

NEWS

▼ POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

# Education hopes for a generation lost in Haiti quake

I know the answer to this question, but it still begs to be asked: Where is the Haitian government?

I have yet to hear a statement from Haiti President Rene Preval in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that has hit his country.

And earlier this week, I heard on the news that their minister of culture lost her entire family and is now living in a park.

Everything I have heard so far is statements from our own prime minister, U.S. President Barack Obama and the French government as they implement relief ef-



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SCHOOLS IN

forts.

My husband tells me that one of the biggest issues with Haiti is the distrust of that country's government, which occurred after strong dictatorships led by Papa Doc (Dr. François Duvalier) and his son Bebe Doc (Jean Claude Duvalier) from 1957 to 1986.

This long history of

oppression has scarred Haitians and has led to civil unrest for years.

This unrest led to the 2004 revolution where the United Nations, with the support of a number of other countries, brought in peacekeepers and they have been there ever since.

From what I can gather, Haiti is a country held in limbo with ineffective governments and outside forces maintaining the peace.

In turn, the people of Haiti have limited access to public health and education.

Education is so under resourced that only 67 per

cent of Haitians are literate, less than 30 per cent of the population reach Grade 6 and only 20 per cent make it to high school.

The government is so lacking when it comes to education that 90 per cent of schools in Haiti are sponsored and supported by religious organizations.

There were few public schools before the quake and now there are even less.

So what happens to those students who lost their schools in the quake?

One article I read last week talked about high

school students walking around with no place to go because their public school was now a pile a rubble.

Who knows how many of their teachers died in the earthquake.

Their education may well be lost as the support systems they had before the quake are now gone.

They most likely will be forced into employment as the country rebuilds.

This is why these students are now being called the lost generation.

They were the lucky 20 per cent who could go to high school and this small window of oppor-

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tunity probably won't ever come back again.

Some of these students may end up working for menial wages and never be able to move beyond the slums of Port-au-Prince.

Their children, and their children's children will be raised in a poor, uneducated environment because their grandfather or grandmother's chance for a higher education was lost one fateful day way back in January 2010.

In addition to the loss of family and friends, it is hope for a better life through education that was taken as well from the youth of Haiti.

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