


# Three Keys for Rehabilitating and Stabilizing Haiti

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# THREE KEYS FOR REHABILITATING AND STABILIZING HAITI

by Chris Logan\*

Haiti faces many challenges due to the current global food crisis that are exacerbated by the nation's lack of an effective government and the devastation wrought by four hurricanes in one month. In order to rebuild the country's infrastructure, combat hunger, and promote good governance, Haiti must rehabilitate basic infrastructure, expand existing microfinance institutions ("MFI"), and reestablish functioning government institutions. This article will discuss three essential objectives for short- and long-term recovery and advancement in Haiti.

Today's global food crisis is affecting hundreds of millions of poor people around the world who live with hunger and instability on a daily basis. The reasons for the crisis are many. Global agriculture commodity prices have reached their highest level in thirty years<sup>1</sup> and worldwide decreased supply and increased demand create a situation where the world's poor must use more of their incomes to purchase food.<sup>2</sup>

Haiti is a prime example of an impoverished, fragile country that struggled under the weight of the food crisis even before natural disaster struck. Seventy-six percent of Haitians live on less than two dollars per day and fifty-five percent on less than one dollar per day.<sup>3</sup> Daily food insecurity affects forty percent of Haitian homes.<sup>4</sup> In April 2008, the government was ousted following food insecurity riots.<sup>5</sup> A functioning government has yet to be reestablished while Haitians are burdened by rebuilding after four hurricanes ravaged the country leaving coastal cities under water and people stranded on their roofs. The hurricanes wiped away food reserves, flattening crops and farmland, killing livestock, and creating a desperate situation in a country beholden to foreign aid and relief.<sup>6</sup>

To improve Haiti's immediate welfare funding and resources are necessary to rehabilitate the country's weak infrastructure so food aid and emergency relief can reach those in need. As of September 26, 2008, the United Nations ("UN") reported that road travel remained disrupted due to collapsed bridges, damaged dykes, flooded roads, and landslides.<sup>7</sup> The UN Development Programme is leading an interagency effort to strengthen Haiti's dyke system and several NGOs are willing to implement cash-for-work programs to assist with infrastructure repair.<sup>8</sup> The United States Agency for International Development ("USAID") has 7,000 metric tons ("MT") of food aid in Port au Prince and 10,000 MT in regional warehouses ready for distribution to affected areas, but washed out roads and bridges hinder its distribution.<sup>9</sup>

Basic infrastructure rehabilitation will ease immediate suffering in Haiti, but is not enough to mitigate long-term food

resources inadequacies. One option is increased access to microfinance, which contributes to poverty reduction, especially at the local level where it bolsters the economy.<sup>10</sup> MFIs, such as Haiti's Fonkoze, provide a safety net and help establish the economic foundation for a democratic government.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the food crisis, MFIs have worked with borrowers to provide flexible loan policies tailored to each client.<sup>12</sup> MFIs empower ordinary people to secure food, housing, and medical care by providing small business loans, increasing agricultural investment, and coordinating trainings on literacy, women's health, and environmental protection.<sup>13</sup> Expanding Haitian MFIs through increased funding will allow more people to receive loans, feed their families, and climb out of poverty.

To begin climbing out of poverty and creating long term stability, Haiti's government with international organizations and the private sector must respond to the needs of its people. However, its institutions are weak or inactive, so the government cannot "hear or represent citizens' interests, render justice, achieve consensus, or effectively provide public goods and services."<sup>14</sup> One promising program is *Kombit Ak Tèt Ansanm* [Working Together in Haiti] which facilitates the creation of immediate, durable jobs through infrastructure development and maintenance.<sup>15</sup> A Haitian government will succeed when its people have enough food and are empowered to control their own economic situation.

Coordinated infrastructure rehabilitation and increased investment in Haitian MFI's are necessary components for improving Haiti's immediate welfare. Long-term stabilization will come when the Haitian population is free from hunger and worry, and when a government is in place that responds to needs of the people.



## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> SOPHIA MURPHY, INST. FOR AGRIC. AND TRADE POL'Y, THE GLOBAL FOOD PRICE CRISIS (2008), available at <http://www.tradeobservatory.org/library.cfm?RefID=104147> (last visited Nov. 13, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* (outlining current decreased supply from factors such as halved world food stocks, drought affecting exporters of major staple crops, diminishing water supplies, climate change affecting rainfall and temperatures, and production costs alongside increased demand from factors such as an increasing world population, changing diets, and exponential growth in biofuel use).

**Endnotes:** Three Keys for Rehabilitating and Stabilizing Haiti  
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## ENDNOTES: THREE KEYS FOR REHABILITATING AND STABILIZING HAITI *continued from page 50*

<sup>3</sup> World Food Programme, Where We Work-Haiti, Food Security Overview, [http://www.wfp.org/country\\_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=332#Facts%20&%20Figures](http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=332#Facts%20&%20Figures) (last visited Nov. 1, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* (adding that food supply in Haiti covers only fifty-five percent of the population).

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Guyler Delva & Jim Loney, *Haiti's Government Falls After Food Riots*, REUTERS UK, Apr. 13, 2008, available at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUKN1228245020080413> (last visited Nov. 13, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Marc Lacey, *Meager Living of Haitians Is Wiped Out by Storms*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 11, 2008, available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/11/world/americas/11haiti.html?\\_r=1&scp=6&sq=Haiti&st=cse&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/11/world/americas/11haiti.html?_r=1&scp=6&sq=Haiti&st=cse&oref=slogin) (last visited Nov. 13, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> USAID, HAITI - STORMS (Sept. 29, 2008), available at [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/disaster\\_assistance/countries/haiti/template/fs\\_sr/fy2008/haiti\\_st\\_fs12\\_09-29-2008.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/countries/haiti/template/fs_sr/fy2008/haiti_st_fs12_09-29-2008.pdf) (last visited Nov. 1, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> SHAHIDUR R. KHANDKER, THE WORLD BANK ECONOMIC REVIEW, MICROFINANCE AND POVERTY: EVIDENCE USING PANEL DATA FROM BANGLADESH (2005), available

at <http://wber.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/19/2/263> (last visited Nov. 13, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Fonzoze, Our Mission, <http://www.fonzoze.org/aboutfonzoze/whoweare/ourmission.html> (last visited Nov. 1, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Anne Hastings, Fonzoze, The Global Food Crisis: Its Impact on Micro-finance Institutions and Their Clients, Sept. 4, 2008, <http://www.fonzoze.org/publications/videos/7-educational/86-anne-hastings-on-the-global-food-crisis-impact-on-microfinance-institutions-and-their-clients.html> (last visited Nov. 1, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> USAID/HAITI, GOVERNING JUSTLY & DEMOCRATICALLY FACT SHEET (Sept. 2008) available at [http://www.usaid.gov/ht/gjd\\_factsheet.html](http://www.usaid.gov/ht/gjd_factsheet.html) (last visited Nov. 1, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> CHF INTERNATIONAL, HAITI KATA FACTSHEET, available at <http://www.chfinternational.org/files/Haiti%20-%20KATA-%20July%2007.pdf> (last visited Nov. 13, 2008) (explaining that the KATA initiative is implemented by Cooperative Housing Foundation International, funded by USAID, and developed in accordance with the GOH).