Canada and the Travail of Partnership in Haiti
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July 2010 post-review revised draft of chapter for Thompson & Heine eds.
Fixing Haiti: MINUSTAH and Beyond
Book to be published by UNU Press in December 2010

Since the departure of President Aristide in February 2004, Canada has played an important role in international efforts to re-establish security and stability in Haiti and to assist longer-term development and reconstruction efforts. Today, Haiti is the highest beneficiary of Canadian development assistance in the Americas and the second largest in the world (DFAIT, 2009a).

This passage, taken from the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) website in 2009, reflects the common perception among Canadian officials that Canada has been an active, generous partner in the stabilisation and development of Haiti since 2004. There is considerable evidence to support this view. Indeed, since the US-Franco-Canadian military intervention that removed President Aristide in February 2004, Canada has:

- Co-sponsored key UN Security Council resolutions including Resolution 1542, which provided the first mandate of the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).
- Promoted the active engagement of Latin American middle powers such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile in MINUSTAH and in broader reconstruction efforts.
- Made large, multi-year development assistance commitments to Haiti averaging around CA $100 million/year, and usually exceeded those allocations in its disbursements. This record made Canada the second-largest bilateral donor to Haiti after the US until 2010.¹
- Promoted greater investment and coordination by large multilateral and bilateral donors.
- Invested funds in key central agencies of the Haitian state, to enhance its capacity to understand, track and lead development processes in the country.
- Made major contributions to humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake.

Yet there are other perspectives on Canada’s role in Haiti. In 2008, Haiti’s Minister of Planning and External Cooperation at the time, Jean-Max Bellerive, publically questioned Canada and other Western donors’ self-image by suggesting that they had not adapted their cooperation to Haiti’s real situation. Speaking to important audiences in Ottawa, Minister Bellerive (2008) argued that despite his government’s efforts to improve the management of its own and the international community’s resources, and despite the principles enshrined in international instruments such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, traditional donors were not investing enough to reinforce the Haitian state. This tendency, he argued, put in peril the end-goal of sustainability, since national and state ownership were keys to durable development.²

Bellerive’s concerns converge with certain academic analyses. Robert Muggah has observed that historically, Canada’s governance programming in Haiti has “oscillated between reinforcing public institutions and … efforts that bypass the state altogether in order to strengthen
‘civil society’” (Muggah, 2007: 168). For that analyst, Ottawa’s declared shift back toward strengthening the state, after the military intervention in 2004, masks a continued mistrust for Haitian public institutions and a habit of channelling funds largely through international and civil society organisations.

Drawing on the academic literature pertaining to local ownership in conflict-affected societies, Timothy Donais offers a deeper analysis of the challenges of working with the Haitian state. He suggests that the international community’s partnership-building efforts have been aided by the election of a moderate, legitimate president in 2006. Nonetheless, he argues that the Préval government and the international community have not been able to move from “regime ownership” to “national ownership” in the democratic sense of that concept. A key reason for this, aside from the weakness of Haiti’s public institutions and the particularities of its political culture, lies in the realm of policy. Indeed, Donais (2009) argues that a major obstacle to democratic support for the post-intervention model is that its liberal economic policies have failed Haiti before, and are not seen by the majority of Haitians as offering them a better deal for the future.

Yasmine Shamsie (2006) brings this line of analysis back to Canada, arguing that despite Ottawa’s considerable investments, its engagement tends to focus on institutional and market-oriented reforms that do not address the social bases of democracy or the real needs of the poor. Canada’s support for democratic development in Haiti has privileged support for procedural mechanisms like elections and parliamentary institutions, at the expense of popular participation in policy change. Its support for economic development has focused on debt forgiveness, private sector development and export-oriented manufacturing, rather than on reactivating agriculture for the benefit of Haiti’s extremely poor rural dwellers – who still account for over half of the country’s population.

A network of solidarity and peace organisations grouped under the Canada Haitian Action Network (CHAN) has gone much further in its criticisms. CHAN accuses Canada of complicity in the 2004 “coup” and in the “reign of terror” since (Sanders, 2007). It suggests that Canadian NGOs active in Haiti unwittingly participated in Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) -sponsored plans to destabilise the Aristide government from 2000 to 2004 (Sanders, 2008). Canada’s intervention in 2004, according to Richard Sanders, has been part of a long-standing strategy to undermine the pro-poor reforms of President Aristide, and install friendly regimes that would make Haiti safe for business interests. In other words, Canada’s current role in Haiti reflects its sub-imperial role in a larger system of capitalist globalisation.

Some might dismiss CHAN’s views as politically marginal or lacking in scholarly rigour. Yet this chapter treats them as contributions to an understanding of Canadian actions in Haiti. It does so out of respect for diverse perspectives, and because elements of CHAN’s analysis converge with those of respected academics and of Haitian leaders like Prime Minister Bellerive. The methodological challenge is to identify the elements that stand up to empirically-based scrutiny and weave them into a more nuanced view of Canada’s role as a “good partner” in Haiti.
Before turning to the historical record, it bears explaining that our assessment is normatively and analytically rooted in two international instruments. The first is the Paris Declaration (PD), to which 55 Northern and Southern states (including Haiti), as well as numerous international agencies, adhered in 2005. The PD codifies the mutual responsibilities of donors and recipients to practice cooperation differently. It sets clear standards for donor alignment on national priorities and institutions, harmonisation among donors, joint monitoring and accountability for results. The Declaration contains a chapter on fragile states, which lowers standards on both sides of the cooperation relationship. Yet multilateral monitoring exercises coordinated by the OECD have held donors and fragile state governments to core PD standards even in such contexts (see OECD, 2005; 2009).

One reason for upholding core standards is that the PD has been “amplified” by the OECD DAC Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations, a document that influenced the PD and was formally adopted by OECD governments in 2007. The DAC Fragile States Principles codify 10 guidelines for engagement in fragile states. The key one, for our purposes in this chapter, is the commitment to “Focus on state building as the central objective” (OECD, 2007). Though Southern countries have not formally adhered to this OECD instrument, in 2008 Haiti and six other self-designated fragile states agreed to jointly monitor its implementation in their countries. Several of the Latin American states most engaged in Haiti have agreed to join this process in Haiti. This is one reason why Prime Minister Bellerive regularly uses the PD and the DAC FS Principles as normative referents to analyse his government’s and external actors’ engagement in Haiti.

The chapter examines Canada’s engagement based on these norms. In the next section we discuss the big picture of how Canada’s approach crystallized during the transitional period from 2004 to the elections in 2006. In the following section we examine Canada’s role during the initial years of the Préval administration, from 2006 to mid-2009. In the conclusions we extend the analysis to Canada’s role in Haiti since the earthquake in January 2010. Throughout the paper, we focus on the core governance issues of strengthening the Haitian state and nurturing national ownership.

Canada and the transitional government from 2004 to 2006

Before looking at the period since 2004, it is important to recall that Canada has been active in Haiti for several decades. Canadian missionaries have been on the ground since the late nineteenth century. Diplomatic relations were established in 1954, Haiti became an important recipient of Canadian development assistance in the late 1960s, and Canada (mostly Quebec) has accepted tens of thousands of refugees and economic migrants from Haiti. Ottawa supported the democratic process that began in the mid-1980s, and opposed the 1991 coup against President Aristide. During the 1990s the Canadian government supported all UN and OAS missions, it was active bilaterally and it funded the field activities of many Canadian NGOs and church groups. Like most other Western countries and international organisations, after the highly contested elections in 2000 Canada reduced its direct engagement with the state and channelled most of its assistance through civil society organisations (CSOs).
Ottawa re-engaged in early 2004, first to support renewed CARICOM-OAS attempts to forge a peaceful solution to the political crisis. A few days before President Aristide’s departure, Ottawa lined up behind the US-French strategy of ousting Aristide through a combination of social pressure, armed rebellion, as well as external military and political intervention (Hallward, 2007). In the early morning of Aristide’s departure, Ottawa deployed Special Forces to Haiti to protect Canadian assets and secure the international airport. Later on February 29, Ottawa put those troops under the command of the Multinational Interim Force (MIF) established by the UN Security Council the same day. Canada then increased its military presence to over 500 troops.

That intervention remains controversial under international law, in Haiti and in Canada. It is a key piece of evidence used by CHAN to support its view that Canada conspired to replace President Aristide with a government more attuned to Western interests. It is difficult, without conducting detailed historical research, to come to a definitive judgement on those events. It remain unclear whether Canadian officials truly discussed possibilities of sponsoring “regime change” in Haiti with their US and French counterparts in early 2003. What seems clear to this author is that Ottawa sided with Washington and Paris when they decided to move against Aristide in February 2004. This is presumably one of the issues that the Canadian parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development was alluding to when it noted that “the Committee acknowledges past mistakes of international intervention in recent years, including the controversy over Canada’s own role ...” (House of Commons, 2006: 2).

What is also clear is that since then Ottawa has played an active, multidimensional role in Haiti. The first axis of its actions has been a “whole-of-government” approach at the domestic level, involving the close coordination of diplomatic, security and development efforts. The second axis has been a multilateral approach at the international level, where Canada has championed a broad approach to stabilisation in Haiti, mostly through the UN and with significant Latin American involvement. Let us touch on the second axis before examining the first in more depth.

While planning to remove President Aristide, Washington and its allies explored ways of avoiding the uncomfortable result of ending up as three Western occupying powers. By February 29, they had persuaded Chile to join the MIF (see Cheyre in this volume). Although Brazil was open to playing a security role in Haiti, it indicated that this would have to take place under the aegis of a more legitimate UN Mission, with Brazilian and other Latin American officials in lead posts (Brigagao and Fernandes, 2007: 25). Negotiations eventually led to the mandating of MINUSTAH on April 30, 2004, the appointment of a Brazilian to command its military component and officials from other Latin American countries to lead other pillars, and the official transfer of powers to that mission on June 1, 2004. Canada actively promoted this evolution, on the understanding that a UN mission which represented a wide diversity of countries in the Hemisphere would have more legitimacy in Haiti and internationally.6

The other axis of Canada’s strategy after February 2004 has been the attempt to coordinate its own and others’ approaches to security, political renewal, as well as economic and social development. Ottawa sent high-level representatives to Port-au-Prince, including Prime Minister Martin in November 2004, and invited Haitian officials to visit Canada. It was active in
the Group of Friends formed to support the Haitian process in various capitals and in New York. Once MINUSTAH was deployed, Canada withdrew most of its military forces, replaced them with a contingent of police officers, and took the command of the United Nations Police (UNPOL) element for two years.

Canada also championed and assisted the joint formulation of the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) by donors and the transitional government. It then invested a growing portion of its development assistance to support the implementation of the ICF. In mid-2004, Ottawa pledged CA $160 million over two years for Haiti. Table 1 shows that from April 2004 to the end of March 2006, Ottawa’s disbursements actually exceeded its pledges to Haiti.

Table 1: Canadian ODA disbursements to Haiti, April 2004 to March 2006

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<th>FY 2004-05, in CA $million</th>
<th>FY 2005-06, in CA $million</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>104.62</td>
<td>96.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGD*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104.62</td>
<td>98.42</td>
</tr>
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Source: CIDA, 2006a: 33; CIDA, 2008a: 40
*Other Government Departments

Table 2: Estimated distribution of Canadian ODA disbursements to Haiti, 2004-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Percentage of disbursements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic development</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and justice</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social development and humanitarian aid</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of Canada’s assistance to Haiti is also noteworthy. As shown in Table 2, Canadian ODA seems to have been fairly evenly spread over all the pillars of the ICF -- from democratic development and security to humanitarian assistance and longer term socio-economic development -- with the traditional areas of CIDA support receiving the greatest funding.

It is also important to note who “executed” those funds, in CIDA parlance. Canada is one of the few donors that invested ODA funds to help the Haitian Office of the President and Ministry of Planning participate in the elaboration of the ICF and in its follow up processes. Yet during this period the lion’s share of Canadian aid was channelled through international institutions like the UN, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, as well as Canadian NGOs, firms, crown corporations and universities (see Baranyi, 2007).

Of course, what matters most is the outcome of these investments, not only where the money was spent. The Canadian government’s initial reports on results provide indications of key outcomes during the 2004-2006 years. The most notable result is perhaps in the realm of democratic governance, where the free and relatively fair conduct of three rounds of elections in 2006 is held up as a major positive outcome. CIDA reported that its assistance contributed directly to the registration of 3.5 million voters, the broad participation of women as voters and candidates, training for several thousand Haitian election monitors, training of 250 journalists in responsible media coverage, etc. Canadian assistance also contributed to strengthening the
foundations for a modern civil registry and a permanent electoral council, both of which are crucial to the sustainability of legitimate electoral processes in the country (CIDA, 2006b). This falls short of Shamsie’s call for substantive democratisation, yet there is no doubt that Canada contributed significantly to procedural democratisation during the transitional period.

While the elections received much domestic and international attention in 2006, insecurity was also a concern during this period. Canada was active in the area of security and justice through three main channels. Its main involvement, by far, was through political support to MINUSTAH and the contribution of a commander as well as about 75 officers to its UNPOL element. The second was to support attempts to reform key institutions such as the Haitian National Police (PNH) and the judiciary. The third channel was to support civil society organisations and their attempt to promote the same reforms or human rights more broadly.

In its mid-2006 report to Parliament, CIDA claimed that these investments were producing significant results. It suggested that MINUSTAH had reinforced the PNH’s security operations and that a reform plan had been approved by Haitian authorities. It noted that a plan to strengthen the administration of the penitentiary system had also been elaborated, and that both the PNH headquarters and the prison in Jacmel had been renovated with Canadian assistance. It also suggested that civil society campaigns had increased the quantity and quality of citizen engagement in debates on judicial reform.

Yet as noted in an April 2007 whole-of-government response to Parliament, the “security situation, while still fragile, is stabilizing thanks to a better integration of efforts between Haitian authorities and MINUSTAH” though “progress has been slow and there are still many challenges that must be overcome to reverse the downward spiral in which Haiti has been caught ...” (Government of Canada, 2007: 2). The government’s response also acknowledged that the reform plan formulated by PNH officers with Canadian assistance had been sidelined by the UN-drafted plan, while noting that the latter had incorporated elements of the first plan and was ultimately approved by the Haitian government. Finally, the Government noted that Canada was having difficulties fulfilling its pledge to deploy the full contingent of 100 police officers to MINUSTAH, but was taking measures to boost its capacity for police deployments in this area.

In retrospect, the 2006 CIDA report probably downplayed the extent of the security crisis and exaggerated Canadian contributions during this period. Even if one does not accept all of CHAN’s claims, there is no doubt that grave human rights violations were committed both by MINUSTAH forces and by the PNH during the grim years of 2004-2005. From mid-2005 to late 2006, the Brazilian approach of exercising restraint in the use of force (and investing in community service) became the guiding doctrine in MINUSTAH and the PNH, but by then both institutions had been tarnished by their initial abuses. Moreover, the UN’s attempt to impose its PNH reform plan on the outgoing Haitian government in early 2006 undermined Canada’s painstaking efforts to assist the formulation of a more home-grown plan by the PNH. It took the UN and others three months of negotiations with the Préval government to get its nominal buy-in to a revised version of the so-called “UN plan” (see Fortin and Pierre, 2008). Finally, despite civil society efforts, judicial reform remained blocked during this period. Both the problem of national buy-in and the missing link with justice reform would come back to haunt PNH reform.
With regard to economic and social development, the Canadian government argues that by paying CA $15 million of Haiti’s arrears to the World Bank and CA $18 million of interest on Haiti’s debt with the Inter-American Development Bank, Canada facilitated the country’s inclusion in the Highly-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, which will greatly reduce Haiti’s debt burden over the coming years, thus freeing up scarce national resources for real poverty reduction in the country. Meanwhile, in mid-2006 CIDA reported that its more modest investments in local development projects had already generated results such as strengthening a network of 64 savings and credit cooperatives, enhancing the provision of electricity services in Jacmel, creating 5000 jobs in poor areas of the country, etc. It also reported that its social assistance had helped increase the quality of schooling in departments such as Artibonite and Nippes, and ensured the vaccination of thousands of children against diseases like rubella (CIDA, 2006a; Government of Canada, 2007).

So Canada contributed to macro-economic stabilisation, to local development in some regions, and to the provision of essential social services during the 2004-2006 years. Canada supported a hybrid rather than an orthodox market-oriented approach to economic reactivation. Though agriculture was not a CIDA priority during this period, some of CIDA’s investments in local development fostered natural resource management and production in rural areas.

Nonetheless, Shamsie’s question about whether even this softer market-based approach is adequate for Haiti’s conditions remains relevant. The ICF and the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) elaborated in 2006 were incomplete plans based on limited consultation. As we shall see in the next section, the neglect of agriculture for domestic consumption was one factor that detonated the governance crisis in 2008. Moreover, the extremely modest amount of Canadian (and other international) funds channelled through Haitian state institutions perpetuated the state’s inability to take on a more active role in the economy.

In sum, Canada followed up on its problematic military intervention by contributing greatly to stabilisation in Haiti. It championed a multilateral approach in diplomatic forums and coordinated a multidimensional, whole-of-government Canadian approach. Ottawa exceeded its considerable aid pledges through a balanced portfolio of democratic, security, economic, social and humanitarian assistance. Many initiatives supported by Canada yielded early results, from the relative success of the 2006 elections to the reduction of Haiti’s debt service payments.

Yet a number of worrisome trends appeared during this initial period. These included Canada’s inability to make a major difference in critical areas like security and justice reform, given the inherited situation on the ground and the problematic approaches of international actors such as MINUSTAH. It also included the tendency to channel the lion’s share of Canadian funds through international or Canadian institutions, despite the declaratory commitment to “focus on state building as a central priority,” in the language of the DAC fragile states principles.

Neither of these tendencies can be attributed solely to Canadian or broader international approaches. The lack of political legitimacy and the inherited administrative weakness of the Haitian state under the transitional government made it very difficult for international actors to
respect its orientations and even more challenging to trust it to administer international funds. Let us see if these tendencies changed under the elected government of President Préval.

**Canada and the Préval government from 2006 to 2009**

Shortly after taking office in mid-2006, President Préval and his officials began asserting their sovereign right to lead development cooperation processes in their country. They wanted the ICF and Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to be extended to the end of 2007, and they signalled their intent to lead the preparation of a full PRSP by the end of that year. During Canadian-sponsored expert consultations on the draft DAC Fragile States Principles, Haitian officials signalled their desire to move from these principles to the concepts of national ownership and full partnership codified in the Paris Declaration (see Unknown, 2006). It was during this period that the Préval government insisted on some revisions to the PNH reform plan and appointed a more activist National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (CNDDR) to coordinate disarmament efforts. This was also when the government took steps to increase the solvency, transparency and accountability of public finances.

By late 2006, these attempts to strengthen state leadership ran into major problems on the ground. CNDDR’s attempt to negotiate with the leaders of armed gangs generated little disarmament. Violent crime and citizens’ demands for action continued to grow. After months of debate, in December 2006 MINUSTAH initiated aggressive security operations in the most crime-affected neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince and in major drugs trans-shipment points like Les Cayes. These operations apparently disarticulated several gangs and decreased the incidence of violent crimes by early 2007, but the government’s nationalistic discourse was dented by this reassertion of MINUSTAH’s prominent security role (International Crisis Group, 2008).

The process of formulating the full PRSP, finally approved as the National Strategy Document for Growth and Poverty Reduction (DSNCRP) in November 2007, also complicated the government’s bid to reassert national ownership. On the upside, with international assistance the government managed to consult some local officials, private sector leaders and national experts, and draft a multi-pronged strategy to foster growth, human development and better governance. On the downside, many CSOs felt excluded from the consultations while key international actors felt that the DSNCRP lacked clear (and clearly budgeted) priorities. Even the President’s commitment to the document was questioned, both nationally and internationally.

The economic downturn which began in Haiti in late 2007, and the resulting governance crisis in 2008, greatly weakened the attempt to reassert national ownership. The riots against the high cost of food and other essentials prompted President Préval to relieve Prime Minister Alexis of his duties in March 2008, and Haiti found itself without a functioning government for almost six months. This caused the postponement of the conference with donors which had been scheduled for April 2008. It put the rivalries within Haiti’s political elite on public display. It also caused the financing and implementation of the DSNCRP to be postponed for a year.

By the time Prime Minister Michele Pierre Louis truly took office in September 2008, the global economic crisis and four devastating hurricanes compelled her government and the
international community to revisit the DSNCRP. It was only at the conference with donors in April 2009 that the Haitian state gained international confidence in its plans to implement an updated DSNCRP over the following years. The introduction of external audits of government finances, competitive public procurement procedures and strengthened tax and customs administration, also helped generate international confidence in the state. Those changes continued when Mr. Bellerive became Prime Minister in late 2009. That is the backdrop against which Canadian engagement in Haiti must be assessed, particularly on the issue of ownership.

Canada remained diplomatically active on Haiti during this period. At the highest levels, Governor-General Michaëlle Jean visited in 2006 and again in 2008, while Prime Minister Harper visited the country as part of his Americas tour in July 2007. Those visits were reciprocated by high-level missions from Haiti. The two governments established a Mixed Commission of senior officials for annual strategic consultations. At the second meeting of the Mixed Commission in March 2009, the Haitian side tabled a Mutual Accountability Pact to reinforce both sides’ commitments to the principles of partnership. In Ottawa, the Haiti Taskforce was established in 2008 to strengthen whole-of-government coordination.

Canada remained very engaged in Groups of Friends of Haiti in New York and Geneva, as well as in numerous working-level tables in Haiti. It broadened dialogue on Haiti with Latin American partners such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile. The key message of Canadian diplomats during this period was that the international community needed to “stay the course” in Haiti.

Canada also increased its financial engagement under the Préval government. At the first conference between donors and the new government in July 2006, Prime Minister Harper announced a five-year commitment of CA $520 million. In 2007, Ottawa increased that allocation to CA $555 million. Those were clear votes of confidence in the newly-elected government and important signals to other major donors about Canada’s engagement over the medium-term. Table 3 suggests that Canada is on track to meet or exceed those allocations.

Table 3: Canadian international assistance to Haiti, April 2006 to March 2008

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<th>FY 2006-07, in CA $million</th>
<th>FY 2007-08, in CA $million</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>92.57</td>
<td>103.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGD</td>
<td>30.08</td>
<td>30.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122.65</td>
<td>133.78</td>
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A preliminary analysis of CIDA reports on its and OGD disbursements from 2006 to 2008 suggests that while Canada has maintained a balance of investments in the main areas of development cooperation, it seems to be spending more in the area of security and less in the area of democratic governance (CIDA, 2008a; 2009). This may reflect the winding down of electoral assistance after 2006 and the ramping up of DFAIT/START (Stabilization and Reconstruction Taskforce) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) programming on security. A closer examination of Canada’s expenditures, by area, reveals other patterns.

In the area of democratic development, Canada’s support evolved considerably from its focus on the elections in 2005-2006. CIDA is supporting new initiatives in this domain:
• A CA$ 15 million project (managed by the OAS), to modernize the Haitian National Identification Office’s civil registry. The civil registry is a key instrument for voter registration. It is also the starting point for broader citizenship, for example to access social services, jobs and property titles. This is critical in a country where large numbers of persons have been unregistered and disenfranchised for generations.

• A CA $5 million project managed by the Canadian Parliamentary Centre, to strengthen the Haitian parliament’s capacity to provide oversight through its committees, make the parliament more accessible to citizens and provide better administrative support for the work of parliamentarians.

• A CA $4.4 million program managed by Rights and Democracy, to strengthen the advocacy work of Haitian human rights organisations on key issues such as the right to food, the role of political parties in democratic development, and women’s rights.

Earlier initiatives like the Election Observer Mission, the Democracy and Peace Fund for Haitian CSOs were gradually completed. Ongoing and new projects during this period demonstrate that CIDA’s portfolio promoted both the strengthening of procedural democracy and the broadening of democratic participation. However they also suggest that CIDA continued to channel most of its funds through international and Canadian institutions. While these projects usually aimed to strengthen Haitian state and civil society partners, few if any of the large programs and projects were managed by Haitian institutions themselves.

By mid-2008, CIDA could already report initial results from some of these projects. These included the registration of a further 560,000 adults on the voters list, bringing the level of its national coverage to 92 percent. They also included the broadcasting or parliamentary sessions to make them more accessible to the public, and continued increases in CSOs’ capacity for human rights advocacy (CIDA, 2008b). These promising initial results suggest that more transparent, systematic monitoring and evaluation would be useful to track outcomes over time. Nonetheless, Shamsie’s analysis reminds us that few of these projects supported the self-organization of large and historically-marginalized constituencies such as the rural poor, whose pressures from below would seem crucial to deeper changes in economic and social policy.

Women are one such constituency, yet they were sidelined by Canada during this period. For a decade CIDA supported networks of Haitian women’s organisations that were at the forefront of proposing and often gaining major legislative and programmatic changes from the state. Leaders of the women’s movement were brought into the Préval government as ministers and senior officials. On the basis of these antecedents and new developments, CIDA officials formulated a CA$ 17 million program with two tracks. The first would have expanded Canadian support for the Ministry for the Rights of Women (MCFDF) and its efforts to mainstream gender in government. The second track would have expanded CIDA’s support for the service provision and policy advocacy activities of women’s CSOs. Despite the impressive record of CIDA gender programming in Haiti, and despite the conclusions by a global review of 10 years of CIDA gender programming that a two-track approach was essential, in 2008 the Conservative Minister of International Development decided not to approve this program. Minister Oda’s rationale was that equality between men and women should become a “cross-cutting priority” in all of CIDA’s programming in Haiti. Nonetheless, CIDA officials and their Haitian counterparts quietly found
other ways of maintaining some support for the women’s organisations that they viewed as being critical for human development writ large.

Security is an area in which Canada became even more programmatically engaged under the Préval government, chiefly due to the establishment of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Taskforce in DFAIT, and its growing security sector programming in Haiti. Highlights of START’s Haiti programming during this period include the allocation of:

- CA $5.5 million to CANADEM to fund the deployment of Canadian police and correctional experts with MINUSTAH. This is in addition to the approximately CA $30 million allocated to the RCMP over these two years, for the deployment of active duty officers to Haiti via the Canadian Police Arrangement (CPA).
- CA $3.3 million via the International Migration Organisation (IOM) for the refurbishment of the National Police School, and of CA $3.5 million via the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to renovate several PNH stations in the South Departments. Also the allocation of CA $5 million via UNDP to renovate the infrastructure and equip the PNH Inspectorate General.
- CA $ 4.7 million via UNDP for a major disarmament and community security program, and of CA $0.4 million to the Brazilian NGO Viva Rio, for a community security project in the Bel Air area of Port-au-Prince.
- About CA $ 6 million for several programs and projects, via IOM and other international institutions, to renovate the infrastructure and strengthen the capacity of border guards to control illicit activities such as arms smuggling and human trafficking.
- As part of its programming in this sector, START has played an active role in government-donor coordination mechanisms, for example by chairing the Donor Table on Prisons and helping to establish the Border Management Working Group.

It is worth noting that despite the prominent roles played by DFAIT/START and the RCMP in the area of security, CIDA also made large grants in this area. It allocated CA $18.1 million to build and equip the new National Police Academy in Ganthier, outside Port-au-Prince. It allocated CA $16.5 million to train and otherwise enhance the administrative capacities of PNH managers. CIDA also allocated about CA $5 million to support the continuation of Viva Rio’s community security programming in Bel Air.

A 2009 evaluation of START programming in Haiti, commissioned by DFAIT and the Canadian Office of the Inspector General, provides insights into the outcomes of Canadian engagement in this sector. It pointedly suggested that START’s programming “reflects some OECD best practices for fragile state engagement and several of the principles on aid effectiveness” (DFAIT, 2009b: 15). Specifically, the evaluation observed that START programming is aligned with Haitian governmental priorities codified in the DSNCRP, and in more specialized documents such as the 2006 National Police Reform Plan. It noted that most START-supported projects aim to strengthen the infrastructure and human resources of key Haitian institutions such as the PNH, prisons and the institutions involved in border management. It suggested that most of these projects were appreciated by Haitian counterparts, for their relevance and timeliness.
Yet the evaluation also noted some overarching challenges, in addition to numerous things that could be improved at the operational level. Though START deserved credit for convincing CIDA and other donors to make longer-term investments in key areas such as PNH reform, much remained to be done to ensure the sustainability of these investments. Critical challenges in this regard included deepening coordination with Haitian institutions and channelling more funds through the Haitian state. While recognising the historic corruption and inefficiencies of Haitian institutions, the report recommended that START shift from its almost total reliance on international and Canadian implementing agencies, and increase the portion of funds channelled directly through the PNH and other Haitian government institutions (ibid: 67, recommendation 9).

The report noted that sustainability also depends on the will and effectiveness of national actors in this sector. Indeed since 2004 the PNH, the judiciary and other state actors have slowed down or blocked internationally-sanctioned reforms when they have viewed these as too risky. Yet the international community’s somewhat technocratic and state-centric approach to reform has also left it hostage to the whims of political and bureaucratic leaders. The lack of international follow up on a PNH Reform Plan provision to hold public consultations on “what kind of police Haiti needs” has been a major problem in this area. In 2007, senior Haitian officials claimed that they wished to go ahead with these consultations. Yet key international actors, including MINUSTAH and Canada, withheld support for public consultations because they feared that this could further polarise public opinion on security matters. That may have been the case in 2007, but paucity absence of parliamentary or citizen engagement in public security policy debates now makes it difficult for the international community to find allies in its quest to press the PNH on delicate matters such as the de-certification of officers allegedly guilty of serious crimes (Fortin and Pierre, 2008; and de-brief with senior Canadian police officers who served with MINUSTAH in 2008).

In the economic and social realm, during the 2006-2009 period CIDA’s programming was based on its 2006 Interim Strategy, informed by the Haitian DSNCRP, and affected by the destruction caused by the hurricanes in 2008. Highlights of CIDA’s programming during those years reflect these diverse influences:

- A CA$ 13.8 million project to increase the capacity of several Government of Haiti institutions to implement the DSNCRP.
- A CA$18.5 million project via the Canadian Border Services Agency to increase public revenues through improved Haitian border and customs controls.
- A CA$15.5 million project via the Ministry of the Economy and Finances, largely to reduce its short-term debt to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and to strengthen public finances management.
- A CA$75 million project via the IDB to build a new road connecting the towns of Jérémie and Les Cayes in the south western region, and another CA $19.8 million project via the IDB for the rehabilitation of other roads and basic infrastructure.
- A CA$20 million project via Canadian NGOs like le Centre d’Études et de coopération international (CECI), to promote local development and a CA $15 million project via Développement International Desjardins to support Haitian savings cooperatives.
CA $5.3 million for the Pro Huerta project with the Inter-American Institute of Cooperation for Agriculture (IICA) and Argentine partners, to foster community-based agriculture for food security for some of the poorest areas of the country.

A CA $17.5 million project via the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and Brazilian partners, to support the Ministry of Health’s Expanded National Vaccination Programme. Another CA $17.5 million project via the Université de Montréal, to help the Ministry of Health (MSPP) strengthen its policies, planning, human resource management and stakeholder engagement processes. A CA $18.75 million project via the Canadian Embassy to help the MSPP strengthen its regulatory role in the health sector.

A portfolio of small grants, such as CA$ 750,000 granted to the World Food Programme for relief to hurricane victims in 2008.

In mid-2008, CIDA reported results from some of these projects. These included the reduction of Haiti’s debt to the IDB; continued access to credit in 56 savings and credit cooperatives; the immunization of over 620,000 children and youth against polio, measles and rubella; “doubling, and in some cases even tripling, of agricultural production for people benefiting from local development projects” (CIDA, 2008b). These all seem to be significant outcomes.

Thorough studies would be required to assess results, yet several observations are possible. First, although most of CIDA’s largest investments were still channelled via international and Canadian institutions, there were important projects being implemented by the Haitian state. These included a large project to strengthen the state’s capacity to lead the implementation of the DSNCRP, a central development mission over the coming years. Other projects could strengthen the revenue generation or financial management capacities of key state institutions, which may make them more investment-worthy and even self-sufficient in the future. Indeed, CIDA’s support helped key ministries prepare the DSNCRP priority investment plan presented at the donors’ conference in April 2009; that plan and measures to strengthen the accountability of public finances and increase customs revenues were crucial to regaining donors’ confidence, and obtaining a further cancellation of Haiti’s external debt, that year.

Second, although most other projects addressed other important development needs – from debt relief and the construction of roads to the provision basic services such as immunization and primary schooling – few except for Pro Huerta directly stimulate agriculture for local consumption. This is worrisome because food insecurity remained a major gap in Haiti’s stabilization-to-development strategy, and other large donors did not seem to be stepping up to the plate in this area (Droits et Démocratie et GRAMIR, 2008; Baranyi et al., 2009). The establishment of the National Commission for Food Security, the initiation of promising initiatives under its guidance, and the involvement of innovative partners from Argentina may help attract more investment from traditional donors like Canada.

Third, given the scale of Canadian investments in the economic and social sectors, there was little investment in democratic debate on policy alternatives. The focus on strengthening state capacity and delivering essential services seems to have crowded out support for the organisation of constituencies that could press for critical policy changes. Nonetheless, CIDA’s support for Rights and Democracy’s program to help rural producers lobby for increased
investment in national agriculture, and its program to help women lobby against gender-based violence, were steps forward in the direction of more participatory development.

Conclusions

If nurturing national ownership of development processes was a challenge in Haiti after the intervention in 2004, it has become an enormous challenge since the earthquake in January 2010. The authority, capacity and legitimacy of an already fragile state have been greatly weakened, while the scope of international engagement has grown dramatically in quantitative and qualitative terms (Fatton, 2010). How has Canada acted in this even more difficult context?

Like many others moved by the dimension of the tragedy that befell Haiti on January 12, 2010, Canadians responded quickly and generously to the humanitarian crisis. Within a week Ottawa had deployed 1000 troops and disbursed funds to support several UN and NGO humanitarian assistance initiatives. On January 25 Canada hosted the first Ministerial Preparatory Conference, where core cooperation principles like national ownership, coordination and sustainability (which seemed threatened by certain large powers’ militarised initial responses) were reaffirmed. Over the following weeks Canadian citizens donated a record $220 million to Haiti, while the government increased its financial commitments to keep up with the Canadian public and with other donors. At the International Donors’ Conference on March 31, Canada pledged an additional $400 million of assistance over two years. On that basis it was given a seat on the Interim Commission for the Reconstruction of Haiti (CIRH).

Although it is too early to assess these commitments, one can piece together a sense of where Canada is focussing its contributions:

- Humanitarian aid: A large part of the funds allocated for 2010-2012 are earmarked for short term relief and reconstruction activities.
- Reconstruction and development, especially in CIDA’s priority areas, namely economic reactivation, food security, as well as children and youth.
- Justice and security: Support to rebuild the National Police and the broader rule of law system will remain a priority for DFAIT/START.
- Democratic governance: Canada does not appear to have allocated large sums for democratic assistance, yet it vocally insisted that elections be held in November 2010 and offered financial support for that exercise.

What do these initial post-earthquake actions and the longer record of Canadian engagement from 2004 to 2009, suggest about Canada’s abilities to walk the talk of partnership in Haiti? What do they trends suggest about the debates noted in the introduction?

The historical record over the past five years supports Canadian officials’ self-perception of Canada as a diplomatically active partner which tends to exceed its substantial aid pledges. It confirms their claims that Canadians coordinate their efforts fairly well through whole-of-government, bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. The record also demonstrates that Canada has been active in several important sectors – from democratisation and public security to
economic and social development, as well as humanitarian assistance – and that before the earthquake some Canadian-supported initiatives were yielding developmental results.

The record shows that building the capacity of Haitian state institutions has been a priority of Canadian development assistance since 2004, and that Ottawa has increased the funding it channels directly through state agencies since the elections in 2006. Indeed, Canada seems unique among traditional donors in having targeted some of its assistance to strengthen the capacity of key state institutions to plan and implement overarching development processes such as the DSNCRP. It has also targeted funds to help border and customs agencies increase public revenue, help the Ministry of Finance manage public finances more effectively, and help both the National Police and the Ministry of Health manage their human resources more professionally. All of these initiatives are critical to the goals of strengthening the Haitian state and its ability to own and orient development processes in the country.

This tendency helps qualify suggestions made by Jean-Max Bellerive when he was Minister of Planning, namely that Canada and other traditional donors have not adapted their cooperation to reflect Haiti’s advances and are not investing sufficient Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds through the Haitian state. While the data presented in this study confirm that Canada still channels the lion’s share of its assistance through international and Canadian executing agencies, it also shows that Canada has strategically invested in projects to strengthen the Haitian state and its absorptive capacity. The big question is whether this approach will be sustained over the coming years given the unpromising convergence of dramatically weakened state capacity/legitimacy and equally dramatic increases in international engagement.

National ownership involves much more than state ownership. Canada’s support for inclusive, free and fair elections, its support for parliament and other aspects of procedural democracy, are important contributions to democratising national ownership. In the past, CIDA has invested ODA funds to foster organisation and constructive policy advocacy by constituencies such as women, which have an interest in policy change. Yet these investments in the social basis of democracy have been minute compared to Canadian investments in state institutions and procedural democracy. Before the earthquake, Canada still invested little in supporting policy advocacy by small rural producers and consumers, two constituencies whose engagement is essential to reversing the critical problem of food insecurity in Haiti. Similarly, DFAIT/START’s important investments in security sector reform (SSR) have also largely neglected the democratic dimension of SSR. Clearly, there is scope for improvement if Canada aspires to pursue the democratic approach to national ownership codified in the Paris Declaration and in the DAC Principles for Good Engagement in Fragile States.

One of the most complex dimensions of development cooperation in a context like Haiti, is the interface between democratic ownership and policy choices. Donais, Shamsie and others have argued that Western donors and multilateral institutions have encouraged democratic ownership but only within the bounds of liberal orthodoxies like macro-economic stability, fiscal restraint and social compensation typical of the post Washington Consensus era. This model may have made sense immediately after the 2004 intervention, when stabilisation was the main goal. But as Robert Fatton (2010) and others have argued cogently, at a time when key sectors of the
Haitian economy like agriculture need to be revitalised, when the provision of basic social services is unlikely to become more socially inclusive without greater public sector activism, it seems important to give Haitians space to explore policy mixes that might be more appropriate to their situation. That is also what Mr. Bellerive has been asking for since 2008.

That brings us back to the core of ownership, namely national agency. A former chief of a ministerial cabinet in the Alexis government has suggested that “When the state asserts itself, certain donors follow.”19 This suggests that when national ownership emerges from the inside and when it is seen as legitimate by the international community, it can provide a focus for external engagement. Shamsie and Donais remind us that democratic support is another crucial ingredient of national ownership: state elites can assert themselves vis-à-vis external actors, but their capacity to sustain such efforts rests on their ability to marshal broad support for their positions. That, in turn, depends on being able to translate public policy into tangible benefits for broad constituencies – by stimulating and regulating the creation of more jobs with better incomes, affordable food, transportation and housing, public security, as well as better education and health care for the majority of citizens. It is these synergies between national ownership, democratic support, and public policy effectiveness that require careful nurturing in Haiti.

If one believes that there is room for creative agency in history despite the weight of social structures or the devastating effect of natural disasters, then it may be possible for the next leaders of Haiti to move ahead with the institutional and policy reforms that the country needs, and build the multi-party and multi-constituency alliances required to sustain such reforms. It may also be possible for international actors like Canada to support such reforms and help Haitians nurture the social bases of change, even when some movements’ discourses differ from liberal norms. That would require an imaginative leap beyond current practices of technical assistance for elections, institutional strengthening and the reconstruction of infrastructure. It would also require more investment in public agency (as opposed to just “agencies”), as well as in public accountability through parliamentary and other participatory mechanisms.

If Canada and its partners in Haiti rise to this historic challenge, they may find themselves walking the talk of national ownership and sustainable development. Yet if the earthquake and its aftermath do not lead to this qualitative leap, many Haitians may ask what their leaders and their partners are really up to. Some will ask whether, despite their stated intentions, Canada, the UN and other partners are actually perpetuating Haiti’s condition of fragility and dependence.20 And Canadians might well ask whether the considerable investments made since 2004 have really been worth the candle, as they are currently asking about Canada’s precarious role in Afghanistan. Before readers dismiss this scenario, they might reflect on words written by Lyonel Trouillot, one of Haiti’s prominent intellectuals, in April 2010:

The “chiefs”, the big men … might speak of reconstruction led by Haitians, but it is not what is happening … In the street, in the homes of honest citizens … there is a sense of defeat … An impression … that what is being built is improvised, leaving much room for the private calculations of a few Haitian politicians and businessmen. The impression that a few international officials, “experts” … and NGOs will play the sorcerer’s apprentice to
justify their nice salaries … In the street, a wave of anger is rising that we would be wrong to under-estimate (Trouillot, 2010, author’s translation).

References


Shamsie, Yasmine (2006) “It’s not just Afghanistan or Darfur: Canada’s peacebuilding efforts in Haiti”, in Andrew Cooper and Dane Rowlands, eds. Canada Among Nations, Ottawa: Carleton University Press.


Notes

1 Pledges made at the International Conference on Haiti on March 31, 2010, suggest that Venezuela has replaced Canada as the second bilateral donor and that it may have replaced the US as the lead donor (PRH, 2010).

2 The original version of this speech was given at CIDA on 18 November 2008. Government of Haiti representatives in Canada continued to echo this view in mid-2009 (see Collins, 2009).

3 Several primary research methods were used for this study. We examined documents issued by the governments of Canada and Haiti, conducted over 20 off-the-record key informant interviews and participated in numerous policy forums from 2007 to 2010. The interviews have been kept confidential to protect informants’ identities. The author thanks Michèle Meilleur Sarazin for her research assistance on this project. I am also grateful to Isabelle Fortin for her detailed comments on a draft as well as to the two anonymous reviewers of the book manuscript.

4 For an historical account of Canada-Haiti relations, see Keating, 2001.

The last claim was confirmed in interviews with senior DFAIT officials in Ottawa and senior diplomats in Port-au-Prince, in 2008 and 2009.

CIDA does not report the thematic breakdown of its disbursements in its annual statistical reports. These estimates were calculated on the basis of disbursements that CIDA reported to the Canadian parliament in ACDI (CIDA, 2006b). For a more detailed breakdown of these funds and of their executing agencies, see Baranyi, 2007.

Muggah (2007) draws the same conclusion based on his analysis of Canadian governance programming in Haiti.


The figures for FY 2006-07 disbursements are reported in CIDA, 2009, 33. Those for FY 2007-08 are based on CIDA’s August 2008 mini-report on results. Since that report did not include data on OGD disbursements in FY 2007-08, we used the figure for FY 2006-07 as a proxy.

The project descriptions in this section (except those financed by DFAIT/START) are adapted from CIDA’s online project browser, accessed between June and August 2009.

For a detailed analysis of Canada’s gender equity programming in Haiti, see Salahub, 2008.

Based on discussions with Canadian officials, Haitian officials and Haitian activists in Port-au-Prince in June 2009, as well as in Ottawa during the autumn of 2009.

These project descriptions are taken from the DFAIT/START website and from the February 2009 draft evaluation report.

See Collins, 2009, for an analysis of Canada’s role in the forgiveness of Haiti’s debt.

Ottawa and Quebec also introduced measures to make it easier for certain Haitians to stay in or immigrate to Canada. Ottawa repatriated most of the 2000 or so Canadian troops deployed in Haiti by March 2010, as MINUSTAH ramped up its new deployments. Data on these actions was obtained from Government of Canada press releases and other statements posted on DFAIT and CIDA websites during that period, particularly the periodic updates on the DFAIT website titled “Canada’s response to the earthquake in Haiti”.

A CIDA News Release on July 9, 2010 notes that CIDA has allocated over $150 million to humanitarian assistance in Haiti since the earthquake.

In addition to the CIDA News Release noted above, this composite picture draws DFAIT (2010) and as well as Montpetit (2010).

The increase of social protests in Haiti since May 2010 suggests that this is not only an academic preoccupation. See RNDDH (2010) and Péan (2010) for analyses of the national government and the international community’s actions six months after the earthquake, and their differing views on where current trends might lead Haiti.