



Advancing Collaboration with Haiti Partners

Approach to Collaboration

Haiti Partners' culture is influenced by advice that our director, John Engle, received 25 years ago – to create effective partnerships, be clear about the mission, stay small, and stay nimble. We believe collaboration entails a good leadership culture. We utilize the Open Space Technology meeting method, as leadership is about inviting and creating conditions that empower others to engage. Haiti Partners carries this notion with us throughout our many partnerships.

We support a variety of different schools in Haiti, including partner schools and our very own school, established seven years ago with our local community there. We knew the school was lacking a significant need – healthcare. As an organization that focuses on education, not healthcare, we developed

a partnership with Haiti Clinic to collaborate and provide healthcare for people in the community and children at our school.

Haiti Partners believes our schools should offer relevant learning experiences for children so they can transform their society. We aim to work not only with the children but their parents as well. One of our main partners, Beyond Borders, is an organization that focuses on school-based community development, child protection, and provides training towards ending violence against women. By partnering with us, Beyond Borders can accomplish its objectives by training to impact more people. In turn, we achieve our objectives by creating a model community that respects children's rights and eliminates gender-based violence.

Application of the 9 Considerations for Collaboration

Build Trust

We build trust by seeking collaborators with similar values. Two organizations could be reputable and credible but have entirely different cultures. We emphasize collaborative leadership, which entails accountability to one another. Despite a hierarchy in a working environment, everybody who carries out a project has a say. By working together we build trust.

Have a Vision

We strongly believe in the clarity of having a vision and mission. Vision unites us. The Children's Academy, a school we support, has a mission to prepare and inspire change makers. The Academy can articulate their mission because they have a clear vision - a goal they're all working to achieve. This perspective allows our minds to be more open and enables us to explore unconventional solutions.

Seek to Assure the Success of Your Collaborators

As a nonprofit organization working in Haiti, we've had the benefit of working with exemplary foundations such as the SG Foundation and Vista Hermosa. They are interested in who we are and our needs, rather than how we fit into theirs. These kinds of funders inspire us as we work alongside Haitian schools. We aim to ensure our requirements are realistic and show we care about their experiences, so our relationships are transformational rather than transactional.

Take Stock

Haiti Partners can share the space of our school with people in the community. The school serves as a secure and safe place for the people which aids in strengthening the families. Unfortunately, child servitude is a significant problem in Haiti. Our space generates opportunities for parents and community members to participate in training on child protection, positive discipline, and ending gender-based violence. By keeping the school space available after hours, we're able to offer

a safe haven for the families. We also now have 500 community members and parents that meet weekly to create village savings and loans.

Start Small

We've learned the importance of going slow and starting small from our Haitian colleagues. Having a predetermined beginning and ending in a new partnership lays the groundwork for a longer relationship. This framework builds trust without setting unexpected expectations.

Fail Fast, and Build Rigorous Feedback Loops

Haiti Partners doesn't like the word fail, so we embrace learning moments instead. More than ten years ago, we wanted to generate a sustainable revenue source for the Haitian schools under our support, as the government is only responsible for about 10% of the schools in Haiti. We also wanted to create a social business model wherein parents could volunteer, and children could learn entrepreneurship and business skills. These projects required significant investments, and we had to cancel one of the plans to change it into another business. We established elaborate projects with partners before we had the chance to work together. In retrospect, creating small, income-generating projects together would have ensured we could succeed on a small scale before committing to larger collaborative efforts.

Take a Portfolio Approach

Whenever we find an opportunity where there's alignment between people or organizations, we like to seize the moment. Having several partnerships provides learning opportunities and creates room for growth on all levels. This culture in our organization enables opportunities for developing leadership and management skills.

Consider Non-traditional Partners

As a nonprofit that works with a local community to create schools, we need to construct buildings.

We started by partnering with Architecture for Humanity, which facilitated the process as we contracted a Haitian firm. The next time we built a school, we partnered with a nonprofit that focuses on training people for education or earthquake-resistant construction. Thus, we contracted the organization to train parents in our community throughout the year and a half process of building. Today, we no longer need a construction firm to build because we have the expertise locally. We now contract an international engineering company for inspections to ensure everything goes well.

Keep Your Donors Apprised of Your Collaborations

Haiti Partners is always striving to highlight our partnerships. There are thousands of organizations working in Haiti that often step on one another instead of collaborating. We aim to be conscious of emphasizing our partnerships – it's part of our name – Haiti Partners.

Future Collaborations

We're currently expanding the gardens on school grounds, and parents are volunteering service hours to maintain these. Since we have composting latrines at the school, we're looking for partners with more expertise in permaculture.



John Engle, Director
Haiti Partners

About the Organization

Haiti Partners' mission is to 'Help Haitians Change Haiti through Education.' Our belief is that Haiti's brutal history of colonization, slavery, and exploitation has traumatized its people and created a culture of authoritarian leadership that all too often results in the abuse of power and a scarcity mindset. The abuse of power stifles the positive evolution of institutions – families, organizations, businesses, and the government. Leaders that abuse power create and perpetuate conditions that inhibit people from growing, innovating and discovering their potential.

In order for Haiti to address its many challenges, its children need to experience an innovative, quality education – an education that empowers them to develop their potential, to think outside the box and to engage in improving their communities. This is Haiti Partners' mission and this is the work that we engage in each day.

Disclaimer: All participants were interviewed about past collaborations through the framework of the 9 Considerations for Collaboration. Naturally in some organizations, not every one of the considerations are applicable to their circumstances.