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# Haitians Building Haiti

Haitians Building Haiti: Towards Transparent and  
Accountable Development

Five Key Principles Developed Through an Inclusive Consultation Process

March 26-27, 2010

The January 12th earthquake destroyed the capital city of Port-au-Prince and several smaller urban areas, severely damaging Haiti's government, and devastating all institutions. It also resulted in significant loss of lives, homelessness and human suffering. Educational, social, cultural, economic, and public institutions have to be built. Haitians both on the island and throughout the Diaspora are unwavering in their conviction that Haiti must be built differently and that Haitian voices have to be central in the building efforts.

In order to support the voice of the Haitian civil society in determining and defining a new direction for building Haiti, the Barr Foundation, the Haiti Relief and Reconstruction Fund at the Boston Foundation, the National Haitian American Elected Officials Network, and the William Monroe Trotter Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston sponsored a conference entitled **Haitians Building Haiti: Towards Transparent and Accountable Development**. The two-day conference included a town hall meeting on March 26, 2010 where nearly three hundred Haitians throughout the New England area came together to envision a New Haiti in 2020. The following day, over 150 members of the Haitian Diaspora in the U.S. and Canada, friends of Haiti, representatives of non-governmental organizations and representatives from Haitian civil society organizations convened for over ten hours to build a common vision for building Haiti and articulate key principles to move the Haitian state and society forward.

The work of conference participants was contextualized by presentations from Dr. Marc Prou and Dr. Robert Fatton, shaped by representatives from the peasant organizations, youth and women's groups, and slum dweller organizations in Haiti, and informed by members of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The two-day session was opened by Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston and closed by Massachusetts Senior Senator John F. Kerry who affirmed his support for the people of Haiti and the determination to build Haiti differently. He said, "We are going to win this battle!"

The **Haitians Building Haiti** conference is part of a larger effort to engage the voices of Haitians and Haitians abroad in the rebuilding of Haiti. The conference members are clear that the establishment of trust funds, interim recovery commissions, Haiti development authorities and other strategies and entities to support the building of Haiti must include Haitian leadership and meaningful participation of Haitians in Haiti and in the Diaspora. The participants

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came together because they are disheartened by what they see as inadequate consultations organized by the international community and the government of Haiti. They are puzzled by reports that the international community has already created rebuilding plans for Haiti without meaningful Haitian input. They are concerned that there is no coordinated portal either at the United Nations or within the Haitian government to capture the ideas and sentiments of the Haitian people. Nonetheless, the members are steadfast in their resolve to organize on-the-ground in Haiti and in the Diaspora and to work with the internationals and friends of Haiti to avoid a repetition of history in which those most affected by development plans are not part of their design and implementation.

Based on the conversations at the conference, the following five key principles will be submitted to the UN donors' conference on March 31, 2010 along with the findings of the conference on building Haiti hosted by the Organization of American States March 21-23, 2010 that was held at the exhortation of numerous Haitian organizations. **Haitians Building Haiti** recognizes that much of the language used in modern foreign policy seems to embrace these concepts, and yet putting them into practice has eluded many development efforts. The application of these principles, along with detailed recommendations that we provide here, would be a departure from past practices that exacerbated the impact of the January 12 earthquake. These principles demand building an accountable, transparent Haiti that serves the needs of all its people.

## **Principles**

### **1. The building process must include mechanisms for broad ongoing participation for all segments of the Haitian population and particularly those who have been excluded in the past.**

- Plans and actions must include marginalized sectors of Haitians society, specifically, the disabled, women, youth and rural populations.
- The rebuilding strategy must take into account the reality that there are thousands of newly disabled people who will need additional supports in order to have accessible housing and be able to participate in the workforce.
- Provide a clear and meaningful voice and vote within reconstruction plans and their implementation for the Haitian Diaspora and marginalized sectors of Haitian society.
- Watchdog organizations composed of all sectors of Haitian society must be supported to monitor and report on performance of aid programs.

### **2. Capacities and talents of national and local government institutions and civil society organizations must be mobilized and developed. Local resources must be used.**

- All work must begin with an assessment of what resources can be accessed and built upon locally before bringing in outside workers or equipment.
- Food security and food sovereignty must be achieved by supporting and investing in agricultural ventures, both large and small.
- The building of Haiti must require employment and training of the local workforce with all contractors required to present measurable targets which are regularly monitored as part of the requirements for additional funding.
- Bilateral and multilateral aid, as well as the assistance offered by nongovernmental organizations, must affirm the commitment to build a sustainable Haiti and reject trade policies and the delivery of humanitarian and financial assistance that undermine the local economy. Instead, this aid must use and strengthen the capacity of the local and national government institutions as well as civic institutions.
- Aid programs must be designed to build Haiti's self sufficiency.

**3. Aid resources, financial, technical or otherwise, must be allocated locally to strengthen a de-concentrated and decentralized Haiti.**

- Capacity must be built throughout Haiti and not just in Port au Prince.
- In particular, government services must be offered throughout the country rather than excessively concentrated in Port au Prince.
- The allocation of donor funds and the awarding of all contracts must be in line with a decentralized national rebuilding strategy.
- Donor funds must be subject to local oversight and be used for nation building activities.
- A percentage of the donor funds must be directed to local aid to build capacity of state and civic institutions in the 10 departments of Haiti to provide public services locally.

**4. Non-governmental organization aid and operations must be transparent and aligned with overall redevelopment strategies for the country and principles of inclusiveness, sustainability and accountability.**

- Aid cannot be allocated by avoiding the state apparatus.
- Aid must reach the entire population while building the state's capacity.
- Clear benchmarks for the desired outcomes of the aid must be established and expressed publicly to maximize transparency and accountability.
- Aid recipients should participate in clearly defined and regularly conducted processes to give feedback and evaluate the efficacy of the aid quality and delivery.

**5. Haiti's sovereign cultural identity must be respected and strengthened throughout the building process.**

- Those interested in rebuilding Haiti must understand the history of Haiti both as a way to respect and understand her people and to avoid repeating past mistakes.
- Information, meetings and discussions about the building of Haiti must be culturally competent and provided in Haitian Creole.
- The systems developed while building this new Haiti (agriculture, education, transportation, commerce etc...) must be culturally competent and not a wholesale import from other countries or cultures.
- Foreign investors and donors must build their strategies within the unique context of a developing Haitian state and not that of dominant notions of Western democracy.