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**Scott Kloeck-Jenson International Internship Grant, Fall 2009**

**MOPAWI-Honduras**

Along the Miskito Coast, it is not uncommon to encounter men walking with a slight limp, using a personal ambulatory device, or suffering from some degree of neurological distress. These men are bound to a sea economy, where they dive for the lobsters that eventually end up “fluffed” in their tails on Red Lobster dining plates. As lobster populations are increasingly over-harvested, divers are forced into deeper waters. As a consequence, many suffer from decompression sickness or the “bends.”

At the beginning of my internship, the lobster fishing boat, *El Coral*, scooped up 100 lobster divers and their canoemen for a 2-week excursion. Within one week, the boat had returned with a deceased diver. Four deaths occurred in four months. Approximately one death occurs every other diving trip. Lobster diving is dangerous work but as nearly every Miskito will say, there is no economic alternative. They are structurally tied to an economy at sea.

As part of my broader dissertation research and Scott Kloeck-Jenson internship, I sought to explore the political and economic conditions that structurally bind Miskito laborers to an economy at sea as well as the local grassroots response through organizations such as MOPAWI (*Moskitia Pawisa Apiska*), a Miskito non-profit dedicated to sustainable local economic development.

MOPAWI (*Moskitia Pawisa Apiska*) is a Miskito non-profit dedicated to sustainable local economic development among the indigenous Miskito that promotes the empowerment of Miskito human and territorial conservation rights

(<http://www.mopawi.org/>). MOPAWI can help catalyze the skills of paralyzed male

lobster divers and/or offer injured and paralyzed lobster divers alternative forms of economic survival.

With the support of a Scott Kloeck-Jenson Internship Fellowship, I worked with Carlos Molinero of MOPAWI (*Moskitia Pawisa Apiska*), to help catalyze the skills of paralyzed male lobster divers and engineer local, feasible and sustainable development programs. Paralyzed and injured lobster divers strain an already meager system. My original internship proposal outlined and sought to help MOPAWI develop alternative economic programs for injured divers, would-be divers and their families. Viable alternatives include the development of artisanal fishing markets, the promotion and advertisement of ecotourism in a beautiful and remote World Heritage Biosphere Reserve (through advertisement in Lonely Planet for example), and/or cacao certification through the Rainforest Alliance.

Due to the political instability of former President Zelaya's return and occupation in the Brazilian Embassy, my travel was interrupted and slightly delayed due to fear and concern across the country that riots would commence. While Carlos Molinero, of MOPAWI, knew of my travel dates and internship plan, my delay due to the political situation coupled with the ebb and flow of life on the coast, especially in the satellite branch of MOPAWI in Belén, delayed the commencement of my internship.

Through conversations and initial work, I learned that the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service issued its final rule pertaining to spiny lobster fisheries in the Caribbean, Gulf, and south Atlantic on January 12, 2009. The rule set a minimum size of 6oz for the importation of spiny lobsters into the U.S. and prohibited the import of

“berried,” or egg-bearing females, in an effort to enhance conservation. This ruling sets further limitations on Miskito lobster diving work.

I worked to extend initial contacts for initiatives with Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI) for the development of agriculture and fishing production as well as sustainable management at the international level, which would include indigenous rights. I also worked to extend contact with Alianza Global, an organization out of La Ceiba, Honduras, in trying to balance the work of the lobster industry by employing traps in addition to divers. Boat owners are hesitant to employ traps because it is time, and hence, money, sensitive.

In addition, I helped MOPAWI organize a conference with La Secretaria de Recursos Naturales (Secretary of Natural Resources) on el Proyecto Reserve de Biosfera Trasfronteriza Corazón del Corredor Biológico Mesoamericano (Biosphere Reserve) specifically about los recursos marinos costeros (coastal marine resources). I assisted and helped Carol Ayala coordinate the conference.

With thanks and appreciation to the Scott Kloeck-Jenson internship grant, my consistent and sustained presence is garnering trust among community members. The internship helped to cement and solidify me in the community for a more involved public commitment during my year-long dissertation study.