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Equipping the Next Generation of Christ Centered Leaders

Team Member Guide

Haiti Information

Haiti and the Dominican Republic - Country, Culture, and Information.

Haiti information from the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1982.htm>

Haiti¹



OFFICIAL NAME:

Republic of Haiti

Geography

Area: 27,750 sq. km. (10,714 sq. mi.); about the size of Maryland. Ile de la Gonave, Ile de la Tortue, and Ile a Vaches comprise Haiti's principal offshore territories.

Cities: *Capital*--Port-au-Prince (pop. 2 million). *Other cities*--Cap Haitien (pop. 240,000).

Terrain: Rugged mountains with small coastal plains and river valleys, and a large east-central elevated plateau.

Climate: Warm, semiarid, high humidity in many coastal areas.

¹ Information accessed via Web on September 2, 2008.

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*--Haitian(s).

Population (2006 census): 8.5 million.

Annual population growth rate: 1975-2001, 1.9%; 2.5% per year.

Ethnic groups: African descent 95%, African and European descent 5%.

Religions (2003 data): Roman Catholic 55%, Protestant 28%, voodoo (voodoo) practices pervasive.

Languages: French (official), Creole (official).

Education: *Years compulsory*--6. *Adult literacy* (2006 census)--56%.

Health: *Child mortality*--1 out of 8 children die before they reach the age of five. *Life expectancy*--56 years (women), 52 years (men).

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: January 1, 1804.

Constitution: March 1987.

Branches: *Executive*--President. *Legislative*--Senate (30 seats), Chamber of Deputies (99 seats). *Judicial*--Court of Cassation.

Economy

GDP (2007): \$6.1 billion.

Per capita GDP (2007): \$713.

GDP by sector (2006): *Agriculture*--27%; *industry*--8%; *services*--40%; *other*--25%.

Inflation (2007 est.): 8.1%.

Natural resources: Bauxite, copper, calcium carbonate, gold, marble.

Agriculture (27% of GDP): *Products*--coffee, mangoes, sugarcane, rice, corn, cacao, sorghum, pulses, other fruits and vegetables.

Industry (8% of GDP): *Types*--apparel, handicrafts, electronics assembly, food processing, beverages, tobacco products, furniture, printing, chemicals, steel.

Services (40% of GDP): Commerce, hotels and restaurants, government, tourism.

Trade (2006 est.): *Total exports f.o.b.*--\$494.4 million: apparel, mangoes, leather and raw hides, seafood, electrical. *Major market*--U.S. *Total imports f.o.b.*--\$1,548.3 million: grains, soybean oil, motor vehicles, machinery, meat, vegetables, plastics, petroleum.

Note: There are serious problems with national accounts in Haiti, including incomplete coverage and the questionable accuracy of raw data.

PEOPLE

Although Haiti averages about 302 people per square kilometer, its population is concentrated most heavily in urban areas, coastal plains, and valleys. About 95% of Haitians are of African descent. The rest of the population is mostly of mixed Caucasian-African ancestry. A few are of European or Levantine heritage. Sixty percent of the population lives in rural areas.

French is one of two official languages, but it is spoken fluently by only about 10% of the people. All Haitians speak Creole, the country's other official language. English and

Spanish are increasingly used as second languages among the young and in the business sector.

The dominant religion is Roman Catholicism. Increasing numbers of Haitians have converted to Protestantism through the work of missionaries active throughout the country. Much of the population also practices voodoo (voodoo), recognized by the government as a religion in April 2003. Haitians tend to see no conflict in these African-rooted beliefs coexisting with Christian faith.

Although public education is free, the cost is still quite high for Haitian families who must pay for uniforms, textbooks, supplies, and other inputs. Due to weak state provision of education services, private and parochial schools account for approximately 90% of primary schools, and only 65% of primary school-aged children are actually enrolled. At the secondary level, the figure drops to around 20%. Less than 35% of those who enter will complete primary school. Though Haitians place a high value on education, few can afford to send their children to secondary school and primary school enrollment is dropping due to economic factors. Remittances sent by Haitians living abroad are important in paying educational costs.

Large-scale emigration, principally to the U.S.--but also to Canada, the Dominican Republic, The Bahamas and other Caribbean neighbors, and France--has created what Haitians refer to as the Eleventh Department or the Diaspora. About one of every eight Haitians lives abroad.

HISTORY

The Spaniards used the island of Hispaniola (of which Haiti is the western part and the Dominican Republic the eastern) as a launching point from which to explore the rest of the Western Hemisphere. French buccaneers later used the western third of the island as a point from which to harass English and Spanish ships. In 1697, Spain ceded the western third of Hispaniola to France. As piracy was gradually suppressed, some French adventurers became planters, making Saint Domingue, as the French portion of the island was known, the "pearl of the Antilles"--one of the richest colonies in the 18th century French empire.

During this period, African slaves were brought to work on sugarcane and coffee plantations. In 1791, the slave population revolted--led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe--and gained control of the northern part of the French colony, waging a war of attrition against the French.

By January 1804, local forces defeated an army sent by Napoleon Bonaparte, established independence from France, and renamed the area Haiti. The impending defeat of the French in Haiti is widely credited with contributing to Napoleon's decision to sell the Louisiana territory to the United States in 1803. Haiti is the world's oldest black republic and the second-oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere, after the United States. Although Haiti actively assisted the independence movements of many Latin American countries, the independent nation of former slaves was excluded from the hemisphere's

first regional meeting of independent nations, in Panama in 1826, and did not receive U.S. diplomatic recognition until 1862.

Two separate regimes--north and south--emerged after independence but were unified in 1820. Two years later, Haiti occupied Santo Domingo, the eastern, Spanish-speaking part of Hispaniola. In 1844, however, Santo Domingo broke away from Haiti and became the Dominican Republic. With 22 changes of government from 1843 to 1915, Haiti experienced numerous periods of intense political and economic disorder, prompting the United States military intervention of 1915. Following a 19-year occupation, U.S. military forces were withdrawn in 1934, and Haiti regained sovereign rule.

From February 7, 1986--when the 29-year dictatorship of the Duvalier family ended--until 1991, Haiti was ruled by a series of provisional governments. In March 1987, a constitution was ratified that provides for an elected, bicameral parliament; an elected president that serves as head of state; and a prime minister, cabinet, ministers, and supreme court appointed by the president with parliament's consent.

The Embassy of Haiti is located at 2311 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-332-4090).

ECONOMY

Haiti remains the least-developed country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world. Comparative social and economic indicators show Haiti falling behind other low-income developing countries (particularly in the hemisphere) since the 1980s. Haiti now ranks 146th of 177 countries in the UN's Human Development Index. Haiti's economic stagnation is the result of earlier inappropriate economic policies, political instability, a shortage of good arable land, environmental deterioration, continued reliance on traditional technologies, under-capitalization and lack of public investment in human resources, migration of large portions of the skilled population, a weak national savings rate, and the lack of a functioning judicial system.

The [U.S. Embassy](#) in Haiti is located at:
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Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Telephone: 011 (509) 22 29 8000

Web site: <http://haiti.usembassy.gov/>

The Canadian Embassy in Haiti is located at:
Delmas 18, Édifice Scotiabank, B.P. 826
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Telephone: 011 (509) 22 98 3050

Web site: <http://www.canuckabroad.com/canadian-embassy/haiti/portauprince.html>