

HAITI ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP (HAWG)

HAWG is a working group of international development, faith-based, human rights and social justice organizations advocating on issues related to U.S.-Haiti policy.

FOCUSING ON THE CHILDREN: Universal Education: A Renewal of Haiti's Education System

The education sector in Haiti was in a state of crisis long before the January 12, 2010 earthquake which affected half of the nation's educational institutions. Education in Haiti was typified by a fee-based private system, with 80% of education services provided by the non-public sector. The majority of schools were inaccessible for those living outside of Port-au-Prince with 25 percent of Haiti's districts located in rural areas and not having one school. The Literacy levels in Haiti hover at an abysmal 53% literacy rate for school-aged children, while only 38% of Haitians above the age of 15 are literate, with significantly less adult literacy among women than among men. Many youth received inferior, truncated, and segregated education. **As children under the age of 18 account for almost half of Haiti's total population of 9 million persons, the public education system is undoubtedly a critical element in rebuilding and strengthening the nation's political and socio-economic development.**

Six-Months After the Earthquake

- As many as 79%, of children in camps have no access to centers of learning
- UNICEF has emphasized that the longer children are out of school, the more vulnerable they become to exploitation or abuse
- Most schools are still operating on a fee-based system that excludes the majority of poor Haitian youth
- Half of Haiti's 15,000 primary schools and 1,500 secondary schools were destroyed or badly damaged in the earthquake

Given these grim realities, the immediate priority must be the child welfare, nutrition, and security of these children followed by a clear plan for the building of key infrastructure for learning and a strong focus on education reform at the primary and secondary levels through the promotion of universal education.

Education must be a key priority if Haiti is to move away from a model characterized by the underutilization of human resources- a concern highlighted by USAID since 1986. Haitians truly value education and have carried the weight of funding it. Haitian students bring to school a sense of resiliency and a rich fund of knowledge, language, and culture from their every day experiences; therefore schools can no longer greet them from a deficit model.

If quality, publicly and adequately funded public schools are built, students will come and they will succeed. **Discourse and strategic plans in collaboration with the Haitian Diaspora must also occur to adequately implement these plans and ensure the success of its delivery.** The renewal of Haiti's education system is the future of building in-country capacity, empowering its youth with knowledge and access to resources to secure a better life for tomorrow.

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Multiple organizations contribute on a case by case basis to issue or sector specific recommendations and positions expressed in HAWG materials. These materials are not designed to be consensus positions and have not been explicitly endorsed by each organization active in the HAWG.

Strategic Plan for Education Reconstruction

1. **Quality *Universal Education For All (EFA)* to assure equitable access ****
 - a. Primary, Secondary and Higher education must be decentralized so that it is available to those who live outside of major urban centers.
 - b. Build schools to code including provisions with access for students with disabilities
 - c. Provide free meals (breakfast and lunch)
 - d. Provide free transportation and sanitation when appropriate and potable water
 - e. Provide uniforms, school supplies, and textbooks
 - f. Implement technology ready schools with Media Centers and Libraries
2. **Foster cooperation between the Haitian Government and private education institutions**
 - a. **The Haitian Government must be armed with the tools to fulfill the educational needs of the population.** While NGOs and the private sector may partially fill this vital need, the government must have the capacity to provide a free primary and secondary education to all of Haiti's children. Cost-sharing methods may be employed to accelerate the accomplishment of this goal: The Haitian Government can pay for teacher salaries while IOs, Donors, NGOs and private organizations provide safe spaces for children to learn.
 - b. The Haitian Government in collaboration with the Haitian Diaspora should embark on a massive literacy campaign in the rural regions of the country, in the effort to build an educated, engaged, and politically capacitated population.
 - c. Donors, IOs and NGOs should support the Haitian government's stated goal of lessening discrimination and the perpetuation of gender-based stereotypes, guaranteeing that women and girls have as much access to education as boys and men.
3. **Enhance the abilities of teachers and administrators ****
 - a. Ongoing professional development of educators and administrators
 - b. Higher wages for teachers and administrators
 - c. Diaspora Teacher Mentoring Exchange Program
 - d. Diaspora Adoption of School/Students Program
4. **Start school readiness programming through a community approach that leads to higher education and vocational training ****
 - a. Develop second chance education and adult literacy programs
 - b. Support post-secondary internships for workforce readiness
 - c. Build capacity of University of Haiti through partnerships with Universities abroad
 - d. Support of Cultural Art Centers
5. **Develop curriculum with national standards and result-based evaluation criteria ****
 - a. Create and implement culturally relevant curriculum
 - b. Create and implement differentiated curriculums
 - c. Create and implement Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics program
 - d. Use mechanisms such as distance learning, media tools, etc.
 - e. Create and implement health and sports program
6. **Provide education in Creole to help address high illiteracy rate ****
7. **Address the needs all vulnerable groups by implementing psycho-social support services for vulnerable groups (special education, orphans/unaccompanied minors, restavek/children of domesticity, exploited children, disabled youths, etc.) ****

**Recommendations made at Haitian Diaspora Forum at the OAS, March 2010, which included Haitian Educators and members of several educational institutions.

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