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WHO REALLY CONTROLS HAITI'S DESTINY?  
AN EXAMINATION OF HAITI'S HISTORICAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT,  
ENDLESS POVERTY, AND THE ROLE PLAYED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL  
ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

A Thesis Presented

by

Patrick Scheld

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Science  
Specializing in Community Development and Applied Economics

January, 2018

Defense Date: November 8, 2017  
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## Abstract

The presence of NGOs and development agencies is often considered an apolitical phenomenon, and that the very presence of NGOs within a country is a symbol of a global humanity in action; in short, NGOs equal charity which equals good work. Unfortunately, the reality is often much more complicated as NGOs can also be found to be self-serving, anti-democratic and strictly in pursuit of their next funding source. In this thesis I advance the central hypothesis that the international community's continued pursuit of an NGO-led neoliberal economic development model has systematically failed to contribute to the sustainable development of Haiti because they pursue the wrong means of achieving poverty alleviation goals.

Throughout its history, Haiti has continuously been caught between the aspirations of its people and the legacy of foreign interventions. The recent trend of implementing neoliberal development goals and strategies, supported and executed by NGOs, has focused on the promotion of economic growth as a means to eradicate poverty. However, this strategy is an ineffective method at producing positive changes in well-being, the economy, or the environment (Edmonds, 2010; Shamsie, 2012). I argue that the relationship between NGOs and their donors continuously undermines the Haitian's right to self-sufficiency that would lead to self-determination and enable the Haitian people to control their own destiny.

A new approach for addressing extreme poverty in Haiti must be rooted in a different set of values and beliefs; a different outlook that puts morality, humanity, equality and the environment at the forefront. A new development path that is not based on a growth economy but focused on human well-being and environmental conservation. NGOs will need to enact increasingly participatory and transparent practices that allows for a development path that can be regulated and determined by the Haitians themselves.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Methods .....	3
Background.....	5
I.    Haitian History.....	10
Social Stratification.....	10
Historical Context .....	13
II.   Development.....	22
Neoliberalism.....	23
Neoliberalism in Haiti.....	25
Critiques of Neoliberalism.....	29
Sustainable Development.....	31
Dependency Theory and Haiti .....	33
III.  NGOs and Haitian Development .....	37
What is an NGO? .....	37
NGOs and Haiti .....	39
NGOs Are Counterproductive .....	44
IV.   A Path Forward.....	55
Enhance Institutional Capacity .....	56
Participation and Transparency is the Key .....	57
NGO Regulation and Monitoring .....	60
Duplication of Efforts .....	61
The No AID Alternative .....	62
Conclusion .....	64
References.....	68

# INTRODUCTION

There are many critiques of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the role they play in international development (Brown and Moore, 2001; Chimiak, 2017; Deaton, 2013; Edmonds, 2012; Edwards and Hulme, 1997; Farmer, 2003; Lewis, 2007; Schuller, 2009; Suleiman, 2013; Szporluk, 2009). The presence of NGOs and development agencies is often considered an apolitical phenomenon and a symbol of a global humanity in action (Edmonds, 2012); in short, NGOs equal charity which equals good work. Unfortunately, the reality is often much more complicated and can often be very self-serving for the NGOs themselves (Suleiman, 2013).

Throughout its history, Haiti has continuously been caught between the aspirations of its people and the legacy of foreign interventions. Whether economic, militaristic, or humanitarian, all forms of foreign intervention have contributed in their own way to creating a country that has become entirely dependent on foreign assistance to meet basic human needs, and yet these needs remain unmet (Edmonds, 2012; Pierre-Louis, 2011). At one point in its history Haiti was considered to be one of the most lucrative colonies of its time, ‘the Pearl of the Antilles’ (Diaz, 2010), but after gaining independence in 1804 Haiti’s narrative tells a very different story; a story not of continued wealth and prosperity, but of underdevelopment with profound inadequacies in social welfare, education, and healthcare (Farmer, 2003). In addition to the relentless human struggle and extreme poverty, Haiti has seen environmental degradation on an immense scale (Eliscar, 2010), and recurring political instability (Dubois, 2012; Smith 2001). The political instability has been further

exacerbated by the constant presence of NGOs and other aid organizations undermining any attempt at Haitian government autonomy by providing basic services to the Haitian people that should be a function of the Haitian government (Edmonds, 2012). After years of predatory regimes, international peacekeeping missions, and intense multilateral and bilateral aid programs, as well as a pervasive presence of international NGOs, the cause of all that has gone wrong, and continues to go wrong, in Haiti needs further examination.

In this thesis I advance the central hypothesis that the international community's continued pursuit of an NGO-led neoliberal economic development model has systematically failed to contribute to the sustainable development of Haiti because they pursue the wrong means of achieving poverty alleviation goals.

The recent trend of implementing neoliberal development goals and strategies, supported and executed by NGOs, has focused on the promotion of economic growth as a means to eradicate poverty. However, this strategy is an ineffective method at producing positive changes in well-being, the economy, or the environment (Edmonds, 2010; Shamsie, 2012). I argue that the relationship between NGOs and their donors continuously undermines the Haitian's right to self-sufficiency that would lead to self-determination and enable the Haitian people to control their own destiny.

NGOs can be found to be counterproductive in their methods as they can undermine the efforts of the local governments and other NGOs (Edmonds, 2012; Schuller, 2009; Szporluk, 2009). NGOs spend much of their time and energy trying to justify their own existence rather than helping Haitians help themselves (Goldberg, 2010). Suleiman (2013) sums it up as he maintains that NGOs can be found at times to be self-serving, anti-

democratic and strictly in pursuit of their next funding source, thereby being preoccupied to concern themselves with promoting good governance practices or accomplishing the socio-economic goals of the programs and projects they are administering. Understanding the NGO sector is imperative to assessing appropriate approaches to positive development and poverty alleviation in Haiti, and acknowledging the needs, attitudes, and aspirations of the impoverished Haitians for themselves and their families, as well as helping to design donor and government responses.

### **Methods**

I will support this hypothesis using the methods of a theoretical and historical examination of Haiti's political economy and the role played by the international community in promoting and pursuing neoliberal policies that have opened the door for an overabundance of NGOs that have become increasingly unaccountable to the Haitian people. The first section of the paper will introduce the country of Haiti, its self-suffocating and brutal history, and provide the context for the remainder of the paper. In order to understand the current state of affairs and to advance any kind of sustainable future in any country, it is important to first look into its past (Mintz, 1995).

The second section will take a critical look at neoliberalism as a development strategy in Haiti, and summarize multiple critiques of neoliberalism as a global development model to alleviate poverty. I will introduce an alternative theory of economic underdevelopment known as Dependency Theory that better defines Haiti's current state of development, as well as the development trajectory for many poor, underdeveloped countries worldwide.

The third section will examine how the international community, with the use of an NGO-led development model, has been able to continually provide basic human needs and services to the people of Haiti acting as ‘gap fillers’ as the privatization of public services and pursuit of a neoliberal agenda has shrunk the Haitian government, successfully creating an ‘NGO Republic’ unaccountable to the Haitian people.

The fourth section will offer recommendations of policies and strategies that could be implemented to allow for the Haitian people and Haitian government to reclaim their sovereignty and control their own destiny. NGOs will need to enact increasingly participatory practices that allows development to be determined by the Haitians themselves. The organization Spark, which offers microgrants to communities in rural Africa, offers a model of how participatory development practices can work. The Haitian government will also need to take on an increasing role in the regulation of NGOs operating within the country. This section will offer a few basic practices that the Haitian government may be able to implement as the governments capacity to govern strengthens.

In addition to the literature study, this thesis also draws on and benefits from, experiences and informal discussions that took place over the course of several years during multiple volunteer trips I have taken to Haiti, beginning in the summer of 2010 to assist in the disaster recovery and humanitarian assistance following the January 2010 earthquake, and continuing with month long trips in the subsequent years of 2012 and 2013. During my time in Haiti I have worked alongside and met many Haitians, that despite being passionate and devoted to Haiti, have very little faith in the future development of their country.



A closer look at the seemingly endless poverty that this small island nation has endured reveals the way in which globalization and neoliberal policies toward trade liberalization has exacerbated poverty in Haiti and hampered the government's ability to invest in the social and cultural infrastructure (Diaz, 2012).

### **Background**

Prior to the 2010 earthquake Haiti was already considered one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere, a prototypical failed state, faced with high levels of unemployment, gross income inequality, minimal economic growth and a limited tax base that could not produce an adequate revenue stream to fund basic functions of a modern state in providing services to its people (Dupuy, 2010; Farmer, 2003; Hallward, 2007; Lundahl, 1989; Mintz, 1995; Schuller, 2006). The continuous implementation of neoliberal development goals and strategies, supported and executed by NGOs, has focused mainly on the promotion of economic growth as a means to eradicate poverty (United Nations, 2017).

Within nations, like Haiti, that have weakened government structures, NGOs can reinforce structures of dominance and dependence by, albeit often times unintentionally, undermining the government and dislocating the local economy (Edmonds, 2012; Farmer, 2003; Neiman, 2015). In Haiti, NGOs have been playing the role of 'gap filler' by providing basic services to the poor majority without the proper oversight or management of the Haitian government to coordinate services, and thereby effectively undermining the governance capacity of the state to provide for the social well-being of its own people (Schuller, 2009).

The development goals and policies advanced by global donors and implemented by NGOs have limited the Haitian government in their effort to provide for the welfare and well-being of their own people, economy, and environment (Edmonds, 2010; Shamsie, 2012). Haiti continues to be one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere despite the large amounts of aid that has been pouring into the country for decades (Zanotti, 2010). In 2013 the United Nations Human Development Index, a measure of development that leaves out economic growth, ranked Haiti at 161 out of a total 187 member countries (UNDP, 2013) with approximately 78% of the population living at or below the national poverty line (World\_Bank, 2013). Haiti continues to remain one of the poorest nations in the world despite an overwhelming presence of aid organizations and NGOs providing services throughout the small nation-state.

In Haiti, this deeply entrenched poverty and dependency came to the world's attention on January 12, 2010 when a catastrophic earthquake shook the small island nation reducing the capital city of Port-au-Prince to rubble, killing over 200,000 people, and leaving countless others homeless (Diaz, 2010; Zanotti, 2010). The horrific scenes of suffering that were broadcast across the world in the days, weeks and months following the earthquake led to a massive response of international NGOs and international volunteers arriving in swarms to provide humanitarian aid on behalf of the goodwill of a heartbroken international community. Makeshift hospitals were erected, temporary shelters were built, and international committees were formed to aid the battered and damaged nation in its recovery. And yet, despite this massive invasion of NGOs and the promise of international aid money for rebuilding, Haiti still remains in ruins and the

international community continues to advance the same failed development goals and strategies of economic growth that are only further entrenching Haiti in the same structures of dependence and pursuing the same wrong development goals the country had known prior to the earthquake (Edmonds, 2012; Schuller, 2017; Shamsie, 2012).

The pursuit of constant economic growth as a mechanism to development and the prolonged presence of NGOs has over time allowed for continued underdevelopment of state institutions and prevented the Haitian government from achieving self-sufficiency that would allow for self-determination. The result of ineffective governance, according to Joshi et. al (2016), results in stunted human development, environmental degradation and a waste of financial and organizational resources.

### **The Right Goals but Wrong Means**

In September 2015, members of the United Nations agreed upon and signed into order a new global development agenda with seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core that are designed to address the recognized ongoing problems of poverty throughout the world while protecting the environment (United Nations, 2017). The SDGs provide an opportunity to atone for various deficiencies attributed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which have been criticized for setting unreasonable expectations, lacking governance goals, ignoring the role of human rights, and being identical across countries despite vastly different starting points (Gupta, 2016; Haas, 2016; Joshi et. al., 2015). The SDGs present a rejuvenated and unified global vision for eradicating poverty and making progress on the key issues of social, economic and environmental concerns by the year 2030.

The majority of the SDGs are desirable, just and fair as a means to eradicate poverty. They outline goals to end world hunger, provide a quality education for all, work towards gender equality, promote good health and well-being, provide clean water and sanitation, and to protect the environment and mitigate climate change. Unfortunately, the SDGs, much like the MDGs, were developed through a politically motivated process and established with an emphasis on economic growth as the means to alleviate suffering and overcome poverty (Madeley, 2015). According to the United Nations Sustainable Development website (2017), the SDGs recognize that ending poverty must accompany strategies that build economic growth as well as addressing a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while also tackling climate change and environmental protection.

Yet, to truly promote sustainable development would be to denounce endless growth and focus on a development strategy that can meet the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Daly 2011, Easterly, 2006; Goodland, 1993; Reid, 1989). The SDGs as they are presented by the United Nations (2017), while they claim to be ‘sustainable development goals’ by name, maintain the same development strategies of the past, namely that growth is necessary for reducing social inequalities and addressing ecological issues instead of making clear commitments to redefine the development process. To redefine the development process would be to recognize and live within ecological constraints. Achieving a true process of sustainable development continues to be impeded by policies and goals that favor economic growth over social and ecological well-being (Gupta, 2016).

The trend of implementing neoliberal development goals and strategies in Haiti has been supported and executed by NGOs that adhere to the global community's promotion of economic growth as a means to eradicate poverty (Klarreich, 2012; Paluzzi, 2005). However, in Haiti this strategy has been ineffective at producing positive changes in the overall well-being of all Haitians, the economy, or the environment (Edmonds, 2010; Shamsie, 2012). The country of Haiti serves as a great example and case study of NGO counterproductivity as Haiti has been mockingly referred to as the 'NGO Republic of Haiti' (Dupuy, 2010; Schuller, 2009; Zanotti, 2010).

Schuller (2017) argues that for many Haitians the so-called 'NGO Republic' is a further manifestation of foreign dominance and imperialism, and an insult to Haitian sovereignty (Schuller, 2017). On one side there are thousands of NGOs and other aid organizations funded through an international aid budget, and on the other are the representatives of the Haitian people, the elected officials, and Haitian civil society who remain broke and continually undermined by the very NGOs that have swooped in with the goodwill of the international community to help the Haitian people. The NGOs have built a powerful parallel state accountable to no one but their own board of directors and donors, while the Haitian people themselves remain impoverished, unemployed, homeless and trapped in a system of aid that has all too often failed to meet their needs (Klarreich, 2012). As private entities, NGOs do not have any structural accountability to the population they serve (Schuller, 2017). In Haiti, this lack of accountability manifests itself in the willful omission of critical information regarding the NGOs' strategy, funding and programs, leaving the Haitian government and its people without due public knowledge.

## **I. HAITIAN HISTORY**

By examining the historical conditions within Haiti, this section is intended to explain how long-term colonial relationships, a legacy of slavery and centuries of internal challenges have impacted the global community's view and approach to Haitian development (Brennan, 2004). An understanding of Haiti's brutal history, burdened with internal struggles, extreme social stratification, and external interventions, provides the necessary framework to understanding the unique development issues that face Haiti and the challenges of creating a new path forward (Mintz, 1995).

Throughout its history, both external and internal processes have combined to create a deeply entrenched cycle of dependency within Haiti (Brennan, 2004; Edmonds, 2012). Internally, continuous cycles of weak, minimally democratic governments frequented by military coups and unpredictability have contributed to a weakened state (Brennan, 2004; Dubois 2012). Externally, colonialism, foreign occupation and economic reparations have impeded Haiti's ability to consistently invest in local development. Together, these processes have hindered the establishment of a sovereign, self-sufficient state.

### **Social Stratification**

Social stratification is a class system by which a society ranks its members in a hierarchy. A stratified society is one in which there is an unequal distribution of society's rewards and in which people are arranged hierarchically into layers according to how much of society's rewards they possess. This section is intended to outline the social stratification that has historically existed in Haiti and continues today as an example of an

extremely stratified society. The separation of classes within Haitian society is linked directly to its colonial days when the color of a person's skin was a determining factor for their role in society.

One of the most striking features of Haitian society is the wide separation between the rich and the poor or, more accurately, between the elite and peasant masses in the country. The gap is so visible not only financially, as the GINI Index indicates, but also in terms of color and culture that Haiti at times has been described as a caste system (Dash, 2001). The GINI coefficient is used to measure the inequality of the distribution of wealth or income across a population (Daly and Farley, 2011). A GINI coefficient of 100 implies perfect inequality with more wealth concentrated in the hands of few individuals, and a coefficient of zero indicates perfectly equal distribution. According to the World Bank (2013), Haiti has a GINI coefficient of 59.2.

Like other postcolonial nations, especially in Latin America, Haitian society is controlled by a small group of elites that have monopolized the Haitian government through control of foreign trade and the military (Schuller, 2007). As Schuller (2007), Trouillot (1994) and others have argued, much of this control is due in large part to a historical racial prejudice that originated during Haiti's colonial years and has been maintained in the centuries following independence. The lighter skinned urban mercantilist elite have historically controlled Haiti's economy and government by monopolizing urban centers, ports, and foreign trade. To maintain power this elite class of lighter-skinned Haitians has maintained an alliance with black military. These two elite groups, the lighter-skinned urban mercantilists and black military leaders, have

traditionally competed for control of the country while also oppressing and often purposely excluding the rural peasantry class from power (Schuller, 2007). This constant competition for control of the country has generated continuous social and political instability, with only two Haitian political leaders serving out their full term, the father and son dictatorship of Francois and Jean-Claude Duvalier.

Anthropologist Jennie Smith describes some of the cultural differences and distances that continue to exist today within Haitian society in her book 'When the Hands Are Many.' Smith (2001) notes that the members of Haiti's small elite upper class are able to maintain high levels of affluence that would humble many U.S. millionaires while most Haitian peasants live in grinding poverty. This social stratification, implemented and continuously reinforced by the ruling elite, highlights the us versus them, the rich and poor conflict, that continues to define Haitian development. Over the following two centuries, the separation between the ruling class and larger rural peasantry population led to a devastating set of authoritarian political behaviors that only truly succeeded in maintaining power and wealth for the elite while further ostracizing the culturally and socially distinct poor peasantry (Dash, 2001, Dubois, 2012; Dupuy, 1989; Farmer, 2005; Schuller, 2007). Convinced that the uneducated peasantry was unable, or not ready, to participate in political life, the governing urban elites developed state institutions that cleverly excluded most rural Haitians from formal political involvement. As Dubois (2012) points out, one of the most telling and simple facts illustrating the depth of this political exclusion is that until 1987 the only official language of the government was French, which only a small minority in the country could speak, read or even understand. For almost all of Haiti's history, the



majority of the population has literally been unable to read the laws under which they were governed.

## **Historical Context**

The international community has been influencing the governance of Haiti and exploiting its resources ever since the territory was colonized by France in 1697 after Spain officially ceded the western third of the island of Hispaniola to the French (Dubois, 2012). Through an examination of Haiti's unique history, I aim to reveal the brutally destructive colonial period that was followed by nearly two centuries of horrific predatory regimes upon whose heels emerged the misguided economic policies of globalization. It is difficult to understand the unique development issues that face the country of Haiti today without the proper historical context.

### **The Early Period**

The French colony of Saint-Domingue was in no way free from corruption, so when Haiti embarked on its own path as an independent nation in 1804, it was burdened with a legacy of governance that favored such corruption and underdevelopment (Dash, 2001; Dubois, 2012). This dangerous precedent and history of oppression became entrenched in the economic and political systems of Haiti with resonating effects even after independence (Brennan, 2014).

The prosperity of Saint-Domingue as a colony rested heavily in a plantation system that had become vastly efficient at the production and exportation of raw materials, most notably in the production of sugarcane and coffee (Noailles, 2010). Following the success of the Haitian Revolution in 1804 the early Haitian rulers continued to depend on

the plantation system in an effort to preserve the country's military strength in the event of a French invasion, but also because it was the only way to generate income for the non-working elite (Lundahl, 1989).

However, the plantation system in Haiti was quickly proven unsustainable with the peasantry refusing to work in a system they just fought so hard to overthrow. So, beginning in 1809 the new rulers of the infant nation-state began a redistribution of land throughout the country in an effort to avoid a second revolution (Dubois, 2012). As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed the land became further subdivided amongst family members and Haiti gradually became converted into a peasant nation of subsistent family farms (Lundahl, 1989; Smith, 2001).

The eradication of the plantation system throughout Haiti meant an end to the landed incomes of the non-working elite. Since working the land, by their own hand was out of the question, the elite needed alternative ways to obtain income. As an ex-colony whose current infrastructure was arranged around the exportation of agricultural products, the only wealth in the country was in agriculture. In order to siphon this wealth, control of taxation was necessary, and the best way to obtain control of taxation was to control the presidency. This set the stage for over a century and a half of the elite class vying for control of the government with little concern for the actual development of the nation.

### **Independence Reparations**

Following the success of the Haitian Revolution in 1804, the colonial powers of the time decided that an independent Haiti would pose a direct threat to the entire system of slavery and colonialism in the Americas, so the international community consisting mostly

of Europe and the United States set about to financially smother the infant nation (Edmonds, 2012). Facing global isolation and a French invasion fleet sitting offshore to force compliance, Haitian officials agreed to pay France 150 million francs as reparations to the French plantation owners for property losses incurred during the revolution, which included both the loss of slaves and land (Farmer, 2004; Noailles, 2010). In return France agreed to acknowledge Haiti as a sovereign nation recognizing its independence. Today that amount of 150 million francs would equal approximately US\$21 billion (Dubois, 2012). In essence, Haiti was forced to pay twice for its independence and freedom; first with blood and second with money.

This debt put a heavy burden on Haiti's economic and social development with little funding available to consistently build schools, hospitals or even invest in infrastructure (Edmonds, 2012). For the next century and a half nearly 80 percent of government revenue went directly to France for debt service (Farmer, 2003). The country fell deep into poverty and setting the stage for over a century of political instability and turmoil that would later come to define the young nation-state (Dubois, 2012). To service this debt the Haitian government, controlled by the rich elite class, imposed a tax on domestic exports which became an indirect tax on the rural peasant majority since all export revenues were mostly based on agriculture goods like coffee and sugar (Noailles, 2010; Schuller, 2007). This debt service put a heavy burden on Haiti's development severely limiting the Haitian governments ability to invest in domestic institutions and infrastructure such as public education, public health, and roads. The lack of investment

in public education, in particular, had a lasting impact as it reinforced the divisions between the light-skinned urban elite and the poor rural peasantry (Dubois, 2012).

Haiti may have been the first nation in Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) to escape colonialism through revolution, but simultaneously, Haiti also became one of the first recognizably underdeveloped nations.

### **Haitian Presidencies**

The plight of Haitian presidencies reinforces the Haitian struggle and provides insight to the difficulties of working towards development in a nation that has never trusted the government, or any foreign power, to provide for them their most basic needs. From its independence in 1804 to present day, Haiti has been led by 53 presidents, of which 9 served their full term, 23 were overthrown and the remainder were either assassinated or died in office (Dubois, 2012; Noailles, 2010). Politics, or politicking, became the best way to secure income for the elite class (Lundahl, 1989), and Haiti quickly became subject to some of the worst predatory regimes ever seen in history (Dubois, 2012; Lundahl, 1989). Kleptocracy is a form of political and government corruption where the government exists to increase the personal wealth and political power of its officials and ruling class at the expense of the general population. Haiti quickly became subject to some of the worst kleptocracies throughout history, whose main concerns were first to tax agriculture and foreign trade for private income, and second to remain in power (Dash, 2001; Farmer, 2003; Hallward, 2007).

The Haitian president who served the longest was Jean Claude Duvalier (a.k.a. Baby Doc) serving a term of 15 years after succeeding his father Francois Duvalier (a.k.a.

Papa Doc) who had previously led Haiti for 14 years from 1957-1971. Running on a platform that greatly mirrored his love for education and improved health standards for the poor, Papa Doc won the presidential election in 1957 (Noailles, 2010). After a failed coup against him in 1958, Duvalier began consolidating his power and grip on the Haitian state (Dubois, 2012). Soon thereafter with his consolidation of power, appointment as president for life and control of a rural militia, Duvalier's presidency quickly transformed into a dictatorship plagued with corruption, crime and censorship (Brown, 2010; Dubois, 2012; Noailles, 2010).

Prior to his death in 1971, Francois Duvalier nominated his then 19 year old son, to replace him as president for life (Dubois, 2012). The regime of Baby Doc was a continuation of the same tyrannical dictatorship instilled by his father until a popular uprising ousted Baby Doc in 1986 and he fled into exile taking the Haitian treasury, worth about US\$1.6 billion, with him (Lundahl, 1989). The Haitian political landscape after Baby Doc was filled with military coups and saw five different interim governments, with each attempting to gain the favor of the international community by putting forward increasingly neoliberal policies (Edmonds, 2012). Under the Duvalier family dictatorship, Haiti had already been classified as the poorest nation in the Western world and the ruling elite at the time argued that force was required to police deep poverty (Brown, 2010). By the mid-1980s, the hunger, despair, and disease that had become the reality of most Haitians was beyond management, and the promise of shared wealth and prosperity was not trickling down to the poor majority.

The first truly democratic elections in Haiti were held in 1990 and won by a young priest named Jean-Bertrand Aristide (Farmer, 2003; Noailles, 2010). Aristide had become a prominent voice during the waning years of Baby Doc's rule, speaking out boldly from the pulpit against the dictators' regime. Never had an election in Haiti generated as much enthusiasm among the general population prior to the 1990 election as the thought of electing Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and finally having a real connection between the country's segregated poor population and its government institutions (Dubois, 2012).

Aristide immediately began to fulfill his promises to the Haitian people that elected him by increasing tariffs to protect local farmers, raising the daily wage to US\$5 per day, and funding public works (Edmonds, 2012), in addition to starting health and educational programs in an attempt to kick-start the development of the economy (Dubois, 2012). One year after coming into power, Aristide was ousted by a military coup that sought to regain the presidency for the elite and continue to pursue neoliberal development policies.

Aristide was put back in power in 1993 by the U.S. government under Bill Clinton in response to the humanitarian crisis developing in Haiti and the flood of refugees attempting to flee the increasingly predatory regime that had successfully seized control of the country after ousting Aristide (Farmer, 2004). Aristide served out the remainder of his term as president until 1996 under the conditions that he further implement neoliberal policies and enter into a coalition government with the very same Haitian elite that had ousted him three years earlier (Brown, 2010). The Haitian constitution prohibits successive presidential mandates, and thus Aristide could not run for re-election in 1996 (Noailles, 2010). In 2000, Aristide ran for president again and regained power in another landslide

victory on the platform of stopping privatization of the remaining state industries, raising the minimum wage, protecting local farmers, building schools, hospital and clinics, while also demanding that France repay the US\$21 billion debt to Haiti (Farmer, 2003; Noailles, 2010).

Despite the unprecedented economic hardships once again placed on Haiti, more schools were built in Haiti under Aristide's leadership, 195 new primary schools and 104 new public high schools, than the previous two hundred year history of the country (Farmer, 2003). Aristide began universal schooling devoting approximately 20 percent of the starved Haitian budget towards education and was able to build the country's first free public medical school (Farmer, 2003). Due to these modest gains under such a restrictive economic circumstance, Aristide was increasingly viewed as a threat to the Haitian elite, and in February of 2004 he was once again overthrown and exiled from the very country he had worked so hard to develop and grow (Dubois, 2012; Farmer, 2003; Noailles, 2010).

### **Foreign Occupation**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the political instability in Haiti had reached a new boiling point and from 1911 to 1915, six presidents governed the country, all of whom were assassinated or overthrown (Noailles, 2010). In order to protect United States (U.S.) investments in Haiti and compete with global colonizers such as France, Great Britain and Spain (Dubois, 2012), the U.S. sent 300 marines to Port-au-Prince in an effort to re-establish and maintain peace declaring the country incapable of self-governance (Brennan, 2004). However, this initial peacekeeping force was only the beginning, and it was clear by the end of 1915 with nearly 2,000 U.S. soldiers present in Haiti that the U.S.

was embarking on something much more extensive than just a simple operation to reestablish order and protect U.S. interests (Dubois, 2012). The U.S. military would remain in Haiti until 1934 acting at times as more of a conquering militia than neutral peacekeeping force (Dubois, 2012).

During the occupation Haiti sustained a period of relative political stability, with four successive full-term presidencies. However, the U.S. was able to gain increasing control over the Haitian economy and government by having a heavy influence over the presidential candidacies and exercising veto power over the main decisions of the government (Noailles, 2010). The U.S. also aided the Haitian government in the adoption of a new constitution, written primarily by Franklin D. Roosevelt, then the assistant Secretary of the Navy (Dubois, 2012). One important amendment within the new constitution, that was primarily in the interest of the U.S., was the allowance of foreigners to own land in Haiti (Noailles, 2010). The Haitian-American sugar company, known as HASCO, had difficulty acquiring land prior to U.S. occupation, but under the new constitution they were able to purchase vast amounts of land, evict the local peasants and established large plantations (Dubois, 2012). Other large agricultural organizations soon followed HASCO's lead of acquiring vast amounts of land, with the backing of U.S. investors, for the purpose of exporting their products back to the U.S. Many peasants who for generations had cultivated the same land under the *metayage* system suddenly found their fields had been sold or leased to U.S. corporations (Dubois, 2012).

The occupation came to an end in 1934 due to the growing opposition both in Haiti and the U.S. (Dubois, 2012; Farmer, 2003; Noailles, 2010). In its wake the U.S. left lasting



unrest and a scramble for power that once again created the very same political instability and turmoil that the original peacekeeping force set out to subdue. The difference now, however, was the stronghold and influence that U.S. could enact through the continual offer of aid money. The U.S. had effectively instituted a culture of dependency within the office of the presidency which now solely benefited U.S. interests, and the interests of the Haitian people came second (Brennan, 2004). This continued for the next 20 years until Francois Duvalier was able to use the collective unrest of the Haitian people to come to power and throw out the U.S. influence for a while.

More recently, the international community has been involved with numerous UN peacekeeping missions beginning in 1993 and continuing through to today (Noailles, 2010). The original mission in 1993 corresponded with the reinstatement of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide by the U.S. President Clinton, with the intent to prevent another coup and ensure that Aristide would be able to serve the remainder of his term (Noailles, 2010). Since that time, Haiti has continuously had some form of a UN peacekeeping mission present to help maintain peace and stability. The UN missions activities range from securing elections to training the new civilian police force (Noailles, 2010).

## **II. DEVELOPMENT**

This chapter aims to provide an overview of different development theories and how they relate to the Haitian experience of development. First, development is defined, and the popular neoliberal development strategies rooted in economic growth are presented; ideas of dependency theory are then discussed and the concept of underdevelopment is introduced; and finally, a discussion of sustainable development which can mean very different things to very different people depending on how it is defined.

### **Development Overview**

Development, according to Lewis (2001), is one of the more problematic and questioned terms of the current age. Often times the concept of development is viewed as a value judgement, a standard against which things can be compared (Lewis, 2001). In this way, many people will make the comparison similar to that of Jeffrey Sachs' (2005) rungs of a ladder analogy, in that each rung represents a stage in development and as a country advances in development they move up to the next rung on the ladder. The idea that one country, society, or culture may be undeveloped or in a state of being developed while others, usually those making the value judgments, have already reached a state of development.

Development in the neoliberal approach is viewed as a linear process with the belief that all developed nations have followed the same path to development (Ruccio, 1988).

This linear process assumes then that all societies' progress in a similar fashion from an original lesser developed state to a modern more developed state

Development, however, is not a linear concept (Frank, 1969) and there is no one single universal trajectory for development that is followed by all nations due to the simple fact that all nations have very distinct histories and institutions that have shaped their respective current relationships both internally and within the global society (Irogbe, 2005). This would then suggest that the poverty experienced by the developing countries is not due to their lack of integration into the world system, as the neoliberal trade liberalization insists, but instead is a direct result of how they are integrated into the world system. Until recently, Lewis (2001) argues, development has been debated primarily in economic terms, with a concentration on growth rather than distribution, and on statistics rather than actual people.

## **Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism has its origins in the 1960s and 1970s as a theory formulated in the United States, most closely associated with the University of Chicago, and later emerging in the 1980s as a political and economic policy under Reagan and Thatcher (Perreault, 2005). With the acceptance of this theory as a model for economic well-being by such development institutions as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, neoliberalism became the mainstream consensus view. However, because of its seemingly omnipresent character throughout the world, neoliberalism has become synonymous with the phenomenon of globalization.

Neoliberalism is most commonly thought of as an economic and political model that seeks to liberalize trade (particularly international trade), privatize state-controlled industries and introduce market-oriented management practices to a reduced public sector (Jessop, 2002). A central aspect of the neoliberal policy reform program is the downsizing of the state and the privatization state-owned enterprises (Roxborough, 1992). As defined by Perreault (2005), politically, neoliberalism seeks to reduce state functions, particularly the provision of social services and regulatory restraints on corporate practices to promote economic growth and development.

The neoliberal development model is rooted in the privatization of state-controlled industries and services, the deregulation of the economy in order to maximize competition and free trade, and the implementation of fiscal policies that favor businesses and corporations (D'Souza, 1989; Liow, 2011; Richards, 1997), at the expense of labor, the environment and resource depletion (Giroux, 2005). Over time, by adhering to these policies the GOH was forced to scale back what few subsidies there were to staple foods, fertilizer, and water, as well as decrease many tariffs as they attempted to “integrate” into the global market in an effort to generate economic growth and decrease the country’s historical poverty (Shamsie, 2012). However, in a country where the majority of people make a living from the agricultural sector, the resulting loss of agricultural livelihood has been devastating in both environmental and human terms. Globalization and trade liberalization for the impoverished Haitian farmer did not open new markets as promised; it instead created a greater dependency on foreign imports and resulted in the transfer of wealth from Haitian farmers to the subsidized farmers in the developed world.

## **Neoliberalism in Haiti**

Beginning in the 1980s international donors began to increasingly follow a neoliberal agenda of “integrating” Haiti into a global economy as a way of decreasing the country’s historical poverty and suffering. The neoliberal policies pushed by the international community and soon adopted by Haitian government cut government workers, increased taxes on the poor, provided subsidies to assembly industries, decreased import tariffs to near zero and privatized multiple state enterprises (Diaz, 2012; Edmonds, 2012; Farmer, 2005; Mintz, 1995; Metayer, 2012; Zanotti, 2010). Over time these policies resulted in the decline of the agricultural industry and livelihood subsistence farming, as well as the repatriating of profits through industry privatization. In a country where the majority of people make a living from the agricultural sector, the loss of agricultural livelihood resulting from the reduction of import tariffs has been devastating in both environmental and human terms (Shamsie, 2012).

A newly established assembly industry was intended to perform two main functions. The first function was to provide employment and help to facilitate the absorption of domestic rural migrant workers into Port-au-Prince (DeWind, 1988), and the second function, according to DeWind (1988), was to provide the necessary revenue needed to pay for influx of imported foods that were no longer produced in the country, now that the agricultural sector was in focused on developing cash crops for export. In evaluating the new Haitian assembly industry during the 1980s, Metayer (2012) notes failures in the realms of job creation and improved well-being for Haitian farmers. Metayer (2012) contends that over a fifteen-year period of pushing the assembly industry only 40,000 to 50,000 jobs were created, which equates to approximately 3,000 jobs per year in

a country where the unemployment rate has reached over 60% of the population. At the height of its operation in the mid-1980s, the assembly industry never employed more than 7% of Haitian workers and never contributed significantly to reducing the high unemployment rates of the time (Dupuy, 2010).

In addition, the food policies adopted by Haiti beginning in the 1980s to compensate for the adverse effects of the export-oriented strategy were damaging to Haiti's small peasant farmers. The international policy makers failed to properly consider what impact the re-development of the agriculture sector might have on small producers (DeWind, 1988). In the 1970s, under the Duvalier regimes, Haiti imported only about 19% of its food needs, compared to the 51% just prior to the 2010 earthquake (Dupuy, 2010). Dupuy (1989) maintained that the importation of foodstuffs such as rice, cooking oil, soya, and milk powder were undermining the peasantry's production of corn, millet and rice because of their inability to compete with the cheaper imports. In addition, producers of cow and goat meats were also being displaced by the importation of cheaper chicken meat from Miami (Dupuy, 1989). Haiti effectively went from being self-sufficient in the production of many staple food items to becoming the fourth-largest importer of subsidized U.S. rice in the world and the largest importer of foodstuffs from the United States in the entire LAC region (Dupuy, 2010). Today, nearly 80% of all the rice consumed in Haiti is imported (Dupuy, 2010).

Interestingly, when Aristide assumed the presidency following the 1990 elections, he sought to change the liberalized free trade policies that were increasingly implemented in Haiti throughout the 1980s. Aristide promised to protect domestic food production

against cheaper imports while also raising the minimum wage. His efforts failed, however, due in large part to the stiff resistance he received from the Haitian elite, Haitian Chamber of Commerce, and foreign aid that heavily favored the liberalized free trade markets, which arguably led to the overthrow of his presidency within a year of its inception (Dupuy, 2010).

### **Globalization and Creole Pigs**

Former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide wrote an article in 2001 that describes the common Haitian's distrust of the global community's push toward continued neoliberal influenced interventions within Haiti. The brief description of this article highlights a single failed intervention in Haiti that continues to furnish negative associations with globalization and foreign intervention up to today.

The article Aristide (2001) wrote tells the story of the eradication of the Haitian Creole pig by US/AID in the 1980s in a seemingly desperate act to prevent a fatal swine disease from spreading north into the United States and decimating the U.S. pig population. The aim of the program was to stop the disease dead in its tracks in Haiti, but what US/AID and other aid agencies failed to properly research and understand was that the Haitian environment was strikingly different, despite similarities in geographical location, to other Caribbean countries. The Creole pig had adapted to the harsh living conditions in Haiti and also provided additional benefits for the Haitian peasant, such as fertilizer for the lands, being used as 'savings' account to be sold in times of need, and keeping the land clear of waste due to its foraging habits. So, here is the story of the Creole pig told mostly in the words of Aristide himself:

“The eradication of the Haitian Creole pig population in the 1980s is a classic example of globalization gone wrong. Haiti’s small, black, Creole pigs were at the heart and soul of the peasant economy. Well adapted to the climate and living conditions in Haiti, Creole pigs ate readily available waste and could survive for days without food. Approximately 80-85% of rural households raised pigs which played a key role in maintaining the fertility of the soil and constituted the primary saving bank of the rural population. Pigs were sold to pay for emergencies and special occasions such as funerals, marriages, and illness. In some extreme or critical cases, the pigs were sold to pay for school fees and buy books for children.

In 1982, international agencies assured rural Haitian peasants that their pigs were sick and had to be killed (so that the illness would not spread north). Promises of better pigs were made to replace the loss of the Creole pig. With efficiency not since seen in Haiti in development projects, all Creole pigs were killed over the course of a year. Two years later “better” pigs arrived from Iowa, however these pigs were not suited for the conditions of Haiti and required clean drinking water (unavailable to 80% of Haiti’s population), imported feed (\$90 a year when the per capita income was \$130), and special roofed pigpens. This repopulation program was a complete failure. It is estimated that Haitian peasants lost nearly \$600 million. There was a 30% drop in school enrollment in rural areas, a dramatic decline in protein consumption and an incalculable negative impact on Haiti’s soil resulting in a drop in agricultural productivity which has yet to recover.

Most of rural Haiti is still isolated from global markets, so for many peasants, the extermination of the Creole pigs was their first experience of globalization and the



experience still looms large in the collective memory. Today, when the Haitian people are told of economic reform and privatization will benefit them, it is understandable that they are wary.” (Aristide, 2001)

## **Critiques of Neoliberalism**

Some scholars have scrutinized neoliberalism from the perspective of democratization. Bresnahan (2003) maintains that the privatization of state industries and social services has not only limited the sphere of government action but also eroded the social weight of the professional and middle class voters (Bresnahan, 2003). Bresnahan (2003) goes on to further proclaim that corporate interests that have been grouped into influential associations and strengthened by ties to the military and transnational capital have become a dominant business class stronger than the state itself. From a slightly different perspective, Giroux (2005) has also observed a loss of democratic values as a result of the rise of corporate power. He argues that corporations privatize public space and disconnect power from issues of equity, social justice and civic responsibility. Giroux (2005) observed that neoliberalism in practice tends to work outside of democratic accountability and in doing so allows for private interests of the upper classes of society to control as much social life as possible in order to maximize their personal profit.

Harvey (2005) critiques how neoliberalism involves concepts of class and class interests that favor the wealthy elite. To support his claim that neoliberalism reinforces social stratification Harvey (2005) provides a few examples of how in some countries, the rich elite minority, have benefitted from neoliberalism. In the United States, Harvey (2005) argues that the Reagan and Bush administrations implemented increasingly neoliberal rules

which allowed for a concentration of income and wealth for the upper classes of society. The implementation of neoliberal policies in Great Britain enabled the top 1 percent of income earners to double their share of the national income from 6.5 percent to 13 percent since 1982. Lastly Harvey (2005) uses the example of Mexico and how a wave of privatization policies in 1982 after the demise of ISI catapulted a select few individuals into some of the world's wealthiest people.

The link between neoliberalism and corporate power has also been a subject of study by some scholars. According to Giroux (2005), under neoliberalism corporations have been able to shape both the economic sphere and the policymaking process of governments making everything for sale or available to be plundered for profit. Arthurs (2005) contends that global free trade agreements seek to only expand Western financial and commercial interests in order to manage and transfer resources and wealth from the poor underdeveloped nations to the rich developed countries. Corporations have dominated the political arena and have restructured politics through deregulation and privatization (Metayer, 2012). This corporate influence is what makes the wealthy wealthier to the detriment of the poor (Giroux, 2005).

Bill McKibben critiques economic growth and the effects that trade liberalization and globalization have on the environment in his book, *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. McKibben (2007) does not discriminate against different development models but argues that economic growth in general yields more negative results than positive. He points the invention of the practical steam engine in 1712 as the critical turning point in modernity because it allowed human beings to begin tapping

into fossil fuel power. “First coal, then oil, then natural gas allowed for everything we consider normal and obvious about the modern world, from making fertilizer to making steel to making electricity” (McKibben, 2007:6). The results of this energy revolution following the invention of the steam engine saw rapid economic growth that most certainly attributed to the increase in per capita wealth within industrialized and developed nations, however at the same time it severely degraded the ecological well-being of the planet (Moe-Lobeda, 2009).

McKibben points to two primary planetary limits that call into question the viability of growth. The first is the limit of fossil fuels, particularly oil of which we are rapidly running out. The second limit he talks about is the planet itself. As McKibben (2007) writes, “Even before we run out of oil, we’re running out of planet. (p. 18)”

## **Sustainable Development**

Following the critique of neoliberalism as a development practice and the brief description of Bill McKibben’s critique on economic growth, this section on sustainable development is intended to outline alternate development practices that place humanity, well-being and the environment ahead of economic growth. .

Roseland (2000) defines sustainable development as development that can meet the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition established the need for integrated decision making that is capable of balancing the economic and social needs of the people with the regenerative capacity of the natural environment. In order to minimize environmental and social consequences of development, a strategic assessment of policies and plans must be

under taken. Projects must assess for their impact upon the environment and society. Roseland (2000) argues that one of the chief focuses of sustainable development is on society, and society's intent and purpose should be to include environmental considerations in the steering of any societal change especially through changes to the way in which the economy functions. A large part of sustainable development is ensuring that the present generation does not consume so much as to foreclose the option of future generation to enjoy at least the present level of consumption and well-being.

Goodland and Daly (1993) outline an alternative view to development saying that the North should stabilize its resource consumption and reduce its damage to local environments and ecosystems because resources are finite and further Northern growth means less room for Southern growth. And, Daly and Farley (2011) take the ecological economic approach to development that recognizes that an increase in goods and services must be defined by their ability to increase overall human well-being provided by the overall flow of raw materials and energy from the global ecosystem. In essence, the economy should be sustained and also constrained by the ecosystem, recognizing that there are tradeoffs between economic growth and ecosystem health. Economic production requires the use of raw materials and energy at the expense of the ecosystem. The throughputs must balance the waste produced so as not to overburden the ecosystem and further degrade the environment.

Melnick et al. (2005) highlight the critical importance of achieving environmental sustainability to meet development goals with respect to poverty, illiteracy, hunger, gender inequality, unsafe drinking water and environmental degradation. Melnick et. al. (2005) go

on to argue that achieving environmental sustainability requires carefully balancing human development activities while maintaining a stable environment that predictably and regularly provides resources and protects people from natural calamities. According to Rogers et al. (2008) in order to achieve sustainable development, the causes of poverty like resource depletion and environmental degradation need to be addressed (Rogers, 2008). Current development practices are degrading the ecosystems and natural resource base to the detriment of the current generation and of future generations calling into question the current efforts towards sustainable development. Ultimately, sustainable development will require a radical shift in thinking from a growth, market-based economy to a steady state economy in which the economy is viewed in balance with the parent ecosystem that sustains it (Daly, 1996; Daly and Farley, 2011).

### **Dependency Theory and Haiti**

Dependency Theory, developed by Frank (1969), proposes an alternative theory to development in contrast to the neoliberal capitalist world-economy. Frank (1969) presents the idea that countries do not develop in stages but instead fosters the underdevelopment of a satellite group of societies in order to extract resources and allow the wealthy ruling societies to remain wealthy. Thereby suggesting that the poverty experienced by the ‘developing’ countries in the ‘periphery’ is not due to their lack of integration into the world system, but instead a direct result of how they are integrated into the world system. Wallerstein (1974) defines underdevelopment as the result of being involved in the world-economy as a peripheral, raw material producing arena which he sees as a necessary by-product for the existence of capitalism itself.

Frank (1969) asserts, that despite certain surface similarities, like poverty and non-industrialization, there are very distinct historical occurrences that have shaped the current relationships found between underdeveloped and developed countries, namely colonialism. Underdeveloped countries have experienced the phenomena of slavery and colonialism, this is not the case with the developed countries (Irogbe, 2005). Haiti is often considered to have been one of the most brutal slave colonies of its time (Dash, 2001; Dubois, 2012; Smith, 2001). Therefore, it is assumed by Frank (1969) that there is no single universal trajectory for development that is followed by all nations, and because there is no single track to development it is therefore incorrect to refer to 'developing countries' as undeveloped, since their present condition is a direct result of their own historical integration into the world system as colonies of the rich, developed countries (Ruccio, 1988). Thus, Frank (1969) introduces the term 'underdeveloped' to characterize the current condition of the developing countries and making a clear distinction between the current state of development found in these countries versus the original state of modern day developed countries. Frank (1969) contends that the now developed countries were never underdeveloped, though they may have been undeveloped at one time.

The second part to Dependency Theory that is important to understand is the concept of dependency relations. A dependency relation, in Frank's (1969) view, requires two parties; one dominant and the other dependent. For Frank (1969), the central dependency relationship exists between the various countries of the developed world and those that are underdeveloped. In the LAC region this relationship began when the dependency was created between the colony and the imperial power that conquered it

(Frank, 1969). Today, it is more a matter of an underdeveloped country and those developed countries with which it has primary economic relations (Ruccio, 1988). Over the years various names have been given to describe this relationship between the developed and underdeveloped countries: metropolis/satellite, core/periphery, and center/periphery (Frank, 1969; Irogbe, 2005; Wallerstein, 1974).

The metropolis-satellite relations, however, to use the terms preferred by Frank, are not limited to the imperial or international level, but can penetrate and structure the very economic, political, and social life of the previous colonies and current countries (Frank, 1969). The key to this relationship is control. The metropolis-satellite structure simply functions as an instrument to draw capital and economic surplus out of each sequential satellite distributing wealth upwards towards the elite ruling class and seldom, if ever, downwards towards the poor (Ruccio, 1988). Moreover, each national and local metropolis serves to impose and maintain the monopolistic and exploitative relationship of this system as long as it serves the interest of the metropolis which take advantage of this global, national, and local structure to promote their own development and the enrichment of their ruling class (Frank, 1969). With their economic and military power, Europe, later joined by the United States, was able to successfully control the underdeveloped poor countries for their material benefit (Irogbe, 2005).

Haiti serves as a perfect example to illustrate Franks point since Haiti's colonial past is considered to be one of the most lucrative colonies in the Americas, and following the Haitian Revolution, the countries elite maintained a culture that continued to enforce a local metropolis-satellite relationship within Haiti. In the case of Haiti, the privileged

positions of the cities of Cap Haitien in the north as well as Port-au-Prince and Jacmel to the south, to name a few, became instrumental in gathering resources en route to France during the colonial time. As the French pulled out of these metropolis centers, the rich Haitian elite were able to move into the urban centers and continue the domination of the surrounding satellite peasant population in the countryside (Dash, 2001; Dubois, 2012). It wasn't until the occupation by the United States that the entire economic, political and social structures of Haiti became centralized to Port-au-Prince (Dubois, 2012; Noailles, 2010), as the United States was able to create a single metropolis to act as an instrument of authority over the regional capitals of Jacmel and Cap Haitien. While Port-au-Prince continues to maintain authority as the main metropolis within the confines of Haiti, the city itself remains today a satellite largely dependent on the United States and international community which serves as the metropolis (Noailles, 2010).



### **III. NGOS AND HAITIAN DEVELOPMENT**

As neoliberalism reduces the size of the state in favor of market competition and privatization, the capacity of the Haitian government to provide for basic human services to the Haitian people has diminished. While NGOs have been able to fill the void, and provide essential services to the Haitian people they are still no more than band-aid solutions. If NGOs were to actually accomplish their goals of truly alleviating poverty and achieving the self-sufficiency of their beneficiaries, they would in essence work themselves out a job. As Edmonds (2012:445) writes, “The reality of NGOs in the developing world tend to operate along the lines of a twisted, but suitable idiom, ‘Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, allow a man to fish and you ruin a perfectly good business opportunity’.”

To debate the structural ineffectiveness of charities and NGOs is difficult because I believe in the mission of these organizations with their purpose being to assist in easing the suffering of others and the good intentions they have to make the world a better place. The problem is mechanisms and framework that NGOs operate in can be counterproductive to truly achieving the ultimate goal of poverty eradication. This section describes the role of NGOs in Haiti and presents arguments as to how the overabundance of NGOs operating within the country has undermined the effectiveness of the NGO sector.

#### **What is an NGO?**

NGOs are found all over the world and work within very different environments. In the most basic understanding an NGO is an independent organization that distances itself from government, as the title of Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) implies. However, despite being non-state actors, NGOs are often not separate from politics or economics and may even work in partnership with governments (Pineda, 2013).

The definition of an NGO can vary depending on their scope and range of work. As Lewis (2007) notes that NGOs can come in all shapes and sizes, and can mean many things to many people. NGOs can have different reach and be defined as local, regional, national or international (Edwards and Fowler, 2008). However, despite the varying range and capacity of NGOs, Lewis (2007) contends that all NGOs work towards the common goals to promote and secure social and economic change in favor of the marginalized and vulnerable populations. Lewis (2007) formally defines NGOs as third-sector organizations, separate from the public and private sectors, that are concerned mainly with addressing the problems of poverty and social justice. Jordan and Tuijl (2000) adopt the definition of an NGO as being a self-governing, private, non-profit organization that is working towards improving the quality of life of disadvantage people.

As mentioned above, NGOs tend to be grouped or defined based on their range of work, and whether the NGO performs said work on a local, regional, national or international level. Avina (1993) makes a distinction between the local and regional NGOs versus the international NGOs. Local and regional NGOs tend to be self-financed grassroots startups that are generally small in nature with the range of their impact being very localized and based on the resource capacity of the surrounding community (Avina, 1993). Whereas an international NGO will tend to be externally financed from the country in which they operate, and may build around locally perceived needs incorporating local and regional NGOs or they may promote an externally designed development approach (Avina, 1993). National NGOs, according to Avina (1993), operate within their country

of origin and while they tend to be larger with a wider reach and additional resources than local and regional NGOs, they operate primarily within their own country of origin.

In my work and experience in Haiti I have seen and interacted with many NGOs of varying size. The majority of these NGOs originated from outside of Haiti and considered an international NGO. They may be self-financed and grassroots organized but made a choice to conduct their activities outside their country of origin making them an international NGO. For the purposes of this thesis the simple definition of an international NGO is adopted from Stroup and Wong (2013) as they make the simple distinction that international NGOs are simply local or national NGOs that have chosen to focus the efforts of their work outside their country of origin.

## **NGOs and Haiti**

NGOs became formally recognized in Article 71 of the 1945 UN Charter and three years later in 1948 Haiti was among one of the first countries to receive a UN mission and development mandate (Schuller, 2017). During this time, 1948, a team of foreign experts made 101 specific recommendations for policy reform and governmental restructuring (Schuller, 2017). However, it was during this same time that Francois ‘Papa Doc’ Duvalier came to be president and the harsh living conditions, human rights violations, and state policy under the Duvalier regime began to gather attention (Brennan, 2014).

In 1970, nearing his death, Papa Doc requested a U.S. military presence in Haiti to prevent a rumored invasion from dissident exiles (Dubois, 2012; Schuller, 2017). In return for the military presence, Papa Doc agreed to allow U.S. apparel industries and Protestant churches to set up in the country (Schuller, 2017). This allowance of U.S. industries began

to usher in a new era of economic liberalization as the international community, specifically the U.S., vied for influence in the country as the transition of power from Papa Doc to his son Jean-Claude ‘Baby Doc’ Duvalier took place. The newly formed Protestant churches also began gaining some influence as many would set up missionaries and apply for NGO status to engage in development activities such as building schools (Schuller, 2017). Nearly 78 NGOs had been registered in Haiti between 1970 and 1989 with 38 being established in the 1980s alone. However, the true NGO invasion and awakening occurred in the mid-1990s with the reinstatement of Aristide as President.

Haiti had been so badly weakened politically and economically during Aristide’s ousting that the international community, mainly the U.S., considered the reinstatement of Aristide as an opportunity for a restoration of democracy in Haiti (Schuller, 2017). The role of NGOs expanded during this time as the international community realized that NGOs could be perfect vessels in which to bring about democratization and simultaneously contribute to Haiti’s development (Brennan, 2014). With Aristide’s return to power and the second U.S. occupation of Haiti, since Aristide was accompanied by 30,000 U.S. Marines to keep the peace (Dubois, 2012), hundreds of NGOs began working in Haiti (Schuller, 2017). It was also during this period of the mid-1990s that the Haitian government was coerced into accepting increasingly neoliberal policies (Brennan, 2014; Farmer 2003; Schuller, 2017). As a result, tens of thousands of public sector employees were laid off creating an institutional void within the government and further weakening the Haitian state (Schuller, 2017).

For many Haitians the so-called NGO invasion on the mid-1990s and continued presence for the next twenty years is a further manifestation of foreign dominance and imperialism, and an insult to Haitian sovereignty. The parallel state developed by NGOs has been able to gain near-sovereign control over certain parts of the country (Klarreich, 2012; Schuller, 2017). While accumulating power and resources throughout the country, many NGOs began to increasingly ignore the Haitian government. In any given year only, 10-20 percent of NGOs fulfilled their legal requirement to send the Haitian government an annual report. As a result, the NGOs became less and less accountable to the Haitian people and government, and increasingly accountable to their donors.

NGOs have played the role of ‘gap filler’ in Haiti providing basic services to the poor majority without the proper supervision or management of the GOH, and have effectively undermined the governance capacity of the state to provide social welfare to its own people (Morton, 1997; Schuller, 2009). Schuller (2009) argues that NGOs have acted as intermediaries within the globalization process making four distinct arguments. First, NGOs play the role of ‘gap fillers’ offering alternatives to social welfare for the people within states fragmented by neoliberalism. Second, that the contemporary neoliberal aid model undermines the governance capacity of those aforementioned fragmented states, eroding the social contract that the state is responsible for social welfare and service provision. Third, NGOs provide high paying jobs to an educated middle to upper class further reproducing inequalities that seem to be inherent to and required by neoliberal system. And finally, Schuller (2009) argues that NGOs constitute buffers between the

wealthy elites and impoverished masses, and can present institutional barriers against local participation and priority setting.

Schuller (2009) uses the examples of roads and trash to highlight state failure within Haiti. As NGOs began arriving in Haiti to fill the gaps left by a privatized and outsourced government certain tasks, like trash cleanup and road repair, were not completed (Schuller, 2009). “While it may be true that governments did not fulfill some of their basic functions, the social contract at least implicitly implied their responsibility” (Schuller, 2009). NGOs did not have the same responsibility to the people of Haiti, but instead were (and still are) dependent on and responsible to foreign donors, not the responsive will of the people as citizens.

Haiti’s government has also been unmeasurably weakened by the potential for a ‘brain drain’ of Haiti’s public sector as NGOs offered higher salaries than what the government could offer (Schuller, 2009). NGOs are directly competing with the GOH for scarce resources and often winning that battle. In this case the resource is human resource, but in a country like Haiti where the education is seriously lacking, a highly educated individual can be considered a scarce resource. According to Schuller (2009), in August of 2004 of the 145 job advertisements in Haiti’s oldest and largest daily newspaper nearly three-fourths were for NGOs and international aid agencies. It is further estimated that NGOs provide up to one-third of all jobs within the formal economy as of 2004 (Schuller, 2009).

NGOs provide legitimacy and alternatives to states that have been fragmented by neoliberalism as they offer services to the masses and fill the gaps in services created by

increasing privatization of public services. Second, NGOs directly contribute to the weakening and undermining of the national government that ultimately drains the state capacity to provide for its citizens, particularly in human capital through higher salaries. Related to higher salaries, NGOs also are willing to pay a higher monthly rent for housing and office space, as well as the purchase of expensive luxury items such as cars and electronics, thereby creating false markets and driving up the price for the average Haitian. Without realizing it many NGOs are deepening the rift between the elites and poor peasants. The unequal distribution of the market favors the individual that can pay more for the item instead of allocating the resource to the individual that will receive the greatest utility.

Johnson (2010) believes that part of the reason for the rebuilding process to take so long is because of three main reasons. First, some of it has to do with fraudulent charities that have sprung up in the wake of the earthquake. Secondly, Johnson (2010) mentions bad infrastructure wreaking havoc on the tiny nation. Three years after the earthquake bad infrastructure continues to wreak havoc, but improvements are being made just not as quickly as they could or need to be. Third, Johnson (2010) believes that some of the reason why rebuilding will take so long is related to the allegations of local officials profiting off of the kindness of the world for their own financial gain. Corruption certainly ran rampant immediately following the earthquake and people certainly took advantage of hand-outs that were being given, but many of these people were living in poverty prior to the earthquake and then lost everything including family members during the earthquake. It was a form of extreme desperation that took time to eliminate, but progress has been made

and officials are more accountable now than they were following the chaos of the earthquake.

### **NGOs Are Counterproductive**

While there are many critiques of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the role they play in international development, some of the most significant and striking arguments have been centered around the topics of accountability and good governance (Brown and Moore, 2001; Chimiak, 2017; Deaton, 2013; Edmonds, 2012; Edwards and Hulme, 1997; Lewis, 2007; Schuller, 2009; Suleiman, 2013; Szporluk, 2009). Other critiques that scholars have written about include how NGO-led development can reinforce Western neoliberal ideals that can result in trapping the recipient communities in a cycle of dependency (Edmonds, 2012), or how the work of NGOs to provide social services can undermine the capacity and efforts of the local civil society, local governments, and other NGOs operating nearby (Chimiak, 2017; Schuller, 2009).

An understanding of accountability and governance throughout this thesis will relate to the definitions put forward by Lewis (2007) in his book *The Management of Non-Governmental Development Organizations*. Accountability, as defined by Lewis (2007), is a process in which an NGO builds and maintains a relationship with stakeholders based on transparency and influence. And, governance, as defined by Lewis (2007), is the ongoing process within NGOs that set forth the guidelines which the NGOs follow in the decision-making process, mission building, and actions or projects undertaken, as well as how compliance within the NGO is monitored.



## **The Problem with Accountability for NGOs**

One of the more widely criticized problems when it comes to accountability for NGOs is that they are largely dependent on their funding to exist and can therefore be perceived as having more accountability and loyalty to their donors rather than the communities in which they work (Brown and Moore, 2001; Edmonds, 2010; Deaton, 2013; Lewis, 2007; Schuller, 2009; Szporluk, 2009). This sense of obligation to their donors can lead NGOs to focus on the immediate short-term outputs of a project and not take the time to consider the larger economic, social, political, and environmental outcomes that will have a long-term impact on the communities in which they work. Donor constraints have also been linked to a lack of flexibility an NGO might need in order to best achieve the proposed project objectives (Schuller, 2009). In my experience volunteering in Haiti it was seldom that project goals and benchmarks to reach those goals remained constant throughout a project. Things just simply do not go as planned, and having the ability to remain flexible in our approach to address the unforeseen obstacles often dictated whether we could be successful or not in reaching our objectives.

Donors may also make significant changes in the priorities of a project with little notice or input from the community recipients which can be extremely disruptive for the local community (Moyo, 2009; Szporluk, 2009). A lack of explanation for the change of scope or a full-stop in the project due to the NGO suddenly ceasing operation can create animosity within the community toward future partnerships and projects with other NGOs. The community may also be left scrambling to secure additional resources in an effort to complete the project on their own. In Haiti, I witnessed this first-hand as there are

numerous examples of half-built buildings and sometimes a general distrust of the volunteers in the community.

NGOs are often criticized for being unregulated, but this is only partly true. McMahon (2013) argues that NGOs may in fact be too well-regulated by their subservient nature towards their donors. As McMahon (2013:13) writes “a more nuanced and directed critique is that NGOs are not legally well regulated, but are highly restrained by their need for capital to initiate and maintain development projects.” The international community therefore is able to dictate development goals and policies as they are able to place limitations on their funding to NGOs that focus on projects that ultimately benefit the international community.

Another issue with NGO accountability, as Edwards and Hulme (1996) point out, is that NGOs are not only subservient to their donors, but have also been known to originate in response to a funding source which has immediate impacts on their loyalty and purpose. Cooley and Ron (2002) explain how Western donors tend to follow a market-based approach to aid that is heavily rooted in neoliberal development policy which assumes that the more NGOs that exist the better. This competition and marketization of aid-funding is believed to boost efficiency, cut waste, curb corruption, and provide greater opportunity for emerging NGOs to become international players (Cooley and Ron, 2002). The Western donors believe they are providing more opportunity for small start-up organizations, but instead NGOs become more focused on appeasing donors to position themselves favorably in the eyes of the donor in hope of receiving additional future funding. As Cooley and Ron (2002) note, the marketization of donor funds tends to produce dysfunctional incentives

resulting in project goals that are not always in tune with community needs. Competition for funds then can call into question the overall effectiveness of management at the local level and a lack of good governance practices as NGOs are only increasingly interested in trying to satisfy the donors needs with little input from the local population (Deaton, 2013). When an NGOs survival depends on making strategic decisions based on a market environment characterized by uncertainty, the NGOs interests will be shaped by incentives to appease donors in an effort position themselves to receive future funding which the NGO needs for their own survival (Cooley and Ron, 2002).

Leogane, a small city just south of Port-au-Prince and epicenter of the earthquake, provides an example of NGOs projects being driven more by donor objectives than by the needs of the beneficiaries. Following the earthquake, what the people of Leogane needed and wanted after their city was destroyed was new, safe housing on dry land. What they got instead were small square “cookie cutter” boxes in the middle of a flood plain. Leogane sits at the intersection of three rivers, yet no NGO was willing to work on flood management of the rivers and creating a sustainable drainage system. As Klarreich (2012:13) puts it the mitigation of flood risk “wasn’t part of their plan; it wasn’t what they’d been fundraising for.”

McMahon (2013) points out that NGOs often focus on relatable narratives or stories of how their services and the impact of their projects. These narratives become the NGOs products which they use to compete against other NGOs for future funding. However, there is no requirement that NGOs must promote narratives that are representative of the full scope of the project. The narrative used to promote themselves may be void of a

thorough impact analysis that might admit failures and deficiencies in their projects. This framework of being able to develop their own narrative effectively incentivizes NGOs to operate with a lack of transparency and to be loyal only their donors (McMahon, 2013).

Stories can be problematic in that they appear to communicate something about the impact of an NGOs work but, by nature being narratives about a single event or person from a single perspective, they contain no complete or detailed information that could be used to analyze specific projects or to draw larger conclusions about an NGOs effect on development outcomes. Another issue with stories is that it requires the reader to trust that the NGO is accurately reporting on its own behavior. The motivation for providing ambiguous stories of success over thorough project analysis can be explained by the direct competition for funding. Stories create an appearance of having provided evidence for an NGOs effectiveness, but as McMahon (2013) points out, stories can actually reduce transparency by diluting more comprehensive information about the true effect and outcome of an NGOs actions. Stories provide ‘feel good’ moments, but in actuality what is the true outcome. The project may have positively impacted one individual or one family, but at the expensive of how many others in the community, or even at the expense of that individual the story claims to have benefitted.

Take the example of sponsoring a child or sponsoring a school which would provide a great narrative. Those children found benefit for that school year, but what happens the next year or the year after that? What is ultimately the lesson being provided to those students? Teachers may come and go as they follow the NGO funding source from one community to the next rather than working with the community to truly make the school

sustainable an NGO may provide funding for a snapshot in time. It can turn the children and community alike, into beggars as they look for and expect handouts. During my first trips to Haiti all the children would run to any white person they could find looking for handouts, looking for food. They learned the English phrase ‘give me money’ and they could be heard up and down the road “Blan (white person), give me money!”. My response was always the same. I’d ask them for something in return. Provide a service for me, or produce a good then I might consider giving you money.

Another issue with being dependent on donors for survival is that many NGOs may pursue projects that are not a top priority within the community or within the mission of the NGO, simply because there is international donor interest and available resources that the NGO may need for survival (Szporluk, 2009). Pursuing projects in this manner can delegitimize an NGO and future NGOs accountability within the local community. A building that was built to be a school to satisfy donors interests may become community storage of agricultural goods, or commandeered by the local police force as a new headquarters, or remain vacant because it was built in a poor location with little community input (Moyo, 2009). However, the NGO accomplished their goal and appeased the donor by addressing a perceived need. There was no community participation in design or implementation, and therefore no attempt at sustainability of the project. Once the NGO left and the funds dried up, so too did the project resources and knowledge (Moyo, 2009). Without including local communities in the implementation or remaining flexible in the project scope, there is no transfer of knowledge and long-term investment in the community.

In my time in Haiti following the earthquake and working in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp of over 50,000 people, I witnessed playgrounds built by the international NGO Save the Children, but I never witness any children playing in the playground. These playgrounds were left to quickly fall into disrepair. Most likely the construction of the playgrounds was funded in part by some donor living far away from Haiti who just assumed children need playgrounds in order to be happy and play. Nowhere else in Haiti during my travels did I see an abundance of playgrounds like we find in the United States or in Europe. Schools in Haiti don't have playgrounds. They have 'play areas' or squares in which the children play soccer or other games, but no playgrounds with monkey bars or slides.

Another example of a donor getting it completely wrong was the time I met Pamela Anderson. She was on a 'humanitarian tour' after the earthquake. I got a chance to meet with her and spend the better part of an hour introducing her to the group of young adult Haitian volunteers I was working with as we organized games and activities for the younger children in the camp, both for fun and educational purposes. After our brief meeting Pamela was moved by the work being done and asked me what can she do, what do the children of Haiti need. Her and her children back in the United States wanted to donate surf boards. SURF BOARDS! I politely encouraged her to donate money that can be invested into the local economy, but the surf boards really bothered me and has stayed with me. Within the IDP camp there were tens of thousands of children. Was she expecting to provide that many surf boards? How would she choose which few children would receive the surf boards? And if she did succeed in providing a few surf boards, where were the

kids supposed to use them? We were in the middle of Port-au-Prince in a IDP camp with minimal access to clean drinking water let alone access to a water source to go surfing. This story, while not specific to NGOs, shows the ineptitude of some donor attitudes that do not take the opportunity and effort to properly understand and research the issues facing the people they are serving.

And finally, Lewis (2007) writes about the often-misunderstood ambiguity of how NGOs can come in all shapes and sizes, and can mean all things to all people which can ultimately affect their legitimacy at the local level. The NGO organization, as Lewis (2007) notes, has become a viable form of business that can be so irresistible to some individuals that a broad assortment of celebrities, missionaries, and miscreants are creating their own NGOs in the belief that they are performing good, but not realizing the unintended, often detrimental, consequences of their actions. Lewis's interpretation of NGOs coming in all shapes and sizes and founded by all sorts of individuals with different motivations suggests the widely practice idea of 'poverty tourism' or 'aid vacations'. And, yes while the service provided can be beneficial to the community by working in and with the community once on the ground, the more beneficial outcome tends to be for the volunteer since they get to go back home after their trip leaving the Haitians to wonder when the next group will come and from where. These types of projects are often short-lived, limited in scope, and last just a couple of weeks. And, they are always easy to spot in the airport as they tend to arrive in large numbers wearing the same colorful t-shirts with catchy slogans as if to announce to the world they are good people here to do good work.

### **Undermining Government Capacity in Haiti**

NGOs have also been known to undermine the local government capacity, and in some cases even other NGO efforts. NGOs often have greater capacity and more access to funding than the Haitian government. Fears of corruption have also caused foreign donors to bypass the Haitian government and funnel financial aid and material assistance directly through NGOs believing this is the better alternative. As a result, the Haitian government is continually undermined and has had little chance to develop the human or institutional capacity needed to deliver services to the Haitian people. The Haitian people, instead, have learned to look to NGOs, rather than the government, for provisions of essential services. NGOs have become ‘gap fillers’ as they deliver basic human services to the Haitian people. Over time this erodes the government’s ability to act as a credible provider of resources to their own people.

NGOs are also often in direct competition with other NGOs, as well as, government agencies when providing basic services. This is in part is directly related to access for additional funding and the NGOs accountability as discussed above. Cooley and Ron (2002) explain how Western donors tend to follow a market-based approach to aid which assumes that the more NGOs that exist the better. This competition and marketization of aid-funding is believed to boost efficiency, cut waste, curb corruption, and provide greater opportunity for emerging NGOs to become international players (Cooley and Ron, 2002). In reality though, it can create ‘turf wars’ between competing NGOs that will offer competing services, sometime contradictory service which again reinforce the idea of accountability, and may present competing NGOs in a negative manner to the other communities in an effort to gain further support of their own NGO in a certain community



while undermining the work of a competing NGO. (Schuller, 2009). This lends itself to lead directly to increased ambiguity in the locals understanding of the NGO (Lewis, 2001). Lewis (2001) goes on to describe how NGOs have become to mean all things to all people which further increases their ambiguity and an increase in local the community's dependence on the NGO to provide for their basic needs. Local community's will begin to look first to NGOs to provide service and secondly to their government reinforcing a cycle of need and dependency on the NGOs and further undermining the government's ability to garner trust and accountability with its own people.

### **The 'Brain Drain' and 'Humanitarian Gentrification'**

One consequence of shifting development responsibility and funding to NGOs is the 'brain drain' from the Haitian government to the organizations funded by international donors (Kristoff, 2010). In Haiti, the government has been unmeasurably weakened by this 'brain drain' of the public sector as NGOs are able to offer higher salaries than what the government could offer (Schuller, 2009). NGOs have the ability to recruit and attract prospective Haitian staff away from the Haitian government positions by offering higher wages, benefits and better working conditions (Kristoff, 2010). The best and most educated Haitians are often enticed away from working for the government which has resulted in further hindering the Haitian governments abilities to develop and maintain institutional systems of their own. NGOs are directly competing with the Haitian government for scarce resources and often winning that battle.

In this case the resource is human resource, but in a country like Haiti where the education is seriously lacking, a highly educated individual can be considered a scarce

resource. According to Schuller (2009), in August of 2004 of the 145 job advertisements in Haiti's oldest and largest daily newspaper nearly three-fourths were for NGOs and international aid agencies. It is further estimated that foreign NGOs provide up to one-third of all jobs within the formal economy (Schuller, 2009), and this number has surely grown since the 2012 earthquake and arrival of countless additional NGOs.

Another way NGOs can dislocate the economy is by creating a ripple of 'humanitarian gentrification'. The continued presence of NGOs since the mid-1990s and their hiring of staff (mainly expatriates) with salaries several times greater than the Haitian governments pay scale, put a great deal of pressure on the local housing markets across Haiti. Schuller (2017) refers to this housing pressure as 'humanitarian gentrification'. NGO expatriate staffers with more purchasing power would find accommodation in upscale areas which would push out Haitian middle-class as landlords raise rental prices to the market price that the NGOs were willing and able to pay. In turn the middle-class Haitian professionals would be pushed out and forced into mixed income neighborhoods which in turn push out the poorer working-class Haitians into shantytowns. Klarreich (2012) writes about an NGO that was paying US\$1,850 a month for a four-bedroom home complete with three security guards. This same NGO, according to Klarreich (2012), was offering tent-camp dwellers a one-time relocation gift of US\$500 to be paid directly to their landlord for a year's rent.

## **IV. A PATH FORWARD**

This section presents a discussion of possible solutions to the seemingly counterproductive nature of NGOs operating in Haiti. Between January 1996 and January 1997 Alice Morton coordinated a study of the NGO sector within Haiti in coordination with the World Bank and Government of Haiti (Morton, 1997). One of the significant outcomes of Morton's (1997) study was a list of recommendations for the continued operation of NGOs within Haiti. Many of these recommendations continue to have relevance twenty years later as evidenced in the more current studies and writings of other scholars such as Brennan (2014), Edmonds (2012), Farmer (2003), Johnson (2010), Schuller (2009).

Using Morton's (1997) study as a baseline, this section will unpack some of her recommendations, namely; suggestions for the enhancement of institutional capacity, the increased participation of beneficiaries, the reduction in the duplication of efforts, the development of a monitoring system, and finally to promote increased collaboration and partnerships. With greater loyalty to their donors, many NGOs tend to prioritize demands from above rather than requests from below, the recipients of aid. As a result, the provided aid often fails to serve local needs and incorporate local institutions and infrastructure (Brennan, 2014). This section will offer recommendations of a path forward that puts the recipients of aid at the forefront and looks to incorporate local institutions and infrastructure.

**Enhance Institutional Capacity**

Morton's (1997) main emphasis and first recommendation for developing a positive path forward for Haiti was for all actors working toward Haitian development to recognize the need for an increase in institutional capacity. The enhancement of institutional capacity according to Morton (1997) should be focused on the NGO and understand the limitations that each individual NGO possesses. As Morton (1997) suggests the coordination, personal management, stakeholder analysis, gender analysis, cost-effectiveness assessment, fundraising and beneficiary assessment are all areas that many of NGOs operating in Haiti could be strengthened and benefit from additional technical assistance and training. The trainings to be developed should go beyond broad topics, as Morton (1997) contends, but rather specific to the sector and socioeconomic issue being addressed by the NGO. While Morton (1997) does not specify who or what entity should provide the NGO training it is clear that the emphasis should be on greater coordination and collaboration between NGOs themselves, as well as the Haitian government.

While it is important to strengthen the capacity of the institution to deliver services, it should be noted that the quality of that service should be strengthened along with the ability to provide said service. Therefore, the enhancement of the technical capacity of NGOs should incorporate the Haitian government to work together to build and strengthen institutional capacity. Morton (1997) discovered in her study that the quality of some services is very well thought out and delivered, and there are some specialists that have received high level training in public health or education, for example, that are able to do a good job and to train others. However, Morton (1997) continues by pointing out that due

to limited funding and limited access to highly trained specialists, there is a steep drop-off in the quality of services available within the country.

### **Participation and Transparency is the Key**

One of the more favorable solutions offered by scholars and aid practitioners is to recognize a greater active role and participation of the recipients and beneficiaries at the local level (Chimiak, 2014; Collier, 2007; Deaton, 2013; Farmer, 2005; Lewis, 2007; Morton, 1997; Szporluk, 2009). This active participation in decision making, whether through a process of voting or active dialogue and engagement, with the local community is the cornerstone of accountability and transparent practices, and a prime example of good governance (Szporluk, 2009). If NGOs are to be promoting ‘good governance’ and accountability shouldn’t then these practices of local community participation be the foundation for all the work being conducted at the local level. As Chimiak (2014) points out, the participation of the recipients of aid yields better results than an outside NGO stepping in and performing development projects based on initiatives that are developed by doors using a preconceived idea of what is needed. There are also examples of alliance organizations working toward defining a transparent set of standards and best practices for NGOs to follow, like in the case of the organization InterAction and their published Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) Standards which is an attempt to define a financial, operational and ethical code of conduct for NGOs to follow ([www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org)).

There are also examples of NGOs working toward s participatory and inclusive approaches. One example of this effort already taking place in Haiti is the work of Partners in Health (PIH) and their effort to build a public hospital in the city if Mirebalais that is

owned by the Haitian government. Even the Haitian government owns the hospital they can't run it, but not for lack of passionate and caring Haitians wanting to do the right thing. The Haitians are void of the human and financial resources needed to run the hospital. So, PIH has agreed to run the hospital both logistically and financially while also training Haitian doctors and nurses until a point when the Haitian government has developed the capacity to take over. Another example within Haiti is the organization J/P HRO that follows a model of employing and promoting Haitians within the organization's workforce to carry out reconstruction efforts and housing projects. J/P HRO also maintains a community center and local school through which they administer community programming developed and run by Haitians. By listening to the needs of Haitians and offering community education on topics developed by the community, they are following a participatory model (Stoecker, 2005).

Another example of participatory efforts being undertaken by an NGO that could easily be translated to Haiti is the work being done by Spark Microgrants in Uganda and Rwanda. Spark's approach towards community development involves six key phases designed to bring community members together to plan towards a shared future for their own community. The Spark approach begins by employing and training local university graduates to become community facilitators. Facilitators reach out to the infrastructure-poor villages and engages the communities in a six-month planning process. Together they set the goals and expectations of the project. Spark then teaches the community how to develop metrics for project success including an operational plan, budget, risk assessment and sustainability plan to ensure the longevity of the project. The implementation phase

of the project is carried out by the community members themselves. In this way Spark is able to ensure local ownership of the project and buy-in from the community as a whole. Spark is able to award a one-time microgrant of up to US\$10,000 to assist the communities in realizing their project.

Szporluk (2009) in his critique of accountability writes a lot about the idea of participation and democratic accountability as a solution to address the challenges of accountability and governance. The community and NGOs together should have a say over what decisions are made, and not the NGOs alone as Brown and Moore (2001) advance. Brown and Moore (2001) write about accountability relationships between four different types of stakeholders as well as three different types of programs that NGOs typically partake in. The four types of stakeholders are the donors, beneficiaries, NGO staff, and NGO partners. And, depending on which program the NGO is operating, whether it be in service delivery, capacity building, or public advocacy, will determine which relationships between stakeholders takes on the most significance (Brown and Moore, 2001). While Brown and Moore (2001) may be correct in their statement about the importance of different stakeholders and the different development activities NGOs may partake in, the primary focus and always most important stakeholder should be the communities being affected by the work being done by the NGOs.

Contrary to the participatory method of development, Cleaver (2002), contends that there is little evidence to suggest the long-term effectiveness of participation of the beneficiaries. He argues that while the evidence for effectiveness can be supported on a small scale, the evidence regarding larger scale empowerment and sustainability is more

reliant on and affected by the rightness of the approach and process (Cleaver, 2002). However, to counter Mr. Cleaver's remarks, it is in the approach and process of participatory practices that I am arguing directly counters the issue of accountability.

### **NGO Regulation and Monitoring**

Another large component of developing a path forward is in the regulation of NGOs operating within the country. Haiti is considered by many to be a 'Republic of NGOs' (Dupuy, 2010; Edmonds, 2012; Schuller, 2009). NGOs have been criticized in Haiti for carrying out uncoordinated and political agendas as they adhere to their donors (Zanotti, 2010). This influx of NGOs within the country has been detrimental to the establishment of institutional capacity of the Haitian government. The best policy for addressing institutional capacity may be to shift the focus of funding and support away from large international NGOs and direct support to the Haitian government, and instead look to work with and support local Haitian grassroots efforts in collaboration with larger international NGOs.

According to Edmonds (2010), Haitian grassroots organizations and Haitian civil society have a deep history in Haiti to bring forth change. The focus on supporting large NGOs coincides with the market-based development approach as many smaller grassroots organization can't compete for funds on an international level. Participation of Haitian organizations can yield better results than outside NGOs stepping in and performing development projects based on preconceived initiatives developed by donors with a predetermined idea of what is needed.



However, prior to developing a system to measure success there must be a system developed and implemented that monitors the presence of NGOs, where they are operating, and what services they are providing. Morton (1997) suggests in her study that this system should at first be streamlined as much as possible to make the process easy for compliance. The Haitian Government would need to implement a process that any operating NGO must register with the government and disclose certain information on annual basis in order to continue legally operating within the country. Information to be reported would include the organization name and mission under which they operating, the geographical location with the country and list any local partners if the NGO originates from outside the country. Morton (1997) suggests that a monitoring system should also include NGOs to report on by-laws, organization officers and funding arrangements.

### **Duplication of Efforts**

The Haitian government will need to establish and follow their own development goals, policies and procedures, this process can be assisted by foreign entities, but those entities need to also learn when it's time to walk away and allow the Haitians to govern themselves. If foreign powers continue to meddle in Haitian policy then the Haitians will never learn how to implement policy on their own. It will be accompanied by some failure, but in time they will learn just as all current developed countries did for themselves. The Haitian people can alleviate poverty themselves by borrowing ideas and institutions from the West when it suits them to do so. And, when they no longer ask for assistance we should back out and allow them the space and freedom to act upon the new information they have received.

Morton (1997) suggests that the creation of a social service plan that would be monitored by social service committees could help to mitigate NGOs following their own agenda rather listening to and implementing projects that originate from the Haitian communities. As these social service committees become stronger they will be able to encourage more communities to follow an adopted regional development plan as opposed to the current practice of the acceptance of free goods and services being provided. In the United States, at least in Vermont from my own experience, public funding is often awarded only if the proposed project is in line with a regional developed plan, as well as an adopted municipality plan. If the local Regional Development Corporation (RDC) does not support the proposed project then it is far less likely to receive public funding. The challenge of course is implementing regional development plan and for the Haitian government or local regional governments to follow through with the plan.

### **The No AID Alternative**

Deaton (2013), in his book *The Great Escape*, purposes a solution that does not involve aid or development interventions. Moyo (2009) in her book *Dead Aid* offers a similar solution for aid in Africa. What the two scholars purpose is the solution of simply walking away. As Deaton (2013) asks the simple question, “Who put us in charge?” What he is arguing and calling attention to is that we ought to let developing countries develop on their own and not stand in their way. The rich, developed countries are continuously funding NGOs that are increasingly becoming more and more unaccountable to local communities as competition for funding increases. These NGOs are undermining capacity of local governments by providing services that should be a provided by the in-country government. As Deaton (2013:312) writes “negative consequences are pretty much

guaranteed when we try. And when we fail, we continue on because our interests are now at stake, it is our aid industry.” No one provided aid to Northern developed countries as they moved from a state of less developed to their current state of development. The fact that we continue to provide aid and pretend that it is helping, Deaton (2013) argues, is merely adding insult to injury, and needs to stop.

Aid in its current form is doing more harm than good (Deaton, 2013). NGOs should act as capacity builders and assist the government and other local NGOs in upgrading their services rather than simply providing the routine services (Lewis, 2001). Lewis (2001) goes on to write that NGOs should work towards complimenting the governments work and creating a more useful synergy by reinforcing one another’s objectives. However, the key to success is in transparency, a participatory approach, and knowing when to walk away to let the Haitians do it for themselves.

## **CONCLUSION**

One of the major criticisms of NGOs in their contribution to international development is that they are often labeled as insufficiently accountable, due in large part to their perceived loyalty to their donors over their beneficiaries. Suleiman (2013) sums it up as he maintains that NGOs can be found at times to be self-serving, anti-democratic and strictly in pursuit of their next funding source, thereby being too preoccupied to concern themselves with promoting good governance practices or accomplishing the socio-economic goals of the programs and projects they are administering. NGOs should not only be held accountable by the local community but should also invite community members to participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the work being done in their community (Szporluk, 2009).

Most of the work carried out by NGOs takes place outside of their country of origin, and while NGOs obtain funds from various sources, there is no direct requirement or obligation for the NGOs activities to be approved by the communities in which they work. As a result, the individual communities may have little or no influence over which NGO works in their community and on what sort of project the NGO undertakes. Ray Jennings of US/AID did declare in 2000 that participation of the local community should inform and define the goals of the necessary institution-building activities to be undertaken and encourage accountability to the public, not to the donors and governments.

A new approach for addressing extreme poverty in Haiti must be rooted in a different set of values and beliefs; a different outlook that puts morality, humanity, equality and the environment at the forefront. A new development path that is not based on a growth

economy but focused on true sustainable development goals, not a constant push for economic growth, but a focus on human well-being and environmental conservation. For decades the international community and NGOs have bet on big-ticket, donor-friendly development projects that tell good stories. The North, including the U.S. and Western Europe, is an expert at pouring aid into poor countries; it's less adept at teaching poor countries how to stop being poor. (Goldberg, 2010)

While many of the NGOs in Haiti are providing essential services to the people of Haiti, they are still nothing more than a band-aid solution because when these organizations eventually leave the Haitian people will unavoidably be more dependent than ever. Easterly (2006) writes in his book *The White Man's Burden* that the reason why international aid has failed is because the aid agencies plan on a small-scale to tackle large problems, such as total poverty eradication. The problem is that there is no small-scale answer to such a large problem as poverty eradication. The SDGs put forward by the UN are phenomenal goals to strive for to eradicate poverty. The problem is not in the solution but in the path to the solution.

To develop a path forward, the factors of development that lead to resource depletion, environmental degradation, and climate change needs to be broken if development is to be truly to be sustainable. There must be a radical shift in thinking and approach to implementation that moves away from a growth economy and promotes a model that ultimately work towards making NGOs irrelevant as development goals are increasingly met.

In conclusion, the current system of funding NGOs to carry out the work that should be provided by the local governments is creating a system that is counterproductive and creating more harm than good. It is a system that is reinforcing a cycle of dependency and not allowing the countries to develop on their own, under their own political and economic structures because the system deprives the government the ability to do it on its own. There is a genuine lack of accountability on the part of NGOs to the communities in which they work, and furthermore the NGOs are undermining the efforts of the local governments by enticing government staff away from government employment and providing basic human services that should otherwise be the responsibility of the government. This system of aid has become muddled. In order to bring about a development model which can really help and build capacity with local governments, NGOs should work towards making themselves unnecessary.

Ultimately the question we should be asking ourselves is what kind of world do we want to live in and create for future generations? And, there are really only two answers, two paths, we can choose. We could stay the current course, and do nothing which will in the end lead to increasing environmental destruction, economic failures, and social divisions. Or we could choose to work towards a new vision, a new paradigm, by providing opportunity for developing nations to become self-sufficient to determine their own development path, which is the path I have tried to take throughout this paper. By taking a critical look at the increasing extreme poverty experienced in Haiti we can hopefully better inform ourselves of our missteps of the past in an effort to better guide and change our decisions for the future.

We do have the ability to end poverty as we know it within the timeframe of our generation, like Jeffery Sachs claims in his book *The End of Poverty*, but where Sachs (2005) fails is that we cannot continue to develop and enforce the same strategies and policies that have been shown to fail in the past with the hope they'll succeed in the future. Just as Haiti was beginning to recover from a long brutal history of first colonialism then ruthless dictatorships, globalization policies have impeded the Haitian people's opportunity to build the necessary infrastructure required to heal themselves (Diaz, 2012).

Poverty is not an individual failing to be blamed on the inadequacies of a single government, culture or society, but, is instead, a consequence of structural inadequacies that are imposed upon that government or society, hindering their ability of self-sufficiency which would allow for self-determination. The old strategies for addressing poverty and development have rested on a carefully formulated model that reflects a preferred set of ideologies, traditions, agendas, and policies, whereas a new approach to poverty alleviation must put in place a set of policies and agendas that reflects the current realities of the world with a vision toward the future. The first responsibility of development workers, politicians, policy creators and activists is to recognize that a world that is satisfying to us can at same time be a world which is utterly devastating to others (Farmer, 2005).

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