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The Haitian State and Haiti's Vulnerability Reduction Process

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Introduction

Traditionally, most scholarly dialogue concerning Haiti's faltering development has revolved around perspectives and frameworks devised by international aid agencies and their respective donor countries. This follow-up paper aims to shift the focus of discussion away from these international stakeholders and towards actors within the Haitian state itself. This entails looking at Haiti's development process from the vantage point of the Haitian state, more specifically from the perspective of the two most recent administrations, that of Alexandre Boniface (2004-2006), and Réne Préval (2006-2011). First, the paper will present the development frameworks of the two aforementioned administrations, Boniface's *Interim Cooperation Framework* (ICF), and Préval's, as summarized in two related documents: 1) *Programme-Cadre de Réforme de l'Etat: Modernisation Administrative et Décentralisation* (Program for Reforming the State: Administrative Modernization and Decentralization); and 2) *Document de Stratégie Nationale pour la Croissance et la Réduction de la Pauvreté* (DSNCRP-Document of National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty). Second, it will look at the potential of these frameworks to reduce vulnerability, and shed light, to a certain extent, on the state vs. private sector debate in terms of which entity has the ability to lead the development and vulnerability reduction processes in Haiti.

The 2004-2006 Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF)

The Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) is a development framework adopted by the interim government that followed the downfall of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in February 2004, as President of the Republic of Haiti. This development framework, approved by major

international donor agencies, was to be implemented during the two-year term of the interim government (2004-2006) led by Alexandre Boniface, as the then appointed President of Haiti, and Gerard Latortue, the de facto Prime Minister. The ICF was to signal a new era in Haiti in terms of economic recovery and prosperity (ICF 2004, p. iii).

Similar to the 1990s Strategy for Social and Economic Reconstruction (SSER)[1], the ICF was largely shaped by powerful donor agencies like the World Bank and USAID. Though it was officially launched by the Haitian government in April 22, 2004, the ICF process was primarily dictated by international donor agencies at an informal donors meeting held in Washington, D.C. by the World Bank (WB) in March 23, 2004 (p. 6). According to its architects, the ICF departed from previous development frameworks implemented in Haiti by addressing many of their previous shortfalls.

One of the insights of the ICF is its acknowledgment of the fact that the Haitian state has been systematically weakened by previous development policies. Indeed, the ICF designers acknowledged a lack of coordination, consistency, and strategic vision in the donors' interventions. They basically argued that "the donors have often set up parallel project implementation structures that weakened the State, without, however, giving it the means to coordinate external aid, and improve national absorptive and execution capacities" (p. 5). They further argued that "recourse to the private sector or to civil society has become routine, contributing to a further weakening of the civil service" (p. 5), and thus blamed international donors for weakening the Haitian state while empowering the private sector.

[1] The SSER was the development strategy promoted by the Aristide government in the context of Aristide's return to power in 1994.

To address the flaws of previous development policies, The ICF articulated the key priorities for the Haitian state around four strategic axes: "1) strengthening political governance and promoting national dialogue; 2) strengthening economic governance and contributing to institutional development; 3) improving access to basic services; 4) promoting economic recovery" (p. xii).

The strengthening of political governance and the promotion of national dialogue consisted of working toward the restoration of public security and basic liberties, national reconciliation and dialogue, free access to law and justice, fighting against impunity, and the holding of free and transparent elections.

In terms of strengthening economic governance and institutional development, the ICF called for an efficient and credible budget, the modernization of the management of public enterprises in key sectors, the strengthening of institutional or state capacities, the implementation of decentralized policies, and the establishment of an Independent *Anti-Corruption Unit.*

When it comes to improving access to basic services, the ICF promoted the development of a strategy for humanitarian aid and post-disaster rehabilitation that takes into account the strengthening of national and local authorities' capacities to better categorize and assist vulnerable groups, and assess social conditions. The ICF put a special emphasis on health care and educational access. According to the framework, the interim government should "restart operations in the main hospitals, extend the Minimum Package of Services to 2,500,000 Haitians by developing 15 health districts, and strengthening the Ministry of Public Health and Population's capacities for management and coordination" (p. xv). To facilitate access to quality

education, the ICF recommended that the government, in the short term, "organize, manage and finance, school supplies" (p. xv).

Lastly, the ICF proposed a set of measures, which, according to the framework, have the potential to lead to economic recovery. These measures include macroeconomic stability, the rehabilitation of vital infrastructures, the strengthening of agricultural activities, the protection of the environment, and, above all, the development of the private sector. Conforming to IMF policies, the ICF called for an increase in fiscal revenues, a reduction in discretionary expenditures, transparency in the management of the public sector, and the establishment of a plan for the clearance of external arrears and debt service. According to the ICF, any sustainable effort for the economic recovery of Haiti would always be challenged by the deterioration of the country's environment, its extreme poverty and social vulnerability, and its deficiency in terms of land-use management. In order to restore Haiti's environment, the framework recommends the substitution of wood and charcoal as sources of fuel to reduce the decline of land and natural resources, ameliorate risk, and promote effective disaster risk management (p. xiv).

On the other hand, the ICF considered the private sector as the engine of the economic recovery process or "the main provider of productive employment" (p. xiv). As a result, the framework recommended that the private sector, including small and medium-size enterprises and industries, be supported "through the creation of a recapitalization fund for businesses that were affected by the events[2] of February-March 2004, and a mutual guarantee fund for small companies for each of the small business professions, and by the injection of financial resources into the micro-finance system" (p. xiv).

[2] In February 2004 violent political events culminated in the downfall of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as President of the Republic of Haiti. During these events, many private businesses were burned out or sacked.

In summation, the ICF mainly focused on the necessity to reinforce or empower the Haitian state. It was followed by Preval's Program for Reforming the State and DSNCRP, which respectively call for the modernization of Haiti's administrative system and poverty reduction in the country.

Programme-Cadre de Réforme de l'Etat: Modernisation Administrative et Décentralisation (Programme-Cadre 2007-2012)

The Program for Reforming the State is the government document of reference in terms of reforming and modernizing the Haitian state. The Program distinguishes between two components of the process of reforming the Haitian state: administrative reform and decentralization. Before underscoring the governmental vision of reform, the Program identifies three major problems plaguing Haiti's administrative system, which are: a) an administration that poorly plays its role of public service provider b) an administration unable to promote a politics of proximity or decentralization c) a Civil Service that is extremely fragile and poorly oriented toward modernity (Programme-Cadre pp. 5-6).

A) According to the Program, Haiti's administrative institutions do not generally conform to their fundamental missions as set by Haiti's current legal framework, which is barely enforced because the country's regulatory framework is poorly developed. The document asserts that years of political instability have caused an important loss of technicians, which in turn has weakened the managerial and operational capacity of public institutions. As a result of this weakness, the services provided by public institutions are generally insufficient, inadequate, and of poor quality, thus many needs and services requested by the population and the private sector, are not taken into account. These

characteristics reveal the fact that organization at the level of technical services is not oriented toward efficacy (p. 5).

B) The Program asserts that there is a strong centralization of public administration in the capital city, Port-au-Prince. This extreme concentration has been detrimental to the public service structures established in different departments of the country, which have become purely nominal. The document further asserts that even the sectors of the public administration that can be considered decentralized haven't really done so in terms of their services because of the slow pace of the process. (p. 6).

C) The profile of the Civil Service is far from satisfying the exigencies of a modern and efficient administration. According to the Program, this situation is due, in large measure, to the fact that public institutions are filled with poorly qualified personnel and very few staff members with seniority, a result of the loss of qualified personnel associated with the country's various bouts of political instability. From the perspective of the Program, the principles of management underscored by the Haitian Constitution and the decree that revises the general statute of the Civil Service are poorly adhered to. To illustrate the traditional nature of Haiti's Civil Service, the Program mentions the fact that most recruitment has been done through personal recommendation rather than open contest.

Given the lamentable picture of Haiti's administrative system, the Program argues that the only way for this system to become a development tool for Haiti is through modernization, a process that should be driven by political leaders. From this standpoint, the Program lays out the vision and the institutional framework of the Préval administration in terms of reforming and modernizing the Haitian state.

Governmental Vision and Institutional Framework of the Reform

In his inaugural speech, President Préval identified two major orientations of his second term (2006-2011), which represent his vision of reform for the Haitian state. They are the construction of a modern state, which involves the reinforcement of democratic institutions, and the creation of favorable conditions for investment in order to generate wealth to the benefit of the population (p. 9). This vision was reinforced by Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis in his *Declaration de Politique Generale*[3] before the Haitian Parliament in June 2006. In his speech, Prime Minister Alexis pointed out three dimensions of the state's modernization process, which are the re-foundation of the state, the consolidation of democratic institutions, and the decentralization of the state (p. 10).

More specifically, the goals set by the government, in the context of reforming the Haitian state, consist of:

a) Renovating Haiti's legal framework and harmonizing the missions of Ministries and other governmental bodies

b) Reorganizing and restructuring the executive system to ensure better management and provision of quality services to the population

c) Distributing competencies and responsibilities between the center and the periphery

d) Developing and valuing the human resources of the Civil Service

[3]The *Declaration de Politique Generale* is a speech made by a designated Prime Minister before the Parliament with the objective to receive a vote of confidence from the Parliamentary institution and officially become Prime Minister with all the rights and duties pertaining to this function. This speech essentially represents a summary of the political program that the Prime Minister and his/her government propose to implement in the country if approved by the Parliament.

e) Improving working conditions by providing adequate material and informational means (p. 13).

To reach the aforementioned goals, the Haitian government created three entities, which are to guide the reform process of the Haitian state. These entities are: a) *Conseil Superieur de l'Administration et de la Fonction Publique* (Superior Council of Administration and Civil Service), b) *Office de Management et des Resources Humaines* (Office for Management and Human Resources), c) *Comite Interministeriel sur la Decentralisation* (Inter-ministerial Committee on Decentralization) (pp. 10-11).

The role of the *Conseil Superieur de l'Administration et de la Fonction Publique* is to look at the elaboration, application, and assessment of actions related to the modernization of public services, while the mission of the *Office de Management et des Resources Humaines* consists of assessing the performance of the Civil Service system through regulation and evaluation measures, thus ensuring the adaptation and harmonization of administrative structures and procedures (p. 11).

When it comes to the *Comite Interministeriel sur la Decentralisation*, which is the third entity created in the context of administrative modernization, its role is to follow-up on the national politics of decentralization in order to ensure better coordination of governmental action in this field. More particularly, this Committee determines orientations in the following:

1) Elaboration and follow-up on the national politics of decentralization and preparation of an implementation action plan

2) Preparation and organization of public debates on issues related to decentralization and local development

3) Preparation of a legal framework related to territorial collectivities and decentralization

4) Elaboration of administrative, regulative, fiscal and budgetary projects in the context of the national politics of decentralization

5) Coordination of activities related to decentralization and support to territorial collectivities (p. 11).

After presenting the governmental vision of state reform and the institutional framework developed toward this end, the Program for Reforming the State underlines what is called the Six Programmatic Axes, which basically represent a summary or the core reforms proposed by the second Préval administration (2006-2011).

As the core of state reforms, the six programmatic axes involve:

1) The reform of the Central Administration of the state, whic consists of shifting from a command to a development-oriented administration. This shift involves the clarification of the missions and objectives of the state; the reorientation of administrative culture towards merit, public service, control, and results; the organization of a rational public administration, stable and adapted to its missions; the revision of legislative and regulative dispositions, which should be completed, correctly implemented, and constantly evaluated; the extension of measures toward the goal of decentralization; the modernization and adaptation of public management methods; the improvement of the image of the state through a public administration that serves citizens in strict conformity to the laws of the Republic (p. 14).

2) The establishment of a new system of Civil Service, which involves developing a regulatory framework; an institutional framework for the management of human resources; the recruitment of Civil Service agents; establishment of an equal opportunity ethos in the Civil Service; career management of Civil Service agents; professional development of Civil Service agents; and the management of contractual public agents (p. 18).

3) The effective de-concentration of public services. This programmatic axe entails an assessment of the status of administrative de-concentration; the conceptual and technical framework of the process; the legal framework of de-concentration; the institutional framework of the de-concentration; the structures for the territorial coordination of de-concentration; the institutional reinforcement of the territorial levels of de-concentration; and activities related to professional development, motivation, and advocacy (p. 24).

4) The launching of the decentralization process, which involves the development of a conceptual framework; reinforcement of the legal framework; institutionalization of territorial collectivities and reinforcement of their capacities; reinforcement of assistance structures and capacities of the state; and a campaign of motivation and advocacy (p. 30).

5) The modernization of the physical aspects of the public services, requires the elaboration of normative dispositions for the construction and repair of public edifices; construction of administrative edifices in the context of the de-concentration; construction of edifices for the institutions that are guiding the reform process; the

furnishing and reinforcement of operational and technical capacities of administrative entities linked to the reform process (p. 33).

6) The sixth and last programmatic axe is the establishment of a system of e-governance, which aims at reinforcing the capacities of the administrative system to use information and communication technologies, as well as associated modern management practices. This programmatic axe involves the consolidation of the physical infrastructures of the administrative system; the development of software; and the development of an adapted institutional and legal framework (p. 38).

To sum up, the Program essentially calls for the modernization of Haiti's administrative system and the implementation of a decentralization process in the country. The Program represents one component of the Préval's development strategy. The other component of this strategy, which is the DSNCRP, basically underscores an approach to reduce poverty in Haiti.

Document de Stratégie Nationale pour la Croissance et la Réduction de la Pauvreté (DSNCRP 2008-2010)

The DSNCRP is intended to express the vision of the Préval administration (2006-2011) in terms of removing Haiti from the spiral of poverty and providing adequate answers to the aspirations of the Haitian people (pp. 12, 14). The document is divided into six parts. First, the DSNCRP makes what it calls a diagnostic of poverty and inequality in Haiti. The document asserts that the index of human poverty indicators for Haiti are alarming (p. 32). In 2001, the document points out, 56% of the Haitian population lived below the line of extreme poverty, which is US$1 per person and per

day. This situation of absolute poverty is sustained, the document argues, by increasing socioeconomic inequalities. According to the DSNCRP, 40% of the poorest of the Haitian population have access to only 5.9% of the country's income. More generally, the document asserts that 80% of the Haitian population owns only 32% of the country's income, while 2% of the richest own 26% of the total income of the country (DSNCRP p. 31).

Second, the DSNCRP underscores the vision of the government in terms of four challenges to be met by state and non-state actors by 2015. These challenges are:

a) Allow Haiti to catch up with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in terms of a more consistent social development.

b) Develop a modern and dynamic economy with a territorial and competitive basis in order to keep up with the rapid modernization of the economies of the Caribbean.

c) Profoundly renovate the public management system and activate the process of decentralization. Modernize the state so it can serve the citizenry as a whole.

d) Value Haitian competencies. This involves the valorization of Haiti's two major comparative advantages, which are its cultural creativity/historic patrimony and the Haitian Diaspora. From this standpoint, the development process rests on the potential for cultural creation and production. The cultural capital represents a major way to benefit from the globalization process (p. 15).

Third, the government identifies three pillars, which represent government priorities in terms of the strategy for growth and poverty reduction. These pillars are:

a) The vectors for growth, which involve the promotion of agriculture and rural development, the promotion of tourism, the modernization of infrastructures, the promotion of science/technology and innovation.

b) Human development, which depends on the significant improvement of the availability of opportunities, like social services, offered to the Haitian people to better develop their capacities.

c) Democratic governance, which entails the modernization of the state, establishment of a state of law and order and system of equitable justice, establishment of a functional judicial system, and development of a general climate of security.

Fourth, the DSNCRP underscores the government's macroeconomic policies, which essentially consist of reducing the inflation rate, moving the fiscal pressure from 10% to 14% in 2011, increasing state revenues through a reinforcement of the institutional capacities of the state and the fight against contraband. The state will ensure a better allocation of public expenditures (p. 20).

By the same token, the government proposes to undertake two steps to reduce poverty and stimulate growth in Haiti during the next decades. The first step, which goes from 2007-2010, consists of implementing two key IMF policies: the implementation of a macroeconomic framework based on an effective management of the economy with prudent budgetary and monetary policies, and the modernization of the agricultural

sector. The second step goes from 2010 to 2015. This step involves the quest for rapid growth, and what the government has called, the mastering of social development. This step, according to the government, aims at reducing both monetary poverty and human poverty (p. 16). Consistent with previous development policies, the government has advocated, in the second step, the development of agro-industry while granting priority to tourism and the manufacture industry (p. 16).

The fifth part of the DSNCRP addresses the implementation and the follow-up of the government's development strategy. The government distinguishes two levels of implementation: one called strategic, under the patronage of the President of the Republic, and the other called operational, under the leadership of the Prime Minister. According to the DSNCRP, these two levels include the principal partners of development, which are the private sector, the territorial collectivities, the international agencies, and the NGOs. The follow-up, which is about the physical and financial realization of the actions included in the DSNCRP, will be collectively ensured by the structures of the public administration, the de-concentrated structures, the local and public collectivities, the private sector, the donors, and the beneficiaries. The Ministry of *Planification et de la Coopération Externe* (MPCE- Planning Ministry) will ensure the coordination and follow-up on the execution of the DSNCRP (pp. 123-125).

The sixth and last part of the DSNCRP is about the cost and funding of the government's development strategy. According to the government, the implementation of this strategy, from 2007 to 2010, requires US$ 3,864.000.000 (p. 129). In terms of funding, the government proposes to mobilize internal and external resources. More specifically, the government proposes to use local resources, concessional loans, and

foreign direct investments to promote socioeconomic development and particularly poverty reduction. The government also relies on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) fund for the implementation of the DSNCRP (p. 131).

Assessment of the Boniface and Préval's Development Frameworks in Terms of their Potential to Reduce the Vulnerability Level of Haiti

The ICF has the merit of pointing out one of the main flaws of previous development strategies implemented in Haiti, which is the systematic weakening of the Haitian state. Given the crucial importance of a strong state in the implementation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures, a weak Haitian state can only witness passively the increased vulnerability of Haiti. In other words, it is unconceivable to systematically incorporate disaster risk reduction into development planning without the direct involvement of a strong state. As a result, the ICF is insightful in terms of advocating the need to reinforce the capacity of the Haitian state.

On the other hand, the ICF can be considered evasive in terms of which entity, state or private sector, should have the command of Haiti's development and vulnerability reduction process. While acknowledging that previous development strategies have extensively supported the private sector to the detriment of the Haitian state, the ICF failed to clearly define the leadership role of the state in the development process of Haiti and, by extension, in the process of vulnerability reduction. In other words, the ICF, while correctly calling for the empowerment of the Haitian sate, stumbles when it comes to pointing out the end purpose of state empowerment. It is understandable that both the Haitian state and the private sector have major roles in Haiti's development and resilience building process; however, the ICF is ambiguous in terms of which entity should mainly shape and drive this process.

When it comes to the Program for Reforming the State, it is discerning in terms of emphasizing the need to modernize Haiti's administrative system and to decentralize governance. Indeed, one of the lessons to learn from Haiti's January earthquake is the fact that the country needs an efficient administrative system capable of mitigating the adverse impacts of disastrous events. Among other things, the January earthquake revealed the archaic and weak nature of Haiti's administrative system, which failed to provide an effective response to the disaster. The earthquake also taught stakeholders that decentralization is a crucial need for Haiti. In fact, as the capital city, Port-au-Prince, collapsed under the devastating impacts of the earthquake, the rest of the country collapsed as well because of being completely dependent on Port-au-Prince. More specifically, as the earthquake hit Port-au-Prince, the whole country became paralyzed due to the fact that Haiti's public services were concentrated in the capital city. From this standpoint, the decentralization of public services in Haiti, for which the Program has called, is a necessity in that it has the potential to reduce the vulnerability of the country to disastrous events.

In addition to the Program, the DSNCRP addresses one of the key issues in the DRR literature, which is the relationship between poverty and disaster. Because poverty increases the likelihood of disaster, the DSNCRP is assumed to have the potential, through its poverty reduction strategy, to mitigate the occurrence of disaster. In other words, the extreme poverty situation of Haiti increases the vulnerability level of the country. By promoting poverty reduction, the DSNCRP is expected to reduce Haiti's vulnerability to disasters.

The question is now about the approach to be adopted to reduce poverty and, by extension, the vulnerability level of the country. While correctly calling for the modernization of the agricultural sector, the DSNCRP granted priority to tourism and the manufacture industry in

Haiti's development and poverty reduction process. There is no doubt that the development of Haiti entails a reinvigoration of all sectors of the Haitian economy. However, given past experiences,[4] and the fact that most Haitians[5] depend on agriculture for their living, it makes sense that the agricultural sector should be central to any development strategy that aims at reducing poverty in Haiti. In other words, the reinforcement of the agricultural sector, in terms of massive investment in this sector and measures to protect Haitian farmers, should be the priority in any viable development strategy for Haiti. In addition to serving the economic need of most Haitians, a developed agricultural sector has the potential to stop Haiti's massive rural migration, which has considerably increased the vulnerability of Haiti's urban areas, particularly Port-au-Prince, to natural disasters. More precisely, the DSNCRP has the virtue of calling for poverty reduction in Haiti. This is so because poverty reduction, as shown in the DRR literature, has an explanatory power when it comes to understanding and explaining vulnerability reduction. Nevertheless, the DSNCRP stumbles when it comes to implementing the right approach to poverty reduction. By omitting the agricultural sector in its underlying priorities, the DSNCRP,

[4] Previous development policies have discouraged any serious investment in Haiti's agricultural sector and have contributed, as a result, to decrease farmers' production. These policies have also exacerbated the problem of massive rural migration toward the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince while increasing considerably the vulnerability level of the capital city. In 1980, for instance, "Haitian farmers provided from 80 to 90 percent of national food needs, but today they produce only about 45 percent of what Haiti eats" (p. 5). It is argued that "declining prosperity in the countryside juxtaposed with the prospect of factory jobs in Port-au-Prince sparked a considerable movement from the land to the capital city in the early 1980s" (Maguire 2009, p. 6). By 1981, "the population of Port-au-Prince, which had been 506 thousand in 1971, reached 852 thousand and its annual rate of growth reached nearly 7 percent" (DeWind & Kinley p. 104). This massive rural migration trend toward the capital city is confirmed by the World Bank. Indeed, the bank asserts that "among the 1.97 million people added to urban areas between 1982 and 2003, 1.3, or two-thirds, went to the West region" where Port-au-Prince is located (World Bank 2007, p. 10). Built to absorb approximately half a million people, Port-au-Prince has a population that far exceeds this estimate. According to the 2003 Haitian census, which is the most recent, the current population of Port-au-Prince is 2,109,516 compared to the general population of Haiti, which is 9,923,243 (Institut Haitien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI), www.ihsi.ht).

[5] 60% of Haiti's 9.7 million people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for a living (Maguire p. 3).

as a development strategy, runs the risk of exacerbating the extreme poverty situation of Haiti and increasing, as a result, the vulnerability level of the country.

Conclusion

Lastly, the ICF, which is the development strategy promoted by the Boniface administration (2004-2006), can be credited for underscoring one of the main flaws of several development strategies implemented in Haiti since the 1980s, which is the systematic weakening of the Haitian state. The ICF's call for the reinforcement or empowerment of the Haitian state is insightful because only a strong state can systematically implement disaster risk reduction measures and considerably reduce the vulnerability level of Haiti. A strong state is critical to the establishment and implementation of a comprehensive disaster risk reduction platform, a necessary component of any truly sustainable development plan. Such a platform requires various legislative initiatives and institutional arrangements regarding environmental protections, natural resource management, land-use management, building and construction guidelines, education, and a whole host of other policies. These reforms require that the state take a lead in not only establishing the framework for such reforms, but also ensuring that policies once put in place, are enforced. Unfortunately, the ICF failed to point out or define the leadership function of the state. It failed, in other words, to specify the main attributes of the state in the development strategy that it attempted to promote. Though the private sector has a significant function to play in the development process, the state has the primary role in establishing the environment in which the private sector takes action. In order to ensure that private sector actions are aligned with the overall objective of sustainable development, states must have the capacity to provide incentives for private sector actors to engage in risk reducing activities, while also enforcing

regulations and sanctioning actions that threaten the safety and well-being of the country's population, and thus hamper sustainable development.

When it comes to the development strategy endorsed by the Préval administration (2006-2011), which is summarized in the Program for Reforming the State and the DSNCRP, it is both insightful and misleading. On the one hand, Préval's development strategy is prescient in terms of calling for the modernization of Haiti's administrative system and the implementation of a decentralization process. The recent earthquake that hit Port-au-Prince has shown the extent to which Haiti is in need of an effective public administration capable of providing adequate response to natural disasters. The earthquake has also shown the need to get rid of the so-called "*Republic of Port-au-Prince*" and promote the development of the country as a whole. Another important feature of Préval's strategy is its emphasis on the necessity to reduce poverty in Haiti. This is a critical point because poverty reduction has the potential to reduce the likelihood of disasters by reducing the vulnerability level of the country. On the other hand, it can be argued that the DSNCRP is misleading due to the fact that it left out of the priority box the agricultural sector, which is supposed to be the key sector in any viable poverty reduction strategy for Haiti. Past experiences have shown that the manufacturing industry, which is considered a priority in the DSNCRP, has failed to act as an effective substitute for a developed agricultural sector and to reduce the vulnerability of Haitians. More specifically, past development policies, which prioritized the manufacturing industry over the agricultural sector, have exacerbated the problem of massive rural migration toward Port-au-Prince and have contributed, as a result, to increase the vulnerability of the capital city. From this standpoint, it can be argued that the goal of poverty reduction, and by extension vulnerability reduction, pursued by the DSNCRP is right. However, the approach or methodology used to achieve this goal is wrong.

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