
The Education of Poverty: Rebuilding Haiti's School System after its "Total Collapse"

BRENDAN MCNULTY

INTRODUCTION: PORT-AU-PRINCE

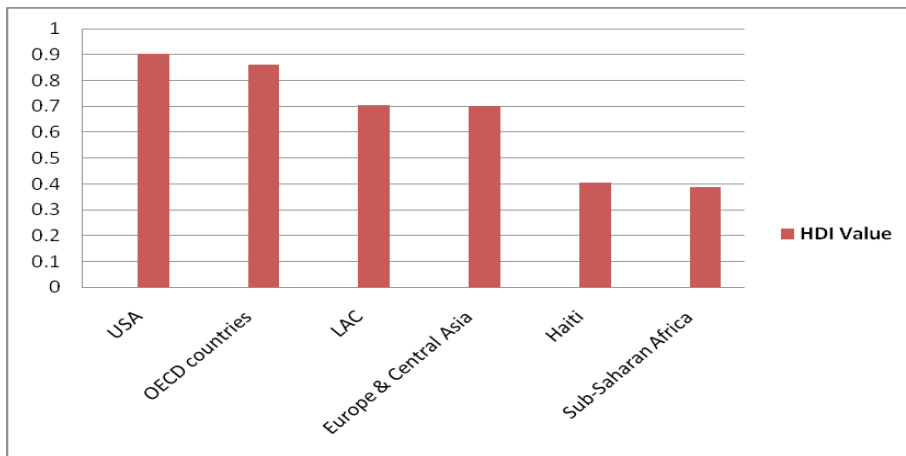
Haitian kids don't get much of a chance. If they're lucky, they have enough rice and beans and whatever else they can find to eat to keep their bellies from distending. If families living near Port-au-Prince are lucky, they no longer live in a thin, donated tarpaulin tent, one that sits in the dirt and is battered by the tropical rains that fall like beatings every night or is slowly cooked for twelve hours every day. In these camps you have neighbors—hundreds of them in every direction—with little more than a meter separating your tent from those closest to you. Barely any of these kids go to school, and almost none of their parents have an income of any kind. Everyone in the camp shares the same unclean water source, living slowly from meager meal to meager meal, and waiting out the same brutal days and nights. Life in Haiti is often just a waiting game, an unforgiving one that a child either gracefully endures or succumbs to, as one of every eight does before their fifth birthday.

Free primary education might seem like a secondary need here. Daily life goes on despite the earthquake that devastated the area on January 12, 2010, killing 230,000 people and leaving roughly two million homeless. More than half of these people remain displaced, hunkered down in filthy,

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once-temporary tent cities that have since become permanent fixtures around the capital. However, even before the widely-reported natural disaster, the country had more in common with the civil-war-wracked nations of sub-Saharan Africa than with its neighbors in the Western Hemisphere; nearly every social indicator ranks it below all of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). In this region—which spans nearly thirty developing countries from Argentina to Mexico—most people live on very little. In Haiti, the average citizen is ten times poorer. The United Nations publishes a Human Development Report based on data such as access to education, medicine, and clean drinking water, among other things. In economics, these are the so-called ‘soft statistics.’ Before the earthquake, Haiti was ranked 149 out of 182 countries, right between Papua New Guinea and Sudan. Now it is sandwiched between Senegal and Angola and remains the only LAC country in the Least Developed Countries category.¹

UN Human Development Index by Region – 2010²



Walk down any street in Port-au-Prince—clogged with motorcycles, unlicensed street vendors, and meticulously-painted pickup trucks with payloads full of cramped commuters—and you’re likely to see trickles of students walking to and from class. The schools are recognizable by their brightly-colored walls and the sharply-dressed students that buzz around them, girls in carefully-arranged braids and pressed skirts and boys in slacks and spotless shirts. In between the ubiquitous heaps of concrete rubble in the street and the skeletons of destroyed buildings, the vast disarray of Haiti’s primary education system—the majority of which has been impenetrable to outside assistance—carries on.

One sees constant motion here. No one rests—even with unemployment around 80 percent—because if you rest in Haiti, you starve. And then those that depend on you may starve. Families who still have the means to do so continue to send their kids to school. For each one of these students that brightens up the landscape as you travel through the capital—Cap-Haïtien in the North or Croix-des-Bouquets in the East—there are parents sacrificing anywhere from a third to more than half of their income to send them there. This is not just their disposable income but their net annual income, which hovers around 400 dollars for the majority of all Haitian households.³

The same issues that complicate education systems everywhere else have been present here as well: education is an expensive, long-term investment; the public side is rife with waste; and the private side, driven by profits, gouges students and their families with high prices. But Haiti's situation very notably gets worse.

Ask anyone about education in Haiti and the first thing they'll tell you is that most primary schools are private and that their quality ranges from questionable to awful. In fact, 80 percent of all primary schools are private, which in Haiti means that they adhere to no standards of any kind, and do not report to any central governing body. There are an estimated 16,000 to 17,000 of these private primary schools in the country.⁴ To be a private school in Haiti, you need little more than to create a name (e.g., École Superior d'Haiti or maybe Einstein College) and a bucket of paint to draw Disney characters on the street-facing wall of your building. There are no certifications required of the instructors, no permits for the buildings, and there is no standard curriculum. At the time of the earthquake, there were only ten accredited schools in the country. Moreover, the accreditations came from three different external systems, namely, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).⁵ The Government of Haiti (GOH) itself does not have official accreditations but it does monitor the standards of its public schools to the extent possible.

Private schools also often charge tuition rates disproportionate to what average households can afford to pay. Though exact figures are hard to come by, annual tuition for a single student can range from around USD 50 in rural areas to USD 250 in cities.⁶ Since many families have more than one child, tuition costs can quickly consume up to 30 percent or even 50 percent of a household's income.

There would also be nowhere for the children to go if private schools were closed down. Public schools are already almost at full capacity.

Education Minister Joel Desrosiers Jean Pierre said, “With our current budget and facilities, public schools only have the capacity to absorb 25 percent of the student population. This would only be a slight increase from the estimated 19 percent currently in the public system.”⁷

Low salaries for teachers (both public and private) are reportedly another main cause for the failures of the education system and are partially responsible for the “brain drain”—or diaspora, as it is called here. Teachers with proper qualifications feel they are not paid adequate wages for the immense responsibilities they take on. The GOH was spending roughly USD 100 million per year on schools prior to the earthquake, not quite 2 percent of GDP. This is slightly less than half the regional average of budget allocation for public education.⁸ At one cramped public school in the North Department of the country, a third-grade teacher, who asked not to be named, pointed to his classroom full of students and whispered, “Look at how many children I have. I don’t know how many there are in here. Maybe one hundred? Maybe more?”⁹

Most private school teachers barely have nine years of education. About one-third have less, and some are essentially illiterate.¹⁰ Right now, Haiti doesn’t have the luxury of eliminating bad teachers. The diaspora plagues the country. Many well-educated people who would be most qualified to become teachers, school administrators, and directors, leave the country as quickly as possible. Though most Haitians feel significant national and

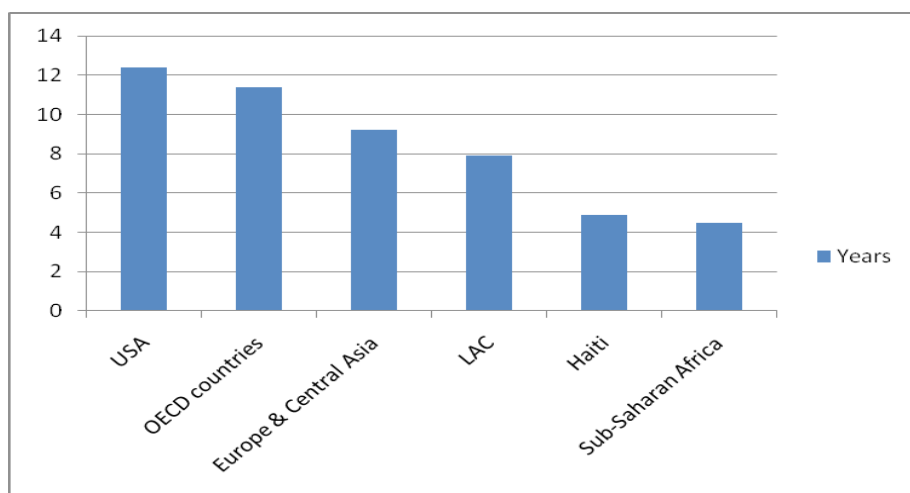
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..... cultural pride, many do not hesitate to leave their country if given the chance. It is estimated that 80 to 86 percent of Haitians with a secondary education leave the country.¹¹ These people largely emigrate to Canada, the United States, or the Dominican Republic to become everything from store clerks to doctors. They would be the same

..... people who, if retained, could be teaching subsequent generations, either formally or informally.

This lack of qualified professionals wreaks havoc on every sector. It is not particular to education. When the French government created a scholarship program that offered to bring 40 Haitian attorneys to France for further studies, none of the 240 applicants passed the test. The program’s criteria were then relaxed, and twenty-four people were eventually selected to participate.

*Average Years of Schooling by Region*¹²



Jacky Lumarque, rector of Quisqueya University in Port-au-Prince and director of the Presidential Commission on Education, said the country has even encountered a secondary loss of quality personnel with the presence of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Haiti responding to the earthquake. “They’re taking the best Haitians away with higher salaries,” Lumarque said. “I’m losing staff now.”¹³

Ducarmel François, who directs all social projects for the Fonds d’Assistance Économique et Sociale (FAES), a public Haitian organization that builds schools, hospitals, and clinics, said the problem has persisted for decades. “My father was a teacher with little pay all his life. Now he lives on a pension of USD 100 a month. This is nothing [even in Haiti].”¹⁴

A public university was built relatively recently in the infamous Port-au-Prince slum of Cité Soleil, where 200,000 people live in indigence, and gun battles between gangs and UN peacekeepers were once a common occurrence. According to UN accounts, the teachers there taught for four years without ever receiving a salary. There was not enough in the educational budget to pay them.

The problem is that nearly everyone in Haiti is poor—including the government. And there are few options right now. This is why the GOH won’t be closing private schools that are deemed inadequate anytime soon, according to Minister Jean Pierre. “That’s not a problem we’re focused on today. There are greater priorities. We have 145 school districts without schools.”¹⁵ With the private side in such disarray, there are enormous inefficiencies of scale as well. In the capital, every block seems to have a school.

The average one has fewer than 100 students.¹⁶ This means increased costs per school for infrastructure and utility expenditures, school supplies, and teacher salaries. It also means they are more likely to have few students per class in some cases, an obvious waste of resources.

It is not that private schools have nefarious intent or that their owners are laughing all the way to the bank. People who create private schools often do so with money from their own pockets. Rolson Charlestro, who lives in Port-au-Prince, recently built a primary school in the middle of Canaan, a village (read: refugee camp) fifteen kilometers north of the capital. The single-story school, Nouveau College Canaan, had to be a tuition-charging private institute because Rolson lacks “the contacts with the government necessary to form a public school”¹⁷ and the personal wealth to pay eight teachers to instruct the (hopefully) 200 students. There is no electricity, running water or toilet. As of mid-October, two weeks before classes were to begin, twenty students had enrolled in his Nouveau College. Charlestro explained that most were siblings because after the first child’s tuition of USD 50 per year is paid, each subsequent sibling receives a discount.

AN ISSUE OF TIMING

A confluence of conditions is more to blame for the educational system’s lack of progress than any singular culprit, such as the private sector, the government, or the international community. But with every crisis comes an opportunity. It is hard to imagine a greater crisis than that which crippled this small island nation one year ago. At the time, Minister Jean Pierre told the press, “What we have seen is the total collapse of the Haitian education system.”¹⁸ Several thousand schools were destroyed or significantly damaged. Perhaps there has never been a greater opportunity. Aid continues to pour in from all over, albeit less than it did six months ago and sometimes in much smaller amounts than originally promised. There are still more than 300 international NGOs operating in the country, many of them focused on training teachers and building schools in rural areas. The immediate response from the IDB was to quickly repair 700 schools, putting approximately 70,000 children back into classrooms. This was done with funds from a previous public-sector loan that the bank had made to the GOH. In May 2010, the World Bank extended USD 27 million in grant-funding to two of its existing programs aimed at getting more children into schools and providing communities with basic services.¹⁹

But the continuity of projects poses one of the greatest obstacles to Haiti’s recovery, according to Roland Van Hauwermeiren, who serves as

the country director for Oxfam in Haiti. "Sustainability of projects is the trick. We expect that either by or on the one-year anniversary of the quake [January 2011], 30 to 40 percent of international NGOs will have left the country."²⁰ To capitalize on the people and resources on hand right now, any action must happen quickly. A year ago, the country was in a state of emergency, and education was not a priority then. The question remains: when will Haiti's education system receive the resources and attention it deserves?

Marcelo Cabrol, chief of Education at the IDB, said that, "After the initial relief response, the policy-level discussions were concentrated principally on decentralizing Port-au-Prince to alleviate some of the pressure; improving roads, ports, the financial sector; and creating jobs and industrial parks."²¹ What did not get as much attention was that out of a national student population between 3 and 3.5 million, around 800,000 children were left outside the education system after the earthquake.²²

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There has been "a profound failure of collective action in the education sector" between the GOH and international organizations during the last 25 years, according to Cabrol, including the IDB. Throughout the years, he admitted that the IDB has only managed to have an effect at the margins.²³

Many countries and organizations have tried their own education-centered initiatives in Haiti. The World Bank had moved to provide 100,000 students with subsidies before the disaster. It has also been training 12,000 teachers and providing the financial resources for related technical assistance. There are dozens of religious organizations involved, like that of Jesuit Brother Jim Boynton, which is building one-room school houses in rural areas. The Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) has sponsored the University of the People—a new online school that does not charge tuition—which will accept 250 Haitians over the next three years. The GOH's Ministry of Culture and Communications is creating Reading Centers with books (697 so far) donated by the National Library.

Lumarque expressed that there was a collective disenchantment with the international community and NGOs in their response to the humanitarian crisis:

I don't think these organizations really want to coordinate with one another. There are a lot of resources here now, but there is also a massive dispersion of those resources. They are not directly channeled at common objectives. There are NGOs more concerned with spending their budgets than producing results. The problems are so brutal and evident in Haiti that you don't need to be creative to know what to do. The issues of housing, education, and food staples can be positively addressed, but there are international organizations here that are more concerned with saying that they individually spent this amount of money on this, or that their particular donations went to that. There is a great mirage here. Lots of people are donating to Haiti but those resources often don't reach Haiti. The beneficiary is often the donor. They are spending money to elevate themselves.²⁴

BUILDING AN IMPERFECT AND IDEALISTIC PLAN

With so many resources currently in Haiti and with so many disparate programs attempting to advance the same cause, the issue may be whether the international community is capable of collaborative, collective action.

The IDB created a diagnosis of the situation and in March presented the GOH with a position paper that suggested a redesign of the system. "The current situation is such that no single actors are capable of bringing about change by themselves," said Cabrol. "It needs the sustained political support of a coalition that includes 300-plus NGOs, think tanks, bilaterals, and foundations, among others. We weren't trying to recreate the wheel. What we came up with was a comprehensive framework in which everyone could take ownership of just one part or action, whether that is working on the new curriculum or retraining teachers. What we don't need is more visions."²⁵ To advise on the process, the IDB brought in Paul Vallas, who orchestrated the rebuilding of the New Orleans school system after Hurricane Katrina as superintendent of the Recovery School District, "not because there were so many parallels between the cities or situations but because we needed an example of a disaster and a leader," said Cabrol.

In May 2010, the GOH chose the IDB as its main partner in rebuilding the education system, and the two entities jointly announced a five-year, USD 4.2 billion plan to create a publicly funded, quality education system that will provide access to free basic education for all children.²⁶ By 2015, the plan is expected to have been implemented up through grade six, and by 2020, through grade nine. The IDB has committed USD 250 million of its own grant resources to the cause and has pledged to raise another

USD 250 million from third-party donors. The intention is to have all new activities fit into a general framework that addresses the specific shortcomings of the current system. The IDB proposal was approved on August 17, 2010, by the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (IHRC), the group that is co-chaired by Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive and President Bill Clinton (who also serves as the UN's Special Envoy to Haiti).

Officials at the IDB felt that it offered several comparative advantages over other development organizations. It is the largest single lender for development in the LAC region, having approved an average of USD 13.2 billion in loans, credit guarantees, and grants to governments and private industries during each of the last three years. It has also been working on education in Haiti for the last 25 years.²⁷ In July 2010, the bank finalized a general capital increase, an action that raised the resources available to the bank from member nations to USD 70 billion. Part of this increase stipulated that the bank give up to USD 200 million in grants to Haiti every year through 2020.²⁸

The first phase in the rebuilding plan is to subsidize the supply side of the equation—that is, the existing private schools. Participation will be voluntary, but in order to qualify for the subsidies, schools must comply with three major criteria. First, they must meet specific infrastructure standards, though schools in temporary structures are not necessarily ineligible. Second, they must offer students free tuition. Finally, they must adopt the new national curriculum, which will include annual student testing standards and two years of mandatory training for teachers.

Jean Pierre said the GOH will not likely close private schools that choose not to participate in the new curriculum because he thinks “the new curriculum will be adopted by private schools voluntarily when the time comes.” And if the subsidies lead to a consolidation of private schools, as is expected, average capacity per primary school may soon be around 400 students instead of 100.²⁹

Educational investments take a long time to bear fruit, Agustin Aguerre, chief of the IDB Haiti Response Group, pointed out. Meaningful results may take decades to appear rather than years. Cabrol gave the example of Brazil, which revamped its school system over the course of ten years. “They started to compare themselves with the world—Asia and the OECD countries—and they weren't happy with what they saw,” he said. “They knew they couldn't compete economically if their populace was only offered seven years of education.”³⁰

In international development, project strategies are defined by technical terms like “inputs,” “outputs,” “outcomes,” and “impacts.”

If the desired impact is the overall improvement of the Haitian education system, some of the inputs and outputs would be expenditures on new, quality infrastructure, subsidies, and the implementation of teacher training programs. Outcomes would then be structurally-sound schools that foster a good learning environment, qualified teachers, and clearly-defined, national learning goals.

To call the plan ambitious does not adequately describe what it hopes to achieve. No one claims this plan will create rapid changes in Haiti. Aguerre said the hope is that in five years, the GOH will be able to demonstrate the successful completion of the rebuilding's major outputs, meaning improved school buildings and more qualified teachers. He suggested that a timeframe of ten years would be more appropriate for seeing improved test scores. Cabrol admitted, "The plan is not perfect and there is a good deal of idealism in it."³¹

A CURRICULUM DESIGNED FOR HAITIANS

The idea of creating a unique and standardized set of tools and measurements for the education of Haitians strikes at a core question: what does it mean to be Haitian? Ever since 1958, the country has adapted its curriculum from that of France. There have been at least four different

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comprehensive education plans put forward in just the last twenty years, according to Creutzer Mathurin, chief strategist at the Ministry of Education and general coordinator for all projects financed by external donors.³² Each one was abandoned as incomplete or as a failure. Some officials scoff at the idea of having a national curriculum anymore because Haiti seems to enact and subsequently dispose of them so frequently.³³ There was an overhaul

in the early 1980s, in which Creole was first recognized and taught in the primary schools. Vocational training programs were designed as alternatives to traditional education in that plan as well, but they were never implemented because of a "social contradiction" between the administration of Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier and that of his successor.³⁴ There was the Plan of 1997, another a few years later, and so on. Nine years of education was even mandated in the country's constitution in 1816, a first

for the region. Almost a century later, another constitution decreed that it would be both obligatory and free. Neither idea came to fruition.³⁵

Though many attempts have been made to improve it in the past, Mathurin thought that the national curriculum currently being developed by the Presidential Commission would be accepted by the Ministry and then implemented successfully in Haiti. "It integrates all those that came before it," he said.³⁶

The commission, which Lumarque heads, was established in 2008 and has been making recommendations to the president and the Ministry of Education regarding the new national curriculum, among other things. In preparing their recommendations, the commission went throughout the country and asked parents and community leaders what they wanted for their children. Lumarque says that the feedback had several resounding themes. "Parents want schools that create model citizen—people with integrity and a sense of civic duty who love Haiti. There is a great desire for solidarity. And families know that education is a factor in social mobility. They also know that school is a chance for their children to eat daily as well."³⁷ Lunches of rice are sometimes the only meals schoolchildren eat during the day.

A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

In late October 2010, even the adults seemed giddy on the first day of school at the *École Nationale de Pailboreau*, a public school in a rural part of Haiti's North Department. From the capital, it is a three-hour trip through a two-lane thoroughfare hugging the country's western coastline to Gonaïves. In 2008, three hurricanes and a tropical storm destroyed this city within a matter of weeks. Much of the wreckage remains. Roads are still washed out, buildings are still deserted, and bridges are still torn from their moorings, washed downstream by the subsequent flooding.

After negotiating the potholed streets of Gonaïves, there is still a 40-kilometer climb up the switchback mountain roads into the countryside. Although droves of Haitians have moved into the cities over the past two decades, half the population still lives in rural areas.³⁸ In these broad swathes of the country, there is little access to basic services, education included. This school has been placed very deliberately atop a remote mountain, far from any urban center. In the valleys below it, clusters of small villages with no real potable water, sanitation, or electricity abound.

On the mountaintop nestled high among the rugged terrain of the northern interior of the country, the two-story, L-shaped building opens up over a large central courtyard. It was constructed by Haiti's Economic

and Social Assistance Fund (FAES) in 10 months and funded through a USD 65 million concessional loan that the IDB made to the GOH in 2003. School children—about 650 of them—washed from one side of the courtyard to the other in perfect chaos and perfectly crisp, blue uniforms until the school director appeared, large bell in hand, at the edge of the yard where most of the parents were watching. Once he began ringing the bell, the mob inexplicably morphed into straight, single-file lines, all facing the flagpole. After role call and an enthusiastic rendition of the national anthem (*La Dessalinienne*), the students walked two by two up the stairs to their new classrooms. The teachers began classes, and the director, parents, contractors from FAES, and even Minister Jean Pierre gathered in one of the building's multi-use rooms on the first floor to discuss what this opening meant, not just for the locals, but for Haiti in general.

The director stated bluntly, “by opening this school, we are closing many prison doors.” Jean Pierre said, “This school will provide access to education according to our national plan. What we are seeking is long-term development through education. It will require a lot of hard work

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The building's architect, William Kénel-Pierre, explained his design and its intentional inclusion of the community. The concept behind the placement of everything was to create public space for the communities that will sustain this school while simultaneously maintaining a good learning environment for the children in their classrooms. No single feature had been casually planned or implemented: the school opening up to the courtyard, the interior second-floor balcony outside

the classrooms with views of the entire facility, the tanks for drinking water on the hill below, and then the public restrooms just below those, at the point where the hill turns back into a tropical green brush that spills all the way down to the villages near the bottom. Even the colors—bright blue, orange, and yellow—were deliberately picked to make the exterior walls of the school stand out as a “point of reference” in the surrounding hillsides, especially under the glare of the hot sun.

Social development is hard anywhere, but it is especially so in rural communities, where people are spread out and common spaces are rare. Kénel-Pierre explained that primary school is the first place where people learn to socialize, and this makes layout critical. The communities populate the school, using its facilities and open spaces; the school, in turn, reinforces the communities. The architect made a plea to the minister to work for the continual maintenance of this school and others like it. He said, "Today it looks beautiful, but without care it will fall into disrepair. That's the same old Haitian story."³⁹ Jean Pierre said that since the new national curriculum had not yet been finalized, the school would follow the existing curriculum for the time being. Once finalized, this school—along with every other public school and those private schools that opt to participate in the education reform plan—is expected to begin teaching from the same materials and using the same methods to test students. The minister said that because of this new building and the integration of the community in its design, the children's learning experience will be improved. The school will also be more than just a collection of classrooms; it will be a central point for locals, a meeting ground in a remote countryside that lacks much sense of communal space.⁴⁰

This school will accommodate very few of the hundreds of thousands of students left outside the system. Multiplying its example 2,500 times—as the reform plan hopes to do over the next five years—will be a slow process. Future schools will be larger, accommodating up to 900 children from pre-K to the 9th grade, according to IDB education specialist Anouk Ewald. Nonetheless, this school will serve as a good model for what is to come, and everyone on the mountaintop that day celebrated it as a great start.

OWNERSHIP

In Haiti, where institutions are traditionally weak, people have grown accustomed to fending for themselves rather than relying on the government. Historically, political leaders have proven more prone to rob the populace than to inspire it. But in the new presidential election, Lumarque thought that chances for the political continuity of this education plan after the January 16, 2010, run-off were good because "all the candidates have been agreeing on education and are including it in their platforms." Still, he said there is a need for a binding national pact on education, a resolution everyone would be committed to.⁴¹

"We, as Haitians, need to force collaboration," said Lumarque. "We have no chance to develop ourselves with foreign aid and donations. If you

look at the long-term trend, Haiti is a country that tends to take one step forward and two steps back. But still we are left to solve our own problems.” Cabrol pointed out that, even with all of the IDB’s assistance, they have still been excluded from some GOH discussions. “If this is perceived as an IDB or World Bank plan, it would undermine the entire effort,” he said. “But it is totally Haitian-owned.”⁴²

Maybe a shift has already begun. When cholera broke out near St. Marc and then spread to the capital in early November 2010, Quisqueya University immediately had 22 medical students working in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior to train tent-clinic staff how to treat the disease. “They have been out there since day one,” Mr. Lumarque said, adding that he was surprised by the quality of coordination and communication in the response and said it was one positive result of the earthquake. “[That day] has changed the mindset of students,” Lumarque says. “There is more commitment to Haiti and to the communities. The image of Haiti has improved among the youth since then.”⁴³

RULE OF LAW

The history of Haiti is filled with natural catastrophes and the tragic consequences of human corruption. Since the successful slave revolt for independence, the small island nation has seen thirty-two coups d’état. “With the tides of calamities that continually hit Haiti, one can understand how the people have developed a sense of fatalism about their lives,” said Raphael Mutiku, Oxfam’s coordinator for water and sanitation projects in Haiti.⁴⁴ And with fatalism often comes a sense of resignation.

The rebuilding of Haiti’s education system cannot happen in isolation. It has to be accompanied, or even preceded, by an overall improvement in Haiti’s development. Even though strong investment in education is quite obviously a path toward a better future, all of these efforts may be moot if security does not improve.

During the last 20 years, there have been six international military interventions in Haiti, according to Edmond Mulet, head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which currently has 12,000 UN peacekeepers in the country. MINUSTAH has been a major presence in the country since the ouster of then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.⁴⁵ Some Haitians welcome the protection. Others resent it, viewing the force as no more than a foreign military occupying the country. Between the twelve-foot walls that wealthy Haitians adorn with razor-wire around their fortress-like homes, and the occasional armored

UN personnel carriers that rumble down pockmarked city streets, both perspectives may have their merits.

"But more than security, which is important," said Mulet, "I believe that the issue of rule of law, which includes security, justice, commercial laws, investments, job creation, etc.—this is what is needed to create sustainability in Haiti."

It is this glaring inequality that creates a breeding ground for instability. Mulet pointed out that the domestic banking sector has actually been quite robust and filled with liquidity since the earthquake. The reason for this, however, was largely because of influxes of cash from narco-traffickers and money-launderers who want to hide the sources of their wealth. "The middle class lost everything," Mulet said. "The bourgeoisie have never had it better though."

There will be no real foreign direct investment (FDI) in Haiti until there is adequate security, and until the rule of law as maintained by Haitians prevails. But today, most domestic private-sector organizations could never afford to pay back a loan at or near market prices, and no foreign investor would ever put equity into something they knew could be ransacked and carried off the next day. Between 2000 and 2008, FDI in Haiti ranged between only USD 13 and USD 72 million annually.⁴⁶ Without substantial FDI, the chances for overall development, and with it the fruition of a new education system being rebuilt within that environment, start to look bleak.

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HOPE?

So, what are the chances for a turn-around in education in an already fragile country that is overwhelmed with social, economic, and health problems of every sort? Is the GOH capable of implementing and sticking to a long-term strategy? It may help to first think about the things that Haiti has in its favor. It is in a good neighborhood. The United States, Canada, Mexico, and the rest of the Caribbean nations are as good neighbors as one could hope for in terms of trade. Haiti also has seaports and a 1,100-mile coastline, which, for ease of international trade and exporting, are two of the most important characteristics for any country to have, argues Oxford

professor and development expert Paul Collier.⁴⁷ Under the HOPE II Act (Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement), Haiti also has the best trade agreement with the United States that a country can get: 10 more years of tariff-free access to a USD 13-trillion-per-year market after the legislation was renewed in 2008.⁴⁸ This kind of favorable arrangement would change the future of almost any economy. For their part, Coca-Cola has already begun an initiative called Haiti Hope that is helping 25,000 mango-growers increase their productivity and incomes, and which will ideally develop a sustainable mango-juice industry in the country. Others are working with coffee-growing cooperatives, though there are a number of barriers to entry in that market, most of them internal.

However, a critical barrier to regional integration is the language. Neither French (Haiti's official language) nor Creole (its more commonly-spoken cousin) is spoken elsewhere in the region. Both are taught in public schools, but if English or Spanish were to be incorporated into the primary curriculum, as some experts have suggested, Haitian children would have obvious advantages.

Continued attention from abroad is necessary too. Cabrol said, "When I met with President Bill Clinton and he asked me what I needed from him, I told him the most important thing he could bring to the effort was not money, but attention. I asked him to be constantly asking about how the implementation of this new plan is going. The attention that he can bring, and that only he can bring, is critical for the success of this."⁴⁹

Remittances spiked immediately after the earthquake but have since leveled out.⁵⁰ Rather than try to incentivize more wire transfers, the GOH would do well to spur the repatriation of citizens living abroad. Half the population of Haiti is under age 20 and a third is younger than 15; so, it seems that every generation must start over from scratch.⁵¹ All this is to say that there are no perfect solutions. But there are good intentions and good plans. Hopefully that is what Haiti has right now. There also is plenty of hope. And as Jacky Lumarque has observed from watching his students, "the young need to have hope."⁵² ■

ENDNOTES

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