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# SPECIAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

Following a year of economic setbacks, natural disasters, and political turmoil in Haiti, bilateral and multilateral donors convened at a mid-April 2009 conference and pledged \$353 million to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth there. But it is by no means certain that this pledge—and the additional hundreds of millions of dollars coming in from earlier pledges—will reverse the country's fortunes. At present, Haiti continues to be characterized by turmoil, a lack of sustained growth, and extremes of poverty and human suffering, and it remains highly vulnerable to external shocks. This report surveys poverty and inequality in Haiti and examines obstacles to sustained stability and growth as a means of understanding why stimulative efforts have not succeeded thus far. It offers conclusions and recommendations aimed at providing Haitians and their international supporters a way forward for achieving sustained stability and growth and for lessening the country's turmoil and vulnerability to external shocks.

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*Robert Maguire*

## Haiti after the Donors' Conference

### A Way Forward

#### Summary

- In April 2009, multilateral and bilateral donors pledged \$353 million to support the government of Haiti's plan to alleviate poverty, mitigate the effects of natural disasters, and achieve sustained economic growth.
- Extreme inequalities among Haitians—apparent through severe income disparity and the lack of access by most to quality education, health care, and the legal system—have exacerbated the country's already relentless poverty and stymied the development of human resources required for stability and growth. They have also created strong enmity between the society's "haves" and "have-nots."
- A major obstacle to Haiti's growth has been the lack of attention to its rural economy and population. Over time, this neglect, juxtaposed with efforts to develop urban wage employment, resulted in the demise of Haitian agriculture, dependence on imported food, significant off-the-land migration to crowded urban centers and destinations beyond Haiti, unmet expectations, and increased environmental degradation.
- The state's lack of capacity to render public services has resulted in the virtual absence of the government as a positive presence in citizen's lives, thus stoking citizen frustration and weakening the democratic process. Donor support of nonstate entities has created an environment that lacks coherence, particularly in support of national development plans.
- Expanding opportunities that enable people to fulfill legitimate aspirations is sine qua non for Haiti's brighter future. In order to expand opportunities, development programs must act in concert to alleviate poverty; lessen inequality in health, education, and rule of law; strengthen institutions; build partnerships; address rural neglect and consequent vulnerabilities; and alter attitudes that place personal or group interests above those of the national good.

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- Conditional cash transfers, expanded microcredit, and the creation of a national civic service corps offer important possibilities for achieving improved equity and inclusion among all Haitians and, therefore, for attaining irreversible stability and growth.

## Introduction

Since the 1986 demise of the Duvalier family dictatorship (1957–86), progress toward a more democratic and prosperous Haiti and its citizens has been unsteady, if not uncertain. Instability and economic deterioration under a parade of military and civilian governments, exacerbated by episodic conflict, have characterized the country despite—or some would argue because of—considerable international attention. Following the election of President Rene Preval in 2006, the Haitian government crafted a poverty reduction and economic-growth strategy endorsed and supported by international institutions that had, by the beginning of 2008, reduced gang-related conflict, rampant kidnapping, and politically linked strife and their collective catastrophic effects—all highly important achievements in confronting the country’s social, economic, and environmental deterioration.<sup>1</sup> From all appearances, the Caribbean’s most unstable and impoverished country had finally begun to take long-awaited steps along a path of progress. However, two developments, both beyond Haiti’s immediate control, have since reversed these positive trends. The first was the effect of skyrocketing costs worldwide of food and fuel. In a country where 78 percent of the population barely survives on less than \$2 a day and where more than 55 percent of its food is imported, the resultant cost-of-living crisis only deepened the suffering of Haiti’s poor. Fallout from the crisis led to the parliamentary ouster of the prime minister in April 2008 and months of political gridlock. The second was the devastation wrought on the country by four strong storms that struck during August and September 2008. These storms, which collectively killed hundreds, uprooted tens of thousands, exacerbated food shortages, submerged a major city in mud, and caused \$897.4 million in damage—the equivalent of 14.6 percent of the country’s GDP—were, in the words of President Préval, “Haiti’s Katrina.”

By April 2009, both the government and its international supporters had taken steps aimed at restoring the country to its pre-2008 path of progress and avoiding further turmoil and decline. Among these steps was a one-year extension, to mid-October 2009, of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), with its 9,000 peacekeepers and police trainers essential to maintaining security and improving public safety. Additional steps included a postdisaster needs assessment, a report on improving economic security, and, subsequently, the creation of a revised national development strategy that would work toward a new paradigm with three goals: reducing poverty, decreasing vulnerability to natural disasters, and paving the way for sustained economic growth.<sup>2</sup>

These steps culminated in the Conference on the Economic and Social Development of Haiti, held in Washington, D.C., in mid-April 2009, which brought together international donors and the Haitian government. Emanating from the conference was an agreement that the donors and the government would work together to address the poverty reduction, disaster mitigation, and economic growth priorities identified by Haitians. That resolve was accompanied by donor pledges of \$353 million in support of the aforementioned revised strategy. These funds will join hundreds of millions more for Haiti already in the combined pipelines of various nongovernmental, bilateral, and multilateral donors.

By no means, however, is it certain that this concerted action will reverse the country’s backward tumble for a sustained period. As prior experience in Haiti instructs, the international commitment of human, material, and financial resources alone does not hold the key to success, even when coupled with development strategies and plans. To be sure, previously allocated development funding from diverse international sources, including donors’

conferences in 1994, 2004, and 2006, and the commitment of additional resources, including those from UN Missions in Haiti between 1994 and 2000, did not result in a Haiti with less poverty, more growth, and greater resilience to shocks, such as the ones of 2008 that sent the country tumbling.

The key to success in Haiti will come not simply from allocating urgently needed resources, but by ensuring that they are used effectively to strengthen security and improve public safety, relieve poverty, and promote sustained growth, particularly in ways that focus on the pressing need for the country to become more resilient to external shocks that leave it reeling. Moreover, resources must be applied to create opportunities for equitable and inclusive development. Extremes of poverty and inequality among Haitians, and the exclusion of most from access to opportunities required both to meet basic needs and to participate meaningfully in national life, have been at the root of Haiti's history of human suffering and conflict. Absent significant gains in equality and inclusion the country will continue to vacillate between turmoil and deterioration on the one hand, and stability and progress on the other.

## **The Challenge of Poverty and Inequality**

Of all the world's countries, Haiti has the second largest overall income gap between the very rich and the very poor. More than 68 percent of total national income accrues to the wealthiest 20 percent of the population, while less than 1.5 percent of national income accumulates among the poorest 20 percent. Of the aforementioned 78 percent of its population earning less than \$2 a day, 56 percent must make do with less than \$1 a day. In rural Haiti, where some 60 percent of its 9.7 million people live, extremes of destitution are even greater: 86 percent of the population earns less than \$2 a day; 69 percent less than \$1 a day.<sup>3</sup> Although life in the countryside is bleak, Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, is no land of milk and honey. One prominent businessman estimates that as many as 300,000 of the 2.5 million to 3 million residing in the metropolitan area wake up every day without a penny in their pocket.

Few opportunities exist for impoverished Haitians—in cities or the countryside—to increase daily earnings. Unemployment is rampant; estimates run as high as 70 percent nationwide and 62 percent among urban youth. Under the prevailing daily minimum wage (approx. \$1.80 a day), even those roughly 250,000 Haitian workers who find wage employment do not necessarily earn enough to meet basic needs. Most Haitians making \$2 a day or less earn that by hustling to survive within the informal economy, or by working the land. Agriculture, historically undercapitalized and notoriously inefficient, nevertheless provides a source of employment for 69 percent of those with work in rural Haiti.

Cash transfers from Haitians living overseas assist those receiving them to meet basic food, clothing, and shelter needs. An estimated 31 percent of Haitian adults receive cash from family living abroad. One quarter of all household income is derived from remittances. In 2007, Haitians overseas remitted \$1.6 billion to family members. Over the past year, however, remittances are down by as much as 20 percent as a result of the impact of the global economic crisis on the Haitian diaspora.<sup>4</sup> This bodes poorly for those who depend on international cash transfers to make ends meet.

Inequality in access to education reinforced by dichotomies of wealth and poverty also illustrate Haiti's stark social and economic disparities. Quality primary and secondary education, available principally at a handful of private schools disproportionately located in Port-au-Prince, is a dream for most Haitians, who cannot afford tuition and supplies. Instead, they must depend on other, less-costly schools. Typically also privately run (81 percent of Haiti's schools are privately run as a result of scant government spending on education),

these schools—generally speaking—are inadequately resourced and offer nightmarish educational environments, including untrained teachers, classrooms averaging 78 pupils per teacher, and poorly constructed buildings. The local characterization of these schools as *lekòl bòlèt* (“lottery schools”—*bòlèt* is Haiti’s numbers game, or lottery) is indicative of the fact that they are a gamble where students and their parents seeking education as a pathway out of poverty lose more often than win. Haiti’s few public schools offer similar conditions.

Access to quality health care exhibits a similar dichotomy. Those on the upper end of the income scale count among their options the best physicians and facilities available either in Haiti or beyond. For the vast majority, however, access to quality health care, like education, is elusive. As a rule, the poor gain access only when a low-cost or no-cost service is provided by volunteer doctors and nurses either in Haiti on medical missions or in scattered clinics operated on shoestring budgets by various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). As with education, prior Haitian governments have typically not paid much attention to health service provision. In rare cases when they have, they have had only limited resources to invest in public health.

Despite these known systemic inadequacies, Haiti’s poor commit precious resources (including the aforementioned remittances) toward education and health care with the hope of putting children on the path of progress and keeping family members healthy. That the poor are desperate for quality services is as apparent as is the fact that those services are not readily available, especially in rural areas. Twenty-five percent of Haiti’s rural districts have no schools whatsoever. Nationally, only three in five Haitian children attend school. In desperation, rural families seek educational opportunity for their children by sending them to cities to live with fictive kin in a potentially abusive arrangement called *restavek*, whereby youngsters exchange domestic service for the opportunity to attend school. In regard to health care, few of Haiti’s districts have doctors or nurses. The national average of physicians and nurses per 10,000 inhabitants is 2.5 and 1, respectively. In the Grand Anse Department, the ratio of doctors falls to 0.2.<sup>5</sup> As a result, poor Haitians, in search of relief for their ailments, seek advice from neighbors with knowledge of traditional medicine or others claiming expertise and purchase often worthless, outdated, or even toxic medicines from merchants who exploit their desperation. It is no surprise that life expectancy in Haiti today stands at 57.5 years, the lowest in the Western Hemisphere.

Inequities among Haitians in rule of law, coupled with a dysfunctional judicial system, also obstruct the country’s path toward poverty reduction, disaster mitigation, and economic growth with greater inclusion and equity. Like inequalities in access to quality education and health, rule-of-law disparities also play out along socioeconomic lines, with those in the upper echelons better served than those who occupy the rungs below them. Haiti’s language dichotomy as applied to legal proceedings provides an insightful example. The Caribbean nation has two official languages: French and, since 1987, Creole. Only some 15 percent of Haitians, however—few of whom are among those surviving on less than \$2 a day—speak French whereas *all* Haitians speak Creole. Yet French remains the predominant language used by judges and lawyers in courtroom proceedings, befuddling Creole-speaking plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses. Hence, even when there is access to the legal system by the poor, there is not an even playing field.

Corruption endemic to the system also obstructs equal access to the law and works in favor of those with influence through power and resources—usually French speakers. Bribery of judges, attorneys, and law enforcement officials is commonplace in a context where justice is literally for sale and expected impunity among those with power is the norm. Judicial officials who endeavor to enact equal justice for all are vulnerable to the pressure and intimidation tactics of those who have customary impunity and more power—or

more persuasive tools—than they. This serves not only to exacerbate patterns of exclusion and inequality but also to make the poor less likely to invest scarce resources in productive activities. Budding entrepreneurs poised to compete successfully against established middlemen or merchants with customary impunity can be ruined by extralegal intimidation tactics. Farmers who improve their land run the risk of corrupt officials issuing bogus land titles to a crony or of being forced to turn over a higher portion of their production to powerful middlemen who have little or no fear of prosecution. Resultant disincentives to improved land use management are particularly detrimental to the compelling need for natural disaster mitigation and environmental rehabilitation.

In sum, severe, widespread poverty and inequities in access to education, health care, and rule of law—along with the inability of the poor to mitigate these inequities—preclude prospects for most Haitians to pursue the kind of personal growth and self-improvement required for their country's sustained stability and growth. Further, Haiti's disparities, coupled with the penury and pain of the millions at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, has created enmity between the country's "haves" and "have-nots." Among those at the top, there is widespread fear. Among those at the bottom, there is considerable loathing. Haiti's poverty and inequality, combined with such feelings and perceptions, fundamentally contribute to the episodic violence, obdurate instability, and grave human suffering that keep the country on edge.

## Obstacles to Sustained Stability and Growth

### *Rural neglect*

A major obstacle to Haiti's sustained stability and growth has been the lack of attention and investment in the country's rural economy and population, particularly as linked to agriculture. Traditionally, Haiti has been a nation of small-scale farmers. A majority still lives close to the land despite urbanization trends that have shifted the population from 80 percent rural in the 1970s to 55 to 60 percent rural today. Investments for economic growth and development have not served this majority. According to OECD data, between 1995 and 2006, for example, only 7 percent of donor allocations went toward agriculture. In 2007, this dropped to 2 percent, representing only \$12 million out of \$624 million of donor support.<sup>6</sup>

Neglect of rural Haiti is at the root of the country's vulnerability to the external cost-of-living and deadly storm shocks that brought Haiti to its knees in 2008. As recently as 1980, Haitian farmers provided from 80 to 90 percent of national food needs, but today they produce only about 45 percent of what Haiti eats. The country's diminished capacity to feed itself came about as a result of several interrelated developments. Decisions in the late 1970s by banks and donor governments to promote Haiti as the "Taiwan of the Caribbean," supported by the pliant regime of dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, contributed significantly to Haiti's food-production demise. Why invest in rural Haiti and its primitive agriculture, the thinking went, when the country could become—given its abundant cheap labor and its proximity to the United States market—a locus for investment in low-wage assembly plant jobs that would alleviate unemployment and stimulate economic growth? Wage earners would be better off buying cheaper imported food than more costly Haitian foodstuffs. Farmers would be better off earning wages than scratching a living from the land. At its height in the early 1980s, this push to situate Haiti as an assembly zone in the Caribbean saw modest success. Apparel, electronics, and sporting goods assembly plants located exclusively in Port-au-Prince created somewhere between 60,000 and 100,000 jobs, employing about 10 percent of the city's population.

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Unfortunately, those who envisaged Haiti's emulation of Taiwan's fast-growing economy did not pay attention to how Taiwan became Taiwan in the first place. As political economist Francis Fukuyama has noted, "In Asia, fast-developing countries such as South Korea and Taiwan began their high-growth periods with land-reform policies and then invested heavily in universal education. Latin American countries, by contrast, have undertaken relatively little redistribution and have failed to provide equal access to public services such as education and health."<sup>7</sup> In Haiti, where the failures of Latin America were played out in the 1970s and 1980s, concern about strengthening the country's rural productivity were trumped by the prospect of greater access to cheap imports, particularly flour and rice. Universal education was simply not important to Haiti's urban-based political and economic elites, who were content maintaining their positions of privilege and power in a society highly polarized along lines of race and class.

The impact of the lack of investment in rural Haiti and its people has been disastrous. Increased importation of basic food commodities fueled the demise of the country's ability to feed itself *and* changed consumption patterns. Haitian-produced rice—labor intensive, undercapitalized, low yielding, and grown on relatively small parcels—simply could not compete with its highly capitalized and high-yield U.S. counterpart, produced on large farms that took advantage of economies of scale, favorable government policies, and inexpensive inputs derived from fossil fuels to plant, fertilize, control pests, harvest, dry, and ship the product to such far-flung markets as Haiti. By the early 1980s, low-cost rice was flooding Haitian markets as a relatively inexpensive staple for the country's poor. The grain, previously consumed by most families only several times a week, became a daily necessity as it undercut the price of not just Haitian rice but also locally grown tubers and starches, such as cassava, yams, plantains, and corn.

The country's competitive disadvantage in supplying food to its people was exacerbated after 1986, when tariffs on imported agricultural commodities were removed or reduced, a Haitian decision driven by international pressure. Haitian rice producers tried to resist when, in 1987, they barricaded roads leading from the port of Gonaïves to markets in Port-au-Prince, in what became known as Haiti's "Rice War." Their efforts were futile. In 1980 domestic rice production was 210,000 metric tons, satisfying virtually all of Haiti's needs. By 2007, when it had fallen to 90,000 metric tons, Haiti's total consumption had risen to 450,000 metric tons. The 360,000 metric ton deficit was made up entirely by imports from the United States.<sup>8</sup>

As local rice production collapsed and demand for other crops declined, Haitian farmers and farm workers, already undercapitalized and struggling, felt the pinch. Multitudes reacted by seeking opportunities elsewhere, with families in tow. Declining prosperity in the countryside juxtaposed with the prospects of factory jobs in Port-au-Prince sparked a considerable movement from the land to the capital in the early 1980s. As the exodus continued, the population of the metropolitan area exploded, growing from an estimated 763,000 in 1982 to more than 2.5 million today, with 75,000 new migrants arriving each year. New arrivals have joined those already crammed into burgeoning slums built on seaside mudflats, precipitous slopes, or alluvial flood plains: all locations that leave them highly vulnerable to the effect of rainwater and mud cascading down deforested mountainsides.

As a rule, new migrants have also joined those who preceded them in not succeeding in their quest for greater opportunity. Following the 1986 ouster of the Duvalier dictatorship and the corresponding freedom of expression that fed a cacophony of voices calling for improved wages and worker treatment, jobs in the assembly sector began to disappear as factories closed—their owners shifting production to less vocal, more predictable environments. By 2008, in a much larger Port-au-Prince, about 1 percent of the population (25,000 workers) was employed in the assembly sector, 18,000 of them in apparel factories.<sup>9</sup>

The rural exodus also turned toward destinations beyond Haiti. Laborers without work, farmers without viable livelihoods, craftspeople with shrinking enterprises, and, subsequently, former rural dwellers now in cities and filled with dashed dreams sought opportunity across the border in the Dominican Republic and across the sea in the United States. Today thousands of people who used to live in rural Haiti work in farm fields or at construction sites in the Dominican Republic, or at low-wage jobs throughout South Florida. Their greatest contribution to Haiti is the cash they transfer to those left behind.

Haiti's vulnerability to the devastating effects of storms has also been exacerbated by a convergence of the deficit in rural investment and the surfeit in rural desperation that resulted in increased removal of vegetative land cover. Deforestation had begun during the French period with the indiscriminate harvesting by colonists of precious tropical hardwoods and continued ever since, particularly after 1920, when 60 percent of Haiti's surface remained forested. After 1980 the assault on Haiti's forests and trees ramped up considerably when laborers and farmers still in depressed rural areas harvested more wood—Haiti's principal source of energy—and produced more charcoal to meet increased demand from a growing urban population. In 1980, an estimated 5 percent of Haiti was covered with forests. Today, less than 2 percent of the country's surface remains forested and 25 of its 30 watersheds are completely deforested. This near absence of vegetative cover has left Haiti virtually defenseless to tropical storms and hurricanes that inevitably—and seemingly now in greater frequency and with greater force—move across the landscape. Just as the country's dependence on imported food left Haitians unprotected from global trends, the neglect of investment in rural Haiti and its people left the countryside unguarded against the vagaries of Mother Nature.

As long as imported commodities, particularly rice, remained relatively inexpensive, few decision-makers lamented the declining fortunes either of Haitian agriculture or of Haitian farm families. And then, after the 2007 to 2008 global commodity price increase, with people eating "mud cookies" to survive—not because imported food was scarce, but because the poor simply could no longer afford it—investment in rural Haiti and agricultural production suddenly became "*la mode*." Donors and their NGOs scrambled to rediscover (or discover) rural Haiti. The government poured precious resources into rice production, aiming to increase annual production to 120,000 metric tons. It invested \$30 million in rehabilitating infrastructure in the Artibonite Valley and \$13 million in fertilizer sold at a subsidized price. Sadly, these efforts went practically for naught when storms sent rainfall, mud, and rocks cascading from hillsides, wiping out 25,000 acres of newly planted rice and thousands of acres of other crops, washing 706,000 farm animals out to sea, making 3.3 million Haitians vulnerable to moderate or severe malnutrition, and reaffirming that decades of neglect of rural Haiti created a severe obstacle to the country's stability and growth.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Lack of institutional capacity***

A generally recognized obstacle to improved stability and growth in Haiti is a lack of institutional capacity. As implied earlier, this deficit is particularly apparent when it comes to the government's inability to render services to the population. Institutional deficiency emanates from several interrelated factors, including brain drain to distant shores and to better-paying private sector, NGO, and international organization positions within Haiti. Also contributing to this lack of capacity is the fact that Haitian governments have tended to be more concerned with maintaining power and extracting rent from the citizenry than providing services. For example, the state's presence in towns and villages has been characterized more by tax offices and—before it was disbanded in 1995—Haitian army outposts than by health clinics, agricultural extension offices, or schools. In this context, it should

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not be surprising that when resources from international donors were provided to previous governments, expected results were not attained. Endemic corruption, inefficiencies, and the preferred use of resources by the state to support power maintenance and predation were fundamental causes of the lack of hoped-for outcomes of donor support in education, health, and improved economic productivity.

Over time, Haiti became a destination for church groups, private voluntary agencies, and other organizations engaged in various humanitarian undertakings, filling the void left by the state. Haitian regimes accepted NGOs as mechanisms that would offer at least minimal services, allowing them to focus on political objectives. In response to the government's poor performance, donors not explicitly mandated to support public agencies ultimately chose to direct resources toward NGOs. For example, the United States channels bilateral aid to Haiti—usually in the range of \$250 million a year—exclusively to private NGOs. Today, there are an estimated three thousand NGOs active in Haiti, carrying out a dizzying array of projects that receive support from overseas. This profusion of NGOs and their projects has led some, particularly in Haiti, to characterize the country derisively as “a republic of NGOs.”

***One result of this pattern of overseas support of NGOs is that the Haitian state is virtually absent from delivering services to its citizens.***

One result of this pattern of overseas support of NGOs is that the Haitian state is virtually absent from delivering services to its citizens and not seen as having a positive impact on their lives. The limited presence of state-supported schools exemplifies this point. This pattern has given rise to an uncharacteristic dilemma today: the Haitian government is expressing its desire to serve citizen needs. This shift away from predation, evident in the Preval government's strategic plans of the past three years, has drawn ample praise among donors and other “friends of Haiti.” Whereas the government's intentions have been commended, its ability to fulfill them has been met with skepticism.

This uncertainty is partly a recognition of the very real weakness of state institutions. In part it is a legacy issue from the decades of governments enacting power prerogatives and predatory preferences that fueled the aforementioned ineffectiveness. Today's dilemma is that if a Haitian state seeking to reform this track record cannot gain access to significant donor funding, it will be unable either to demonstrate its commitment to action or to strengthen its capacity to undertake them, and thereby be condemned to remain absent from the lives of its citizens. This absence will stoke not only citizen frustration with and distrust of the elected government, but disinterest in or alienation from the democratic process writ large. This, in turn, will fuel not only demagoguery, recidivism, and the politics of division, but also instability and further economic decline.

Weak capacity juxtaposed with significant resource allocation to nonstate actors also has contributed to the same lack of strategic planning, program implementation, and oversight that major donors typically lament. There is no extant mechanism for coordinating the significant body of NGO work in Haiti, either to ensure that it complements poverty reduction, disaster mitigation, and economic growth priorities established by the government, or to evaluate it. This deficiency has given rise to an environment where private and nongovernmental development actors enact a kaleidoscope of feel-good projects draped in national flags that at best offer short-term fixes to longer-term problems.<sup>11</sup> International actors must support mechanisms for overcoming deficiencies in effectiveness and challenges in coordination. They also must assist the Haitian state to become a positive presence in the lives of all Haitian citizens.

### ***Fear and loathing***

Perhaps more than any other factor, the fear and loathing engendered by poverty and inequality obstruct prospects for the equitable and inclusive development desperately

required for sustained stability and growth. That addressing this obstacle is a prerequisite for progress is doubtless; that allocation of international resources necessarily helps the country to achieve that precondition is not. This conclusion is drawn from having seen resources either allocated to or appropriated by individuals or interest groups on the upper rungs of Haiti's socioeconomic ladder who subsequently apply them toward their own short-term interests and gain, not toward the greater national good.

A proverb popular among poor people laments this tendency: "The mules do the work while the horses reap the benefits." In Haitian society there is no doubt about whom the mules and horses are. And when benefits continually accrue at the top—as Haiti's income distribution patterns verify—little is achieved to alter the uneven human social, economic, and political relationships that are at the root of Haiti's poverty, instability, and conflict.

The borderline paranoid fear of poor people among society's upper echelons may be as much perception as reality. The story of Sisyphus—adapted to the Haitian context—illustrates the point. In Greek mythology, Sisyphus is condemned for eternity to roll a boulder up a hill only to have it roll down again before it reaches the top. In Haiti, Sisyphus, who represents the country's poor and disadvantaged, pushes the rock up a hill whose crest is occupied by those at the top of the pecking order. The closer he gets, the more fearful they become, so they push Sisyphus and his boulder back to the bottom. Like the Greek mythological figure, Haiti's Sisyphus renews his climb, only to be pushed back down again and again. From the perspective of the Haitian poor, this scenario has been enacted repeatedly since 1986, when the ouster of the Duvalier dictatorship brought the thus far unfulfilled promise of improved lives with greater opportunity for equity and inclusion.

Continuing with the metaphor, when those at the top are asked why they are afraid, they respond assuredly that if Sisyphus reaches the crest, he will heave his boulder at them. But, is it Sisyphus's intention to hurl his stone? What if, instead of reacting to the poor with fear and hostility, those at the top reach out a helping hand, rewarding Sisyphus's determination? Experience demonstrates that Haiti's poor are gracious to those who reach out to them, even though initially they may also be suspicious. Strangers who find themselves in remote villages are welcomed to share an already meager meal, to overnight in the nicest—and perhaps only—bed, and to accept as a farewell gift the nicest fruit from the garden. Humanitarian workers and others who visit Haiti's most desperate neighborhoods to offer help are warmly welcomed. Have these deep-rooted tendencies among the poor been irrevocably transformed into an angry loathing after so many years of being pushed down the hill? Is Haiti's aforementioned rise in crime and rash of kidnappings a manifestation of this anger and frustration? Is it too late for reaching out?

These questions cannot be answered absent an effort of those in the upper echelons to set aside fear; to redefine or sublimate personal or group interests to embrace broader national interests; and to acknowledge that it is the inhumane living conditions of some 80 percent of Haiti's people that pushes the country—and all residing in it—to its tipping point. Viewing the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the less fortunate as a plus—and not as a threat—is a *sine qua non* for sustained stability and progress in Haiti. The country's present precarious state, matched by the attention, support, and endorsement Haiti and its leaders are receiving internationally, makes this a propitious time to initiate changes to destructive behavioral paradigms. Change will take courage and will. It will take leadership. It will also take time. But it must begin. International actors mobilizing and allocating resources to assist Haiti must insist on—or try to catalyze—changes in Haiti's socioeconomic behavioral paradigm that will improve the country's chances for a salubrious future.

## Opportunities for Sustained Stability and Growth

At the April 2009 donors' conference, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remarked in reference to Haiti that "talent is universal; opportunity is not." This statement encapsulates Haiti's great challenge: expanding opportunities for a talented people. That Haiti's people are talented is beyond doubt and when given opportunities, those talents blossom. Consider the success of ordinary Haitians when they manage to relocate themselves to environments with greater opportunity in the United States, Canada, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere. In the Eastern Caribbean island of Dominica, for example, the more than one thousand Haitians who have migrated there over the past decade have seized opportunities as farm workers, seamstresses, tailors, hucksters, and entrepreneurs. One recent immigrant, a part-time mechanic in Haiti, established Dominica's first 24-7 road-service company, a thriving business valued throughout the 300-square-mile island. Simply stated, Haiti must also become an opportunity-laden environment that gives such energy and entrepreneurship a chance to blossom.

But not all opportunities are equal. Like people everywhere, Haitians seek opportunities that enable them to care for themselves and their families, improve their material conditions, and achieve personal growth and fulfillment. For most, existing opportunities do not allow them to meet—or even realistically work toward—these legitimate aspirations. Earning \$2 or less a day keeps individuals and families in survival mode, with little prospect for advancement. And, as costs of living rise, minimal income improvements barely allow individuals and families to keep their heads above the waters of despair, destitution, and frustration. Declining remittances add to already desperate conditions.

To move beyond survival, resources and investments must respond to the current needs of Haiti writ large while concurrently boosting its people beyond poverty and inequality by eroding obstacles to sustained stability and growth, and to human fulfillment. If not, resources and investments may move Haiti away from turmoil and deterioration, but only temporarily. There is no single solution that will achieve resolute movement toward continued stability and growth. Indeed, just as there are multiple interwoven manifestations of Haiti's poverty and disparity, and multiple interwoven obstacles in its path, there are multiple intertwined approaches toward expanding opportunity required for achieving—and sustaining—that strongly desired, but heretofore elusive, steadfast movement forward. Intertwined approaches to expanding opportunity must alleviate poverty and lessen inequality, strengthen institutions and build partnerships, address rural neglect and its consequent vulnerabilities, and alter attitudes.

### *Alleviating poverty and lessening inequality*

To bridge disparities in poverty and inequality, efforts must focus on improving access to quality education and health care, channeling financial resources toward the poor, freeing up capital for grassroots entrepreneurship, expanding wage-employment opportunity, and improving prospects for equitable and inclusive rule of law.

***An essential condition for a brighter future is the diminution of imbalances among Haitians in access to quality education and health care.***

**Improving education and health care.** An essential condition for a brighter future is the diminution of imbalances among Haitians in access to quality education and health care. Building more schools and health care centers, upgrading existing facilities, and equipping them all are a necessary part of the solution. The same holds true for training teachers, health care workers, and administrators, and making sure they have the resources required to render quality services. These essential needs can be met, at least in part, through the allocation of resources mobilized for Haiti's development, mutual respect among NGOs and the private and public sectors working in education and health, and successful coordina-

tion among them. Fortification of the education and health ministries of a government that takes rendering services seriously is an indispensable part of the solution. Encouraging Haitians living overseas to continue—or expand—their support of education and health initiatives (in coordination with national plans) is another key element.

**Channeling resources toward the poor.** But will the intended beneficiaries of these education and health improvements be able to take advantage of them? In view of Haiti's crushing poverty and slipping remittances, and the need for so many of its children to hustle in the informal economy or work in fields as a means of making a family's ends meet, the answer is not an automatic yes. It is for this alone that a "best practices" conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, similar to Brazil's Bolsa Familia, Mexico's Oportunidades, and New York City's Opportunity NYC be adapted and instituted to Haiti's circumstances. Such a program will not only improve the income of the poorest of the poor through cash transfers conditioned on their children's regular, verifiable, and successful participation at school and health clinics, but will also serve as a catalyst for Haiti's long-neglected investment in building its human capital. Additionally, because CCTs are public-sector programs, they provide national, regional, and local governments the opportunity—and responsibility—to be present among citizens, without a political litmus test, in a positive regard and, as such, to reinforce the benefits of democracy and the democratic process.

A CCT program in Haiti would fuel the urgency to expand and upgrade all components of the education and health infrastructure. Conditioning cash transfers on participation in quality educational and health programs and then not having those programs available would defeat program objectives and exacerbate dissatisfaction through unmet expectations. As a matter of pace and scale, a CCT program can be phased in to match improvements of the education and health (physical, human, and material) infrastructure. In regard to needed improvements, the Haitian diaspora can play a critical role, particularly in providing material and human resources. One example of how this can be done is the Haitian Volunteer in Education Corps (HVEC), developed by the Florida Agency for Voluntary Action in the Caribbean and the Americas (FAVACA), whereby Haitian-American upper-level undergraduate or graduate students, or recent college graduates, volunteer in Haiti's schools under an arrangement roughly similar to Peace Corps Volunteers. If eager volunteers are discouraged by the burden of federal college loans, payment on them should be deferred or renegotiated to facilitate participation in this international public service initiative.<sup>12</sup>

One prerequisite for successful administration of a CCT program is that its participants have a state-issued identification card. Multitudes of Haitians have no such document. Expansion of the ongoing Organization of American States voter identification program into a national identification documentation system will address this need.

**Increasing capital for grassroots entrepreneurship.** Greater access by poor people to the capital required for expanding or creating jobs and increasing productive capacity is essential to alleviating poverty and lessening inequality from the bottom-up. One vehicle for placing resources critical to job creation and increased production at the disposal of Haiti's poor is microcredit. Well-managed microcredit enterprises similar to the vaunted Grameen Bank of Bangladesh have begun serving entrepreneurs in Haiti not traditionally served by the established credit system and badly served by avaricious money lenders whose interest rate reaches as high as 20 percent per month on unpaid balances. One such program is Fonkoze, which in 2007 had 33 branch offices nationwide serving some 159,000 members, the vast majority of whom are among—or at least began as being among—the 78 percent of Haitians surviving on \$2 a day. That year, its loan portfolio was valued at 405 million gourdes (approx. \$10 million), with an on-time repayment rate of 90–95 percent.

***Augmented support of such grassroots programs, and extended support of microcredit by formal banking institutions will provide a significant boost to bottom-up entrepreneurship and job creation.***

Augmented support of such grassroots programs, which serve clients in locales where there are no banks, and extended support of microcredit by formal banking institutions to both individuals and grassroots civil society groups will provide a significant boost to bottom-up entrepreneurship and job creation. While some have argued that microcredit may not work the wonders claimed by its most enthusiastic supporters, few doubt that it is of great assistance to the entrepreneurial poor.<sup>13</sup> Greater access to credit by CCT program participants who demonstrate sound management of their cash transfer income also will help set loose the talents of heretofore stymied people. Particularly important are loans to small farmers or small-farmer organizations. Producers with expanded access to credit at fair rates *and* to agronomic inputs and services and agricultural infrastructure improvements (including farm-to-market roads) will considerably expand opportunity in rural areas through increased hiring of farm laborers. Concurrently access by small farmers to these resources will free up family labor to attend newly established or improved local schools, thus obviating the need to participate in risky *restavek* arrangements. According to government statistics, an increase of just 10 percent of man-hours on Haiti's small farms is equivalent to the creation of 40,000 jobs nationwide.<sup>14</sup>

Another vehicle is freeing up what Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto calls "dead capital." De Soto calls it dead because it is located (or hidden) within the informal economy and/or tied up by discrimination, prejudice, or red tape, preventing it from being used formally to leverage additional capital for investment and growth. In 2000, he identified in Haiti \$5.2 billion in such capital, shared among 82 percent of the population. Of this amount, \$3.2 billion was located in rural Haiti. In the late 1990s, this potential resource for job creation, production, and economic growth represented four times the total assets of Haiti's 123 largest private formal enterprises, 11 times the total savings and time deposits in Haiti's commercial banks, and 158 times the value of direct foreign investment in Haiti.<sup>15</sup>

Giving life to dead capital to unleash it for investment in entrepreneurial activities throughout Haiti is a large and difficult challenge, and progress will be slow, particularly since it must touch upon the sticky areas of resolving ambiguous ownership, including land titling, streamlining the incredibly obstacle-laden process for the registration of small businesses, and confronting public and private corruption. Nevertheless, in view of the infusion of energy and entrepreneurship these unleashed resources would bring to Haiti's long-neglected and resource-starved rural areas and inner-city neighborhoods, and the fresh resources that would be attracted from among Haitians living overseas if these sticky issues were treated, the trail toward giving dead capital life—tentatively blazed by open-minded private-sector leaders in the late 1990s with the support of the first Préval administration—should be traveled again. The robust and sustained support of all the key actors in Haiti, along with the full support of the international community and its resources, will be required for a successful journey.

**Expanding wage employment.** Expanding opportunities for wage employment can also help lessen poverty and inequality. One such high-profile initiative for expanding wage-driven jobs comes through the HOPE II Act, a ten-year trade bill for Haiti passed by the U.S. Congress in 2006 that provides duty-free access to the U.S. market of Haitian apparel products, particularly knit articles, made from fabric of third-country origin. This provision makes HOPE II unique, as usually the United States grants duty-free access only when garments are assembled from fabric of U.S. origin. HOPE II has created 11,000 jobs since its passage and, according to some supporters, can add up to 100,000 more.

As with CCTs, however, parallel investments in infrastructure, particularly as they pertain to such needs as adequate roads, electricity, and ports, are required to serve the core investment of assembly plants. The speed at which these needs can be met is not clear. Some, such

as Oxford economist Paul Collier, believe that can happen quickly. Others, including officials of multilateral donor agencies, acknowledge the job creating prospects of HOPE II but believe there is no quick fix to meeting these needs, particularly when it comes to changing customary practices, attaining required new legislation, and mobilizing the resources to put all the pieces in place. Regardless of whether wage work in assembly plants is expanded sooner or later, it can be a part of the equation of enlarging opportunity in Haiti, but only if caution is taken to avoid repeating the mistakes of Haiti's experience as the "Taiwan of the Caribbean" several decades ago.

One key factor to mitigating mistakes is to ensure that those who find employment in factories can move beyond survival mode. This can be achieved through both an increase in wages and investment in workers and their families by both the state and private sector.<sup>16</sup> Investment by the state can be achieved through the aforementioned expansion of education and health opportunities and the implementation of a CCT program. Private-sector investment can be achieved by a sector-wide commitment to, and codification of, a variety of socially responsible initiatives that assist employees and their families. Such programs include the provision of subsidized midshift meals and transportation, and assistance with health care and child care access or costs. Public-private partnerships that provide workers and their families with low-cost housing will also help improve their well-being. As a rule, factory jobs alone do not go very far toward enabling Haitian workers to meet their triumvirate of legitimate aspirations. Assisting wage workers to move beyond survival mode is essential to Haiti's future well-being. HOPE II may create jobs in Haiti, but it will not alter the poverty and inequality that cast Haiti back and forth between turmoil/deterioration and stability/progress unless it is complemented by public and private initiatives that improve worker well-being.

**Improving rule of law.** Rule-of-law dysfunctions are well documented as is the fact that internationally supported reform initiatives have tended to place a much heavier emphasis—and allocation of resources—on police reform to the detriment of much needed reform of and investment in courts and prisons. Less well documented but equally important to ensuring an even playing field for improved rule of law is the need to reform Haiti's antiquated legal codes. Correcting the imbalance in the attention paid to all three legs of the rule-of-law stool—police, courts, and prisons—and allocating (or reallocating) resources accordingly is achievable, as is reforming archaic codes.<sup>17</sup>

Ultimate success, however, will depend not as much on where donors allocate resources, but on whether or not there is widespread and durable support for reforms from within Haiti. Because powerful elements benefit from dysfunction, such support has been dubious. Individuals and institutions who are the beneficiaries of dysfunction are not among those who will advocate change. On the other hand, those exploited by the failure of the judicial system to perform equitably have little power to change the system unless they have forceful and determined allies who want to—and can—lead the charge. It is imperative that those who benefit from rule-of-law disparity and dysfunction sublimate their instinctive prerogatives to serve and protect their own self and group interests to those that serve and protect the greater good. It is equally important that international actors push for and insist upon this needed change and steadfastly support allies in Haiti. Otherwise, Haiti will continue to wallow in turmoil and human suffering, regardless of any goodwill and resources mobilized on its behalf.

### ***Strengthening institutions and building partnerships***

At the April 2009 donors' conference, the issues of strengthening weak state institutions and providing them with resources required to more robustly render services to citizens were key elements both in presentations and in the reference document outlining a new cooperation paradigm for growth and opportunity endorsed by participants. An operational aspect of this requirement is greater coordination between donors and the Haitian government. A successful state in Haiti would play a dual role as it administers state functions, responsible not only for delivering services and contributing to the improvement of citizens' lives, but also for affirming the fruits and advantages of democracy.

Further erosion of talent because of the brain drain beyond and within Haiti's borders will be mitigated through the provision of more resources to state institutions to even the salary and benefits playing field, as well as through the potential attraction more robustly endowed state institutions may hold for Haitians overseas looking for opportunities to return to and work in Haiti. The deficit of human resources in the public sector will not be overcome quickly or by any one initiative, particularly as the government expands its programmatic presence nationwide. For that reason, the need for greater coordination between nongovernmental and private organizations operating in Haiti and the Haitian government, also a key concern of the donors' conference, is urgently required.

That coordination should ensure that NGO and private-sector resources are applied in conjunction with the Haitian government's endorsed poverty reduction, disaster mitigation, and economic growth plan. In view of current public-sector institutional shortcomings and the lingering legacy of past governments' inabilities or disinterest in applying resources toward the greater good of Haiti, a body created along the lines of the Independent Service Authority (ISA) proposed by Paul Collier is recommended. An ISA will ensure the coordination, allocation, oversight, regulation, and evaluation of donor resource use as government capacity is concurrently strengthened. In turn, as government capacity to undertake programs is strengthened, ISA functions can be transferred to appropriate state entities.

Donors will be challenged to allocate resources to this envisaged entity that will be managed, (e.g., the Préval-inspired Presidential Commissions that have emerged as vehicles for addressing critical public issues) by capable Haitians from diverse economic, social, political, and institutional backgrounds who agree to work together toward a common and transparent goal. The proposed independent body would have the authority to reinvest in the work of organizations effectively achieving national development goals and to disinvest in those unable to meet these goals. This would be an important step toward assuring that the most competent organizations have resources required to meet the government's goals and the nation's needs.

Within a month of the April donors' conference, former U.S. president Bill Clinton was named UN special envoy to Haiti for two years by UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon. Among Clinton's stated goals are to ensure that donors actually allocate to Haiti the resources pledged at the conference; to ensure that resources are used consistent with the government plan; to assist with the coordination among all parties, including NGOs working toward Haiti's well-being; and to engage the Haitian diaspora more effectively in their homeland's development. Robust support of the UN special envoy's work toward accomplishing these goals will be a plus for achieving required outcomes in strengthening institutions and building partnerships.

### ***Addressing rural neglect and consequent vulnerability***

Addressing the neglect of rural Haiti and its people will set the stage for the revitalization of agriculture, the renaissance of rural communities and their economies, and the rehabili-

***Coordination should ensure that NGO and private-sector resources are applied in conjunction with the Haitian government's endorsed poverty reduction, disaster mitigation, and economic growth plan.***

tation of Haiti's battered environment. As suggested earlier, decentralized investment that improves access to education, health, credit, and government services, and that improves the productive infrastructure—roads, irrigation systems, crop storage facilities, seeds, tools, fertilizers, technical assistance—will all contribute to this end. These investments will pay off through job creation, increased harvests, better yields, and improved natural resource management. A revitalized rural Haiti, in turn, will improve the country's capacity to feed itself, thereby lessening its vulnerability to externally driven cost-of-living shocks, and its overall security. Enhanced rule of law and equitable access to justice by all will provide incentives for improved land management and greater production. If only for all of these reasons, resources mobilized internationally must—as a priority—be invested in addressing Haiti's rural challenges.

But there is an even more compelling reason for investing in rural Haiti, particularly at the level of rehabilitating its degraded environment as a key ingredient in moving the country beyond vulnerability to external shocks toward irreversible progress. Revitalizing the landscape is essential for protecting all investments in poverty alleviation and economic growth. Factories and small businesses located on Haiti's coastlines and alluvial plains, poor people crowded into those locations and elsewhere, and investments in infrastructure and agriculture are all equally vulnerable to destruction by raging torrents of rain, mud, and rocks tumbling down denuded hillsides. Without a focus on environmental rehabilitation, resources allocated to Haiti from international sources run the risk of being literally washed out to sea.<sup>18</sup>

Robust support of the postdisaster needs assessment analysis developed by the Haitian government in collaboration with donors and integrated into the aforementioned new paradigm is essential to address vulnerabilities and risks. One of the study's central recommendations is to focus investments on the fifteen watersheds most affected by the storms of 2008, at a cost of approximately \$8.4 million per watershed. Top-down watershed rehabilitation is an integral part of—and will perfectly complement—the bottom-up, disparity-lessening poverty alleviation and economic growth initiatives outlined herein.

An essential component of environmental rehabilitation is identifying and applying viable alternatives to wood and charcoal as Haiti's principal energy sources. This need is obvious; how to go about meeting it is not. Ideas abound, including introducing or expanding alternative energy sources and technologies such as bottled gas and solar and wind power; using waste materials to make charcoal briquettes; establishing hillside reserves for quick growing, harvestable trees; and importing charcoal. Most likely, a combination of initiatives will be required. Whatever solutions are found viable, they should incorporate the involvement of the legions of poor people who make a meager living through their participation in today's wood/charcoal industry. In other words, it is important to "do no harm" to the poor who have little choice but to eke out a livelihood in the wood/charcoal sector.

The desired endgame is that Haiti's natural environment be rehabilitated. That compelling endgame will not come about short of an urgent, focused, and sustained unified national and international effort.

### ***Altering attitudes***

When individuals or groups among the privileged and powerful band together against real or perceived threats from below, or discount the legitimate aspirations of the poor, not only do they fail to sublimate self or group interests to those of the greater good, but they also demonstrate an apparent fear that improvement at the bottom will erode resources and status at the top. In Haiti, this seems particularly true among those with the power to guard access to and control over the resources that have propelled them to a higher status than

their neighbors. As a result, any image of a rising tide lifting all boats is rejected in favor of a conviction that improvement among the poor comes at the expense of the rich.

A prerequisite for effective resource allocation and improving Haiti's future is overcoming attitudinal obstacles among Haitians toward supporting improvements among poor people, as measured by greater inclusion, equity, and opportunities to fulfill personal aspirations. Otherwise, "the mules [will continue to] work and the horses [will continue to] reap the benefits" and Haiti will continue along its path of turmoil and unacceptable human suffering, regardless of international concern, commitment, and resource mobilization. It is essential that international actors recognize this change as imperative for Haiti's long term stability and progress, and use their influence as needed to attain it.

### ***Expanding opportunities through a national civic service corps***

Few initiatives have the potential to create mammoth and diverse opportunities and to concurrently address Haiti's vulnerabilities, both to external shocks or to the frustration and demoralization that make so many of its citizens fodder for the "spoiler class" of political demagogues, narcotics traffickers, and gang leaders. The potential is offered through an article of the Haitian Constitution that has garnered little attention and even less action. Article 52-3 of Haiti's 1987 constitution states: "Compulsory civic service for both sexes is established. The terms thereof shall be set by law." Both Prime Minister Michèle Pierre-Louis and her immediate predecessor, Jacques Edouard Alexis, have expressed interest in enacting this article of the constitution through the creation of a law to establish a national civic service corps. Alexis saw this as a much-needed "bold endeavor," and Pierre-Louis called for the creation of such an entity at her confirmation hearings in August 2008.

The corps is envisaged as a Haitian variant of the U.S. Depression-era Works Progress Administration (WPA), which gave birth to such job-creating entities as the Civilian Conservation Corps. As envisaged, much like WPA programs of the past, it will create a variety of "shovel ready" jobs to rehabilitate the country's severely damaged natural environment; to rehabilitate, improve, and build the infrastructure that supports productive investment in both rural and urban areas; and to improve Haiti's tourism infrastructure. Diverse internationally funded programs, principally under the auspices of NGOs and private entities, are engaged in a variety of initiatives aimed at creating labor-intensive jobs. Greater coordination with the Haitian government could gather these initiatives into a more unified effort and make sure they address priority needs for poverty alleviation, environmental rehabilitation, and economic growth. The envisaged civic service corps would also serve a long-term disaster preparedness and response function.

The corps would be composed of urban and rural males and females between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five, providing them opportunities for gainful employment while also allowing them to learn job skills and work attitudes they can apply beyond their participation in the program. Wages, paid in cash, will further stimulate localized economic activity. If fully funded, the program would also provide a set-aside stipend that participants could use for reintegration or investment following the completion of their service. As an incentive to increase Haiti's agricultural productivity, land, credit, and technical assistance could be made available to program participants seeking to remain in the rural locality where their service was undertaken.

This public sector initiative will draw on the participation of a variety of ministries, ranging from those focused on the environment, youth and civic action, and agriculture; to tourism, public works, and planning. In rural areas, work camps would house corps members, providing shelter and meals, and serve as a venue for educational activities, including literacy, math, and civics classes. International volunteers could work alongside Haitians in

***The corps will create a variety of "shovel ready" jobs to rehabilitate the country's severely damaged natural environment; to rehabilitate, improve, and build the infrastructure that supports productive investment in both rural and urban areas; and to improve Haiti's tourism infrastructure.***

rebuilding the country. The program would provide young Haitians an opportunity to gain a stake in the future of their country, along with a sense of accomplishment and identification with a larger whole. Successful entry-level participants in the program could be promoted to a position of greater responsibility for a second tour.

The challenge of addressing the aspirations of Haiti's young population is essential to the country's ability to move away—and stay away—from turmoil and deterioration. In 2005, 42.6 percent of all Haitians were younger than fifteen years of age; 71.1 percent were twenty-nine or younger. These youngsters have come of age with little or no direct experience with either the Duvalier dictatorship or the exhilaration and hope experienced by most when it was overthrown. Rather, they have grown up in a society characterized by deepening poverty, fear and loathing, episodic turmoil and violence, and distrust of government, which largely has failed to improve their lives. Increasingly alienated from a society that has "robbed us of our right to dream," as one Haitian youngster told this author, Haiti's youth is a simmering storm of unrest and instability. Providing opportunities for youngsters is another of Haiti's great challenges. A robust and sustained civic service corps will contribute enormously to addressing this need.

The initiative will move along a dual track: one to create the requisite law and seek its passage in parliament, the other to draw upon technical assistance to create the program's framework and operational procedures and to prepare key personnel. The envisaged corps will be phased in at a pace and scale that matches available resources. Big problems call for bold initiatives. In view of the enormous prospects for this initiative to address multiple obstacles and challenges and the government's apparent interest in prioritizing it, it is essential that resources mobilized for Haiti provide the required support for it.

## Conclusion

Haiti faces considerable obstacles to attaining irreversible stability and growth. Extreme disparities and the exclusion of most Haitians to opportunities required to meet basic needs and fulfill legitimate aspirations have been at the root of the country's history of human suffering and conflict. Today, they fuel turmoil and feed deterioration. More than anything, Haiti must attend to its unacceptable suffering and cycle of conflict so it can move away—and stay away—from a disastrous abyss. Greater effort among all Haitians to sublimate their short-term self or group interests toward those of the greater national good is an essential step in that regard.

The international community can help Haiti take more steps, but not simply by mobilizing and allocating resources. To assist Haiti achieve and sustain progress, international actors must support the more effective use of resources to help the country and all of its people achieve greater opportunities for equitable and inclusive development. It will be helpful if international actors keep in mind the proverb of the mules and the horses. In the end, when the mule does the work, he must get his fair share of the benefits. This, after all, is the essence not just of stability and development, but also of democracy.



## Notes

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16. An increase of Haiti's daily minimum wage from 70 gourdes (approx. \$1.80) to 500 gourdes (approx. \$5) is the focus of legislative action, intense political jockeying, and street demonstrations as this report is being written.
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