

CSI Strategic Planning and University Partnership: Brief on Initial Findings

Introduction

This report serves as a brief summary of research into the planning institutions and university systems in the South Department of Haiti undertaken by Sophonie Joseph on behalf of the Center for Sustainable Urban Development (CSUD). Overall, this work is motivated by the recognition that one of the key aims of CSI should be to support and build local planning and knowledge producing institutions. It is widely recognized that for any society to become resilient to shocks such as natural disasters and move towards sustainable development, it must have robust planning capacities and institutions and the people and resources to make these institutions work well (Olshansky and Chang 2009). One aspect of this is the importance of moving towards a situation where the country produces its own planning professionals in adequate numbers and with locally-relevant skills.

With this in mind, the purpose of this work is threefold: 1) to learn about local economic development and urban and regional planning processes, collect existing plans in the region and get preliminary information on these plans including how they were produced and any implementation issues, 2) learn about the opportunities for CSI to engage and collaborate with institutions of higher education and 3) explore the way institutions of higher learning can be incorporated into planning processes.

Methodology

This research began in New York City in June 2011 and then continued in Haiti from July to August 2011 primarily in the Côte Sud region. CSUD identified key actors in the region, Port au Prince and diaspora involved in planning and higher education and then systematically set out to gather contacts, plans and conduct semi-structured interviews with a view to gaining insight into institutional dynamics and challenges as well as opportunities. We formally interviewed 43 individuals and had informal conversations with 12 individuals representing 29 different institutions.¹ Two locales were also selected, Port Salut & Potapiman, to conduct a brief but deep analysis of their respective planning processes and plans. In addition, we spoke to a number of citizens to understand their perspectives and concerns and knowledge, including of the CSI initiative. This work was meant to be preliminary to a larger and more thorough study that is ongoing.

Key Findings

Haitian Planning: Law versus Practice

The first key finding is that a substantial gap exists between the planning processes as defined by law and what happens in practice. Many interviewees from within Haiti's planning system noted that according to the law, the Haitian planning process is outlined as a bottom-up approach.² Planning should begin with assessments of community needs at the lowest political jurisdiction,



the section-communale,³ by the members of the CASECs and the ASECs.⁴[3] The needs assessment information should move up the chain of governmental units until it eventually reaches the Presidential office where the budget would then be developed in accordance with local needs and appropriate funds would flow back down to the commune level. However, the highly decentralized system of government in Haiti that is in theory to play an important planning role is neither fully implemented nor is it funded, which creates disincentives to planning at a local level.

In practice, the Haitian planning system is characterized by a top-down approach that is often embedded in a patronage-based system of politics. The President usually sets the funding priorities. Projects, which do not align with national priority areas, are less likely to obtain funding since there is less funding available for non-priority areas. The projects that often get funding are linked to political objectives. In addition, to the presence of many donors working in parallel to each other, incentives exist for regional and local government entities to tailor their proposals to projects that are more likely to obtain funding and this undermines planning and long-term initiatives that represent local self-identified needs and priorities.

Our research found that six different national-level ministries are involved in planning activities on the regional and local levels.⁵ On the local level, the Ministry of the Interior and National Defense administers the commune and commune-sections, Commune-sections are the smallest, political jurisdictions. The mayoral office comprises three individuals, the mayor and two deputy mayors, and is the elected head of the commune level of local government. The Conseil des Sections Communales (CASEC) and the Assemblée des Sections Communales (ASEC) are the elected heads of the commune-section level of local government. The CASECs comprise three members. The ASEC's membership varies from five to nine members depending on the population density of the given section. Interviewees noted that the delineation of the responsibilities of the CASECs and ASECs is still unclear. Thus, their roles within decision making varies throughout the region and country based on the local context and political dynamics. Overall, this institutional situation leads to fragmented planning approach.

Many interviewees described the regional and local government planning bodies as largely information sharing and/or coordination conduits rather than strategic planning entities. The specific planning bodies that we reviewed in this study were selected because of their relevance to the situation within the Southern Department. They include the table⁶ system; the steering committees⁷; the watershed management committees⁸; local development councils; and community groups. Most do not have the political power or the financial capacity to implement a planning process* under the current Haitian government structure. Nevertheless, these existing platforms are important for sharing information and coordination and could support better planning processes.

* A "planning process" is defined as defined as the collection of participatory community input and technical data, analysis of this data, developing and costing of potential solutions to the identified problems, and initiation of project implementation.



Table System (System Tab)

The table system includes three Tables (consultative meetings) and two different levels of government. The Consultation Table⁹ and the Sector Table¹⁰ function on the departmental level. The Commune Table is supposed to function on the commune level, but in practice the Commune Table rarely exists.

The regional bureau of the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation administers the Consultation Table. The Consultation Table serves as a communication resource between key stakeholders (governmental units, NGOs and the private sector) to enable coordination of services and avoid duplication. Stakeholders are invited to monthly meetings to learn about what others are doing within the department. However, the Sector Tables do not make joint planning decisions and this works against an integrated development planning approach.

Sectoral Tables are administered by Regional Directors of thematic ministries, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture's Sectoral Table meets the last Thursday of every month but the Ministry of Health's Sectoral Table meets the first Tuesday of every month. People and institutions relevant to the ongoing problems are invited to discuss pertinent issues related to agriculture, i.e. various regional ministry directors, NGOs. Educational institutions' presence occurs on an as need basis.

Steering Committees (Komite Pilotaj)

The Komite Pilotaj is a temporary governing body. It is essentially a steering committee, a coordinating body setup to manage a given project. It is temporary by design.¹¹

Local Development Councils (Conseil Development Kominal/Seksyon Kominal)

The local development councils were initiated by FAES (Bureau of the Fund for Social and Economic Assistance) in some of their target communes.¹² A FAES representative noted that where these two councils, Conseil Development Kominal and Seksyon Kominal, are present, they have essentially replaced the Commune Table, but these councils tend to exist based on the willingness of the local mayor especially to be transparent.¹³

Foreign Aid and Interventions

Foreign entities such as NGOs and multi-lateral institutions often act in fragmented and non-transparent ways which contributes to fragmentation at the local level and can circumvent local and regional efforts at establishing long-term goals and undermine bottom-up approaches to participatory planning practice in Haiti. Donors often give small grants for short-term projects that undermine a longer term planning approach. One respondent noted, "Why plan for projects that one is not assured will obtain future funding?" Following this logic, planning practice in Haiti consists predominantly of short-term, project planning. However, there are ongoing



attempts to rectify this institutional dilemma. USAID's LOKAL program and FAES's "Plan Developmant Communautaire" program are two attempts to institutionalize systematic, local government-based planning processes.¹⁴

Universities in the Region and Potential Partnerships

CSUD researchers interviewed representatives from five higher educational institutions¹⁵ in the Côte Sud region. They face a range of problems that have also been documented by INURED, which also notes the "over-concentration of higher education in and around Port au Prince" and the importance of supporting these institutions (INURED 2010, 2). From a planning perspective, it is critical to support planning (and other) departments and curriculum and training to cultivate a cadre of planning professionals who have local knowledge and the skills to support the rebuilding of planning institutions in Haiti and have a range of knowledge about the environment, agriculture and other critical sectors. It is also important to connect existing programs and faculty to local government; the government needs capacity and expertise and the practical engagement is one of the best forms of education (Klopp, Ngau and Sclar 2011).

There have been intermittent instances of university involvement in planning processes via the Tab Depatmantal de Concertasyon¹⁶ and Tab Sektoryel de Agriculture meetings,¹⁷ as well as data collection and research of ongoing government activity for student theses. In the CSI target area, CSUD researchers found one case of a higher education institution's involvement in a planning process; the Centre de Techniques de Planification et d'Économie Appliquée (CTPEA), a Port-au-Prince based planning school, was directly involved in conducting a month-long community assessment and producing the Potapiman development plan.¹⁸

Higher education institutions in the South Department participate in current planning processes on an as-needed basis. Some academics noted the limited involvement of their institutions in planning processes and the lack of invitations to participate by government representatives, often because of limited conference room space.¹⁹ Lack of university interest in being involved in planning also stems from the reputation of planning processes as inefficient.²⁰ Overall, there is potential to better support universities, planning education and create linkages between universities and planning.

There are also a number of existing higher education resources, consortiums and one-to-one partnerships between Haitian higher education institutions and foreign universities. FOKAL's University Partnership's program exists to help build bridges between foreign universities searching for local, Haitian university partners.²¹ Three consortiums identified by CSUD researchers have already made significant headway with building transnational university partnerships.²² CSUD researchers identified one example of a one-to-one partnership within the Côte Sud region. The two institutional partners are City University of New York (CUNY) and the Public University of the South-Les Cayes (UPSAC). Although this particular relationship is relatively new, CUNY has undertaken preexisting university partnerships in the central and North of Haiti with other universities.²³ In the case of planning institutions, Centre de Techniques de Planification et d'Économie Appliquée (CTPEA) has a history of some successful



and some failed attempts to build one-to-one partnerships between itself, University of Quebec, University of the West Indies and University of Massachusetts-Boston. In short, there are burgeoning university partnership opportunities for CSI partners to get involved within in the near future; however, careful thought must be put into structuring these partnerships.

Preliminary Recommendations

These recommendations are written for CSI partners, administrators and staff involved in the planning for and implementation of CSI related projects. The following recommendations are preliminary. CSUD is writing two other detailed reports, one on strategic planning and another on university partnerships, that will be based on more thorough research and consultations in Haiti and will be ready by later this year. These will include broader recommendations on strategies and suggestions for reinforcing planning and higher education institutions and developing an approach that will distinguish CSI from past interventions.

For CSI Administrators and Staff's External Relations

1. *Be extremely careful and strategic about initial partnerships in the region. CSI must avoid being seen as captured by particular interests, especially with regards to any infrastructure or other concrete developments.* CSI should also consider how their investments in this region build on work that has already been completed by local actors. For example, some interviewees suggested that instead of using CSI funds to build a new visitors' center in Port Salut on leased, private land, CSI should use and improve the current publicly owned, un-used, beachfront, Beach Administration Building. Building the visitors' center on public land would be symbolically important. *CSI should ensure that its own infrastructure fits within a broader process of planning and community involvement.*

2. *Build on existing plans and planning processes to strengthen and support planning institutions in the South Department.* For example, at the Departmental level a Canadian consulting firm has already prepared a preliminary technical assessment of the region. This should be analyzed and built upon and possibly the firm should become a partner in the work since they have already begun an important regional planning initiative that appears respected by planning officials.

At the local level, a Potapiman preliminary community development plan exists but only Phase 1 was completed. The planning process stalled due to financial constraints and political infighting. CSI could explore:

- Using the community assessment data in the Potapiman preliminary plan to inform CSI and MVP internal and external planning activities;
- Reviving the remaining steps in Potapiman's planning process under the CSI-local government banner by validating the preliminary plan's community assessment data with local stakeholders;
- Under the MVP/CSI banner, making changes necessary to ensure the final Potapiman plan represents the community's most up to date needs. CSI can help the local, regional and national level government via the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation (MPEC) and Ministry of the Interior establish a process by which the plan can be



adjusted to continual changes on the ground. Continual changes are inevitable, as more interest will be generated in this area with the CSI project work underway. Planning is an ongoing process and plans go out of date fast. CSI can help by equipping local institutions to be prepared to frequently update their local plans; and

- Training staff to use negotiation and conflict resolution skills when working with the mayor's office and community groups since a coalition will need to be secured to support the planning processes both for CSI and for the broader government initiatives in the region.

3. *Choose institutional reinforcement and political coalition building practices that are more likely to withstand political party changes at all governmental levels, such as including those elected and appointed officials who may be in their position for the short-term as well as long-term career officials.* Devise strategies that create positive incentives for officials to be constructively involved. Otherwise, there is a chance that they will oppose the initiative.

4. *CSI partners (possibly CRS office in the short-term) should attempt to support the existing planning system including the Table system. CSI could generate goodwill by offering to share a large meeting space to increase attendance to the tab departmantal, which currently faces limited capacity.* The CSI's representative/liaison from the Regional Planning office in Les Cayes could help arrange this. CSI should also explore how to strengthen this office in other ways (access to plans and new ideas and expertise and training.)

5. *Communication/Public Relations Recommendations:*

- Translate website, brochures and technical reports into Kreyol, French and English. Consider creating local newsletters to update people locally who do not have Internet access.
- Publish new documents or announcements simultaneously in Kreyol, French and English; refocus the audience from simply the international donors by making data and information accessible to the government, community group leaders, and general population.
- Plug into the Haitian teledjol network (word of mouth), a system of dedicated community organizers or community health workers who are actively engaged in sharing programming information to the wider community through person-to-person interaction and public meetings. This will help circumvent the low literacy rate and lack of access to electricity, radio signals, phone signals, television signals and the Internet in many parts of the Cote Sud.
- In the mid-term, CSI could invest in expanding electric, telephone and radio service to the most remote areas of the CSI target area to serve as a means of communication with the wider population.
- In the long-term, communication via the Internet may become a possibility, however this would require significant investments in educational reforms and an intense literacy campaign to ensure accessibility to a representative sample of the population.
- Inform government authorities, at *all* scales, of projects within their jurisdiction. Information does not always transcend different levels of government.



- Request authorization from necessary government authorities at *all* scales, for projects within their jurisdiction.
- Employ a full-time staff member, preferably the Community Development Coordinator, who is responsible for keeping contacts, especially those made by transitory students or temporary contract workers, informed of the ongoing status of relevant activities and maintaining CSI's reputation within the community as a whole.
- A CSI representative, preferably the Community Development Coordinator, should begin attending all the tab departmantal de concertasyon and the tab sektoryel agrikol meetings on a monthly basis to share information, receive feedback, and recommendations for changes to CSI implementation strategies and to learn about the activities of other groups within the region. Once trust is built between these stakeholders over time, CSI could use these governing bodies as bridges for advancing institutional reform and capacity building.
- A CSI representative, preferably the Community Development Coordinator, should regularly attend the Komite Basant Versant in order to remain informed about their activities as well as to spread information about CSI programming and opportunities.

6. University Engagement

- Partner with INURED to get involved in its longitudinal research initiative.
- Partner with Centre National de Recherche et de Formation (CENAREF) on developing research capacity.
- Join the Consortium of Colleges and Universities for Rebuilding and Improving Higher Education in Haiti to avoid coordination problems and draw on its expertise.
- Use students' field experience requirement of agronomy programs, at UNDH, AUC & Seed Ministries, as an opportunity to share CSI program information and also to involve them in research and project work.
- Seek opportunities for researchers from CSI to work with the local educational institutions during their field visits and to provide public presentations jointly to the community on work when possible. Coordinate with FOKAL in this initiative.

For CSI Administrators and Staff's Internal Administration

1. *Survey evaluations for large CSI partner meetings:* One recommendation for strategic self-reflection on the CSI structure itself, developed after witnessing disputes during the July 4th pre-agricultural planning meeting and the agricultural planning meeting: CSUD recommends having meeting evaluation surveys of large group CSI partner meetings to test preferences for how a meeting should be run as well as ask for participants feedback/advice on how meetings should be held in the future. This is common CSUD procedure for our work and we find it very helpful.

2. Communication:

- Community development coordinator should play the role of community organizer and strategic planner by attending community meetings (i.e., komite pilotaj meetings/steering committee meetings; komite basin versant/watershed management committee meetings).



- Each CSI staff should also serve as a word of mouth information source about what CSI/MVP/HRI is and what it is doing in the region. For example, the drivers and other support staff are locals of the CSI target area. Locals ask them questions about the program; they should be prepared to provide a concise and informative response because that information will end up in the Haitian teledjol network.
- CSUD recommends future CSI group meetings be held simultaneously in English and Kreyol with specific translators set-aside for that express purpose. This means not having EI staff trying to translate or present critical, technical, information via their limited French or accented French that may be difficult for Haitians to comprehend.

Conclusions

These preliminary recommendations are meant to provoke further thinking and discussions on approach and strategy in working in Haiti. There will also need to be a more detailed analysis of the institutional issues around planning, higher education institutions, and questions of broader reform. CSUD will provide a stronger and more in-depth analysis in the coming months. In the meantime, we hope this is helpful.

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¹ The institutions represented include: CSI; Group Initiative Pour un Port-à-Piment Nouveau (GIPPN); Seed Ministries; South Department's Regional Bureau of the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation (MPEC); South Department's Regional Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture; South Department's Regional Bureau of the Environment; University of Notre Dame's Faculte de Agronomy (UNDH); Fond d'Assistance Economique et Sociales (FAES); Fondation Macaya; Konbit Pou Potapiman (KPP); Port Salut Hotel Proprietors (3); The Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED or the Institute); Centre National De Recherche et de Formation (CENAREF); Société d'Aménagement et de Développement (SODADE); City University of New York (CUNY); New York University (NYU); American University of the Caribbean in Haiti (AUC); Deputy Mayor of Port-a-Piment; Fondation Connaissance et Liberté / Fondasyon Konesans Ak Libète (Foundation for Knowledge and Liberty (FOKAL)); Il-a-Vache mayor, AZEC & CAZECs; Coteaux Mayor; Port Salut Mayor; Organization for



the Rehabilitation of the Environment (ORE); Centre de Techniques de Planification et d'Économie Appliquée (CTPEA); Université Publique du Sud au Cayes (UPSAC); National level of MPEC

² (S.-P. Joseph, 2011; Wah, 2011)

³ In French, section-communale.

⁴ The Conseil des Sections Communales (CASEC) and the Assemblée des Sections Communales (ASEC) are the two governing bodies at the section-communale level.

⁵ These ministries include the Ministry of Interior and National Defense; Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation; Ministry of Public Works, Transportation and Communications; Ministry of Finance; and the Ministry of Tourism.

⁶ "Tab" in Haitian Creole

⁷ "Komite Pilotaj" in Haitian Creole

⁸ "Komite Basin Versant" in Haitian Creole

⁹ "Tab Depatmantal de Konsetasyon" in Haitian Creole

¹⁰ "Tab Sektoryel" in Haitian Creole

¹¹ (S.-P. Joseph, 2011)

¹² In the CSI area, this includes the communes with development plans implemented by FAES: Coteaux and Aquin.

¹³ (J. Joseph, 2011)

¹⁴ (Eustache, 2011; J. Joseph, 2011)

¹⁵ SEED Ministries; Université Publique du Sud au Cayes (UPSAC); The Faculté d'Agronomie of the Université Notre Dame d'Haïti (UNDH); and American University of the Caribbean in Haiti (AUC).

¹⁶ This term is explained on page X.

¹⁷ This term is explained on page X.

¹⁸ (Dorval, 2007)

¹⁹ (S.-P. Joseph, 2011)

²⁰ (Voltaire, 2011)

²¹ (Hudicourt-Barnes, 2011)

²² The three consortiums include: The Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED or the Institute); Centre National De Recherche et de Formation (CENAREF); and the Consortium of Colleges and Universities for Rebuilding and Improving Higher Education in Haiti.

²³ (Pierre-Louis, 2011; Plaisir, 2011)