

## **Reconstructing the Haitian heritage sector. First ICC Haiti meet on 7-8 July**

*Culture in Development*  
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Just recently Haitians were demonstrating and rioting demanding immediate action from the government to fulfil their basic needs. The police had trouble to control the hopeless and disparate crowd. The picture on the present state of Haiti is a gloomy one. In July 1.5 million people still live in tents with the hurricane season underway.

### *Many problems*

Logistics are for the many humanitarian organizations the main problem. The ruins and rubble of destroyed buildings are not cleared yet. Consequently the food, tents and other aid cannot reach the Haitians in dire straight. The Dutch [Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties](#), the organization in where many Dutch NGOs work together, collected € 111 million for Haiti after the quake. But till today (June 2010) they could not spend more than € 20 million mainly because of logistic problems. After all, it does not make sense to transport food supplies to Port-au-Prince that will only lie untouched to rot.

The last few weeks the newspapers reported on the rising rice prices caused by the tremendous amount of food aid. Now to buy rice from abroad is cheaper than buying rice locally. That is why the [UN World Food Program](#) changed their policy. Instead of handing out rice they give out money or a voucher to the starving people to buy rice at the local market. Thus by the same token 'Cash for Work' works better then 'Food for work'. One could also wonder what impact the army of well-do-ers, UN staff and other aid workers, have on the local economy. Are they stimulating the local economy by buying food from the local market or do they fly all food into the country? Often strict hygienic rules are applied by aid organizations thus preventing them to buy locally.

These problems are worsened by the increasing crisis over land. With so many people deceased and buried in unknown mass graves, so many displaced persons, so many buildings demolished and hardly any official records left, title deeds and land registry records, it is next to impossible to prove to whom a building belongs. All the more since some 16,000 civil servants were killed. To clear a site without knowledge of ownership will cause many legal problems in the near future. Moreover, land rights are the number one cause of violent clashes worldwide.

It does not get better with the knowledge that this autumn the country will have general elections. They were supposed to take place on February 28, right after the quake, and were postponed till November 28. Those in power would like to maintain their position but it is predicted that the opposition will win. This makes the aid industry even more sensitive and political as it usually is already. Who do they talk to, who is to sign a Memorandum of Understanding when the chance is real that the present rulers will be replaced by November. Are the deals struck yesterday valid tomorrow?

## Humanitarian facts and figures

INFORMATION	FIGURES	SOURCE
EQ affected population	Over 2 Million people affected	GoH
Destroyed or partially damaged houses	188,383 houses	GoH
Assessed Buildings	157,865 houses have been assessed by the Ministry of Public Works. 47% (74,975) Green 29% (45,251) Yellow 24% (37,639) Red	Ministry of Public Works (UNOPS) 25 June
Displaced people in settlement sites	1.5 Million people	GoH
People migrating from West Department	661,000 people (majority living in host families)	GoH
Spontaneous settlement sites	1,342 sites	DTM Analysis as of 9 June
Camp management	Sites registered: 122 across affected area Number of families: 164,356	IOM 29 June
Camp assessment and mitigation	122 sites in PaP out of 130 have now been assessed for vulnerability to storms, hurricanes and flooding. 71 have committed agencies to carry out mitigation.	IOM 29 June
Transitional shelter construction	3,264 T-shelters constructed enough for 10,355 people. Shelter Cluster agencies are planning to complete 125,000 transitional shelters by Summer 2011. An additional 12,071 transitional shelters are already in country.	Shelter cluster 25 June
Damaged / destroyed schools	A total of 4,992 schools were affected by the earthquake. These represent 23% of all schools in Haiti (4,992 of 22,000). Of these, 3,978 were damaged or destroyed, representing 80% of affected schools or 18% of all schools in Haiti.	Ministry of Education
Flash Appeal Funding	61 % funded	Financial Tracking Service (FTS)

Source: [UN OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin, issue # 6, 1 July 2010](#)

### First ICC Haiti

Perhaps these problems are some of the reasons the interest in rebuilding and reconstructing Haiti after the 12<sup>th</sup> January earthquake is clearly decreasing. The number of attendants at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Coordination Committee for the Protection of Haitian Cultural Heritage (ICC) on 7-8 July at the UNESCO'S HQ in Paris was smaller than expected: Hall XII was poorly filled.

Unfortunately, the relevant documents for this meeting were distributed at the beginning of the morning session. That was a pity because the [Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti](#) is essential reading and a necessary preparation for the ICC; the plan was already published in March. The more as at the [Preparatory meeting on February 16](#) all participants agreed with UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova that Culture and Development are intertwined and need to be taken as one. Above and beyond, all heritage reconstruction plans have to fit this master plan and I sincerely wonder if all the present plans meet this requirement.

Another document greatly missed in the preparations to the ICC meeting is the *Strategic Coordination Framework for the Safeguarding of Haitian Cultural Heritage* based on the findings of the Preparatory meeting and in which the ICC interventions are outlined. Also the Statutes of the ICC Haiti were distributed in the morning, which makes it difficult to react to the formal aspects of the committee. At first glance they seem to be different from the ICC Iraq statutes. Compared to the ICC Iraq the mechanisms of the ICC Haiti appear to be less flexible.

The discussions during the one and a half days were rather confusing and many participants misunderstood each other. On the one hand the representatives of the aid organisations kept asking for inventories and needs assessments from the Haitian participants without which they could not produce proposals while on the other hand the Haitians kept saying they had no staff and resources to comply with their requests. It seems that the capacity of the Ministry of Culture and its subsequent institutions, especially [ISPAN](#) (Haitian Institute for the Preservation of the National Heritage), is the main problem. In the end this was recognized by all and put as the number one recommendation.

The UNESCO secretariat set up four thematic sub-groups, respectively on cultural and natural heritage, including world heritage; intangible heritage; museums, archives and libraries; cultural industries. That makes a lot of sense and I am glad that intangible heritage and the cultural industries are included. Especially the last one will have an important role to play in job creation and sustainable tourism.

The recommendations from the sub-committees are subdivided into emergency measures and mid-term strategies. Some are rather generic and others are somewhat ambitious but overall the draft recommendations look very good. We have to wait and see how and when these recommendations will be realized.

Another step in the right direction has been set by UNESCO that will develop, hopefully soon, a website that serves as a platform for information sharing. Though a project database is greatly needed at the Ministry of Culture as well. How else can they oversee what is going on in their sector?

#### *Civil society*

Many do not recognize the teething troubles a government of a country in transition and in a post-disaster situation have to solve. By air-loads the well-intended foreign aid workers are clogging up the country over whom the government seems to have little control.

According to [ActionAid](#) the rebuilding reflects the wishes of donor countries - mainly the US and the EU - rather than the needs of Haitians themselves. The Haitian people must be included in the reconstructions plans, ActionAid continues. At the moment the plan is more reflective of donor country interests. It is imperative that Haitian people be directly involved in their own recovery and lead the reconstruction process. I wonder how many heritage plans have been developed in full consultation with the proper Haitian authorities. Are the heritage societies aware that participatory planning is a set standard in international cooperation?

When Haitian people are directly involved in their own recovery and lead the reconstruction process, there might also be a better chance for ideas like Public Private Partnership (see for more the [World Economic Forum](#)). The Haitian government should seriously consider this economic model as foreign investment is indispensable for the realization of big projects. The advantages for the Haitians are that part of the revenues will stay in the country and local staff will be well trained by (foreign) specialists without extra costs. These partnerships are very suitable for big infrastructural projects (roads, housing [Jacmel], urban planning [Port-au-Prince], electricity plants, water purification plants) but also for a sustainable tourist industry. Sincere attention to Public Private Partnership should be paid at the January-February 2011 Donors-Partners Committee.

The foreign aid troops represent the western centric model for administration and political culture lead by concepts as democracy, transparency, efficiency, efficacy, science, high-tech, etc. It is no wonder that this seems to disagree with the Caribbean-French oriented style of administration and management: hierarchy, status & prestige, emphasis on personal relations, micro-management, centre-periphery, capital-countryside, etc. Many westerners value this culture as negative and force their ethnocentric norms and values on the Haitian leaders. To those I have only one advice: leave the neo-colonial attitude at home.

All kinds of VIPs and press demand appointments or interviews with the authorities, often at short notice, refraining the Haitian government to do their job so badly needed. The Haitian culture does not permit them to simply refuse these requests and be stricter. My advice was to have these requests put forward through the respective embassies. One of the recommendations at the ICC meeting was to *encourage* the international community to restrict their requests. Personally, I would have used stronger wording.

Unrealistic, inconsiderate and wild plans by some foreign agencies are put before Haitian staff every day and they don't dare to refuse any. I am convinced that the conscience of 'refusing aid' is essential in any reconstruction effort. Civil society has to admit that some are in Haiti just for their own benefit while others have no clue whatsoever what Haiti is all about. One of those bad plans is to copy urban planning from Southern California to reconstruct Port-au-Prince (see [Is Haiti a Laboratory for New Urbanists?](#)). The planners should have realized that Haitians have different demands in shaping their urban landscape. This is Development without Culture!

Another huge problem is the fragmentation of aid. The lack of the big three C's – Communication, Cooperation, Coordination – is without a doubt the major cause. One of the ways to overcome this lack could be 'twinning.' In particular, national

heritage institutions, but not only, could link up with one partner abroad. This idea has already been put into practice in the past by the American Museum Association and by the Middle East Librarians Association (for other examples see [Palestine Think Tank](#) and [UNESCO World Natural Heritage Sites](#)).

This collaboration could actually be advantageous to both parties. The Haitian institution has only to deal with one foreign partner and their counterpart will get to know the institution better and will be able to readjust their plans as they go along and thus see their money better spend. But it can be more than a practical solution as examples from development organizations teach us that western participants in twinning projects were surprised to learn so much in their field of expertise from their co-partners.

Heavy competition between the international organizations seriously slows down the rebuilding of Haiti (see [Aceh afterwards](#), [The fantasy world of reconstruction](#) and other articles on my news list [Discussing Culture and Development](#)). The heritage sector is no exception. It is just an aid industry as any other where fundraising and setting up projects is also needed to provide jobs for their relief workers. A high-profile organization will sooner raise the necessary funds, either governmental or private, to extend their life. In the present financial crisis competition is of course much fiercer. Leaders of the international heritage organizations should put their differences aside and work much more closely together.

#### *Future prospects*

The problems to rebuild the cultural heritage sector in Haiti are countless and diverse. However, so are the (possible) solutions. The first step to take in my opinion is capacity building for the Ministry of Culture and ISPAN. Direct budget support that was always troublesome in the past, is possible as it is clearly mentioned in the Action Plan. The supporting (governmental) donors can earmark the money for salary support as it is done for example in Afghanistan in police missions. In Afghanistan one particular government is made the leading donor for one issue (governance, legal reform, policing, and gender). Perhaps the coming Donors-Partners Committee can copy this model and find a principal donor for the cultural heritage sector in Haiti. This is a sort of twinning on ministerial level. The Ministry of Culture is in great need of donor money to hire local staff and office equipment. As Mme Comeau Denis Magali, special advisor to the ministry, pointed out at the ICC meeting: the lack of internet facilities and electricity hampers them enormously in their daily activities.

The second step is training that staff in basic skills: (western) management; computer literacy; language skills (basic English); accounting; budgeting; proposal writing. In Iraq over 100 staff from the Ministry of Culture were send to the American University in Beirut for a similar basic course. It costs very little money and the effects are enormous and instantaneous. An additional advantage is that people from different heritage sectors get acquainted and begin to appreciate each others' work more than ever. It goes without saying that this project needs to be planned in a participatory manner.

Thirdly, solve the ownership of buildings and houses as soon as possible. As one of the main causes that interferes with the logistics of aid, the authorities should perhaps be a little more creative. One way of proving ownership can be to organize community gatherings where all those present agree that one person or family can

rightly claim a particular property. If that has been established it can be added to the registry and made official. This claim system should be valid for a limited period and the possibility to lodge an objection within a reasonable time should be included.

The 1<sup>st</sup> UNESCO ICC Haiti meeting was certainly worthwhile. At least the different parties were brought together and acquired better insight into each other's problems and difficulties. As usual outside the official agenda many extra meetings were set up, information and addresses exchanged. As the Haitian participants made very clear: this disaster is an opportunity at the same time. Nobody wants to go back to the Haiti before the earthquake. Together we will build a country that will be a better place to live. That in the process different cultures, Haitian and the West, clash is very 'normal'. What better place than at UNESCO to overcome these differences in culture.

There are some interesting examples, I am positive there are many more, of cultural aid for Haiti. Keeping in mind that to take care of the pennies the pounds will take care of themselves, these projects are:

- [Haiti's children shine a light on their own struggles](#)
- [Intangible heritage: helping heal disaster victims](#)
- [Haiti earthquake: volunteers take mobile cinema round camps](#)
- [Haiti's Enduring Creativity](#)
- [Cardboard for Haiti](#)
- [Haiti Redevelopment from Architecture for Humanity](#)

Some positive actions undertaken by UNESCO are:

[UNESCO calls for ban on trade in Haiti art objects](#)

[UNESCO emergency funds for documents](#)

[U.N. Supports Move to Protect Haiti Heritage](#)

[UNESCO Forum on Haiti](#)

[UNESCO launches Mobile Multimedia Unit for internally displaced persons in Haiti](#)

[Michaëlle Jean designated UNESCO Special Envoy for Haiti](#)

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