

At the border a look at two different worlds

As we cross the border from Haiti into the Dominican Republic, I'm once again hit by the drastic difference: Vibrance and green on one side, empty stalls and brown fields on the other.

By [Kathie Klarreich](#) Correspondent / February 3, 2010 Jimani, Haiti

Kathie has lived and worked as a writer in Haiti for more than 20 years. Her memoir, "Madame Dread: A Tale of Love, Voodoo, and Civil Strife in Haiti," is about her life in Haiti with her former husband, a Haitian musician, and their son.

The southern road between Haiti and the border with the Dominican Republic is, for the most part, a long, rambling but well-paved route that connects the capital with the small border town of Jimani, where not much happens besides border crossings.

I remember a time when the road wasn't so smooth. During the 1991-1994 military regime of Raoul Cédras, when the internationally imposed embargo made buying fuel difficult, this road became one of the most popular paths for ferrying contraband across the border and into the capital. The military controlled the black market so they paved it.

Now the road is a "humanitarian corridor" full of convoys of aid vehicles and flatbed trucks carrying bulldozers and other large road equipment to remove the tons of debris.

At the border, in the no-man's-land between the two countries, there is one lone *tap tap*, or mini-bus taxi. Its name is painted in bright red, blue and yellow lettering: *Dieu Qui Decide*.

God Decides.

God seems to have decided that the DR, and not Haiti, gets all the breaks. It's like two different worlds.

In this neighboring country there are streetlights and food stands with blaring music and people dancing. We look back across at Haiti to see the few empty stalls where merchants waited for customers – any customer – to buy their metal work and wooden sculptures.

As opposed to dry fields on the Haitian side, there are lush green ones full of banana trees and other healthy plants, the kind Haiti has in its paintings, but not in real life.

And there are lots and lots of bright, colorful houses that line the road. They are separated from each other by fences made of sticks. Sticks much sturdier than the wooden branches Haitians now use to build their homes.