



Côte Sud Initiative: Integrated Development in Haiti

Teaching Note

Case Summary

Desperately poor, environmentally degraded countries need international assistance across all sectors, including agriculture, ecology, economics, education and healthcare. In 2000, the United Nations declared the Millennium Development Goals, an ambitious set of 15-year priorities that include eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; combating disease; and achieving universal primary education, gender equality and environmental sustainability. The Millennium Villages Project was an effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by taking an integrated, multi-sector approach to international development aid. As of 2014, the Millennium Villages Project operated largely in small villages in poor African countries with the aim of developing models to be applied nationwide.

This case examines an attempt to apply the Millennium Development Goals and establish a Millennium Village Project in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, Haiti. In the mid-2000s, over half of the country's 10 million people lived on less than \$1 per day, and 80 percent lived on less than \$2 per day. Forty-six percent of Haitians didn't have enough to eat, fewer than one in 50 finished secondary school, and less than 4 percent of the nation's land remained forested. While the international aid community had sent millions of dollars to Haiti, the aid's effectiveness had been limited. Corruption, mismanagement, international politics and Haitian political instability had combined to keep the majority of Haitians in severe poverty. Haiti became immeasurably worse off on January 12, 2010, when a devastating magnitude 7.0 earthquake leveled large portions of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Students follow an ambitious project, co-sponsored by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and Columbia University's Earth Institute, dubbed the Côte Sud Initiative (CSI). The project aimed to take a scientific, long-term approach toward restoring an environmentally

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and economically devastated watershed in Haiti's southwest. Andrew Morton (UNEP) and Marc Levy (Earth Institute) were co-leading the effort. They hoped for at least five years of funding.

UNEP and the Earth Institute had selected as the project site the Port-à-Piment watershed, an area some 200 kilometers (125 miles) west of Port-au-Prince. Port-à-Piment was trapped in a cycle of poverty and environmental degradation. After the earthquake, Levy invited his Earth Institute colleague Tatiana Wah to move the western hemisphere's first Millennium Village Project from Haiti's Central Plateau and incorporate it into the larger Port-à-Piment watershed project. Wah, who was technical advisor to the UN for the Haiti Millennium Village Project, readily agreed. She was also an advisor to the Haitian government on the Millennium Development Goals.

The case describes CSI's growth to become what would be Haiti's first comprehensive, integrated development project, a model for the rest of the country. CSI began in earnest in September 2011 with a grant of \$8 million, which came from the Norwegian government via the post-earthquake Haiti Reconstruction Fund (HRF). Over the next six months, CSI signed on other nonprofit partners, began a household survey, established a cadre of local healthcare workers and started education, agriculture and forestry projects.

The reader follows as CSI learns about a severe cut in funding, and scrambles to replace it. On March 22, 2012, UNEP notified Wah and her colleagues that the Haiti Reconstruction Fund would be unable to fund the project beyond June because the chief donor, Norway, had changed its lending goals. (UNEP, as a UN entity, was the point of contact between HRF and CSI.) Wah mobilized her considerable contacts and resources, and soon won the support of Haiti's agriculture and finance ministers for the redeployment to CSI of international funds intended for reforestation in the southwest.

But in early May, before the necessary paperwork was signed, a new government took office and both ministers were dismissed. The case ends with the CSI team staring down a deadline; they have barely a month to secure the funding to keep the project running. The local community has finally embraced the project, and is eager to reap its benefits. Wah has to navigate the complex and politically challenging funding process while trying to corral ministers busy coming to grips with their new jobs, all before time runs out.

Teaching Objectives

Use this case to examine the value of integrated, multi-sector development; the challenges of long-term, sustainable development in fragile countries; and the complexities of the international aid system. Have students discuss how the United Nations, national governments, nongovernmental organizations and academic institutions attempt to work together to address environmental and economic devastation. Look in particular at the Côte Sud Initiative (CSI) as an example of an innovative attempt to break the cycle of poverty in Haiti.

Students should consider the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Villages Project. Are the Millennium Development Goals appropriate and effective for spurring progress in global efforts to reduce suffering and improve quality of life? How can science drive effective, sustainable development? How should project planners balance disparate needs and priorities in initiatives that include scientists, economists, public health specialists and policy advisers?

Watershed reclamation addresses the intimate connection between the environment and the economy in developing countries. Discuss the downward spiral that can occur when economic circumstances lead communities to exploit natural resources unsustainably. The premise of multi-sector development is that all sectors, including agriculture, ecology, education, healthcare and infrastructure, are interrelated. Discuss the connections in Haiti's Port-à-Piment watershed.

Wah, Levy and Fischer were frustrated by shortcomings in the management and operation of the Côte Sud Initiative. In some instances they found themselves pushed to take on a larger management role, while in other instances they found themselves blocked from doing so by organizational boundaries. How might they have better balanced their responsibilities to the technical and scientific aspects of the Initiative with the need to fill the management void? How do you preserve harmony in a coalition while also ensuring that each party meets its responsibilities?

Students should consider the importance of clear communications and good relationship management in international aid and development projects. How can project managers ensure good coordination among United Nations organizations, national governments, nongovernmental organizations and academic institutions? How do projects ensure buy-in and cooperation from communities targeted by development projects? What might account for the history of development aid in Haiti and the relationship between the Haitian government and the donor community?

Finally, have students consider the challenges of securing funding for long-term development projects. Can project organizers commit to multi-year projects with year-to-year funding? How can project leadership stay on the same page as funders? How do development coordinators navigate government approval in fragile nations?

Class Plan

Use this case in a course on international development, sustainability, humanitarian aid, international affairs, project management, or organizational behavior.

Pre-class. Help students prepare for class by assigning the following question:

1) As the case ends, what do you think are the odds that Wah, Levy and Fischer secured long-term funding for the Côte Sud Initiative? What was working in their favor, and what against?

Instructors may find it useful to engage students ahead of class by asking them to post brief responses (no more than 250 words) to questions in an online forum. Writing short comments challenges students to distill their thoughts and express them succinctly. The instructor can use the students' work both to craft talking points ahead of class, and to identify particular students to call upon during the discussion.

In-class questions: The homework assignment is a useful starting point for preliminary discussion, after which the instructor could pose any of the following questions to promote an 80-90 minute discussion. The choice of questions will be determined by what the instructor would like the students to learn from the class discussion. In general, choosing to discuss three or four questions in some depth is preferable to trying to cover them all.

- a) Why is integrated, multi-sector development important?
- b) What are the major challenges of long-term, sustainable development in fragile countries?
- c) How did the Côte Sud Initiative (CSI) propose to help break the cycle of poverty in Haiti?
- d) What is the connection between the environment and the economy in developing countries?
- e) What happens when economic circumstances lead communities to exploit natural resources unsustainably?
- f) How are agriculture, ecology, education, healthcare and infrastructure related in the context of development projects?
- g) How might CSI project members balance their existing responsibilities with the need to step in and fill management voids?
- h) What methods might preserve harmony in a coalition while also ensuring that each party meets its responsibilities?
- i) How do you ensure buy-in and cooperation from communities targeted by development projects? Did CSI achieve this?
- j) What accounts for the history of development aid in Haiti and the relationship between the Haitian government and the donor community?
- k) Should project organizers commit to multi-year projects with year-to-year funding?

l) How does one navigate government approval in fragile nations?

Suggested Readings

Timothy T. Schwartz, *Travesty in Haiti* (Charleston, South Carolina: BookSurge Publishing), 2008.

SYNOPSIS: This book presents an anthropologist's account of working with foreign aid agencies in Haiti and the debilitating effects of corruption, mismanagement, international politics and Haitian political instability.

The United Nations, "Millennium Development Goals"

SYNOPSIS: This UN website details the eight Millennium Development Goals, which range from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015.

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Millennium Promise and The Earth Institute, "Millennium Villages Project"

SYNOPSIS: This website details the Millennium Villages Project, which takes a holistic, community-led approach to sustainable development with the goal of ending extreme poverty.

<http://millenniumvillages.org/>

United Nations Environmental Programme, "Haiti Regeneration Initiative: Study of lessons learned in managing environmental projects in Haiti," *UNEP Publications*, March 2010.

SYNOPSIS: This report assesses previous international development projects in Haiti in preparation for the Haiti Regeneration Initiative, an integrated, multi-sector, multi-year watershed reclamation project.

[https://www.cimicweb.org/cmo/haiti/Crisis Documents/Cross Cutting Issues/Environment/UNEP - Lessons Learned in Managing Environmental Projects in Haiti.pdf](https://www.cimicweb.org/cmo/haiti/Crisis/Documents/Cross-CuttingIssues/Environment/UNEP-LessonsLearnedInManagingEnvironmentalProjectsInHaiti.pdf)

United Nations Environmental Programme, "UNEP in Haiti: 2010 Year in Review," *UNEP Publications*, February 2011.

SYNOPSIS: This annual report summarizes the work of UNEP in Haiti in 2010, including the beginnings of the Haiti Regeneration Initiative, which encompassed the Côte Sud Initiative.

http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP_Haiti_2010.pdf