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IMMIGRATION AS A CANADIAN AID STRATEGY FOR HAITI

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JCSP 43 DL

Exercise Solo Flight

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Introduction

On 19 January 2010, HMCS Athabaskan was positioned approximately seven miles from the epicenter of a 7.1 magnitude earthquake that devastated Haiti seven days prior.¹ Athabaskan's Sea King helicopter took off at dawn to assist with recovery efforts. This event would symbolize the beginning of Operation HESTIA, the largest Canadian joint operation since the Korean War. Operation HESTIA would mark another milestone in the 40 years of Canadian assistance efforts in Haiti.

The earthquake devastated the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. In its aftermath, an estimated 220,000 people died, 300,000 people were seriously injured and over a million people displaced.² The Canadian government's efforts immediately following the earthquake were substantial and reflected a genuine national desire to help. Canada's formal aid response was founded on delivering aid in Haiti, using a familiar whole-of government approach that combined civilian and military resources and personnel. The response included the coordinated efforts from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Immigration Canada, and the Department of National Defence (DND).

¹ Author's personal RCAF Pilot logbook.

² Harvard Medical School Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, and NATO Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre "The Haiti Case Study" (Working Paper of the Collaborative NATO-Harvard project) *Towards a Comprehensive Response to Health System Strengthening in Crisis-Affected Fragile States*. Harvard University and NATO. 2012

The Canadian Forces provided a sizable response, second only to its concurrent efforts in Afghanistan. Operation HESTIA consisted of two warships, the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), two Field Hospitals, a light infantry Battalion and air force strategic and tactical lift support. In total, 2046 Canadian Forces personnel participated.³ Canadian medical personnel attended to over 16,000 patients and conducted nearly 200 surgeries. Nearly 3 million litres of water and 2 million meals were distributed to Haitians.⁴ Commander Peter Crain, Commanding Officer of HMCS Athabaskan stated on 26 January 2010, “Although sometimes it seems so little in an area where the need is so great, I am glad we are here.”⁵ Sixty days after the earthquake, HMCS Athabaskan returned home as the Canadian military participation withdrew.

Since 2010, the Government of Canada has provided Haiti with more than 1.4 billion dollars of development and reconstruction assistance.⁶ Haiti continues to be the largest recipient of Canadian assistance in the Western Hemisphere.⁷ Despite these efforts, and similar initiatives from other international donor countries, Haiti remains the one of the poorest nations on Earth. The lack of perceived progress has led to donor fatigue and a growing pessimism that Haiti is “too complex to fix, yet too volatile to be left alone.”⁸

Unfortunately, Canadian aid efforts have been consistent in their approach and have delivered consistent outcomes. Canada has overlooked the most effective strategy for improving

³ Government of Canada. *OPERATION HESTIA: Canadian Forces Perspective on support to Canada's Contribution to the 2010 Earthquake*. Department of National Defence, accessed on 2 May 2018, www.slideplayer.com/slide/731825

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Crain. 2

⁶ Government of Canada. “Evaluation of Canada-Haiti Cooperation 2006-2013- Synthesis Report.” Global Affairs, accessed 2 May 2018, http://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/evaluation/2015/dev-eval-canada-haiti01.aspx?lang=eng#toc_1_1

⁷ Andrew S. Thompson. “Entangled: Canadian Engagement in Haiti 1968-2010” *From Kinshasa to Kandahar: Canada and Fragile States in Historical Perspective*, ed Michael K. Carroll and Greg. 97-120. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2016).

⁸ Ibid., 98

the quality of life of Haitians. Legal migration is superior in alleviating poverty, providing human security and building institutional capacity than Canada's traditional method of delivering aid. This paper will demonstrate that Canadian policy should focus on initiatives that encourage increased Haitian immigration and support Haitian diaspora communities in Canada. Until there is a radical change of development policy for Haiti, Canada's forty-year engagement will continue to produce marginal results.

Consistent Policy, Consistent Results

Haiti's history has been defined by poverty.⁹ The 2016 UN Human Development Index ranked Haiti 163 out of 188 nations, placing it in the "Low Human Development" category.¹⁰ The country was considered a fragile state prior to the devastating earthquake in 2010.¹¹ Nine million Haitians lived in extreme poverty, with 40 per cent living on less than a dollar a day.¹² Children in rural areas were dying from malnutrition as over eighty percent of the nation's population were surviving on less than the "Minimum Daily Rations" as defined by the World Health Organization.¹³

Haiti has also suffered under a poverty of governance. In the country's 200 years of self-government only 5 elected presidents have been able to serve their term. Twenty-two of 55

⁹ Maureen Taft-Morales. Haiti: Current Conditions and Congressional Concerns, (Washington, DC CRS 2009) 1.

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme. "Human Development Report" 2016, accessed on 4 May, 2018. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf

¹¹ "Aid to Fragile states: Focus on Haiti" Organization for Economic Co-operation, accessed on 3 April, 2018 <https://www.oecd.org/countries/haiti/aidtofragilestatesfocusonhaiti.htm>

¹² Taft-Morales. 4

¹³ Ibid.

Haitian presidents have been overthrown, and nine have died while in office.¹⁴ From the repressive Duvalier regimes to the volatility of the 19 changes of government since 1990, turmoil has defined the Haitian political experience. The country has consistently ranked at the bottom of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions index.¹⁵

Canada's aid objectives in Haiti have undergone numerous machinations over the past 40 years. Fundamentally, they have been focused on cooperative nation building efforts in the country that reflected the current Canadian political priorities. In 2006, Canada emphasized projects that promoted governance, combating corruption and strengthening the rule of law.¹⁶ Three years later, Canadian support was focused on economic development, health and education.¹⁷ Presently, Canada's priorities are concentrated on "gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; human dignity; growth that works for everyone, environment and climate action; as well as inclusive governance and peace and security."¹⁸

The implementation of Canada's aid strategy has been consistent in delivery and has produced remarkably consistent results. A 2006 House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development criticized Canadian efforts in Haiti for being too diverse and "having little cumulative effect."¹⁹ This criticism was echoed in 2015 by a Global

¹⁴ Scott M. Anderson, "Development assistance in Haiti: where has the money gone?" a thesis presented to Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. December 2014. Appendix.

¹⁵ Transparency International. Corruption Perceptions Index. Accessed on 12 May, 2018
<https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview>

¹⁶ Government of Canada. "Evaluation of Canada-Haiti Cooperation 2006-2013- Synthesis Report." Global Affairs, accessed 2 May 2018. http://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/evaluation/2015/dev-eval-canada-haiti01.aspx?lang=eng#toc_1_1

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Embassy of Canada in Haiti. "Canada- Haiti Relations," accessed on 12 May, 2018
http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/haiti/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/canada_haiti.aspx?lang=eng

¹⁹ Thompson quoting Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs and International Development, "Canada's International Policy Put to the Test in Haiti," Ottawa, December, 2006, 10.

Affairs report, suggesting that many of the initiatives produced modest outcomes and were unlikely to be sustained.²⁰

Prior to the earthquake Haiti lacked the national capacity to support the conditions required for development. The country's humble 'Millennium Development Goal' goal in 1990 was supposed to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015. To accomplish this would have required the country's GDP to grow at a rate of 3.5% per year. It was an ambitious aspiration considering the Haiti's GDP had actually shrank by 30% over the previous 40 years.²¹ After the quake, the Haitian government is now attempting a similar strategy with less infrastructure. The plan titled "Haiti 2030" hopes to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030 and Canada's current development strategy is structured to support this reimagined effort.²²

After the earthquake, there was little confidence with the Haitian government's ability to organize and implement relief programs. Of the U.S. \$2.2 billion provided to support relief projects, "less than one percent of humanitarian aid and 15 percent of the recovery aid went to Haiti's government."²³ Much of the immediate aid was used to support military relief efforts or were channeled through international non-governmental organizations. Haitian businesses received less than two percent of reconstruction contracts with most of the disbursements remaining in the U.S. bank accounts of development contractors.²⁴ Lack of Haitian participation in the relief and development programs created substantial inefficiencies, administrative gridlock

²⁰ Government of Canada. "Evaluation of Canada-Haiti Cooperation 2006-2013- Synthesis Report."

²¹ Taft-Morales.

²² Government of Canada. "Canada's international assistance in Haiti," accessed 15 May, 2018 www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorities/where-ou/haiti.aspx?lang=eng

²³ Anderson. 40.

²⁴ Charles Kenny, "The Haitian Migration" *Foreign Policy* January 9, 2012.

and inconsistent outcomes.²⁵ These actions further eroded the Haitian government's already tenuous hold on public accountability, and did little to address the suffering of Haitians.²⁶

Canadian's response to the Haitian earthquake was earnest and immediate. The Canadian public raised 238 million dollars which were matched by the Federal government via the CIDA managed Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund.²⁷ The Canadian government subsequently reevaluated its development priorities after the earthquake to "ensure that [they] reflected the priorities of [Haiti's] early recovery."²⁸ These goals were similar to its previous objectives, and included public institution building, promoting democratic principles and supporting human security.²⁹ The disbursement of relief funds followed the example of other international donors, and were channeled directly to separate Canadian and international NGOs operating in Haiti to support their pre-existing and diverse programming.³⁰ These projects, like those from other international donors, have produced modest and mixed results. Seven years after the earthquake tens of thousands of Haitians are still internally displaced, cholera has killed an estimated 9700 people and much of the foreign aid distributed has had little lasting effect.³¹

Immigration as a Development Tool

Canada has attempted to improve the standard of living in Haiti by providing aid, promoting investment and attempting to build institutional capacity. However, immigration has

²⁵ Anderson.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Government of Canada, *"Evaluation of Canada-Haiti Cooperation 2006-2013- Synthesis Report."*

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Archbishop Thomas Wenski, Bishop Launay Saturne, William Canny, Jeanne Atkinson and Melissa Hastings. *"Haiti's Ongoing Road to Recovery: The Necessity of Extension of Temporary Protected Status"* Report of the Committee on Migration of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 2017

proven to be a more effective and practical method of poverty reduction for Haitians than any other formal aid initiative. Successive waves of Haitian immigrants have fled their country to seek better lives abroad.³² According to Michael Clemens, “four out of every five Haitians who have escaped destitution did so by leaving Haiti.”³³

Migration provides real, measureable and significant improvements to the quality of life for Haitians. It is estimated that the average salary of a Haitian immigrant to the U.S. increases by nearly seven hundred percent.³⁴ Migrants coming to Canada have immediate access to quality healthcare and education not previously available. Less than thirty percent of Haitian children go to secondary school, juxtaposed to the nearly seventy percent of Haitian Canadians that have post-secondary training.³⁵ According to Tatiana Weh, “it would take Haiti seventy-four years to produce an equal number of university graduates to that which already exists in the U.S. and Canadian Haitian diaspora communities.”³⁶ If there is a more effective method to reduce poverty for Haitians or improve their quality of life, it hasn’t yet been demonstrated.

Canada has been a destination for Haitians seeking a better life since the 1960s. According to the 2011 Canadian census, nearly 100,000 people identified themselves as being of Haitian origin. Haitians are now the 10th largest non-European ethnic community residing in Canada³⁷ and their influence continues to contribute to improving the country they left.

³² Thompson

³³ Michael Clemens and Tejaswi Velayudhan, “Migration as a Tool for Disaster Recovery: U.S. Policy Options in the Case of Haiti,” Center for Global Development, October 2011. 1

³⁴ Michael Clemens, “A Labour Mobility Agenda for Development” CGD Working Paper 201. Washington, D.C.: Centre for Global Development, accessed 12 May 2018. www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1423717

³⁵ UNICEF. At a Glance: Haiti, accessed 12 May, 2018 https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/haiti_statistics.html and Statistics Canada. 2011 Census Data

³⁶ Tatiana Wah. “Engaging the Haitian Diaspora, Emigrant Skills and Resources are needed for Serious Growth and Development, Not just Charity,” *Cairo Review*, September 2013. 62

³⁷ Statistics Canada. 2011 Census Data.

Haitian immigrants played a significant role shaping the Canadian response to the earthquake. Championed by Haitian born Governor General Michelle Jean, the diaspora community lobbied for changes to Canadian immigration policy to allow for greater admission for victims.³⁸ The Canadian government responded by expediting previously made applications for admission, including the highly publicized acceptance of 200 orphans.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the numbers of applications for admission to Canada increased. However, the rate of acceptance remained at fifty percent.³⁹ The Government of Canada refused to waive the visa fees or the administrative requirement for supporting documentation. Patricia Fagen states, “it was never the intention to allow large numbers of people into Canada who would not have some claim to immigrant status in a non-crisis situation.”⁴⁰

Following the President Trump’s decision to remove Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians living in the United States in 2017, Canada became the destination of choice for thousands undocumented Haitian migrants.⁴¹ To deal with the sudden influx of asylum seekers, the Canadian Forces was tasked with constructing temporary camps in Quebec to assist with

³⁸ Patricia Weiss Fagen, “Receiving Haitian Migrants in the Context of the 2010 Earthquake” Discussion Paper for The Nansen Initiative, Georgetown University, 3 December 2013.

³⁹ Ibid. In 2009, 4067 Haitians applied for residence status, and 2086 were approved. In 2010, there were 8555 applications and 4549 were approved.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 23

⁴¹ Kathleen Harris, “Nearly half of illegal border-crossers into Canada are from Haiti” *CBC News*. November 22, 2017, accessed on 12 May 2018 www.cbc.ca/new/politics/haiti-border-crossers-canada-irregular-1.4414781

processing refugee claims.⁴² The success rate of these Haitians seeking entry into Canada rate was ten percent.⁴³ Unsuccessful applicants were scheduled for deportation.

Despite this reluctance to increase immigration for Haitians, the Canadian government has recognized the importance of Haitians Canadians providing financial support to their country of origin. In a 2013 Global Affairs report Canada acknowledged, “the restoration of remittances services to Haiti was seen for the first time as a critical part of disaster relief and response.”⁴⁴ Payments from those living abroad present a direct cash flow to the local population and are considered more effective than traditional aid disbursements.⁴⁵ These funds circumvent government bureaucracy and are able respond more quickly than foreign aid.⁴⁶ A 2011 study from the World Bank found that a 10 percent increase in international remittances resulted in a 3.5 percent decline in the share of people living in poverty.⁴⁷

The external funds provided by the Haitian diaspora population makes up 30 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and is nearly 3 times greater than foreign aid contributions.⁴⁸ In Canada, the average Haitian immigrant household transfers \$1000 per year to

⁴² Benjamin Shingler, “Military builds tent village to house surge of asylum seekers at Quebec boarder” *CBC News*. August 9, 2017, accessed 12 May, 2018. www.cbc.ca/new/canada/montreal/quebec-announcement-asylum-seekers-1.4240038

⁴³ Anna Mehler Paperny, “Canada data shows 10 percent of Haitian border crossers get refugee status” *REUTERS*, accessed 22 May 2108 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-canada-immigration-border/canada-granting-refugee-status-to-fewer-illegal-border-crossers-idUSKCN1IN1CO>

⁴⁴ Government of Canada. “*Evaluation of Canada-Haiti Cooperation 2006-2013- Synthesis Report.*”

⁴⁵ Anna Versluis, “Formal and informal material aid following the 2010 Haiti earthquake as reported by camp dwellers,” *Disasters*. Overseas Development Institute, 2014.

⁴⁶ Royce Bernstein Murray and Sarah Petrin Williamson, “Migration as a Tool for Disaster Recovery: A Case Study on U.S. Policy Options for Post-Earthquake Haiti” Centre for Global Development Working Paper 255, June 2011.

⁴⁷ Dilip Ratha, Sanket Mohapatra and Elina Scheja, “Impact of migration on economic and social development: A review of evidence and emerging issues.” Policy Research Working Papers. February 2011. 2

⁴⁸ Johanna Mendelson Forman, Hardin Lang, and Ashley Chandler, “The Role of the Haitian Diaspora in Building Haiti Back Better,” *Centre for Strategic & International Studies*, 2011, accessed 20 May, 2018 <http://csis.org/publications/role-haitian-diaspora-building-haiti-back-better>

family members still residing in Haiti.⁴⁹ In 2011, Haitian Canadians provided \$125 million in remittances, compared to the Canadian government's \$49 million in direct assistance.⁵⁰

This form of funding assistance is more consistent than traditional aid disbursements, and is countercyclical, increasing during times of increased hardship.⁵¹ The importance of remittances on households who receive them is significant. Remittances are used to provision basic staples, provide access to education and health services and better contribute to the long term recovery of the Haitian economy.⁵² More importantly, this level of household support directly alleviates extreme poverty- which has been the principle goal of the various reiterations of development objectives in Haiti.

Conclusion

In 2015, Canada recognized the importance that migration could make in improving the lives of people living in chaos. The Canadian government pledged to settle 75,000 Syrian refugees over three years.⁵³ At that time, Syria ranked 149th on the UN Human Development Index, fourteen places better than Haiti.⁵⁴

There is a peculiar irony of Canadian Forces members being tasked to provide disaster assistance in Haiti, and then be directed to construct camps for asylum seekers that would

⁴⁹ Alan Simmons, Dwaine Plaza and Victor Piche, "The Remittance Sending Practices of Haitian and Jamaican in Canada" A Report to the Canadian International Development Agency," Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean, York University Toronto. May 28, 2005.

⁵⁰ Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah, "Should Canada make it easier for immigrants to send money home?" *Macleans*. Feb 19, 2013.

⁵¹ Government of Germany. *Migration and Sustainable Economic Development*- Discussion Paper. Federal Ministry for Economic Development. February 2013. 22

⁵² Versluis. See also Clemens, and Kenny.

⁵³ Sean Speer and Christian Leuprecht, "From a mandate for change to a plan to govern; Getting Refugee Policy Right," *Commentary*, Macdonald-Laurier Institute, December 2015.

⁵⁴ United Nations Development Programme.

facilitate their processing and inevitable expulsion to their place of misery. Haiti, and Haitians have suffered decades of political and economic poverty, and Canadian aid delivery has been detrimentally consistent in response and outcome.

If Canada was truly interested in alleviating the hardships of those living in Haiti, it would seek new approaches. Migration is principally responsible for raising Haitians out of poverty and improving their quality of life. It provides immediate improvements to human security, access to education and health services and dramatically improves their standards of living. The benefits of migration are not isolated to those who leave, but rather are shared to those who are left behind. Remittances are more responsive, larger and effective than traditional aid delivery and directly contribute to reducing extreme poverty.

Immigration should not be considered a replacement for traditional forms of foreign aid delivery, but rather viewed as a complimentary component of the ‘whole of government’ approach. Accepting more Haitians would have an immediate impact, and produce far reaching results. Policies that promoted remittances would significantly multiply Canada’s formal aid effectiveness and improve the standard of living in Haiti. Modest options including reducing bank fees for money transfers, extending tax exceptions for supporting family members overseas and coordinating remittances with local development programs would have dramatic and lasting effect. Until there is a change of perspective, Canadian aid policy will continue to produce modest results.

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