

Danielle Retallick
Roland-Story Community School District
Story City, IA
Haiti, Factor 12

Haiti: Changing generations through education.

The several islands and three mountain ranges of Haiti add up to be slightly larger than the state of Maryland. Haiti's most serious disadvantages are poverty, corruption, and poor access to education (CIA 11). Nearly three quarters of the country's more than 9.7 million people, whose median age is 21.4 years (CIA 11), live on less than \$2 per day with food expenditures accounting for nearly 59 percent of their spending ("Haiti"). Political and economic corruption severely handicaps the progress of the county and acts as a deterrent for potential foreign investment and donations (Roc 09). Although the 1987 Haitian Constitution grants everyone the right to free basic education, because of the lack a structured educational system, qualified teachers, time committed to teaching, and access to public schools and the complete educational cycle, literacy is only approximately 53 percent (Lunde 08). It will take investing in education, training, and extension to improve implementation of agriculture research and technology and to resolve these problems.

The availability and access to food because of limited production capacity, dependency on food imports, and widespread poverty create a huge food security issue ("Haiti"). In Haiti, coffee, cocoa, coconuts, avocados, oranges, limes, and mangos all grow wild throughout the country (foodbycountry.com). Although it grows naturally, coffee is one of the two most popular commercial crops. Sugarcane is the other commercial crop commonly planted by farmers. Because it grows less than 50 percent of the food needed to adequately feed its population ("Haiti"), it also imports other foods such as bananas, corn, rice, sorghum, beans, and coca. These foods make up the Haitian diet, which was shaped by Spain, France, African, and the United States. The menu is largely based on starch staples like rice, corn, millet, yams, and beans ("Food in Haiti"). Their national dish is rice and beans and for flavor, Haitians will sometime fry their meals in pig fat. All these starches help fuel the people with carbohydrates to give them energy for the day.

Most Haitians average a 1,900 calorie diet along with 41grams of protein ("Haiti"). However, in rural areas, an average Haitian would consume only about 1,300 calories along with 30 grams of protein, which is much lower than the recommend intake for men (2500 calories and 56 grams of protein) and women (2000 Calories and 46 grams of protein) (Institute of Medicine 05). A 1978 survey revealed that 77 percent of children in Haiti were malnourished (Haggerty 89) and in 2008 the United Nation's World Food Programme reported that one-third of all children are either acutely or chronically malnutrition ("Haiti"). Because of their diet and lack of nutrition many children's growth is stunted and both women and children are often anemic leading to high morality rates. Infant mortality was as high as 124 per 1,000 live births in 1983 (Haggerty 89) and quarter of all infant deaths occurred in infants younger than one year and half of all the deaths occurred when children were younger than five.

Because of Haiti's poor sanitation and living conditions, malaria, typhoid, tuberculosis (TB), intestinal parasites, and sexual transmitted diseases (STDs) are common. In 1983, only one-fourth of the rural population had access to potable water. Eighty-five percent of the population lived in malarial areas. Eleven percent of the adult population in 1999, between the ages of twenty-two and forty- four, had Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).Tuberculosis and parasitic infections were very serious health hazards. Since there is less than one nurse per 8,000 people and one doctor for every 6,600 people makes treating each person and every disease almost impossible (Countries and Their Cultures). The doctors that do work in Haiti must, however, work in poorly funded and understaffed medicine facilities. In the

mid-1980s, there were only thirty-eight hospitals and more than half were in the area of Port-au-Prince. Rural Haitians had limited access to medical facilities and often relied on an elaborate system of indigenous healers or herbal specialists who could be called “masseuses”, “granny midwives”, “leaf doctors”, “injection specialists”, and “spiritual healers.”

Haitians place a lot of importance on family. Because of urbanization and efforts to identify with other parts of the world, they have evolved into nuclear families as compared to the extended families of previous generations (Ranard 04). Men and women commonly share the family workload including household and financial responsibilities and farmwork. The population is rapidly growing (“Statistics”). Each family in Haiti averages 4 children and by the age of seven or eight the children start to engage in serious work. The children are harshly disciplined and sometimes whipped as part of discipline. All of the children in the family are expected to do a lot of hard work; they are expected to do as they are told. One of the main things is that they are expected to share. Sharing is a big thing between the children of Haiti. They are taught to be grateful for what they have and share with the less fortunate.

As early as the 1805 Constitution Haitians wanted primary education that would be free and compulsory. Because of the Constitution and the Education Act in 1848, most children are sent to primary school (Ranard 04). The primary school enrollment rate is 67 percent and less than 30 percent of students reach the sixth year of schooling. The Education Act of 1848 created rural primary schools with more of a limited curriculum and established colleges of medicine and law. The children who excelled in primary school were the ones who were more likely to continue on with their education. That is, if the parents can afford the cost of school. Most schools are private in Haiti. As time went on and school developed, education in Haiti changed. During the 1970s and 1980s primary enrollments increased greatly, especially in urban areas. However, still in 1982 only 8 percent of the population was educated beyond the primary level and 65 percent of the population over ten years of age had received no education at all. Although, the ten year education plan raised the education budget from 9 percent in 1997 to 22 percent in 2000, the literacy rate in Haiti still remains 53 percent (CIA 11). The primary issue is access (Ranard 04). Haitians highly value education, but the majority of people don’t have access to it. These issues create a vicious cycle where it’s hard for Haitians to continue educating their population because they themselves are barely educated.

Agriculture has been a mainstay of the economy since the 1980s employing approximately 66 percent of the labor force and accounting for nearly 35 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Haggerty 89). Three quarters of rural households are engaged in farming activities. However, those activities only account for 26 percent of their total income (“Haiti”). Off-farm wages and the sale of charcoal are among the other sources of income. Crop disease and climate highly affect the success of these activities. More than economic, the main challenges to agriculture is the extreme deforestation, soil erosion, droughts, flooding, and other natural disasters that lead to critical environmental situations (CIA 11; Haggerty 89).

The 1971 census reported 616,700 farms in Haiti, each about 1.4 hectares in size which is equivalent to 3.46 acres. Of those 616,700 farms, there were several that consisted of less than one hectare. Despite all the obstacles of being on an island, most Haitians own their own farms. The farms in Haiti have all forms of tenancy and their land tenure distinguishes them from the rest of the nation. In Haiti, there are three major forms of tenancy: ownership, renting, and sharecropping. Even though some lack official titles to their land, 60 percent do have ownership. Another 28 percent of farmers either rent land from another person or they are using sharecropped land. Some other jobs that Haitians do related to farming include managing land for an absent landlord, squatting, and working as wage labor. Rural farmers lack the technology found in other more developed counties, like the United States, and the funds necessary to acquire the technology like tractors and fertilizers. Even some of the wealthy farmers who can afford

technologies like tractors and fertilizer, don't have the education required to use those products properly to increase production and profitability. Even though there are already low levels of farming technology, there is marginal support because MARNDR (Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development) conducts minimal research and provides a limited number of extension officers (Haggerty 89).

Many organizations and countries have attempted to identify interventions and strategies. The Partnership for Local Development, a member of Groundswell International (2010) has focused on widespread training for farmers in basic agricultural principles, increasing crop diversity, harvesting rain water and improving water use efficiencies, and establishing community managed seed banks. WFP (2008) recommended food assistance interventions in rural areas, improved agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, and created an awareness of the benefits of improved agricultural practices. The Haiti Advocacy Working Group offered seven recommendations focused on improving seed systems, rural infrastructure, markets, financial support, participatory and farmer-led research, and knowledge transfer among small-scale farmers (Haiti Advocacy Working Group 10). Even in my local community in Iowa, a small business and church group have joined forces to obtain farm machinery and then travel to Haiti to train the farmers to use them. "From what I've seen, I believe beyond a doubt that if Haiti invested more in the training of farmers and the general population about the use of tractors, fertilizer, and seeds, they would prosper unlike we have seen before," (Soderstrum 11).

If the Haitian government could invest in agriculture, food production, training, and education of the people in Haiti, over three million jobs could be created and the cost of living could easily decrease (Bruemmer 10). Over the years, the money has vanished due to corruption. A new system for getting the funds into the hands of trainers and the farmers would be required to make this work. Along with that comes the improved implementation of agricultural research and technology. Henri Baker agreed when he stated, "If one billion dollars of the eleven billion pledged by international donors was put toward agriculture, the world could watch Haiti not only feed itself but export billions." (Bruemmer 10)

The migration for rural people to urban city-centers must be minimized. After the recent earthquake hundreds of thousands fled to the city for refuge. Now there are more than four million people in the Port-au-Prince area alone. The people in this area are now in desperate need of work and food. The vision for the future of Haiti is to organize a system of managing aid, decentralizing the Port-au-Prince area, and shifting development away from the Port-au Prince area and back to the villages (Bruemmer 10). Roland Hyppolite did the same thing that everyone else did after the earthquake, flee to the city (Bruemmer 10). But he has now done something different, he chose to retreat back to his village and join forces with other farmers to sell his goods to a Quebec-based distributor through the internet. He agrees that farming is not easy: farmers have few customers, no decent roads, no electricity for refrigeration, and sometimes have to lay off workers. Hyppolite estimates a successful farmer with a hectare of peppers can make ten thousand dollars on the local market in a single season, which is twenty times the per capita income. "You have to have courage to be a farmer," said Hyppolite.

Effective education changes generations. If the government invested in education of not only basic knowledge that children should be learning in school but also the education of the adults on farms in Haiti, Haiti could grow and become a major exporter. Other parts of the world have seen the results of a concerted educational effort. After studying Nigeria, Kenya, and Ethiopia, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis concluded that 1) investment in education does pay off in terms of higher long-term economic growth and 2) secondary education is a key component. Education resulted in better health of mothers and children, renewed family planning efforts, and slowing population growth rates that often place undue stress on existing infrastructure and natural resources. Extension work with farmers also had a positive impact. Evenson visualized extension programming that created the following sequence:

a) farmer awareness, b) farmer knowledge, through testing and experimenting, c) farmer adoption of technology or practices, and d) changes in farmers' productivity. Such an approach increases productivity, economic impact, and the foundation for future generations to grow and succeed (Evenson 11).

In conclusion, Haiti has faced numerous obstacles including natural disasters, political and economic corruption, lack of access to education and technology resulting in food insecurity. These events have caused land degradation, driven the entire country into poverty, and has demonstrated why investing in education, training, and extension is important. If a system can be implemented where the money goes directly to educating the youth and farmers of Haiti, not only will Haitians develop a more sustainable lifestyle, but they will also improve their economic situation through the exportation of their commodities. U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson said it best. "At the desk where I sit, I have learned one great truth. The answer for all our national problems - the answer for all the problems of the world - comes to a single word. That word is 'education.'"

Works Cited

- Bruemmer, Rene. "Can Farming save Haiti? Added COMMENTARY By Haitian-Truth | HAITIAN-T RUTH.ORG Proud to Be Haiti's Most Informative NEWS Site." *HAITIAN-TRUTH.ORG Proud to Be Haiti's Most Informative NEWS Site | The FLAME OF TRUTH Is Flickering near Oblivion. We Are Dedicated to Fanning Them with Facts. Truth Will Empower Haitians*. Haitian-Truth.org, 5 June 2010. Web. 20 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.haitian-truth.org/can-farming-save-haiti/>>.
- Central Intelligence Agency. "HAITI." *CIA- The World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency, 1 Apr. 2007. Web. 23 Aug. 2011. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>>.
- Evenson, Robert. "The Economic Contributions of Agricultural Extensions to Agricultural and Rural Development." *FOA. Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations*, 2011. Web. 25 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.fao.org/docrep/W5830E/w5830e06.htm>>.
- "Food in Haiti - Haitian Food, Haitian Cuisine - Traditional, Popular, Dishes, Recipe, Diet, History, Common, Meals, Rice, Main, People, Make, Customs, Fruits, Country, Bread, Vegetables, Bread, Drink." *Food in Every Country*. 2011. Web. 15 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.foodbycountry.com/Germany-to-Japan/Haiti.html>>.
- Haggerty, Richard A. "Haiti." *Country Studies*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1898. Web. 21 Aug. 2011. <<http://countrystudies.us/haiti/>>.
- Haiti Advocacy Working Group. "SUSTAINABLE RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN HAITI." *American Jewish World Service*. HAWG, Apr. 2010. Web. 23 Aug. 2011. <http://ijdh.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/HAWG_Ag-Food_FINAL.pdf>.
- "Haiti." *Countries and Their Cultures*. 2001. Web. 21 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.everyculture.com>>.
- "Haiti." *WFP | United Nations World Food Programme - Fighting Hunger Worldwide*. 2011. Web. 17 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.wfp.org/countries/Haiti/Home>>.
- Institute of Medicine. "Dietary Reference Intakes for Energy, Carbohydrate, Fiber, Fat, Fatty Acids, Cholesterol, Protein, and Amino Acids." *Nap.edu*. National Academies Press. Web. 26 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.nap.edu>>.
- International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis. "Economic Growth in Developing Countries: Education Proves Key." *IIASA Policy Brief*. International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis. Web. 26 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.iiasa.ac.at/Admin/PUB/policy-briefs/pb03-web.pdf>>.
- Lunde, Henriette. "Youth and Education in Haiti." *Haiti Youth Project*. FAFO. Web. 22 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/10070/10070.pdf>>.
- Ranard, Donald A. "Haitians: Their History and Culture." *Center for Applied Linguistics*. 18 Feb. 2004. Web. 21 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.cal.org/co/haiti/htoc.html>>.
- Roc, Nancy. "Haiti: The Bitter Grapes of Corruption." *Frیده.org*. FRIDE, 2009. Web. 27 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.fride.org/publication/583/haiti:-the-sour-grapes-of-corruption>>.
- "Statistics." *Pregnant Pause*. Luner Pages, 2000. Web. 21 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.pregnantpause.org>>.
- Soderstrum, Matt. Personal. 6 September 2011.