

# Human Rights Education for Officers of the Haitian National Police: Port-au-Prince

**West Department, June 9-19, 2008**

For as long as it has been in existence, the Haitian National Police force has been distrusted by the general population who view it as an agent of abuse, rather than protection. RNDDH, recognizing that a culture of human rights cannot be established without the assistance of these authorities, established a partnership with the General Administration of the Haitian National Police (DGPNH) and began a series of six human rights workshops designed specifically for members of the Haitian National Police (PNH). The purpose of these workshops is to reinforce and support the transformation of the PNH into a more professional and functional police force that has the capacity and capability to carry out their mission to protect and serve the Haitian population.

In August of 2006, RNDDH began its workshop series in the Southeast Department, in the city of Jacmel. The work continued in 2007 in Mirebalais (Central Plateau) and in Jeremie (Grande-Anse). The final three workshops took place in 2008 in Port-au-Prince at the Lyesa Training Center on Delmas 83. The first was held from June 9-11, the second from June 13-15, and the third from June 17-19. Officers from 20 different precincts within the West department participated in these workshops. Between the three sessions, 112 police officers and 22 officers from the Penitentiary Administration (DAP) participated in the seminar.

As with the previous workshops, all three sessions included modules, one day each, on the following themes:

1. The chain of command and overall structure of the Haitian National Police
2. The role of the police in the protection of human rights in a democratic society

For these final three workshops, though, a third day-long module was added that addressed the question of gender. This module was developed over the past year in response to feedback received from participants of the first three sessions. Those participants reported an imbalanced attitude towards gender that had a negative impact on the work of the PNH. The new gender module will become a regular part of RNDDH's human rights workshops for the PNH.

The first module was elaborated by Venus Darius, municipal commissioner and representative of the general director of the PNH. Commissioner Darius provided a brief history on the police from its establishment until present time. Darius then further presented "the chain of command and overall structure of the Haitian National Police."

For the second module, Mr. Jean Simon Saint-Hubert presented "the role of the police in the protection of human rights in a democratic society." Saint-Hubert developed these concepts in a Haitian framework, using national, regional, and international documents

such as: the 1987 Haitian Constitution; the American Convention of Human Rights; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and international pacts relating to civil and political rights as well as social, economic, and cultural rights, etc.

The third module, which was led by Jean Joseph Alfred Gibbs, addressed the question of gender in relation to the PNH. During the course of this module, the following topics were elaborated.

- ▶ Analysis of the values that characterize the question of gender
- ▶ The difference between sex and gender
- ▶ Elements of gender theory
- ▶ A history of feminism
- ▶ An analysis of gender and the Haitian National Police
- ▶ The legal framework for protection of women's rights

In addition, the module introduced a concept known as the gender tree, a tool allowing analysis of gender from three different viewpoints: practices, institutions, and norms/values. This allowed the officers present the opportunity to see how they could, within their roles as officers, contribute to a greater social equilibrium in terms of gender. This activity also gave officers the occasion to denounce the irregularities they had noticed, whether within the police institution or in their own behavior.

The seminar participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the seminar and an appreciation for the topics addressed. For some officers, much of the information was completely new. Others saw the seminar as a good chance to refresh their understanding of protocol because rules are often neglected over time. In either case, the officers now feel better equipped to carry out their mission.

RNDDH's departmental networks have reported a noticeable impact from these seminars. According to them, officers and precincts that participated in the seminar have been much less likely to commit human rights violations, and have become more integrated into the communities where they are working. This has the reciprocal effect of creating more trust among the populations in these areas towards the police.