

Haiti: Sustaining Partnerships in Sustainable Development

Anthony Vinciguerra

Abstract

How can universities organize their international community engagement to optimize both student learning and community impact? This article describes the St. Thomas University/Port-de-Paix, Haiti, Global Solidarity Partnership, and provides one model of how a project-focused scaffolding of engaged scholarship opportunities can enhance student learning, empower local communities, and support long-term development.

Introduction

St. Thomas University is a small, urban, archdiocesan Roman Catholic university located in Miami Gardens, Florida. The Diocese of Port-de-Paix (geographically equivalent to the Northwest Department of Haiti) is the sister diocese of the Archdiocese of Miami and is one of the poorest and most isolated regions in Haiti (Mogisha, 2011). Since 2006, St. Thomas has worked with partners in the Diocese of Port-de-Paix to develop the St. Thomas University/Port-de-Paix, Haiti, Global Solidarity Partnership (STU GSP), a collaboration aimed at providing concrete faculty research and student-learning opportunities in the developing world, while supporting long-term, Haitian-led, sustainable development projects in the region.

Due to the limited resources of the university and the difficulties of working in rural Haiti, a model had to be developed that would focus the university's limited means into specific projects that had the greatest potential of making a long-term, sustainable impact. As such, a geographically centered, project-focused model of collaboration was chosen that would include an interdisciplinary scaffolding of engaged scholarship opportunities at the university. The hope was to offer a wide array of research and learning options to faculty and students, while also bringing a broad spectrum of academic resources to bear on the specific needs of the projects as defined by the Haitian partners. Concrete faculty/student research projects, intensive internships, community-based learning courses, and volunteer opportunities have all taken place within this context.

An overview of the historical development, pedagogical model, and community impact of the STU GSP illustrates one example of how a

geographically focused, interdisciplinary, multi-tiered community engagement model can both enhance learning opportunities and contribute to long-term community impact – even in one of the poorest regions in the Western Hemisphere.

Historical Context and Project Inception

In 1980, in response to waves of Haitian immigrants arriving on the shores of South Florida, the archbishop of Miami, Edward McCarthy, traveled to Haiti with hopes of addressing the reality these individuals were risking their lives to escape. Leaders from the Haitian episcopal conference sent Archbishop McCarthy to the Diocese of Port-de-Paix – an impoverished, extremely remote region in the northwest of Haiti. While the Northwest Department is Haiti's oldest region (Columbus arrived in Haiti's most northwestern point, Mole St. Nicolas, in 1492), its geographic and political isolation from Port-au-Prince has deprived it of the modest level of development that has occurred in other regions. Due to its extreme poverty, and geographical proximity to Florida, the Diocese of Port-de-Paix became one of the main launching areas for Haitian refugees fleeing to the United States.

Upon witnessing the desperate economic, political, and ecological situation of Haiti's northwest, Archbishop McCarthy immediately established a sister diocese relationship between the Archdiocese of Miami and the Diocese of Port-de-Paix. His hope was that people of the Archdiocese of Miami would build strong relationships of solidarity with the people of Port-de-Paix, dedicate themselves to bettering the social conditions of the area, and in doing so ameliorate the root causes of this dangerous migration (Sherry, 1978).

Amor en Acción, a lay-led missionary group based in Miami, was given responsibility for the sister diocese relationship and spent the next 30 years supporting schools, providing emergency relief, and serving as some of the only consistent aid to this very remote region (Amor en Accion, 2011).

Over the next 30 years, however, Port-de-Paix remained one of the poorest regions in Haiti. With a population of over 600,000, its dry and deforested terrain exacerbated the extreme poverty. The area is accessible by road from Port-au-Prince; however, travel can take between six to nine hours due to poor, unpaved roads and the lack of bridges to cross several rivers. The diocese is centered in a mountainous area with no public water, few roads, and little to no electric power. The population suffers from numerous diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and typhoid fever. Three-fourths of the children in the diocese are malnourished and have parasites. Though the area has consistent health crises, medical attention is rare. For example, there are only 10 doctors for the 100,000 people in the township of Port-de-Paix. Only 18% of children in all of Haiti will go on to high-school and, though precise figures are not available, it is widely believed that this percentage is much lower in Port-de-Paix (United Nations Children's Fund, 2010). Because of the almost complete lack of infrastructure, aid from international relief and development agencies has remained rare in this remote northwest region (Amor en Accion, 2011; IHSI, 2009; Mogisha, 2011).

In 2006, St. Thomas University was undergoing a restructuring and, as part of this transition, was reviewing both its institutional mission and its international engagement programs. As a Roman Catholic university, St. Thomas had a particular call to address issues of economic inequality in the developing world (John Paul II, 2009). Integrated into its mission and programs were the principles of Catholic social thought – a body of teaching intended to guide just relationships between an individual, institutions, and society. Among these principles are “the dignity of all human life,” a “preferential option for the poor and vulnerable,” and a “commitment to global solidarity” (Mitch, 2011, pp. 8–9). St. Thomas had established a Center for Justice and Peace with the explicit purpose of integrating these values throughout the curriculum and activities of the university. Furthermore, as a specifically archdiocesan-

sponsored university (as opposed to a Catholic institution founded by a religious order such as the Jesuits or Franciscans) St. Thomas had the unique institutional commitment “to be of, and serve, its locality” (Iannone, 2010, p. 1).

Despite this institutional commitment to social justice, global solidarity, economic development, and serving its region, St. Thomas in 2006 had no institutional relationship with its own sister diocese of Port-de-Paix. The university had small programs in Spain, China, and Costa Rica, and yet had never sent a delegation to visit Port-de-Paix. Upon reflection on this unfulfilled calling, the Center for Justice and Peace initiated a process aimed at focusing the university's international engagement specifically on its sister diocese. To begin this process, a small team of faculty and staff was recruited to explore the possibility of a fruitful collaboration between the university and the Diocese of Port-de-Paix.

Listening Process and Establishment of Collaborative Project Criteria

The steering committee of faculty and staff first held meetings with the Amor-en-Accion leaders who had helped build the sister-diocesan partnership over the prior 30 years. These early meetings laid the groundwork for what would become key elements in the future St. Thomas/Port-de-Paix partnership. To begin with, Amor-en-Accion staff recounted the deep distrust that existed in Haiti's northwest for outside organizations coming to “help.” For years international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had arrived in the region with promises of assistance, only to pull out once difficulties were encountered or project funding ended. Amor-en-Accion made clear that working in northwest Haiti would not be easy, and that if the university was serious about developing an authentic relationship with the region, there must be a long-term commitment to the process. Furthermore, those who had worked in the Northwest Department for years underlined the need for an attitude of “listening and accompaniment” rather than “project creation.” Their experience was that the only lasting projects in Haiti's northwest were those that were rooted in long-term, deep relationships, and that long sessions of listening, discernment, discussion, and debate would have to take place with Haitian partners well before any specific project plans were made.

With these guiding thoughts, a number of

visits were made to Port-de-Paix with the university steering team during 2006 and 2007 to explore possible areas of collaboration. Meetings were held with local church officials, community leaders, and grass-roots organizations throughout Haiti's northwest. After two years of travel between the regions, a small group of Haitian leaders (representing community leaders, church leaders, and local Haitian organizations) coalesced as key partners for the university's collaboration. Amor-en-Accion's warning about reticence toward outside organizations was well merited, and the Haiti-side partners made clear that any collaborative projects between the university and the region would have to abide by three criteria:

Criteria 1: Empowering/Civil Society Building

From the perspective of the partners in Haiti's northwest, Haiti's history was a history of outsiders imposing their ideas on the country's development. From colonial powers, to dictators, to today's foreign NGOs, they had experienced outside powers as completely uninterested in local, Haitian-led programs of development. If this was to continue, they explained, Haitians themselves would never take responsibility – or learn how – to identify their own problems and implement their own solutions.

An experience on one of St. Thomas's early delegations to the Northwest Department brought this message home very clearly, and became a key cultural memory that has helped guide the university's partnership to this day. The following is a recounting of that event, as it is presented in formation sessions for St. Thomas faculty and students traveling to Port-de-Paix for the first time.

The St. Thomas team had been visiting a number of towns in Haiti's northwest and listening to community leaders about possible areas of partnership. The group decided to visit the remote mountainside village of Ma Wouj, an area where the Archdiocese of Miami had never worked before. A meeting was called under a thatched hut with Caritas Ma Wouj, the local Catholic church's relief and development committee. A Haitian priest traveling with the university team explained to the Caritas members that the university was there to learn about any ways they might be able to partner with the community.

After the explanation there was a long silence. Finally, the Caritas leader stood up and

asked very seriously, "Why are you here?"

The priest reiterated that the university team had come to learn about possibilities for partnership, that they had been meeting with numerous other locations, etc.

There was again a long silence. The Caritas leader then once again slowly asked the group, "Why are you here?" He continued:

We know how it works. You come here with your ideas for our community. You come with your research projects and plans. You come with your nice backpacks and water bottles – but if you took a drink of our water you would be in the hospital tomorrow, if there was a hospital here....

His voice broke off. Then he continued: "And we know how it will end. You will leave, with those same backpacks and that same water. Nothing will change."

He sat down and there was a long silence. Then slowly, a very elderly nun stood up and scowled.

"You treat us like dogs!" she exclaimed, pointing at the group. She continued:

All of you – you *blan*! [derogatory word in Haitian Creole for foreigners of European descent], you white people from America. You come with your projects and your ideas. From when people are children here, they are raised to think only about what the foreigners are going to give them – whether it be a piece of candy, a dollar, or a development project. This is not what the Church calls us to! This is not development! This is not solidarity!

The elderly nun sat down, and there was again a long silence. Finally, the Caritas leader stood up and began to speak again:

We are from this community. We know the problems of our community, and we have our own solutions. And yes, there are areas where we have need, and there may be areas for partnership.... But if you have come with your own projects, with your ideas about what our community needs, then you may leave right now."

Again there was a long pause. The university team's leader then began to speak, thanking the group for their honesty, and explained that this was exactly the type of relationship they had hoped for (St. Thomas University/Port-de-Paix, Haiti, Global Solidarity Partnership, 2006).

This initial experience in the town of Ma Wouj proved formational for the university partnership. After this, and numerous other meetings, a clear agreement was made between the university and the Haitian partners that any collaboration would focus on projects led by the local Haitian community themselves. A principle goal of the initiative would be to not only create economic development, but to empower local community initiatives and, in doing so, support the development of an indigenous civil society in the region. As a symbol of this commitment to an empowering relationship, the collaboration would be officially named The St. Thomas University/Port-de-Paix Haiti, Global Solidarity Partnership, drawing on the term "solidarity" as a central tenet of the Catholic social tradition that calls for models of mutual, empowering, collaborative development (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2005).

Criteria 2: Long-term Development.

In further conversations, Haitian leaders expressed their dismay that foreign institutions were quick to offer emergency aid in times of crisis, but unwilling to commit to long-term social or economic development projects in the region. In their own words, they wanted partners who would focus on "auto sufficiency" for their community. There was widespread sentiment that many international partners were involved in these collaborations simply to feel good rather than really focus on the community's future. Some leaders did not see the motives as so benign. They argued that the international NGOs were really in this work for their own benefit – that if the community's problems were truly addressed then the NGOs would be "out of work" – and that the NGOs actually had a self-interest in the community's underdevelopment.

While seemingly extreme, this critique is actually quite common in rural Haiti and has come to the forefront as international partners deeply examine their motives and commitment (Schwartz, 2010; Klarreich & Polman, 2012; Watkins, 2013). In light of these critiques, and as building the long-term sustainability of the

community was part of the university's goal as well, an agreement was made that the university's work would focus on long-term projects aimed at building the self-sufficiency of the region.

Criteria 3: Relationships of Mutuality

Finally, the Haitian partners expressed their sentiment that while there was extreme poverty in Haiti's northwest, there was also much to offer the university as a context for learning. Haiti in many ways is a microcosm that reflects the structural challenges facing other developing nations, and the local community's voice about these challenges (and the solutions they have developed over the years) was presented as an opportunity to educate and develop globally aware, civic-minded students. As mentioned earlier, the growing literature on international community-based learning (CBL) supports this perspective (Bringle et al., 2011; Ibrahim, 2012).

At the same time, as a small university, St. Thomas did not have the resources that might be needed for all forms of potential collaboration. As such, a final criterion to the partnership was added that any potential projects must be a good match between the community's self-identified needs and the university's current academic resources.

Project Identification

After two years of meetings and discussions at both the university and in Haiti, it was decided that three projects had the greatest potential for partnership. These will be detailed below.

The Café COCANO Fair-Trade Coffee Project

One of the first possibilities identified by the Haitian partners was a collaboration in the export and marketing of coffee from Haiti to the United States. Northwest Haiti has some of the oldest coffee-growing traditions in the Americas, as coffee was introduced to the area by the French in the early 1700s and it quickly became one of the first major export commodities from the Caribbean. By the late 18th century Haiti was the world's single largest producer of coffee, and it remained Haiti's largest export commodity for the next 200 years (Dunington, 2001).

By the mid-20th century, however, Haiti was having difficulty competing on the world coffee market. Haiti's weak domestic infrastructure was driving up the cost of production, while international coffee prices were plummeting

due to overproduction in Latin American and Asia. Furthermore, the speculator-exportation system that had existed for generations in Haiti kept payments to farmers at a minimum and concentrated profits in the hands of regional coffee brokers. These factors created prices so low for rural Haitian farmers that they began to uproot their coffee trees and in their place plant corn, beans, and root vegetables to feed their families. Unlike coffee, however, these crops did little to maintain soil on hillsides, thus contributing to the deforestation and leading to mudslides during the rainy season. Mud would then pool along the coastline, killing off reefs and destroying the fishing economy of many seaside villages. This collective process only worsened the extreme poverty of the region, and led to the abandonment of much of the northwest's coffee (INESA, 2001).

Contemporary farmers of the region knew that their coffee was organic, and of a very high-quality, heirloom variety. They also knew that farmers would save their coffee trees, and in fact plant more, if they could get a better price for the beans. The challenge, however, was that they did not have a mechanism for getting the coffee to foreign markets in a way that would ensure them a fair price.

While St. Thomas University had no programs in agriculture or agronomy, the university did have programs in marketing, management, accounting, and international business. It was agreed that the university's STU GSP team would join with the newly formed *Cafeiere et Cacouyere du Nord'Ouest* (COCANO) coffee cooperative to begin to research the development of a direct/fair-trade partnership. The goal was to develop a long-term business plan and infrastructure that would support the farmers in getting the coffee directly to foreign markets, while ensuring them a price at or above international fair-trade standards.

There was much skepticism about the probability of success. Haiti has a long history of failed cooperatives. Never in the history of the Haiti's northwest had there been any such direct/fair-trade export system, and there would be significant opposition from the speculators who had for years benefited from the current arrangement. With these challenges clearly in view, the university team began its work.

The Atelye Thevenet Fair-Trade Artisan Project

In addition to the coffee collaboration,

another Haitian-led project was proposed by communities in the most western regions of the Northwest Department – areas so deforested that they could no longer produce coffee. Haiti has a rich and varied artisan production tradition and northwest Haiti is part of that tradition. A network of Haitian women had come together with the assistance of a local religious community to develop an artisan workshop that would provide job training, be collaboratively run, and offer economic independence to Haitian women of the region. A partnership was soon developed between the university and the *Atelye Thevenet* artisan cooperative in Jean-Rabel, a small town about 25 miles west of Port-de-Paix. As with the COCANO partnership, the university team would work with the artisan cooperative to research areas of potential market growth and develop a system for the import, marketing, and sales of the artisan items to foreign buyers.

The St. Thomas/Port-de-Paix Solar Energy Initiative

Finally, as noted earlier, access to reliable electricity is an ongoing barrier to development in the northwest of Haiti. There is only limited public electricity in the region's capital of Port-de-Paix and none outside of this area. As such, lighting is most often by candle or lamp, and cooking most often by charcoal – another significant contributor to the deforestation of the land. St. Thomas University electrical engineering and solar physics faculty agreed to work with local leaders to develop two projects that would provide sustainable energy to the area and train community members in the implementation, use, and maintenance of solar energy systems, while providing concrete research and learning opportunities for St. Thomas faculty and students.

Finding an Effective Model of Engagement

While criteria had been established and projects identified, there was still the problem of how to organize the university's involvement in a way that would best utilize its limited resources. As noted earlier, St. Thomas is a small, inner-city university with very limited financial support. The university's Center for Justice and Peace had only one staff member at the time, and no institutional funding was available to support the Haiti collaboration. Student academic engagement would also be a challenge: Over 55% of St. Thomas students came from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, many of

whom entered the university with weak high-school preparation and worked second jobs while studying (St. Thomas University, Office of Institutional Research, 2011). The university was both a predominantly African-decent and Hispanic-decent serving institution, due to the large Latin American, African American, and Afro-Caribbean descent communities in South Florida. How to engage such a diverse student body, many of whose families had left impoverished countries themselves, would be a considerable challenge.

Similarly, the challenge of working in rural Haiti was not taken lightly. Haiti has the second largest number of NGOs per-capita in the world, and yet has seen only modest gains in development over the last 30 years (Ratnesar, 2011; Doucet, 2011). As discussed earlier, the Northwest Department has remained one of Haiti's most isolated regions, and even the world's largest NGOs have been unable to effect substantive change in the area. For a small university with such limited resources, the challenge of making a significant impact in the region would be a daunting task.

A decision was made early on to adopt a community-based learning/engaged scholarship approach to the partnership. While not all of the project needs would fit into a traditional research model (some would have specific research questions, while others would involve the production of sales models, business plans, etc.), they would have the common thread of using the university's research and teaching to meet the needs of the collaborative projects. At St. Thomas, engaged scholarship would come to be broadly defined as:

A structured academic partnership with a local community in which faculty and students: participate in an organized activity that addresses needs identified by the local community; learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper appreciation of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally. (Adapted from Bringle & Hatcher, 2011, p. 19).

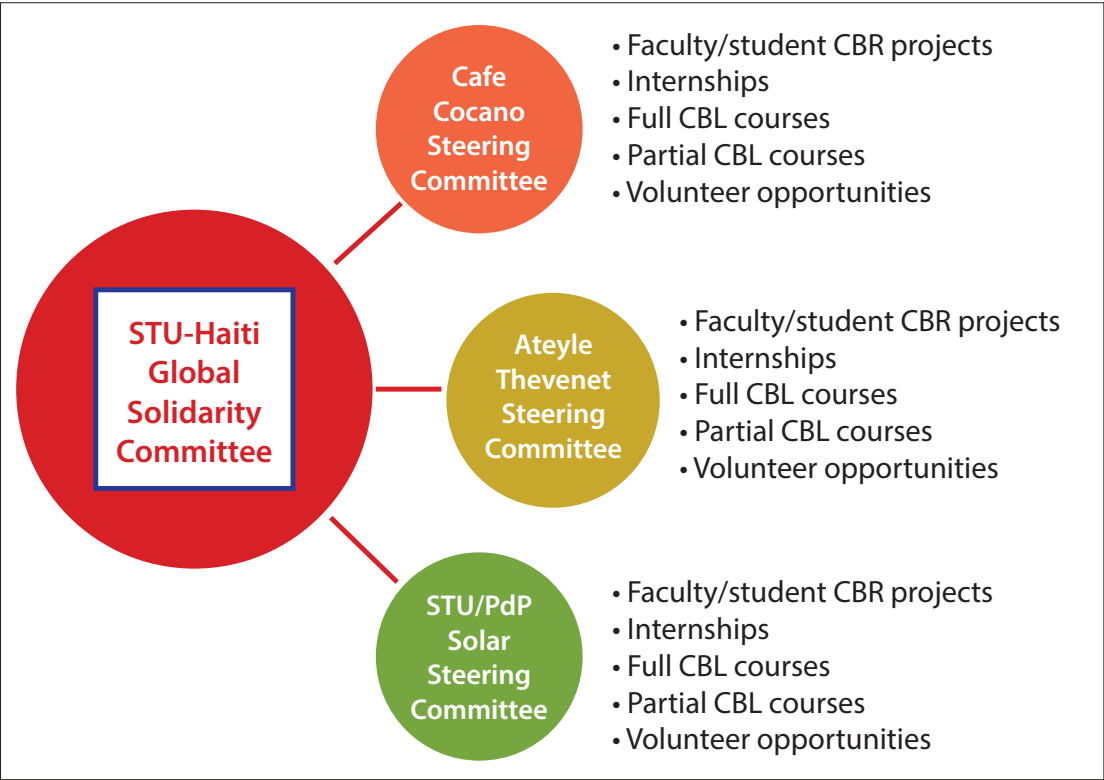
The pedagogical benefits of such an engaged research and learning process have been well documented in the literature (Eyler & Giles, 1999, 2000; Fitzgerald et al., 2010). Beyond these academic benefits, however, utilizing such an approach was also simply the most practical decision given the reality of St. Thomas. Due to heavy teaching loads and students' competing interests of work and school, both faculty and student involvement in co-curricular activities was very limited. Quite simply, it was unrealistic to expect faculty or students to commit significant time to projects outside their academic commitment. Conversely, an approach that could enhance faculty research and teaching, while also providing students with credit, made the projects more appealing to both parties (Eyler & Giles, 1999, 2000).

As noted earlier, the collaboration was strictly focused on one geographical region of Haiti (the Diocese of Port-de-Paix), and within this region it was focused on addressing the needs of these three specific collaborative projects. The hope was that focusing the university's research and teaching in such a targeted way would create a deep (as opposed to wide) level of engagement, and thus maximize community impact despite the challenges.

A steering team called the "Global Solidarity Committee" was formed to bring faculty, staff, students, community-members, and Haitian partners together to identify the long-term aims of the overall initiative. From this larger group, subcommittees were formed to (a) create goals and objectives for each of the three projects, and (b) oversee their ongoing implementation. Finally, a scaffolding of five levels of university engagement in the projects was envisioned, with the aim of offering faculty and students different engagement opportunities with differing levels of commitment and responsibility. The hope was that this would give faculty and students the chance to increase their engagement incrementally throughout their university career, while also offering a broad range of resources to meet specific project needs (see Martin, Bekken, & Poley, 2011). These five levels of engagement were identified as: 1) faculty/student community-based research projects; 2) intensive for-credit internships; 3) full community-based learning courses; 4) courses with a partial community-based learning component; and 5) volunteer opportunities. This model is roughly approximated in Figure 1.

The collaboration is still in development,

Figure 1. Model of University Engagement



and not every level of engagement has been realized for each of the projects. That said, there has been significant progress, and this scaffolding of engagement levels has proven a useful way to organize the various community-based research and learning activities, while meeting the multiple needs of each of the projects. We will now turn to concrete examples of each level of engagement, and detail how it has served, and is serving, the development of the projects. While the following is true for all three of the projects’ implementation, for sake of brevity we will focus our attention on the coffee and artisan initiatives.

Examples of Project-Based Scaffolding

1. Faculty/Student Community-Based Research Projects

Faculty/student CBR projects played a key role in laying the foundation for much of the coffee and artisan projects’ implementation. The Cafe COCANO steering committee worked with a St. Thomas business/marketing faculty member to develop a multi-tiered CBR partnership with the farmers that would: (a) identify the cooperative’s strengths/weaknesses and support

its organizational development; (b) identify the coffee varieties and consult with the farmers on U.S. and foreign market opportunities given Haiti’s unique coffee cultivation history; and (c) develop a large-scale CBR project to integrate St. Thomas academic research and course offerings in a way that would facilitate the import, roast, and distribution of the cooperative’s coffee in the United States.

Similarly, the Ateyle Thevenet steering committee worked with business faculty and students to develop a multi-tiered CBR project/collaboration with the artisans that would: (a) identify a variety of artisanal market opportunities; (b) work in product development, pricing, and market/value niche; and (c) develop an import/sales structure to bring and market production goods in the United States.

The coffee team’s research showed that cooperatives in Haiti had historically failed when they were overly dependent on one export chain and source of support (Dunnington, 2001). A relationship was built with Pascucci Torrefazione, an Italian coffee roaster that would export to the European market, as well as Panther Coffee Roasters, a specialty coffee roaster in Miami

that would work with the university in the U.S. market. Simultaneously, in collaboration with groups such as Catholic Relief Services and the Just Trade Center, technical assistance was provided to the cooperative to support its organization and production planning.

In order to bring the coffee to market, the coffee CBR team developed an integrated process where St. Thomas business students would work with the cooperative to directly import, roast, and sell the coffee in the United States. This would give hands-on learning opportunities to university business students in international trade, marketing and sales, while also increasing profits for the farmers of the region.

A similar process was designed by the artisan team, with art management students focusing on sales opportunities for the Haitian paintings, while other students focused on selling more traditional artisan goods through online and direct retail outlets.

A St. Thomas communications faculty member launched a CBR public relations/marketing team involving a number of undergraduate and graduate communications students. This team was divided into two subsections: one to integrate faculty/student marketing expertise with the research/production needs of the STU GSP projects (developing marketing and promotional materials for the coffee and artisan initiatives, creating websites, event notifications, etc.) and the other (called the “Blooming Hope” documentary project) to organize a CBR/production of a full length documentary highlighting the projects. Employing a participatory-action model, the work integrated faculty research, student learning, and community voice/partner development. The documentary’s release and distribution were planned to serve as a second CBR project focused on using the documentary as a tool for promoting sales/opening new markets in the United States, as well as promoting and building co-op participation in Haiti. This process inspired a St. Thomas doctoral dissertation focused on the transformational power of this collaborative filmmaking initiative (Moyano, 2011).

2. Intensive For-Credit Internships

Internships proved to be key to the development of the projects as well. Once the structures for both the coffee and artisan projects had been researched and developed (import processes,

customs clearance, pricing, opportune sales markets, accounting mechanisms, etc.), interns were recruited to function as the core staff for the day-to-day operation of the projects. These students were generally business or communications students who, under the guidance of both the steering committee and a faculty advisor, planned the semesterly activities of the projects, held sales events, generated reports on the sales, and consulted Haitian partners in the process. While not CBR in a traditional sense, the interns would face questions that needed to be addressed on a weekly basis, drawing on their academic resources to address these challenges.

These internships have become regular offerings at the university, and each year there are marketing, sales, and accounting interns from the university’s school of business who earn credit by integrating their learning into the coordination of sales, marketing, accounting, and inventory management of the coffee and artisan items. Similarly, a public relations intern is recruited from St. Thomas’s communications department every year to coordinate PR and media outreach for the projects, as well as to further the expansion of the documentary film initiative.

3. Full-Course Engagement

Early on, the steering committee also saw the opportunity to develop a three-credit course that would integrate the needs of the projects with student research and learning. An upper-division, interdisciplinary Social Entrepreneurship course based in the St. Thomas School of Business was soon developed. First offered in the spring of 2009, it continues to be offered today with an ever increasing number of student applicants (two sections of the course were needed to meet student demand in 2013 and 2014).

Students in the Social Entrepreneurship course study business management and development models that include a “double bottom line” of both profit and social-responsibility, while applying their learning to specific tasks needed by the coffee and artisan projects. The course incorporates faculty lecturers from disciplines as varied as communications, philosophy, economics, theology, environmental law, psychology, and management – all with the aim of giving a broad orientation to best practices in socially responsible enterprise.

Specific research questions or projects that can be completed in one semester are identified

for the course by the coffee and artisan steering committees. Students in the course then choose one of these issues and throughout the semester utilize their learning to address these issues and further the projects. Integrated into this process is the opportunity for students in the class to travel to Port-de-Paix to meet with their Haitian counterparts and complete project tasks that might require person-to-person contact or site-based work.

Many of the discreet next-steps of the projects have been completed in this way. For example, one year a student group researched socially responsible web design and applied this learning to the creation of a website for the coffee project. A group of students studying art management developed a project in which they researched pricing guidelines for the artisan paintings, while building relationships with local art galleries. Another group researched and helped expand artisan sales beyond handcrafts and into custom tote-bag production. Yet another group researched coffee grading techniques and prepared a report and classification system to aid the coffee farmers in their coffee sorting process. In each case, the community engagement projects were small but concrete, and integrated student learning with real project needs identified in collaboration with the Haitian partners.

4. Partial Course Engagement

There are also projects that do not require a full semester of research or student work but can still serve as a basic level of engagement and student learning. For example, sales events need informed staff, outreach efforts require a group of committed members, and partner meetings require Haitian Creole translation. In light of this, a number of courses were developed that provide faculty and students with an introductory level of information and engagement in the projects, while also meeting some of the projects' basic needs.

For example, a philosophy professor teaching Introduction to Business Ethics expressed interest in orienting his students to the moral issues of international commodity trade. The GSP steering committee worked with the professor to redevelop his course with a new unit focused on coffee trade as an example of global commodity supply chains. Students in the class now study fair-trade and coffee as one of the world's most-traded global commodities and then apply their

learning through interactions (via Skype) with partners in the Cafe COCANO coffee project. The students are then offered the opportunity to work with the project at local coffee sales and promotional events.

Similarly, introductory courses in the St. Thomas School of Theology and Ministry have looked at ethical consumption from the perspective of Catholic social thought, with a specific focus on coffee as a common beverage of college students. After considering various trade models through the ethical lens of the Catholic tradition, students are offered the opportunity to take part in promotional events for the coffee project in the local Haitian Catholic community. Students then reflect and integrate their learning from this partnership in light of their experience and in-class study.

Other partial-engagement courses have included introductory level radio and film classes. In these courses students have taken on production of short public service announcements (PSAs) within the class. The PSAs give students the hands-on opportunity to integrate their learning about the projects with actual radio/film production, while also providing the projects with valuable PR materials to support sales. In each case, the engaged learning component is not the entire focus of the course, but it contributes to concrete student learning outcomes and builds needed support for the projects.

5. Volunteer Opportunities

Finally, volunteer opportunities have been integrated into the ongoing work of the projects. While these opportunities entail virtually no research, they have offered a first-step into the work for faculty and students who want to learn about the projects without academic credit or research commitment. Often this takes the form of simple coffee packaging or assisting in promotional sales events. If the volunteers express further interest, they are then encouraged to follow-up by working with the steering committee to find a connection between their teaching and research and the needs of the project (for faculty) or enrolling in a course that works in closer collaboration with the projects (for students).

This flexible, project-focused, multi-tiered model of engagement has been applied to each of the projects and has helped organize the engagement of the university in a way that brings faculty from a number of disciplines together,

offers multiple levels of engagement opportunities for students, and provides numerous resources to serve the various needs of the projects. While still in development, it has proven to be a helpful structure in organizing, and achieving, both academic learning and community impact.

Community Matters: Output, Outcomes, and Impact

In their recent work, Mary Beckman and her colleagues have introduced a framework for achieving community impact that includes three critical components: (1) commitment to a long-term process of change with a specific goal, (2) a process of evaluation and revision to stay focused on this goal, and (3) the involvement of multiple contributors, including the affected community, in this process (Beckman, Penney, & Cockburn, 2011). Though the STU GSP collaborations were not designed with this framework in mind, in many ways their implementation reflect these components: (1) the projects were developed with a commitment to long-term economic self-sufficiency in northwest Haiti, and with the specific goals of developing fair/direct-trade coffee and artisan import processes, as well as sustainable solar-energy initiatives; (2) the STU GSP steering committees kept the long-term goals in mind, clarifying research needs as they became apparent, and constantly evaluating and revising the projects' direction in light of project results; and (3) the projects included multiple voices and input of faculty, students, community partners, and perhaps most essentially, the Haitian partners. In retrospect, it seems likely that these components were key in the project's success to date.

In the same work, Beckman and her colleagues also make clear the importance of differentiating three stages in the community change process. These are: (a) outputs – referring to the initial results of a CBR/CBL initiative; (b) outcomes – referring to the effects of the application of the CBR/CBL results; and (c) impact – referring to the long-term contribution of this collaboration over time. While these categories were not used in the initial planning of the projects, they are useful to describe some of the planned, as well as some of the unforeseen, community changes that have come about as a result of the STU GSP collaboration. These will be briefly summarized below.

The Café COCANO Fair-Trade Coffee Project

Outputs

- With university support, the COCANO cooperative created a functioning infrastructure for both coffee production and cooperative management that included space for expansion and collaboration with multiple export partners.
- Multiple technical assistance projects were created in collaboration with the university that brought in agronomists from Italy, Burundi, Brazil, and the United States to work with the cooperative in coffee cultivation and processing.
- A five-fold, interdisciplinary scaffolding model of engagement was developed to integrate St. Thomas business and communications students into the import, marketing, sales, and accounting of the coffee project.
- A faculty/student communications CBR team developed a full-length documentary, “Blooming Hope,” that was produced using a participatory-action/production model to promote the work of the Haitian partners.

Outcomes

- Coffee farmers in Haiti's northwest are exporting coffee in a direct fair-trade partnership for the first time in history (see cafecocano.com, youtube.com/cafecocano, and www.facebook.com/cafecocano).
- Over 120,000 pounds of coffee have been exported by the cooperative in the last three years, with production growing significantly year-to-year.
- The cooperative is now earning \$4.16/lb on exports to the United States – more than twice the current international fair-trade standards of \$1.85/lb (Fairtrade International, 2014).
- Approximately 20 delegations from the university have traveled to Haiti to work on-site, and over 200 students have been involved in for-credit CBR/CBL activities connected to next steps on the projects.
- The National Association of Haitian Cooperatives has identified COCANO

as a leading new cooperative in Haiti, and the Hudson Institute's Index of Global Philanthropy highlighted the St. Thomas/Café COCANO collaboration as one of its projects of success in 2010 (Hudson Institute, 2010).

Impact

- Over 300 farmer-families, and close to 2000 individuals, are currently employed in the cultivation, harvesting, and processing of COCANO coffee in six areas of the Diocese of Port-de-Paix (La Croix, Guichard, Gaspard, Jean Claire, Anse-a-Fleur, and Ma Wouj).
- The cooperative has begun coffee nursery programs, with thousands of seedlings planted in what is, in effect, an economically incentivized reforestation effort for northwest Haiti.
- The cooperative provided employment to individuals displaced to northwest Haiti following the 2010 earthquake in Port-au-Prince, thus supporting the much-needed decentralization of the Haitian economy (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2010, 2012; Stevens & St. Hubert, 2010; Ministry of the Interior of Haiti, 2011).
- In response to the 2010–2011 cholera epidemic, the cooperative saved hundreds of lives by organizing its own relief efforts in the remote northwest mountains, essentially functioning as an independent relief organization in areas not served by foreign NGOs (MSPP & WHO, 2011; St. Hubert, 2011).
- The cooperative has taken on increasing responsibility as a conduit between coffee farmers and the Haitian government, thus supporting the development of social capital in its members, and further strengthening its role as a functioning unit of civil society (Froehle, 2013).

The Ateyle Thevenet Artisan Initiative

Outputs

- The same five-fold, interdisciplinary scaffolding of engagement opportunities was created to integrate student research and learning with the import, marketing, and sales of hand-made arti-

san crafts in the United States.

- The Haitian artisans' workshop was strengthened and developed into a formal atelier (studio) production unit and three-year training facility to develop future artisans in the community.
- Business models, including pricing indices based on market standards, were developed to aid planning for future sales.
- New artisan items such as high-quality, hand-crafted, custom tote-bags were developed in a collaboration between student market-research efforts and the atelier's own artisan training staff.

Outcomes

- The first large scale fair-trade artisan project has been established between Port-de-Paix and the United States (see www.haitiartisanscrafts.com).
- Over \$65,000 worth of Haitian artisan products have been sold in the United States.
- Over 200 women in five artisan centers have been employed throughout Haiti's Northwest Department (Bombardopolis, Jean-Rabel, St. Louis du Nord, Bonneau, and Anse a Fleur).

Impact

- After the 2010 earthquake, like the coffee cooperative, the artisan cooperative played an important role in absorbing displaced individuals into the local economy of Haiti's northwest.
- Beyond simply a source of employment, the artisan cooperative has come to serve as a source of technical educational in its community, and a forum for addressing local women's issues.
- The artisan cooperative has begun a new initiative to support women who have graduated from the co-op and gone on to start their own businesses.

The St. Thomas/Port-de-Paix Solar Energy Initiative

Outputs

- With university support, a large-scale solar oven was implemented in the poorest parish of the Northwest Department to cook for the community school without the need for charcoal.
- A collaboration was created with Haiti

Tec (a technical training school in Port-au-Prince) to work with the university and the Cathedral of Port-de-Paix in the design and implementation of a 10kw solar energy system for the Cathedral and community center of the region.

- A steering committee was created with St. Thomas physics/solar energy faculty, electrical engineering students, and community electricians to work with the Haitian partners in researching and developing the appropriate technology for the community's needs.

Outcomes

- Three-hundred school children in Baie-de-Henne – the poorest, most deforested parish of Port-de-Paix – are currently fed by a large solar oven provided by the collaboration.
- A 10kw solar energy system for the Cathedral of Port-de-Paix has been designed and installed by the St. Thomas/Haiti Tec solar team in collaboration with community leaders in Port-de-Paix.

Impact

- The solar oven in Baie-de-Henne is supporting sustainable cooking methods, while raising awareness about charcoal/tree conservation in one of Haiti's most critically deforested areas.
- The Cathedral of Port-de-Paix solar project is providing light to thousands who come to this key community center in the capital of the northwest region, offsetting 12,479 pounds of CO₂ pollution annually and has provided hands-on learning experiences for St. Thomas and Haiti Tec students, as well as for the local Haitian electricians trained during the process in Port-de-Paix.
- Haiti Tec partners, already commissioned by the Haitian government to develop electrical codes for the country, have received a level of training in international standards that they had not previously received working only with domestic partners.

For all three projects, it has been the development of the Haitian community's capacity to (1) define its own problems, (2)

create its own solutions, and (3) implement its own plans that the university partners have seen as most promising in terms of a contribution to long-term, sustainable development for the region.

Lessons Learned and Areas for Growth

The positive experience of the STU GSP collaboration to date suggests that three main lessons can be learned from the university's partnership in Haiti:

1. A geographically centered, community-led, project-focused collaboration can help maximize benefit for both partners, as university resources are optimized, local leadership is empowered, long-term collaborative relationships develop, and impact (both community and student) synergize.
2. Engaging individual projects from multiple disciplines adds breadth to student learning, increases faculty interaction, and increases impact by providing multiple resources to meet project needs.
3. Offering a scaffolding of engagement levels provides pathways to engagement for faculty/students at different points in their career, while also meeting multiple project needs (from research questions, to day-to-day operations, to one-time volunteers, etc.)

Though there has been significant success, a number of weaknesses/areas for growth have been identified by the project partners:

- A. Ongoing funding has been a challenge for the project, as many funders focus their support either on internationally based development operations or domestic higher-educational initiatives, but do not have a category for projects that integrate the latter with the former.
- B. Use of standardized logic models that visually map out required resources (inputs), activities to take place (processes), assessable outputs, and desired outcomes is quickly becoming a best-practice in university-community engagement planning. While logic models had not been historically used by the STU GSP teams, in 2013–2014 the project committees began using such models with their partners to map out ideal (1) community impact outcomes, (2) academic

learning outcomes, and (3) civic learning outcomes for each of the five levels of project engagement (Howard, 2001; Finley, 2013).

- C. Standardized assessment of each of the three principal outcome areas mentioned above (community impact, academic learning, and civic learning) is a future goal as the projects aim to take their efforts to an even higher level of accountability and efficacy.

While the results of the above changes remain to be seen, the hope is that a more structured planning and assessment process will enhance long term the impact of the collaborations, both for the university and the community.

Conclusion

As programs of engaged scholarship become more widespread, universities will continue to consider how they can use their limited resources to maximize community impact while offering a variety of meaningful community-based research and learning opportunities for faculty and students. The St. Thomas University/Port-de-Paix Global Solidarity Partnership was born out of just such an effort to leverage the minimal resources of a small, urban, Catholic university into long-term development in one of the Western Hemisphere's poorest regions. While the programs are still young, the experience so far suggests that significant impact can be attained by adopting a model that is geographically centered, community-led, project-focused, interdisciplinary and utilizes a multi-tiered scaffolding of engagement opportunities to address the varied needs of the university-community initiative.

References

Amor en Accion. (2011). *History, theology and sister-school program*. Retrieved from http://amorenaccion.com/e_html/history/history.html and http://amorenaccion.com/e_html/work/ourwork_SisterSchool.html.

Beckman, M., Penney, N., & Cockburn, B. (2011). Maximizing the Impact of Community-Based Research. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 15 (2), 83–103.

Brescia, W, Mullins, C, & Miller, M. (2009). Project-based service-learning in an instructional technology graduate program. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 3(2). [\[sotl/vol3/iss2/20\]\(http://sotl/vol3/iss2/20\).](http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/ij-</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

Bingle, R.G., & Hatcher, J.A. (2009). Innovative practices in service-learning and curricular engagement. In Sandmann, L., Thornton, C.H., & Jaeger, A.J. (Eds.), *Institutionalizing community engagement in higher education: The first wave of Carnegie classified institutions. New Directions for Higher Education* (pp. 37–46). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Wiley Publishing.

Bingle, R., Hatcher, J., & Jones, S. (2011). *International service learning: Conceptual frameworks and research*. Sterling, Virginia, Stylus Press.

Casale, F., & Galligan-Stierle, M. (2010). The transformational mission of a Diocesan university. *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, 29 (1), 83–99.

Doucet, I. (2011). NGO's have failed Haiti. *NPR/The Nation*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/13/132884795/the-nation-how-ngos-have-failed-haiti>.

Dunnington, L. (2001). A case study in brand creation with small holders: Haitian Bleu®. Development Alternatives International, Inc. Retrieved from <http://cfihaiti.net/pdf/coffee-industry.pdf>.

Eyler, J., & Giles, D. (1999). *Where's the learning in service-learning?* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Eyler, J., & Giles, D. (2000). *At a glance: What we know about the effects of service-learning on college students, faculty, institutions, and communities, 1993–2000: Third Edition.* Report for the Corporation for National and Community Service, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://service-learning.org/filemanager/download/aag.pdf>.

Fairtrade International. (2014). Fair trade minimum price and premium table – updated April 2014. *Fairtrade International*. Retrieved from <http://www.fairtrade.net/price-and-premium-info.html>.

Fitzgerald, H., Burack, C., & Seifer, S. (eds). (2010). *Engaged scholarship: Contemporary landscapes, future directions*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.

Finley, A. (2013). *Assessing together: Practical strategies for measuring civic learning*. Presentation during the 2013 NASPA Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Conference, June 21, 2013, Philadelphia, PA.

Flicker, S., & Savan, B. (2006). *A snapshot of CBR in Canada*. Toronto: Wellesley Institute.

Froehle, B. (producer). (2013). Meeting of COCANO president, Haitian Ministry of Agriculture, Haitian Consulate, and St. Thomas Uni-

versity [video], April 5, 2013. Available from St. Thomas University Center for Justice and Peace, www.stu.edu/cjp.

Howard, J. (2001). *Service-learning course design workbook*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan OSCL Press.

Hudson Institute Center for Global Prosperity. (2010). Catholic Relief Services, Archdiocese of Miami, St. Thomas University – Made in the shade. Hudson Institute 2010 Index of Global Philanthropy and Remittances (37). Washington, DC: Hudson Institute. Retrieved from http://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/978/index_of_global_philanthropy_and_remittances_2010.pdf.

Iannone, J. (2010) *Toward a creative partnership between the Archdiocese of Miami and Saint Thomas University*. Miami, FL. Ecclesial partnership document available through the St. Thomas University Center for Justice and Peace: www.stu.edu/cjp.

Ibrahim, B.L. (2012). International service-learning as a path to global citizenship. In J.A. Hatcher and R.G. Bringle (Eds.), *Understanding service-learning and community engagement: Crossing boundaries through research* (pp. 11–24). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

INESA. (2001). *Coffee in Haiti: The current state of the industry and a lobbying campaign to improve the socio-economic position of growers*. INESA, September 2001. Available in French at http://www.icefda.org/IMG/pdf/cafe_enHaiti_bon_.pdf.

Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI). (2009). *Haiti: Major city, town and agglomerations*. Retrieved from <http://www.city-population.de/Haiti.html>.

John Paul II (1990, August 15). Apostolic constitution on Catholic universities, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_xex-corde-ecclesiae_en.html.

Klarreich, K., & Polman, L. (2012, Nov 19). The NGO Republic of Haiti: How the international relief effort after the 2010 earthquake excluded Haitians from their own recovery. *The Nation*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenation.com/article/170929/ngo-republic-haiti#ixzz2Xp3imnPT>.

Martin, C., Bekken, B., & Poley, L. (2011). *Community action projects: Scaffolding and authentic assessments for effective service-learning*. Presenta-

tion at the 42nd Annual International Society for Exploring Teaching and Learning, October 14, 2011). San Antonio, TX. Abstract retrieved from <http://www.isetl.org/conference/presentation.cfm?pid=1370>.

Miami International Film Festival. (2011). *2010 Miami International Film Festival award winners*. Retrieved from <http://www.miamifilmfestival.com/archives/2010/2010winners.aspx>.

Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population & the World Health Organization. (2011). *Health Cluster Bulletin: Cholera and post-earthquake response in Haiti*. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/hac/crises/hti/HealthCluster-Bulletin30-21122011-ENG.pdf>.

Ministry of the Interior of Haiti. (2011, Dec 1). *Haiti charts new course for economic development with decentralization and community empowerment as key drivers*. Press release: *PR Newswire, United Business Media*. Port-au-Prince Haiti. Retrieved from <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/haiti-charts-new-course-for-economic-development-with-decentralization-and-community-empowerment-as-key-drivers-134870503.html>.

Mitch, M. (2011). *The challenge and spirituality of Catholic social teaching*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Moyano, M. (2011). *Documentaries for social change: An examination of blooming hope* (doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, UMI Dissertations Publishing. (Accession Order No. 3452863).

Mugisha, V. (2011). *Livelihoods in Northern Haiti, Summary of a participatory assessment*. Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services.

Nigro, G., & Farnsworth, N. (2009). *The effects of S-L on retention. A report to the Northern New England Campus Compact*. Retrieved from [http://www.uvm.edu/~partners/Retention%20and%20S-L%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~partners/Retention%20and%20S-L%20(1).pdf).

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. (2005). *Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church*. Washington, DC: USCCB Communications.

Putnam, R. (1992). *Making democracy work, Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ratnesar, R. (2011). "Who failed on Haiti's recovery?" *Time*. Retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2041450,00.html>.

Regalado, M. (2010, Feb. 22). Helping hope 'bloom' in Haiti. *The Florida Catholic*, p.1. Retrieved from <http://newmiamiarch.org/ip.as>

p?op=Article_10222115611989.

Schwartz, T. (2010). *Travesty in Haiti: A true account of Christian missions, orphanages, food aid, fraud and drug trafficking*. Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing.

Sherry, G. (1978, July 27). Haitian Center Reality. *The Voice* (Archdiocese of Miami, FL), 1–3.

St. Hubert, S. (2011). Interview with COCANO President Semilforte St. Hubert on cooperative's cholera response in northwest Haiti. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/cafecocano.

Stevens, B., & St. Hubert, S. (2010). Interview with COCANO President Semilforte St. Hubert on COCANO's relationship to the displaced in Haiti's northwest. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tz1LdrKbXo>.

St. Thomas University, Office of Institutional Research. (2011). 2009-2010 Data Sets and 2010-2011 *Factbook*. Retrieved from <http://www.stu.edu/AboutSTU/OfficeofPlanningEnrollment/OfficeofInstitutionalResearch/tabid/77/Default.aspx>.

St. Thomas University Global Solidarity Project. (2006). Haiti preparation formation materials. Available from the St. Thomas University Center for Justice and Peace, www.stu.edu/cjp.

United Nations Children's Fund. (2010). At a glance: Haiti statistics. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/haiti_statistics.html.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2010, February 17). Haiti: Earthquake: Population movements out of Port-au-Prince (map). Retrieved from <http://reliefweb.int/node/15791>.



Semilforte St. Hubert, president of the COCANO coffee cooperative, inspects green coffee cherries with St. Thomas University professor of Global Entrepreneurship Dr. Justin Peart in La Croix St. Josef, Haiti.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2012). *Haiti: Two years after the devastating earthquake*. Retrieved from <http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/haiti-two-years-after-devastating-earthquake>.

Watkins, A. (2013). GAO slams USAID's Haiti rebuilding efforts. *The Miami Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/06/25/3470384/gao-slams-usaids-haiti-rebuilding.html#storylink=cpy>.

About the Author

Anthony Vinciguerra coordinates the Center for Community Engagement (formerly known as the Center for Justice and Peace) at St. Thomas University in Miami Gardens, Florida.



Anthony Vinciguerra walks with children at the site of STU GSP solar oven initiative in Baie-de-Henne, Haiti.



Emmanuel Buteau, St. Thomas doctoral student, speaks with COCANO coffee farmers (from left) Petit Frere Lafontant, Eliocoer Beaubrun, and Ferdinand Louis in San Louis du Nord, Haiti.