



**Global Kids' Ayiti: The Cost of Life**  
**A Game-based Lesson Plan Addressing**  
**Poverty as an Obstacle to Education in Haiti**

**Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Use an online game to understand conditions in contemporary Haiti and how poverty is an obstacle to education.
- Develop problem-solving, critical thinking and such life skills as resource management, budgeting, and planning for the future.
- Learn about ways in which they can advocate for action to confront poverty and increase access to education in Haiti.

**Time:** 45 Minutes

**Materials/Resources Needed:**

- Computers with Internet access
- *Ayiti: The Cost of Life* URL: [www.thecostoflife.org](http://www.thecostoflife.org)
- Map of Haiti
- Country Profile Sheet

**Main Activity - Game Play:** (25 Minutes)

*Ayiti: The Cost of Life* is a role-playing video game in which the player assumes the roles of family members living in rural Haiti. At the start of the game, the player chooses a primary goal for his/her family: achieve education, make money, stay healthy, or maintain happiness. During the course of the game, the player encounters unexpected events and must make decisions that contribute to or detract from achieving the chosen goal.

Take the students online to play *Ayiti: The Cost of Life*. Have students, either individually or in pairs, play the game for approximately 20-25 minutes. It will not be necessary to give them further instructions on game-play because sufficient instructions are included in the game. If some students complete the game faster than others, encourage them to play again.

**Discussion:** (20 minutes)

**Key Points:**

After students have played the game they will need to reflect upon as well as share their experiences. The discussion questions are designed to explore:

- The correlation between choices made, their respective outcomes, and the constraints faced within the game.
- How the students' own lives and situations compare and contrast with those of the family members in the game.

### **Processing Questions:**

1. What was it like playing the game?
2. What was the game about and how would you describe it to a friend?
3. Which primary objective did you select, and why? (Get several answers.)
4. What types of decisions did you have to make about the family members while playing the game and trying to achieve your objective?
5. What strategies did you use? For example, did you combine work and school, or did you send everyone to work? Which worked? Which did not?
6. Why would parents choose to devote so much effort to sending their children to school?
7. How many of you were able to keep the children in school?
8. What obstacles did you face in trying to keep them in school?
9. How do the situations and options in the game compare with those in your own community?
10. Why might access to education be a challenge in another country?
11. What factors would make it easier for the children in the game to gain access to education? What conditions could be changed and how?
12. Distribute and review copies of the Haiti Country Profile Sheet and the Country Map. At the bottom of the Haiti Country Profile sheet you will find optional links to additional information about Haiti. You are welcome to use them at your discretion. Inform students that they will now have an opportunity to take action aimed at addressing the challenges faced by children in Haiti.

### **Background Information for Educators**

**Rationale:** This section will provide you with general background information about the international norms and regulations outlining the rights and entitlements of all children around the world, with particular emphasis on the right to education. It will also give you a snapshot into the prevailing social, political and economic realities in Haiti.

#### **Overview:**

The right to education is a fundamental human right. Every individual, irrespective of race, gender, nationality, ethnic or social origin, religion or political preference, age or disability, is entitled to a free elementary education.

#### **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):**

The right to education is explicitly stated in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948<sup>1</sup>:

"Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. ..."  
(Article 26)

Ensuring *access to education* is a precondition for full realization of the right to education. Without access, it is not possible to guarantee the right to education.<sup>2</sup>

### **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):**

The United Nations defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. Every young person has rights and responsibilities protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Convention has been ratified by Haiti and every other country in the world except for the United States and Somalia.  
(<http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>)

The CRC makes nation states accountable for their actions towards children and calls on nations to create the conditions in which children may take an active and creative part in the social and political life of their countries. The CRC explicitly codifies the child's right to education in articles 28 and 29.

### **Access to Education in Haiti:**

In Haiti only fifty-five percent of school age children receive an education; only two percent finish the U.S. equivalent of high school; and roughly one-third of youths between 15 and 24 are illiterate.

There are many factors that prevent children from attaining their right to basic education. Poverty is one of the biggest obstacles. In Haiti poverty is more widespread in rural areas than in the cities. Seventy-seven percent of Haiti's extremely poor live in rural areas. The level of education of the main provider in a Haitian household has a clear impact on the risk of being poor.<sup>3</sup> Of those living in households where the main provider has higher education, only seven percent are extremely poor compared to seventy percent of those living in households where the main provider has no education.<sup>4</sup>

### **Economic Inequality:**

In Haiti, often described as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, 80% of the population lives in abject poverty. Haiti's most serious underlying social problem, the huge wealth gap between the impoverished Creole-speaking black majority and the French-speaking mulattos, 1% of whom own nearly half the country's wealth, remains unaddressed. Two-thirds of all Haitians depend on the agriculture sector, mainly small-

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hrea.org/learn/guides/right-to-education.html>

<sup>3</sup> Poverty in Haiti, Pål Sletten and Willy Egset, Fafo Foundation, Norway (2004)  
<http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/755/755.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Poverty in Haiti, Pål Sletten and Willy Egset, Fafo Foundation, Norway (2004)  
<http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/755/755.pdf>

scale subsistence farming, and remain vulnerable to damage from frequent natural disasters, exacerbated by the country's widespread deforestation. Persons with education in Haiti tend to live in the metropolitan areas and are salaried rather than self employed.

### **Political Instability:**

After gaining independence in 1804, Haiti has experienced significant political upheavals. Years of misrule by dictators and a series of armed rebellions have led to the collapse of the Haitian economy, degeneration of infrastructure, and exacerbated the government's inability to provide desperately needed social services such as healthcare, clean water and education.<sup>5</sup> With a new democratically elected president, Rene Preval, (February, 2006), the government faces huge challenges - such as improving social and economic conditions. President Rene Preval said Haiti was on the path to recovering its sovereignty, but said it needed the help of the international community. A UN peacekeeping force is deployed in Haiti<sup>6</sup>, which remains deeply divided between rival political factions.

Because of poverty, children are often faced with many challenging conditions and responsibilities, including:

- Having to work in their homes to keep the household running.
- Caring for their younger siblings instead of going to school.
- Lacking money needed to pay for school fees, transportations, uniforms and supplies, and food.
- Lacking medical resources needed to stay healthy and attend school.

### **Resources:**

- **UNICEF Child Alert Haiti** <http://www.unicef.org/childalert/haiti/>
- **USAID** (United States Agency for International Development) programs in Haiti: <http://www.usaid.gov/ht/education.htm>
- **World Bank** <http://www.worldbank.org>
- **United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)** <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minustah/index.html>
- **Global Campaign for Education** <http://www.campaignforeducation.org/>

## **Action Assignment**

**Rationale:** This section will suggest possible actions your students can undertake to make a difference.

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<sup>5</sup> For further reading on the Haitian politics go to: <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/haiti-politics.htm>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minustah/>

## **What You Can Do:**

Inform students that there are many ways to take action:

1. Write a letter to your Congressional or Senate Representatives to find out what they are doing to improve access to education for children in Haiti.  
<http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm>
2. Create a petition, collect signatures, and send them to any of the following U.S. government offices or agencies calling for programs that increase access to education for Haitian children:
  - The Embassy of the United States in Haiti  
U.S. Ambassador to Haiti  
Ms. Janet A. Sanderson  
Boulevard Harry Truman no. 5  
Bicentenaire–Port-au-Prince, Haiti  
<http://haiti.usembassy.gov/>
  - USAID/Port-Au-Prince  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20521-3400  
Tel: 509-223-3805 Fax: 509-223-9603  
URL: [www.usaid.gov/ht](http://www.usaid.gov/ht)

Write a letter of inquiry to the Haitian Ambassador to the United States or United Nations to find out about the current status on access to education in Haiti:

- His Excellency Ambassador, Raymond Joseph  
2311 Massachusetts Avenue,  
NW, Washington DC 20008  
Telephone: (202) 332-4090 Fax: (202) 745-7215  
E-mail: [embassy@haiti.org](mailto:embassy@haiti.org)  
URL: [www.haiti.org/](http://www.haiti.org/)
  - Ambassador Leo Merores  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Haiti to the UN  
801 Second Avenue, Suite 600  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: 212-370-4840 Fax: 212-661-8698  
Email: [Haiti@un.int](mailto:Haiti@un.int)  
URL: [www.un.int/haiti](http://www.un.int/haiti)
3. Introduce your peers to the game and educate them about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>).
  4. Raise funds to support a local organization in Haiti such as the Maison Fortuné Orphanage in Hinche which is working to provide food, shelter, clothing and education to orphaned Haitian children. <http://www.maisonfortune.org/>

5. Write a few paragraphs about what you learned playing the game and send it to Global Kids to post on its website. Email to: [info@globalkids.org](mailto:info@globalkids.org) with “Ayiti Action” in the subject line.
6. Educate your peers and members of your community by writing an article on poverty as an obstacle to education in Haiti in your school or community newspaper.

### **Organizational Contacts in Haiti:**

1. **Haitian Coalition for the Defense of Children's Rights**  
 Ms. Colette Larose Lamothe  
 10, Babiole, Turgeau,  
 Port-au-Prince, Haiti  
 Tel / Fax : 245-4357
2. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)  
**UNESCO Office Port au Prince**  
 Mr. Paul-Antoine Bien-Aimé  
 Education Expert  
 19, Delmas 60, Musseau par Bourdon, Petion Ville,  
 Port-au-Prince, Haiti  
 Email: [unescohaiti@hainet.net](mailto:unescohaiti@hainet.net)
3. **Centre for Specialized Education**  
 73, rue Enterrement, Port-au-Prince  
 Phone: 509-222 21 54 257  
 E-mail: [magloirenicole@hotmail.com](mailto:magloirenicole@hotmail.com)
4. **Association Women Sun of Haiti (AFASDA)**  
 Cap Haitian, rue 21, J-K, # 145  
 Haiti  
 Phone 509-431 40 89  
 E-mail: [afasdacap@yahoo.fr](mailto:afasdacap@yahoo.fr)
5. **Fanm Yo La** Strengthening leadership/capacity building  
 9, rue Cheriez, Canapé Vert, Port-au-Prince  
 Phone: 509-244 54 28 or 403 92 29  
 E-mail: [fanmyola@yahoo.fr](mailto:fanmyola@yahoo.fr)



## Haiti Country Profile Sheet

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

1. Haiti is the world's first black-led republic and the first Caribbean state to achieve independence, Haiti's pride has been dented by decades of poverty, environmental degradation, violence, instability and dictatorship which have left it as the poorest nation in the Americas
2. Haiti achieved notoriety during the brutal dictatorships of the voodoo physician, Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, and his son, Jean-Claude, or "Baby Doc". Hopes that the election in 1990 of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former priest, would herald a brighter future were dashed when he was overthrown by the military a short time later.
3. Although economic sanctions and US-led military intervention forced a return to constitutional government in 1994, Haiti's fortunes did not pick up, with allegations of electoral irregularities, ongoing extra-judicial killings, torture and brutality.
4. A bloody rebellion, and pressure from the US and France, forced Mr. Aristide out of the country in 2004. Since then, an elected leadership has taken over from an interim government and a UN stabilization force has been deployed. But Haiti is still plagued by violent confrontations between rival gangs and political groups and the UN has described the human rights situation as "catastrophic".
5. **Politics:** Democratic rule was restored in 2006, two years after a violent revolt ousted former leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide; bitter political divisions persist.
6. **Economy:** Haiti's economy is in ruins and there is chronic unemployment.
7. **International:** The UN has deployed peacekeepers; international aid is seen as key to recovery.

Country profile source: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country\\_profiles/1202772.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1202772.stm)

### Additional Articles on Haiti:

Donors Pledge \$750 million aid to Haiti. July 2006  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/5215490.stm>

Challenges Ahead for Haiti's Preval. February 2006  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4721510.stm>

Glimmers of Hope in Cite Soleil. February 2006:  
[http://blog.washingtonpost.com/haitisstruggle/2006/02/glimmers\\_of\\_hope\\_in\\_cite\\_solei\\_1.html](http://blog.washingtonpost.com/haitisstruggle/2006/02/glimmers_of_hope_in_cite_solei_1.html)

UN Envoy Urges Continuing Aid for Haiti. May 2006:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/20/world/americas/20haiti.html?ex=1160280000&en=3c762a89f52485&ei=5070>