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GOODBYE TO 'PIXIE DUST'? A NEW U.S. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN HAITI

ROBERT MAGUIRE

Abstract

Given the less-than-desired results in sustained poverty alleviation and economic growth in Haiti despite the past allocation of significant foreign aid dollars, the Obama administration launched a review of the United States government's approach toward development assistance in there well before the January 2010 devastating earthquake. Findings and recommendations, fine-tuned after the catastrophic disaster, thrust Haiti into the forefront of a wider U.S. overhaul of foreign aid policy and practice that incorporates not only core principles for aid effectiveness set forth in the Paris Declaration of 2005, but also findings and recommendations included in the 2006 peer review undertaken by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. As the administration endeavours to enact strategies for greater aid effectiveness in a country challenged not only by a devastating natural disaster, but also by the scars of poverty and conflict, Haiti offers important insights into issues critical for achieving and sustaining more effective development and peacebuilding policies and practices worldwide.

Introduction

On the afternoon of Tuesday, 12 January 2010, Cheryl Mills, the Chief of Staff of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, convened a meeting in the State Department to put the finishing touches on what had been evolving for months as a re-worked U.S. assistance policy toward Haiti. Around 5 pm Mills asked a staff member to call Port-au-Prince for a last-minute consultation. She and her colleagues were surprised that they were unable to get through to the Haitian capital. Fifteen minutes later they learned of the catastrophic earthquake that had struck the city and environs. As one participant of the meeting put it, 'We looked at each other around the table; gathered our papers and put them aside; looked at each other again and wondered, "Now what?"'¹

In the months following the quake, Mills and her colleagues in the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) were engaged in directing the U.S. bilateral response to the calamity, working to help coordinate multilateral efforts in Haiti and beyond its borders, and coordinating among actors in Washington. Concurrently, U.S. officials were revisiting and revising the policy review process abruptly pushed aside on 12 January.

In September 2010 the position of Special Coordinator for Haiti was created within the State Department and filled by Thomas Adams, a career diplomat who had served as Coordinator of Assistance to Europe and Eurasia from 2005-2008. During that time Adams oversaw the design and implementation of all U.S. assistance programmes in 29 European and Eurasian countries, including Bosnia. In his new position his sole responsibility would be Haiti. He would be reinforced with a staff of more than a dozen Foreign Service officers

and USAID personnel in an office located in the State Department headquarters at Foggy Bottom. As he undertook his assignment, Adams drew significantly on the work, findings and ideas of Mills and her staff before and following the natural disaster.

Given its high level of engagement with Haiti since almost day one of its tenure, little doubt existed that the administration viewed the Caribbean nation as more than a pinprick blip on the U.S. policy radar screen. Indeed, the aid effectiveness review process traced in this article that began prior to Haiti's devastating earthquake and that was fine-tuned following the natural disaster offers insights into not only how a reformed U.S. development strategy might achieve significant and sustainable results in Haiti, but also how policies and practices leading toward more effective development assistance might be enacted elsewhere.

Setting the Stage: The Pre-Quake Policy Review

Motivating factors

The pre-earthquake, 2009 Haiti policy review was motivated, in essence, by three key factors. First, even before his November 2008 election, presidential candidate Barack Obama spoke of the necessity for U.S. leadership in assisting Haiti to bounce back from a very difficult 2008, when it was caught early on in the bull's-eye of a global increase of food and fuel prices that resulted in protests throughout Haiti over the skyrocketing cost of living and increased suffering among poor people. Those protests evolved into a period of protracted political instability that was followed by extensive human suffering and economic loss when Haiti was struck in August and September by four powerful tropical storms. Once he became president, Obama's commitment moved toward action when he nominated Hillary Clinton as his Secretary of State. Clinton's engagement with Haiti had begun in 1975 when she and her husband visited the country as newlyweds and continued through the years when Haiti was a major foreign policy concern of her husband's presidential administration.

Second, the Obama administration's commitment to Haiti was paralleled by a determination to strengthen and improve upon the Bush administration's late-developing policy of engagement with Haiti following years of an approach that could be characterised as 'estrangement' toward the Caribbean nation (Maguire 2011: 234).

Finally, the new administration was determined early on to address the fact that Haiti had continued to experience declining social and economic indicators, despite the allocation

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of billions in international aid over past decades, including more than \$1 billion in U.S. foreign assistance in the previous three years. Indeed, U.S. disbursements in 2006 alone had totalled \$390 million. In fiscal year 2008 the \$201 million initially accorded to Haiti represented 61% of the entire U.S. aid package for the Caribbean. As a result of emergency

post-hurricane response, total aid allocations for that year rose to \$279 million (Maguire 2011: 235). Yet Haiti remained, infamously, 'the poorest country in the hemisphere'.

The stars aligned for enactment of a policy review following an April 2009 donors' meeting on Haiti in Washington, when donors pledged some \$325 million toward Haiti's recovery and growth, and former U.S. president Bill Clinton accepted United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's invitation to become UN Special Envoy to Haiti for a two-year

period. Haitian President René Préval had already become the first foreign leader to meet with the new Secretary of State when he visited Washington in March 2009, and the Secretary of State visited Haiti following the April donors' meeting. Shortly thereafter Secretary of State Clinton designated Mills to lead an inter-agency policy review process.

Review findings

By September 2009, in addition to finding that enormous sums of international and U.S. aid had been channelled to Haiti with no appreciable social and economic impact, Mills and her staff had identified three primary findings that helped to explain this miserable aid track record. Key among them was that U.S. foreign assistance in Haiti, executed through an array of NGOs and for-profit contractors, suffered from a limited holistic strategy, focus and coordination. At the time of the review U.S. aid was

committed to more than 30 multi-million dollar contracts that largely operate[d] in isolation of each other and other donor programmes, with limited documentation or rigorous programme evaluation (Department of State 2009).

Or, as summarised later by one of Mills's aides, the U.S. approach to Haiti was 'a mile wide, an inch deep and sprinkled with pixie dust'.²

The review also found that the success and sustainability of initiatives were hindered by the apparent incongruity between U.S. plans and the government of Haiti's long-term economic development and poverty alleviation strategies. The U.S. focus was largely on humanitarian relief and short-term stability operations. The GoH emphasis, as set forth in internationally endorsed poverty alleviation and economic growth plans, tended toward longer-term poverty alleviation and economic growth (GoH 2007).

Lastly, the review found that U.S. reliance on for-profit contractors and NGOs to execute foreign assistance programmes, as opposed to channelling aid through the Haitian government and its institutions, had resulted in programmes 'not designed to be transitioned to the GoH and ... therefore not sustainable' (Department of State 2009).

While these criticisms of past U.S. aid practices came from the Obama Administration, they echoed concerns that had been voiced by the broader donor community for years. As noted by Baranyi in the introductory article to this issue, the 2005 Paris Declaration and the 2007 OECD/DAC 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States' both called on donors to move beyond short-term humanitarian and other projects, align their aid with national development plans and priorities and strengthen the state, as opposed to channelling overseas development aid through NGOs and contractors.³ The DAC peer review of foreign aid in 2006 had faulted the U.S. for not following some of these principles in its assistance practices, particularly in fragile states (OECD/DAC 2006).

As such, it is not surprising that the recommendations emerging from the U.S. review reflected the OECD consensus, and therefore a decided shift away from the Bush years when policies focused more on political than development goals. The resulting bypassing of the state and channelling of assistance almost exclusively through NGOs, for-profit contractors and the private sector not only weakened the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was widely vilified by Bush; they also resulted in a myriad of unsustainable projects created from outside Haiti and implemented by foreign organisations, little coordination with other donors, economic decline and greater suffering among Haiti's poor. In spite of greater engagement by the Bush administration with public



authorities following Aristide's February 2004 removal from office and from Haiti, U.S. development assistance continued down its ineffective path. A state weakened from years of neglect and confronting a post-regime change environment whose instability rivalled that of Iraq in 2004 and 2005 in terms of internecine conflict and danger to foreign personnel was unable to take advantage of resources made available to it. Concurrently, the problems of NGO non-sustainability, lack of coordination and the imposition of top-down strategies continued to work against improved aid effectiveness (Maguire 2011; Buss 2008).

Emerging recommendations

As Mills and her colleagues met on 12 January 2010, they were fine-tuning a new U.S. foreign assistance strategy toward Haiti built on the following five broad principles:

- 1) U.S. assistance would be better served if it supported an integrated, country-led plan that focused on key sectors and geographic regions of the country;
- 2) U.S. assistance would respond to GoH priorities and help build that government's capacity to sustain stability and economic growth;
- 3) The U.S. approach would be best served by aligning itself with common goals that would harness the strengths of an array of U.S. government agencies in a coordinated, 'whole-of-government' approach ;
- 4) The U.S. would endeavour to leverage and complement the resources of other donors through an envisaged joint Haitian/international 'donor coordination unit' composed of GoH representatives and representatives of donor nations and multilateral organisations, coordinated under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy;
- 5) U.S.-allocated funds would be subject to rigorous monitoring, evaluation and evidence-based outcomes.

The recommendations that emerged from the Obama administration's review of development policy in Haiti were a direct application of the Paris Declaration principles.

Mills and her team considered concentrating U.S. investments on four key sectors to scale back on the 'pixie dust' approach characterised by thinly spread support over 29 different programme areas with 30 multimillion dollar projects enacted by various contract agents. These were agriculture, energy, health and security, with each leveraging benefits for Haiti

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of investments in food security, environmental restoration, economic development, infrastructure improvement, enhanced public sector capacity and political stability. By taking this approach the State Department believed that it could begin to address weaknesses in aid policy and practice that had plagued effectiveness not just under the previous administration, but also for all U.S. administrations since the mid-1970s, when

U.S. assistance to Haiti increased following the death of the despot Francois Duvalier and the ascension to dictatorial power of his supposedly less repressive son, Jean-Claude Duvalier. One key element – support of country-led plans developed in 2007 and 2009 by Haiti's incumbent elected government – was viewed as both essential and problematic. This was because, on the one hand the expectations Haitians held that an elected government should render them services that would improve their lives, and on the other

the fact that Haiti's state, emasculated following decades of the poor governance that pushed donors to bypass it in favour of non-governmental partners, had little capacity. The recommendations tabled by Mills and her team aimed to address these historic deficiencies by reinforcing the state and supporting its priorities in domains that were central to reconstruction – or to what is called 'peacebuilding' in other contexts.

Other important components of the plan, including strategic coordination among donors and a greater accountability to demonstrate results among aid contractors, also presented challenges, particularly as these envisaged reforms pushed against the comfort zone of the multitude of project implementing organisations that had become accustomed to the development industry's 'business as usual' approach, for example by measuring disbursement as a key component of success (Reitman 2011: 63-65).

By early January 2010 implementation of the policy approach was envisaged as a three-phase process covering five years beginning early in 2010. Then the earthquake struck Haiti, sending shock waves as far as the aforementioned conference room at the State Department.

Fine-tuning and Applying Recommendations in a Post-disaster Setting

Contextualising post-quake needs into a broader development strategy

Following an intense post-quake focus on disaster response and humanitarian relief, the Haitian government tabled a 'post-disaster needs assessment' (PDNA) and an 'Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti' that was endorsed as a blueprint for reconstruction at the international donors' conference held at UN Headquarters on 31 March 2010. Informed by the PDNA and by the action plan, officials concluded that U.S. assistance should not be directed toward helping Haiti rebuild its past. U.S. aid, rather, should support opportunities presented by the earthquake to move forward by 'building Haiti back better', particularly to achieve greater economic development.⁴

In this regard U.S. assistance would reinforce the capacity of the Haitian government that was required if it were to have any chance of successfully implementing the broad outline of recovery and development set forth in its action plan, against which donors had pledged some \$9 billion over the next five years. Importantly, that plan emphasises a decentralised approach through infrastructure and other investments in three new growth poles aimed at creating opportunities beyond Port-au-Prince (GoH 2010) The plan's emphasis on decentralised growth poles is a key element contributing to the rebuilding of Haiti, not only addressing the quake-stricken area in and around the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. Reversing decades of neglect of rural Haiti and the cities, towns and villages spread around its countryside and hugging its long coastal stretches by channelling resources for infrastructure improvement and health and education services for improved human development would begin to address the enormous disparity of investment and opportunity that had grown between the capital city and the rest of the country. This rebalancing of Haiti also envisages investment in agriculture, light manufacturing and tourism as a triumvirate of sectors key to revitalising Haiti's economy and society. This approach to decentralisation and economic diversification reflects the incorporation of key lessons from revisionist (post-neoliberal) development thinking into post-disaster reconstruction strategies, building on but going beyond earlier peacebuilding strategies.

Consistent with thinking that emerged from the pre-quake policy review, the initial orientation regarding the post-quake approach was that it would be based on pursuing opportunities as



opposed to chasing needs, resulting in a more focused approach toward development assistance, particularly as post-quake aid efforts transitioned from relief to economic investment and growth. Anticipating an amplification of the humanitarian and development needs across the board in the aftermath of the unprecedented disaster, post-quake thinking centred on Haiti's characteristics that provided opportunity for economic and social growth as opposed to simply staunching the tide of poverty. Those opportunities included the country's proximity to large markets for the export of agricultural products such as mangoes, avocados and coffee, along with garments assembled and shipped to the U.S. in conjunction with the HOPE and HOPE II Acts.⁵ Haiti's natural assets – including beaches and historical heritage sites from its revolutionary period – and its unique Creole culture provide other opportunities to pursue the development of a tourism sector. Also noted in the State Department's post-quake planning was the fact that Haiti's dedicated and resourceful people were another tremendous asset, along with its nearby, educated and talented Diaspora anxious to help the country rebound and move forward (Department of State 2010).

To sum up, salient post-quake opportunities were envisaged in agriculture, manufacturing and tourism, with an emphasis on job creation and decentralised growth through investment in ports, electricity and transportation infrastructure serving the aforementioned growth poles. Inherent in the execution of the strategy was the greater investment in developing Haiti's human capital.

U.S. thinking in the immediate post-quake period also stressed that Haiti's prospects for success would be enhanced if the earthquake would yield a departure within the country from the narrowly defined priorities of self-interest and self-preservation commonly held

If the country's small and powerful private sector rejected its inefficient rent-seeking practices that lack transparency to embrace an approach based on openness and accountability it could serve as an engine of true national development.

among the country's economic and political elites, combined with their embrace of a sustained, shared and inclusive vision of development among all Haitians. Such a break from strongly entrenched patterns of political leadership, posited U.S. officials, would have to be paralleled by a break from Haiti's economic past. If the country's small and powerful private sector rejected its inefficient

rent-seeking practices that lack transparency to embrace an approach based on openness and accountability it could serve as an engine of true national development. Lacking this break from its past, underscored the State Department, Haiti's chances to 'build back better' would be limited (Department of State 2010).

By May 2010, U.S. post-quake thinking had coalesced around the following critical operational areas that Mills and her staff believed would yield improved performance and important results:

- Expand agriculture, infrastructure and ensuring food security to help farmers grow more, sell more and reduce dependence on imported food;
- Improve security by expanding the Haitian National Police, supporting improved corrections, a new criminal code and courts, and reducing the narcotics trade;
- Extend access to electricity and renew the environment by restoring and expanding the electricity grid and increasing the market for LPG cooking fuel to reduce charcoal demand;
- Support sustainable healthcare, particularly to women and children, to limit the spread of infectious disease and strengthen Haiti's public health delivery capabilities;

- Make strategic investments in governance and housing that would support elections and build capacity in central and local governance structures to enhance revenue collection capabilities, and build homes in the new growth poles.

The U.S.-supported growth poles, in coastal areas in or near to Cap Haitien and St Marc, and north of Port-au-Prince, would be connected to 'development corridors' that stretched into their hinterland areas. In the hinterland, investments in watershed rehabilitation, agricultural development, healthcare and an improved tourism infrastructure would complement investments largely in infrastructure improvements (electricity, roads, ports and housing) made in the growth poles themselves. The result would be a more holistic and comprehensive approach to social and economic development, reflecting over a decade of accumulated knowledge about the importance of decentralised approaches to peacebuilding and reconstruction (Baranyi 2008 and in this issue).

Finally, during the months following the quake U.S. officials reiterated two earlier recommendations. First, they called for the creation of a mixed Haitian/international body that would coordinate Haiti's post-quake recovery and development. The Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) that emerged from the March 2010 donor's conference appeared to fulfil that recommendation. Second, they insisted on a deliberate priority focus on building Haitian institutions that would become capable of managing and overseeing the country's development.

A strategic framework unveiled: a context broadened

On 3 January 2011 Tom Adams's Haiti Coordinator's Office of the Department of State unveiled the U.S. government's detailed post-earthquake Haiti strategy, elaborating a strategic framework for U.S. support of the country's recovery and development. The document represents not only a culmination of the department's policy review initiated in 2009, but also, in recognition of Haiti's fragile and sometimes volatile conditions, it is construed as a 'living document' that 'while setting strategic parameters, must be agile in responding to the continually changing landscape in which it operates' (Department of State 2011a).

The framework to 'build Haiti back better' tacitly recognises that a reformed U.S. strategy for enhanced aid effectiveness must confront the underlying factors of inequality and poverty-inducing conflict that were laid bare by the natural disaster, and not focus principally on rebuilding the area directly affected by the quake. As such, it incorporates pre-earthquake policy review findings and recommendations summarised above, and it builds on and fine-tunes the early post-quake directions. The framework's overarching goal is to achieve a stable and economically viable Haiti. To achieve this it identifies four core development sector pillars similar to those that emerged in the immediate pre-quake period: infrastructure and energy; food and economic security; health and other basic services; and governance and rule of law. In recognition of the urgent need to decentralise opportunities and investment in Haiti, it locates U.S. efforts in the aforementioned three geographically defined development corridors that serve Port-au-Prince, St Marc, Cap Haitien and their surrounding areas, and that complement the Haitian government's envisaged growth poles. It foresees sustained economic growth catalyzed by investments in agriculture, energy and infrastructure, as well as long-term stability that will be ensured by investments in public institutions. Finally, the framework's guiding principles closely reflect the guiding principles of the Paris Declaration: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results, and mutual accountability.

As Mills and her colleagues were spending the better of two years reviewing and revising Haiti development policy, the Obama administration issued a presidential policy directive



that placed development alongside diplomacy and defence as core pillars of American power (White House 2010). Obama's directive reiterated the adaptation of a 3D (diplomacy, defence, development) foreign policy approach under the Bush administration that had won praise from the OECD's DAC, which had previously argued that development needed to be accorded the same status as diplomacy and defence and that the critical importance of poverty reduction had to be explicitly recognised within the 3D approach. Because Haiti faces three key development challenges identified in Obama's directive – natural disasters, poverty and political instability – the Caribbean nation has become viewed within the administration as a test of its foreign policy (Department of State 2010: 8)

The flow between Haiti and the administration's larger policy initiatives has become a two-way street. The assessment of U.S. foreign aid policies and programmes in Haiti carried out under the auspices of the State Department since the middle of 2009 and outlined above had helped to inform the Obama administration's broader thinking on how U.S. development assistance writ large requires reform in order to achieve greater and sustained effectiveness in poverty alleviation and economic growth. Haiti, apparently, is not the only place where U.S. development assistance has a track record of ineffective outcomes and a variety of shortcomings, including the 'pixie dust' approach.

Indeed, shortly after the release of the Haiti strategic framework, Dr Rajiv Shah, the Administrator of USAID appointed to his position just prior to Haiti's January 2010 earthquake, called for sweeping reforms in the way his agency went about pursuing its development goals, citing the importance of Haiti as a case in point. Reflective of some of the findings of Mills and her colleagues, Shah was particularly critical of the 'modern development enterprise' he had begun to oversee that brimmed with 'high-priced consultants' that were adept in finding 'another flight to another conference or lead another training'. Adding that his agency was 'no longer satisfied with writing big cheques to big contractors and calling it development', the top USAID official stated:

We have no interest in our own growth and our own perpetuity. We must seek to do our work in a way that allows us to be replaced over time by efficient local governments, by thriving civil societies and by a vibrant private sector (Shah 2011; Pincus 2011).

As if to underscore these points, in late 2010 USAID had suspended its 65 contracts worth \$640 million, including \$109 million for work in Afghanistan, with the Academy for Educational Development (AED), a Washington-based non-profit organisation, citing findings by the Office of Inspector General of the contractor's misconduct, mismanagement and a lack of internal controls. USAID's action toward AED, which subsequently closed its doors, was widely linked to the agency – and administration's – pursuit of greater accountability in the expenditure of aid dollars (Hedgpeth & Boak 2010; Beam 2011).

The apparent convergence between Haiti and broader U.S. development approaches is particularly manifest in the aforementioned five principles of U.S. post-earthquake strategy in Haiti outlined in the January 2011 strategic framework. Acknowledged in the framework is the fact that those principles guiding U.S. aid strategy in Haiti 'will adhere to the five development principles set forth by President Obama at the G-8 summit in L'Aquila, Italy, in 2009' (Department of State 2011a: 13). Those principles, as cited in the Haiti document, specify that U.S. government assistance will: be country-led and build country capacity; be comprehensive and integrated; leverage and be coordinated with the resources of other partners; leverage multilateral mechanisms wherever appropriate; and be sustained and accountable. This approach clearly built on the earlier policy review and on the DAC principles of aid effectiveness that had informed the new U.S. policy.

Many variables, including sustained availability of resources and of interest in Haiti, will have to fall into place for the U.S. post-quake strategy to achieve the successful implementation of these principles and the strategic framework they reinforce. The variable that appears important above all others for the enactment of major sections of the strategy is that requiring the Haitian government to be a reliable partner. Given both the importance of this variable

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juxtaposed with past shortcomings of Haitian governments, the framework unveiled a year after the earthquake contains a key caveat: the U.S. will decidedly not amend its approach to Haiti if the appropriate partnership between the U.S. and Haitian governments is not realised (Department of State, 2011a: 3). In view of Haiti's seemingly perpetually volatile political environment, its exceedingly weak

governmental institutions and the uncertain prospects of stable governance during the five-year term of President Michel Martelly – as seen in the early months of his term that have been characterised by provocation and stand-offs with the Haitian Parliament – achieving and sustaining a reliable partnership may not be easy (Charles 2011).

Enacting Reform: Continued Challenges

The Obama Administration's initiative to reform U.S. foreign assistance toward Haiti taken under the auspices of the Hillary Clinton-led State Department is a long overdue and positive step toward a more fruitful U.S.-Haiti relationship and the more effective application of U.S. foreign aid. It is also a welcome manifestation of the administration's willingness to consider reform measures that are consistent with the principles of the Paris Declaration and with recommendations of the OECD's DAC. In this regard, the recommendations that emerged prior to the earthquake – and that have survived the quake's trauma – promised a new approach toward Haiti that includes greater coordination among donors, support of government-led plans and strategies, de-emphasising the dependence on NGOs and for-profit contractors and strengthened capacity of Haitian governments to lead and manage the development of their country. Beyond doubt, the complexities and urgency presented by the earthquake complicated the reform process. On the one hand they slowed it down considerably, forcing Mills and her staff almost back to square one in January 2010. On the other, the earthquake provided greater clarity of Haiti's structural weaknesses and important opportunities to refine the reform process.

On the second anniversary of the earthquake, the Obama administration is being challenged on all fronts to achieve its new approach to aid effectiveness in Haiti. Strengthening Haiti's government capacity poses a key challenge given its pivotal place in the achievement of the reforms. Particularly glaring among the weaknesses exposed with the earthquake is the overwhelming lack of capacity of the Haitian state. Even before the earthquake destroyed almost all the government's physical infrastructure and killed an estimated 15-30% of its workforce, the Haitian state was bereft of the human and financial resources and the organisational structures required to effectively confront Haiti's myriad development challenges. Political squabbling between the executive and legislative branches in Haiti had further eroded prospects for effective state policies and programmatic intervention to address the country's glaring weaknesses in such areas as education, health, infrastructure, and economic development, as had the long term haemorrhaging of state capacity due to emigration from Haiti and the migration of talented personnel from public service to employment, in Haiti, by international organisations.



Strengthening the capacity of the GoH to lead and manage the development process of Haiti will require donor staying power and the resources to help cover the costs of rebuilding and expanding the physical and human resource infrastructure of Haitian governance. It will also require that Haitian authorities embrace the aforementioned, more inclusive vision of development as well as heightened transparency and accountability in enacting that vision. Further, it will require that the contractors and others whom the international community calls upon to implement projects in Haiti work with more effectiveness toward ensuring that their interventions result in project success and in contributing tangibly to improved Haitian public sector institutional capacity.

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Haiti's overseas population, often viewed in Haiti solely as a source of investment or remittances, can assist by reinforcing the technical capacities of overstretched senior public servants and by training a new generation of government functionaries. Among ideas under consideration are internship programs for recent university graduates from the Diaspora and fellowships

to support mid-level professionals who wish to devote themselves to strengthening Haiti's public institutions. A good beginning toward these ends was witnessed in the aftermath of the earthquake with the consultative process that culminated in the 31 March 2010 international donors' conference⁶ and the creation of the Haitian government's quite serviceable action plan for recovery and development. Enactment of that plan has stumbled, however, at least in part on account of a perceived lack of urgency and effective decision making among Haitian officials and the return of 'politics as usual' following the election of President Martelly (Oxfam 2011; Charles 2011). Also, anti-reform push-back within the 'development community' by those who have benefitted nicely from established methodologies is strong (Reitman 2011).

The extent to which other pre-quake recommendations that emerged in the post-quake period to become prominent in the post-quake strategy of January 2011 will be successfully implemented is yet to be seen. Certain trends have begun to emerge that indicate a mixed success rate so far:

- The aforementioned 'pixie dust' approach appears improved by a more focused approach; yet in the post-quake period Haiti's already extensive needs have once again been urgently underscored in view of the extensive damage done by the quake to the country's educational, health and sanitation, financial, governmental, housing, energy and job-creation infrastructure that was so heavily concentrated in quake-stricken Port-au-Prince. By underscoring pre-existing weaknesses in so many critical sectors, the earthquake fuelled a compelling impulse among those responding to try to address the universe of the country's needs, hence presenting a temptation to return to a 'mile-wide, inch deep' approach and to get bogged down by chasing multiple needs as opposed to keying in on promising opportunities. The ability of the administration to maintain its strategy of emphasising key sectors will be challenged by this parallel reality, particularly if donor coordination does not improve.
- Casting some doubt on effective coordination – both among donors and with Haitian authorities – has been the criticism levelled at the U.S.-supported IHRC for an apparent 'project-by-project', NGO-driven approach that lacks unified and coherent support for the country's recovery and development plan. International critics also suggest that the IHRC fails to require that the recovery and development projects it endorses

include activities and measurable outcomes that contribute toward the building and strengthening of Haitian public institutions (Oxfam 2011). Haitians – including President Martelly – have criticised the body as lacking responsiveness to Haitian input. The mandate of the IHRC expired in November, 2010. Despite 11th hour support for its extension requested by President Martelly, the commission is currently inactive and its future is unknown (IHRC 2011; Daniel, 2011).

- Despite the doubt and criticism, support for government-led plans and greater coordination through new organisational instruments have occurred as the U.S. and other donors provide funding in support of the GoH action recovery and development plan, and they work through the IHRC and a World Bank-managed multi-donor reconstruction fund. Yet many donors – including the U.S. – continue to identify 'their' projects, enact 'their' strategies, and channel funds to 'their' NGOs and for-profit implementation agencies. As a result, in the field, NGOs continue to be the lead implementation actors of social and economic initiatives, with the Haitian government virtually out of sight. The face of 'building Haiti back better' continues to be a foreign one of NGOs and for-profit contractors. Whether NGO actions will ultimately transition to GoH oversight and become more sustainable as a result is yet to be seen.
- The lion's share of development funds entering Haiti continues to bypass the GoH. Only some 30% of the \$4.53 billion of pledged programmatic funds for the first 18 months of recovery had been disbursed over the first 12 months, and little of that has translated into activities and improvements that ordinary Haitians can see and benefit from. Of the \$2.25 billion in earthquake humanitarian response funding, only \$19.6 million (0.9%) went to the Haitian government (UN Special Envoy 2011).

Conversations about Haiti and its possibilities often boil down whether one sees the glass as half-empty or half-full. The initiative begun by the Obama administration in early 2009 to reform the way U.S. foreign assistance is delivered to Haiti aims not only to fill the glass, but also to increase its size. The jury remains out as to whether the desired reform goals will be implemented, sustained and successful, and the pixie dust of ineffective development interventions in Haiti will recede. As emphasised in the introductory article to this volume, the challenge of reform is a challenge for the U.S. just as it is for other donors and indeed for the Haitian government. As the international actors and Haitians seek to address those challenges, Haiti, in the meantime, remains 'stuck in the mud'.⁷

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Endnotes

¹ Conversation of the author with a member of the State Department's Haiti policy review team.

² Comments of a U.S. Department of State official at a meeting on Haiti at the U.S. Institute of Peace, 8 April 2010.

³ Baranyi explores this topic further in his article in this issue of *JPD*.



⁴ 'Build Haiti Back Better', a phrase that has become commonly used in the earthquake's aftermath, was coined within days of the catastrophe by UN Special Envoy to Haiti Bill Clinton, who also had applied the phrase in 2005 during his work as Special UN Envoy for post-tsunami recovery in affected Indian Ocean states (Clinton 2010).

⁵ The HOPE Acts were exceptionally liberal trade agreements already on the books that provided Haitian-based garment manufacturers the opportunity to source raw material from points of origin anywhere in the world and receive preferential, duty-free access to the U.S. market (Hornbeck 2010).

⁶ Critics of that consultative process, however, point out that the voices of ordinary Haitians – 'the voices of the voiceless' – were not heeded during the process, in spite of considerable efforts to the contrary that culminated in the presentation, at the donors' conference, of recommendations from those voices. See 'A Voice for the Voiceless': http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/F74FC62B3590027B492576F7001C9E1E-Full_Report.pdf.

⁷ 'Haiti, Stuck in the Mud', *Washington Post*, 16 August 2011: A 16: www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/haiti-stuck-in-the-mud/2011/08/05/gIQAbK5hFJ_story.html, accessed 11 September.

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