

Haiti Needs Help - and a Serious Plan

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I'm writing this on my blackberry as I am driving to Haiti from the Dominican Republic.

Again, nature has destroyed Haiti's chances of getting back on its feet - or at least, that is what we are being told.

The truth is that natural disasters in Haiti always prove to be more devastating than in the neighboring Dominican Republic or in Cuba. Lack of infrastructure, deforestation and severe poverty are [some of the reasons](#) why.

After former priest Jean Bertrand Aristide was removed from office, a UN mission known as [MINUSTAH](#) brought in over 7,000 peacekeeping troops to prevent the country from being torn apart by violence.

And it's true, since then, the security situation had improved. But the remaining problem is that Haitians continued to live in poverty, with only a few of them profiting from the business that a UN deployment represents.

There are several efforts under way to ease Haiti's issues of education, health, food and the recently formed Haitian police. The problem, though, is that nothing is being done to address the racism and class differences that continue to exist.

Aside from the effects that foreign interventions have had in Haiti, there is a serious problem within the country. The US and international organizations come into the country and deal with the same people that, as Haitian born Patrick Eli says, have been bleeding Haitian people for decades.

And that's why Haiti continues to be so vulnerable, because there is a very small sector in Haitian society that continues to control most of the country and its economy.

The United States under President Barack Obama has been trying to help President Rene Preval generate jobs. Former President Bill Clinton, meanwhile, has been trying to raise money to help Haiti recover from the [hurricanes](#) in 2008 that cost the country over \$1bn.

But the truth is that Clinton only got from the international community one third of what he was asking.

One of the projects by the US, for example, is to create factories that could take advantage of what is known as the Hope Act, which allows Haiti to export, for example, clothes tax free.

When Hillary Clinton visited Haiti, I accompanied her to one of these factories, where people

are paid around \$5 a day – they have to spend at least two in transportation to make it to work. The factory we visited, I later found out, belonged to a family that had been involved with what was known as Group 184, an anti-Aristide Movement composed of rich families that sought to get rid of Aristide – a man who said he wanted to rule for the poor majority.

So those coming in to help end up dealing with the same old people that historically have controlled money and power. This goes back to the Haitian revolution, when 500,000 slaves rebelled against the French and white minority. When the French left, the mulattos inherited control of the country – and that’s how it has basically remained since then.

Until that issue is resolved, the quality of life of millions of Haitians will probably not improve. Up until now, the international community has offered some, but not enough, help. They are not the only ones to be blamed, though, as much of the money that has been sent here has been mismanaged and misspent.

Haiti [needs help](#) now – as thousands continue to be trapped under the rubble. But it’s also time that a serious plan is put in place that will benefit the poor majority and that will help the country leave its endemic problems behind.

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