

Le Matin

The Grand-Anse prepares its Regional Development Roadmap

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Civil society actors in the department of Grand-Anse have traditionally complained about the exclusion of their region in the decision-making process leading to the formulation of development policies. Given the lack of response from the ICHR, these actors are determined to produce a Regional Development Roadmap and submit it to the competent authorities. They are also planning to conduct awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts in order to give response to the medium and long term development challenges that the department is facing.

On October 29, 2011, the city of Vertigo Village, located in the southern suburbs of Jeremie, hosted a follow-up meeting on the Regional Development Roadmap of the department of Grand-Anse. During the meeting, several workshops were conducted with the participation of various sectors, including community-based organizations, representatives of socio-professional associations, the departmental delegation, town halls, Social Affairs, the HNP, the press, etc.

The meeting, organized by the Network of Initiative Committees of Grand-Anse with support from the National Democratic Institute (NDI), succeeds the workshops conducted on October 12, 2010 and May 26, 2011, which brought together the organized sectors of the department to discuss and propose solutions to the challenges the region faces. The objective was to produce a Regional Development Roadmap to be integrated into a national development plan, highlighting the different poles of development, the obstacles to development and the actions the State should take to circumvent them, with the ultimate goal of bringing the department of Grand Anse to a substantial degree of development in the medium to long term.

At the October 29 meeting, the participants were supposed to identify the most urgent interventions to focus on among five major areas: education, health, infrastructure, agriculture and tourism. The exercise was not easy for those believing that everything has become a priority in the country, both because of the poor governance that has characterized the Haitian government for decades, and the lack of commitment to change of those citizens not educated for this purpose.

Priority interventions

Paulémont Michael, Thimoté Beulest and Gershon César, coordinators of COGA, the COJDEP, and community-based and socio-professional organizations, provided an update during the morning. According to the workshop participants, significant changes to the well-being of the population of Grande-Anse could be implemented if the interventions listed below are performed.

First, in terms of infrastructure, the port closed to foreign trade since the American occupation—period of the beginning of the centralization of the country and the economic decline of the department of Grand-Anse—should be standardized and reopened. The construction of a hydroelectric plant—since

“rivers abound”— is equally crucial for the participants. A project, they said, was already initiated in the early nineties by a German company. Funds for the project could be recovered, as it has been the case for the road Cayes-Jérémie currently under reconstruction. At the same time, the construction of pathways would facilitate the flow of agricultural products, input distribution and mobility of farmers, who would not have to go into the center of Jeremiah. The participants also proposed to educate rural people and increase their organizational capacity to transform them into builders of sustainable change, and therefore, a better future. The establishment and development of processing industries, the technical supervision of both farmers and fishermen, coupled with the work and economic opportunities that would result from the reopening of the port, should help reduce unemployment, the true obstacle to development.

Second, the development of the department of Grand-Anse and the country cannot be achieved without qualified human resources. Development would be further delayed if the country were to lose these resources, as was the case during the earthquake of January 12, 2010. According to the participants, numerous losses of lives can be attributed to the excessive centralization of the state. They also suggest opening campuses of the State University throughout the department, and the support of private initiatives in this direction, as recommended in section 32.2 of the Constitution. Education must enable students to fully understand the new socio-economic realities in order to effectively transform their lives and contribute to the welfare of the community. In addition to allowing free access to education, it is necessary at this time to create resource centers in every municipality of the department and to facilitate Internet access to schools. It is also crucial to regularize the wages of teachers, providing them with benefits, so they can be motivated to offer a quality education.

As for the issue of healthcare in the department of Grand-Anse, the participants appreciate the help of NGOs and the Cuban delegation, but they regret that this support seems to turn into permanent dependence. The participants gathered at Vertigo propose the construction of at least one health center in each communal section—people from rural areas are the most vulnerable to the outbreak of epidemics—, the modernization and strengthening of existing hospitals—currently capable of performing only minor medical procedures—, and increased medical staff. These measures would also have the long-term effect of reducing infant mortality and enhancing the energies available to serve the department’s development.

Finally, in terms of the development opportunities related to tourism, the potential of the department is not being exploited. Praising the touristic heritage of the department without actually promoting it, does not suffice. The reasonable exploitation of the touristic heritage, the rehabilitation of tourist sites and beaches, and the opening of a training school for tourism professionals, would result in job creation and the development of a sense of belonging necessary for participation of the local population in development efforts.

Organized sectors ready for action

The representatives of organized sectors present at the summary workshop are resolved to undertake the necessary actions for the gradual implementation of Regional Development Roadmap of the

department of Grand-Anse. These include, among others, the creation of work cells aimed at providing local elected officials and deputies from the department with arguments to present to the competent authorities and undertaking lobbying campaigns on these authorities to raise their awareness on the issue. To this end, an unfinished copy of the Regional Development Roadmap was symbolically handed over to the deputy for the constituency of Jérémie, Jean Laforest Rupert, who attended the workshop (photo). Senator Andris Riché, through one of his campaign managers, has already a copy, albeit incomplete, and has vowed in each of his public interventions to pursue this battle. The people of Grand-Anse expect from their elected officials the manifestation of their commitment to the cause of the department.

-English translation by NDI, original article available at

<http://www.lematinhaiti.com/contenu.php?idtexte=27105>