

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2010 9:57 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: Griot education project in Haiti - another idea -- much quicker ramp-up

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From: David Domenici [mailto:]
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2010 8:54 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: Griot education project in Haiti - another idea -- much quicker ramp-up

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Cheryl:

After watching scenes on TV, talking w/ you and others, here is idea for nearly immediate way to get kids back 'in school' or into school for the first time. It would be very cheap, could get started very soon—say mid-February, could be linked to other distribution networks (food/medical supplies), and would be quite organic and grassroots. I'll call it the Griot education project (in the west African tradition of a streetside storytellers).

Context/Understanding:

Looks like there are a few hundred thousand kids in Port-au-Prince who pretty soon will be (already are) sitting around day-to-day w/ more or less nothing to do. Their schools got destroyed, their neighborhoods in rough shape. These are young kids who would be best served if they could get out of the house for a few hours a day (possibly even freeing up parents to do rebuilding or other work), and not spend their time getting caught up in crime, or desperately searching through rubble for a meal to eat...and get back to school, and engage their naturally curious brains.

The goal of this program is to immediately give them a place to go, a chance to interface with an energetic educator, and at least expose them to relevant, skill-enhancing academic work that engages them while we rebuild education infrastructure. It also would likely get them 1 meal each day, and if needed a way to get referred for immediate medical attention.

Griot Educators:

We recruit and equip a cadre of teachers who will go out into communities with a set of portable materials each morning—educators who after a few days will find a place to teach, and will have attracted class of students. This is modeled off the street artist/storyteller.

We flyer the neighborhoods, advertising teaching positions. We work w/ whoever we can find who can help us identify people who were good teachers prior to the earthquake and/or people who have the ability to attract kids (appropriately).

We select teachers. We agree to pay them a daily/weekly stipend. We want people who know their communities, who don't need a lot of direction, who will take a cart full of educational materials, find a corner, or abandoned building and start teaching to whoever shows up. People who will do anything to get some young kids to try to read or do some math problems or sing songs and write poetry...

Education Supply Centers

We set up education supply centers and a distribution system. Each center is staffed by small team—1 lead person is an education-leader, others are admin and support. Griots come the center in the morning, they get a day's worth of educational materials (we select it, we photocopy it, we give them 50 pencils, etc.). We agree to send over 50 meals two hours later. Each Griot wheels his portable classroom to his/her spot and sets up shop...Kids come, and he/she teaches. It builds momentum and kids get off the streets, out of their homes and come to the morning 'school' site. Kids who come get a meal. Maybe we end up w/ 3 tiers of Griots—1 who works w/ 4, 5, 6 year olds, 1 with 7, 8, 9 year olds, 1 with 10, 11, 12 year olds. Each one picks up a packet of material that is more or less appropriate for that age group. All this is incredibly flexible and fluid. Maybe one morning session and then an after lunch session.

The education supply centers are warehouses we set up. They have copiers, lots of paper, basic school supplies, some art supplies, etc. (Over time, maybe people donate a bunch of books or magazines, etc—they become ways for artists, volunteers, entertainers to connect w/ kids, as well.) Each morning a group of Griots go to their supply centers and pick up materials, and fill up their cart...and roll down the block, or blocks and set up their 'school' for the day. Maybe someone wants to donate a bunch of art supplies, or harmonicas—who knows—whatever it takes to get kids to show up and do some academic and enrichment activities. These education supply centers likely get linked to other distribution hubs. This way they can get linked w/ food or other supplies.

Longer-term/setting the stage for longer-term ramp up

Over time, some of the Griots will end up running little schools that start to feel permanent. Kids will bring in chairs and stools...maybe some of the teaching material ends up staying at the school sites, and the end up as likely places for folks to build/rebuild schools. But in the near term, the 'school' is whatever spot the Griot goes to where he/she can attract a cadre of kids—and the good news is that can be almost anywhere.

This program is cheap -- as costly as it is to pay stipends to the Griots, plus the cost of supplies, delivery, and some human capital to man the supply centers, develop/acquire high interest, high educational value material. I think quite cheap, and could easily be costed out once we knew about how much we need to pay a Griot for a day of teaching.

It also gets some folks working, immediately.

Some Griots would take stipend and not teach; some wouldn't do it well; some would pawn off the food/biscuits...But we could weed much of that out and w/ this sort of approach, you don't let a few bad apples spoil the larger program (or fear of them stop it from getting started). This program is about planting the seeds for the future schools to come, about getting young kids off streets and stoops and into a fun/learning environment, about empowering talented teacher-artists to go out into their communities armed w/ some basic materials, their good will, their creativity (and a paycheck)—together the kids and the Griots will find local places to call and claim as their schools.

And while this is going on, we have time to build out infrastructure (human capital, facilities, instructional/curricular materials) for more robust ramp-up over time.

Per usual, feel free to ignore or pass on.

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