

## At a glance: Haiti

### A UNICEF-supported music school helps young Haitians dream of a better future

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A teacher helps a student hold a cello properly before a music class at Vision Nouvelle School in Delmas, Haiti. The school still lacks enough music instruments for its students.

**By Benjamin Steinlechner**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, 25 March 2011 – In one of the classrooms at Vision Nouvelle School sits a large wooden box filled with broken instruments – violins, violas, flutes and even piano parts.

It's all that remains of the school's once substantial collection of music instruments, a stark reminder of the destructive power of last year's earthquake which reduced the school and its contents to rubble.

#### 'No instruments at all'

"The earthquake destroyed most of our school and left us with almost nothing, no instruments at all," says headmistress Micheline Adolphe. "I wasn't even sure if it was worth reopening the school."

Most classes have now resumed in a new UNICEF-constructed school building, but conditions are still far from what they used to be.

Vision Nouvelle School in Delmas is one of only 10 schools in Haiti that offers music classes to its students and has a reputation for producing successful musicians. For decades, it has sent students to international competitions in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

#### Instrument donations

"Before the earthquake, we used to have all the instruments necessary, and practical music classes were an integral part of our study plan," says Ms. Adolphe, turning the pages of a photo album showing students performing at various events. "Now, every student gets at least theoretical music lessons."



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Vision Nouvelle School in Delmas is one of only 10 schools in Haiti that offers music classes. Many of its instruments were destroyed in last year's earthquake.

Through donations and the joint efforts of teachers and parents, the school is hoping to buy a used piano, some violins, violas, and flutes.

However, many of the students who would like to learn to play an instrument have to bring their own and there are still no wind instruments available.

"This is a big problem. Instruments are expensive and our school does not have children from wealthy families," explains Ms. Adolphe.

"Many cannot even afford to pay their children's school fees on a regular basis."

#### UNICEF support

Although Adolphe asks banks for loans to pay her teachers' salaries and to help children who cannot pay their fees stay in school, many are still unable to attend.

Only 50 per cent of school-aged Haitian children go to school, which is due in part to a lack of public schools, but also the cost of uniforms, transportation, food and supplies.

UNICEF continues to provide basic supplies for students and teachers across Haiti, and is supporting the reconstruction of buildings such as Vision Nouvelle School.

Last year more than 720,000 children and 15,000 teachers were given school materials and training. Since the earthquake, UNICEF has reconstructed 110 semi-permanent schools in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.

UNICEF is now preparing to rebuild another 37 schools in the Haitian capital and aims to complete 200 schools across the country by the end of June.

#### The power of music

Fabienne Ejerard Philippe Auguste, 17, a student at Vision Nouvelle School, is thankful for UNICEF's efforts in reconstructing schools. It allows her to continue to learn to play the violin.

"Music makes all the difference to me. I love it. It helps me focus on the beautiful side of life," says Ms. Auguste, holding her instrument. "Since the earthquake, I am very stressed. Music helps me to express my feelings and to deal with this stress."

Recognizing the liberating benefits of music, UNICEF recently helped build a music recording studio at a boys' school in Port-au-Prince.

"Music can help you dream," says Ms. Auguste. "Everybody needs a dream, especially young people. They need to know that there is more to life than their current reality."



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Fabienne Ejerard Philippe Auguste, 17, says music helps her cope with stress caused by last year's earthquake. She takes violin lessons at Vision Nouvelle School in Delmas, Haiti.

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