

Strategy Paper for Funding and Donor Agencies: Higher Education in Haiti

**European Union - Caribbean Network for
Internationalisation of Higher Education
(EUCANET)**



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Acknowledgements: To the highly-dedicated persons in the partner institutions who actively participated in the project, as well as the European Commission and the ACP-Secretariat for the trust deposited in the EUCANET project through the framework of the EDULINK Programme.

Introduction

It is certainly not news that the current situation within the Republic of Haiti is both desperate and dire. Haiti is the poorest country on the Human Development Index (HDI) in the Americas, and has a long, violent history of political unrest. Most significantly for recent times, Haiti has seen natural and human disaster of immense scale, from which it struggles to recover. A large-magnitude earthquake devastated Haiti and its capital Port-au-Prince in January, 2010. This earthquake destroyed homes, livelihoods, government buildings, and educational establishments, as well as provoking a grotesque loss of life.

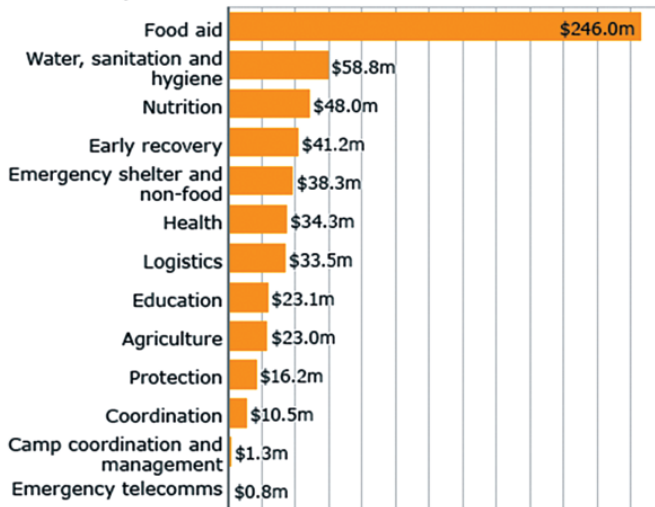
The challenge for Haiti is to now rebuild itself, concentrating on basic rights and needs, including healthcare and sanitation, homelessness, infrastructure of all types, poverty, etc. However, it is the belief of this strategy report that education is key to rebuilding Haiti's future, and is a much overlooked area of investment currently via donors and international aid. This paper does not dispute that the abovementioned fundamental rights and needs must be a priority, but also suggests that donors look towards other, less-covered, areas. Foreign aid to Haiti represents around 30 to 40% of national budget (estimates vary), with the United States, Canada and the European Union being the principle donors.¹ The "World Factbook" cites in Haiti a shortage of skilled labour, widespread unemployment and un-

1. "\$1 Billion is Pledged to help Haiti Rebuild", New York Times. July, 2004.

deremployment, quoting that “more than two-thirds of the labour force do not have formal jobs”, and describes pre-earthquake Haiti as already “the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with 80% of the population living under the poverty line and 54% in abject poverty”². Additionally, literacy in adults is reported to be between 53% (World Factbook) and 65% (United Nations). Meanwhile, the World Bank estimated in 2004 that over 80% of Haitian graduates were living abroad, representing serious brain drain³. All of these problems are intrinsically linked to education and further education, which are the cornerstones of an economically developed society. More recent or accurate data is hard to find.

As mentioned previously, the aid effort in Haiti is largely devoted to fundamental human rights and needs. However, education is pinpointed as one of the developmental areas, albeit it low down on the list:

Haiti aid requirements



Source: UN Consolidated Appeals Process

2. World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency: “Haiti”.

3. “Latin American Shouldn’t Bet Everything on Remittances”, World Bank. October, 2006.

Within such a ranking, education comes 8th out of a potential 13. It is safe to say, however, that the majority of aid projects under the umbrella of “education” are directed towards and benefit primary-level and, to a lesser extent, secondary education. We have found little evidence of educational projects specifically devoted to higher education (tertiary level). However, NGOs and donors are the fundamental link to improvement in Haiti as it is estimated that there is more than twice the amount of money invested in education in Haiti from donors than from the relevant Ministry⁴.

Problems in Haiti

Within the EUCANET project, it has been possible to identify four main elements which contribute to the problems of Higher Education quality and access in Haiti. These four elements are:

INFRASTRUCTURE	CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
CORRUPTION	DIVISION

For each of the above items, it is considered that a concerted effort on the part of donor agencies could be better focused towards relieving these structural and baseline problems. Besides that, the Workshop report of the EUCANET project declares that one of the major problems of Haiti is its tendency to make plans, roadmaps or strategies, which are subsequently left aside and not followed through. Assistance to follow-up on concrete planning exercises would be a valuable intervention in the country’s development.

Infrastructure

Already a problem in Haiti, since the 2010 earthquake the country’s infrastructure has been a major weakness to its development. Even with half a billion dollars in Aid from private and charitable donors, the rebuilding of Haiti will be long and drawn out. Just clearing debris from Port-au-Prince

4. EUCANET Project: Workshop Report.

was estimated to take minimum a year.⁵ In terms of educational establishments, the Ministry of Education estimated that approximately half of Haiti's 15,000 primary schools and 1500 secondary schools were severely damaged or destroyed. In addition, the three main Higher Education establishments in Port-au-Prince were almost completely leveled, resulting in a loss of equipment, usable classroom and lecture space, etc.⁶ The education Minister has implied the importance of schooling as a return to some semblance of normality, and as a method of reducing trauma for youth and children. United Nations in a statement from the Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization said that "Education is at the core of Haiti's recovery and is the key to Haiti's development", and urged the rebuilding of its infrastructure, providing support for temporary facilities and rebuilding.

The US Government (one of the principle donors) focuses its investments on four main areas, including Infrastructure. However, they do not specifically target educational infrastructure.⁷ Other donors, such as UNICEF, have provided vital temporary facilities such as tents as classrooms. However, these are primarily focused on primary and secondary schools. Their "school-in-a-box" kits also provide critical basic equipment such as pens, paper and learning materials.⁸ It is clear that without primary and secondary education, further and higher education cannot exist. However, it is fundamental to provide some assistance to the rebuilding of the universities in Port-au-Prince so that graduates can contribute to the furtherance of a developing economy. The EUCANET project deviated funds originally dedicated to other activities (such as training workshops) and received permission from the European Commission to instead purchase some portable classrooms for the universities. However, at a cost of approximately 16,000 € each, more investment in this vein would be needed to provide sufficient space.

5. CBS News: Desperate Need for Infrastructure in Haiti (27th January, 2010).

6. ReliefWeb: Interview: "Haitian Education Systems "totally collapsed"" (18th January, 2010) - Reuters Alertweb.

7. www.state.gov: Background Notes on Haiti "US Economic and Development Assistance".

8. UNICEF: "Tent classrooms and school kits help restart education in Haiti's quake zone" (17th February, 2010).

Curriculum Development

In a nation where there is little industry to speak of, the *relevance* of curricula can be difficult to determine. Likewise, one of the main problems cited for the masses to enter into further and higher education is the still-ingrained use of French as the language of culture and instruction from its historical background. However, the majority use the local Creole as a mother tongue. Access exams into higher education are mainly held in French, therefore assuring a poor pass rate from the masses and keeping higher education as an elitist institution. This has been described as “apartheid through language”, and that the number of people in Haiti who speak French fluently can be as low as 5%, whereas 100% speak Creole⁹. Education and curriculum development in the vernacular language would open up more opportunities to the masses and act as a catalyst to bring together Haiti’s peoples. Likewise, there is reticence to change the system both from within and, strangely enough, from those who are put at a disadvantage from it. Efforts to disseminate knowledge on why instruction and education in the local language is important would be an extremely valuable programme, such as the pilot “Matenwa School”¹⁰, the first school in Haiti to only hold classes in Creole in an effort to boost basic literacy rates. The “Bernard Reform” – a law introduced over 30 years ago to provide education in Creole – has never been implemented. True to the conclusions of the EUCANET workshop, this again demonstrates that Haiti is a country with plans, and worthwhile plans, but which are never seen through. In summary, curricular development in the vernacular language, as well as concrete projects and plans to both promote the usefulness of such a scheme and revive the Bernard Reform would be desirable.

In terms of the types of curriculum available, the buzzword in Europe and other western nations reflects the interests of industry vs. Curriculum development. There is a tendency to develop industry linkages, and develop degree programmes accordingly to provide companies with specialised graduates, and students with ‘ready-made’ employment locally. However,

9. BBC News “Should Creole replace French in Haiti’s Schools?” (23rd August, 2011).

10. <http://matenwaccl.org/> “Matenwa Community Centre”.

how can this be done in a country with little or no employment and where only 1% of people actually reach higher education? In fact, industry in Haiti accounts for 20% of it's GDP but only a mere 9% of the employment of the available workforce¹¹. Traditional and local industry was based mainly on agriculture, although imports and manufacturing from the USA came about in recent times.

Likewise, it is important to note that the very reconstruction of Haiti will bring about new curriculum development needs. The reconstruction of the country, as well as the social challenges this brings, will require specialists in a wide variety of roles including architects, fundraisers, international aid specialists, doctors and nurses, contributors to infrastructure (electricians, road builders, telecommunications specialists, for example). By basing the educational offer on the needs of Haiti currently, perhaps they may depend less on outside assistance and contribute further to their own progress.

Corruption

It is not news that corruption is endemic and present in Haiti. In particular, Haiti has brought up the rear positions of Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index* as one of the most corrupt countries on Earth. In the 2010 index¹², Haiti is number 146 out of 178. For this year's recently posted numbers (posted just a few days before the publication of this paper) Haiti comes in at number 170 of 175, showing a worsening of the situation. Naturally, following the disaster of Haiti's earthquake, corruption and its avoidance was not a priority. In such a situation, basic human needs in terms of shelter, healthcare and sustenance came first. However, in the months following, it has become painfully apparent that corruption is affecting the rebuilding of Haiti, and diverting funds and assistance away from those projects in need.

Education is not an area often linked to corruption in the minds of most citizens, who tend to link such concepts with the worlds of politics or fi-

11. Encyclopaedia of the Nations: Industry in Haiti (<http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Americas/Haiti-INDUSTRY.html>)

12. http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010

nance. However, the World Education Forum (2000) stated categorically that “Corruption is a major drain on the effective use of resources for education and should be drastically curbed”. This is undoubtedly the case in post-earthquake Haiti whereby a rebuilding of the educational system is required. In particular, Transparency International states that current corruption risks “include diversion of funds because of fraud and theft, and the misallocation of budgets and resources because of conflicts of interest. These leave genuine victims without rebuilt homes or basic services restored”¹³. Within the same article, the situation described for management of aid is bleak. The IHRC (Haiti Interim Recovery Commission) was established in April 2010 just 3 months following the earthquake, with a view to providing a multi-stakeholder forum to coordinate the aid efforts, funding and oversee / approve projects to rebuild Haiti. Similarly, the World Bank set up the HRF (Haiti Reconstruction Fund) to act as a centralised point for the reconstruction process via external aid and donors, acting on behalf of smaller donors who do not have enough personnel or presence to undertake the projects. Here the numbers are terrible: only 134 million dollars of the 11 billion pledged in aid have made it into the hands of the HRF and IHRC. Most aid is still administered via traditional channels, small NGOs and is prone to fall into the wrong hands. Clearly, we can cite a lack of co-ordination in the aid efforts as a major obstacle.

This paper echoes Transparency International's emphasis on countering corruption in aid. In particular, NGOs and other actors must report properly on activities carried out, and should take advantage of and use official established structure for aid such as the IHRC and HRF. Only through such bodies may they ensure the aid reaches the correct destination. In terms of education, this paper would like to recommend that the IHRC and HRF set aside specific budgets for Higher Education as well as secondary and elementary level, and take steps to manage their administration where possible.

13. http://www.transparency.org/news_room/in_focus/2011/haiti_one_year_on

Division

This section is an observation from the EUCANET project, which means there is anecdotal evidence to back it up. One element which was clearly visible and mentioned in the different EUCANET workshops, was the distinct lack of collaboration between Haiti's higher education institutions, and in particular the public and private sectors. There is a clear "us and them" attitude. This creates a situation whereby each institution must create, maintain and finance its own infrastructure, resources, etc. This paper would like to promote and address the idea behind a series of 'shared' resources, for example libraries, laboratories, equipment, etc. As there are little funds available, it makes more sense at this time of mass rebuilding to maximise resource utilisation, create linkages and cooperation between the different public and private universities of Haiti to create shared structures. Those based in the same city / district may benefit from a joint investment in resources.

To conduct such an activity, universities must engage in common debate and identify their similar needs and requirements. A change in mindset must come about, borne of necessity, and they must collaborate for the greater good of all.

Conclusions

This paper has established a brief background to some of the most pressing problems for Higher Education in Haiti, as well as a series of short recommendations in ways that funding may be better applied. In summary, the paper wishes to highlight the following:

- Education is not given enough importance, in particular tertiary education
- It is key to improving Haiti's labour-shortage and literacy problems
- Aid and donors are vital to the development of Haiti's education, investing twice the amount of money than the Ministry of Education
- For four elements: Infrastructure, Curriculum Development, Corruption, and Division: A concerted effort on the part of agencies and NGOs would be appreciated to target and relieve such issues

- Haiti needs to follow-through on developmental ideas and strategic plans. Many are not later carried out, even at governmental / legal levels
- Efforts to specifically target educational infrastructure would be fundamental to rebuilding the universities
- Determining the relevance of curricula in Haiti is an extremely difficult task, owing to a lack of industry
- The earthquake has brought about new challenges and therefore new educational needs
- A shift towards teaching and entrance exams in creole rather than French would assist to boost the participation in higher education, not just being an elitist institution
- For the above, promotion and education on why Creole is not 'worse' than French is fundamental; A change in mindset is required
- Corruption needs to be now targeted after the initial aid projects in Haiti centred on human rights and basic needs. It is evident that aid is not reaching the needy
- Corruption in education needs to be publicised, many do not realise it is occurring
- A centralised management of funds and aid projects would be desirable to ensure the aid reaches the correct destination, as well as combating the lack of coordination between aid efforts
- Countering corruption should start with the NGOs and donors themselves, who do not report properly to the established authorities
- A shift towards greater cooperation between public and private higher education institutions would assist the development and rebuilding process
- Shared resources such as libraries, laboratories, lecture spaces, etc would represent less initial outlay and could be managed properly to ensure fair access to all
- Debate and cooperation between the institutions must therefore be promoted.



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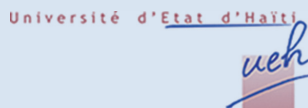
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The present document has been produced with the financial support of the ACP EDULINK Cooperation Programme



'EUCANET' is a Project financed by ACP EDULINK
Cooperation Programme with contract number:
9 – ACP – RPR – 12 # 21