



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# UNESCO HAITI



Photo: Elke Selter



## Welcome to UNESCO Haiti

By Mr. Teeluck Bhuwanee, Representative and Head of Office

Dear Reader,

This is the first newsletter of this Office. We hope to have a regular newsletter to inform all UNESCO and other colleagues on the activities of the Office.

The earthquake that struck Haiti on 12 January 2010 suddenly brought the floodlights on this country and also on the Port au Prince Office. From a small professional team of 1 National Programme Officer (NPO) and 2 international consultants in education located in a small house in 19 Delmas 60, Port au Prince, we have over the last 5 months turned into a large team of 2 NPOs, 2 Education consultants, 1 Programme Specialist in Culture, 1 Project Manager for the Flash Appeal, 3 Secondee from the Norwegian Refugee Council (One for the Flash Appeal, one for Communication and one for Education and Culture). We are expecting a Science Specialist to join the team soon. The Administrative team has remained the same. The present premises are over-stretched and we need to find offices for another 6 staff. Our budget was to be some 700,000 USD for the biennium 2010-2011, and is now at least multiplied by 10. Additionally we are expecting it to continue to increase with more extra-budgetary funds.

For those who have not visited Haiti after the earthquake, it suffices to say that this was a

tragedy of historic proportions, with more than 300,000 dead, 1.5 million homeless and displaced, and hundreds of thousands wounded or maimed in one way or the other. After the quake, we got tremendous support from all quarters, specially initiated by the Director General, who visited Haiti early March, and from colleagues in Headquarters and throughout the world. During these difficult times, we received hundreds of wishes from colleagues in other offices, and we really felt that UNESCO had its eyes focused on the Port au Prince Office. Head Quarter sent some 10 missions ranging from 1-3 weeks to support the Office. We are grateful to all the resource persons who came on mission and who helped us play our role to the best of our ability.

However, the miracle of staying afloat in this devastated country is due to the Port-au-Prince staff, all of whom without distinction, from the driver and cleaner to the Consultant and Specialist, are still doing herculean work to keep up the image of UNESCO.

I dedicate this first newsletter to all my staff who continue to work in very difficult circumstances, without proper office and equipment, without proper accommodation, without the necessary logistical support all the time, selfless, patient, determined and looking forward to help this country to the best of their ability.

# UNESCO Director General Visits Haiti

Director-General, Irina Bokova, visited Haiti on 9-10 March to express UNESCO's solidarity and to see how the organisation can best support the Government of Haiti at this crucial time.

During her stay, Ms Bokova met with the Prime Minister, Jean-Max Bellerive, and the Minister of Education, Joel Desrosiers Jean-Pierre, as well as representatives of non-governmental organisations. The objective was to discuss projects that will help to repair the country's social and cultural fabric.

Regarding culture, Ms Bokova reaffirmed UNESCO's commitment to do its utmost for Haiti's cultural heritage, largely destroyed in earthquake and now threatened by vandalism, looting and illicit art trafficking.

Ms Bokova also visited CECOSIDA, a national communications centre against AIDS. The centre has been providing psychological and post-traumatic support to journalists, with UNESCO's backing. *"In the aftermath of the disaster, the media have a key role to play in rebuilding the nation,"* stressed Ms Bokova.

In education, Ms Bokova reiterated UNESCO's aim to *"assist the ministry in re-establishing the educational system in the short term, with emergency measures for now, but also in addressing education at all levels, from primary school to*



In this photo (from the left): Head of Office Mr. Teeluck Bhuwanees; Special advisor to the Minister of Culture and Communication Ms. Magali Comeau-Denis; UNESCO Director-General Ms. Irina Bokova; Minister of Culture and Communication Ms. Marie Laurence Jocely Lassègue.

*university."* Objectives include to increase the number of children in school throughout the country and to prevent brain-drain.

After her visit to Haiti, Ms Bokova travelled to the Dominican Republic to meet with President Leonel Fernandez.

## Rapid Emergency Response

UNESCO unfolds a comprehensive recovery & reconstruction programme



Photo: Fernando Brugman

UNESCO has been directly involved in the immediate response to the earthquake and submitted substantive projects in the original

and revised flash appeals. UNESCO's original flash appeal education project in the Haiti CAP (Consolidated Appeal Process) totals 2.9 million USD.

The flash appeal focuses, primarily, on three strategic areas:

- 1) Reactivation of emergency schooling and TVET/skills development for youth affected by the earthquake
- 2) Emergency support to national education authorities
- 3) Psychosocial support to secondary students through teacher training

UNESCO is working closely with the Haitian education authorities and other partners in the Education Cluster to support the immediate re-establishment of education services. Capacity building, psychosocial support and early recovery are among the priorities of the Ministry of Education, as well as the Education Cluster.

Considering that many emergency response operations in the education sector tend to focus on young children and primary schools, UNESCO is putting a greater emphasis on the needs of secondary education, Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) and higher education, in order to complement the activities of other partners.

## Protecting History

### UNESCO moves quickly to safeguard Haiti's cultural heritage



Photo: Fernando Brugman

Culture, a powerful symbol for the identity of a community, plays an invaluable role as generator of solidarity and unity. The earthquake has greatly affected the cultural heritage of Haiti, tangible and intangible and UNESCO has moved fast to assist the government with safeguarding the cultural heritage.

Coordination was ensured with relevant authorities and UN-partners to secure major heritage sites in the capital. UNESCO received the support of UNPOL (UN Police) and MINUSTAH (UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti) for immediately securing the protection of key sites in order to prevent looting. A comprehensive damage assessment of heritage was also undertaken for Port-au-Prince and the South of the country.

The impact on the built heritage has been the most

## Food for the Soul

### UNESCO organises theatre play for displaced people in Port-au-Prince

On 11 April 2010 the Haitian street theatre group "Zhovie" performed in one of Port-au-Prince's many temporary camps for displaced Haitians. UNESCO Port-au-Prince organized the performance.

Based on texts by the Haitian author Frankétienne, who was recently awarded the UNESCO Artist for Peace title, the play elegantly evoked scenes from the earthquake, drawing upon local mythical and cultural references.

The performance offered joy and a much-needed break to some 20,000 people living in makeshift tents or shelters in the Acra Camp. Yet, it was mainly therapeutic in its objective. Jean Joseph, who is a philosophy teacher and one of 14 Zhovie artists, explains:

*"If we want to help the survivors it is not enough to give them food. Mental health is just as important as physical health. We, the actors, have to help these depressed, desperate people and try to revive their hopes. A positive experience and a good laugh can nourish a person for months!"*

visible, and the task ahead for restoration and reconstruction is tremendous. In small heritage towns like Jacmel more than 50 percent of historic structures have been damaged.

Thousands of artefacts (mainly paintings) and archival items (books, documents, pictures, sound recordings, etc) have been saved from the rubble, but need urgent restorations. The Organization will ensure further cooperation for the preservation of artefacts and their storage, as well as for preventing illicit trafficking.

The cultural industries sector, not least tourism, was seriously affected and has largely come to a standstill in many parts of the country. Artisans lost their livelihoods, and cultural institutions and festivals are not operating.

The earthquake also had a major impact on the intangible cultural traditions within local communities. Having often been torn apart by the loss of lives, homes and livelihoods, many cultural traditions that used to bind these communities together are endangered. Such ties are crucial for social stability and sense of wellbeing and UNESCO is assisting displaced and interrupted communities in reviving these cultural practices. The organization of theatre performances in displaced camps is one example of building on culture for psycho-social relief.

UNESCO is advocating for the crucial role of culture and traditions in the reconstruction efforts, since they contain key elements of sustainability and continuity, which the local communities need.



Photo: Teeluck Bhuwane

Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, who attended the performance, agreed with Jean Joseph, asserting that *"the population needs food for the soul too"*.

## Back to School

### UNESCO offers psychosocial support training to secondary school teachers

Pupils reacted strongly, when the Sainte Marie des Anges School reopened in May. According to school principal Pastor Franck Petit, some cried and refused to enter the hangar that now replaces their old school, fearing that they could be buried alive. The boys' building was completely destroyed in the earthquake, while the girls building suffered too much damage to reopen. Pastor Franck Petit also explains that many children cried while the flag was hoisted, *"possibly mourning a relative, a mother or a sister. We don't know. (...) It is very difficult for both pupils and teachers"*.

UNESCO has been training secondary school teachers and administrators to deal with the psychosocial challenges they face as teaching resumes. In cooperation with the Haitian Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, UNESCO has developed a comprehensive guide on how to integrate psychosocial activities into normal classroom teaching. Furthermore, the two partners have held a three days' seminar for secondary school inspectors, principals and teachers, focusing on psychosocial support and general earthquake phenomena, such as risk prevention and survival techniques.

Psychosocial support in this context aims at preventing or easing the aftershocks of catastrophes or violent events. It is based on team-building techniques, role-



Picture: Mehdi Benchelah

play and discussions between pupils and their teachers.

UNESCO is also supporting the Ministry of Education in developing a special syllabus for about 600.000 students from public as well as private schools.

#### [Read Syllabus online](#)

*38,000 pupils and students died in the 12 January earthquake, which also killed 1,300 teachers and school personnel. The Ministry of Education was destroyed along with 4,000 schools – or close to 80 percent of educational establishments in the Port-au-Prince area.*

## Uniting against Illiteracy

### UNESCO supports innovative ways to fight illiteracy



Photo: Gilles Cavaletto

Almost 55 percent of Haiti's population are illiterate. In an effort to help overcome this problem, UNESCO has been supporting the State Secretariat for Literacy (SEA) since 2007.

SEA is a division under the Ministry of Education

and Vocational Training, dedicated to the implementation of a project, which aims to reduce illiteracy rates and promote professional skills among youth from two communities in the South-East department. The project also aims to strengthen local SEA capacities to contribute to the development of strategies to reduce illiteracy in Haiti.

Around 5.000 youth have benefitted from the project, which employs innovative teaching methods to strengthen literacy skills among youth. Reading and writing activities have been included in professional training sessions and in courses on how to create and maintain vegetable gardens.

The project is supported by the Spanish Cooperation and implemented under the framework of LIFE (Literacy Initiative for Education), which is a global campaign launched in 2005 by UNESCO to overcome illiteracy worldwide.

## UNESCO Facilitates Coordination Between Donors in the Education Sector

UNESCO is active in a number of coordination sector and sub-sector groups, relevant to the Organisation's mandate. Coordination at all levels have become especially important in the wake of the earthquake, as the influx of Funds increases remarkably.

Donor coordination takes place within the forum of the "Local Donor Group" (Groupe Sectorielle de l'Éducation/GSE). The group is chaired by UNESCO and has some fifteen member agencies, including the European Commission, USAID, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, CIDA, the Swiss Cooperation, AECID, the Brazilian Embassy, the Chilean Embassy and France.

Established in 2003, the Local Donor Group has met on a monthly basis to discuss priorities and progress within the sector and to share information on new as well as ongoing activities. Since the earthquake the group meets twice a month and the extent of its cooperation and coordination efforts has expanded accordingly.

Local Donor Group member agencies are coordinating their contributions within sub-groups focusing on early

childhood, teacher training, vocational training, higher education, school reconstruction and a statistics forum. The primary coordination tool is a comprehensive matrix, which maps out all donor contributions within the different education sectors. This allows donors to identify potential gaps vis-à-vis the government's education strategy.

The group also monitors the Education For All - Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) in Haiti. In September 2009 the EFA-FTI donors allocated 22 million USD to Haiti. This grant has now been reallocated to meet the most urgent needs in the education sector.



Photo: Lisbeth Albinus

## Building Back Better UNESCO supports training of construction workers

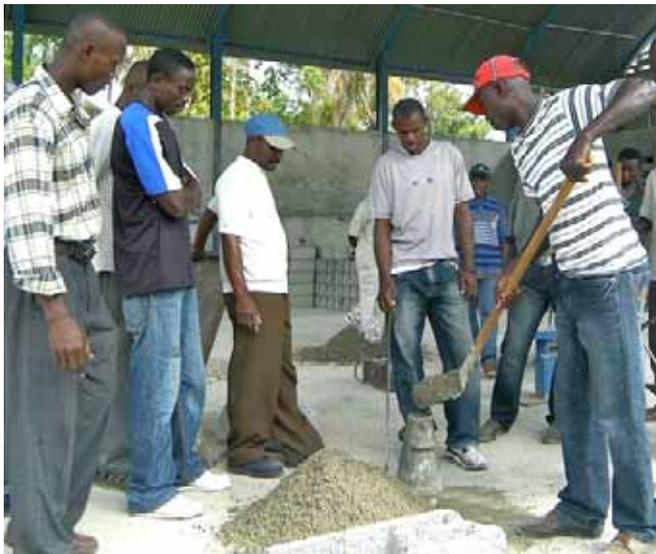


Photo: Mehdi Benchelah

Haiti is experiencing a strong sentiment to "Build Back Better", as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon framed the enormous task facing local and international communities in the wake of the January earthquake. UNESCO is taking steps to assist the country to build

back better at structural as well as practical levels.

To support the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, UNESCO has developed an action plan for vocational training and established a system for validation and comparison of skills. Furthermore, UNESCO is carrying out a series of ten days' intensive training courses for masons, steel-fixers and foremen working in the construction sector, with a local training centre in Camp Perrin. The aim was to correct some of the bad building habits that amplified the magnitude of the disaster.

Course participants learn to build one or two floor cube-shaped houses, with reinforced concrete strips that tie the components properly together and the mixing of concrete in the correct ratio.

By the end of the project UNESCO and the Camp Perrin Training Centre expect to have trained more than 500 construction workers. Furthermore, the two partners will publish a building manual, which will be distributed in French and Creole to construction workers throughout the country.



Photo: Anette Haug

### Fighting Aids in Haiti

UNESCO and partners work to mitigate the spread of HIV among students

UNESCO is, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, UNFPA and UNAIDS, implementing a project to diminish the spread of HIV among students in Haiti. Activities include awareness raising, organisation of conferences and debates, teacher training, TV- and radio-shows, development of information material and policy support. The project partners recently published a comprehensive teacher guide on HIV prevention for instructors at primary and secondary levels.

As a response to a substantial demobilisation of students after the earthquake, UNESCO and partner organisations are preparing teachers and trainers to reach out to students not currently enrolled in the formal school system. Furthermore, the organisations are helping the Directorate of Health Education to mobilise funds for research and for radio broadcasts relating to trauma, HIV prevention, general health and responsible sexual behaviour.

### Rebuilding Educational Authorities

The entire premises of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training were destroyed in the earthquake, along with irretrievable data material. UNESCO is therefore providing substantial support to the Ministry by providing offices to several Ministry staff, thus allowing for even closer cooperation between the two parties.

UNESCO continues to support the Ministry in developing its strategy and plan for the educational sector, based on the recommendations of the National Task Force on Education.

### Haiti - Five Months Later

Photos by Elke Selter & Lisbeth Albinus



## Roundtable Discussion: The role of media in Haiti's reconstruction phase



Photo: Mehdi Benchelah

On the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, 3 May, UNESCO and International Media Support (IMS) co-hosted a roundtable debate on the role of media following the earthquake. More than 70 people attended the debate, among them Haitian journalists, stakeholders and key-representatives from the local media industry.

Discussions focused on the role, rights and obligations of journalists in the reconstruction phase, best practices and the role of media vis-à-vis the government, donors and the Haitian population. The participants also spoke about the importance of journalists working together and jointly developing a set of professional “best practice” standards.

Haiti has made remarkable progress in terms of press freedom over the past years, jumping from a 125th

place on the Reporters Without Borders’ Press Freedom Ranking List in 2004 to a 58th place in 2009. This process must be supported, so that the press can continue developing coherence, strength and professionalism.

In order to support cooperation between journalists, as well as journalist unions, who lost their premises during the earthquake, UNESCO and IMS have co-funded a centre that will house three major journalist unions: Group Médalternatif, SOS Journalists and the Association of Haitian Journalists.

**Read consolidated report online (in French):**  
[Media’s Role in the Reconstruction Phase](#)

### Joint Forces to Prevent Conflict and Facilitate Social Cohesion

UNESCO and a group of UN partner-agencies implement a project on “Conflict Prevention and Social Cohesion through local community empowerment and institutional capacity building” (CPSC). The project addresses a persisting uncertainty in semi-urban and rural communities in Haiti, a situation that can trigger renewed violence and undermine social and economic recovery and reconstruction.

Among its activities the CPSC invests in developing an independent National Violence Observatory to undertake national surveillance capacities, reinforcing legitimate community-based authority structures and generating violence prevention plans through participatory and locally-driven partnerships.

UNESCO’s key actions will be to contribute to the identification of the sources and the drivers of violence among youth in the respective communities, in order to promote reflection at academic and community levels and to support decision-making and government policies on these issues.

The project is implemented in cooperation with UNFPA, IOM, UNDP and UNIFEM.

## Creativity is our Wealth

### Recently elected UNESCO Artist for Peace, Frankétienne, talks about the rich culture of his country

The Haitian author Frankétienne was designated UNESCO Artist for Peace by Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO on 24 March this year. The ceremony coincided with a comprehensive forum in Paris, focusing on “Rebuilding the social, cultural and intellectual fabric of Haiti”. On that occasion, his latest play “Melovivi” – or “Le Piège” – was presented. Written in November 2009, the play is set in the midst of a terrible disaster, where two people are trapped under ruins.

Mehdi Benchelah from UNESCO met Frankétienne in Port au-Prince prior to his designation to talk about his work and Haitian culture in general.

*How did you get the idea to write this play? It seems to be based on a prediction of the 12 January earthquake.*

In November 2009 a mysterious, yet familiar, voice woke me up in the middle of the night and asked me to write a new play about ecology, as the earth is under threat.

This is not the first time I experience this kind of clairvoyance. I was born and grew up in a mystical voodoo atmosphere that has influenced me profoundly. Although I do not practise voodoo myself, I recognise its importance in the way Haitian culture works. Voodoo really forms the fabric of our culture.

The earth has been weakened by human exploitation (gas emissions weakening the ozone layer) and causing the gradual desertification of Haiti. The modern civilisation seems more interested in having than being. Hence, I began writing based on an anguish that has been formed by such painful and tragic observations. To my satisfaction, the play gradually took on a poetic dimension. Poetic transcendence allows me to express with metaphors what I call the aesthetics of chaos, decay and the unexpected. Life is such that most phenomena are not in

the realm of the visible; they are impalpable and intangible. I know that what I write disturbs certain rational spirits. Too bad for them! Dry rationalism misses out on life. It claims that one plus one equals two, whereas one plus one equals infinity.

(...)

*Do you really believe that culture can free Haiti from its suffering, not to mention the trauma of 12 January?*

This has always been my wish and my belief. Haiti’s true wealth is its continuous creativity. Yet, conditions for artists are appalling. The different authorities do not take care for them at all, even though this creativity is the only wealth of Haitian identity.

Our painters, craftspeople, musicians and dancers are our wealth, a wealth that is sacrosanct, as it exists in the imagination – in the cathedral of the human skull.

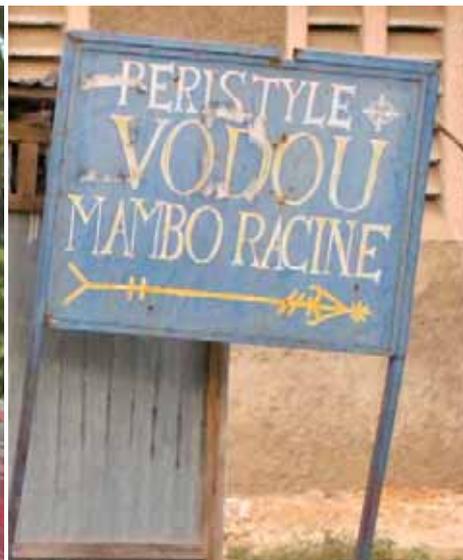
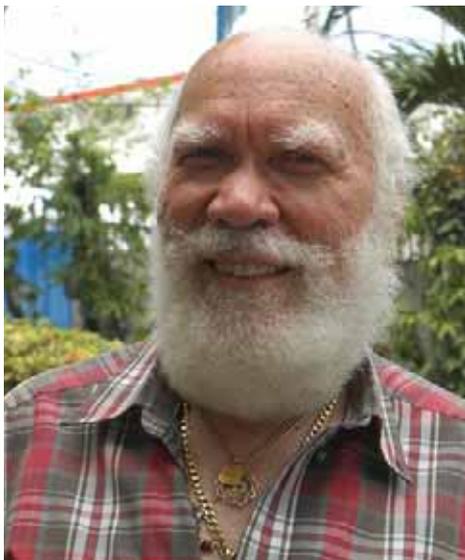
However, this does not only concern Haiti. Humanity as a whole will only reach its salvation through culture and spirituality in its global meaning, that is to say civic, intellectual and artistic education.

*How would you define the Haitian soul, which you often speak of in your multifaceted work?*

It is this primal sensitivity to a spirituality that is nourished by voodoo, whatever some Christians may think. There is a voodoo sensitivity even in those who do not practise it. There is a typical Haitian way of speaking, of eating, of making love and of communicating with others that is nourished by voodoo. This belongs to our collective unconsciousness. This Haitian unconsciousness changes over time, but keeps its profound essence - an essence that is fundamentally spiritual.

*The designation as a UNESCO Artist for Peace recognises Frankétienne’s remarkable contribution to French-language literature, his commitment to safeguarding and promoting Haitian culture, and his efforts to promote UNESCO’s ideals.*

Photo (left): Mehdi Benchelah  
Photo (right): Lisbeth Albinus





UNESCO at Work: Port-au-Prince Staff

## List of Staff UNESCO Port-au-Prince

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**Michelet Jean-Louis**  
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**Rose-Marie Denis**  
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