Evaluation of the EU’s co-operation with the Republic of Haiti (2008-2012)

Executive summary

August 2014
Objective and scope of the evaluation

The main objectives of the evaluation are:
- To ensure accountability and to provide the relevant services of the European Union (EU) and the wider public with an overall independent evaluation of the EU’s past and current co-operation relation and partnership agreements with the Government of Haiti.
- To identify key lessons and formulate recommendations in order to improve the current and future strategies, programmes and activities of the EU.

The evaluation covers all co-operation strategies, agreements and other official engagements between the EU and the Republic of Haiti, as well as their implementation, over the period 2008-2012.

Evaluation methodology and challenges

The approach and methodology for this evaluation are based on the official methodological guidelines of the DG DEVCO Evaluation Unit.1 The study's progress was closely followed by a Reference Group, under the leadership of the Evaluation Unit. The Reference Group was composed of members of relevant EU services (European Commission and European External Action Service), the EU Delegation in Haiti, the National Authorising Officer in Haiti, and the Embassy of Haiti in Belgium.

The main challenges faced during this evaluation relate largely to the impact of the 2010 earthquake on the context of co-operation (such as loss of life, staff changes on both the Government and development partners’ sides, physical data loss, and changes in the focus of development/co-operation strategies). The measurement of the support’s long-term effects has also been made difficult by numerous factors specific to the fragile state context.

Country context

Despite numerous natural and social assets, Haiti remains the poorest country of the Americas2 and has high level of inequality. The context of fragility in Haiti partly stems from its troubled political history, a specific social configuration, and a significant environmental vulnerability. A small cluster of families controls the majority of resources and profitable economic activities and is able to exert considerable influence on public opinion and the Parliament. This situation, along with the economic disadvantage of a great part of the population, has fed corruption and exposed most governments to diverse kinds of pressure.

Haiti’s geopolitical context is characterised by the proximity of the United States, a growing influence of some Latin American countries such as Venezuela, a historically complex relationship with its neighbour, the Dominican Republic, and a high dependency on external aid. After the coup d’etat in 2004, the process of restoring stable executive and legislative powers faced difficulties, but eventually led to a relative normalisation, with elections organised under the aegis of the UN in 2006 and new elections in 2011. The United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has been in the country since June 2004.

In recent years, Haiti has been exposed to a series of external shocks – in particular, the soaring price of essential commodities in 2007/2008, hurricanes and severe floods in 2008, and a devastating earthquake in January 2010 that was followed by a long-lasting cholera epidemic.

EU-Haiti co-operation

In this context, the strategic framework of the EU-Haiti co-operation covered multiple sectors, including: road infrastructure, economic governance, democratic governance, education, disaster risk management and food security. The total amount contracted over the period 2008-2012 was €485.6 million, of which 80% was financed through the European Development Fund (EDF). Beyond the EDF, EU-Haiti co-operation was based on a variety of instruments, in particular: the thematic lines of the Instrument for Development Co-operation (such as the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities Programme, and the Food Security Programme), the Food Facility and the Instrument for Stability.

During the same period, about €210 million was allocated to emergency operations through the EU’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO).

Overall assessment

EU support to Haiti has targeted the core dimensions of fragility, focusing on two levels: (i) strengthening of the state, and economic reconstruction of the country (budget support and rehabilitation of major infrastructures); and (ii) support in high priority social areas (education) and to the most vulnerable sections of the population (food security and local development).

However, the pressure exerted by the ongoing emergency situation and the complexity of in-
International aid in the country, combined with some conceptual and operational weaknesses of the support, prevented a convergence between these two intervention levels. Budget support, which represents one quarter of the contracted amounts, eventually focused mainly on macroeconomic issues. Sector interventions displayed many weaknesses in terms of strategic contributions and sustainability, although some progress can be observed in particular themes (e.g. infrastructure, public finance and local development plans).

For the future, the EU should: (i) continue to strengthen budget support, via a high-level bilateral political dialogue, to allow a more meaningful contribution to priority issues (such as public financial management reform, consolidation of the rule of law, strengthening of the public administration, and improvement of sector financial allocations and sector strategies); (ii) spread the most successful field experiences across the entire sectors targeted, allowing to reconnect with a strategic vision, and ensure sustainable linkages between the support to decentralised actors and the political-institutional dimension of support to state-building at central level.

Main conclusions and recommendations

The analysis has led to a series of conclusions and recommendations at three levels: (i) the overall strategic framework of EU-Haiti cooperation; (ii) the implementation of the strategy and the approaches adopted; and (iii) the programmatic level in the key areas of cooperation.

A strategic framework adapted to the fragile context

The EU strategy has been adapted to the context of fragility. In particular, it proved wise to focus on statebuilding and the strengthening of the structuring measures initiated in the previous period, without neglecting certain high priority “social” issues (including food security, education and disaster risk management).

Thanks to the use of a variety of instruments and a pragmatic approach, the strategic framework was properly adjusted following the successive shocks that occurred during the period (such as hurricanes, soaring prices of basic commodities, and the earthquake).

Budget support has been a courageous and innovative choice in the context of Haiti. It has led to non-negligible effects at macroeconomic level and on the legitimisation of the state. However, the effects of budget support have been limited in terms of strengthening public finance management, and budget support did not contribute to the strengthening of sector policies and their priorities in terms of budget allocations. The budget support modality in particular relied on policy and political dialogue that was too weak.

The EU has provided support to both the central state and civil society, but has not aimed at achieving real synergy between the two forms of support. While positive effects have been achieved at the local level, the support to non-state actors has not been integrated in processes aimed at strengthening strategies and public institutions at sector level.

Finally, the visibility of the EU at the political level was good, but was still lower than what it could have been, given: (i) its significant financial support, especially when considering the support of Member States with whom joint programming was adopted; and (ii) the level of financial and political risks associated with budget support.

Recommendations on the overall strategic framework

- Put state-building at the centre of the strategy. In particular, in accordance with international principles for engagement in fragile states (OECD), the focus should be on strengthening state capacity in terms of strategic and transparent management of resources, sector co-ordination, and support to civil society initiatives. This strengthening at strategic level should be based on a clear and explicit policy agreement between the Government of Haiti and the EU to ensure a continuous bilateral dialogue on key co-operation priorities.

- Support the strategic management of state resources. The EU must continue to help improve the efficiency and transparency of public financial management, but also focus on ensuring prioritisation of budgetary allocations and the effectiveness of public expenditure in key sectors. This concerns both budget support and sector/programmatic interventions.

- Support local governance and non-state actors. The EU support must help to ensure a more coherent and structured involvement of non-state actors and local authorities in the process of strengthening strategies and institutions at sector level.

- Further develop the visibility of the EU as a strategic partner of the country by establishing an enhanced bilateral relationship between the EU and the Government of Haiti.
An approach to strategy implementation below the level of its ambition

Despite a difficult context in which to implement the strategy during a large part of the period evaluated, the EU has contributed to several achievements at sector level, including: (a) the formulation of new government strategies (e.g. in public finance, disaster risk management, road maintenance); (b) the completion of major infrastructure (e.g. roads); (c) the development of pilot interventions carried out by the state (education), by non-state actors/community-based organisations (local development), or through collaboration between the two (territorial planning, food security).

However, the evaluation has highlighted the low or uncertain sustainability of these achievements. The insufficient consideration given to institutional dynamics and the low strategic dimension of approaches adopted in sector and/or thematic interventions (e.g. disaster risk management, transport, public finance management, agriculture/food security, local governance) are reasons for these limitations.

An intelligent use of a multitude of methods and instruments has strengthened the EU strategy’s overall relevance. It has also provided flexibility in the implementation of the strategy. However, under the pressure of the prevailing emergency conditions, these instruments have often been used in an ad hoc and segmented manner, which has limited their impact.

Important successes have been recorded in terms of joint programming with Member States. The EU has also been particularly active in efforts aimed at co-ordination and harmonisation among donors – although, overall, EU leadership has been limited.

Finally, many links could have been established between the various elements of the framework for external action of the EU. However, while EU development support found synergies with ECHO activities in Haiti, especially on issues of urban rehabilitation in the earthquake-affected areas, links with the EU strategy at regional level remained limited.

⇒ Recommendations on the implementation of the strategy

- Adopt sector-wide approaches in priority areas. The EU needs to strengthen the strategic dimension in its support to specific sector/ thematic areas, especially by engaging more in policy dialogue at sector level and by better identifying existing institutional dynamics.
- Improve the integration of the various instruments, forms and levels of intervention. This should be done through a clearer articulation and strengthening of synergies between modalities and intervention instruments, and through the pursuit of greater consistency of actions at national and local levels.

- Focus on institutional strengthening. The EU needs to better recognise capacity development as a crucial factor for sustainable development, making institutional strengthening a central focus of its cooperation with Haiti in the medium- and long-term.
- Strengthen the EU’s role in co-ordination and dialogue. The EU must base future co-ordination efforts on the success of the joint programming and implementation with Member States. The EU should also strengthen the political dialogue with the Government of Haiti to consolidate the role that both partners take in the co-ordinating bodies.
- Enhance synergies with other elements of the framework for external action of the EU. Already at the design stage of interventions, the EU must define general and specific criteria that enable synergies between ECHO (or other organisations involved in Haiti) and the country strategy. The EU must also ensure a better use of regional programmes by the EU Delegation and the Government of Haiti.

Mixed results at sector/thematic level

Disaster risk management. Under the pressure of the emergency, it was difficult to cover consistently and effectively the sector’s multiple dimensions. EU support has been scattered, sporadic and poorly articulated. The lack of success is mainly the consequence of the lack of a structured strategy and an inefficient way how the issue has been addressed in EU programming.

Transport. EU support to the roads sector has absorbed a large part of the resources allocated to the country. Its contribution to the economic reconstruction is evident. However, the support has been faced with weak sector governance and a lack of political will to reform the sector, which has limited changes in the national institutional framework and has negatively affected the sustainability of investments. Moreover, road design was insufficiently tailored to local requirements.

Territorial development. The EU supported the testing of new concepts related to land-use planning, and ensured first interesting achievements in the field of urban development (especially slum upgrading). However, the encouraging results in this area are counterbalanced by concerns about the EU’s capacity to implement support of greater size and in a sustainable way.
Food security and agriculture. EU support consisted of important actions to strengthen the sector’s economic dynamism and to improve food security. However, these actions remained too scattered, isolated, with no institutional base, and, given the country’s considerable needs, also too limited to achieve a sustainable contribution to food security.

Education. EU support to the education sector accompanied the efforts of the Government of Haiti and its partners with regard to access to education. However, the question of sector funding has been underestimated, and expectations were over-ambitious with respect to intervention models. This resulted in mixed results both in terms of quality of education and strategic contribution in this sector.

Democratic governance (local authorities and non-state actors). The EU has contributed significantly to the promotion of democratic governance and the decentralisation process through the strengthening of local authorities and non-state actors, especially community-based organisations. However, very little has been done so far in terms of establishing an enhanced national framework that would facilitate a sustainable decentralisation process.

**Sector/thematic recommendations**

- **Establish a strategic framework for specific EU support to Haiti in the areas of disaster risk management and resilience.** This framework should cover the maximum possible number of dimensions and put the envisaged support in a sustainability perspective, especially by supporting institutional strengthening.

- **Review the support strategies in the field of road infrastructure.** The EU must rethink road projects to move towards a more holistic approach and prepare a transition to the support to wider territorial development. Only a deeper understanding of the sector’s political economy will help better grasping the institutional context and sector strategies (road maintenance, road transport, construction companies).

- **Establish a strategic and institutional framework for urban development interventions to ensure sustainable investments.** The EU should not commit to further investments until this framework and a clear focus have been identified, and a balanced approach between neighbourhood development and institutional support has been adopted.

- **Strengthen the strategic and institutional framework of support in the area of food security and agriculture.** Support in this area should be part of a sustainability-oriented approach that pays particular attention to the synergy and strategic coherence of different interventions and which is strongly bonded to the national and local institutional framework.

- **Consolidate gains in access to and quality of education, while strengthening support to national policy and the institutional framework in this sector.**

- **Provide pragmatic support to decentralisation and democratic governance.** The support to decentralisation must adopt a pragmatic approach that ensures, in particular, combined support at central and local levels, better co-ordination with technical and financial partners, enhanced strategic articulation, and that capitalises better on positive experiences.