



Classroom Activities

HAITI: THE AID DILEMMA

OVERVIEW

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti, post-disaster relief is creating a new kind of problem for businesses there. The massive influx of food aid has altered the price of rice, throwing the delicate balance in Haiti's food supply chain out of whack and threatening to collapse the country's rice market. In this video, NPR's *Planet Money* reporter Adam Davidson examines Haiti's fragile economic system, and methods of delivering relief that they hope to help with long-term recovery efforts.

GETTING STARTED

For classrooms studying economics and government, FRONTLINE provides a set of video themes and discussion questions to help students analyze and understand key current events around the globe. Watch the video and start a discussion about the impact humanitarian relief efforts can have on the local economy. Go further into this topic with the *Haiti: The Aid Dilemma* Lesson Plan that asks students to examine post-quake disruptions to supply and demand in Haiti's rice industry and determine the form of aid that would best serve Haiti's short- and long-term needs.

VIDEO THEMES

- The massive influx of food aid in Haiti after the earthquake altered the price of rice, making it difficult for wholesale rice distributors like Melissa to stock her store shelves affordably.
- Since the quake, it is difficult for Haitians to earn money, which decreases demand for rice.
- Such supply-and-demand disruptions in the local economy can turn a one-time disaster like the earthquake into a crisis that lasts for years.
- To avoid destabilizing the local economy, international aid organizations are testing the idea of giving people money or vouchers to buy rice, rather than providing the commodity itself.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe the relationships among the following levels of the Haitian rice economy: street vendors, micro-wholesalers, large wholesalers and foreign suppliers. How did the earthquake disrupt these relationships?
- Explain both positive and negative effects of humanitarian relief efforts on supply and demand for rice in Haiti.
- Consider the decisions made at the port of Port-au-Prince by the U.S. military and the World Food Programme regarding what products will be allowed to unload with limited docking space. Evaluate the pros and cons of allowing the following supplies to be unloaded: humanitarian aid (food, medical supplies); military supplies (building material, gasoline); or commercial products (products for sale).
- How can the international community best support Haiti's short-term needs after the quake without undermining the country's long-term recovery?
- What role should the Haitian government play in the country's recovery?
- What lessons from Haiti can be applied to future disaster relief efforts?

GO FURTHER

Featured Lesson Plan: "Prioritizing Relief Efforts in Haiti"

Web-exclusive Resource: [Q&A with Adam Davidson](#)

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/haiti-aid/qa.html>

FEATURED LESSON PLAN: "Prioritizing Relief Efforts in Haiti"

Overview:

In this lesson, students will watch the video *Haiti: The Aid Dilemma* and consider how the earthquake crisis affected the traditional system of supply and demand in Haiti's rice economy. In addition, students will assume the practical role of a harbor master to determine which ships will enter the port. This activity will require students to prioritize the forms of aid that would best serve Haiti's short- and long-term needs. For more background on the January 2010 earthquake and relief and recovery efforts, please see the [Related Resources](#) section.

Grade Level:

Grades 10-12

Subject Areas:

Economics, Government, Political Science, Current Events, Global Studies

Objectives:

The student will:

- Define key terms related to this lesson
- Outline the functions of each level of the rice industry's supply-and-demand chain in Haiti
- Explain the relationships between each level of the rice industry's supply-and-demand chain both before and after the January 2010 earthquake
- Prioritize the forms of aid that best serve Haiti's short- and long-term needs through the "Who Will Enter the Port?" activity

Estimated Time Needed:

Two 50-minute class periods, plus homework time

Materials Needed:

- Internet access and equipment to show the class an online video clip
- Video: *Haiti: The Aid Dilemma* (length: 14:49)
[<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/haiti-aid/>]
- Handout: What Happened to the System? (PDF file)
- Article: "Quake-damaged Main Port in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Worse Off Than Realized" <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/27/AR2010012705250.html>
- Handout: Who Will Enter the Port? (PDF file)
- Optional Handouts:
 - Haiti: The Aid Dilemma transcript (PDF file)
 - Transcript Questions (PDF file)
 - Who Will You Help? (PDF file)

PROCEDURE

Homework Preparation:

For homework the night before this lesson, ask students to define the following key terms:

- Emergency aid
- Sustainable recovery
- Wholesale
- Retail
- Aid dependency
- Supply
- Demand
- Haiti
- Port-au-Prince
- Cap Haitien

Opening Activity:

- Begin the lesson by writing the word “Haiti” on the board. Ask students to brainstorm associations with that nation and list them underneath. Responses might include “Caribbean,” “former slave colony,” “French ancestry,” “poverty” or “earthquake.”
- After a brief discussion of these responses, write the phrase “January 2010 Earthquake” next to “Haiti.” Ask students to consider what implications a natural disaster like this might have on the Haitian people. Student responses might include “death,” “destruction of property” or similar ideas, but guide the focus of the discussion to the earthquake’s disruption of infrastructure and pre-existing economic structures.
- Finally, write the word “America” between “Haiti” and “January 2010 Earthquake.” Ask students to consider what the role and responsibility of the United States should be in helping Haiti recover from the earthquake. Point out that one of the great challenges for Haiti after the earthquake has been to figure out how to meet short-term survival needs while at the same time building toward long-term economic recovery. International aid and relief efforts often hand out food and supplies to meet basic needs after a disaster, which is helpful in the short term. But such handouts disrupt pre-disaster supply-and-demand chains, which slows the return of productive economic activity.

Main Activity: Prioritizing Relief Efforts in Haiti

1. Distribute the handout What Happened to the System? Go over its format with the class and ask students to use the information in the video *Haiti: The Aid Dilemma* to fill in as much as they can in each section of the graphic organizer. Then show the video *Haiti: The Aid Dilemma*.

2. After watching the video, divide the class into groups of three or four. Within their groups, students should compare notes, discuss, come to a group consensus, and write their responses on the graphic organizer. Circulate around the room and monitor students’ progress. Sample student responses to the second part of the organizer might include:

U.S. suppliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrecked port initially impeded rice supply. • Massive influx of rice from aid agencies created a glut of supply on the market, artificially lowering prices.
Large wholesalers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faced with a largely free supply of rice, wholesalers must lower their own prices to compete. • Given the size of these wholesalers, most are able to survive, which means the economic costs are passed off to the next level.
Micro-wholesalers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to profit with lowering prices and abundant supply, small wholesalers are leaving the market.
Street vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many have lost their connection with micro-wholesalers and are unemployed.

If needed, follow up the group activity with a short discussion of their findings.

3. In the next group activity, students will examine practical decisions related to the managing of ship traffic in the ports of Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien. This exercise will require students to prioritize the forms of aid that would best serve Haiti's short- and long-term needs. Set the stage for this activity by sharing the article "[Quake-damaged Main Port in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Worse Off Than Realized](#)"

4. Distribute the handout [Who Will Enter the Port?](#) Keeping the same student groups, have each group member take one (or more, if needed) of the following roles for their group discussion as they complete the handout:

- Port-au-Prince port administrator for the APN, the Haitian port authority
- Official from the U.N. World Food Programme
- Representative of Fonkoze, the Haitian financial institution dedicated to long-term economic progress
- Representative of ADIH, the Association of Industries of Haiti, which represents large wholesalers affected by the glut of supply on the market

Alternative Jigsaw Method: The port activity would also work well as a jigsaw exercise. For this approach, number all students 1 to 4. Have all the students that correspond to the same number gather together. Assign each group one of the roles listed above and provide a few minutes for each group to discuss the issues that would be facing an individual in that position, what his or her priorities should be, etc. Then reconvene the class and place students in heterogeneous groups of four, where each group has at least one representative of the four different roles.

5. From the perspective of their given role, have students work with group members to prioritize a list of incoming ships based on the cargo they carry, the type of ship (and therefore, the degree of difficulty involved in loading/unloading the cargo), and the needs of Haitian citizens. Display a world map that students can use to see where these ships originated and how far they have traveled. Again, circulate around the room to monitor students' progress. Consider asking the following questions to help students think through this practical exercise:

- What should be the first priority for Haiti now: immediate survival, short-term economic recovery, long-term economic improvement or something else?
- Whose interests should be considered the most important right now: the rural poor, the midlevel wholesalers' or the large wholesalers'?

6. If time permits, conclude the activity by having each student group report on their decisions, with particular focus on the first ship they would allow to dock and the last. Ask students to compare and contrast the decisions of the various groups.

CREDITS

This teacher's guide was developed by Cari Ladd. It was written by Mark Percy. Advisers were Satinder Hawkins of Millikan High School in Long Beach, Calif., and Eddie Mandhry of [Global Kids](http://www.globalkids.org) [http://www.globalkids.org]. The section on using these materials with ESL students was written by Sally Bunch.

Lesson Extensions:

- Consider the resilience of the Haitian people when evaluating short- and long-term relief strategies. Watch the FRONTLINE/Planet Money video “The Economy of a Tent City” [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/haiti/view/economy_tent_city.html] (length: 5:25) and discuss how Haitians have adapted to their circumstances following the earthquake. What economic activities have they established? What seem to be their immediate needs? Their long-term needs? How should international aid agencies work with Haitians when planning and carrying out relief efforts? Have students research some of the Haitian citizens’ initiatives within the tent cities and determine whether or not they might be sustainable as long-term institutions.
- Explore the artistic side of the Haitian economy by designing tap-taps. Find out what a tap-tap is by watching the FRONTLINE/Planet Money video “Solving the Tap-Tap Puzzle” [<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/haiti/view/tap-tap.html>]. Afterward, have students respond to the following:
 - Why do tap-tap owners pay such a prohibitive cost for such outlandish designs?
 - Describe the economic concept of “signaling” as it applies to Haitian tap-taps.
- Remind students of *The Washington Post* article “With Cheap Food Imports, Haiti Can’t Feed Itself.” Ask the class, “Should the United States participate in recovery efforts in Haiti, even if that effort has no short-term resolution?” Ask students to list the pros and cons involved in making such a decision, and make recommendations for U.S. policy both in Haiti and in similar global crises. Some pros and cons could include:

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening a traditional ally • Humanitarian concerns • Providing opportunities for U.S. business/enterprise during recovery effort • Developing possible responses for future crises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment of U.S. capital/resources at a time of domestic economic distress • Risk of American lives in service of another nation • Attempts to help Haiti may backfire by creating reliance on international aid

- Evaluate further the priorities of humanitarian relief efforts. Begin by having students examine the Principle Commitments of the Code of Conduct [<http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/>] developed by the

International Red Cross and Red Crescent and other nongovernmental relief agencies. Then have students do the following:

- Given what the class saw in the video *Haiti: The Aid Dilemma*, have any of these principles been violated in the recovery efforts in Haiti? Have students offer their analysis as part of a classroom discussion or as a written response.
- Have the class read the article "[Americans Arrested Taking Children Out of Haiti.](http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE60T23I20100130)" [http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE60T23I20100130] Ask students to judge whether the Americans in this case were doing a good thing. How can the international community be sure that disaster relief does not degenerate into abuse?

Related Resources:

Haiti Country Studies

<http://countrystudies.us/haiti/>

This website contains the online versions of books previously published in hard copy by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress as part of the Country Studies/Area Handbook Series sponsored by the U.S. Department of the Army. The study provides information about Haiti's historical setting, geography, society, economy, political system and foreign policy.

Haiti, CIA Factbook

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html> This is an excellent source for background information on the nation of Haiti, from the Central Intelligence Agency. The site contains subtopics on geography, demographics, government, economy, communications, transportation, military and transnational issues.

Political and Economic History of Haiti

<http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/haiti.htm>

From the San Jose State University Department of Economics, this page details the political and economic history of Haiti, dating from its early history through French occupation and rebellion to independence. Easy to read and detailed, it includes contemporaneous accounts of the impact and scope of the Jan. 12 earthquake.

Coverage of the Haitian Earthquake

CNN: Haiti Earthquake

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2010/haiti.quake/>

This is CNN's collection of stories about the Jan. 12 earthquake, with a substantial number of videos, graphics, maps, charts and interview transcripts.

FRONTLINE: *The Quake*

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/haiti/>

FRONTLINE shows the devastation of the January 2010 earthquake on Haiti, its people and its economy. There are multiple resources provided, including video and audio clips, podcasts, interviews and lesson plans.

NPR: Haiti Quake: Ruin And Recovery

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122522434>

This is a link to NPR's story archive on the Haitian earthquake, with multiple story links, audio broadcast clips and outside sources.

Relief and Recovery

International Rescue Committee

<http://www.theirc.org/>

The IRC responds to international humanitarian crises and is dedicated to reaching durable solutions by promoting "local capacity and self-sufficiency—and promoting human rights, participation and accountability." The IRC is shown in action in the *Haiti: The Aid Dilemma* video featured in this lesson plan.

ReliefWeb: Haitian Earthquake

<http://reliefweb.int/rw/dbc.nsf/doc108?OpenForm&emid=EQ-2010-000009-HTI&rc=2>

ReliefWeb compiles "timely, reliable and relevant humanitarian information and analysis," incorporating thousands of sources and relevant content to update those inside and outside the humanitarian community.

***Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*: "Humanitarian Challenges in Chile and Haiti"**

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/march-5-2010/humanitarian-challenges-in-chile-and-haiti/5822/>

Containing video clips and a transcript of the episode, this Web page details the recovery effort in Chile and Haiti and the divergent approaches to each.

U.S. Naval Construction Force ("Seabees")

<https://www.seabee.navy.mil/>

This website is dedicated to the multiple efforts of the U.S. Naval Construction Force (the "Seabees") to aid reconstruction efforts around the globe. It provides significant detail as to the status of the Haitian recovery process and the U.S. military's role in connection to it.

"With Cheap Food Imports, Haiti Can't Feed Itself"

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/03/20/with-cheap-food-imports-h_n_507228.html

This AP article by Jonathan Katz describes the impact that U.S. trade policies and relief activities have had on the Haitian economy.

Related Standards:

These standards are drawn from “Content Knowledge,” a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>.

Civics, Standard 23.1: Understands the influence that American ideas about rights have had abroad and how other peoples’ ideas about rights have influenced Americans

Economics, Standard 1.2: Understands that increases in productivity are affected by incentives that reward successful innovation and investments (e.g., in research and development, and in physical and human capital)

Economics, Standard 1.4: Understands that investing in new physical or human capital involves a trade-off of lower current consumption in anticipation of greater future production and consumption

Economics, Standard 2.2: Understands that economic institutions (e.g., small and large firms, labor unions, not-for-profit organizations) have different goals, rules and constraints, and thus respond differently to changing economic conditions and incentives

Economics, Standard 3.3: Understands that changes in supply or demand cause relative prices to change; in turn, buyers and sellers adjust their purchase and sales decisions

Economics, Standard 3.4: Understands that a shortage occurs when buyers want to purchase more than producers want to sell at the prevailing price, and a surplus occurs when producers want to sell more than buyers want to purchase at the prevailing price

Economics, Standard 3.5: Understands that shortages or surpluses usually result in price changes for products in a market economy

Economics, Standard 5.2: Understands the concept of supply and demand in the labor market (e.g., if wage or salary payments increase, workers will increase the quantity of labor they supply and firms will decrease the quantity of labor they demand)

Economics, Standard 10.6: Understands that public policies affecting foreign trade impose costs and benefits on different groups of people (e.g., consumers may pay higher prices, profits in exporting firms may decrease), and that decisions on these policies reflect economic and political interests and forces