

Project Report “Entrepreneurship Camp Haiti”, June 2014

After having a brief layover in New York, we arrive in hilly Haiti on Pentecost Sunday. It's the end of the rainy season, every looks green, yet the bare mountaintops are evidence of the merciless exploitation of nature which has taken place since colonial times; certainly also a factor which contributed to the devastation of the 2010 earthquake, as a lack of trees only paved the way for rocks and boulders rolling down the mountainside toward inhabited areas. Ruins are to be seen everywhere in the house-crowded city of Port-au-Prince. Much has been rebuilt but the story is still unmistakable. The legality of what has been rebuilt, for instance wild, high towering houses, is difficult to tell. The safety of their inhabitants is also quite questionable.

For the time being though, I can only sporadically observe Haiti's history and economic situation, as my colleague, Tilman Becker of Lufthansa Communications, and I are here in the middle of an excursion to reward the speakers and helpers for their great volunteer work. A boat trip takes us to a secluded beach where the water is turquoise and there are hardly any people. It's here where I find out, through many stimulating conversations, how the camp has been thus far. “Terrific” describes it best. It apparently positively overwhelmed both speakers and participants and despite all of the exhaustion, the staff, core group, and organizational team are continuing to further conceptualize and discuss the next session, the next presentation, the next steps, and the future outlook on this Island paradise. I am impressed with the initiative which has been created here by young, dedicated, and highly competent people. The chosen motto “driving business – driving future” has been exercised exemplary.

The camp takes place in the right place at the right time. People are fed up with the inaction of the state, its bureaucratic institutions, and their contribution of poor advice to the armada of NGOs which has flooded the country. They are no doubt separate entities altogether, yet they contribute little to ‘capacity building’. In worst cases, they even condition the debilitating neediness of the population.

The current government under President Martelly has indeed fired up the engine after decades of exploitation and corruption, but there is still much to do and a long way ahead. This is exactly where the team of Jude V.P. Tranquille, of ‘Devoted Servants of Haiti’, and Jan Holz, Lufthansa employee in New York, are picking up. Recognizing and promoting capacity and potential in Haiti and building and strengthening its independent economic power. Supporting young entrepreneurs, whether still in planning or having already begun, is the team's ambitious aim. The transfer of knowledge is also an important and responsible part of the initiative and it is executed in an individualized manner, as well as in partnerships. It's not that there aren't enough measures in place locally; it's just that they're not executed in such an adapting, sustainably supportive manner.

And that's also why I was speechless when I met with the participants on Monday morning. They couldn't wait for it to continue this week, despite the fact that many of them even have financial obligations to fulfill.

While there, we all listened in on an inspiring lecture about how to successfully establish a business given by Surtab, a start-up business itself which produces

'tablets made in Haiti'. It's the opening of a world of possibilities, accessible to only those who want it bad enough. The recently built industrial park Sonapi, the home of start-up businesses like Surtab, is an example of the willingness of both the government and society to take responsibility into their own hands.

Later, in a classroom at the Université Quisqueya, the program continues with much focus and concentration. "Finance" with Alex, Smaggi, and Mike: Alexandra Heinrich, Lufthansa, London; Smaragda Strouba, London; Mike Ney, New York. The topics "Motivation" and "Team" with Jens Unger from Lufthansa Cargo, Frankfurt and Antonio Guaiana, Frankfurt, "Start-Up" with Robin Balser, Frankfurt, "Corporate Planning" with Nils Hermann, Lufthansa, Frankfurt, are all finished. But first I must pass on a greeting to the participants from Rita Diop, the Chairwoman of help alliance, and of course explain a little about what the help alliance does and how the help alliance is connected to the Entrepreneurship Camp. Of course not just financially, but also its substantive and logistical support.

To think that "Finance" could be such a captivating topic becomes immediately clear. The exemplary group work in small, alternating groups emits a sense of intrigue throughout the entire room. Leadership principles are brought to life here. The feedback from the preliminary evaluation forms makes it quite clear; the camp has the right approach, the right people, the right method – it must go on.

We try late into the night to establish and outline and define a structure as to how it will continue. Before the camp ends, we want to let participants know that we'll continue to help them; a clear statement of sustainable support. That means a solid local base, as well as long-term support from our end. With Jude as an initiator and coordinator in Port-au-Prince and Jan, Alex, and Jens in New York, London, and Frankfurt as contact points, we should be in good shape. With the help alliance onboard, as well as Lufthansa Consulting on the Lufthansa side, this endeavor will be a promising, forward-looking project.

On Tuesday, Katja Krafczyk from Lufthansa Cargo, Frankfurt and Felix Harms from Essen, will take turns discussing "Economics". When, how, and why is a business successful? When and how do I realize risks? When can I take action, make change, or adapt? Data and figures become more interesting than one thought. Attending to other aspects of the project in Haiti, I return back to the classroom only in the afternoon. As on the previous day, there's so much enthusiasm amongst the 22 participants today (unfortunately, a few of the participants are absent, as they've been suffering from the Chikungunya fever) and they don't seem to want to stop discussing the topics at hand.

An official visit to the Rotary Club of Port-au-Prince, which welcomes us with open arms, as Jan Holz is a member of the Wallstreet NY Rotary Club, sheds light on the possibility of an innovative project idea. Of course, it's not unimportant here to network locally and build project plans.

The evening of the next planning stages, the next agreements are lined up. Logistically speaking, everything should/must go as planned (despite horrible traffic patterns). Toby, or Tobias Fried, from New York, has reached a point of exhaustion after having tirelessly compiled 30 hours of film which will tell 'his story'. A corporate

video about the Entrepreneurship Camp is to present, advertise, and promote and establish the continuation of the project. Similarly, a yearbook has been crafted and will be distributed to the participants at the end of the camp. “Driving business – driving future”: an amazing effort on behalf of the entire team.

Wednesday. Mike Veny, New York, Smaragda, London and Jude, Haiti, begin with „Smart Goals“; from dream/idea to reality/implementation. It'll certainly be another exciting class. In the afternoon, a “Marketplace” event will take place, where organizations and potential investors will be able to introduce themselves. Maybe the next ‘big thing’ will come to fruit here. Thursday is “Legal Framework” with Susanne Gellert from the German American Chamber of Commerce, New York. Friday, Pietro Montemurri, from Lufthansa Consulting, will take the stage. Unfortunately, today (Wednesday) is my last day in Haiti and I won't be able to participate in the closing event on Saturday which will host keynote speaker Bruno Boucher from Lufthansa Consulting.

Thankful that I could be a part, grateful to still be there, and deeply moved by the enthusiasm of the participants and the dedication of the initiators, organizers, and speakers. The sum of potential which exists and the amount of extended networks which are to be found within the Lufthansa Group are two things which impress me all the time. Many sparks from many great personalities have ignited a fire, driving business in Haiti into the future.

Continue to follow the project “Entrepreneurship Camp Haiti 2014” at our website: www.helpalliance.org and find out more at the up-to-date blog under the following link: <http://haiticamp2014.wordpress.com>.