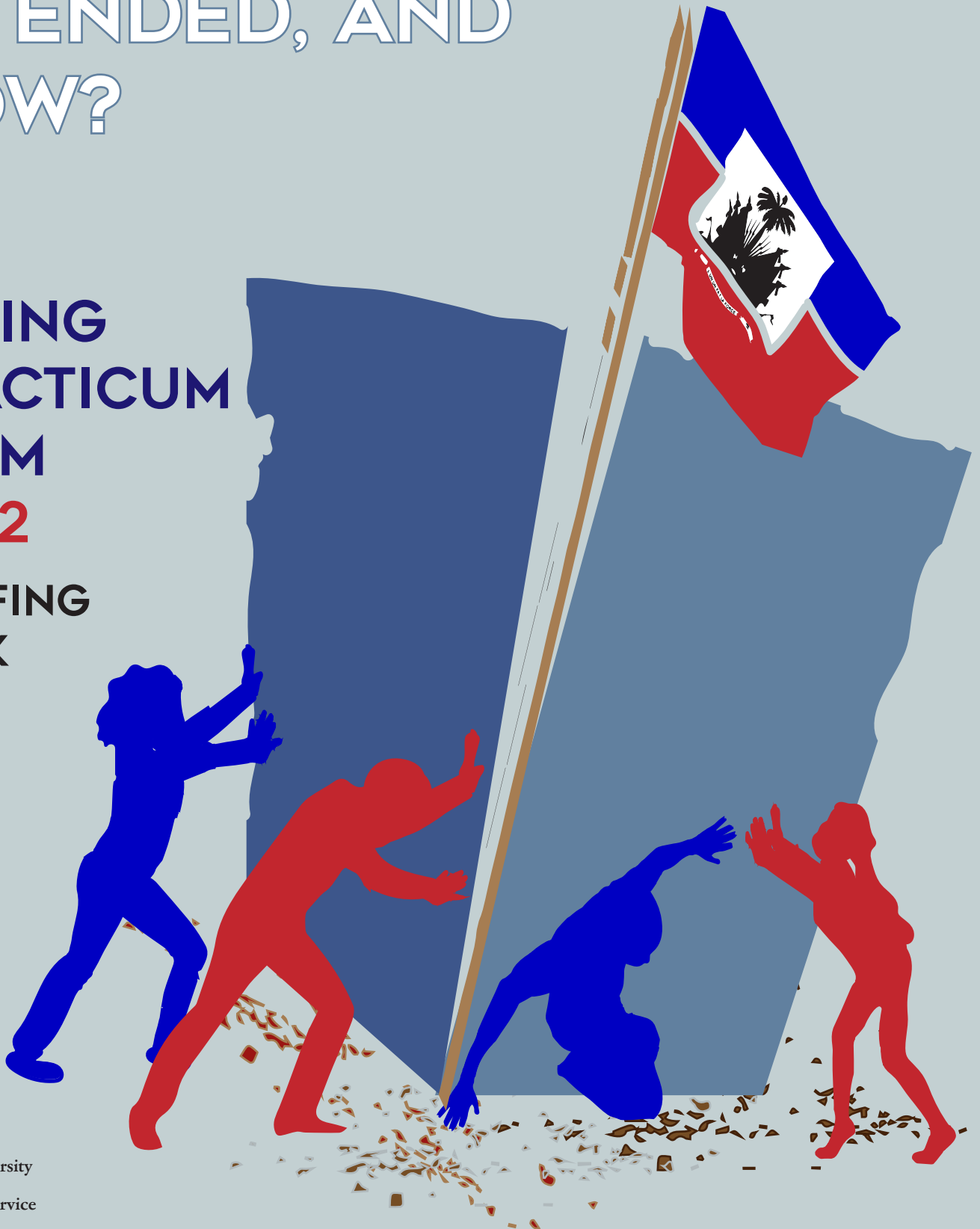


HAITI: CAN THE CYCLE OF CRISIS BE ENDED, AND HOW?

AU
SPRING
PRACTICUM
TEAM
2022

BRIEFING
BOOK



American University
School of
International Service

American University
School of International Service
U.S.-Latin America Prospects for Cooperation
SIS-793-006

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Acronyms

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| CARICOM | Caribbean Community |
| CICIG | International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala |
| ED'H | <i>Electricité D'Haiti</i> |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| HNP | Haitian National Police |
| HTA | Hometown Association |
| MACCIH | Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras |
| MARNDR | Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development |
| MFI | Microfinance Institution |
| MLO | Multilateral Organization |
| MPP | Haitian Papaye Peasant Movement |
| NGO | Nongovernmental Organization |
| OAS | Organization of American States |
| PCAC | <i>Programa Campesina a Campesina</i> |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene |
| WUC | Water User Committee |

Key Judgments

Political Internal

Haiti has long been afflicted by political instability due to coups, regime changes, military juntas, international meddling, and internal conflicts. Despite elections in 2011 and 2017 that the international community deemed sufficiently fair and free, today's country has no fully legitimate government leadership.

- Haiti is facing a leadership crisis. President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated on July 7, 2021, and his administration's mandate expired in February 2022 with no substantial contingency plan and with no scheduled parliamentary elections to initiate a new administration. Ariel Henry, the current acting president and prime minister of Haiti, has opted to remain indefinitely until elections. Prime Minister Henry's term should have ended in February with the Moïse administration's mandate.
- Civil society leaders formed the "Commission for the Search for a Haitian Solution to the Crisis" and forged a political plan under the "Montana Accord" that would create a two-year transitional government with provisional officials elected by a broad council of civil society and political groups. However, the U.S.-supported Prime Minister Henry and the international community have not supported the initiative.
- Corruption is systemic and undermines political, economic, and social initiatives at every level of society. Transparency International's "Corruption Perception Index" scored Haiti at 25.44, putting it in 157th place out of 180 countries.

International Involvement in Haiti

Repeated foreign interventions have encroached upon Haiti's sovereignty and hindered its institutional development. This foreign meddling in Haitian affairs has persisted from the country's independence to today.

- Just two decades after its independence in 1804, Haiti was forced, at threat of invasion, to pay reparations to the colonial French as compensation for the "property" loss of French slaveholders and landowners. This centuries-long debt, which Haiti paid in full in 1947, amounted to over \$20 billion. Paying this debt stunted Haiti's institutional and economic development for years, redirecting revenues that Haiti could have benefitted from if it had sovereign control of its economic affairs.
- The U.S. military occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934, planning to stabilize the country and force it to pay its debts. During that time, the United States established a puppet regime and controlled its finances until 1947. The U.S. occupation and subsequent departure left Haiti on an unstable path toward the future.
- From 1957 to 1986, the U.S. provided an estimated \$900 million in financial support to Haiti's brutal dictator Francois Duvalier and his son and successor Jean-Claude Duvalier to prevent the spread of communism.
- The U.S. military again had a strong presence in Haiti from 1994 to 1997, intending to reestablish democracy and reinstate democratically elected President Aristide after a military coup overthrew him in 1991. After Aristide's reelection in 2000, the country fell into chaos. In February 2004, the U.S. pressured Aristide to resign in the wake of anti-

government protests, and he went into exile in South Africa. A U.S.-backed transitional government followed the Aristide administration.

- The United Nations Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH) provided security for Haiti from 2004 to 2019 with a controversial legacy and no lasting stability.
- Several decisions made by the Biden administration have affected Haiti. President Biden has backed the interim government and Prime Minister Ariel Henry, despite credible allegations that he may be connected to the Moïse assassination. He has also continued Title 42, a Trump-era migration policy, which has allowed him to deport 20,000 Haitians since his coming into office, resulting in the resignation of several high-level State Department officials in protest.
- The World Bank, the United Nations, the European Union, the U.S., and other nations have all issued sanctions against both the Haitian government and Haitian officials over the previous decade. Foreign parties take these actions to combat corruption and narcotics trafficking. These sanctions have proven ineffective at redirecting international funds from their intended recipients, going so far as to cement the positions of problematic regimes.

Institutional Weaknesses

The Haitian government is premised on a centralized system, making local initiatives difficult. However, public sector institutions are weak, making the country unable to develop and implement development goals and policies.

- Government services, where they exist, are political tools used by elites seeking political advantage. Provision of public utilities, such as garbage collection, is often contingent on an upcoming election to demonstrate the official in question's power. Despite this, taxation, where it exists, is often high and regressive. For instance, over a quarter of the country's sales tax revenue comes from telecom services.
- Almost 70 percent of Haitians do not have direct access to potable water, and many of those served by public systems rarely have year-round service. Less than half of Haitians in rural areas have access to water, and only 24 percent of Haitians have access to basic sanitation.
- The banking system is foundational at best. It is very centralized, with 86 percent of all assets belonging to three out of eight banks in the country. Ten percent of commercial bank borrowers consume 80 percent of the total credit. Additionally, access to formal banking is limited outside of Port-Au-Prince, where 70 percent of bank branches are located.
- While about 60 percent of Haitians live in rural areas, only five banks have operational capacity outside the capital. This leaves many rural Haitians without access to critical financial services, with only 16.7 percent of the rural population possessing a bank account. *Le Bureau de Crédit Agricole*, one of the country's oldest established financial institutions, only has one-third of its portfolio devoted to the agricultural sector. Haitians have access to informal financial networks, such as the *Sòl*, that provide a reliable and trusted savings and loan mechanism. However, this informal system allows for little financial expansion because it usually lacks new capital.
- As previous cases have demonstrated, international aid can compromise state-building and capacity by imposing top-down solutions that are not holistic and only temporarily

solve problems. Most importantly, these solutions do not listen to the direct needs of the Haitian people. This can further undermine institutions and contribute to the aforementioned systemic failures.

Broken Economy

Foreign interventions, institutional weakness, chronic political instability, and devastating natural disasters have left Haiti's economy unable to satisfy basic needs.

- Haiti ranks at the bottom of several key economic indicators. Its GDP per capita (\$2,925) is the lowest in the hemisphere. Worldwide, it ranked 170 out of 189 countries according to the UN's Human Development Index. According to USAID, roughly 2.5 million Haitians live below the poverty line.
- Haiti is dependent on remittances, mostly from the Haitian diaspora in the United States and Canada. In 2020 remittances reached \$3.9 billion, a record high. They accounted for one-third of Haiti's GDP – the highest in the region by a significant margin.
- Small and medium enterprises are vital to Haiti's economy. They account for more than 80 percent of total employment, but their growth is constrained because entrepreneurs and managers lack the connections and capital to improve their performance and profits.
- Northeast Haiti, or Nord-Est, is representative of Haiti as a whole. Statistically, there are no divergences between the region and national averages. Population density is split evenly between extremely dense urban areas and sparsely populated rural areas. In the labor sector, 70 percent of all working-age men have been employed for at least 12 months, whereas only 40 percent of working-age women have been employed for at least 12 months. Women are predominantly employed in the service and tourism sectors, between manual labor in industrial settings and factory and agricultural work. Formal labor is rare, with approximately half of all non-agricultural wage labor done informally. The informal sector of Haiti's economy contains most of those mentioned above, small and medium enterprises.

Unstable Agricultural Systems

Nearly half of Haiti's workforce is employed in the agricultural sector, contributing 23 percent of the nation's total GDP. Agriculture is vulnerable to crop failures and natural disasters, and the agricultural sector lacks crucial investment, technology, and infrastructure to get food to market. With high food insecurity and no market access, some rural households by default engage in subsistence farming.

The local economy of the Northeast is the fastest growing in the country, but local agriculture meets only about 45 percent of the region's food requirements. With little cash and only 15 grocery stores in the 1,623 square kilometer department, rural populations are dependent on subsistence farming to feed their families.

- Scarce financial service points throughout the country, a lack of financial literacy, and unaffordability are all roadblocks to acquiring insurance and loans. Micro-finance institutions are missing in-house capacity to offer agriculture-oriented services, thus disadvantaging small farmers and entrepreneurs.

- The 52 percent of farmers who own more than 0.65 hectares are Haiti's agricultural growth engines. These farms are market-oriented, whereas smaller farms are geared toward subsistence agriculture.
- The proper functioning of the local agricultural products marketing chain today is an essential element of the growth of the agricultural sector. The underfunding of the marketing and processing of local products is one of the primary obstacles to agricultural sector growth.
- The lack of policies in the agricultural sector, such as improving seeds or interventionist policies regarding fertilizer and farm machinery distribution, create market distortions. However, some policies limit the use of fertilizers, seeds, and agricultural equipment necessary to improve agricultural yields.
- Local producers are undercut by imported food, which reduces prices to a non-profitable level and causes price fluctuations and other logistical challenges. Communities lack proper storage of crops; the flow of food to markets rises and falls depending on the harvesting cycle. Supplies are also prone to risks such as natural disasters.

Food insecurity is a nationwide threat. Half the population, some 4.4 million, requires immediate food assistance, while about 1.2 million suffer from severe hunger.

- Half of all households lack sufficient iron sources, while one in four experience protein shortages. As a result, 22 percent of children in the country are chronically malnourished, with 10 percent of children underweight and 66 percent of children under the age of five suffering from anemia.
- Food shortages lead to systemic challenges in health, learning, work, and the overall livelihoods of Haitians.
- Haiti is highly dependent on imported food. Some 80 percent of all rice – the staple food in Haiti – is imported, mostly from the United States. Only 45 to 50 percent of the food consumed in the country comes from domestic production. In some sectors, imports dominate; for example, major food products such as sugar, wheat, dairy products, oil, eggs, and industrial chicken are primarily imported. However, domestic production is competitive in other sectors; beef, goat meat, peas, maize, sorghum/pitimi, fish, fruits, and vegetables are primarily produced in-country.
- Haiti exports very few agricultural products. Essential oils, mangoes, coffee, cocoa, crustaceans, and rum are primary exports, earning approximately \$50 million.
- Top-down international food aid programs, such as those implemented by the Red Cross and USAID, flood markets with unsustainable goods and produce and weaken opportunities for local farmers to achieve food sovereignty for their communities.

Vulnerable to Climate Change and Natural Disasters

Due to its location in the “hurricane belt,” Haiti is the most vulnerable country in Latin America and the Caribbean to climate change. Haiti has experienced six devastating storms in the past 30 years. Also located on a geologic fault line, Haiti is vulnerable to earthquakes. In 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake killed at least 200,000 people and caused over \$8 billion in damage. In August 2021, another strong earthquake destroyed vital infrastructure and killed over 2,200 Haitians. Recovering from such repeated blows would be challenging even for countries with institutional stability and viable economies.

- An internationally recognized disaster occurs in Haiti every two to five years. Due to inadequate building standards and the complete absence of resilient infrastructure and sustainable urban planning, Haiti's urban areas have become some of the country's most vulnerable areas. Similarly, the densely populated areas along the coastline are located at low lying levels, increasing the risk of natural hazards from the sea, landslides, and flash floods caused by runoff from the mountains.
- Crumbling infrastructure and unmitigated deforestation have increased Haiti's vulnerability to disasters such as hurricanes and flooding. The impacts of climate change will likely worsen as temperatures increase, strengthening tropical storms and contributing to unpredictable rainfall patterns. In general, a scarcity of consistent and reliable evidence-based data about rainfall patterns and other climate-related issues hinders the ability of farmers and businesses to adapt to changing weather patterns.
- Haiti's health system is fragile and is further overwhelmed in emergencies. Additionally, crucial health infrastructure does not escape from natural disasters unscathed. The August 2021 earthquake damaged or destroyed around 82 health facilities, further complicating Haitian access to life-saving assistance.

Health

Haiti's inequality, poverty, and weak institutions have resulted in chronic health crises. Inadequate hygiene and clean water sources have exacerbated disease and infection rates in Haiti and emphasized the need for quality health care access.

- In October 2010, an outbreak of cholera began, introduced to the country by UN personnel. It led to over 820,000 cases and nearly 10,000 deaths. As of February 2022, the World Health Organization declared Haiti cholera-free after three years without any confirmed cases.
- While there have been some positive gains in Haiti's health sector over the years, there are still pressing challenges. Some positive gains are shown in a 2017 demographic health survey that showed a decrease in infant mortality by 23 percent and HIV decreasing in adults slightly from 2.2 percent in 2012 to 2 percent. However, immunization coverage has deteriorated, with the proportion of children who have received eight of the essential vaccines decreasing from 45.2 percent in 2012 to 41.4 percent in 2017.
- COVID-19 has further highlighted the lack of health care. Only 0.89 percent of the population has been vaccinated against the virus, compared to 54.5 percent in the Dominican Republic. The pandemic has exacerbated medical shortages and further disrupted the country's health care system.
- Major challenges in the health sector come from weak governance and coordination, geographic and financial barriers to accessing health services, significant shortages in essential medicines, and difficulty retaining qualified health professionals. COVID-19 has further strained Haiti's already struggling Ministry of Health (MOH).

Violence and Crime

Taking advantage of weak institutions and the lack of rule of law, gangs have gained power and territory in Haiti. The North American Congress on Latin America estimates there are more than

90 gangs in the country, and their influence is growing. Gangs seize much-needed resources from the populace and business owners through road blockades, extortion, and theft.

- According to the New York Times, Haiti is currently the “kidnapping capital of the world.” Kidnapping offers a major source of income to gangs, targeting even the most impoverished Haitians. In October 2021, the kidnapping of 17 U.S. and Canadian missionaries brought international attention to Haiti’s problem of gang abductions. These crimes are carried out with near impunity as the Haitian justice system is under-resourced, overloaded by a backlog of cases, and suppressed by threats to judicial officials. Similarly, the Haitian National Police (HNP) has proved unwilling and unable to confront the gangs.
- Gangs are responsible for numerous human rights abuses against Haitian civilians. Notably, in November 2018, more than 70 people were murdered in the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of La Saline. Authorities have accused the leader of the G9 Federation gang of orchestrating the massacre.
- Haiti is a major transit corridor for narcotics trafficking. The nearly unchallenged flow of narcotics through Haiti continues to undermine the legitimacy of Haiti’s institutions and weaken the rule of law. This illicit industry also fosters corruption in law enforcement and finances armed gangs.
- The criminal exploits of gangs have led to delays and complete failures in distributing humanitarian assistance across the country and have contributed to widespread instability.

Haitian leaders have long used gangs as political tools and enforcers to preserve their power and intimidate opponents, offering them money and territorial control.

- The collapse of institutional legitimacy and the deterioration of political power permit gangs to operate with minimal state control. Their operations are independent of one other; thus, expansion triggers a conflict between gangs.
- Although gangs have a strong presence in Haiti’s urban regions, especially in Port-au-Prince, its rural regions are also under threat from the expansion of gangs and increasing insecurity. Anecdotal information indicates gangs control many rural roads, where they rob farmers and others on their way to the market.

Weapons

Though the United States has an official arms embargo on Haiti, illicit firearms continue to flow into the country, serving as a power source for gangs and other irregular players.

- The arms trafficking results from the lack of enforcement of U.S. law, corruption within Haiti, and the country’s porous borders. Haitian law forbids any imported firearms from entering the country, but this is not regularly enforced on air travel to Haiti. Because Haiti cannot monitor or check every bag entering its borders, these firearms often go unchecked.
- Border inspection in Haiti is lacking; where it is present, authorities cannot utilize screening and x-rays to monitor imports. Haiti lacks the funding to purchase such

capacities, and the U.S. is not interested in funding them. Arms also flow through Haiti, often going to other countries in the Caribbean like Jamaica.

Violence in the Home

Poverty, low education rates, and entrenched hypermasculinity put unbearable stress on many communities and contribute to violence in public and private spheres, a traumatic reality for many.

- According to Spotlight Initiative, one in three Haitian women have suffered violence from their intimate partners. In Haiti, women face most abuse and violence from people they know, such as partners, boyfriends, or husbands.
- It is extremely difficult for a woman to leave home when facing violence due to socio-cultural norms and economic opportunities. The violence can range from physical violence to sexual abuse to threats with a weapon. A 2017 estimate reported that 273,200 Haitian women experience intimate partner violence yearly, approximately 9.4 percent of the population of women ages 14 to 49.
- In 2005, rape and sexual assault became punishable by law. Before then, rape and sexual assault were considered moral wrongdoings rather than criminal acts in Haiti. The law itself does not define rape or what constitutes assault, making under-reporting and under-punishing the norm.
- Although Haiti is a matriarchal society, men have the final authority and most of the power relating to situations outside the household.
- About two-thirds of children experience physical violence in childhood by an adult caregiver or a public authority figure. Children experience violence in the home and witness it from their parents and community. This is passed down and normalized, which furthers the cycle of violence. Many children do not learn appropriate and constructive ways to show anger and other emotions.

Relations at the Border and Migratory Trends

Haitian poverty, lack of jobs, and health crises are major push factors in Haitians' decision to attempt to enter the Dominican Republic. Significant migration flows further tensions and anti-Haitian stereotypes along the border.

- Migration has created racial tensions at the border. The Dominican government's recent construction of a border wall exemplifies its desire to keep Haitians out of the Dominican Republic.
- The flow of migrants exacerbates long-standing racism against migrants in the Dominican Republic, where Haitians are traditionally portrayed as "dark, voodoo-practicing" people who are fundamentally different.

Improving Foreign Aid in Haiti

Developing a long-term sustainable approach to foreign aid that will give Haitians ownership of their country to build institutions, improve education, and create better jobs, breaking the cycle of crisis and dependence.

Challenge

Continuous, short-term humanitarian aid and the giving and forgiving of loans has turned Haiti into an “Aid State” reliant on foreign assistance for survival. The Global North perspective that Haitians are incompetent and corrupt resulted in foreign donors largely bypassing the Haitian government and local groups when providing services, loans, grants, and aid. After the 2010 earthquake, the Haitian government received just one percent of the billions of dollars in humanitarian aid that were funneled into the country. Haitian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and companies received even less. The international community channels most aid to Haiti through private contractors and NGOs from their own countries, often with large overhead costs, leading Haiti to be known as a “Republic of NGOs.” These international groups do not consult Haitians nor design programs that can be transferred to them, as a result, their solutions are often unsustainable and do not address local reality. Additionally, donors sometimes “tie aid” upon Haiti buying services, goods, or technical assistance from the donor country, at prices often more expensive than from other sellers. Furthermore, international NGOs contribute to brain-drain within Haiti, as many qualified public servants take higher paying jobs with these organizations, further depleting governmental competency.

Analysis

Foreign aid organizations seldom invest in building local capacity, as it is time-intensive and does not produce visible results. Most aid programs have not been created in consultation with locals or designed to be transitioned to Haitian organizations or government. Consequently, donors fill the institutional gaps within Haiti by providing social services like healthcare and education. The self-interested, results-oriented nature of the aid industry often leads them towards producing tangible short-term outputs rather than striving to make a lasting impact. For example, building a school instead of improving literacy rates. Inadequate coordination between the multitude of NGOs and international institutions working in Haiti results in an inefficient allocation of resources. Additionally, the frequent rotation of foreign aid workers exasperates the lack of on-the-ground knowledge. As a result, \$13 billion in aid pledged to Haiti since 2010 has done little to make a lasting, structural difference in the country and has only exasperated local resentment.

Recommendations

The following are guidelines for international donors to Haiti to be promoted and enforced by the Montana Accord, which includes Haitian civil society organizations, political parties, groups, and individuals that are striving for a “Haitian solution to the crisis.”

- Aid should focus on building Haitian capacity to provide social services, reform institutions and other national capacity-building efforts. Donor organizations can help

Haitians create objectives, plans and strategies. There should be regular checks on improvements jointly led by donors and Haitians. The goal will be to reduce the need for foreign NGOs.

- Aid should be concentrated towards long-term development for economic growth to address the root causes of poverty. There should be a heavy emphasis on improving education, skills training, and job creation.
- Grants should be disbursed consistently over the long term, until the country is eventually able to function with minimal outside help. Aid should not be tied to the purchase of donor goods and services.
- A pooled funding system should be operated jointly by donors and Haitians to coordinate aid between the multitude of foreign organizations.
- Aid should be given to parts of the government that are trustworthy: the Montana Accord can choose responsible public servants to manage programs. For example, the Director General of Haiti's National Emergency Operations Center, Dr. Jerry Chandler, is a trusted doctor who oversees disaster response. Haiti will never fully build capacity if the government is not given any ownership of aid.

Comments and Outcomes

With a dysfunctional government, the non-governmental sector – civil society, political parties, and businesses – serve as Haiti's only hope out of crisis. Donors must give Haitians the opportunity to manage aid and development on their own. Even if they fail, they will learn in the process and be better equipped to thrive in subsequent attempts. The success of this plan will depend upon the international community's willingness to trust in the Montana Accord and Haitian civil society. They must be willing to forego their own self-serving aid structures to develop the capacity of the Haitian people. The Montana Accord must also prove capable to enforce these guidelines and assist in the creation of a new system for aid.

If the inefficiencies within the foreign aid apparatus are left unaddressed, Haiti will remain an aid-dependent state that struggles to build the capacity to function on its own. The government will remain corrupt and unstable. Haiti is unlikely to develop its own institutions and social services will continue to be operated by foreign organizations. Furthermore, brain-drain will perpetuate; educated Haitians will continue to leave the country for better opportunities. If these recommendations are implemented, Haitian civil society will have the ability to come together to form their own plan to build back Haiti, develop capacity among the population and eventually decrease national dependence on foreign funding.

Correcting the Course of Internationally-Led Anti-Corruption Efforts

Moving towards a community-inclusive model to combat corruption by applying lessons learned from the MACCIH and CICIG models.

Challenge

The Haitian national government is the second most corrupt in the Western Hemisphere. The misuse of national funds permeates the entirety of the federal system, impeding the implementation of fundamental government services which are then independently subsidized through foreign aid. Haitian laws require anti-corruption measures to resolve this dynamic, yet the nation's accountability mechanisms lack the capacity to implement the necessary changes. Multilateral organizations (MLOs) that are capable of such an anti-corruption initiative have an ugly history of interventions with disastrous consequences for the population of Haiti. Many of these interventions did not involve national participants at the directorial level and were therefore not self-sustaining once foreign-led corruption projects drew to a close. As a result, many Haitians place little trust in such interventions. Analysis of previous anti-corruption missions led by MLOs in similar settings yield insights into potential future anti-corruption efforts in Haiti.

Analysis

Both the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations (UN) mounted individual anti-corruption projects in Honduras and Guatemala, respectively, to varying degrees of success. These states' external interventions provide a useful study in the fight against corruption in the Caribbean and Central American regions due to comparably high levels of corruption and a history of unbalanced external intervention. The key lesson learned from these missions is the use of the hybrid model, which employs the combined efforts of on-the-ground international officials alongside national-level institutions, mainly the judiciary. The weaknesses of these missions centered around convincing enough federal officials to "buy into" the project: Guatemala's highest court found the intervention unconstitutional, and Honduras purposely selected the OAS due to its limited international reputation for enforcing compliance.

National-level corruption is primarily a result of weak institutions. The judicial mechanisms internal to Haiti that would ideally be used to address integrity violations are extremely vulnerable to retaliation. Those who profit from limited accountability are reluctant to relinquish the advantage and tend to be willing to take drastic measures to defend it. Attempts to outsource accountability to MLOs are ineffective: most efforts come from a mix of institutions based in the Global North. These initiatives rely heavily on a surface-level understanding of national dynamics, and are almost exclusively strategized from the perspective of predominantly white states and international non-governmental organizations (such as the World Bank, IMF, UN, and the EU). The extent to which Haitian nationals are involved in directing these efforts is minimal. This results in efforts that rely primarily on foreign aid and action, which often collapse upon completion if not sooner.

Recommendations

The client may support a modified hybrid anti-corruption effort that includes an intensive rehabilitation of UN and OAS images in Haiti. Haitian prosecutors, community organizers, academics, and judges have the knowledge to combat corruption but lack the institutional power to do so. MLOs have the funding and structure to affect change but lack key context to do so. The next step is to engage in the development of deep professional relationships (a key failing in UN and OAS anti-corruption efforts) between members of Haitian civil society and these two MLOs: thus, a hybrid anti-corruption effort will be able to identify and empower Haitian leaders to fight corruption on their own terms with the backing granted by the international community's support.

- Launch a public relations campaign that addresses key complaints against the UN and OAS.
- Designate a joint UN-OAS Anti-Corruption office in Port au Prince.
- Identify and build relationships with key Haitian academics, reliable government officials, and community leaders. Identify and engage members of the judiciary willing and positioned appropriately to impact change.
- Forge consensus between above-mentioned members and generate a list of guiding best practices for a hybrid anti-corruption campaign.

Comments and Outcomes

This is a systemic approach that will take a long time to implement, and even longer to produce visible results. Key to its success is the genuine investment in the belief of Haitian self-determination combined with a view of MLOs in a purely supporting role. This demands an attitude shift from MLOs operating in the hemisphere. There is likely to be pushback from international donors; the suggested changes will clash with the inertia of a preexisting foreign intervention paradigm. The proposed way forward is to release those inhibiting conceptions of Haitians and their method of using aid.

Haitian buy-in to future anti-corruption efforts is vital to both the sustainability and success of these projects. Haitian elites have opposed previous anti-corruption efforts and will surely continue to. The success of these recommendations also relies on rehabilitation of MLO perception among Haitians. It is likely that the specific interventions recommended by this document will be implemented, but it is more difficult to predict buy-in from other international institutions.

Failure of this proposal would be an implementation of the recommendations to a limited degree, followed by a rejection of the core concepts that guide its creation: a successful anti-corruption effort will significantly engage Haitians in its design and execution. Success would result from full implementation of key points as well as organization-wide reflection on the power dynamics between the Global North and the Global South that result in the current-day relationship between MLOs and predominantly black states. It is vital to the success of the mission to select foreign representatives who are aware of historical and current racial dynamics, the balance of international power, and have a deep understanding of Haitian government operations.

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Stemming the Flow of Weapons into Haiti

Reducing gang violence by eliminating the supply of arms.

Challenge

The flow of illicit arms from the United States and other countries enables gangs to exploit the lack of security and challenge the police and community members all around the country. The gangs likely purchase the weapons with funds derived from kidnapping ransoms and illicit drug profits. Research indicates that an estimated 270,000 weapons enter Haiti each year, mostly from the U.S. and Jamaica. In one year of data collected, 99 percent of criminal guns recovered in Haiti were U.S.-sourced. Guns are easily available in the U.S. and straw purchases permit these transfers to the Caribbean.

Even further, the state of Florida is a major source of arms due to its weak gun purchasing laws and proximity to the Caribbean. Arms are usually purchased by gun owners in the U.S. and then smuggled into Port-au-Prince by air and by ship. Gangs are often better equipped than the police, and corrupt officers do not stop the flow.

Analysis

Arms flow into Haiti is a result of lax U.S. gun laws and weak enforcement of existing laws, corruption within Haiti (i.e., the Haitian National Police or port officials), and porous borders with the Dominican Republic where illicit flows are prevalent.

- Members of the Haitian National Police (also considered corrupt ‘insiders’) have been known to channel arms to the gangs in urban areas. In addition, officials at the border often do not have the resources to check every bag entering, but some officials knowingly have allowed weapons to enter due to bribery or threats.
- The lack of police along the border allows arms and drug transfers between Haiti and the Dominican Republic to exist. Members of Dominican Republic gangs also participate in cross-border trafficking of weapons, drugs, vehicles, and other products, exacerbating the situation in Haiti. Because the Dominican Republic equally lacks laws and regulations that would control illicit flows, porous borders fuel this issue.

Recommendations

The Haitian and Caribbean diasporas in the U.S. should pressure the U.S. government through various methods – writing to Congress, organizing civil society movements, raising concerns to relevant organizations – to carry out existing laws that are not being regularly enforced.

- Regarding enforcement on the U.S. side: despite an arms embargo on the transfer of arms to Haiti, exceptions have been made in the past that have permitted sales of pistols, rifles, and tear gas to the Haitian police. In the past, guns held by the Haitian police have often ended in the hands of gangs and other individuals within communities. By simply enforcing the arms embargo, with no exceptions, the U.S. can reduce the supply of arms gangs receive and thereby limit gun violence.

- Regarding enforcement on the Haitian side: firearms are prohibited to enter Haiti without a special permit. U.S. citizens have been caught and arrested for entering the country with arms and smuggling them to gangs. The United States can contribute to Haitian enforcement by educating and enforcing a zero-arm policy on all flights and boats to Haiti from the U.S.
- In addition to law enforcement, information is power – Haitian and Caribbean diaspora in the U.S. should be educated on the number of illicit weapons entering their countries and the violence they have caused. Haitian organizations in the U.S. are active and strong, including a Haitian caucus in U.S. Congress. These bodies will be able to leverage their influence and share this information to other organizations around the country.

Comments and Outcomes

While discussion on guns in the United States is usually a delicate topic, this discussion is not – the goal is to encourage enforcement on laws that currently exist. However, gaining momentum on Haiti may be difficult at this time.

- The international community is focused on efforts toward the Russia-Ukraine war, so attracting attention and resources toward Haiti may be difficult.
- U.S. administration and U.S. Congress lack political will to get involved in Haiti – donor fatigue from the U.S. may cause slow action on this issue.
- A timeline is tricky because a campaign on U.S. involvement in arms trafficking will take time to gain ground. However, if the U.S. were able to strengthen their side of the enforcement, Haiti would significantly benefit, given that none of the Caribbean countries manufacture firearms. Fewer weapons can weaken the gangs. More importantly, with less arms readily available, gangs will have fewer options to purchase these arms. Limited gun supply can limit the number of members in gangs.
- If gun laws remain unenforced, then guns will likely continue to flow into neighboring countries, exacerbating the security situation for the entire Caribbean. This would fuel even more migration into the U.S. from these countries, as people flee gun violence in search of safety and security.

The other factors contributing to arms flow into Haiti are less likely to change. Major obstacles to combatting corruption and lack of border security include gaps in legislation and organizational capacity. Haiti will need to pass significant anti-corruption legislation and create trainings for security forces that will educate them on public integrity standards and the impact of corruption. Additionally, Haiti will need to promote safer, more secure borders that will protect the country from neighboring flows. Both of these initiatives hinge upon a functioning government, passing legislation, and restored trust in security forces – all which do not exist at the moment. For this reason, the recommendations above promotes an external solution rather than an internal solution to the arms flow crisis.

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Preventing Gang Expansion through Youth Outreach Clubs

Establishing guidelines for Haitian communities to revitalize youth outreach clubs that will help prevent youth from gang membership.

Challenge

Capitalizing on the existing power vacuum and economic stagnation, organized gangs in Haiti have mobilized marginalized young Haitians into their ranks. Haitian youth are largely led to join gangs due to both a lack of meaningful opportunities and as a response to social exclusion. Gang membership is a means of obtaining the resources that young Haitians need and feel they cannot acquire in their communities: opportunity, respect, and material resources. With 54 percent of its population under the age of 25, youth are one of the best resources Haiti has for development and progress, so long as they are given the support they need to resist gang membership and become positive agents of change in their communities.

Analysis

As the crisis in Haiti continues, instability may spread as a result of increasingly dire conditions. Growing insecurity can lead to the expansion and formation of gangs in parts of the country where they are not currently entrenched, such as the Northeast region. In the absence of preventive measures, violence and crime generated by gangs will further damage the country. Many Haitian youth face underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood of involvement in gangs such as poverty, low educational attainment, lack of prosocial relationships, and youth inactivity. Where risk factors cannot be mitigated, a focus on reinforcing protective factors – aspects that buffer individuals against risk factors – can build youth resiliency to resist violence. Protective factors include highly developed social skills, involvement in prosocial activities, close relationships with prosocial peers, and community cohesion, among other factors.

Recommendation

A Haitian-based committee of local civil society members should create guidelines to be distributed to community leaders in the Northeast to help prevent youth violence and gang membership in the face of growing gang influence. These guidelines will highlight best practices for reducing risk factors and building youth resilience through community youth outreach clubs. Recommended components of the guidelines on community youth outreach clubs include:

- Guidelines should be drafted by a multi-disciplinary committee of Haitian civil society, potentially including psychologist-practitioners, scholars, and community leaders. The committee should ensure that guidelines are flexible and able to be tailored to local needs, available resources, and culture.
- Guidelines should encourage communities to identify and assess the youth risk factors and protective factors present in their communities. They should also urge for the identification of the most vulnerable groups of youth to crime and violence.
- Guidelines should instruct communities to reduce risk factors where possible and strengthen youth protective factors. The revitalization of youth outreach clubs can accomplish both of these aims by providing meaningful opportunities for youth to

participate in their communities, develop skills, and forge prosocial relationships, enhancing protective factors and mitigating specific risk factors at the individual and community levels.

- The committee will consider effective aspects of youth clubs for violence prevention, including civic engagement; enrichment activities such as sports, art, and music; and vocational training, either through specific workshops if resources are available, or through the building of soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, and leadership during civic engagement and enrichment.

Comments and Outcomes

Large NGOs and international donors have carried out social interventions in the past with mixed results. One of the primary shortfalls of these programs was their creation based on preconceived notions of the problem, disregarding the specific needs and requests of local communities. By providing a roadmap for communities to make their own programs, we can better tailor social interventions to community needs.

- These guidelines are intended for communities in the Northeast region that are facing the threat of increased gang presence, not communities where gangs are already deeply entrenched. Areas under full gang control will require much more aggressive, multi-sector interventions to make in-roads. Gangs could also take over projects and capture resources.
- Youth outreach clubs should be financed within the community's means. Many prosocial activities, such as sports, art, and certain community volunteering projects can be done with minimal equipment in shared communal spaces.
- While small communities likely do not have the resources to address major risk factors such as extreme poverty, enhancing protective factors can make youth more resilient to overcome these challenges and can help avoid negative outcomes like gang membership.

By implementing this recommendation, Haitian communities in the Northeast who believe they are facing growing gang influence would gain awareness of a potential preventive measure. If successfully tailored to community resources and conditions, small-scale success in building youth resilience is likely. One indicator of success would be the implementation of the guidelines by Haitian communities in the Northeast, reflected in the number of youth outreach clubs created. Although the success of violence prevention can be difficult to quantify, a steady level or even an incremental decrease in the rate of involvement in gang activities where gang violence is in its incipient stages could indicate program success. With the creation of guidelines, Haitian communities can take youth violence prevention into their own hands. Providing opportunities for youth to establish positive social connections and engage in their communities in meaningful ways will also help change the narrative of youth from being a source of Haiti's problems to being a valuable resource in the country's future.

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Containing Gang Violence and Enhancing Territorial Control

Empowering local communities to lead local security measures through dialogues with local gangs.

Challenge

Widespread corruption has enabled gangs to operate as a political tool for government officials and elites to deploy authority campaigns. Their functionality immediately shifted as Haiti's remaining institutions disintegrated following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. They have since become emboldened to undermine state authority as government clout crumbles. Currently, over 60 percent of Haitians live in gang-controlled territory. Although nine of the most violent gangs are found within Port-Au-Prince's metropolitan area, over 90 gangs operate across Haiti – although they are largely decentralized. Gangs exist separately from non-gang members in local communities, which leads to a power imbalance that leaves residents subject to their violence. Gangs prevent Haitians from performing daily activities, such as grocery shopping or commuting, without the threat of violence.

Analysis

The state left vast safety, security, and governance vacuums that have been seized by gangs and other non-state armed groups across the nation. Urban gangs have amplified their criminal operations through violent means such as coercion and extortion. Their unfettered expansions continue transforming Haiti into a post-conflict state in which hostile tactics are replicated by competing non-state armed groups throughout the country. Nonetheless, they operate separately from one another and with varying influence, which is contingent on their proximity to urban centers.

Their territorial control is largely incentivized by financial returns, which are most notably realized through kidnappings and resource blockades. This is continuously displayed by gangs' effective halt in communication, resources, and security measures alongside crucial highways that aggravate regional divides. As a result, communities are exposed to gang campaigns as their accessibility is obstructed by them.

Recommendation

Commencing in the Northeast region, gang expansion can be curtailed through coordinated efforts of community leaders in establishing ad hoc assemblies to correspond on matters pertaining to community developments and local safety measures. This will serve to establish coordination among communities and build resilience against gang expansion. These efforts necessitate the engagement of low-to-mid level gang members. Dialogues held within these assemblies will serve to not only collectively empower local residents into regulating their parameters, but integrate gang affiliates via de-escalatory measures.

- Prioritize commerce and public transportation access among communities by monitoring transportation routes and establish sound knowledge-sharing tools.

- Identify transportation route vulnerabilities and address accessibility risks with assembly members to standardize travel protocols.
- Reinforce existing community groups by merging them with new efforts that include low-to-mid level gang members – and later develop a comprehensive understanding of problems that prevent essential day-to-day activities.
- Community leaders must establish security guidelines for ad hoc assembly members to follow. An example of such guidelines is to prohibit arms within 50 meters of an assembly meeting space. This provides an opportunity to build mutual trust between assemblies and gang affiliates that have become alienated from their communities. Moreover, it builds legitimacy where leaders' influence remains absent or frail.

Comments and Outcomes

It is imperative that community leaders be identified carefully to advance communal accountability without perpetuating existing obstacles, including but not limited to apathy, gender roles, economic insecurity, accessibility to transportation, and local customs. For this reason, the following must be considered:

- Community organization is essential to containing gang violence. Once soundly established and maintained within the Northeast, it can be expanded to other parts of Haiti.
- Integration is time-consuming and must be approached in phases as communities expand participation.
- Opportunities to feature NGO support can bolster legitimacy as international organizations can provide external resources in the form of trainings, funding, and other supplies. Nonetheless, failure is possible without proper organization and steadfast partner-based accountability. The involvement of various actors is an effective manner of establishing agreement obligations.

Successful implementation of the recommended actions will help contain violent gang activity to urban zones within a few years. By mitigating rampant turbulence from rural Northeast regions, civil security strengthens as non-state armed groups undergo a de-concentration process in the outer sectors of the country. Weakening gangs' peripheral power should result in a decrease in violent regional transportation incidents and an increase in public and commercial travel. Additionally, integrating distanced people into collective efforts lessens the risk for conflict related to stigma and isolation, further decreasing structural violence. An effective strategy can be duplicated throughout rural areas of the north and center regions before expanding to the rest of the country.

Reducing Dominican Violence against Haitians

Reducing structural violence and racism between Haitians and Dominicans with a jointly produced comic book that corrects fallacious versions of history of Hispaniola.

Challenge

Haitians have been consistently expelled from the Dominican Republic since the early 19th century, through immigration control and acts of racism. The DR's implementation of birthright initiatives, coupled with the construction of a border wall, are notoriously known methods of deterrence for Haitians entering the DR. Politics, government hostility and economic insecurity are repetitive factors of structural violence inflicted amongst Haitians by the hands of Dominicans. Remnants of the 1937 massacre still travel through border towns like Restauración are predominantly a Haitian town that remains uninhabited after victims fled the massacre. Despite obstacles, Haitians increasingly continue to enter the DR to seek economic opportunities and food security despite heinous treatment at the border. Also, Black Dominicans are being mistaken for Haitians by Dominican authorities exemplifies the Dominican government's reaction.

- Dominican Interior Minister Jesús Vásquez Martínez says Haiti is his nation's principal threat.
- The Dominican government stripped the citizenship of many Black Dominicans in 2015 and deported more than 31,000 people by the end of 2022.
- Mistreatment of Haitians has greatly increased since Dominican President Luis Abinader took office summer of 2020.

Analysis

Haiti and the DR have been at odds for years. Their issues are systemic, as they evolve from a shared history of colonization that has affected the entire island and created current day challenges like mass migration and racial discrimination. Haiti's frequent natural disasters, health crises, economic discrepancies, and dilapidated infrastructure add to the challenges Haitians face with the DR. The Dajabón Binational Market located on the Dominican side of the border exemplifies the racist actions Haitians experience. (The issues of market access are further discussed in the Local Economy section.) Haitians boycotted the market due to mistreatment, further raising tensions. Additionally, Dominicans have enforced limitations on Haitians entering the market due to COVID-19 and their belief that Haitians will increase the spread of cholera due to sanitation in Haiti. A shared history remains unclear as either side devolves their own version based on their historical past colonized by the French and the Spaniards. Some Dominicans feel they have a superior European heritage compared to the West African descendants.

Recommendation

To address the racism between the two countries, I recommend the creation of a comic book that displays a creative, collaborative, and correct variation of the history of Hispaniola. The comic book will be written with the assistance of history professors from top universities in both

countries, such as the Université d'Etat d'Haiti and Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo. This is a multi-step process, addressing how structural violence affects Haiti due to the history with the DR. It will break down structural violence to showcase how political acts restrict Haitians from Dominicans with the inclusions of racism, and religious xenophobia. Additionally, addressing economic depletion, racial and social exclusion from both perspectives shows how these issues afflict both countries. The book will be written in the border cities of Haiti and the DR by local leaders, experts, and artists from each. The comic book will emphasize:

- The pre-colonial history of the island of Hispaniola. Haitians' perspective of the Dominican Republic (and vice versa).
- French and Spanish influence on Hispaniola. Using colorism to show the positive relationships among darker to lighter skinned people of Hispaniola.
- Afro-Euro religious differentiation and understanding the root of racist behavior.

Comments and Outcomes

Experts in both countries will write the comic book to detail the history of Hispaniola to reach a mutual understanding of each country and its inhabitants. Unification of the two nations is imperative and, with the support of historians and locals, this material will educate the public. The comic book is a collective effort, which brings a shared sense of responsibility to detail Haiti and the DR in a positive light. Additionally, it creates an environment where both parties can formulate a mutual bond and acceptance towards each other. This book will be an attempt to alleviate the effects of racial violence on Haitians and the economic strain on the DR, which aggravates their racial ignorance.

Success of the comic book would be based on effective participation in the creation of a series. Multiple voices from Haiti and the DR exploring the history of Hispaniola, the history of race, and its negative impact on Haiti and the DR are formulas for success. The continuous creation of the comic books can lead to a reduction of violence at the border. When UNICEF held a comic book contest, "The School Superhero," Rizka the author was able to reach leaders at the United Nations to distribute comic books to 100,000 schools worldwide. Also, a case study by Alicia C. Decker and Mauricio Castro on teaching history with comic books states that "It is indeed a simple, yet highly effective strategy for enriching students' experiences within the history classroom." Obstacles that can arise are due to the political relationship between the two countries, which can be a driving factor for lack of participation and push a negative propagandic outlook towards the idea of a comic book (i.e., comments from the interior minister) because each side believes that their historical recall is accurate.

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Confronting Gender-Based Violence through Safe Spaces

Community elder-led counseling groups in the Northeast will be beneficial in tackling increased gender-based violence and understanding the role of hypermasculinity.

Challenge

One in three Haitian women experience some form of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence (GBV) defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees includes harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. Particularly, it is an abuse rooted in power that manifests itself through physical, sexual, and reproductive violence generally, inflicted on women by men. GBV manifests itself in a myriad of ways ranging from manipulation and forced marriages to physical and psychological violence and coercion. GBV remains entrenched in Haitian society due to traditional Haitian relationship norms, lack of educational and economic opportunities, and most importantly, lack of support for women who experience physical or psychosocial violence.

- Every year, approximately 273,200 Haitian women suffer from a version of domestic violence. Roughly 30 percent of Haitian women ages 12 to 51 have experienced physical violence. Thirty-four percent have survived violence, but in 37 percent of these cases women face serious injuries.
- Approximately 31 percent of women in Haiti experience controlling behaviors from their partner and are prohibited contact with their external support systems, leaving them ashamed, discouraged, and in danger.

Haiti is a matriarchically led society, where women are seen as the forerunners in the reverberations of disasters and issues in the community. It is essential that the same veneration be present in routine life. Addressing the violence that women face in the home community is essential for the long-term empowerment of women.

Analysis

Hypermasculinity is the overemphasis of strength, power, and sexual and physical aggression by men. Having increased access to educational and economic prospect strengthens men's roles as providers. Women feel increasingly disempowered and may become subordinate because of their lack of access to educational and economic opportunities. As women are busy in the home, performing household duties and taking care of children, they have fewer circles of support. The scarcer opportunities to feel empowered impact how women react to or report the violence they experience. Despite violence being a taboo subject, some men are aware that GBV has detrimental repercussions for their family and for future generations. They define violence as learned and accepted; as physical, sexual, mental, and emotional; and as an abnormal behavior that occurs both voluntarily and involuntarily without a determined reason.

Despite men's awareness of violence, the violence persists given its cultural entrenchment. Some Haitian men feel threatened when women have increased roles in society. Thus, GBV not only is a significant burden to women who suffer from violence but also community dynamics. The more women that remain impaired, either physically or psychosocially, the less they can

participate as formidable community members, employees, or people. Additionally, as women face violence, they feel an increased sense of shame which drives them to skip school, miss work, and close themselves off to their support systems, *inter alia*.

Recommendations

Community leaders should generate a safe space to mediate and prevent conflict from occurring. The space should not only be for women to feel more empowered but for men to join a conversation they have traditionally been left out of. For women to gain equal standing with their male counterparts, there must be opportunities for them to express themselves, learn, and develop an individuality separate from the home. To do this, the communities in the Northeast should:

- First, identify a safe space in the community to hold weekly gatherings (i.e., a schoolhouse or a church).
- Second, identify key community elders or leaders that are willing to discuss the negative implications of gender-based violence and have serious and thoughtful conversations regarding gender norms in Haiti.
- Third, the community leaders should create an environment where community members feel safe attending counsel and expressing how they feel towards their relationships with no judgment.
- Fourth, men should critically engage what their role in GBV is and how to decrease hegemonic manifestations of masculinity. Moreover, women should engage in conversations regarding what could be done to increase their empowerment.
- Fifth, women and men in the community should keep each other accountable for their actions to not perpetuate the normalization of violence by encouraging the reporting of violence, calling each other out, and offering support to victims.

Comments and Outcomes

Hypermasculinity and the proliferation of violence are crises that have become normalized, accepted, and sustained for decades. Creating a space for discussion will not be easy as Haitian communities have endured decades of distrust. The community elder leading the program needs to be trusted, and the community needs to be assured that the counseling circle will not cause negative impacts to their lives. To refute this obstacle, a key subject that counseling leaders should begin the counseling journey with easier and less taboo subjects to get to know the community member on a deeper level and form a connection. When the community member feels comfortable enough to share experiences regarding violence, whether they have been perpetuating or undergoing it, the community elder should maintain confidentiality. If the community-based grassroots counseling center initiative is implemented, and the community is willing to address gender-based violence in the community, the program can then take a secondary step in addressing intimate partner violence. Moreover, the space can also expand and generate a community reserve where survivors can obtain goods such as contraception, be referred to a triage location, or receive additionally psychosocial support.

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Challenging the Normalization of Violence against Children

Parenting classes address violence in the home head-on and create a system in place to both model and explain how the behaviors children witness impact them later in life.

Challenge

Around two-thirds of children in Haiti experience physical violence in their childhood by an adult caregiver, with mothers being the most common perpetrators and fathers being the second. The violence that occurs in the home and has long-lasting effects on a child's development and hinders their ability to process emotions. While Haiti has passed a series of laws on protecting children from violence, the reality is that the state has no power to enforce these laws and regulations that it has endorsed. With practically no governmental support for addressing violence in the home, many families have no means to address the systemic issue of violence at a familial level. The normalization of violence in the home has also created a cycle of violence for many Haitian youths, who first witness and experience violence in the home and then normalize these reactions into adulthood, where they are then more likely to carry out these actions.

Analysis

With the lack of protection for children against violence and little to no means of processing what is happening, many children will internalize and maintain that same violence later in life. Since there is no discussion on the implications of violence in the home, many parents mimic what they have witnessed and experienced in life towards their children. Many parents also see inflicting some forms of violence to discipline their children while not realizing its harmful effects. The implications of violence in the home often do not remain solely in the home but also perpetuate into more public spheres and can heighten levels of violence within a community. If left unaddressed, violence will continue to the next generation and could lead to higher levels of abuse, developmental delays, and an increase in gang violence. Families with fathers present who drink alcohol report almost three times higher odds of experiencing violence in the home, yet the most common perpetrators of violence against children are mothers.

Violence has a vast impact on children in the home by:

- Impacting their emotional, psychological, and physical development.
- Hindering their ability to stay focused in class.
- Affecting their self-esteem.
- Creating unhealthy examples of what relationships look like.
- Carrying over outside of the home and into the community.
- Pushing children outside of the home towards other dangerous areas in the community.
- Continuing the cycle of abuse.

Recommendations

To address violence in the home, parenting classes that discuss the normalization of violence against children and the violence that children witness in the home, facilitated by a community leader and clinical professional, will help better support children's development and prevent the

cycle of violence. The trained psychologists and or social workers will come from outside of the community but will both design and implement the program with the community elder to generate a locally based program. The factors that are the most secure in preventing violence are a close relationship with parents and children feeling cared for by biological family members. The first step in violence protection is to understand the characteristics of the problem, and the cycle of violence in Haiti almost always starts in the home. Parenting classes allow caregivers to understand how violence in the home impacts a child's life both mentally and emotionally while using sensitive language instead of "normalization." Providing a comprehensive education and tools to best support parents and caregivers as they raise children will bring healthier outcomes for a child's overall development. Classes should emphasize:

- Appropriate ways to deal with anger and other emotions.
- Provide tips on modeling good emotional behavior towards children.
- Identifying the root cause of violence for parents against children.
- Creating appropriate pathways to discipline children.
- Model good relationship behavior for children.

Comments and Outcomes

Parenting classes should be offered by trusted community leaders, with the support of trained psychologists or social workers who can support in designing and implementing culturally aware and sensitive material. To receive buy-in from community members, having classes in community buildings, such as schools or religious centers, can provide a neutral zone of communication instead of a home where violence can occur and give space for children to be near a safe environment while their parents are in courses. Classes need to emphasize the emotional impacts of violence in the home in a way that does not sound accusatory to parents but rather in general terms. A successful parenting class would have lots of community buy-in from parents and support from community leaders and elders. More buy-in from the community helps create a community that supports the reduction of violence, including outside of the home. Programming should first start at the local community level, for instance, all families in close vicinity of a school. As the classes expand to encompass more families, programming can start to address other forms of violence in the home, such as intimate partner violence and violence in the community.

Farmers Accessing Markets and Increasing Production

As farmers in Northeast Haiti experience issues accessing markets to sell produce, a peasant farmer-based solution with the cooperation of farmers and trusted groups would help bring food to market.

Challenge

With 23 percent of Haiti's GDP consisting of agriculture, farmers have endured substantial difficulty in two factors of their practice: getting access to key markets and building enough output to combat food insecurity. These factors affect half of the entire Haitian population, but mostly the 45.1 percent of the rural population who, as a result, feel unrepresented and disconnected from the rest of Haiti.

Analysis

Limited market access contains three key drivers which contribute to food insecurity in Haiti: (1) farmers have lost trust in large, top-down functioning NGO's; (2) farmers have to prioritize between quality harvest and market presence due to poor road infrastructure and gang-disruption; (3) Madan Sara are a trusted informal network of female produce transporters and sellers, but their reach and resources are minimal, with frequent disruptions by gangs while in transit and no sustainable infrastructure to support their efforts.

- The Haitian Papaye Peasant Movement (MPP), a larger movement of peasant farmers founded in 1973, has developed a system of farming practices that exists for the purpose of bringing peasant farmers to the focus of sustainable farming in Haiti for greater food access. MPP works with 60,000 farmers to improve deforested landscape so people living there can eat, while increasing forest cover to help reduce carbon levels. This group has struggled to grow and establish their sovereignty over how food is grown because of the implications of NGO's enforcement of farming practices that are both unsustainable and unaffordable.
- Small and medium farmers make up 90 percent of Haiti's economy. However, they lack knowledge of the interconnections between each business and what resources are available to help build revenue. Consequently, they have been unable to build an institution to rely on for regulations and profit flow, aside from the poorly distributive *Bureau d'Agricole*, and still developing Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development (MARNDR).

Recommendations

To address the lack of connection between peasant farmers, improving the structure of the Madan Sara, and access to farmers markets, farmers and trusted non-profit organizations should:

- Build a network database of information, initially manually at booths at major markets, then over time to be adapted into computers for a more formalized center of information, to develop lasting connections among farmers, facilitated by the MPP and the Madan Sara.

- The network database will develop information for transportation of produce, delivery, sale, and logistics managed by the trusted Madan Sara. It will also build connections between each farm and agricultural organizations to increase market presence for farmers through business development practices.
- Locate the manually updated databases at important markets in the Northeast region such as en route to the Binational Dajabón market in the Ouanaminthe Arrondissement, the St. Michel de Attalaye market in Cap Haitian, and the Rural Market of L'Acuil des Pains in Pierrot, so farmers can have a reliable source of reference as the network gains information. This is a step towards providing a service that the state could not fulfill with the MARNDR.
- These three large markets can pilot the farmers' network databases to connect farmers, Madan Sara, MPP, trusted non-profits, and other people in the region willing to facilitate the movement of produce to market.

Comments and Outcomes

If successful, the network will become a profitable and established business for the Madan Sara, ran exclusively by women with the means and connections to continuously support farmers. Additionally, the MPP will guide farmers towards growing sustainable produce, dependent on what is best for the communities they feed. A similar network was created in Nicaragua with the *Programa Campesina a Campesina* (PCaC). By building connections with peasant farmers, this organization has developed a successful network and fostered sustainability in farming practices, which helped them eventually join the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). There is a strong probability that this network could develop similarly to PCaC.

The farmers will be responsible for maintaining the network. *Poto mitan*, a common phrase among Haitian peasant farmers, especially women, directly translates as “central post,” emphasizing the faith and necessary trust the state must put into the peasant farmers as the guidance for determining how their land is used, farmed, cultivated, and globalized to feed the world. Placing internal trust in the farmers, enforcing *poto mitan*, and meeting the expectations for how each can sustain their practices has benefitted Nicaragua, and could exhibit similar results in Haiti. This is pivotal to the direction of this recommendation.

There are two potential obstacles to the implementation of this plan. The first is increased criminal activities by gangs that farmers have already been suffering from, effecting the resilience of their businesses. (The disruption that gangs cause is further explained in the National Security section.) Additionally, the *Dajabón* Binational Market is host to severe tensions between Haitian and Dominican farmers (including the right to market access) that have plagued the two groups of farmers since the separation of the island. (This is further explained in the Local Security section.)

Improving Farmers' Financial Capability through Collaborative Education

Using the Sòl community savings and loan system as a guide to integrate financial literacy into a new educational program for Haitian farmers and increase trust between the agriculture and finance sectors.

Challenge

The relationship between rural Haitians and formal financial institutions is fractured due to a history of discrimination, lack of transparency, and a combination of unprofitable loans and unfavorable interest rates. Despite the existence of Haitian formal financial services in Haiti (the majority in Port-au-Prince), only 16.7 percent of adults in rural Haiti have an account in a formal financial institution. While bank branches are less prevalent outside of the capital, many Haitian adults simply do not want to hold an account at a formal financial institution because they do not trust them. Many Haitians prefer to put their trust in places that they know and that have historically been reliable, such as the *Sòl* community savings and loans pools.

Analysis

The lack of trust between rural farmers and financial institutions has three main drivers:

- Existing financial institutions are unreliable partners to rural farmers.
- The existence of more trustworthy alternative options such as *Sòl*.
- The lack of nearby financial institutions' physical branches and few digital options.

The preferred and most reliable system for rural Haitian farmers is the *Sòl* savings and loan group system that has deep cultural and historical significance. It does not rely on any third party, consisting of just group members and the leader who acts as the glue that makes the system work effectively. However, these systems tend to be smaller scale due to a physical cash-based approach which limits the reach and scope of the combined pool. This in turn restricts the size of the payments to each individual and limits the reach of any one given *Sòl* group. Low participation and trust in formal financial services can have a negative effect on farmers' production and income growth capacity. It limits their options for important financial tools such as a savings account with interest, access to larger credit, and investment opportunities.

Recommendation

Local stakeholders should create a collaborative educational program designed to help rural farmers connect and improve existing *Sòl* networks, while also building trust between farmers and formal financial institutions. The program will be as follows:

- Designed and implemented in collaboration with *Sòl* leaders to better address local issues related to finance and agriculture.
- Taught by trusted members of farmers groups, community leaders (*Sòl* leaders), and members of formal financial institutions in community centers using the infrastructure and connections of existing networks of farmers movements, such as the Papaye Peasant Movement (MPP) or *La Vía Campesina*.

- Created following basic finance concepts such as interest and inflation rates, credit and debit, and security.
- Designed with flexibility for a community specific approach that is specialized to the unique situation of each farmer's community, and sometimes to each farmer.
- Starting with one village before expanding to other villages to help establish a foundation for the program to later expand on.

Comments and Outcomes

Effective creation and implementation of this educational program relies on the combined interests of all parties. Communication between the leaders of informal groups, such as *Sòl*, the farmers, and finance institutions is critical in the design and implementation of the program. Therefore, failure to bring these different stakeholders together to work collaboratively and learn from each other would be a significant obstacle to the success of the program. To deliver the best education program, stakeholders should be willing to put effort into communicating and understanding one another for the benefit of all involved. The benefit of participating increases as more stakeholders become involved, since an expanded network leads to more opportunities for growth, learning, and trust building. The expected outcomes of the program for those involved, a specific community or group of communities, are:

- Money management and finance responsibility as well as the tools to operate under different systems (such as *Sòl* and microfinance).
- Improvements to the existing *Sòl* groups to become more reliable, efficient, and far-reaching.
- Increased trust and understanding amongst all parties which can then lead to further collaboration on larger projects and eventually increased financial capabilities for farmers.
- A network of farmers, community leaders, and financial institutions that can work together and support each other's short- and long-term goals for growth in finance, agriculture, and community development.

Building trust is a long-term process that requires taking initial small steps and expanding as progress is made. Therefore, short-term success should be viewed through increased relationship building and farmers learning more about each other and the tools at their disposal.

If this program is not implemented, it will be difficult for farmers to trust in financial institutions or farmers of other communities, losing out on the benefits of collaboration on a larger scale and the advantages of increased knowledge of financial tools.

Extending Disaster Insurance to Farmers

Supporting efforts to spread disaster insurance for Haitian farmers in the Northeast through insurance literacy programs, enhanced agricultural finance management abilities of banks, and a diaspora-supported fund.

Challenge

Although Haiti suffers an internationally recognized disaster every 2-5 years, only a small number of Haitians possess disaster insurance. Natural disasters continue to cause hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of losses in the agricultural sector – losses that are compounded due to a lack of insurance. This forces agricultural producers, with no financial safety net, to rebuild their livelihoods from scratch. In rural Haiti, much of the population has never heard of insurance, and few know how it works. In addition, Haitian banks and microfinance institutions (MFIs) lack the in-house technical capacity to offer and manage agricultural finance and insurance. The few institutions who can, do so at a rate that is unaffordable and unsustainable for the average farmer in the Northeast. Previous attempts by public and private social security and finance providers to offer coverage have failed to deliver crucial insurance services beyond the short term, leaving Haitians untrusting of institutions that would take their money and squander it.

Analysis

Left unaddressed, natural disasters, made increasingly more powerful by climate change, will continue to demolish the livelihoods of rural Haitians. With the rural population lacking the financial resources and literacy skills necessary to navigate the market for insurance, banks and insurance providers see no need to tailor coverage to farmers. Therefore, they neglect developing the necessary in-house capacity to bring both disaster insurance coverage to rural Haitians and to equip themselves with the ability to effectively manage risk for agricultural finances, leaving a crucial service unprovided in the Haitian market. Without the competency to understand and navigate these services, Haitians will continue to be unable to determine their own eligibility for insurance or whether a coverage plan will be right for them. The lack of insurance leaves Haitians with no financial backstop if their sources of income are destroyed, thus continuing the cycle of recurring losses due to disasters.

Recommendations

A multi-step approach will address these challenges. Financial literacy educators connecting with farmers will grow their risk management capabilities. Agricultural finance management consultants will enhance Haitian banks' and MFIs' capacity to offer services and develop the Haitian market for disaster insurance. Lastly, Haitian diaspora organizations, called Hometown Associations (HTAs), will pay for disaster insurance for rural Haitians, providing immediate coverage.

The first step connects financial literacy and risk specialists to rural Haitian farmers and communities to enhance financial and insurance literacy.

- The educators invited will have access to farmers' firsthand accounts and listen to their needs to impart lessons appropriate for the community's disaster issues and provide a realistic set of steps about managing agricultural risk.
- Educators will highlight aspects of the financial market for farmers to avoid, such as predatory lenders and unreliable services.
- Haitians prefer educators and partners that have the endorsement of diaspora and family members abroad.

The second step identifies and invites Haitian and international agricultural finance management consultants to impart their technical knowledge to Haitian banks and MFIs.

- Consultants will enhance Haitian disaster insurance providers' ability to provide traditional disaster insurance services in the Haitian market.
- Haitian disaster insurance providers must listen to farmers' needs to tailor enhanced services and address the concerns of those suffering from natural disasters.

The final step encourages HTAs to purchase disaster insurance coverage for farmers as a last resort.

- HTAs will leverage familial and diaspora connections to identify responsible civic leaders and/or elders to coordinate appropriate disaster insurance policies after listening to the needs of farmers.
- HTAs will partner with villages of sizes that would allow them to provide continuous, sustainable coverage via donations and dues.

Comments and Outcomes

Each step of the recommendations will address the lack of disaster insurance from a different angle, but all have the goal of extending disaster insurance coverage. Haitians who benefit from the insurance literacy courses will be able to better grasp their own power and needs, and understand the deals being offered to them by the institutions who develop the capacity to manage agricultural risk. Diaspora-provided coverage will help address the immediate risk of disaster while traditional services are developed. Enshrining trust between HTAs, Haitians, and their financial institutions is paramount; it will encourage transparency of practice and demonstrate good faith. Furthermore, leveraging familial recommendations of a service or program has shown to greatly increase Haitian trust in that service.

A successful effort to raise the number of Haitians who benefit from disaster insurance coverage will stem from this approach. Supporting the above programs means that rural Haitian farmers will suffer decreased financial losses after natural disasters and be able to recover their livelihoods more swiftly. Failure will occur if there is no buy-in or trust from Haitians who would be receiving these services, thus rendering the literacy programs and technical training ineffective and making the rural population reliant upon diaspora coverage.

Expanding Rural Electrification

Constructing self-sustaining mobile phone charging kiosks to service rural communities who would otherwise lack access to electricity.

Challenge

Haitians, like the rest of the world, have readily adopted mobile phones in their day-to-day lives. Terrestrial telephone networks in Haiti were expensive to use and poorly maintained. Mobile phones presented the opportunity to leap-frog technological progression, one which Haitians have been quick to take advantage of. As of 2021, approximately 63 in 100 Haitians own a mobile phone, a rate which has been increasing since 2010, and is far greater than ownership of other appliances. However, charging these mobile devices is problematic. Haitians without their own power sources must travel long distances or pay per hour for charging from middlemen, introducing an unnecessary hurdle to mobile phone adoption. Increasing levels of electrification would mitigate this obstacle. However, two factors make such an expansion unlikely.

Analysis

Low Government Investment: Haiti's rates of electrical service are low compared to its contemporaries. The electrical public utility of Haiti, *Electricité d'Haiti* (ED'H), is deeply inefficient, providing only sporadic service to its paying urban customers. ED'H has also established, and then abandoned, electrical infrastructure, such as in Fort-Liberté, whose connection to a power plant was only recently re-established after a decade of inactivity. Outside of these urban areas, rates are far lower; only 16 percent of rural Haitians have access to electricity.

Poor Transportation Networks: Logistical issues make the usage of traditional fuel generators more challenging in rural areas. While already less environmentally sound, diesel and kerosene generators require constant supplies of fuel, which depend on an unfettered distribution and transport network. In Haiti, this is not the case. Both social and infrastructure issues plague free transit – road networks are held hostage by gangs, while unpaved roads decay from neglect.

Recommendation

The construction of village-based solar energy generators wired directly to a local “hub” in the form of a sheltered kiosk. By offering electrical generation from within the community, without relying on external fuel sources, problems of infrastructure investment and logistics can be overcome. This project imagines a decentralization of the power grid – instead of being beholden to poor or non-existent connections to the national grid, these installations would be entirely self-sufficient.

These electrical kiosks, dedicated to providing free phone charging to community members, would consist of:

- A 600w solar generation system, consisting of 3 solar panels, a hybrid inverter, and a set of batteries.

- A small all-weather kiosk, constructed to house the solar equipment and charging cables.
- A large, sheet-metal canopy, built to support the solar panels and provide shade for users.
- A radio or small television and speakers, to provide entertainment for individuals waiting for their phones to charge.

Comments and Outcomes

The solar component of these kiosks would cost between \$1,500 and \$2,000. The kiosk's purpose is to provide some level of protection for the generation equipment and can be constructed relatively cheaply. Similarly, a sheet-metal canopy provides both a cost-effective and resilient material to hold the weight of the solar panels. Overall, the electrical kiosk project should not cost more than \$4,000 in materials, making it an attainable project for fundraising from community and diaspora groups, rather than relying on government aid channels.

Assuming two mobile devices per household, and an average charging time of 60 minutes, this concept could service a maximum of 120 households in a 12-hour daylight cycle. A more reasonable figure would be 90 households per day, or 75 percent occupancy. Assuming two uses per household per week, the concept could service up to 500 households simultaneously, making it effective for larger townships and villages which might otherwise lack a convenient location to access phone charging.

While solar panels have become cheaper and more durable over the past decade, adverse weather events brought on by climate change will still pose a threat. Hurricanes, disasters, as well as general wear and tear will damage solar kiosks, requiring organizations to either keep funds in reserve for replacement and repairs, or negotiate with insurance providers to provide quick turnaround in case of damage to "keep the lights on." Additionally, involving community members in the construction of the kiosks, as well as providing education as to their functioning, would empower locals to make basic maintenance and repairs when possible.

Solar kiosks would incrementally increase access to mobile technology, creating a multiplicative effect. Increased mobile access produces increased communication, access to economic channels and education opportunities which would otherwise be unavailable. In addition, unlike combustion generators, these solar kiosks would be scalable – with additional funding, more panels could be added, increasing generation without increasing fuel requirements and allowing for more complex usage. By establishing this type of expandable, communal electrical source, a solar kiosk also provides a base for a future of further electrification.

Facilitate Community Access to Information through Technology

Supporting a pilot program to provide a stable channel of communication with access to information for residents in large towns by utilizing social messaging platforms to connect local government and the people they serve.

Challenge

Despite a legal mandate to decentralize in the 1987 constitution, the lack of community building in Haiti has hindered the role of local governments in participating effectively in their citizens' lives. Mismanagement of available resources has led them to become unreliable and ineffective. The federal government's e-governance office has been unsuccessful in creating and maintaining information channels, such as an interactive, public map to locate government offices as a means to provide access to government services which was launched in 2014. Current official government websites, such as the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Communication, fail to have functioning "Services for Citizens" and "Information and Services" tabs respectively. Information online regarding local government is unclear and difficult to find. Searches generally result in contradictory information or nothing at all.

Analysis

Lack of communication and access to information is a significant issue in the Haitian local government. Failure to implement accountability and transparency measures have resulted in Haitians' distrust in government. In addition to an absent government, the absence of laws providing public access to state information and obtaining government documents has proven to be very difficult. While it is estimated that 94 percent of Haitians listen to the radio, by missing a broadcast, one may be susceptible to missing key information. Disadvantages of reliance on the radio include difficulty in getting a proper signal, weather impacting audibility, and being subject to stipulated time slots (not available 24/7).

Haitians do not have a stable channel of communication that is easily accessible or reliable. Current information flow from the local government to residents is poor or non-existent. However, over the years Haitian access to mobile connections has been on the rise with 60.8 mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants and 95 percent of the population having access to the mobile network.

Recommendation

I recommend supporting a pilot project of a social messaging platform to be conducted in a large city/town to provide residents with a stable communication channel where information is easily accessible. Specifically, create a WhatsApp Business account to be administered by the local government, such as the city hall of Fort Liberté. Benefits from implementing WhatsApp Business include:

- Cost-effectiveness: personal and business accounts are free to download.
- Connecting with residents on a familiar platform they already use.
- 1.9 million Haitian users on WhatsApp (2019).

- Private and secure messaging and two-way conversations.
- Business account exclusive features include a business profile, quick replies, automatic greeting/away messages, and message statistics.

Implementing the “quick replies” feature provides an easy solution by using a menu-driven interface, which facilitates semi-literate user access, to address frequently asked questions (FAQs), such as general contact information (address, hours of operation, telephone, and e-mail), instructions on how to obtain documents (IDs), COVID-19 testing and vaccination locations, among other things. This can be compiled by a city hall clerk who can input the more general information, use available resources from the National Office of Identification for ID-related information, and reach out to the community for information regarding non-government sponsored COVID-19 testing and vaccination locations. Using emojis before each option would further help the illiterate to identify their selection. The audio feature, which users with personal accounts already recognize, allows for a more in-depth interaction, as residents can pose more specific questions to agents.

Comments and Outcomes

Effectively launching the WhatsApp Business account relies on proper management and use of its exclusive features. The city government of Recife, Brazil, piloted a similar project in September 2021. Through the passive service that WhatsApp Business offers, the project began with one person responsible for management. The team has since been expanded to six individuals, receiving 6,000 interactions per day, 1,800 of which are responded to by live agents. Aside from being cost-effective, this example highlights how low-maintenance the project is in implementation. This recommendation depends on the availability of at least one clerk to manage the account, which may not be available in all cities/towns. If this condition is met, assuming the risks and unknowns, a similar successful outcome can be achieved.

A successful outcome would be the emergence of a trusted communication channel and a source of fast and easy information. Information that was difficult to find now becomes available at the user’s fingertips. The user is provided an organized platform with quick, automated replies to frequent inquiries and the option to speak to live agents. The simple interface allows users to navigate the app with ease and without distractions. By utilizing this tool, the government allows itself to be accessible to its residents. Opening this communication channel between the government and its citizens would help to strengthen trust and reliability that currently is fragile. Failure to address this issue would result in continued deterioration of trust and difficulty to access, sometimes, basic information. Overall, the implementation of a WhatsApp Business pilot project will give users access to information through an effective platform.

Building Community Capacity through Local-level Water Management

Adopting a cooperative handbook on local-level water governance to foster community cooperation. The handbook is a guide to starting a dialogue about local water needs, managing and fixing water systems, and promoting collaboration and responsibility.

Challenges

Lack of access to water and poverty are inextricably linked. Lack of access to potable water is currently among the most severe human rights challenges faced by the people of Haiti. While stakeholder participation is crucial for improving local-level water access and management, most communities do not know how to organize, monitor, evaluate, or fix water systems. Aggravating this scenario, water infrastructure is typically expensive and funded by the State.

Analysis

Water is not only the most basic human necessity. It is also a vital component for communities to thrive. Access to clean water is directly related to poverty levels, livelihoods and community development. Poor water access and insufficient sanitation affect the community's health, food security, and living prospects. Moreover, without safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, and hygiene facilities at home and in places of work and education, it is disproportionately harder for women and girls to lead safe, productive, and healthy lives.

- Lack of water access severely undermines Community development. When water supplies are improved, they significantly enhance a community's economic growth and reduce poverty.
- Access to clean water is still a challenge for most of the population in the country. Outside Port-au-Prince and other major regional cities, most Haitians do not have access to running water.
- The number of deaths and diseases related to water is critical. 80 percent of all diseases in Haiti are waterborne. Less than half of Haitians living in rural areas have access to clean water, and only 24 percent of the population have access to a toilet.
- Numerous water access points are not adequately managed and need repairment to ensure quality.
- Women and girls often have primary responsibility for managing household water supply. They regularly fulfill these domestic roles, precluding any other occupation or participation in education.

Haiti's widespread water system failure is a symptom of the country's institutional limitations at all levels. This failure continues to feed a vicious cycle of contaminated water, deficient public sanitation, poor health, and chronic diseases. Breaking this cycle is already a challenge some Haitian communities undertake. However, it could also be an opportunity for groups to build and reinforce their cohesion by coming together and taking control of their environment. When communities learn to cooperate and get involved in the decision-making process, they become empowered and are more likely to understand, accept, and internalize water-management policies.

Recommendations

To increase community cooperation and knowledge to promote water sovereignty, local leaders should adopt a Cooperative Handbook on Water Governance that communities can use to stimulate discussion and cooperation on their water needs. The handbook would consist of a short guide and worksheets that explain how local-level water management work. Based on systematic research on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) toolkits and community organizing literature, the handbook would provide helpful information on organizing the community, starting a dialogue around water cooperation, and improving existing water systems even when outside help isn't imminent. The handbook should:

- Be cooperative, recognizing that community members are the experts of their own experiences. The handbook should be a short guide that aims to engage the community in a collective reflection on their needs, intentions, and responsibilities toward developing better, safer, and more inclusive WASH systems.
- Be a guide for starting a dialogue about cooperation and water. The manual should identify existing community strengths, resources, and skills and strengthen them with well-established knowledge of water and sanitation to equip the community members to lead, drive, and realize the transformation they envision.
- Be a guide to establishing Water User Committees (WUCs). A WUC consists of 9 to 15 members with equal gender participation. The members have specific roles and responsibilities regarding the managing, conservation, and operation of water points. This promotes accountability and community trust.

Guided by the handbook, community leaders would mobilize local citizens in a stakeholder group to assess and set water use and access priorities. The Handbook would offer knowledge on improving water quality, fixing water points, and integrating WASH goals. The guide would rely on the study of successful small-scale projects that increased water quality across the country and the world and adapt these projects to fit the community's objectives.

Comments and Outcomes

The handbook would be designed for peri-urban communities in the Northeast. However, since it relies on a bottom-up, cooperative approach, the process could be started by small to mid-size (around 300 inhabitants) communities anywhere.

- The handbook's most important aspect is building trust and creating a sense of communal responsibility towards the local water system.
- Success would increase community cohesion, water access, and WASH indicators. An increase in engagement, especially among women and girls, who disproportionately carry the burden of transporting water to the household, is also a favorable outcome.
- Spreading knowledge about WASH, sustainability, conservation, and personal health are symbiotic processes that will increase water sovereignty, reduce poverty and dependency on external aid.

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American University
School of
International Service, Spring 2022