education and the teaching of the history, or the environment.

- Integration in the change process: the border work seeks to build roots at the base, to achieve specific practices among populations that have directly experienced the tensions and violence. The grass roots work rests in a system of cultural reproduction resulting in changes in the educational system and recognizing the importance of women for the reproduction of cultural patterns, particularly through the oral transmission of values. Likewise, the management within the educational system seeks to achieve the experience of new relationship patterns, such as the case

of teaching history under different parameters to those that have only served to set the two populations apart.

4.2 Gender Issues

The assessment team found that the gender issue is one of the concerns of the DDHIE/DHDE. There are a series of practices and results that seek to ensure the inclusion of women in the change processes developed mainly in the border area. Likewise, there are explicit references to the participation of women in the bi-national conferences, with the purpose of reaching a balanced participation of men and women. In this sense, we could say the process has taken significant steps. The gender advisers —recruited in Haiti and the Dominican Republic— provided valuable knowledge, a methodological approach and a gender perspective acquired in other areas that complemented an aspect that is traditionally weak in churches. The two advisors, a Haitian and a Dominican, came from civil society experiences that linked them with women's movements and processes. Perhaps the greatest advance at this level is represented by the training processes at the border, where issues of domestic violence are discussed and opportunities for women's self-assertion and identity are promoted.

That said, we must stress that —once again— there is no conceptual development to back the practices developed in this field. The lack of a proper conceptualization of the gender approach means the DDHIE/DHDE does not transcend the commonplace (promoting events for women and ensuring an equitable participation in certain events), does not open spaces to deal with more important aspects such as the hierarchical structure of the churches or the discourses and concepts present in their congregations. Regarding the scope of the workshops and the selection of the beneficiaries at the border, the assessment team has some reservations since there have been only a few workshops, with a limited number of women and no clarity on the criteria to choose the participants, their ability to multiply the experience or their leadership capabilities.

When inquiring about the implementation of Resolution 1325 of the Security Council of the United Nations, as a framework for addressing the protection and empowerment of women, the spokespersons of the Dialogue in Haiti assured us that the resolution is an integral part of the Dialogue since 2007. This resolution has been incorporated in the main programs of MISSEH since 2009 and was a guide for the creation of the women's committee in 2008. Indeed, the women have developed a great activity in 2009 and written a book against domestic violence. Their last major activity took place on November 18, 2010, when 2,000 women spoke about the main political and social issues in Haiti; this event was possible thanks to the technical and financial support of NCA.

The structure of the churches is still based on male power and cultural patterns that define traditional gender roles for family and public life. Violence against women remains a constant in the two societies. Some testimonies seem to indicate that in Haiti these roles run deeper and are less open to change, but the assessment does not have enough elements to corroborate it. It is

said, in this regard, that Haitian women must work more to generate income but the control over economic resources continues to be exercised by men.

Despite these, it is important to stress the presence of women in the bi-national conferences, recognizing that for some time now —since before the DDHIE/DHDE— Haitian and Dominican women have participated on their own capacity in the political scene of the two countries. It is also recognized that both in the economy and in professional training women are gaining importance in the two countries, but they still have a marginal role in the dynamics of the DDHIE/DHDE, as can be seen in the composition of its two National Commissions.

As in other spheres, our perception is that the DDHIE/DHDE moves intuitively on the issue of gender, without having studies or research to support the practices involved in the process. It would be of great importance to document the changes identified by others in areas such as the so-called feminization of migration and also evaluate the presence of women in the bi-national markets. It would be very useful to document the emergence of women in the power structures of the parties and the hierarchical spaces of the churches, to analyze if they bring their own gender agendas and if they promote changes in the patriarchal power logics that historically characterize these spaces.

5. Organizational Structure and Resource Management

First, it is important to recognize the valuable initiative of the churches in taking in their hands this Dialogue process to give it an identity and make it work —once the Norwegian initiative is forced to make changes in its facilitation process for the prevention and reduction of conflicts between the Dominican Republic and Haiti—, especially after noting that the dynamics of other sectors of the society and public institutions were not responding to the challenge. The Dominican churches, particularly SSID, decide to ensure the functioning of the process, take it to the public decision-makers and put the political capital of their church leaders at the service of this diplomatic mission.

It is very likely that the impact of the migration from Haiti to the Dominican Republic —in the mist of polarized discussions on human rights, the violence of the current decade, the denationalization of Dominican-Haitians and an agenda pressing for the exclusion and further polarization within the Dominican Republic—led the Dominican churches to a demand for action, which would explain its early initiative. In the course of time, Dominican leaders met important partners on the Haitian side who wanted to share, on an equal footing, the leadership of the process, but from their own dynamics and motivations (which follow a different pace). The issues that worried the Haitian pastors not necessarily coincide with the concerns of the Dominican part, since each country lives in different conditions and has different priorities.

In any case, the DDHIE/DHDE always counted among his supporters in both countries with people of great dynamism and commitment far beyond the labor or purely contractual requirements. In both sides of the border there are people that have assumed the Dialogue as their life mission. But

this marked emphasis on the personal commitment may partly explain why, during difficult times and even at the recent distancing, this leadership has not chosen to open up to a collective discussion in their countries and, instead, opted for personalized discussions and decisions.

Lately, a few months before this evaluation, there were difficulties that led to a distancing between the leaders and the paralysis of all activities. The rupture was such that NCA had to undertake a facilitation process. As previously stated in the section on findings, it might be that the decision of NCA to leave the facilitation process directly to the organizations of civil society, particularly churches, was not a good idea because of the state of development of the relationship between the parties. The idea was that the prejudices, negative imaginaries and mistrust that characterize the tensions between the two peoples did not affect—in the same way—the relationship between the churches. By ignoring the persistence of these traits, the process led to their aggravation.

Although the Haitian leaders attend the calls, usually led by the Dominicans, they do not feel enough recognition or that they took part on equal terms; that became one of the sources of tension and dissatisfaction with the process. It can be said that the DDHIE/DHDE, and even NCA, took too long in identifying the existence of such tensions, which ultimately led to the rupture among the leaders of the two commissions. The tensions arose from not dealing with the problems present throughout the process, problems that were not timely detected or expressed.

A cultural difference, at the risk of making rash generalizations, has been identified as another element of tension. While the Dominican culture is quite informal and flexible in the handling of situations and relationships, the Haitian leaders give great importance to legal norms and institutional procedures. Surely, certain decisions taken by the Dominican party in the course of events were seen as thoughtless or disrespectful attitudes by their Haitian counterparts, causing suspicion in its leaders. This attachment to procedures and legality should not be understood as inflexibility or formalism; for the Haitian pastors, it is a way of protecting the process and anticipating costly difficulties.

A final organizational aspect is the high number of cities and action centers for the project. In view of the relatively scarce resources, that could undermine the effectiveness of the actions. The fact of having a wider coverage (working in eight border cities) might jeopardize the possibility of deepening in the participation and social appropriation processes, and that would prevent the construction of experiences with a demonstrative value. That dispersion increases the structure, staff and operating costs in general, at the expense of resources for investment in grass roots activities, impact and knowledge management.

5.1 The Role of the DDHIE in the Earthquake Emergency

As we already mentioned the response of the Dominican Republic, the people in general, the Government and the churches, to the deep humanitarian crisis left by the earthquake of January 12, 2010, is regarded as a significant, spontaneous and disinterested contribution. The Dominican churches mobilized millions of dollars in aid and managed to implement distribution systems that

were useful not only for their own consignments but as support to various international entities. SSID made extremely valuable alliances, such as having extensive warehouses for the transshipment of all kinds of goods in the border, opposite the town of Jimani. But the great value of the contribution of the churches was not only the large amount of aid collected by them; in order to distribute such aid, the DDHIE/DHDE's history and experience were essential: the possibility of developing a joint work with the Haitian churches.

Since the very first moment of the crisis, the leaders of the Haitian churches —under the leadership of MISSEH— meet to take stock of the situation. The offices have collapsed; there is no infrastructure, no means of communication. They meet in the streets and begin to evaluate the dimension of the tragedy. In their particular churches, in their congregations, they meet and very soon are in charge of the emergency care. Many of the congregations improvised shelters since the early hours, some of which would later become the structure of the emergency care.

The response of the Dominicans is immediate, within 48 hours the aid is flowing in. The churches —through the DDHIE/DHDE— sent water, tents, health personnel, food; the church structure acts as a source of resources to be delivered to the population in Haiti, while the structure of the DDHIE/DHDE acts as an effective vehicle to channel the contributions of the Dominican community and different sectors of the international community. This was highly effective and is a desirable model since it is the Haitian leaders themselves who are in charge of the distribution, while their local churches act as solidarity and defense of the social fabric networks, with obvious advantages —quality and integrity— over other interventions. It is important to clarify that the care in the communities was never limited to members of the churches: there was no discrimination on grounds of faith or belonging to the churches. The contributions from the Dominican community of churches did not generate injuries nor produce distrust in the Haitian community thanks to the existence of this network and the relations previously established by the DDHIE/DHDE.

The only difficulty reported to the evaluators —both by SSID and MISSEH— in relation to the implementation of the emergency support refers to a specific event that does not reflect a general situation: the refusal of the MISSEH Coordinator to take responsibility before the Haitian customs of some containers with aid sent by SSID for the victims of the earthquake. The incident happened in March 2010. We can only say that it reflects —once again— the tensions related to the different attitudes towards procedural and regulatory aspects. But, the incident might also be an evidence of the emotional price of the earthquake that struck Haitians and Dominicans.

Despite being a very precise event, it has served as a *touchstone* to formalize a distancing within the DDHIE/DHDE. If it were simply a problem of procedures, surely it would have been solved in a very short period, especially taking into account the negative and far-reaching impact this impasse posed to the process of humanitarian care, in this case, for both parties. What it proves is that behind the incident remains an accumulation of tensions, difficulties and mistrust that had not emerged explicitly throughout the process. It also shows the absence of facilitation mechanisms when faced with a crisis within the process. That is an element that NCA can anticipate in the future.

5.2 The Decision to Cancel SSID Funding for the Dialogue

When the assessment team started interviewing the DDHIE staff in Dominican Republic, it was informed by the representatives of SSID that, prior to the assessment, NCA had decided to cancel its cooperation with the DDHIE/DHDE, through SSID. This decision was made during a year already underway, with staff already hired and project costs taking place.

When asked about the cancellation of cooperation, the NCA staff stated that this decision was never made. During the first half of 2010, they asked the coordinators of the Dialogue —several times— to develop and submit their work proposal for this year. The difficulties with the reception of the containers and the subsequent estrangement prevented a meeting between the leaders of the Dialogue to formulate the proposal for the year 2010. NCA was pressured by MFA officials to deliver the proposal to support the funding. The proposal was not delivered and that is why no funding was allocated for 2010. Finally, the SSID sent a budget that did not fulfill the requirements demanded from NCA by the MFA and, moreover, did not correspond to a joint development within the DDHIE/DHDE —as in previous years, due to the estrangement previously mentioned.

6. Program Capacity and Efficiency

DDHIE/DHDE fixed its methodological and strategic orientation in a certain type of activities and followed them consistently from 2006 to 2009. Looking at it positively, there was a continuity effort that permitted achieving results in time, bringing about sustainable changes and validating the effectiveness of the strategies. The continuity of the programmatic model led to the development of institutional skills on how to develop projects. It also allowed the consolidation of work teams, comparative readings between intervention zones and time periods.

We can say that the whole process was a long learning process for the churches and —mainly— for the work teams of the two church networks. There was no prior experience to start from and carry out this education, bi-national integration and cultural change process.

As stated in the first section, one of the recurring problems in the program model was the tension between the development of processes and the implementation of events. The assessment team considers that the DDHIE/DHDE specialized in organizing impact events, which not necessarily corresponded to the continuity of the processes. Because of this, there is no consolidation of organizational processes with women or a bi-national school dynamic that transcends to a pedagogical movement or any other form of dissemination and sustainability of the learning and actions.

The interviewees recognize that this difficulty to consolidate learning or attitude changes is repeated within the churches. Among the leaders, there is knowledge and well informed opinions on the aims of the DDHIE/DHDE, and that has greatly contributed to their incidence with political leaders and bodies of opinion. But, in general terms, the appropriation of the Dialogue process within the churches has not gone beyond the layer of national leaders or —in some cases— of

large congregations. The DDHIE/DHDE has failed to take root at the base of the churches, despite the communication strategies such as the radio programs promoted by SSID, both in Creole and Spanish.

The Alliances. The border work of SSID is based on the possibility of bringing together the women, educational communities and churches of the two countries, mainly in four places: Dajabón / Ouanaminthe, Elias Piña / Beladere, Jimani /Fond Parisien and Pedernales ... Backing the possibility of bringing together the communities is the availability of the migration authorities, military or police authorities, and local (municipal) authorities of both countries who facilitate the mobilization across the border. It should be noted that the DDHIE/DHDE has shown a great capacity to talk with the authorities and ensure their collaboration —even without a full understanding— for the exchange between communities. In some cases, during restriction periods, the requests had to be addressed to the national capitals of the two countries. In very few cases, the political restrictions imposed under adverse circumstances in the relationship between the two countries prevented the proposed activities from taking place.

There is a difficulty to establish alliances with research centers or analysts that could contribute other perspectives to the dialogue as a result of prior research studies about the Haitian - Dominican relations. There is also a methodological weakness in the construction and systematization of agreements and learning, that prevents the events from reaching a new level of development. Some of the analysts interviewed agreed that the Dialogue should have had stronger information and analysis elements to establish an agenda of bi-national relations of greater impact.

7. Lessons learned

- The point of departure for the Norwegian cooperation is the recognition of a conflict situation affecting the population of the two countries. The lesson is that you cannot delegate the facilitation between parties to one of them (or both) without being sure that it has the ability and maturity to overcome the differences that lie at the core of the conflict. The emergence of tensions and estrangements, together with a history of dissatisfaction, demonstrates that the churches of the Dominican Republic and Haiti need external facilitation and support for the Dialogue process.
- DDHIE/DHDE's strategy has been based on a proposal for cultural change, directed towards a new reading of history and a construction of new visions of the Dominican and Haitian condition, in two societies affected by mutual negative imaginaries. The lesson is that this type of change has to be developed as a process, not as a sum of events. A process that, as explained in the border dynamic, must forge constant and systematic interactions with visible results, capable of new readings from the different actors involved. Events, regardless of their success, do not consolidate lasting changes.

- The follow-up of the agreements must be as important as the quality of the events, in order to avoid weakening the spaces of encounter. Major events should be qualitatively superior elements of the process and become really cumulative spaces. To make this possible, it is essential to ensure a follow-up strategy, with appropriate involvement of the parties and facilitators of the process. It would also be useful to give greater emphasis to the consolidation of a thematic agenda of the DDHIE/DHDE.
- The process was affected not only by the asymmetries and negative imaginaries, which were the basis of the conflict, but also by cultural traits that constitute the idiosyncrasy of each people. In this project in particular, idiosyncrasies have an important role on procedural aspects, forms, and in the requirements for the treatment of conflict situations. In those circumstances, it is highly relevant to ensure that the parties feel that they are recognized and treated well.
- When there is a conflict and no confidence between the parties, proceeding without progressively establishing the rules may lead—in the medium term—to a deepening of the conflict factors between the parties, giving rise to new elements of dispute or suspicion.

8. Recommendations

- Validity of the Dialogue strategy. The Assessment Team considers that the DDHIE/DHDE has enormous potential. Its capacity has been demonstrated in its policy advocacy—aimed at decision and opinion-makers—, in the exchange exercises carried out in the educational sector and with the women, and also in the emergency after the earthquake of January 12 when the demands were at their most.
- The Evangelical churches in the Dominican Republic and Haiti are following a qualification process on their role in social and political affairs, which leads them to become a dominant actor in the rapprochement between the two countries. However, it is essential to understand the ecclesiastical structures, their strengths (leadership, large membership, national presence in both countries) and their contradictions in areas as sensitive as the patriarchal structures, their conservatism, their representation struggles, the possible distance existing between the high-level leadership and Church bases, and the cultural elements—that no doubt permeate them— reproducing negative imaginaries about the others. In order to be able to deploy the transformative potential of the churches in the two societies, it is necessary to work—without idealizing— on their inherent characteristics.
- It is essential to recognize the emergence of a new context in the Dominican - Haitian relations, arising from the reality of the earthquake of January 12, 2010. There is a new situation in which the predominant traits of the Haitian crisis have deepened. This new situation calls—first and foremost—for a dialogue within Haiti, its churches, its society and institutions. It is necessary to rearrange the priorities in order to face a process of territorial, economic, social and institutional reconstruction.

- In this context, starting from the right to self-determination of the Haitian society and nation, it is necessary to recognize the place of the Dialogue process, a place from which it can function as a follow-up and critical analysis space of such sensitive issues as: the role of cooperation and international intervention, the role of the Haitian civil society, the incorporation of gender, environmental and sustainability criteria in the process, and the content of the new agenda of bi-national relations.
- These changes to the agenda must account not only for the Haitian problem —traditionally the core of the discussions and objectives— but also for the legitimate interests of the Dominican society in this crisis. In this regard, there must be a process to reveal the Dominican agenda, to make it visible; it should not be considered only in its role in the Haitian crisis, but must pose the Dominican concerns on issues as sensitive as sustainable development, the impact of migration, the need for political stability in Haiti, etc. All this should not be understood as undue interference, since the decisions of the Governments and other actors on either country have an impact on the whole island.
- The **Country Plan Haiti-DR of the NCA** has a thematic agenda on rights, with complex challenges in the fields of gender, climate change, justice and peace. It starts from an interpretation of the violence, environmental problems and the negative effects of development that coincides with the issues addressed by the DDHIE/DHDE in recent years. Their intervention plan has a strong emphasis on Haiti, but recognizes the need to interact with the Dominican institutions in order to face the problems that inevitably affect the whole island. One of their key strategies is enshrined in ***the right to peace and security***, where the strategies of the Dialogue are more clearly reflected, and aims to work for the mobilization of the communities towards a social change to face the problems related to the participation of women, to climate change and increasing violence; that is, essential challenges for the future of both societies.
- The NCA and the church structures in both countries must contribute, within the framework of ACT, to an integration of the challenges identified in the process of the Dialogue during these years. International cooperation should be required to act under parameters of coordination, respect for social participation and, in general, the criteria built in the *codes of conduct* and the DO NO HARM framework, as analytical model for a critical assessment of the cooperation processes for societies in conflict.

Towards resuming the process

- Resuming the DDHIE/DHDE process requires a **self-assessment** exercise —starting from the Dialogue structures— that recognizes the realities and organizational changes of each of the parties. It must be an exercise that encourages the fraternity and mutual recognition built during these years, and directed to reducing the tensions that have emerged and the increased mistrust arisen in the recent period.

- As was expressed in the context of the Assessment Discussion (Santo Domingo, February 2011) promoted by NCA, it is necessary that, in each country, the churches carry out an internal exercise —no longer to examine the problems of the Dialogue in general and its counterpart on the other side of the border— but to define their own perspective towards the Dialogue: evaluate their participation, establish the principles and attitudes that will guide their future participation in the process, consider their own agenda in the face of a bi-national exercise, propose strategies of internal consolidation, of awareness raising of the churches, and to strengthen their own participation.
- The DDHIE/DHDE must have clear rules; although there are founding principles and a history of agreements that must be resumed, it is necessary to lay the foundations for decision making, the orientation of the process, the construction of a common agenda, the methodology, the way to deal with conflicts within the process, the selection of activities and participants, the management of resources, the response in critical situations to both countries, etc. These rules must envisage two dimensions: first, the common action of the two Church Councils, and second, what each Church Council can do independently. That is, the DDHIE/DHDE should not hold back the initiative of the national churches but, at the same time, it must make sure that the actions of one party do not oppose or prejudice the common actions and agendas. Otherwise, the DDHIE/DHDE will face constant obstacles and contradictions.
- The evaluator reiterates that DDHIE/DHDE needs an **external facilitation** agreed upon and accepted by both parties, capable of accompanying a sustained process and not just a few specific events. The idea is to develop a facilitation exercise that appropriately recognizes and interprets the tensions that have arisen and can prevent the repetition of relationship patterns that are detrimental to the parties.
- The DDHIE/DHDE must incorporate studies and thematic research processes carried out by various academic and institutional sectors. These knowledge and analysis, undoubtedly, will contribute to the development of a better qualified and more effective Dialogue on issues such as the impact of migration, the feminization of migration, the role of international cooperation, civil society and environmental issues. To this end, it is desirable that the Dialogue process opens to a much broader framework of alliances, including research centers, civil society, NGOs and international networks especially based on its particular situation of having thousands of congregations and with a possibility of advocacy in both societies.
- The emergence of MISSEH represents a new reality which must be fully recognized in the context of the Dialogue. NCA can make a valuable contribution towards its strengthening as process and tool of the Haitian churches, both when faced with internal problems of Haiti and also as a counterpart in the Dialogue process with the Dominican Republic.