

# HAITI CONTINUES TO REBUILD

Categories: Education Assistance/Community Building/Community Relations

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Education Assistance

### Haitian Education System Lacks Solidarity

Haiti has long been behind in the education sector, and not much progress has been done over the years. With 80% of the population living below the poverty line, only a small percentage of families can afford a proper education for their children, for education costs remain extremely high in proportion to average family revenues.

Furthermore, books are a major concern for they are imported and prove to be very expensive. Thus, many children who do in fact attend school do cannot afford the materials necessary to help them learn. The lack of education among the population can be seen on a daily basis. In fact, some say that for some schools, it appears as though their primary goal is to make money rather than educating their students. Most classes are jam-packed and teachers are often unqualified. The very best schools in the region are often religious and urban-based, but only the wealthier families can afford sending their children.

JEN's education assistance in Haiti primarily revolves around hygiene promotion or community development. Yet JEN staff members spend an enormous amount of time outside of work hours to speak with local Haitians: debating, discussing, and explaining the world around them. Education is one of the primary steps in rebuilding Haiti, however this may take a very long time to accomplish.

Community Building

### Building Trust

For each project JEN implements, gaining the trust of the local community is extremely important in order to ensure success. Trust-building not only allows for the JEN staff members to build relationships, but also to gain a form of effective security.

Each JEN office has adopted a local security protocol, which includes acceptance, protection, and deterrence, or "a strong acceptance strategy with supportive protection and a deterrence element," which are concepts that are extremely important in a place such as Haiti.



*Above: JEN's compound gate left open in Port au Prince*

Acceptance is not easy, and must be built from the ground up on a daily basis through programs as well as through networking with the local residents that the JEN staff members live among. Yet the process of trust-building depends on the location. For example, in Grand Goave, staff members have found it relatively easy to build relationships among community members, primarily because they have been working in the same area for two and a half years. On the other hand, Port au Prince proved to be slightly more

**COUNTRY: HAITI**

challenging, as it was a much larger city. Thus, JEN staff decided to leave their doors open during the day – a common way of living for Haitians – in order to gain the trust of their neighbors.

Despite the efforts put into building good relationships with communities, guards still remain at the JEN offices to ensure complete safety in the case of an emergency. So far there have been no problems, and JEN staff members have been able to get along with their neighbors simply by mingling during the day and taking interest in their daily lives.

**Community Relations**

**Access to Electricity in Haiti Problematic**

Throughout Haiti, access to an electricity network has long been an ongoing problem, not only due to a lack of electricity, but because it is extremely tedious to connect to the public electricity network as well. Further, the development of a public network such as electricity is extremely difficult in a country like Haiti due to its politically unstable past and its location, being exposed to frequent hurricanes that can easily disrupt the network system.

The need for electricity within the country has been growing due to an influx in the population from 6.5 million inhabitants in 1986 to approximately 10 million today. The use of electric devices such as telephones, radios, and television sets has grown as well. Yet Haiti's public electricity network has not been able to follow the needs of the population at such a rapid pace.



***Above: JEN's office in Leogane***

This ultimately leads to a common problem where many people connect directly and illegally to the electricity network. With so much electricity stolen, the public electricity network

has not been able to develop a proper network and has not been able to provide electricity 24/7.

In Leogane, although the JEN office is located right next to an existing network, problems with irregular electricity still subsists. In fact, the electric cable itself and network subscription is not cheap. The cable costs approximately 250 US Dollars, and cable subscription costs 700 US Dollars. Yet this fee is equivalent to six months of pay for those Haitians who are lucky enough to be employed, bringing to light not only a problem in electricity, but in the nation's socioeconomic status as well in comparison to the rest of the world.



**The 7 EN's of JEN**

- Engage
- Entrust
- Encourage
- Endeavor
- Enjoy
- Encounter
- Enable

**DONATE NOW AND HELP THE CAUSE!**

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