

Rebirth for Haiti

At one with Haiti

by Wole Soyinka

Haitian renaissance

by Marie-Laurence Jocelyn-Lassègue

Not from zero

by Michèle Oriol

The Haitian press: A turning point

by Roberson Alphonse

The four pillars of Haitian

reconstruction

by Alex Dupuy

Street university

by Jacky Lumarque

UNESCO in action

by Mehdi Benchelah

Archives : René Depestre

par Jasmina Šopova



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

THE UNESCO

September 2010

Courier

ISSN 1993-8616

Diversity

Many sacred sites around the world are meeting places for biological diversity and cultural diversity. UNESCO works to promote recognition of their importance in safeguarding the environment and cultures.

The Organization has a key role in two international years celebrated in 2010:

The International Year of Biodiversity, aiming to raise awareness and encourage action to promote the safeguarding of the variety of animal and plant species in the world and their environment

www.cbd.int/2010/welcome
and

The International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, designed to promote respect for different cultures and break down the barriers between them.

www.unesco.org/fr/rapprochement-of-cultures

An international conference on the theme of **Cultural and Biological Diversity** was held in Montreal (Canada from 8th to 10th June 2010).

Read more:

www.cbd.int/meetings/icbcd

Read:

Caldecott, Julian; Miles, Lera. **World atlas of great apes and their conservation**, Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 2005

Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue (UNESCO World Report 2009)

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001852/185202e.pdf>

Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

Information kit

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001495/149502E.pdf>

What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?

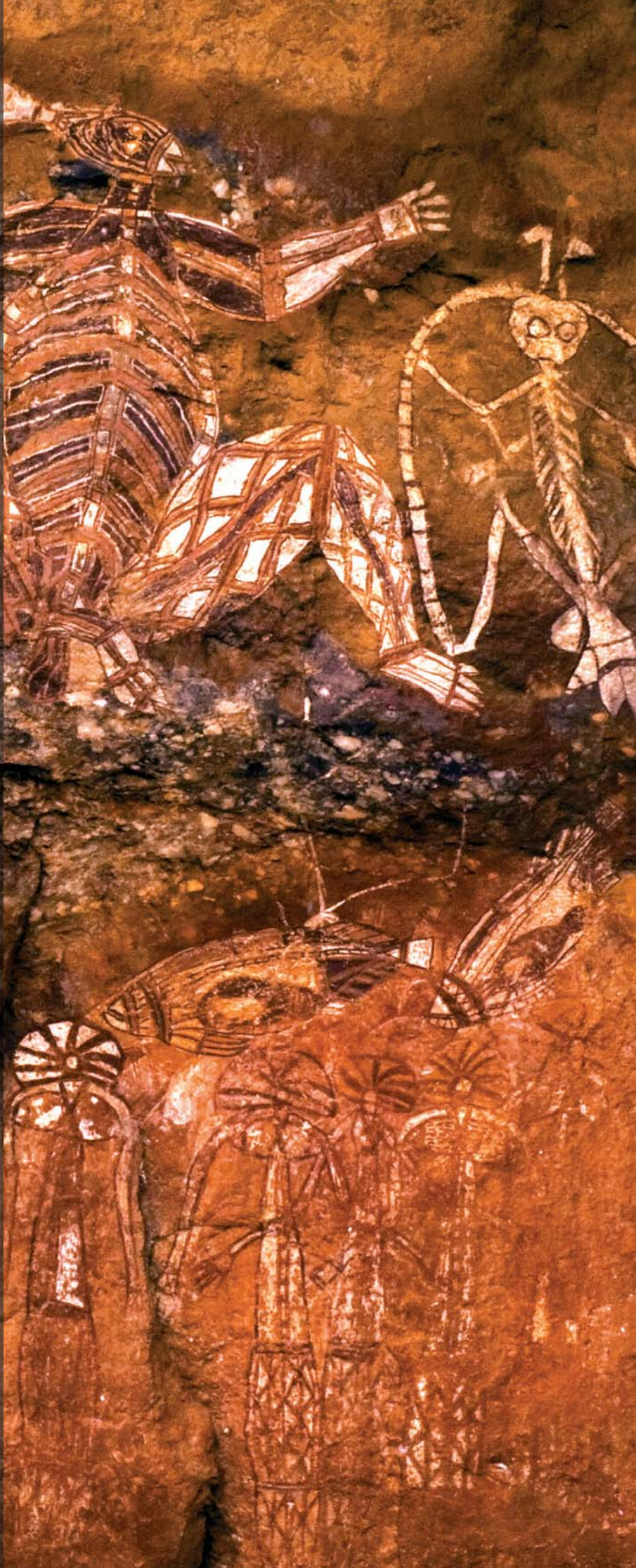
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/01851-EN.pdf>

Other UNESCO publications:

<http://publishing.unesco.org/results.aspx?page=1&theme=3#english>

Photo: Rock art, Anbangbang gallery in Kakadu national park (Australia), UNESCO World Heritage site since 1981. Kakadu rock art recounts 40,000 years of history.

© Our Place the World Heritage Collection





United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

THE UNESCO Courier

September 2010

The UNESCO Courier is published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP, France
www.unesco.org/courier

Editor in Chief: Jasmina Šopova
j.sopova@unesco.org

Editors:

Arabic: Bassam Mansour assisted by Zaina Dufour

Chinese: Weiny Cauhape

English: Cathy Nolan

Portuguese: Ana Lúcia Guimarães

Russian: Katerina Markelova

Spanish: Luisa Futoransky and Francisco Vicente-Sandoval

Intern: Noémie Antony

Photo: Danica Bijeljac and Fiona Ryan

PDF Layout: Baseline Arts Ltd, Oxford

Printing: UNESCO – CLD

General inquiries, reprint and reproduction rights

Fiona Ryan

f.ryan@unesco.org

+ 33 (0)1 45 68 15 88

Articles and photos credited UNESCO may be reproduced and/or translated providing the credit line reads "Reproduced from the UNESCO Courier" and includes date and hyperlink. Photos without UNESCO credit require specific authorization.

Articles express the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of UNESCO.

Photographs belonging to UNESCO may be reproduced freely. Photos must carry the following caption: © UNESCO and photographer's name. For high resolution, please contact the Photobank: photobank@unesco.org

Boundaries on maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNESCO or the United Nations of the countries and territories concerned.

This issue was published with the support of the UNESCO Office of Strategic Planning.



Sculpture in the National Art Centre, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. ©



Editorial by Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO 5

DOSSIER

At one with Haiti by Wole Soyinka 8

Responsibility, the link between freedom and solidarity
by Bernard Hadjadj 11

Culture, cradle of the Haitian renaissance
by Marie-Laurence Jocelyn-Lassègue 13

Haiti's new start will not be from zero by Michèle Oriol 15

Building a new Haiti by Nancy Roc 19

The Haitian press: A turning point by Roberson Alphonse 23

A common search for greater humanity by Raoul Peck 25

The Haitian economy's vicious circle by Gérald Chéry 27

Culture and development: two sides of the coin by Antonio Vigilante 29

The four pillars of Haitian reconstruction by Alex Dupuy 31

Street university interview with Jacky Lumarque by Jean O'Sullivan 34

Reform instead of petition by Jean Coulanges 36

UNESCO in action by Mehdi Benchelah

Training brings concrete contribution to reconstruction 38

Emergency syllabus for schools 39

Archives

Kèbé l'Inesko Fò 41

Between utopia and reality
interview with René Depestre by Jasmina Šopova 44

TOPICS

Focus

Education at risk – the impact of the financial crisis
by Samer Al-Samarrai 47

We're breaking our promise to teach all the world's children
by Kevin Watkins 49

Portrait

Ghani Alani: Calligraphy is the link between man and the letter
by Bassam Mansour 51

Foresight

Gender Equality
interview with Sam Nujoma by Hans d'Orville and Clare Stark 53



Bad weather. Cap-Haitien ↻

IN THIS ISSUE

Haiti is contemplating its future lucidly, beyond the ruins. In the aftermath of the 12 January 2010 disaster, the Haitians expressing their views in this issue of the *Courier* are not indulging in lamentations. They look at the past the better to analyze their country's present situation and to consider what should come next. If they accuse Haiti of lacking vision, of falling prey to superstition or the trap of victimhood, this is only to clear the ground for reconstruction. Along with the other international experts who participated in the forum "Rebuilding the social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti" organized by UNESCO last 24 March, they are expecting the international community to assist them in a more responsible

way than in the past. But above all Haitians are relying on themselves.

"The very soil on which both the seeds of tyranny and resistance were sown," in the words of Wole Soyinka, 1986 winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, Haiti is preparing its refoundation. The rebuilding needed is not only political, economic and social, it is also intellectual, emotional and moral. To this end, Haiti must draw particularly on education, which must be reinvented, and on culture, its essential vital force. On the international scale, these domains fall into UNESCO's fields of competence; immediately after the disaster the Organization pledged its support for Haiti's recovery.

Jasmina Šopova

Editorial

by Irina Bokova

A whole country is tending to its wounds. It was still dealing with the aftermath of hurricanes when a terrible earthquake struck. On 12 January 2010, Haiti sank into a state of despair as countless lives lay buried under the rubble, countless houses were destroyed, libraries and museums flattened, schools demolished, the brand new Quisqueya University was in ruins, Port-au-Prince cathedral reduced to dust – images that will remain etched in our minds forever.

Haiti has been in mourning since the year began. But, like René Depestre's "innocent birds" that "...learn once more how to sing among the silent," allowing "healing tenderness" to work upon "the mind's most piercing wound"¹, hope was already rising from the ashes when I visited the country, barely two months after the disaster. I wanted to let the people of Haiti know they could count on UNESCO for support, and to study, with the Government, the best ways our Organization could provide assistance.

There are times when it is difficult to find hope without help. And we extended our hand to this devastated island. At the International Donors' Conference for Haiti in New York on 31 March, \$10 billion were pledged in the mid-term to get the country back on its feet.

At the meeting, President René Préval launched an appeal for aid to get the education system running again. UNESCO responded with training workshops on post-earthquake

construction, emergency education, psychological and social counselling in schools (see pages 38–40). These are just a few of the initial projects that we supported, largely through a fund-raising drive launched just two days after the disaster, on 14 January.

Culture as bedrock

Almost at the same time as the New York conference, UNESCO joined with Haiti's Minister of Culture and Communication to lay the foundations for the International Coordination Committee for Haitian Culture (ICC). The idea arose at an international meeting at UNESCO headquarters on 16 February to study the state of cultural and heritage sites in Haiti after the earthquake.

The ICC is chaired by the Haitian Minister for Culture and Communication, Marie-Laurence Jocelyn Lassègue, and was set up to coordinate initiatives concerning Haitian culture and to mobilize the necessary resources. In July, the committee met to draft a "road map". Recommendations include making an inventory of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and of Jacmel, nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List; identifying the most vulnerable expressions of intangible cultural heritage; arranging for the protection of archives, books and other cultural artefacts; and gathering data and developing methodological techniques for the cultural industries.

There are times when it is difficult to find hope without help. And we extended our hand to this devastated island.

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, and Marie-Laurence Jocelyn-Lassègue, Haitian Minister of Culture and Communication. Port-au-Prince, March 2010. ↻

1. *Intempéries 99*, a poem by René Depestre, renowned Haitian writer, born in Jacmel on 29 August 1926 and a former UNESCO staff member.



© Olivier Beyrou

© UNESCO / FW Russell-Rivoailan

“Culture is the resource that society needs to move from today to tomorrow”

Arjun Appadurai,
Indian sociologist

To ensure implementation of the ICC’s recommendations, I decided to set up an International Donors’ Committee, which will meet early in 2011 to study the first project proposals.

To date, UNESCO has invested about \$450,000 from its regular budget in actions concerning Haiti’s culture, including a project to safeguard the National History Park in the north of the island, which has a symbolic importance for the country. This World Heritage site includes the Citadel, Palace of Sans Souci and the Ramiers buildings, dating back to the early 19th century, when the first Black Republic declared independence.

Donations are already starting to come in, like that from a Buddhist institution in the Republic of Korea, to support theatre in the refugee camps in Port-au-Prince. I am very attached to this project because it uses the cathartic effects of theatre to sow the seeds of hope in even the most barren soil (see box).

And, because I believe that culture also acts as a catalyst and motor for growth in society, I think that development cannot be conceived without it. This reality is beginning to gain acceptance – culture is finally penetrating the “inner circle” of economics and finance. As proof, it figures in the Joint Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Programme launched in Port-au-Prince on 18 February.

‘Poto mitans’ of the future

Immediately after the earthquake UNESCO obtained satellite images in order to draw up a detailed risk assessment map for Haiti’s cultural heritage. This project, to be carried out in collaboration with the European Space Agency, is one of a series of science initiatives. Obviously, the first and most urgent deals with water. Already last January, UNESCO’s International Hydrological Programme (IHP) began drafting a plan of action for managing the country’s water resources. In the longer term, we have prepared

Catalyst for a new era

As the distinguished Malian writer and ethnologist Amadou Hampâté Bâ believed, a country without poets, storytellers, musicians, painters, singers and artists would surely die of cold.

Haiti will certainly not die, because its painters started painting again, its poets started creating, its singers composing, its writers writing, and stories started circulating, very soon after the disaster of 12 January 2010.

We were tempted to flee, to take refuge in imagination and create wondrous worlds, as we know how to do so well. But after the earthquake, we changed. The clean slate is now the catalyst for a new era. It encourages the revival of mental attitudes aimed at building a concrete future, with the help of our creativity and imagination, of course, exacerbated by the constant connection to suffering.

Mimi Barthélémy, Haitian storyteller
UNESCO, 24 March 2010



a proposal aimed to create a Haitian science and technology institute for the prevention of natural disasters, which will evaluate naturally occurring risks, design and implement action plans for their mitigation, and provide education and training in disaster prevention, while raising public awareness.

Indeed, public awareness and access to information are prime concerns of UNESCO, which has already provided emergency aid to safeguard Haiti's endangered documentary heritage. The Organization is also setting up a mobile multimedia unit, to enable those affected, especially young people, to learn to use new tools for communication. I feel that this initiative will have positive effects not just in terms of access to information, but also on social cohesion within the refugee camps.

A huge amount of work also awaits us in the social sciences, which, alongside education, culture, the natural sciences and communication, are pillars ('Potos mitans' in the beautiful Creole language) of the restoration and rebuilding of Haiti. The whole fabric of Haitian society has to be woven together again if the island is to be reborn. And the history of a country is not written onto doubtful 'clean slates' of the past. It is written in the continuity of noise and fury, as well as achievements and wisdom.

Public awareness and access to information are prime concerns of UNESCO, which has already provided emergency aid to safeguard Haiti's endangered documentary heritage.

This is why, on 24 March, I held a Forum on Haiti, bringing together writers, journalists, policy-makers and international experts. Under the aegis of UNESCO they discussed the paths that Haiti should take towards sustainable development. This special issue of the UNESCO Courier is a reflection of their debates, and shows the central role that culture and education have to play in the reconstruction of the country. ■



© Teeluck Bhurwane

A good laugh can nourish a person for months

A theatrical project supported by UNESCO with the Haitian street theatre troupe Zhovie aims to give displaced people in Port-au-Prince a moment of joy and solace, and to help relieve their fears after the 12 January 2010 earthquake that left many of them with nothing. Zhovie gave the first performance of the play "Zonbi Lage" on 11 April in Acra camp, which shelters some 20,000 people in makeshift tents and shacks on Delmas Avenue, a main thoroughfare in Port-au-Prince.

"The purpose of this theatre production is to provide a therapeutic experience for the earthquake victims, particularly young people," explains Jean Joseph, a Zhovie player who teaches philosophy in a senior high school in the capital. "If we want to help the survivors, it's not enough to give them food. Mental health counts as much as physical health. We, the actors, have to help these depressed, desperate people and try to revive their hopes. A positive memory, a good laugh, can nourish a person for months," says the amateur thespian.

Zhovie, founded in 2004, is a street theatre troupe of 14 actors and three percussionists. Its show, "Zonbi Lage", evokes the quake through texts written by Haitian author Frankétienne, nominated a UNESCO Artist for Peace in March 2010. Characters on stage include Baron Samedi, Voodoo divinity of the dead, and the zombie, a living-dead slave.

The theatre troupe is now much in demand and UNESCO is planning to sponsor a series of performances in other camps for displaced persons. – M.B.

Scene from 'Zonbi Lage'. Acra Camp, 11 April 2010. ↻



At one with Haiti

by **Wole Soyinka**



© Jane Therese

“When a habitation dies, a warehouse of memory perishes with it,” says Wole Soyinka, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature. He calls for restoring the spirit of Haiti, a country fallen prey to political contradictions and the victim of blind forces of nature.



© UNESCO/Fernando Brugman

Fallen statue of Toussaint Louverture, hero of the Haitian revolution, outside presidential palace, Port-au-Prince. ©

If ever there was an ill-starred island, it is that isle once known as Hispaniola, whose western half is named Haiti, a land of profound contradictions that symbolize at once the loftiest aspiration of the human spirit – freedom – and its eternal adversary, tyranny. Even the spirituality of the African continent that sustained its peoples through generations of human degradation has not escaped a tyrannical conversion. Voodoo became part of the negative face of folklore, turned into an agency of superstitious and political terror that shrouded the nation in an opaque, diabolical subjugation, meat and drink to the cinematic arts. Now it would appear the much abused mystic forces of Nature have turned palpably brutal, joined in the spiral of reprisals and left a people stunned into a condition that evokes that very image of dread – the zombie, or the living dead. All too painfully, the process of resuscitation lumbers on.

‘When a book is lost,’ goes a familiar African saying, ‘it can be replaced. When a village elder dies, however, an entire library has vanished.’ Societies steeped in the tradition of the griot, and other oral custodians of a people’s heritage, may be forgiven this touch of hyperbole. Nonetheless it is a sentiment that is based on truth. Elders have died in Haiti, so have youth.

Heritage transcends mere monuments however. The very soil on which both the seeds of tyranny and resistance were sown, the earth that is soaked in the blood of despots and martyrs alike are part of a people’s narrative.

So have habitations. The scale of destruction provokes a variation on that African saying, instructing us that when a habitation dies, a warehouse of memory perishes with it. Such a loss is the world’s, however, not merely that of the stricken locality.

More than physical libraries have been lost in Haiti! Yes indeed, those also, and the records, the physical structures, the priceless archives that guard a people’s history have ended in rubble, mush and ashes. In addition to these however, so have the venerated spots and landmarks, the patina of ancestry on familiar walls, the communal spaces such as market squares, arbours, ageless trees under whose shade a community is renewed as the griot spins out narratives of a people’s antecedents and society’s coming-in-being, where knowledge of identity passes from the old and is embedded in the young. These are the palpable threads in the fabric of continuity of our species, linking generation to generation. For Haiti, much of this is entombed in the insatiable maw of Nature. Even cobbled pathways, evocative of time past, the mementoes and monuments of both triumphant and hostile faces of history have not been spared. Heritage transcends mere monuments however. The very soil on which both the seeds of tyranny and resistance were sown, the earth that is soaked in the blood of despots and martyrs alike are part of a people’s narrative, all eloquent chapters, annotations and bookmarks that line the daily passages of a people even as they pursue their most mundane activities. These have been crushed, mangled into indecipherable mounds, shorn of their communal associations. The bulldozer has been accorded the last word. Hallowed spaces of Legend have become one with earthworks, the guaranteed bequest of a blind catastrophe.

How often has the world of letters been moved, irrespective of race, to indulge in the celebration of the victory of Haitian resistance under General Desallines¹ over the forces of re-enslavement dispatched by Napoleon Bonaparte in his imperial obsessions! Haiti tested and shredded the claims of Europe as the nursery of the Age of Enlightenment. Beyond the clash of arms, however, Haiti proved the manifestation of a people’s supreme will that resulted in the establishment of the first independent black republic on the globe, an event whose heroes – such as Toussaint Louverture² – have been rhapsodized by poets and dramatists,

1. Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1758-1806), a leader of the Haitian revolution, was Haiti's first emperor (1804-1806) under the name Jacques I

2. Toussaint Louverture (1743-1803), emblematic figure of the Haitian revolution and governor of Saint-Domingue (Haiti's former name)

immortalized in statuary, on canvases, murals and tapestries from impassioned brushes, weavers and carvers. They range from schooled masters of the arts in formal galleries to the roadside, 'naive' painters all the way from Harlem to South Africa! But these figures are the survivors across time, today we are confronted by the needs of survivors in present time, the direct heirs of that proud history, the living repositories of their attainment, and inspiration of our creativity.

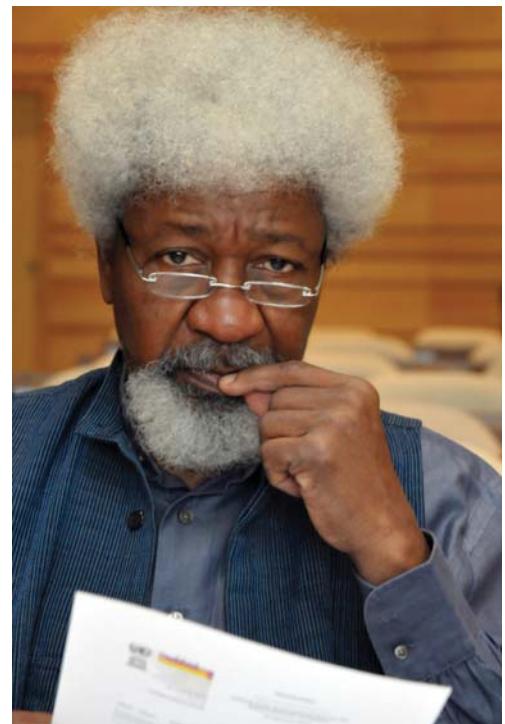
Their burden is now ours, their agony ours, the hope of their survival ours. If we fail them, we deny them, we endorse the victory of blind Nature over human resilience and resourcefulness and thus, we fail ourselves. We master Fate only when we disperse the stench of death and anguish with the magic wand of faith in the future, planting a kiss of life on the faces of orphans, the wounded, and the bereaved.

As the healers of the world rush to the aid of the wounded and the traumatized, reviving hospitals and clinics, ferrying drugs and nourishment, writers, artists and intellectuals must join hands for the restoration of the mind.

Haiti casts a net of historic evocations that is totally disproportionate to her size, at once an aspiration and a warning. Haiti embodies both the glory and tragedy of the black race. Never before, however, have her people confronted a challenge of such dimensions – and opportunity. Haiti exists beyond mere symbol, being, for its time, a unique testing ground of human destiny in the eternal struggle between domination and liberty, between power and freedom. Haiti is a lesson, not merely for the African world but for humanity. Nature has thus dealt a cruel, near irreparable blow, firstly to the African peoples everywhere, but more widely to a world community wherever freedom is valued, and history, heritage and memory are understood as the cohering fabric of communal existence.

Thus, Haiti cannot be permitted to die, stagnate, or degenerate. Opportunities sometimes exact a costly price, and this, Haiti has paid several times over, in one fell swoop! Now is the time to milk that opportunity in turn and assist her own visionaries to recreate Haitian society morally, socially and intellectually. Much has been done, and we salute the humane response of the world. But we cannot be complacent. We do not know how much of Haiti's humanity — which is ours — is still, even now, roaming directionless, foraging with canines and rodents for food, crouched under crude shelters, mothers with the future cradled in their arms, starving, listless, with large bewildered eyes in

mute appeal to unseen, would-be providers. As the healers of the world rush to the aid of the wounded and the traumatized, reviving hospitals and clinics, ferrying drugs and nourishment, writers, artists and intellectuals must join hands for the restoration of the mind. Libraries must be re-stocked, galleries replenished, and schools resuscitated. Writers can help by donating theirs and other books, painters their canvases, architects their skills, and teachers all forms of instructional aid. It is clear – Haiti will never again be the same island we once knew, nor Port-au-Prince exude her faintly decadent redolence of a troubled past. Nonetheless, we can recreate from its rubble a totally new and vibrant social entity that becomes a beacon of universal solidarity, an affirmation of the human spirit, an enduring outpost of a mother continent whose stolen children wiped out the ignominy of enslavement and transformed a mere labour stockade into a citadel of defiance, and a vision of liberty. ■



© UNESCO / Michel Ravassard

Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Nobel Prize in Literature 1986, is a member of the High Panel on Peace and Dialogue among Cultures created in 2010 by the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova.

The novelist and playwright is the founder of two theatrical groups, the 1960 Masks and Orisun Theatre.

He is currently emeritus professor at Obafemi Awolowo University, emeritus member of the Black Mountain Institute at the University of Nevada (USA), and professor in residence at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California.



© Leah Gordon: www.leahgordon.co.uk

Responsibility, the link between freedom and solidarity

by **Bernard Hadjadj**

Since Haiti became independent in 1804, a succession of traumatic events has marked the country's history, complicating the task of building freedom. The irresponsible attitudes of superpowers and national political leaders have left the country at an impasse. The only way out is through responsible action and solidarity on a global scale.

Jacmel carnival figure symbolizing liberation from slavery. ☺

“Attacked, ostracized, coveted, subjected to gunboat diplomacy, divided, militarized, battered.” This is the image the Haitian historian and diplomat Dantes Bellegarde paints of his country, adding “Haiti's independence, endlessly threatened throughout its tumultuous and chaotic history, is still something of a miracle.”

Indeed, the first black republic has suffered considerable pressure from both within and without, which has made for a turbulent trajectory. Ostracized by the superpowers, who couldn't accept the emancipation of this black Tom Thumb, Haiti has faced tyrannical regimes founded upon the exclusion of the people, held in a state of utter destitution and despair.

The superpowers adopted a tough stance, whether it was France withdrawing precious financial resources from the fledgling nation, or the 19 years of American occupation at the start of the

20th century. And the long night of slavery left deep and lasting scars on the social and financial life of Haitians. The master-slave relationship and the rift between the *bô lan mèt* people (those living by the sea) and the *gwo soulyé* (peasant farmers) are examples of schisms that persisted beyond the end of slavery, and still, more than two centuries after independence, undermine the structure of Haitian society.

But how does one really escape from slavery? Once the exuberance of freedom has worn off, how does one construct liberty? Because it needs substance, so that “the trials of liberty do not become insupportable,” as the Greek-born French philosopher, Cornélius Castoriadis, has emphasised, before going on to explain that “that only happens when one manages to do nothing with that freedom.”

The great Toussaint Louverture and, after him, the founding fathers of the Haitian Republic, may have won the fundamental battle for humanism, but it would seem they failed when it came to implementing a new social charter.

Freedom

Very soon after independence, the old relationships of servitude were reproduced. The farmer-generals took the place of the colonials, the former slaves were subjected to forced labour, confined to the plantation, remaining *aneu logou*, i.e. denied any freedom of speech, the right to deliberate or to be inventive. Marronage, which was once celebrated as an act of resistance against the oppression of slavery, was, from the time of the first (1801) constitution, seen as a form of vagrancy and punished with severe penalties. This agrarian militarism (*caporalisme agraire*) was in force right up until 1904, a century after Haitian independence! The peasants, who had fought for freedom, were sidelined from essential debates on how to break with the colonial past.

It is easy to understand how the very structure of the master-slave relationship could make it difficult to use the law to construct freedom, considering how much it saps the Caribbean spirit and dislocates family structures. Indeed, the father figure becomes devalued as soon as his place is usurped by the master, and this destabilises the rule of law – the menacing figure of the master, who is “beyond the law”; becomes a symbol of

violence and confusion, in opposition to that of father, who upholds order. "The words of the father are in accordance with the law [...] whereas the words of the master are just an echo of themselves," wrote the French psychoanalyst, Jacques André, in *L'Inceste focal dans la famille noire antillaise* (1987).

It is in these conditions of political and psychological violence that Haitian liberty served its apprenticeship. But, to escape from slavery means overcoming one's negative self-image and finding the light of true liberation inside oneself, not by repeating patterns of dominance inherited from the plantation. It means rediscovering self-esteem.

Just a few years ago, in 2004, the Haitian writer, René Depestre, in a letter to his compatriot, Carl Fombrun, spoke of another form of slavery to which the people are still subjected: "Let us abolish this internal slavery that the theologies of barbarism impose on the wretched consciousness of Haiti," he writes. "Let us make an unprecedented effort to rediscover a sense of responsibility, to confront the row of zeros that two centuries of incompetence have allowed to accumulate to the left of our zombie-like immobility."

Responsibility

Depending on the way a society organizes its politics and beliefs, it can either favour or hinder a sense of responsibility in its members. Politically, military dictators and populist totalitarian leaders in Haiti have often posed as supreme saviours, believing themselves to be charged with a divine mission. And when the leader is seen as a Living God, the people have nothing more to say.

Meanwhile, Protestant churches, as the Haitian ethnologist Charles-Poisset Romain notes, have encouraged supernatural explanations for underdevelopment. "Is the Church not to blame for encouraging and preaching fatalism, and of training quitters, rather than vicars?" he writes in *Le Protestantisme dans la société haïtienne* (1986). But fatalism leads to inaction and an attitude of spectator, rather than critic, of what is happening.

Then there is voodoo, whose *lavé tèt* initiation rite is emblematic. It consists of introducing into the head of the initiate a *Loa*, a kind of guardian angel, a protecting spirit. According to the French anthropologist Roger Bastide, it is "not the

"To those who see no more than ratiocination in the re-examination of the past suggested in this article, one may reply that it is the sine qua non of an openness towards the future. It is not a matter of seeking ghosts of a past that some may think has gone forever, but, as the French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, wrote, of "reviving the radicalism of a memory which, through the passage of time, inscribes a permanent and fertile tension between past and future, between the particular and the universal." – B.H.

physical head of the individual, but his intelligence, his sensitivity, his psycho-physical life; it is the spirit, in a word, in relation to the soul." If there is indeed a kind of doubling involved, one might well wonder who commands his actions. If a crime is committed, who is guilty?

One often hears Haitians say: *sé pa fôt mwin* (it's not my fault), *sé pa mwin mêm* (it's not me, myself), *sé de m'yé* (I am two), etc. Responsibility, which is a necessary condition for any form of freedom, then becomes a totally relative category. The principle of reparation associated with justice is violated, opening the door to impunity. And it can easily be seen that this pair – violence-impunity – impregnates the psychology of the Haitian masses through and through.

"Any reform of minds has to come via the acceptance of our collective failure," writes the Haitian educationalist Roger Péreira, in his article, "Haïti or the trial of freedom" (2001). "We are all part of the problem; it is on this condition alone that we can all be part of its solutions."

Solidarity

Also, although responsibility is above all a personal matter, it must be understood, following the Israeli philosopher Martin Buber, that every human being can only define himself as *I* when in contact with *thou*. Every individual *I* is part of the *I-thou* dyad that underlies the world of relationships. Relationships are by definition interdependent.

If there is one precursor to the development of solidarity between beings, it is freedom, in the Arendtian¹ sense, i.e. merging with politics, this public space where 'living together' is forged through dialogue. Freedom can only be practiced in society, by giving expression to concern for the other whether close or distant, and a concern for the general interest.

Freedom and responsibility cannot be dissociated and can only be expressed fully through solidarity, without which we would be reduced to what the French philosopher, Jean-Claude Michéa called

monadic egos, without a soul. A world that is not interdependent would abolish humans.

More than ever, during the terrible times that Haiti has been living through since the earthquake of 12 January 2010, the central question of responsibility is raised – both that of Haitians and that of the international community – and of national and global solidarity. UNESCO, in its function as intellectual watchdog and disseminator of ideas and ethical values, will have a role to play alongside Haitians in introducing the principle of responsibility wherever there is dialogue in Haiti, and notably in education. It is a matter of accompanying the physical reconstruction of the country with a social and civil reconstruction founded upon education and culture. ■

1. Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), German-born, naturalized American professor of political theory.



© UNESCO/FW RUSSEL Rivoailan

A staff member of UNESCO, **Bernard Hadjadj** has a PhD in the socio-economics of human resources. After spending 10 years conducting research in social science, he joined the French Ministry for Cooperation and, for ten years, held posts as Head of cooperation and cultural action in Haiti, Benin and Djibouti. African and Haitian by adoption, he has proved it through well-researched and sensitive testimonials in two books: *L'Afrique en marge* (1998) and *L'An prochain à Port-au-Prince: Sortir de l'esclavage* (2007).

Jacmel carnival figure
symbolizing liberation
from slavery.

Leah Gordon's site: <http://www.leahgordon.co.uk>

Culture, cradle of the Haitian renaissance

by Marie-Laurence Jocelyn Lassègue

A hotbed of artistic activity, Haiti does not take full advantage of its cultural resources to further its development. The new cultural action plan, aimed particularly at young people, calls for raising awareness of vectors of creativity and promoting them.

Art triumphant.



© UN Photo/Marco Dormino

Using culture to reconstruct Haiti – is this “a challenge? an anomaly? or a threat?” to paraphrase the expression used by the black American historian Rayford Logan after the unexpected emergence of the new nation-state of Haiti in 1804.

Neither anomaly nor threat, but certainly a challenge, because after a historic two hundred years of existence, with periods of advance and regression, sometimes provoked from within, sometimes from outside, the task in hand today, since the 12 January 2010 disaster, is no less than a radical rebirth of Haiti. And, after the hundreds of thousands of deaths and innumerable collapsed buildings, what is left that can serve as cradle for this renaissance? What remains are Haiti’s cultural resources. At the height of the American occupation of Haiti, with a paternalistic but welcome vehemence, Dr Jean Price Mars, writing in his landmark book *Ainsi parla l’Oncle*, published in 1928 [translated as *So Spoke the Uncle* in 1983], reminded us that it is these resources that give life to our country and enable it to survive.

The time has come to reaffirm that the end goal of development is the happiness of the people, and to recognize that culture is an essential element in our country’s development. Not an accessory or a luxury, accessible only to the elite, but the very stuff that weaves society together, gives it strength and helps foster wellbeing, in tandem with the economy.



André Eugène, one of the Grand Rue sculptors, Port-au-Prince. ©

It is therefore necessary to create the right conditions for the Haitian people to accept who they are and to continue to renew and nourish their traditions.

Plan of action for culture

Because of her conviction that culture can play a major part in the process of renovation and restructuring of Haiti, the Minister of Culture and Communication has called for the integration of four themes in the nation's Plan of Action for Reconstruction and Development – institutional strengthening; economic development; identity, citizenship and social cohesion; regional integration and international cooperation.

Institutional strengthening implies the establishment of partnership agreements between various ministries, with a view to encouraging the creation of infrastructures around cultural goods and services, as well as respecting specific heritage characteristics when developing given sites.

The Minister is aware that the cultural and creative industries can make a significant contribution to our GDP, and this is why she plans to set up a 'creativity fund' aimed at artists, craftspeople and cultural enterprises, as well as establishing a mechanism in favour of professional training and the promotion of cultural entrepreneurship, with the ultimate goal of integrating cultural factors with economic development.

The sense of identity and citizenship needed for social cohesion can only emerge when knowledge and skills are valued and passed on from generation to generation. It is therefore necessary to create the right conditions for the

Haitian people to accept who they are and to continue to renew and nourish their traditions. Haitian culture derives its strength from creativity (in art, theatre, dance, music, etc.). This means that measures are needed, targeting young people especially and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, to raise awareness and to encourage vectors for creativity.

Haitian creativity is responsible for a great diversity of national culture, which is recognised the world over, especially in the Caribbean. There are many examples of Haitian culture's major influence in other countries in the region, as part of a constant flow of exchanges. Today, these exchanges need to be given extra impetus, with a deliberate policy of regional integration and international cooperation through culture. A strengthened cultural presence on the regional and international stage will help to improve the image of our country abroad, while reassuring our compatriots in the diaspora, our international partners and potential investors.

An Observatory for Haitian culture

To encourage greater coherence in public involvement in culture, the Ministry of Culture intends to bring together national and international artists and culture professionals, as well as foreign friends and policy-makers, at a national Forum on Haitian culture. This Forum will provide an opportunity to meet and identify the main priorities and lines of action. The programme will be monitored and evaluated on the basis of a series of indicators, data and statistics, drawn up in cooperation with UNESCO.

Given the nature of its mandate, the Organization can play a leading role in supporting Haiti on its long path to renovation and reconstruction, especially in the cultural and artistic fields. I believe that the project for a Haitian Cultural Observatory, to which we are particularly attached, would constitute an ideal and sustainable vehicle for developing this role. ■



A militant feminist, **Marie-Laurence Jocelyn Lassègue** was named Haiti's Minister of Culture and Communication in November 2009. She held the position previously from 1991 to 1993, after having worked as a teacher and journalist. From 2006 to November 2009, she was also Minister for Women's Affairs and Women's Rights.

Haiti's new start will not be from zero

Animism, voodoo and fundamentalist Christian beliefs prevent a number of Haitians from taking their destiny into their own hands. Superstition has contributed to the country's fall into the trap of victimhood. A rational analysis of Haiti's past and its present situation is the key to salvation.

by
Michèle Oriol



In Port-au-Prince on 12 January, after the second tremor had ended, I was waiting, anxiously, for the third. That's when I heard shouting. It was coming from the Després and Pacot Hills. There were cries from every street in the Bas Peu de Chose quarter: Jesus! Jesus! Mary! Armageddon!

For the next three nights, all these people – crowded in the streets to escape the crumbled

houses that hid the bodies of their loved ones – prayed to Jesus, chanted prayers, read the Bible. Revelation 6: "And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; [...] and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Revelation 16: "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world [...]"

This Haitian couple, starting over, have already planted trees in front of their makeshift home. ☺

© UN Photo/Sophia Paris

And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. [...] And there were voices, and thunders, and lightning; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell [...] And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found."

Everything was interpreted as a sign: if the churches had collapsed, if the Palais National had gone up in smoke, it was because the politicians had shown themselves unworthy of God.

Revelation 18 (9-10): "And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour is thy judgment come."

I saw people using their bare hands to pull their brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers or neighbours out of the rubble. I saw dead bodies being shovelled up with bulldozers, tipped into skips and buried in common graves, dug into refuse dumps. I saw an endless column of people filing up the hills to Pétion-Ville and Kenscoff, leaving the lower quarters to the looters. This unnamed thing, this *goudougoudou* drove tens of thousands of terrified Haitians out to the provinces, to the Dominican Republic, USA or Canada. Revelation 6 (15): "And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains."

And ever since, by word of mouth, on the radio and television, in gatherings of believers, all one can hear are inspired voices declaring the end of a 25-year cycle, ending in 2011, with the total destruction of Haiti! Revelation 11 (14): "The second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe cometh quickly."

We are in the kingdom of deep-seated fears, which sometimes reverberate through an entire society and demand an explanation.

An eternal victim does not see himself as master of his own destiny

Women praying in front of a statue repainted for the visit of Pope John Paul II, Port-au-Prince cathedral, 1982. ☺

Carmo church in Lisbon (bottom right), destroyed by the 1755 earthquake and preserved in its ruined state, resembles the Port-au-Prince cathedral today (top right). ☺☺

Behold these shreds and cinders of your race,
This child and mother heaped in common
wreck, These scattered limbs beneath
the marble shafts—
A hundred thousand whom the earth
devours,
Who, torn and bloody, palpitating yet,
Entombed beneath their hospitable roofs,
In racking torment end their stricken lives.
To those expiring murmurs of distress,
To that appalling spectacle of woe,
Will ye reply: "You do but illustrate

The Iron laws that chain the will of God"?
Say ye, o'er that yet quivering mass of flesh:
"God is avenged: the wage of sin is death"?
What crime, what sin, had those young
hearts conceived
That lie, bleeding and torn, on mother's
breast?
Did fallen Lisbon deeper drink of vice
Than London, Paris, or sunlit Madrid?

"Poem on the Lisbon Disaster"
Voltaire

© Charles Carrié





In eight days I did not see a single uniformed person in the streets. Not a Haitian policeman, nor a soldier from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. It was four weeks before the Head of State addressed the nation. The State seemed to have collapsed along with its symbolic buildings. Even today, we are still waiting for decisions and directives that never come.

Another time, another place – a detour through history

On 1 November 1755, at 9.40 a.m., that is, on the morning of the Catholic All Saints Day, a terrible earthquake struck Lisbon, devastating it in the space of a few minutes. And then an enormous tsunami engulfed the centre of the city. What the sea spared was devoured by fire. A quarter of the inhabitants lost their lives and most of the

buildings were destroyed. Under the ruins of the Royal Palace, the 70,000 books and priceless archives of the national library lay in fragments.

We are told that the very pragmatic Prime Minister, Sebastião de Melo, Marquis of Pombal, simply said: "What now? Bury the dead and feed the living." And he immediately sent troops to put out the flames and gather the bodies, publicly hanged looters as a warning, and prevented able-bodied inhabitants from leaving the city ... Barely a year later the city had been cleaned up and reconstruction could begin.

This catastrophe shook all of Europe and even influenced Enlightenment philosophers. Humanity felt alone in the Universe. It was no longer possible to speak of Providence without thinking of Lisbon.

How will the 2010 earthquake change Haitian thinking?

For an animist society, an earthquake is not a natural phenomenon, but the result of some malicious intervention. Biblical references, within the context of Protestant fundamentalist churches and integrated by Voodooists and Catholics, only exacerbate the trauma suffered by the people. This phenomenon has a considerable hold over people's minds. Those who are imagining a Haitian nation should think about this.

Haiti was considered to be the poorest country in the Northern hemisphere; now it sees itself as the unluckiest, even cursed. We have long been subject to incessant victimisation by our leaders, but also by many Haitian and foreign intellectuals. Victimhood is the greatest trap before us today. In our very fragile institutional context, the world's kindness and generosity

© Jasmína Šopova



© UN Photo/Marco Dormino



may undermine our capacity to look after ourselves. We must banish victimhood and rediscover our self-esteem. An eternal victim does not see himself as master of his own destiny.

Over these past decades, as Haitian institutions gradually started to go under, as the economy floundered, as the spectre of civil war loomed closer and closer, as the State lost its sovereignty – as much the fault of interventions by armies of foreigners as of uncoordinated international aid – our identity crisis only deepened. And we were entirely focused on the past, so confused was the present, while the future seemed a dead-end.

We cover our ancestors with curses in order to cast a puritanical veil over what is happening under our noses today.

But what have we inherited from this past? The images of Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, these two former semi-illiterate slaves who were able to lead Haiti towards independence, to establish a republic, create a nation and thus remain a source of pride. But also, and especially, a sinister refrain which is constantly being beaten out: for 200 years, all Haitian Heads of State have been despots, murderers and corrupt; for 200 years, the administration has been a mess; for 200 years, the country has been torn apart by civil wars and social inequalities.

Trying to start from zero again

This denigration of the past is harmful for the future. And it is not innocuous: it lets those in power off the hook and, with them, the international community that supports them. We cover our ancestors with curses in order to cast a puritanical veil over what is happening under our noses today, namely, an increase in the rate of population growth that the economy cannot support and that politicians ignore; a dehumanising form of urbanisation, born of the destruction of the peasant economy; the trivialisation of the impact of the presence of foreign armed forces; and an ecological disaster that is largely the responsibility of timber exporting companies.

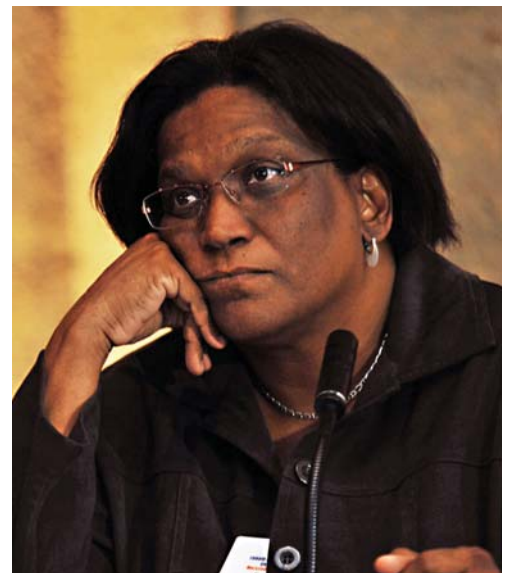
The capital had become a monster, with over two million inhabitants. The population doubled every ten years between 1970 and 1990. It tripled between 1990 and 2000. And as a result, 62% of its housing was built between 1995 and 2000.

In other words, it was not our ancestors who built the houses in Port-au-Prince that killed over 200,000 people. The responsibility for these buildings lies with Haiti's present-day politicians and the countless foreign aid missions, which, for

the past 16 years, have been sharing power with our leaders.

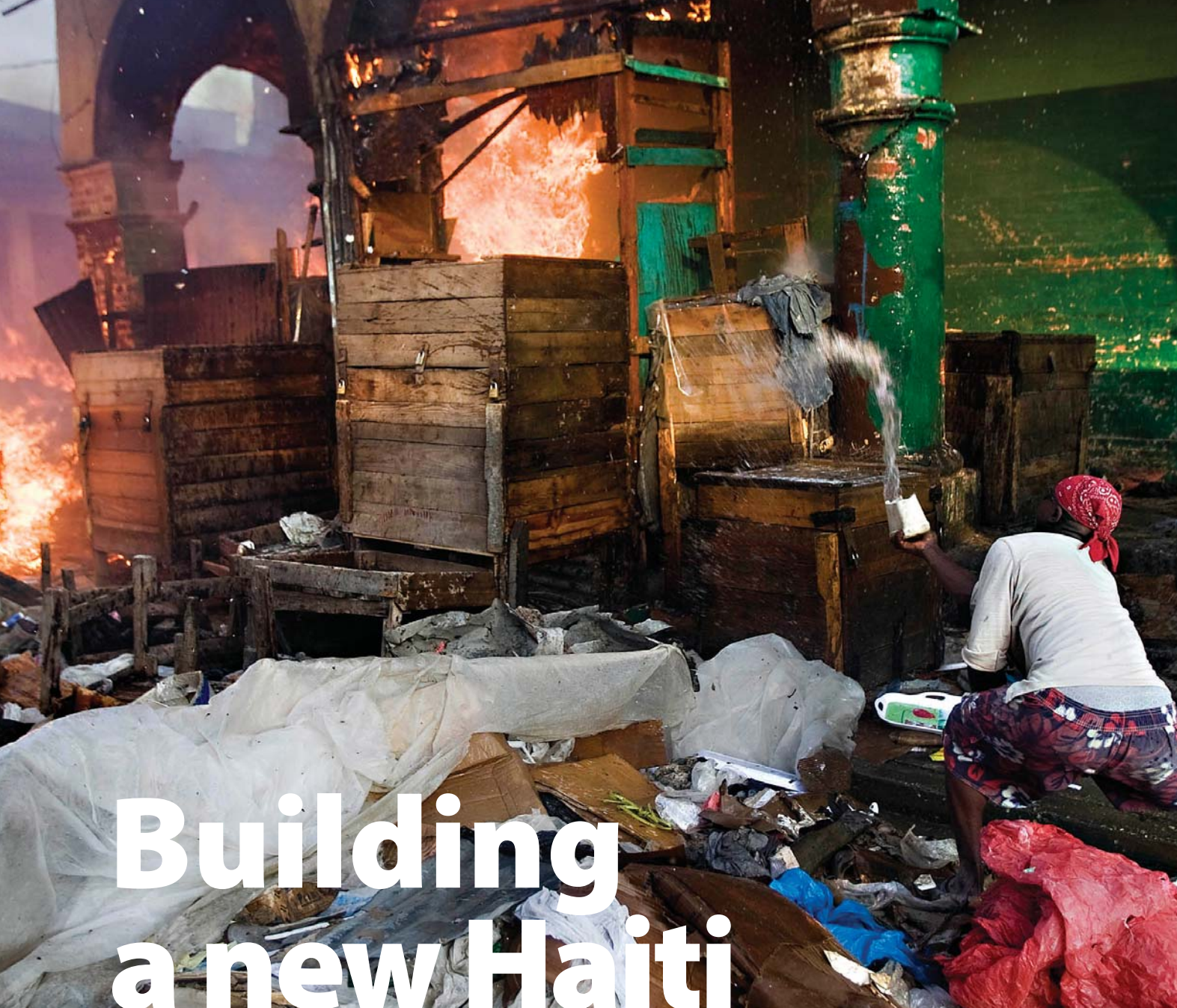
Rather than condemn the past, why not study recent history and the present day? Since the Americans arrived under the flag of the United Nations, in 1994, political authority has been, at best, ambiguous: we are neither a trusteeship, nor entirely independent. Governments on artificial life-support succeed one another, leading the State towards a bottomless precipice. So the question of political power clearly needs to be posed, as it is central to reconstruction.

Wanting to restructure the Haitian state seems like a dream of starting from zero again. The Haitian state has existed for 206 years. It is not a matter of restructuring it, but, on the contrary, of creating links between the past and the present, reconnecting with history and considering what it has to teach us. This is the way to return meaning to the lives of the Haitian people, and with it a sense of dignity and self esteem. ■



© UNESCO / Michel Ravassard

A Haitian sociologist and anthropologist, **Michèle Oriol** one of the creators of the Foundation for Iconographic and Documentary Research in Port-au-Prince. She is a member of the Haitian National Committee for the Memory of the World, a UNESCO programme devoted to the preservation and dissemination of archive holdings and library collections around the world. An independent consultant for a range of national and international institutions, she has contributed to many rural development and environmental protection projects and has directed an international research team on the Haitian property situation. She lectures on family sociology at the Faculty of Human Sciences at the Haitian State University.



Building a new Haiti

Brain drain, cultural destitution, social decay, irresponsibility, corruption – these are key words in this harshly critical portrait of Haitian reality, followed by proposals for rebuilding a new Haiti founded on science, intelligence, competence, humanism and humility.

by
Nancy Roc

We are going to have to accept that it will be impossible to reconstitute the social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti. Contrary to what has sometimes been claimed – that the social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti was torn apart on 12 January 2010 – it was in tatters long before this fateful day.

Twenty years of populism had already polarized Haitian society, deepening the class divide and accelerating a brain drain that has begun under the François Duvalier regime. “Over 83% of the best qualified workforce produced in

Haiti ends up by leaving the country to live abroad,” says the World Bank, adding that the USA is the preferred destination for the great majority of expatriate professionals. Canada is another.

Following the 12 January earthquake, this haemorrhaging out of the country has already increased and could well get worse if concrete and urgent action is not taken very soon. With unemployment running at 90%, Haiti’s economy was already in the red long before the earthquake. It would be better not to dwell on the figures here, to avoid even more self-flagellation.

Desperate gesture.
Port-au-Prince,
12 January 2010. ☞

© UN Photo/Marco Dormino



*Haitians try to leave
Port-au-Prince by boat.* ↻

As a country, Haiti is lagging behind in everything. The world's first black Republic has become the pariah of the American continent – a country that has never been able to lift itself to nation status and which is, today, more than ever, dependent on international charity. Charity, and not aid for sustainable development, which, instead of helping our country get on its feet, has, for the past 20 years, dragged it into the dark depths of misery. Of course, Haitians are the first to blame for their social decadence, but donors should also accept their share of the responsibility. And that is why the next governments need to make enlightened choices and turn to the Haitian diaspora, which provides three times more money each year than the international community – \$1.8 billion compared to \$500 million, respectively.

Successive governments since 1986 have claimed that Haitian culture is our greatest asset. Yet nothing has been done to show this culture off. If it were not for the vitality and talent of our artists and creators, this culture would also probably be moribund today. How is it that, in the 21st century, Haiti does not have a single theatre worthy of the name? Last August, the capital's only cinema announced that it was closing, seriously threatening the survival of

Haiti's nascent film industry. The National Theatre and National School of Arts buildings have long been ruins, or used for political ends far removed from any artistic vocation. Even if Haitian culture is still alive, there is absolutely nowhere that it can be appreciated. The destitution of Haitian culture is shameful: not a single theatre or cinema, no museum fit for the country's art, local publishing enterprises with no resources, no newspapers or magazines, no cultural radio station, no cultural policy, no real school of art. What has happened to the country that seduced French Culture Minister and intellectual André Malraux.

All is not lost

The time has come to "reshuffle the cards" and all may not be lost. In its Plan of Action for Recovery and Development presented to the United Nations on 31 March, the Haitian government recognises, for the first time, that culture is "an element whose marginalisation has, for many years, led to the failure of development support programmes in almost all countries." Obviously, this presupposes that the State sends clear signals that it is willing to help to make the cultural sector economically both viable and enviable.

Successive governments since 1986 have claimed that Haitian culture is our greatest asset. Yet nothing has been done to show this culture off. If it were not for the vitality and talent of our artists and creators, this culture would also probably be moribund today.

It is worth noting that while Haitians are quick to blame the inefficiency of the State, it is also hard to believe that not a single organisation, company or businessman in Haiti is interested in investing more in culture. Last August, in an article entitled "The case for a real theatre in Haiti", published in the *Le Matin* newspaper and reprinted in the *Courrier International* under the headline "The Show is Over"¹, I tried to attract the Haitian public's attention to the economic potential of the culture sector. In 2007 alone, culture brought in almost \$25 billion in taxes to Canada's Federal, provincial and municipal government coffers. That is almost three times more than the \$7.9 billion invested in culture and the arts by these three levels of government put together². But to understand and strive towards this, mediocrity has to be abandoned. When will we see real Haitian patrons and philanthropists with a sense of social commitment and dignity? When will we see less philistine entrepreneurs? Why is it that, for several years, the biggest sports and cultural events in Haiti have mainly been sponsored by foreign mobile phone companies? What does this say about the vision of Haitian businessmen? These questions are still unanswered.

In intellectual terms, too, Haiti raises some unsettling questions. How has this State with no idea of being a nation become a country without government? It seems to us that the motto of "everyone for themselves", together with a very jealous mistrust of its neighbours, can find its roots in the country's history, where the State has never really embodied anything of any value. Haiti's elite has never worked for the development of the country or the common good. First, because it looks down, disparagingly, on the "illiterate masses" and also because of its greed for power. And the lingering odour of slavery in Haitian society has not encouraged a sense of responsibility, at any level of society. The expression "*sé pa fot moin*" (it's not my fault) has become a national slogan.

But if Haiti is not responsible... obviously, someone else is. It is only a short step between calling on foreign organisations to intervene and then immediately denouncing the "interference" of foreigners in Haitian life. The bankruptcy of the country's elite can be seen in the following observation: for 200 years, as the Haitian sociologist, Laënnec Hurbon, put it "the feeling of being a citizen of this country has not been clear. The mentality of the citizen has not evolved much." The question of skin colour, often utilized by political parties in power, has widened the social divide in a society of apartheid and has not helped Haitians to find consensus around the notion of "living together". And, because populism has exacerbated contempt for intellectuals, they have been relieved of their

social responsibilities. The global success of Dany Lafférière, Frankétienne, Lionel Trouillot, Gary Victor, Yanick Lahens, Louis Philippe Dalembert, to name but a few, proves that our writers are able to conquer the world. What is more, some of them took part in the "new social contract movement" launched in 2004 by the Haitian political collective known as the "Group of 184", which called on the Haitian people "to rise to the challenge of overcoming the historical obstacles that have hindered Haitian unity, blocked development and, even today, led to the political, social and economic decline of our country." But, once its "political leaders" abandoned the movement, so did they.

Identity: one or many?

According to the Cameroonian sociologist, Axelle Kabou, "every society is, in the first and final analysis, responsible for the entirety of its history, without exclusion." It is therefore necessary that our intellectuals urgently raise the issue of Haitian identity. What, really, is it today? Is there one Haiti or are there only fragments of a Haitian identity scattered across the world? Can we speak of a common Haitian stock that holds true for all Haitians living in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Miami, Boston, New York, Paris and Montreal? What is the best way to structure reflection on the question and come up with different approaches?

In the light of these points, which are only the main strands of the problems inherent in the tattered social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti, how to mobilise social knowledge and skills in order to revitalise Haiti today?

I certainly do not claim to have THE answer to such a complex question, given the context I have just outlined. Nevertheless, it does seem possible to set out some proposals, some of which are already being implemented.

The role of the diaspora

Recently, Amos Cincir, my colleague at the newspaper, *Le Nouvelliste*, wrote: "the country is facing a significant exodus, especially of its elite. No less than 10,000 Haitians, among the best qualified, have been leaving the island every year since 2000. But illegal migration often ends in tragedy, with 1000 would-be emigrants dying every year on the high seas. Those who do succeed in leaving become the breadwinners for the families who stay behind. Almost 40% of Haitian homes depend on money sent home from the diaspora. In 2008, family money transfers reached \$1.8 billion, or almost one third of gross domestic product. Unfortunately, with the global economic crisis, this source of income is also decreasing, falling by at least 30% between 2008 and 2009. This hemorrhaging of manpower and minds is just as much a catastrophe as a second earthquake. Because the Haitians who are

The reconstruction of Haiti today has to be based upon a mixture of science, intelligence, competence, humanism and humility, too, in order to build a fairer and more equal society.

leaving are those who represent the best hope for rebuilding the country.”

This exodus unfortunately only adds to the 83% of professionals already exiled from Haiti. So it is clear that there can be no reconstruction or reestablishment of Haiti without the active and sustained participation of the Haitian diaspora. The Prime Minister, Jean Max Bellerive, and the minister for ex-patriot Haitians, Edwin Paraison, clearly accepted this principle at the Montreal Conference on 25 January this year, and during the “Rebuilding Haiti – Horizon 2030” symposium held at the École Polytechnique in Montreal by the Study and Action Group for a New Haiti (GRAHN), on 4 and 5 March. But we also know that Haitians in Haiti have always been reticent when it comes to their compatriots abroad. The constitution of the Republic does not allow dual nationality, and this has forced the majority of the best Haitian brains, often against their wishes, to opt for the nationality of their adoptive country. Even so, without its diaspora, Haiti would have disappeared long ago.

Projects that UNESCO can support

The reconstruction of Haiti today has to be based upon a mixture of science, intelligence, competence, humanism and humility, too, in order to build a fairer and more equal society. In other words, Haitians need to design and build a completely different country, with the prime objective being the common good. To do this, it will be indispensable to include the diaspora and all the Haitian social networks.

The symposium on “Rebuilding Haiti – Horizon 2030”, which attracted over 600 participants from Haiti and the four corners of the its diaspora, clearly showed that Haitian men and women can make concrete proposals to the bodies concerned with the reconstruction of their country, using ideas derived from a participatory approach, as well as the expertise and sensitivities available, both on the island and abroad.

Some 45 preliminary proposals³ came out of this historic conference.

Some education projects are already underway, including establishing a permanent structure for those in the diaspora working in education and for friends of Haiti; a distance learning structure capable, in the long term of turning into an open or distance learning university, covering the entire country; an internship programme for Haitian students in enterprises where members of the diaspora occupy senior positions; skill sharing networks in the diaspora, aimed at knowledge transfer and economic development.

Concerning culture, GRAHN suggests, among other initiatives, the creation of a fund for heritage conservation and the development of

cultural enterprises across the country, as well as launching a programme of travelling exhibitions and other methods for disseminating culture using new technologies.

Here, then, are a few projects that UNESCO could support. I would also like to act as spokesperson for artists and young Haitians by asking UNESCO to help my country to find partners to fund a real multi-purpose theatre venue in Haiti.

Finally, it goes without saying that a new Haiti must absolutely rid itself of the demons of corruption at all levels. Let us not forget the words of the French journalist, Edwy Plenel: “Once exposed, financial corruption can be combated and sanctioned. The corruption of ideas is more insidious, more subtle and, in this respect, more inherently dangerous”⁴ ■

This article is an extract of Nancy Roc’s presentation at the Forum on “Rebuilding the social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti” held by UNESCO, on 24 March 2010. The entire text delivered at UNESCO headquarters, as well as an audio-visual recording, are available at: www.unesco.org/new/fr/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_forum_on_haiti/back/18256



© UNESCO / Andrew Wheeler

Nancy Roc is a freelance journalist and campaigner for human rights. She is a member of the Professional Federation of Quebec Journalists (FPJQ), and was awarded its North South Prize in 2008. She has worked for CBC, Radio Canada, TV5, and was the first Haitian woman to become a CNN World Report correspondent. She was cultural attaché for the Haitian Delegation to UNESCO, from 1991 to 1994, and, on her return to Haiti, was appointed Director of the Press office of the Prime Minister, Smarck Michel, but resigned six months later and returned to being a freelance journalist. She currently hosts the Metropolis broadcasts out of Montreal, (www.metropolis.metropolehaiti.com).

1. See the article: www.courrierinternational.com/article/2009/09/03/le-spectacle-est-terme

2. Michel Girard, “La culture rapporte gros aux gouvernements”, *La Presse*, Montréal, 24 September 2008.

3. For further information see the GRAHN conference summary: www.haiti-grahn.net/public/?s=194

4. Edwy Plenel, *Secrets de jeunesse*, Stock, 2001.

The Haitian press: A turning point

A certain degree of freedom of expression characterizes Haitian media. But the media must take a hard look at itself and rid itself of triviality so that it can act as a mobilizing force.

in Haiti, with its high rate of illiteracy, 94% of the population owns a radio, according to a survey by the French agency, Médiascom. But the FM band is saturated – there are already over 40 stations in the capital – and the government agency that looks at applications for frequencies is no longer awarding licenses. Competition is high for advertising revenue and the “top” stations, like Métropole, Vision 2000, Caraïbes, Ginen, Signal and Kiskeya have grabbed the lion’s share. Many others, lacking the necessary financial resources, broadcast technically poor programmes, often put together by completely untrained staff. These stations are no more than sounding boards, devoting a significant part of air time to petty politics, in the form of accusations, indiscretions, slander, and clan quarrels. The same holds for the dozen or so television channels that have sprung up in the past three years.

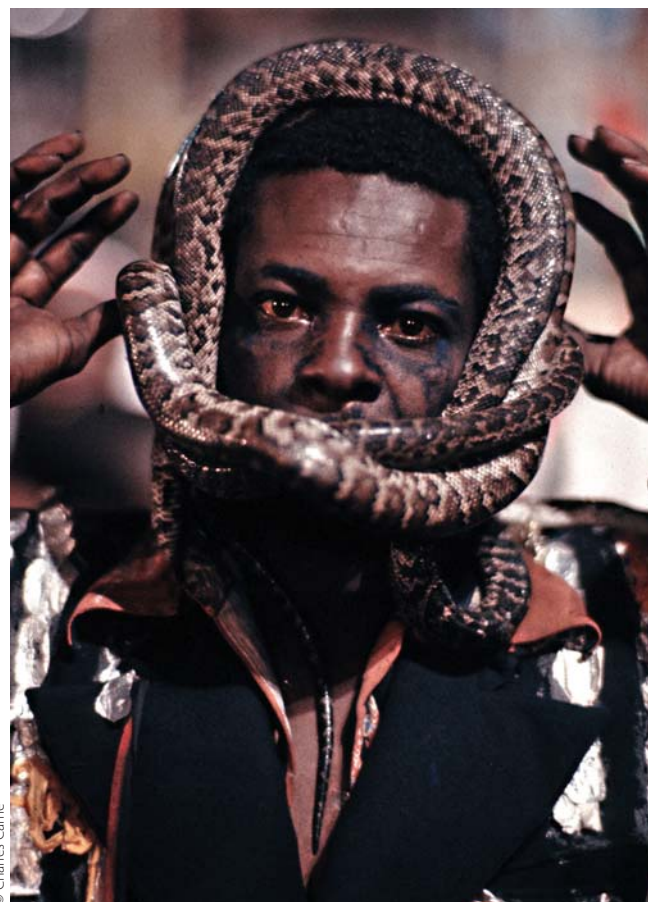
Articulate, objective and rigorous critical thinking is the prerogative of a few seasoned journalists. The two daily papers, *Le Nouvelliste* and *Le Matin*, both of which started at the end of the 19th century, are still sentinels, despite their modest circulation (20,000 copies per edition) and very limited distribution outside the capital.

The Haitian press has not developed the necessary detachment to help unite the Haitian people. It has not marshalled the human resources to rise to the huge challenges facing the country: threat of earthquakes, urgent need for redevelopment, environmentally damaging energy

by
**Roberson
Alphonse**

***The Haitian
press has
to give
responsible
freedom a try.***

*Critical thinking stifled:
scene from Port-au-Prince
carnival, February 1985.* ♣



© Charles Carrié

production, education, reorganisation of the economy and production, showcasing the country’s art and culture. And this was the situation for the Haitian media well before the earthquake of 12 January 2010.

As with many other sectors of society, the media were severely affected by the earthquake. Two months on, most have resumed production, but with the same old programme schedules and no sign of any new commitment regarding the new challenges posed by the catastrophe. However, *Le Nouvelliste* and *Le Matin* have announced that they will be more exacting, even militant, and that they will use the tragedy as an opportunity for a “spring clean”.

Critical thinking stifled

I am not here to put my predecessors on trial. Many of them paid with their lives for the right I now



RUNE

© Plume

enjoy to practise my vocation with a certain degree of freedom. I am simply questioning certain positions that have been adopted, some of which verge on fanaticism, reinforcing existing rifts, exacerbating political and social tensions and fostering a mistrust of the press.

This failure of the media is part of a wider context, where Haitian society has ceased to be demanding, to reward merit, to have high ambitions. It cannot seem to escape the debilitating *status quo* it has been stuck in for the past decades. Learning, which for a long time underwrote political power, has not been used judiciously. On the contrary, Haiti is one of the few countries where knowledge is divisive. Meanwhile, a magical-religious perception of science creates the most incredible situations. And, for many of my compatriots, the death of the 200,000 or so victims of 12 January was not because building regulations were flouted, but because of God! This was God's decision, they say. The churches are constantly full. The priests are rubbing their hands.

Come down to earth, journalists! ☺



© UNESCO / Michel Ravassard

I believe in the future of my country and in the future of a new press. I believe that a new intellectual, financial and political elite will emerge from the ruins

Roberson Alphonse is a journalist on the daily *Le Nouvelliste* (Haiti), news editor at Radio Magik 9 and chairman of the Commission on continuing education for the Association of Haitian Journalists (AJH).

Meanwhile, popular – not to say trivial – entertainment still makes up the bulk of certain radio stations, also overrun with advertisements for imported products. Where are the real issues? “It’s not what the public wants to hear,” you will be told. And so, critical thinking continues to be stifled.

Reinventing the press

Now, even more than in the past, there is an urgent need to work towards a paradigm shift in information and to organize a States-General of the press. This major change of direction – the invention of a modern press, which is professional, courageous, ambitious, freed from the grip of political power and the financial establishment – is easier said than done. But it must be done. It will be a long and arduous process, requiring a responsible partnership between State, regulatory bodies, and independent media stakeholders.

Before the earthquake, two different schools of thought clashed on the need or not to have a law regulating the press. Those who favour legislation dream of regulatory bodies like the French Higher Council for Radio and Television. Those who are against, having endured the Duvalier dictatorships, see dictatorial tendencies and backlash in any attempt to introduce norms. The belief that we can do everything without standards or constraints is a form of atavism for us, in Haiti, and is an enormous handicap.

First of all the Haitian press has to remodel itself, before trying to mobilise social and intellectual resources. In the short term, I think we need to design training programmes for journalists. The support of UNESCO, which has long-standing links to the Haitian Association of Journalists, will once again be welcome. The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Communication, journalists’ associations and newspaper publishers’ associations, will have to work together to decide on the curricula. And, besides training, we also need to address another vexing question: paying professional journalists a decent wage. Today, a journalist’s basic salary is 100 Euros a month.

The challenge, in the world of communications, as in other sectors, is enormous. Nevertheless, I believe in the future of my country and in the future of a new press. I believe that a new intellectual, financial and political elite will emerge from the ruins. A responsible elite that is committed to building a different kind of citizenship, another sense of community, a new meaning for the word Haitian. The Haitian press, once it has been remodelled, will play a leading role. To borrow a friend’s expression, it has to “give responsible freedom a try”; to make a clear-cut distinction between the intellectual elite and Haitian politics – in other words, to help the people to choose their leaders carefully. If this is not done, we will once again fail to get to the heart of the matter. We must act now. ■

by
Raoul Peck

A common search for greater humanity

The absence of vision is Haiti's most serious problem. The country has been receiving the wrong kind of aid for so long. Yet the latest tragedy could be a catalyst for national and international energies.

Let us forget the idea right from the start that the Haitian people are defeated, resigned, or helpless. Let us not see Haiti as a disaster victim. The world can and must learn lessons from the recent tragedy in this country of 10 million inhabitants, and from its lengthy history, in order to attempt the radical change that is needed more than ever in the current international context.

What is this context? Cut-backs and more cut-backs. Rich nations heavily in debt. Questionable, or non-existent, proposals for getting out of the crisis. Flagrant inequalities in wealthy societies. The socially excluded left by the wayside. Unemployment, bankruptcies, suicides, misery, questions of identity – these are just a few of the most conspicuous symptoms of the lack of options for the future.

The real difference between the richest and the poorest nations – and it is considerable – lies in the fact that the former have the material, intellectual and structural resources to change the situation. On condition that they want to. Because what is manifestly missing is the political will. And perhaps the capacity to muster the forces. We have to accept that the world is not functioning as it should and provide ourselves with the means to make a radical change.

*Daily life in
Port-au-Prince,
January 2010.*

© UN Photo/Marco Dormino





© Leah Gordon

Under foreign influence, Haitian rice production was destroyed in the 1990s. ☞

An accumulation of failures

A radical change has to be made, considering the failures that have characterized the last 60 years: there has been the failure of most development policies; the failure of structural adjustment, which was supposed to improve the economies of developing countries sustainably; the failure, so far, of the UN in conflict situations; the failure of the European Union as a counter to the financial frenzy of capitalism; failure of the major ideological blocs, unable to provide any response beyond their hegemonic needs and interests; failure of the non-aligned countries' promises to propose a viable alternative to the deadly dichotomy of the Cold War; failure of the international Left, and in particular social democracy, which has been unable to counterbalance global disequilibrium; and, finally, the failure of the progressive Left in our developing countries, so often cornered with their backs against the wall, abandoned by their Western allies, who are too preoccupied with their own political survival.

We have to accept that the world is not functioning as it should and provide ourselves with the means to make a radical change.

This accumulation of failures makes me think that the real way out, for Haiti, can only come from itself. Why, yet again, should we trust this apparent willingness to "aid" Haiti today? Why should we adhere blindly to hastily-drafted scenarios, often drawn up far from our shores? Several Haitian organizations and movements have denounced the procedure adopted to draft Haiti's "Action Plan for Reconstruction and Development", from which Haitian social and civil stakeholders were almost totally excluded. I add my voice to theirs, deploring this forced march, which does not allow us to play an active role in reshaping our country.

Turn the current paradigm around

What we are calling for is a little more humility and self-criticism. In an article dated 20 March 2010, Jonathan Katz (Associated Press) wrote that, on 10 March, former U.S. President Bill

Clinton - now U.N. special envoy to Haiti - "publicly apologized this month for championing policies that destroyed Haiti's rice production." He declared before the American Senate's Foreign Affairs commission that "It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, [the state Mr Clinton comes from] but it has not worked. It was a mistake."

Indeed, thirty years ago, Haiti imported just 19% of its food and exported rice and coffee. In 1986, the Haitian President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced, by Bill Clinton and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) among others, to drop our trade barriers on the pretext of structural adjustment. Today, again according to Jonathan Katz, six pounds of rice from *Riceland Foods of Arkansas*, incontestably the largest rice producer in the world, sold for \$3.80, while the same quantity of Haitian-produced rice sold for \$5.12.

Also, let us not forget that the reason we are mourning so many dead in Port-au-Prince is precisely because tens of thousands of peasants, with no resources, no means of production, unable to compete with Western imports, had to move there to look for work.

Everything is related. The so-called remedies of yesterday and the disasters of today. The poverty of the one creates the wealth of the other, and vice versa. Our destinies are linked by common problems, to which international aid alone cannot provide the solution. We need a more global view.

Tragedy and mourning such as Haiti is currently living through can enable us to turn the current paradigm around. Haiti could become a new model for intervention. And this is as urgent for countries of the South as it is for Western cities, where inequalities are also continuing to grow. The sooner we start this process of radical change, the sooner we will be able to join together in a common quest for more humanity, justice, equality and - why not? - happiness.

Is this an ambitious, utopian project? I do not think so. Despite all its failures, humanity has demonstrated a great capacity for kindness, creativity and courage - both individually and collectively. ■



© UNESCO / Michel Ravassard

Former Haitian Minister of Culture (1995-1997), **Raoul Peck** is also a filmmaker, author of *L'homme sur les quais*, *Lumumba*, *L'affaire Villemin*, *Sometimes in April*, *L'école du pouvoir*.

After spending part of his childhood in Congo, he went to school in France and the USA. He went on to study engineering and economics in Germany, before entering the Berlin Academy of Film and Television, where his career started.

Two days before the earthquake in Port-au-Prince, the city where he was born, he was appointed, by presidential decree, head of La Fémis *École Nationale Supérieure des métiers de l'image et du son* in Paris.

Haitians have to save money for ten years to start building a house.

© Jocelyne Beroard



The Haitian economy's vicious circle

The prevailing immobility is sustaining an obsolete economy that condemns Haiti to poverty and blocks progress. Rather than waiting for God to help them, Haitians should abolish the “rentier” system that paralyzes the country.

by
Gérald Chéry

It is not possible to build the economy of a country without first drafting an economic policy and having an administration that is capable of taking responsibility for it. Yet Haiti has neither. The economy is synonymous with the idea of progress, which we do not have either. And there is the rub. The ordinary Haitian citizen does not regard himself as an engineer helping to build his country. He is waiting for progress to come from outside. For him, prosperity lies in God's hands.

We do not allow ourselves to build our own country, to change our reality. We vacillate over the right path to take to rebuild our economy. We remain stuck in a mire of uncertainty, not knowing what to do.

The 12 January 2010 disaster is forcing us to take a close look at our immobility. We can no longer put off changes in the way the economy is run – still very much dependent on external

rents from resources. With just a few sources of income, mostly from coffee production, this type of “rentier” economy benefits only a tiny minority of the population and excludes the vast majority. The entire political life of Haiti is organised around income from renting resources, and strives to protect the few elected representatives who oppose any attempt to diversify, in order to preserve their own privileges. And, to do this, they will stop at nothing to occupy important political posts.

Haitian households are locked into a vicious circle, enduring extreme hardship. They have to save for at least ten years before they have enough money to start building a house and then spend the rest of their lives trying to finish it. It is almost impossible to get a loan in Haiti. The country's whole economy is based on savings, which leads to *cash collateral* (i.e. credit equal to the amount the borrower has in his

savings account) and, as a result, the aberration of investing uniquely with wealth that has already been acquired.

This situation highlights the absence of a monetary policy or credit system that is open to the needs of ordinary people, in a country where the government is mainly concerned with the interests of those with income from external rents. This also explains the emergence of government substitutes, in the forms of NGOs, the international community and ... God! – all supposed to look after the needs of the people.

No salvation without credit

Haiti will never get back on its feet without adopting an economy based on credit. If the 200,000 families that fell victim to the earthquake are ever to buy a home again, they will have to be able to get a mortgage that they can pay off over 15 or 20 years. And, given that most households cannot raise the



© UN Photo/Logan Abassi

Man carrying his daughter after the flooding of their home in Cité Soleil, near Port-au-Prince. ↻

The mismanagement of natural disasters in the past six years speaks volumes on this subject.

In order to get the full benefit of outside aid and build the foundations for a new economy, the country's leaders should appeal to international institutions temporarily to exonerate Haiti from certain rules regulating international commerce. They should also encourage setting up a first wave of industries related to building (steel and cement works, electrical equipment, etc) and fitting out homes (appliances, sanitary ware, decorating supplies), which are sectors that have not been promoted in the past because of the lack of demand. Emphasis should also be put on training, because it is only with qualified workers and competitive products that the country will be able to pay off its external debt.

Other changes will be necessary to boost employment in Haiti, such as decentralisation and local development; social security reforms which encourage workers to choose careers in industry; reforms in economic policy that enable the release of internal capital; facilitation of public-private partnerships to stimulate the development of industry and to support the State in sectors of the economy where its presence is ineffectual; university reforms to train more professionals and supply the administration with new ideas on economic and social change. ■

obligatory 30% of the total purchase price stipulated by law, their job should stand as guarantee for the loan.

Also, if loans are given to earthquake victims, then they should be available to everyone. The whole credit system has to be generalised and made accessible to all, including, and above all, to enterprises, so that they can grow and provide jobs and thus enable families to repay their loans.

Loans, then, should be based on the future employment of borrowers, in other words, on their skills, which implies that they should be able to receive training matched to the needs of the market. The overall volume of credits and investments will thus depend on the capacity of the workforce to be competitive on world markets, and not on savings or foreign aid.

The credit economy is not matter of the good will of political leaders or individuals, but is a fundamental factor in the productive apparatus of a nation. If the State does not have a policy that lends credibility to the various economic stakeholders, then the country will continue to flounder in the same problems it has always had.

To make the reconstruction of Haiti possible, it is essential that the State accepts to run an economy that is based on the needs of all social groups and not just an elite living on private income from external rents.

Managing loans and gifts

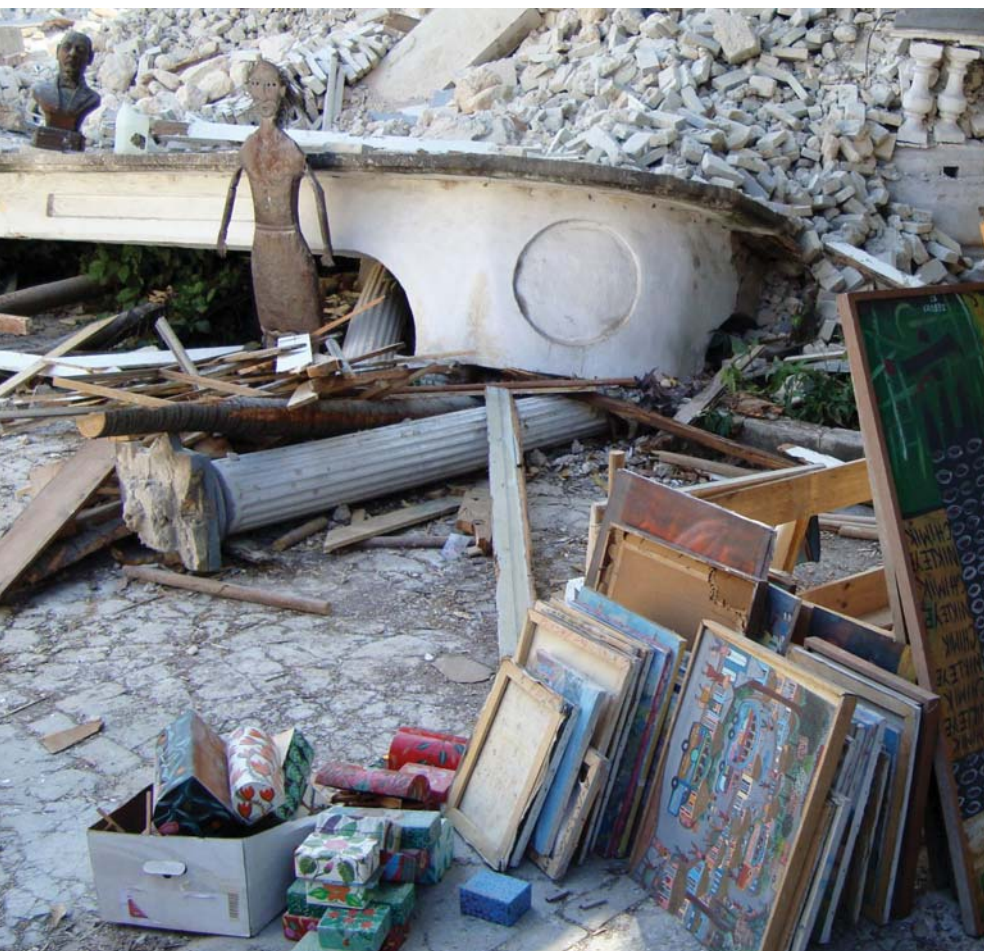
The extraordinary solidarity shown by the international community towards Haiti translates as donations and loans that will, above all, be used to rebuild urban areas. Construction companies will share the funds between them. And the donors will be satisfied if the programme is completed with a minimum of corruption.

But, with the exception of Port-au-Prince, the impact of this aid on the national economy will be minimal and transient, if the decision is made to import building materials on a massive scale. Once the money has run out, the State will have its buildings, a few families will have homes, while everyone else will be left to fend for themselves. The 'rentier' economy will have traversed a brief period of prosperity, while the problems of financing production and of employment will remain unresolved.




© UNESCO / Andrew Wheeler

Gérald Chéry, economist, is a member of the Haitian National Commission for Public Procurement.



© UNESCO/Fernando Brugman

Cultural determinism can lead to dangerous theories that the failures of growth and democratization are due to inherent flaws in cultural traits. The concept of cultural identity must be demythologized for culture to be an asset in social development.

National Art Centre, Port-au-Prince, after the 12 January 2010 earthquake. 

Culture by Antonio Vigilante and development: two sides of the coin

The relationship between culture and development is the subject of a debate that is far from exhausted. Let us define the two concepts. What do we mean by culture? As the French-Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf said, the cultural endowment of an individual or a community is composed of a vertical dimension, which we inherit from ancestors and traditions, and a horizontal one, shaped by our times and our contemporaries. And what about development? It requires more than a decent standard of living and political freedom, as the 2004 Human Development Report from the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP) reminds us. Cultural liberty is now recognized as a human right and an important aspect of human development.

There is however no clear relationship between culture and development. Waves of cultural determinism emerge recurrently, attributing the failures of growth and

The cultural and creativity capital should be channelled through incentives and policies aiming to strengthen people's social capital.

democratization to inherent flaws in cultural traits. To fight such dangerous theories, we should consider that culture is not uniquely critical in determining our lives and identities. Gender, class, profession, politics, human and material resources are also hugely important. Cultures evolve, hence a society's culture may determine very little of its future development. In short, I believe there is no grand cultural theory of development.

Haitian people and artists possess a formidable creativity that creates magic, poetry, paintings, and music and "allows exploration of the eternity of the unknown", to borrow an expression from

Bolivian writer Eduardo Scott Moreno. Yet, in the words of one of his characters, a Haitian intellectual in the novel *La Doncella del Baron Cemeterio* (The Servant of Baron Cimetièrè¹), “notwithstanding this, I see no social and political future”.

The obvious contradiction indicates that culture alone is not necessarily a crucial factor of development, especially if interpreted only as individualistic artistic creativity and expression. Culture can however be a potentially powerful asset, which if appropriately stimulated and encouraged also by public policies, can lead to an enhanced social capital for reconstruction.

Another storm

Haiti represents the *perfect storm*² of development challenges, brought about by two major causes: alienation of the population and lack of legitimate, functioning institutions. At the centre of the storm is the lack of a legitimate, valid social contract between the government and citizens. The recent natural disasters have tragically aggravated the consequences of such a storm and the Haitian people’s suffering.

It is now generally acknowledged that what Haiti needs more than reconstruction is “re-foundation”. This great challenge requires accommodating cultural identity and facilitating evolution, while avoiding making it a myth, since it can hardly be achieved without significant transformational changes in political leadership, institutional capacity and social movements and without a shared understanding of what constitutes the national sustainable development goal. The cultural and creativity capital should be channelled through incentives and policies aiming to strengthen people’s social capital, i.e. the value, mechanisms, trust and interactions that enable the maximisation of the country’s development potential.

The Action Plan for national development prepared by the Government points to some promising paths, such as decentralization, territorial poles of development and investments in culture. Understandably, those who wrote it were focused on people’s suffering, and had despair and urgency in mind. But for a vision to

come true it cannot be determined top-down, as it is the case for the Plan.

The first re-foundational task is therefore to create a national political leadership capable of using decentralization as a vehicle for people’s genuine participation in determining local and national priorities. This leadership must be able to devise implementation and political and financial accountability systems that allow Haitian citizens to be engaged actors and not just supposed “beneficiaries”.

I believe that the opportunity ahead for Haiti is to make a fresh start by defining a vision, a national economic and social project with which all citizens can identify, for which their culture and creativity can serve as an essential tool linked to all domains of life. ■

1. Baron Cimetièrè is a Voodoo spirit of death, like Baron La Croix and Baron Samedì.

2. “The Perfect Storm” is the title of a novel by American writer Sebastian Junger and its film version by German director Wolfgang Petersen. The expression refers to a combination of circumstances that aggravate a situation catastrophically.



© UNESCO / Michel Ravassard

Antonio Vigilante (Italy), is the director of the United Nations and UNDP office in Brussels (Belgium). He was formerly UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Egypt, Bulgaria and Bolivia; he has carried out other UN assignments in New York, Barbados, Ethiopia, Honduras and Bolivia.



In the 1970s, Haiti imported 10% of the food it needed; now that figure stands at 60%. The state has handed over responsibility to non-governmental organizations, which provide up to 80% of public services. What is wrong?

Painting by Haitian artist Préfète Duffaut. ©



© UNESCO/Alexis N. Vorontzoff

The four pillars of Haitian reconstruction

by **Alex Dupuy**

Long before the magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti on January 12 and leveled the metropolitan capital city of Port-au-Prince and its surrounding areas, that city was already a disaster in the making. In 1950, Port-au-Prince had a population of 150,000. It reached 732,000 by 1982 and between 2 and 3 million by 2008. The problem, however, is that the city's infrastructure did not expand commensurably with this phenomenal growth in population. What few services were provided were poorly

administered or primarily served the needs of the wealthier districts or suburbs. Consider, for example, that only about 28 percent of Haitians have access to health care, 54 percent to potable water, and 30 percent to sanitation services. In short, the Haitian state long ago abdicated its responsibilities to the majority of Haitian citizens, both urban and rural, and at least since the Duvalier era has deferred to bilateral and multilateral aid donors and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide

services to the population. More NGOs per capita operate in Haiti than in any other country in the world, and they provide 70 percent of health care and 80 percent of public services in rural areas. This, in turn, has reinforced the state's *laissez-aller* practices and led to the near total privatization of basic services. Unfortunately the turn to democratic rule has not changed that basic reality.

Estimates put the death toll at 250 to 300,000. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) estimates the total damage and losses caused by the earthquake at between \$8 and \$13 billion, thereby making it the costliest disaster in recent recorded history. More than 1.3 million people have been rendered homeless, and only 50 to 60 percent of them have received some emergency shelter. Haitian geologists had warned of the probability of an earthquake for years, but, as with previous massive destruction and loss of lives caused by hurricanes and tropical storms (in 2004 and 2008), the government took no measures to prepare for that eventuality. The capacity of the Haitian state to respond to a crisis of this magnitude (or even to less severe ones) is nonexistent primarily because of shortsighted practices and policies that always prioritized the interests of the few. Along with Bolivia, Haiti has the highest income inequality in the hemisphere. The richest 10 percent of the population control 47 percent of national income, and 2 percent hold 26 percent of the nation's wealth. By contrast, the poorest 20 percent receive 1.1 percent of national income; 76 percent of the population live on less than US\$2/day, and more than half live on less than US\$1/day.

The dominant economic and political classes of Haiti did not create these conditions alone but did so in close partnership with foreign governments and economic actors with long-standing interests in Haiti, principally those of the advanced countries (the United States, Canada, and France) and their international financial institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank). These institutions pursued a twofold strategy that succeeded in transforming Haiti into a supplier of the cheapest



© Olivier Beytout

labor for foreign and domestic investors in the export assembly industry and one of the largest importers of U.S. food in the hemisphere. These outcomes were achieved through a series of “structural adjustment” policies that maintained wages low, dismantled all obstacles to free trade, removed tariffs and quantitative restrictions on imports, offered tax incentives to the manufacturing industries on their profits and exports, privatized public enterprises, reduced public-sector employment, and curbed social spending to reduce fiscal deficits.

At the same time, reducing tariffs and quantitative restrictions on food imports since the 1980s was detrimental to agriculture. Whereas in the 1970s Haiti imported at most 10 percent of its food needs, currently it imports nearly 60 percent and is spending 80 percent of its export revenues to pay for it. Haiti went from being self-sufficient in the production of rice, sugar, poultry, and pork to become the fourth-largest importer of rice from the United States in the world and the largest importer of foodstuffs from the United States in the Caribbean. Trade liberalization, then, essentially meant transferring wealth from Haitian to U.S. farmers and the few firms in Haiti that control food imports. As the economy continued to decline, Haiti became increasingly dependent on remittances from its emigrants, which in 2008 represented 20 percent of Haiti’s gross domestic product.

Pressure is mounting on bilateral and multilateral aid donors to cancel Haiti’s debt. In 2009, the international financial institutions cancelled US\$1.2 billion of Haiti’s debt, but another US\$1.2 billion remains. The United States and the IMF said that they would work again with the other multilateral and bilateral aid donors to provide debt relief to Haiti. However, as significant as these measures are, they do not change these institutions’ overall policies or repair the damage their policies have done to the Haitian economy over the past four decades.

International community again takes charge of Haiti’s fate

What, then, needs to be done? New parliamentary elections were scheduled for February and March of this year, but they have been postponed. President Préval and Edmund Mulet, the new UN Mission chief in Haiti, have renewed their demands for elections to be held as soon as possible. Presidential elections were to be held also in November, but it is unclear when they will be scheduled. In the meantime, the government released the “Action Plan for the Reconstruction and National Development of Haiti,” also known as the “Post-Disaster Needs Assessment” (PDNA) plan drafted with members of the international agencies and financial institutions. The plan estimates the cost of reconstruction at \$11.5 billion, and lays out a vision for the short, medium,

Cap Haitien scene.

and long term that calls for decentralizing power, population, and industry from Port-au-Prince, and investing billions of dollars in infrastructure, construction, tourism, environmental protection, government services, and agriculture.

No doubt, many of the recommendations of the plan must be included in any meaningful reconstruction of the shattered economy. But, given the government’s incapacity to take effective action after the devastations caused by hurricanes and tropical storms in 2008, it is doubtful it will do anything different this time around, especially since its mandate will soon expire. The international community issued its vote of no confidence on the government by insisting that an Interim Development Agency and a Multi-Donors Trust Fund be created and administered by a steering committee comprised of 17 voting members. Of those 17 members, eight will be representatives from the principal international donor community (i.e., the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, the European Union, the IDB, the World Bank, and the United Nations), one from the CARICOM [Caribbean Community], one from other financial donors, and seven from Haiti.. It is clear, then, that the representatives from the international community will have a majority vote in what is being



© Olivier Beytout

presented as a Haitian development and reconstruction plan.

What's more, whereas the PDNA is vague on the specific industrial and agricultural policies it proposes, the international community had already decided what they will be long before the earthquake. In 2009, UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon commissioned former World Bank economist Paul Collier to lay out a development plan for Haiti, and appointed former US President Bill Clinton to spearhead it. In a language similar to the PDNA's, Collier's report calls for decentralizing investments, building road and communication networks, and creating clusters of industrial and agricultural production in different parts of the country. The latter, however, consist essentially of establishing free-trade zones for garment production beyond the two that currently exist in Port-au-Prince and Ouanaminthe, and similar clusters for the production and export of selected agricultural products.

Rethinking the paradigms

From my perspective, then, if Haiti is to be rebuilt on a different foundation that prioritizes the needs and interests of the impoverished majority, it will be necessary to rethink the paradigms that have become a doxy for the major powers and accepted uncritically by Haiti's compliant governments. Such a rethinking has been taking place among rural and urban grassroots

organizations and various sectors of civil society that have been systematically ignored and marginalized in the formulation of the official plan. The alternative agenda

1. Reject or renegotiate all the different versions of the structural adjustment policies of the international financial institutions.
2. Launch an immediate large-scale and national public works project to rebuild and expand Haiti's infrastructure, communication, transportation, public schools, public health facilities, and public housing.
3. Prioritize Haiti's food security and sovereignty by subsidizing production for the local market, and promote the development of small and medium-size industries that use domestic inputs to produce consumer and durable goods for the national market, and, where appropriate, for export, such as, for example, handicraft production.
4. Protect the rights of all workers, including the right to form trade unions, the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike, and the right to a living wage.

It is obvious that these goals cannot be implemented all at once or immediately, but they must serve as the basis for a

large-scale popular mobilization to hold the government to account and to renegotiate Haiti's relations with the international community. One can also hope that the next time around, a mobilized population will not surrender its fate to false prophets. ■



© UNESCO / Andrew Wheeler

Professor of Sociology at Wesleyan University (USA), **Alex Dupuy** has published broadly on social, economic, and political developments in Haiti and the Caribbean. He is the author of *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment Since 1700* (1989), *Haiti in the New World Order: The Limits of the Democratic Revolution* (1997), *The Prophet and Power: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the International Community, and Haiti* (2007).



Street university

A new model of education has emerged from the ruins of Haiti's Quisqueya University, which was entirely destroyed by the earthquake on 12 January 2010. Driven by skills-based volunteering and emphasizing partnerships, it was initiated by rector Jacky Lumarque. These are excerpts from an interview he gave to Jean O'Sullivan of EduInfo.

Ten days after the earthquake, which killed 17 students and staff at Quisqueya University, you had organized a volunteer system. How did this begin?

First the medical students set up in a tent on the parking lot. They were supervised initially by their teachers, then by a team of Slovak doctors who arrived with medicine and equipment looking for somewhere to work. Then the students set up a mobile clinic. After that came fresh water distribution points. The engineering and environmental students went out into the streets, helped people organize themselves into committees to manage the improvised camps as well as introducing work on zoning, sanitation and waste management. The university became a giant volunteering machine!

Eleven more tents went up. Education students were given a crash course in

psychosocial support and put it into practice almost at once again on the streets. They also became involved in running art therapy workshops for children at the weekends, 150 at a time, in one of the tents. I said to them: "The street is your university now".

At the weekend students gathered with their teachers to formalize the non-formal education they had been getting during the week, or to put theory on the practice. We are working on a system to give them academic credits for this work. It changed the paradigm of education for them. They realised that further education doesn't have to be one-way, that it doesn't have to take place within four walls with an all-knowing teacher dispensing knowledge. With the volunteering initiative, knowledge is acquired in the street and the teacher accompanies the process. We are de-institutionalising knowledge.

EduInfo is the Education Sector's electronic newsletter and brings together news, features and latest publications. More: <http://www.unesco.org/en/education/eduinfo-newsletter/>

Were students able to continue studying?

We wired up one of the tents. We call it “the digital tent”. Videoconferences were held with sister universities in Montreal and Paris for students doing master’s degrees. We are looking into online classes to enable students who have almost finished their courses to graduate.

What is the next step?

Given that 400 to 500 new students were not able to begin the second semester that was due to begin at the end of January. We are now giving them a basic grounding or foundation course of 15 weeks’ general education combined with short courses in basic management, logistics, first aid, risk prevention, community organization, etc.

The big challenge is to get the university up and running in a sustainable way by setting up a system of sponsorship by which donors support individual students to the tune of \$200 a month. This enables them to meet their basic living expenses while they continue volunteering, but also to pay tuition costs and thus contribute to the running and staffing of the university. We

badly need this sponsorship as we are a private university and get nothing from the state

Has the earthquake changed your view of what needs to be done to rebuild Haiti’s education system?

Completely. In the light of the devastation of the education system, I have redrafted proposals for a National Education Pact for the Haitian Government. Today the question is not so much getting pupils “back into school” as to get all Haitian children into school – including the 25 per cent of five-to-eleven-year-olds who did not attend school before the earthquake hit. I have consulted a wide cross-section of parents, teachers, students, and education NGOs on this issue. The education budget is currently 9 per cent of Haiti’s GDP. I would like to see it rise to 25 per cent in 2015 and 30 per cent in 2025. The objective would be 100 per cent enrolment, free education, textbooks, materials and a hot meal daily for each child. Accelerated teacher training is essential for this to work. The proposals are ambitious but we can’t afford to have a two-speed system any more. ■

Jacky Lumarque, rector of Quisqueya University, shows UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, (to his left) around the ravaged campus. ↻

Jacky Lumarque a mathematician, has been the rector of Quisqueya University since 2006. The university was founded in 1990 by professors in partnership with a group of Haitian businesses. A former head of the financial management firm Capital Consult, he is currently serving as chairperson of the Presidential Commission for Education in Haiti.

“Now your university is the street.” ↻





© Charles Carrière

Reform instead of repetition

by **Jean Coulanges**

On paper, quality education has been a priority in Haiti for 200 years. In reality, the system is stagnating and helps sustain a society based on inequality and injustice.

A new ideological choice is necessary.

Since Toussaint Louverture in 1801, every Haitian government, with the exception of that of Alexandre Pétiou (1806 – 1818) has had a political and administrative body responsible for education. Article 19 of the Constitution of 1805, signed by Emperor Jean Jacques Dessalines, made education a matter of State concern. King Henry I, better known as King Henry Christophe – who formed a separatist government in the north of the country (1807 – 1820), while the south was under the control of Alexandre Pétiou – was ahead of his time with regard to education, including higher education, and in the practice of arts and crafts.

All constitutions from 1843 to 1987 confirm the right of every Haitian child, boy or girl, to basic education that is “free and common to all citizens,” as a priority and an obligation. However, the country has never been able to implement an education system that follows the cardinal values set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. And, long before 12 January, it was obvious that the education system needed to be overhauled.

Instead of instilling a respect for human rights and basic freedoms, Haitian schools have tended to perpetuate a society based on inequality and injustice. A society comprised of individuals with

no sense of national conscience, scant regard for their fellow citizens and who exclude and dehumanize others. Our system has been unable to eradicate the defects of the country's colonial heritage.

Haiti has become a backward country, slipping further into illiteracy and poverty every day.

A catastrophic state of affairs

Just one university, a few teacher training institutes and a single college offering basic and continuous training for those working in education. Out of 60,000 teachers, just 10.64 % have basic professional qualifications. Teachers are also recruited from other professions, with no specific pedagogical training. Worse still, some teachers have had no higher education at all. But even when teachers are qualified, their effectiveness is limited by having to teach over 40 hours of lessons a week.

Another influence on the quality of education is the dilapidated state of school buildings, which often do not comply with official norms.

Access to primary education can hardly be called free, as about 82 % of schools belong to the private sector (according to a 2003 census of schools).

Secondary education has been waiting for reforms since 1980, but virtually no studies on the subject have been conducted. Meanwhile, reforms of higher education in general and of the Haiti State University in particular have been stagnating since 1997. Research and publications are very rare, apart from student dissertations.

How did this situation come about? The main reason is a lack of vision. The State education budget is small, with government manipulated by an old-fashioned oligarchy with little ambition. A serious problem of governance and corruption is an added complication. The Ministry of Education has no real control over the system and certain projects hardly get off the ground.

The country's political instability also has a negative impact on education. Ministers have very little time to draft, revise and implement a proper national education policy. Over the past 162 years, there have been 216 successive Education ministers – an average of 9.4 months in office per person. This situation is responsible for an almost total lack of continuity in the sector.

A new ideological choice

How to overhaul this system without getting stuck in the same vicious circles, with the same causes producing the same effects? We need to make a new ideological choice, one that considers quality education as a prerequisite to a flourishing society. We have to establish other mechanisms of governance, leaving party politics and vote-catching considerations aside,



© Leah Gordon

by reforming, for example, the inspection system. We have to do everything we can to ensure that the Haitian government's efforts to set up a national educational system are respected, without taking sides. Existing curricula must also be revised so that they are better adapted to the needs of industry, to environmental concerns and citizenship values. Meanwhile, resources have to be allocated for higher education reforms. There is a pressing need to establish adequate infrastructure, while upgrading teachers' career prospects so that they earn a decent living.

Scene from *Jacmel Carnival* ↗

Child in poor district of Bel Air wishing he could go to school. Port-au-Prince, 1982. ©

Any overhaul of the Haitian education system has to favour the emergence of a new generation of citizen-producers who are able continuously to improve physical conditions in Haiti and to create wealth, while helping the country's cultural, moral and spiritual values to flourish. The new education system must be capable of fostering a national consciousness, a sense of responsibility and a community spirit by incorporating in its content the facts of Haitian reality ■

Jean Coulanges is Secretary-General of the Haitian National Commission to UNESCO. Acting as agencies of consultation, liaison and information, and mobilizing and coordinating partnerships with the civil society, the National Commissions make also substantial contributions in the advancement of UNESCO's objectives and in the implementation of its programme. Having joined the UNESCO in 1946 November 18th, Haiti is one of the oldest member states of the organization.



© UNESCO / Andrew Wheeler



Training brings concrete contribution to reconstruction

UNESCO
in action

by **Mehdi Benchelah** *French-Algerian journalist*

How to use earthquake-resistant methods in building – this is what Haitian masons are learning from the pilot project in Camp-Perrin, southwest Haiti, which UNESCO launched in March 2010. The project will train some 500 masons in techniques that will help save many lives in case of an earthquake.

Holding a spade, Jean Sprumont works with vigorous gestures. After a few minutes, in the courtyard cluttered with sieves and moulds for concrete blocks, a crater of cement, sand and water has taken form. Showing the greyish paste, Sprumont speaks in Creole to the 15 Haitian construction workers attending the training course in earthquake-resistant methods: “*Sa se béton kalité. Kalité do kibon pouli é lyben brasé*” (This is good concrete. It has the right quantity of water and it is well mixed).

Jean Sprumont stands out among the trainers. The Belgian project manager has been living in Haiti for 44 years. He was in Port-au-Prince on 12 January and saw entire buildings collapse in a few seconds. “The city was built using concrete in a completely haphazard way,” he says bitterly. “We saw the tragic result.” According to Sprumont, “It was buildings that killed people. Too much water and the presence of clay and loam in the concrete caused the collapse of more than 50 % of the buildings in Port-au-Prince during the tremors.”

To correct bad construction habits that amplified the disaster’s magnitude, the technical training centre at Camp Perrin, near Les Cayes in southwest Haiti, has set up a ten-day intensive training course for Haitian masons, steel fixers and foremen, in partnership with UNESCO. “It’s a good training course, but you can’t learn



Clearing the rubble in Carrefour-Feuilles district, Port-au-Prince. ©



© UN Photo/Sophie Paris

Emergency syllabus for schools

Children in Port au Prince began returning to school three months after the deadly earthquake on 12 January 2010.

But their normal lessons were replaced by a special syllabus developed by UNESCO and the Haitian Ministry of Education to take into account the trauma and disruption experienced by both children and teachers.

Developed by UNESCO and the Haitian Ministry of Education and Professional Training at a seminar held on 25 and 26 March, the syllabus will be followed by some 600,000 pupils in both public and private education

"We have given priority to main objectives," declared Jackson Pleteau, Head of Secondary Education at the Ministry. "We defined a corpus of knowledge that pupils must master to complete the year. We also envisage deferring certain subjects to next year."

Some 38,000 pupils and students died in the 12 January earthquake, which also killed 1,300 teachers and education personnel. The Ministry of Education was destroyed along with 4,000 schools – or close to 80 % of educational establishments in the Port-au-Prince area.

Under the new syllabus, education will be resumed in stages starting with psychosocial activities, such as singing, dancing and creative expression, to help children cope with the extreme stress they experienced as a result of the earthquake. They will also learn about earthquakes as a natural phenomenon. Regular lessons will resume a few weeks later. The Ministry of Education foresees an accelerated programme over 18 weeks to allow pupils to complete the school year that ends in August. UNESCO will post this syllabus on line to make it available to all teachers in Haiti.

everything about earthquake-resistant construction in ten days," points out Hébert Montuma, who runs the centre.

Michel Raoul, 40-year-old mason from Camp Perrin, is attending this training course so he can "avoid repeating the same mistakes they made in the past. But the problem is often caused by the owner. He tells us, "Protect me for the cement" (do not spend too much on the cement). But instead of protecting him, this can kill him."

This is why, says Montuma, "Besides the techniques we are teaching here, we have to make builders aware that when they are working on a site, it is their duty to be professional and ethical."

The third group of builders will soon begin taking the course (with 10 to 15 participants per session). The project will train a total of about 500 masons in techniques that will help save many lives in case of an earthquake. To train a maximum number of builders and pass on the skills more effectively, the best students in each group are encouraged to become trainers themselves.

At the end of the training project, a book in French and Creole containing explanations illustrated with diagrams will be published and distributed to building professionals around the country. ■

Camp-Perrin – March 2010



However, only a few schools have been able to open their doors so far and very few children have turned up for classes.

In most places, rubble is still being cleared and tent classrooms are being set up to accommodate pupils safely. Such is the case of the co-educational Thérèse Rouchon School in the Turgeau neighbourhood. Still visible among the debris are wooden benches, exam papers and the blackboard with notes from the last lesson given a few hours before tragedy struck.

Sainte Marie des Anges, a school in the elegant Paco neighbourhood, has fared little better. The boys' building is completely destroyed, while cracks and gaping holes in the facade of the girls' brick building mean that it cannot be used either.

The Principal, Pastor Franck Petit, had a large hangar built with wooden partitions. The school re-opened but the return to class has been difficult for the children who turned up. "They have reacted in different ways," said Pastor Petit. "Some cried and refused to enter the building, afraid they might get buried alive." He had to explain that the new wooden school rooms were safe. "Several children," he adds, "cried while we hoisted the flag, possibly in mourning for a relative, a mother, a sister, we don't know. It is very hard, for both pupils and teachers."

Some 38,000 pupils and students died in the 12 January earthquake, which also killed 1,300 teachers and education personnel. The Ministry of Education was destroyed along with 4,000 schools – or close to 80 % of educational establishments in the Port-au-Prince area. ■

Psychological support

Overcoming the trauma of the earthquake and restoring faith in the future: these were the objectives of a three-day training course at the end of April 2010 for secondary school education administrators in Haiti, organized by the Haitian Ministry of National Education and UNESCO. These administrators will be responsible for training teachers in the field, so that they in turn can pass on this knowledge to schoolchildren.

This type of psychosocial support aims at preventing and easing the mental after-effects of catastrophes or violent events. This concept is based on team-building techniques, role playing and discussions between pupils and their teachers.

The seminar was attended by 40 inspectors, principals and teachers. The course also included training on earthquake phenomena, risk prevention and survival techniques.

The course was organized by UNESCO, with the support of Quisqueya University in Port-au-Prince. It is the first psychosocial training course for young people in secondary schools.

Ultimately, all secondary pupils in the western Department which includes Port-au-Prince, i.e. approximately 110,000 adolescents, will benefit from this support programme, which will be extended to the entire country in the long term.

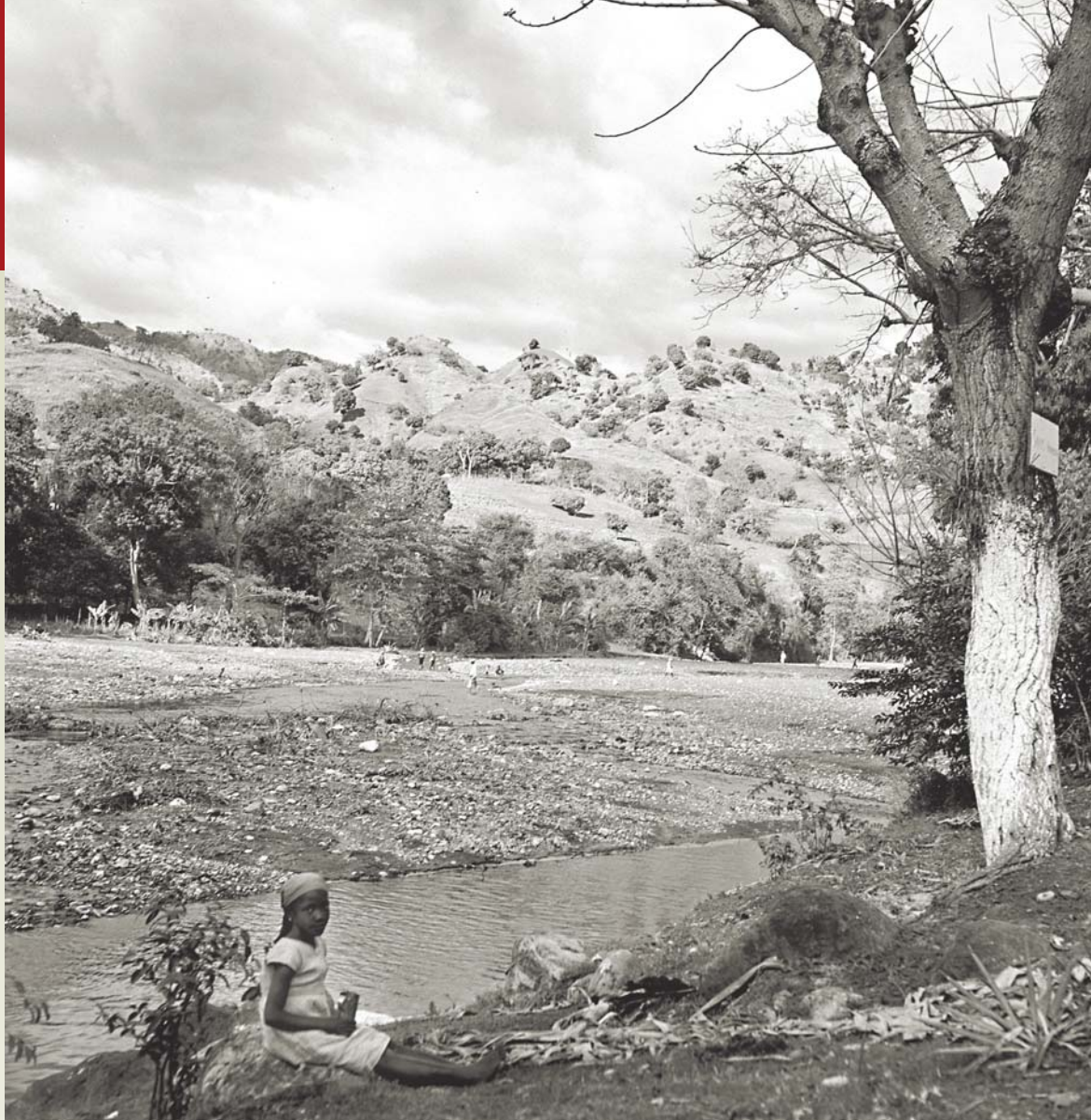
Games to help cope with trauma. ☺

© UN Photo/Sophie Paris

UNESCO
in action

The first UNESCO basic education pilot project in Haiti was established in rural Marbial, in the Gosseline valley, in southern Haiti. ↗

© UN Photo



Kêbé l'Inesko Fò!

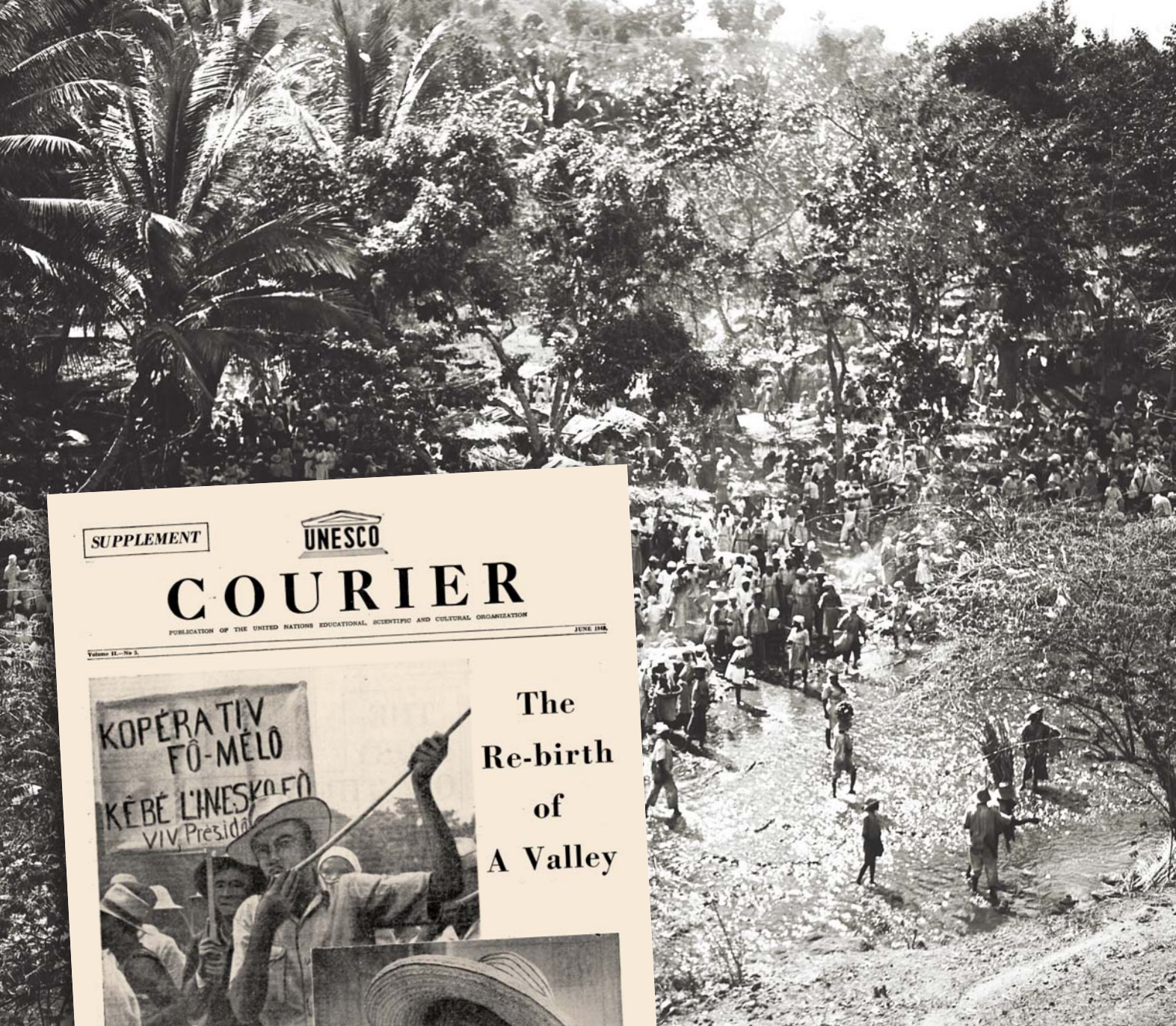
By **Julia Pohle**, from *UNESCO Archives*

As one of the first member states, Haiti joined UNESCO on November 18, 1946. Soon after, UNESCO launched its first pilot project in basic education in the country. The objective was to reduce illiteracy. The project was almost scrapped; the local population saved it.

When Haiti became one of UNESCO's first members, the rate of illiteracy in the country was over 80%, in some areas even well over 90%. This comprised not only the inability to read and write, but also ignorance of basic scientific principles concerning agriculture, conservation of resources and hygiene. Haiti's president of the time, Dumarsais Estimé, proposed to UNESCO to support Haiti in increasing the fundamental education of its population. Julian Huxley,

UNESCO's first Director-General, who had just declared that basic education is an essential part of "the wider and fuller human understanding to which UNESCO is dedicated", accepted the proposition and UNESCO started a pilot project on basic education, the first of its kind, in 1947.

In April 1948, UNESCO sent a survey team to Haiti headed by the Swiss anthropologist Alfred Metraux. The site chosen by the Haitian government for the new Pilot project was the



SUPPLEMENT **UNESCO**

COURIER

PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

VOLUME II—No 5. JUNE 1949.

The Re-birth of A Valley

How the Peasants of Marbial Helped Make the Haiti Pilot Project a Success.

This is a story of an obscure, mountain-bound region in the Caribbean island of Haiti called the Marbial Valley. In the forgotten, isolated corner of the New World, lying north of the little village of Jambou on the southern shore of the island, there live some 30,000 peasants of African origin. Afflicted by tropical diseases and constant drought, stricken with disease and impoverished by long erosion, they tried to scrape together some meagre subsistence — or simply starved. Not families — which was too common-places — but "extraordinary families" were the words used by the people of the valley to mark the periods of large-scale starvation. The children were pathetically emaciated and ill.

Then, in this valley of misery, something happened which gave the people a new hope in life. A new spirit began to blow through the Marbial when a French team arrived to set up a fundamental education project to help them overcome their illiteracy, raise their living standards and agricultural productivity and improve their health.

This story is filled with ups and downs, with moments of deep dejection and despondent periods when almost everyone believed that the project would have to be given up as a failure.

Now, after two years of continuous struggle, the picture has changed. The Marbial project which might have been called "The Death of a Marbial Valley" has lived and grown.

The heroes in this story are certainly the peasants of Marbial themselves, who in the darkest days of the project, demonstrated the same picket signs reading "Kébé Flouko fé" — which in Creole means "Support Union here". Another hero is undoubtedly the social anthropologist on Unesco's staff in Haiti, Dr. Alfred Métraux, who through strikes by fever and with slender funds at his disposal, refused to admit defeat and rallied the Marbial peasants to his side.

The Marbial experiment began on June 1946 when Métraux, with few other staff members, set up a joint international undertaking with the World Health Organization, the Viking Fund, the Rockefeller Foundation and other organizations taking part.

The Unesco Courier presents the story of a Marbial Valley.

The training school in the Marbial Film Project: the peasants of Marbial (upper left) maintain in order the experiment can work. Their picket sign reads: "The Food Union Co-Operative Support Union Here". Above, an agent of the Marbial Film Project. Below, an agent of the Marbial Film Project.

on the scanty crops they grew on the eroding soil and they suffered from tropical diseases like malaria. Because of sickness and the fact that many children would have to walk two hours to attend school, less than 500 pupils were registered in the three schools serving the valley, and only half of them actually attended the lessons.

Besides these problems, there was a tremendous language barrier to education. Although the official language of Haiti was French, Marbial's people only spoke Creole and textbooks in this language were not available since there was no agreement on which of the four methods of spelling Creole should be adopted. Teachers were using 50-year-old French textbooks from which pupils had to memorize passages, without any real understanding of the language. To resolve this problem, UNESCO invited Robert Hall, an American professor who had done research on Creole in the United States.

rural section of Marbial, in the valley of the Gosseline River in the south of Haiti. The population of the valley had been estimated at about 30,000 peasants, living scattered over the steep mountains in isolated shacks. The conditions found by the team on their arrival were at their worst. The valley was overpopulated, the illiterate peasants could hardly live

Article about the Marbial project, published in June 1949 in the UNESCO Courier.

Market in Marbial.

Once arrived in Haiti, Dr. Hall established an alphabet so that the preparation of basic textbooks in Creole could go ahead.

Discouraged by conditions in the valley and the hopelessness of the Marbial peasants, Metraux returned to UNESCO, giving a very pessimistic report concerning the success of the pilot project. Nevertheless, he disagreed when Frederick Rex, an American fundamental education specialist, visited Marbial valley some month later and judged the undertaking impossible, recommending that UNESCO abandon the project. Writing to UNESCO, Dr. Metraux insisted: "We cannot pull out from Haiti [...] we cannot abandon these people. If we do, we shall break their spirit completely [...] Whatever has been done in the field of education will collapse. This will be a complete disaster [...] The UNESCO Pilot Project is an experience which is worth all our energy."

At that point, the peasants of Marbial, hearing the rumours that UNESCO might abandon them, joined the efforts. Demonstrating with huge picket signs reading "Kèbé l'Inesko Fò!" – which in Creole means "Support UNESCO hard" – they sprang into action. Within a few months, their co-operatives turned the trail to the only village of the area into a road and built up an 'UNESCO-centre' as well as a community-centre, which helped the people of the valley to break out of their isolation. The peasants dug latrines and a well for drinking water in order to erase one of the most dangerous sources of disease. They reconstructed the Marbial market on higher and drier ground and constructed a small open-air slaughter house.

Also in education, there was remarkable progress in these first years: An emergency feeding programme for school children was introduced, giving a substantial lunch to 400 children weekly. Until September 1948, ten education centres were created, teaching old and young in the Valley to read and write in Creole. Soon a local newspaper of two pages appeared, handwritten and illustrated with simple drawings, through the initiative of a few members of the co-operatives.

Despite the peasants' efforts, UNESCO saw itself confronted with an immense challenge: raising the social and economic level of the community through education and at the same time training Haitian teachers and workers so that the project might become self-supporting as rapidly as possible. It was soon obvious that all progress in the valley would depend on the improvement of agricultures. That is the reason why Conrad J. Opper, appointed as Director to the pilot project in 1950, asked the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to join in the Marbial project. Mr. Opper

reported: "There is no possible doubt that a project in Fundamental Education in the Marbial area which is not based on soil regeneration is unrealistic and doomed to failure." The World Health Organization (WHO) also took an active part in the project, sending a doctor and a nurse to the valley. It further helped to open a new hospital in Marbial, thus giving the valley its first dispensary facilities.

During this perhaps unspectacular, but steady development, Mr. Opper and its team tried to keep in the background as much as possible, placing the project in the hand of the people it was intended to help. This policy proved so successful, that in August 1950 the Marbial people formed a regional committee of local leaders to advise the UNESCO staff. The common effort of different UN agencies helped the Marbial valley to improve the living conditions of its peasants. But when the pilot project succeeded, it did it thanks to the Haitian people. ■

Julia Pohle works for the UNESCO archives (www.unesco.org/archives/fre/index.html)

The example of the Marbial valley pilot project is just one example of UNESCO's work in Haiti in the field of education, culture, science and communication. There is clear continuity from this early vision to UNESCO's contribution at the beginning of the 21st century. Original documents, publications and correspondence files about the Marbial valley project and UNESCO's work in Haiti are available in the UNESCO Archives. Contact : j.boel@unesco.org

Further info:

Basic education: a first in Haiti. In: , *The New Courier*, n° 2, UNESCO, April 2003.

Mende (Tibor): Things are looking up in the 'forgotten valley', *The New Courier*, n° V, 1, UNESCO, 1952.

The Haiti pilot project: phase one, 1947-1949. UNESCO 1951 (including the Agreement between the Haitian Government and UNESCO)

The Lesson of Marbial Valley. In: *The UNESCO Courier* n. III. 12, UNESCO 1951

Jean François, Emmanuel: Service de l'expérience - témoin d'éducation de base de Marbial: Haïti – Rapports mensuels, UNESCO 1950/1951

The Story of the Haiti 'Pilot Project'. In: *The UNESCO Courier*: supplement, UNESCO n. II. 5, UNESCO 1949

The Rebirth of a valley: how the peasants of Marbial helped make the Haiti Pilot Project a success. In: *The UNESCO Courier*: supplement, UNESCO n. II. 5, UNESCO 1949

René Depestre at UNESCO in 2006, for the 50th anniversary of the first international congress of black writers and artists organized in Paris. ↻



René Depestre: Between utopia and reality

In this interview published in the *UNESCO Courier* in December 1997, the French-Haitian author René Depestre discusses his career in an interview with Jasmina Šopova. He reiterates his rejection of totalitarian ideology and his commitment to global citizenship, founded on solidarity and mutual respect.

Your life as an adult and as a poet began with what you later called "a triple badge of rebellion": proud *négritude*, impassioned surrealism, and the idea of revolution. Today only the surrealism part seems to have survived.

It's a long story. When André Breton came to Haiti at the end of 1945, his visit coincided with an exhibition of the Cuban painter Wifredo Lam's paintings and a series of lectures given by the Martinique poet Aimé Césaire. This really fired the imagination of us young Haitian artists and writers. At that time we knew nothing about what was happening in the surrealist movement in France. For young people combating President Elie Lescot's dreadful dictatorship, surrealism was the

lifeblood of revolt. Contact with Breton had a contagious effect on us. After his first lecture in a Port-au-Prince cinema, we brought out a special issue of our new magazine *La Ruche* as a tribute to him. We went to prison for our pains and the magazine was banned. What Breton discovered in Haiti, and made us discover too, was that surrealism wasn't just an aesthetic doctrine but something that could be part of a people's way of looking at the world; that there was a kind of grassroots surrealism. This restored our self-confidence. We saw that this sense of wonder we had secretly been a bit ashamed of and associated with a kind of underdevelopment was actually our weapon. Breton told us that in France

"we launched surrealism as a movement based on intellectual foundations, you in Haiti learned all about it in the cradle." In other words, surrealism was something inherent in the Caribbean. Voodoo, a product of Franco-African syncretism, is an example of religious surrealism. The behaviour of the voodoo gods is supremely surrealist.

So surrealism for you is much more than a literary movement.

Much more. Many European writers, starting with the German Romantics and even before that, had a surrealist approach. I'm sure if you looked closely at Egyptian, Japanese or Chinese culture, you'd find surrealist elements there too. For one, surrealism is a way of

injecting the supernatural into everyday life. You find it everywhere. But some people, like Haitians or Brazilians, display it more boldly than others.

How do you explain the emergence of the Duvaliers in a society imbued with a sense of the magical?

The magical has even marked Haitian politics. Our history has thrown up dictators who practised a kind of tragic perversion of magic. This is how the "Tonton Macoute" which is a folk concept, an incarnation of evil, a kind of Nazi, a Haitian SS-man came to exist. Haitian folklore is a tug-of-war between good and evil. The elder Duvalier, "Papa Doc," used the forces of black magic to plunge the country into a totalitarian surrealism. But there's more to it than this demoniacal aspect. From the December morning in 1492 when Christopher Columbus discovered Haiti and was transfixed by what he saw, the historic, baroque tale of Haiti cannot be separated from American wondrous realism. A sense of the wondrous (South American magic realism) has become part and parcel of Haitians' view of the world and the sustenance of their third of the island of Hispaniola, where the best and the worst rub shoulders like the dearest of friends, when they are not locked in terrible combat.

You have celebrated the communist utopia in your poems.

The Marxist utopia, with all its lies and repressive nightmares, took over my work and my life as a poet until the moment I broke with Stalinism. After living in places which had a huge "strategic" importance in the turmoil of our century Moscow, Prague, Beijing, Hanoi and Havana I realized that what was meant by "socialist revolution" in those places was not the opposite of the Haitian terror regime, but another form of the same perversion. Instead of promoting the heritage of the rights of man and the citizen, "the revolution" defiled the autonomy of women and men and carried out, at their expense, the most amazing hijack of ideals and dreams in all human history.

What has become of the "revolutionary ideal" which drew you from Haiti to Europe and then on to Cuba?

I ardently believed in revolution. For me it became a kind of natural state, like

breathing, walking or swimming. And it nearly destroyed my integrity as a citizen and a writer. The ideal of revolution seriously impoverished my personal store of poetry and tenderness which, when I was twenty, made me think of my future work as a state of wonder and oneness with the world. It made my literary career that of a writer who performed psychological and intellectual somersaults and sudden existential about-turns a kind of carnival of uncertainties and inconsistencies, adrift in the furious currents of the century's passions and ideals. The treasure islands invented by the utopias and mythologies of revolution went up in smoke with the great dreams of our youth uniting the idea of transforming the world (Karl Marx) with that of changing life (Arthur Rimbaud).

The word "utopia" as used by Marxists has a pejorative meaning for you. But doesn't the world need utopias?

Octavio Paz has defined utopias as "the dreams of reason." We're just emerging from a terrible nightmare of reason. The nineteenth century, a critical age if ever there was one, gave birth to the idea of a revolutionary utopia. But the totally legitimate dream of earlier philosophers did not turn into the major transformation of human lives they had hoped for, nor into unprecedented progress for humankind. The generous aspirations of critical thought imposed on us, under the bogus label of "real socialism," an absolutism the like of which we had never seen before. In saying this I do not wish to denigrate the idea of utopia as such. Old age reminds me these

days that I don't have much time left and that I must hasten to express things I've kept to myself all my life. And hopefully express them with grace and maturity. So, in a way, I'm summing up my life's nomadic journey. And all self-criticism leads one to utopia. But hardened observer that I am, I deeply distrust a historical concept that this century's revolutions have debased. In place of the notion of realpolitik, which is at the root of most of the woes of people and societies and which still flourishes to an extraordinary degree in government, I offer the notion "realutopia".

Could you explain what you mean by "realutopia"?:?

It's an aesthetic concept which enables me to unite the various parts of my Franco-Haitian creole-ness as a writer. Doctors and physiologists call synergy the links between several elements which combine in a single function and a common effect. The idea of realutopia leads me to a kind of aesthetic and literary synergy which points in a single direction the multitude of experiences that I owe to magical reality, to *négritude*, to sun-kissed eroticism and to the creole fantasizing of Haitians, which is the surrealism of the humbled and the hurt.

So you haven't entirely turned your back on *négritude*?

I've always mistrusted the idea of *négritude* because I did not think it was possible to constitute an anthropology which is the exact opposite of the one which devalued us and downgraded us as "Blacks". You can't just transfer to a Black context what is said and done in



Parade of "Tontons Macoutes" in the town of Kenscoff in 1984. ☞

© Charles Carrié



Boy participating in the carnival in Jacmel, Depestre's home town.

"Ezili Danto", by Grand Rue sculptor Andre Eugene, Port-au-Prince.

terms of Whites. Aimé Césaire referred to this phenomenon as turning Gobineau upside down. I realized we had to create our own aesthetic and ideology without falling into "anti-racist racism." That's why I said goodbye to *négritude* at the same time as I dropped Marxism. I've only stuck with surrealism, which is still one of my working tools. I use both ends of the tool the scholarly and the popular. But I mistrust surrealism too. Breton leaned towards the occult, trying to link surrealism with certain cabalistic and Talmudic traditions, a shadowy area in the history of thought - but no less interesting for that - which are the equivalent of looking for the philosopher's stone. I don't go along with that at all. I've rejected the ideals of my youth and today I work with the tragic experiences which in my case they led to.

How do you see the world these days?

The idea of revolution has been buried and history marches on, with its media-fed procession of horrors and marvels. The myth of a great consummation of the body and the mind died of natural causes in a big Soviet-style bed. The corpse is still warm and already the spark of totalitarianism has reappeared in the shape of religious fundamentalism. All kinds of ethno-nationalist savagery, supposedly under the banner of a campaign to renew faithless societies, are building monuments to obscurantism, terrorism and new banditry by the state. On the borders of the West, the idea of a fundamentalist utopia has taken the place of a revolutionary one.

How can literature inspire people to embark on the adventure of a new renaissance?

The answer to that is shaped by a context of fundamentalist horrors, interethnic massacres and racist and nationalist violence. It's one of a planet completely ruled by market forces. Thanks to the rational instruments of the rule of law and democracy, the institution of the market has survived all attacks on it. But most people now think the democracy of the market, its basis and the way it works, needs to be overhauled. Or else life in society is going to become a great planet-wide casino. So it's in the interests of the victorious marketplace to do something about the chaotic and aggressive conditions in which the globalization of human affairs is taking place. Bold steps should be taken to make good use of the world's heritage of democratic experience, the rich store of rules of citizenship and the art of living together which is to be found in Western civil societies, the most developed and experienced in terms of law, liberties, justice and solidarity. We should be able to turn the current haphazard process of globalization into an unprecedented immunization of relations between individuals and nation-states. The international civil society which is growing up amid disorder and uncertainty needs the oxygen of world-wide public-spiritedness and the idea of solidarity that will be conducive to fair distribution of the values and principles which are now the shared property of the global village.

Who could promote this global public-spiritedness?

I see the bold imagination of poets and writers at the forefront of the values shared by the world's cultures. Our works, each with its own strictly aesthetic identity, should help scientists and politicians to revamp our old ideas about good and evil, to revive a sense of the sacred which is being lost and to devise a more balanced relationship between North and South, and East and West. This would be in a new world order where the necessary rules of commerce, tempered by a new sense of meaning and new ideals, could express a fresh balance between nature and history. To advance further without risking disaster, the spirit of the market should now be endowed with certain ethical features, such as meaning, laws of citizenship and an art of living together based on mutual respect and sympathy between the world's peoples and societies. ■

Personalities mentioned in the text:

André Breton, French surrealist poet

Wilfredo Lam, Cuban surrealist painter

Aimé Césaire, surrealist poet from Martinique

Elie Lescot, president of Haiti from 1941 to 1946

François Duvalier, nicknamed Papa Doc, president of Haiti from 1957 to 1971

Karl Marx, German philosopher, economist and social activist

Arthur Rimbaud, 19th century French poet

Octavio Paz, Mexican writer, Nobel prize winner in 1990

Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882), French diplomat and author, notably of "Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races"

Jean-Paul Sartre, French philosopher who in his preface to a 1948 anthology of black poetry described *négritude* as "anti-racist racism"



Pakistani youth at work. ©

By 2010, it is estimated that the economic recession will have edged another 90 million people into extreme poverty. More poverty means parents have less to spend on children's education and in some cases this can push children out of school and into employment. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo rising unemployment in the copper mining sector has reportedly forced households to withdraw their children from school.

Economic slowdown threatens education financing

The importance of economic growth for education financing is not widely recognized. In sub-Saharan Africa, government spending on primary education rose by 29% from 2000 to 2005. These increases were instrumental in the progress the region has made in primary education. Around three-quarters of the increase was directly attributable to economic growth.

Deteriorating economic prospects may therefore hurt public education spending, translating into fewer classrooms built, fewer qualified teachers recruited and more children out of school.

What does the economic slowdown mean for education financing in sub-Saharan Africa, home to just under half the planet's out-of-school children? Estimating levels of future government revenue with economic growth forecasts conducted before and after the onset of the crisis provides an insight into the impact of the crisis. One scenario estimates a potential loss in total education spending of \$4.6 billion per year in 2009 and 2010. While only an estimate, these figures illustrate the budget pressures that many countries face as a result of the global slowdown.

Rich countries have responded to the financial crisis by investing heavily in programmes aimed at restoring economic growth, protecting vulnerable citizens and maintaining vital social infrastructure. Education has frequently been a priority: the American Recovery and Reconstruction Act makes available an estimated US\$130 billion for education-related expenditure. Programmes of this kind have led to rising levels of public debt in many rich countries.

Education at Risk – the impact of the financial crisis

by **Samer Al-Samarrai**

While many of the world's banks are showing healthy signs of recovery after one of the biggest global economic crises of the last century, the aftereffects are still being felt in some of the world's poorest countries.

After a decade of encouraging advances, progress towards the Education for All goals could stall, or even be thrown into reverse, as poverty rises, economic growth slows and pressure mounts on government budgets. The 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report argues that urgent action must be taken to avert that danger. Even before the global economic crisis hit, many of the poorest countries had already been under pressure from sharp rises in international food prices. The lethal cocktail of high food prices and economic recession has left a deep imprint on the lives of millions of vulnerable people. It has also worsened the economic environment for achieving the 2015 development targets, including the Education for All goals.

Growing malnutrition and deteriorating prospects for reducing extreme poverty have far-reaching consequences for education. Hunger undermines cognitive development and can lead to irreversible losses in education achievement. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, high food prices left an additional 175 million people malnourished in 2007 and 2008. Increased malnutrition among pre-school and primary school age children has been reported from several countries, including Guatemala. And rising food prices have had consequences for household spending on education. In Bangladesh, for example, about a third of poor households in one survey reported cutting spending on education to cope with rising food prices.

In contrast, the space low-income countries have had to respond to the economic downturn has been much more limited. In many of the world's poorest countries, tax revenue ratios are likely to decline or remain stagnant, and increasing government borrowing is unlikely to be a viable option. For many low-income African countries, that means turning to international aid.

The education finance gap

Even before the global downturn, recent trends in aid for education were giving rise for concern. Though here had been a rise in aid to education during the first half of the decade, overall commitments to education have recently stagnated. In 2007, reported commitments stood at US\$12.1 billion, around the same level as in 2004. Basic education remains an area of particular concern. While aid commitments rose sharply during the first half of the decade, the period since 2004 has been marked by a standstill punctuated by episodes of steep decline. In real terms, the US\$4.3 billion reported in 2007 represented a cut of 22%, or about US\$1.2 billion, from its 2006 level. The decline in commitments to basic education was far greater than that for education as a whole.

The financial crisis is putting aid budgets under pressure. Some donor countries, notably Ireland, have been hit hard by the crisis and plans announced in 2009 will see the aid budget cut by 22%, reversing a rapid expansion. However, in others, such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan, commitments have been made to maintain or increase levels of aid.

The 2010 *Global Monitoring Report* estimates that greater prioritization of education in national budgets and annual aid commitments of US\$16 billion a year will be required to achieve universal primary education, develop early childhood education programmes and act to reduce the number of adult illiterates (a staggering 759 million adults worldwide – or 16% of the global adult population) by 2015 in the world's poor countries. Current aid to basic education for forty-six low-income countries – around US\$2.7 billion – falls short of what is required.

While this price tag appears considerable, it represents only a fraction – about 2% – of the amount mobilized to rescue just four major

banks in the United Kingdom and the United States. Of course, governments point out that securing the financial assets and balance sheets of banks represents an investment. But the same is true of international aid for education, which is an investment in poverty reduction, shared prosperity and a more equitable pattern of globalization.

As UNESCO's Director-General, Irina Bokova, states in the foreword to the 2010 *Global Monitoring Report*, "In response to the financial crisis and its aftermath, governments urgently need to create mechanisms to protect the poor and vulnerable. They must also seize the opportunity to build societies that combat inequality, so that all may benefit and prosper. Education is at the front line." ■

Samer Al-Samarrai, is an economist specialised in education and the senior Policy Analyst for the *Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2010*.

'You think about your children when you lose your job.

That's the first thing that came into my mind – when school starts, how am I going to buy the uniform, the exercise books and all that.

The food, you know how expensive that is now...

The children depend on me, I'm a single mother.'

Kenia Valle, Managua (Nicaragua)



Education under threat. ©



© UNESCO / Akhtar Soomro

Focus

We're breaking our promise to teach all the world's children

by **Kevin Watkins**

At the World Education Forum in Dakar (Senegal) in 2000, States pledged to provide the world's children with basic education within 15 years. Five years from the deadline, 72 million school-age children are still excluded.



© UNESCO / Akhtar Soomro

The day starts early at the primary school in Aqualaar, a village in Kenya's arid northeast. By 5 a.m., when the children arrive, their teacher, Ibrahim Hussein, 18, is waiting by his blackboard to give a lesson on arithmetic.

'School' in Aqualaar is a sandy patch of ground under an acacia tree. Mr. Hussein's blackboard hangs from the branches. There are no desks or chairs. But around 30 children sit listening with rapt attention, following the lesson by scratching numbers with sticks in the sand.

Classes start before dawn for a reason. By 8 o'clock the children will have started their day jobs. The boys will be out herding goats and cattle with their parents. The girls will be collecting water with their mothers from a stream 10 kilometers away. But they'll be back at 5 p.m. for another two-hour class.

Welcome to the world of education for ethnic Somali pastoralists in Garissa. This is one of the most disadvantaged areas in Kenya. Fewer than one in three children make it through primary school. And just 10 percent of Somali girls finish their teenage years with more than two years of education.

Lacking support from the government, parents are taking matters into their own hands. The villagers pay Mr. Hussein, a high school graduate, a small fee to teach their children. And they make time for their kids to attend his classes. For Khadija Ali, whose daughter Fatima, 7, and son Hassan, 9, attend the school, the choices are straightforward: "Of course it's hard. But an education will give my children a better life and chances that I never had."

If only governments around the world demonstrated the same resolve and sense of urgency. Ten years ago, at a global conference in Dakar, Senegal, they pledged to make sure that by 2015 all of the world's children were getting a basic education. They are not delivering on that promise.

Less than five years from that target date, school registers tell their own story. The world's economy is increasingly based on knowledge and

Classroom in a poor neighbourhood in Karachi (Pakistan). ☺

Pupils at Begum Hajra school during seasonal overflow of sewers, Karachi. ☺

skills, but 72 million children of primary school age are not in school. Millions more drop out before finishing primary school. And many who do finish school lack basic literacy and numeracy skills – a testimony to the poor education they have received.

Of course, it's not all bad news. Some of the world's poorest countries have made extraordinary advances in education. But as any school kid will tell you, a promise is a promise – and the promise of education for all will be broken if we carry on as we are. New figures released this week by UNESCO show that, on current trends, 56 million children will still be out of school in 2015.

Changing these trends should be at the top of the international agenda. Governments in developing countries need to take the lead by putting in place the policies and investments needed to reach the most disadvantaged children.

Obstacles in the road

Too often, those with the most to gain are the last in line when it comes to public education. In urban slums from Manila to Nairobi, the absence of decent

public schools means that some of the world's poorest families have to pay for a private education that is often second-rate – and many can't pay.

Disadvantages in education don't operate in isolation, of course. They are linked to wider problems of poverty and discrimination against girls and women. In Pakistan, girls from poor rural backgrounds average just two years in school – less than one-third of the national average.

It's not just governments in developing countries that need to up their performance grades. Donor countries are failing to keep their promise to the world's school children. Ensuring that all kids get a basic education will require dedicating an extra \$13 billion a year from now to 2015. Yet after several years of stagnation, aid commitments for basic education were cut last year.

Contrasts with health care are striking. Global funds for AIDS and immunization have served as a focal point for political attention, attracting finance and increasing the flow of aid to those who need it.

The Fast Track Initiative, a global framework operating under the auspices of the World Bank, was meant

to play a similar role in education. Instead it has overseen a low level of financing and long bureaucratic delays, with some countries waiting two or three years for support.

Of course, there are many obstacles to delivering on the promise of education for all, including shortages of schools and teachers, deeply ingrained prejudices, discrimination against girls, grinding poverty and inadequate teaching. But such barriers can be broken down — by fairer public spending, targeted support for the most disadvantaged, and policies that attract, train and retain effective teachers.

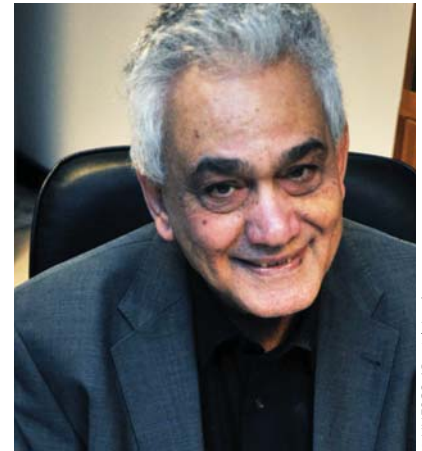
Good schools are a potent weapon in the fight against poverty, social prejudice and extremism. They are an investment in economic growth, shared prosperity and security. It is time for governments to put education where it belongs: at the heart of the national and international policy agenda. ■

Kevin Watkins is director of the 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, published by UNESCO, released on Jan. 19.



Schoolyard in Liberia. ↻

© UNESCO / Glenn Gordon



© UNESCO / Patrick Lagès

“I was born with a pen in my hand,” he says. “I don’t remember any specific moment when I tried calligraphy for the first time,” he adds. “There were a lot of reeds growing in the neighbourhood where I was born, the kind used to make pens.” Ghani Alani started working at an early age. “My first job was with the railway company in Baghdad. I would clean the coaches during the day, and then go home and study in the evenings,” he explains. “On Friday, the day of rest, I spent my time studying and practising calligraphy.”

“My teacher was called Hachem Mohamed, better known as Baghdadi. He was a pupil of one of the greatest masters of calligraphy, whose lineage goes right back to the Abbasid tradition, twelve centuries ago. I was thirteen when I first met him. For three years I submerged myself in the study of writing. Once I had finished the first phase of study, the second seemed easier. Forming one letter leads to making two, and these two letters go on to make a word, and then a sentence.”

But this master of calligraphy was not happy just teaching him how to form the letters with his pen; he also encouraged him to see the link between man and letter. “Calligraphy has something to do with the soul,” he feels. The calligrapher’s pen is an extension of his arm, of his whole being. “My master never told me how to trace my letters. Instead, he drew my attention to the link between the body and the letter. ‘Our hands,’ he said, ‘are different, and their size affects the letters, so the letter is a reflection of the man.’”

“I learned this art from Hachem al Baghdadi, just as he, in turn, had inherited it from the founders of the

Ghani Alani: “Calligraphy is the link between man and the letter”

Interview by **Bassam Mansour**, UNESCO

“In the beginning, there was Baghdad,” says Ghani Alani, as he evokes the role his city has played in the history of Arabic and Islamic calligraphy. It was the starting point for the other styles and different schools. But he recognises that the art of calligraphy has also developed in other great capitals of the Arab-Islamic world, from Andalusia to Bukhara.

Calligraphy by Ghani Alani. ©

Baghdad School. One day, he presented me with a diploma, which none of his other pupils had ever received. When a calligraphy master gives a certificate like this, he authorises his pupil to sign his works with his own name. The diploma becomes an 'official' paper, recognising that the pupil has truly attained expert status." The document reads: "When it became apparent that the recipient of this magnificent certificate had assimilated the rules of Arabic calligraphy, had explored all the forms of this art and had excelled at them, I awarded him the right to affix his signature beneath his beautiful writing ..."

Ghani Alani left Baghdad for Paris in 1967. "In Paris, I followed postgraduate studies in law and received a doctorate," he explained. "I wanted calligraphy to remain a hobby, but my passion got the better of me. The lawyer hung up his robes and made a sharpened reed the tool of his trade. When the Dean of the Faculty of Law handed us our degree certificates, he said: 'today you are ready to start studying law.' What he meant was that our studies had given us the means to think. In the end, that is exactly what Master Hachem al Baghdadi had told us about calligraphy."

"Once I had finished with Law, I went to the Art Institute in Baghdad, following the wishes of my teacher, Hachem al Baghdadi," he explains. "In my first year at the Institute, a great Turkish master of Islamic illumination, Hamad al Amidi, had been invited. His teachings were very important for me. Indeed, I now practice both calligraphy and illumination, which is unusual."

"From the outset, I tried to grasp the essence of writing in Arab civilisation. Starting with my own experience, I worked on the ideas of unity and continuity that calligraphy is able to express. It is rather like a river that the other arts feed into, like tributaries."

For Ghani Alani, calligraphy did not develop in Arab civilization – as is often thought – because pictorial representation was forbidden. "This hypothesis is false," he insists. "There are drawings in Islamic civilization, particularly in Turkey and Iran. And calligraphy can incorporate figurative images. The climax of calligraphy in Arab civilization is more because it is a society based on the word, and has been since pre-Islamic times, when poetry was the only art and the poet was the pride of his clan. And where there is the word, there is writing...."

Explaining the formal origins of calligraphy, he says "the straight line and the curve are found in every style of writing in the world and always have been, from pictograms to ideograms via 'phonetic' writing, which gave cuneiform script its syllabic structure. Since the invention of cuneiform, scripts have used the straight line and the curve. There are several illustrations in Mesopotamian writing, like the inscription of the Codex Hammurabi, where the characteristic of the letters is their straightness, contrary to what was usual at the time."

Ghani Alani also gives us his opinion on Kufic writing. "I have never thought of Kufic script as being straight. Those who call it straight are making a major mistake, saying that all straight and angular writing can be called Kufic. The truth is quite different. This script can be traced back to before the building of Kufa, the town that gives it its name, during the Mu'aalaqat era (the seven most beautiful poems of the pre-Islamic era are inscribed in the entrance to the Kaaba, in Mecca). I, myself, prefer to describe this script as angular. It is true that the Kufi trend brought improvements and led to it being used more widely, both in manuscripts and in



"Arab civilization is based on the word". ☪

© UNESCO/ Patrick Lagès

architecture. The School of Baghdad then created cursive script, which takes several forms, thuluth, diwani and naskhi which was used for printing.”

Although Ghani Alani cites the example of the Mu’allaqats, there are doubts about the very existence of these famous poems. “There will always be someone who doubts the veracity of these Mu’allaqats,” he explains. “But it is certain that, since the pre-Islamic era, there have been texts written using the Arabic alphabet. Documents, treaties and agreements have been found, inscribed on stone tablets dating back to well before the Islamic period. And, in some archaeological sites, texts have been found inscribed on stone, the most famous being at Mada’in Saleh,” in Saudi Arabia. (This site is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.)

Ghani Alani has been living in Paris for over 40 years. Speaking of his relationship with the West, he confides that “I live in Europe, and the exchange that I have had with western society has been very productive, in both directions. And this, despite the difference between Arab and Western ways of thinking. Arab thought is based on the verb, whereas Western thought is based on the image. But the verb includes the image. The best example of this is poetry, which the ancients called ‘the register of the Arabs.’”

Receiving the UNESCO-Sharjah prize for Arab culture means a great deal to him. “Above all, it is a full recognition of calligraphy as an art, one which is part of the soul of Arab civilization, and forms the skeleton of this culture. But what is even more important is that the prize has been awarded to me as an Iraqi artist. This enables me to show another side of Iraq, unlike the images of war and violence that have filled our screens.” ■

Ghani Alani and Polish publisher and academic Anna Parzymies were the laureates of the 2009 UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. The prize was created in 1998 at the initiative of the United Arab Emirates. Every year it honours two people – one from an Arab state, the other not – who have contributed to the development and promotion of Arab culture. Contact for more information: Jeannette Tchilinguirian (j.tchilinguirian@unesco.org).



President Sam Nujoma at UNESCO in 2004. ©

© UNESCO / Michel Ravassard

Gender Equality - A Development Imperative

African elder statesman Sam Nujoma is revered as the man who led the Republic of Namibia to its independence in 1990 and served as its President for 15 years. His promotion of gender parity is a less well-known aspect of his freedom fighting. In this interview, he explains to Hans d’Orville and Clare Stark how he sees the role of women in his country and internationally

President Nujoma, you are known as a veteran freedom fighter in the struggle of African nations for independence.

You are also a proponent of gender equality and we would like to hear your insights this subject.

Gender equality is a matter of urgency, particularly in the developing countries. In the past, women and men adhered to specific gender roles, but now, with modern day information technology, all that has changed. Women are now doing a lot of the jobs that only men used to do, but much more still remains to be done. We need more skilled men and woman in order to fully reap the benefits of our country’s natural resources. It is obvious

that everybody must contribute in order to ensure the eradication of poverty

What was the role of women in your country’s liberation struggle?

Women played a key role in the liberation struggle. We had battalions of women, and they were often tougher than the men. In order to promote the economic development of the country, we, in the South West Africa’s People’s Organization (SWAPO) party, decided that women should be represented by 50% in the SWAPO Party Congress. Our Secretary-General is a woman, Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana. She is also the Minister of Justice.

Is the same also true for the Government of Namibia? Are you also working to have 50% of women in ministerial positions?

That is what we are planning, but we are not there yet. Women make up 22% of our national assembly at present. We have to fulfill our obligation to both the South African Development Community (SADEC), our regional, economic grouping, and to the African Union, which have both stipulated that women should make up 50% of the government by 2015.

Are you proposing that additional funds be reserved in the national budget for gender equality in order to promote women's participation?

I don't think that there is a need to enlarge the national budget to employ women in the government, but I do think that more funding is needed to ensure that all children, both boys and girls, in every district of the SWAPO party are introduced to the computer so that they will be better equipped to succeed in this globalized world.

Education is key to development. At the time of independence, the quality of education that you received was based on the color of your skin and your ethnic background, with of course the whites receiving the best education. This system was imposed by the apartheid regime so we had to dismantle all of that after independence. The current Prime Minister, H.E. Nahas Angula, who was then Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport in 1990 when Namibia

achieved independence, was responsible for reforming the education system in Namibia, and now, thanks to him, we have a very good education system in Namibia.

Do you think that the development projects taking place in Namibia now are sufficiently reaching out to women?

Women in Namibia are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the country's development.

How do you feel in terms of gender equality in the multilateral system? Are you satisfied, or do you think that current trends should continue?

In the multilateral system, I would venture to say that at least 85% of all UN specialized agencies should be led by women, as they are more apt to be able to address issues that focus on promoting human-centered development. ■

Hans d'Orville is Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning.

Clare Stark is Assistant Programme Specialist, Office of the Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning.

This column, launched by UNESCO's Bureau of Strategic Planning, focuses on future-oriented issues and aims to inform both the general public and the Organization's Member States. It presents ideas and opinions that can enrich UNESCO's reflection, programmes and action in its various fields of competence.

The number of women holding leadership positions in the United Nations system has increased recently. Irina Bokova of Bulgaria was elected as Director-General of UNESCO in October. The World Health Organization (WHO) is headed by Margaret Chan, the World Population Fund (WFP) by Thoraya Obaid, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) by Ann Margaret Veneman, the World Food Programme (WFP) by Josette Sheeran and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) by Helen Clark.

Oxapampa-Ashaninka-Yaneshá, in Peru's Amazonian high forest region, was designated a Biosphere Reserve in June 2010. ➔

UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves acquired 13 new sites in June 2010. It now has 564 sites in 109 countries.

Biosphere Reserves are areas designated under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme to serve as places to test different approaches to integrated management of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine resources and biodiversity. Biosphere Reserves are thus sites for experimenting with and learning about sustainable development.

List:

Complete List of Biosphere Reserves (2010)

<http://www.unesco.org/mab/doc/brs/BRList2010.pdf>

Map:

World Map of Biosphere Reserves (2009)

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001848/184853M.pdf>

UNESCO Strategy on climate change

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001627/162715e.pdf>

International Conference of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves

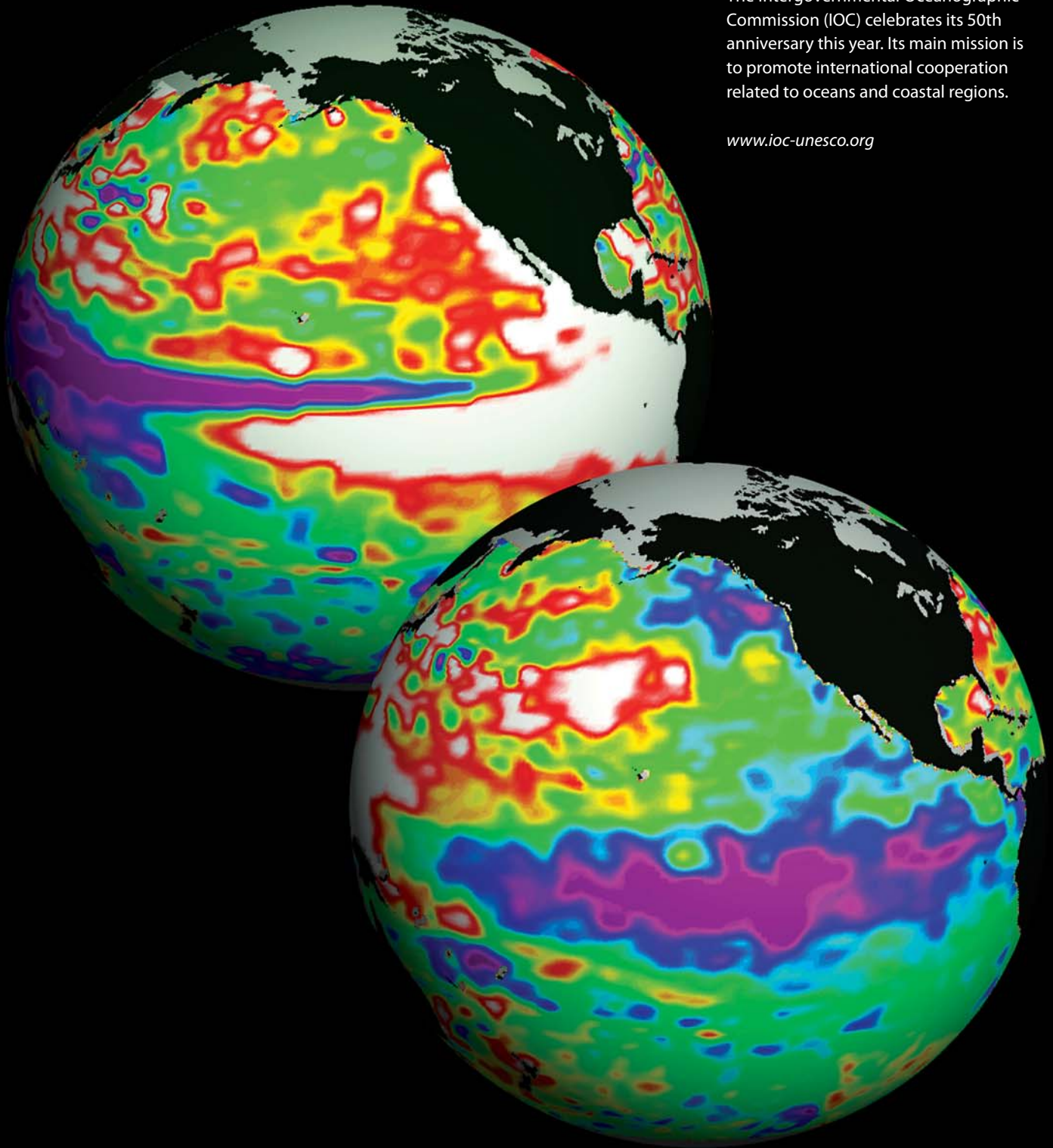
(Final Report)

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001871/187131e.pdf>



The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Its main mission is to promote international cooperation related to oceans and coastal regions.

www.ioc-unesco.org



El Niño in November 1997 and La Niña in March 1999. Images of the Pacific Ocean showing different sea levels and illustrating the interactions between the ocean and the atmosphere that affect the climate.