

# The unstable country of haiti



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The country of Haiti, the poorest in the Western Hemisphere, throughout the decades has experienced not only governmental shifts and tribulations, but economic as well. Haiti's economy coincides directly with the state of poverty in which they are under. The lack of abundant resources, as well as the education to use the resources available and make them prosper, and the lack of money contribute greatly to the inability the economy in Haiti has to flourish. Despite the already unstable economy, the country's experienced earthquake in Port-au-Prince in 2009 has created more economic problems than ever. The country's poverty fuels the decisions individuals make personally and environmentally, which in turn, directly correlates with the country's economic decisions.

An immense concern impacting the country's economy is lack of education. For example, if the United States provided six cows for a town, they would be slaughtered in a week to sell the meat for money. In retrospect, the cows could have made the area prosper, by using them for farming, producing and selling milk, and then selling for meat. The inability to decipher the best possible way to use the resources, or cows, correlates directly with the stability of the economy. The lack of education about how to use resources properly is what has primarily caused " around 80 percent of the population living under the poverty line and 54 percent living in abject poverty, according to the CIA World Factbook. More than two-thirds of the labor forces are believed to not have formal jobs, and just 62. 1 percent of adults over age 15 are literate, according to the United Nations Human Development Report." [1] It is evident that with the proper knowledge on how to maintain

and preserve their resources, Haiti could stabilize and witness a growth in their economy.

Another issue concerning the nation's inability to uphold an unwavering economy is poverty. In a recent study concerning human development, statistically, Haiti was listed as number 149 out of 182 countries in which the " population living [is] below \$2 a day." [2] Although many persons in the country have a minute amount of knowledge concerning the resources at their fingertips, a greater concern is the limitation of resources in Haiti. Easily listed as the poorest country on the Western Hemisphere, Haiti has been " locked in a vicious cycle of environmental disaster, hunger, poverty and reliance on international aid, it's perhaps the most extreme example of what is happening to many of the world's poorest countries." [3] The extreme, unchanging cycle Haiti must undergo is a direct parallel to the availability of resources the country is able to produce. The environmental disaster has halted the desire for materials, such as land to use for farming, and wood to sell. The poverty the country experiences provide limitations for funding food, all resources, environmental progress, and economic independence and advances.

" It is a fact that no country on the face of earth is poor. Of course some have more resources than others but poverty and economic trials result from human economic choices, through government leadership, production, commerce and more. Consider a country like Nigeria in Africa, first in oil in the region, yet with so much poverty. Factor number one in poverty in the world is corruption. I would add to this for Haiti, the lack of care and control and above all the fact that a lot of resources are not used; a lot of sectors

are not developed. Take agriculture and tourism. In the colony time Haiti used to produce half of the sugar consumed in Europe at that time, now with 2% of vegetation left and no structure in agriculture we practically import almost all our food supply (more than 50% obviously) from USA and the DR. Our history, our weather and our natural beauty make of us one of the best spots in the world for tourism, yet we are so poor. Because there is no infrastructure and public services and because the country is so dirty, insecure (not that much, but not controlled actually) and stinky.”[4]

It is evident that the country of Haiti is in great need of many resources and changes to properly rebuild its economy. What needs to happen is to “ make the justice system functional, to get rid of (or at least reduce) corruption, put control for security matters and use the resources we have and provide public services, such as health care, education, electricity, clean water, sanitation and more.”[5]Taking the first step of changing the mindset and actions of the government to further change the minds of the people will allow and provide reasoning for a stable country in the making.

Similarly to education and poverty, hunger due to increasing food prices is a major issue that has a drastic impact on Haiti’s economy. The producer provides food with a heavily induced price, in hopes to sell their product for much more than the costs to make it, simple economist mindset. However, the poverty rates impact not only the consumer, but also the producer. The limited currency achievable drastically makes the desire for basic necessities, such as food, barely attainable. The reality is, is that “ Haiti has enough food in the marketplace to feed its populace, but prices have increased beyond the means of many of the urban poor to pay for

it.”[6]Although the United States may be helping by importing rice, we may be hurting the country’s economy more than helping it. By importing rice at cheaper prices, we’re “ undermining local farmers, often being sold at half the price that local farmers could charge...[creating] more poverty and hunger.”[7]The drastic price increases in the country and the slicing of prices due to import, correlates back to the lack of knowledge both producers, and consumers, have concerning the best approach to sell and buy resources. This price increase “ hurt the poor so much...all protection from price shocks have been flayed away.”[8]While many organizations may be abandoning the country’s much needed help concerning hunger, Congress acknowledges the state in which the country is under. Haiti has been added to the “ list of those poorest countries eligible for debt relief, allowing them to divert resources from loan payment to health and education programs.”[9]By allowing money to be used for education and health programs, allows the country to begin taking minute steps in properly stabilizing their economy.

Despite many of the economic problems concerning Haiti, there are many positive aspects of its economic that can be viewed as the beginning step in a maintainable economy. Haiti’s “ economy.... seemed to be turning a corner in recent years, aided by international support and debt relief programs.”[10]The help of these debt relief programs have helped Haiti collect “ better national statistics, with the help of the International Monetary Fund, so that it could better assess and calibrate its economic policies.”[11]Although these policies are in fact, helping the economy, there are more unpleasant aspects to the faltering economy than there are pleasant. To see any sort of change, it must start with proper education.

This, then, sparks the minds of the producers and consumers to decipher proper resource use, in turn, having a positive effect on the economy.

While economic issues greatly impact the well being of the country's state, governmental issues have a drastic impact on Haiti as well. Government corruption is the largest problem in terms of the country's government and has been said to be the number one reason for poverty in the nation. The lack of organization and set leadership has created an unknowing chaos breeched throughout the nation, and no set laws have been obeyed or put into affect in years. The unequal distribution of punishment and lawful rule in the country has created a broken corruption in the government of Haiti.

Haiti's President, Rene Preval, has faced many challenges concerning the governmental aspect of the country's overwhelming problems. President Preval " openly affirmed his commitment to fight corruption. He is actively seeking technical assistance and cooperation with countries in the region to reinforce Haiti's institutional capacity to fight corruption and financial crime. U. S. firms have complained that corruption is a major obstacle to effective business operation in Haiti. They point to requests for payment by customs officials in order to clear import shipments as examples of solicitation for bribes. Some importers reportedly " negotiate" customs duties with inspectors."[12]Despite the president's attempts to end corruption in the country, Haiti is still stagnating due to the fact that it is still the fourth most corrupted country in the world. Haiti's need to completely demolish corruption is one that has been desired for years, and is the center of the political problem in Haiti. The earthquake in Port-au-Prince is a prime example of the affect and movement the government has during a time of

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crisis. After the earthquake, “ many Haitians...express the conflicting impulse to see their government in action at a time of crisis while wanting to make sure it is denied access to international aid for fear it will be stolen.”[13]The desire and fear many of the Haitian people express concerning their government needs to be eliminated. The Haitian government should be entirely secure and maintainable, to be not be wanted, but obtained. Fear? Eliminated. To have a strong, stable government, fear needs to be eliminated. There, of course, will be times of fear during major governmental decisions, however, fear that the government is not stable or established enough to adhere to these political decisions, should be nonexistent. Haitian Prime Minister Pierre-Louis said the Haiti has a “ vacuum of a government.”[14]The government’s one-way suction, with no evident output, simply shows the lack of education individuals and politicians have regarding a sturdy, lasting government.

While the core of corruption affects the progressive movement of a stable government, the laws in which the government is based off are impacted by corruption as well. Haitian law is corrupted in many areas, “ including operation of the judicial system; organization and operation of the executive branch; publication of laws, regulations, and official notices; establishment of companies; land tenure and real property law and procedures; bank and credit operations; insurance and pension regulation; accounting standards; civil status documentation; customs law and administration; international trade and investment promotion; foreign investment regime; and regulation of market concentration and competition. Although these deficiencies hinder business activities, they are not specifically aimed at foreign firms and

appear to have an equally negative effect on foreign and local companies.”[15]These many, many, laws that are impacted by corruption are added to the overwhelming list of political, social, and individual needs that need to be addressed, met, and fixed, to obtain a stable economically and governmentally sound nation. While all these issues are vitally important in changing regarding the repair of the Haitian government, the major issues that need to be addressed and met will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

The insolvent judicial system enveloping Haitian government has been said to be the number one governmental problem in Haitian politics. Improving the justice system is “ essential for establishing lasting stability and security, enabling economic development, and improving citizen confidence in the Haitian government.”[16]It is apparent that positive governmental changes affirm positive economic changes as well. A stronger judicial system would affect both the government and economic aspects of the country’s government. Enabling and developing go hand in hand. By enabling and striving for a stronger judicial system, allows for the development of a government in need of fixing. Sadly, the number one problem in terms of political change and leadership is lack of education. President Rene states that “ some of the main problems are the lack of access to justice, and the language factor: French is the language of use in official law whereas the Haitian population mostly speaks Creole.”[17]French is the language of businessmen, while Creole is spoken in the streets and among the people. This language differentiation between businessmen and the people creates a barricade. The fact that language has the ability to separate the politicians

from the laborers may cause many to think that there is no point of trying to change the system, when it seems so concrete. The drastic, uneven educational backgrounds of the citizens in Haiti create an uneven system. This system “ lacks practice and respect of the organizational and administrative procedures, and which usually leaves place to interpretation of the roles and responsibilities of justice.”[18] Leaving items to interpretation is the exact opposite direction of what needs to occur in government. Laws and systems should be entirely concrete; of course, certain cases demand interpretation, but the law and governmental systems as a whole should be stable enough to obtain tangible responsibilities and actions. Although the judicial system in Haiti is extremely diminished, action is being taken to reconstruct and rebuild the system. President Rene believe in order “ to have a reform, you must have a base, something you can build on...we should talk about constructing a Haitian justice system before talking about a reform.”[19] Since October of 2006, work on the Haitian Ministry of Justice’s Action Plan has been under construction, and should be ready in December 2010. This document “ offers a glimpse into the needs and activities that should be undertaken to favor judicial reform.”[20] While the need for judicial reform is desperate in Haiti, finding and adhering to the country’s needs is definitely not a quick fix, but the results will hopefully be lasting.

Corruption in customs laws and administration is another major issue that impacts the economic and governmental aspects of the country. The fraudulent actions taken in customs directly effects what comes in, and out, of Haiti. Custom officers have the position and power to “ often demand

bribes to clear shipments.” The fact that many people may not have enough to pay for a bribe, concludes in the delay of important materials and resources, such as food and medication. Bribing also contributes to the suspension of sending individuals in the country to America. Adoption and visa’s take an extremely long amount of time due to paper work and other commonalities, however, if a bribe is not given, this process may take twice as long. The astonishing part about bribes given to custom workers is that it’s not a secret. Many, many people recognize that this occurs; yet because it is the faltered “ law,” it must be obeyed. If not, materials, people, and other resources are left waiting and anticipating while others who provide larger amounts of money are transitioning articles in and out of the country. Although transferring items in and out of the country is important, it greatly depends on the way it is done. Smuggling “ is a major problem, and contraband accounts for a large percentage of the manufactured consumables market.”[21]Due to bribing, smuggling may seem necessary due to the unyielding custom regulations. However, smuggling, in turn, creates a higher security necessity, targeting a problem completely irrelative to the original corruptive act; bribing. The increased safety regulations custom officers are taking regarding smuggling, take the attention away from the corruption entailed with bribing, and focus the attention on the act of smuggling. However, the two go hand in hand. If the corruption concerning inducements was controlled and possibly eliminated, smuggling would decrease tremendously. The entire problem correlates directly back to the justice system. If a concrete justice system was intact, the need and desire for bribes and illegally importing and exporting goods would be

eliminated, and in turn, customs would be able to operate under a specific procedures and rules.

While Haiti's government and economy have been completely consumed by corruption and disorder, the country's government is taking many steps in improving and eliminating the broken system. Although these constructions and renovations are seemingly slow, the devastating earthquake in Port-au-Prince in January 2010 has made efforts to transform the economic and governmental state in Haiti seemingly impossible under these circumstances. The 8.8 earthquake in the country's capital has emotionally and physically undermined efforts to alter political aspects of the country, due to the crisis at hand. The economy of the country was impacted more so than the government; although, government and economic growth parallel one another. While the country's shocking earthquake might seem like a rigorous setback, it's not a "fatal blow. Whatever growth trajectory they were on, it's more of a shift down in that path than it is a permanent decline in the rate of growth." [22] Examining the devastation as a setback as opposed to a decline creates a positive outlook on the situation, and allows for a reinforced positive mindset, that things will change for the better. Although the cost to repair and restore the broken and destroyed buildings in Port-au-Prince is immense, the quake may have aided in the positive economic growth. The earthquake "may have cracked rock formations along the fault, allowing gas or oil to temporarily seep toward the surface...a discovery could significantly improve the country's economy and stimulate further exploration." [23] Although drastically undeveloped in comparison to

its neighbor, the Dominican Republic, striking gas or oil in Haiti would allow for a positive change in the country, since the terrible quake.

While the improvement of political systems seems to halt due to the catastrophe of the earthquake, it is not loosely stated or fabricated that “Haiti will need “ massive support” for a “ colossal” reconstruction.”[24]Not only externally, but internally, everything needs to be altered. The earthquake symbolizes the desperate need for tearing down, and reconstructing the political aspect of the country. During a time such as this, however, the political world is the closest and farthest subject from individual’s lives. The broken government is inconsequential in comparison to the “ hundreds of thousands who lost everything but their lives... [who] need water, shelter and toilets to stop the spread of disease.”[25]Although government and economics may seem minute when vaguely looking at the situation, but when deepening perspective, it is clear that a strong government and economy would be able to handle a setback such as this. While rebuilding a broken town and country may not be easy, in comparison to the relief efforts of Hurricane Katrina, the United States government was able to devise a relief effort plan, paralleling the economy to import and export various medicine and resources [even though the United States did not react as swiftly]. If the Haitian government and economy was as concrete, not in comparison to the United States, however, but more structured than it is now, definite relief efforts could have been planned and initiated more swiftly. A stronger economy would have benefited relief efforts as well. A stable economy would allow for a faster, easier import of necessary supplies, such as medical equipment, water, food, and other

necessities. The January earthquake publicized an extreme visual of what needs to change in the country of Haiti. As other nations are able to now recognize the destruction that has, and is still, occurring in this country, it is time to stop recognizing, and start acting. Helping Haiti would not so much be a burden for other countries, but while helping stabilize their economy, their economy in turn would strengthen as well. Many countries would benefit from importing and exporting goods from Haiti, due to the copious amount of natural grown products such as sugar cane, fresh fruits, and coffee Haiti is able to produce. Although the broken and corrupt economy and governmental systems in Haiti seem to paint a negative light on the country, the determination and desire to positively change the system is what keeps this country, and its people, actively searching and seeking new ways to strengthen and change the structure of things.

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