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UN IN ACTION

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HAITI: PRISON EDUCATION

VIDEO

INMATES IN SCHOOL/WRITING ON
FLIP CHART

JEAN ROBERT WRITES

ROBERT ON CAMERA

AUDIO

NARRATION

A new pilot project is underway at the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. It's the first time prisoners are being offered educational classes. Today, 25 inmates are taking a literacy course – an invaluable skill in a country where half the population cannot read. Nearly 60 percent of Haitian families can't afford to send their children to school. (23")

Jean Robert was arrested two years ago. His crime – associating with kidnappers. He waits patiently for a trial. (9")

ROBERT: (Creole) **M**

"If I'm released one day, this will be really useful for me. Before, I didn't know how to read or write. But now I can write my name, and I know my numbers, thanks to my teacher. I am really interested in this. I want to learn more." (13")

NARRATION

BARBED WIRE / CELL
CROCHETING

The project is currently operating in two sites in Port-au-Prince. At this women's prison, detainees are learning vocational skills. (8")

GROUP CROCHETING

The funding for the four-month project – about \$100,000 – comes from the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti. One of the main objectives is to give inmates professional skills they can use if and when they're set free. (13")

UN OFFICIALS

GEORGETOWN / CHURCH TOWN
HALL

Mamadi Conde is a project manager with the UN Office on Community Violence Reduction. He says the project is helping the government reform the prison system to move away from simply holding prisoners captive. (13")

CONDE ON CAMERA

CONDE: (French) **M**

"They need to also be rehabilitated, and learn something useful. They are citizens who are supposed to one day return to their communities. Until they are released, they should learn a marketable skill that will reduce repeat offenses."
(16.5")

NARRATION

BARBED WIRE / MALNOURISHED
MAN

In reality, Haiti's prison system needs massive reform. A staggering 90 percent of people behind bars have never been convicted. They are being held in "preventive detention" – accused of a crime, and waiting for trial. Prison conditions are dire – cells are overcrowded, and diseases like tuberculosis and chronic malnutrition thrive. (23")

INMATES WITH SIGN /GUARD
TOWER

Human rights groups have pressured the government for two years to reform the justice system and move cases to court faster. But little progress has been made. Thousands still languish, waiting for trial. (12.5")

TENT CLASSROOM
INSTRUCTOR

Educating prisoners is a step in the right direction. More than 400 inmates will participate in literacy classes, conflict resolution and vocational training this year. The goal is to keep prisoners busy. (13")

BEADWORK

Psychologists believe it will help reduce tension, stress and even outbursts of violence, says

MEN WORKING AT TABLE

programme coordinator, Joseph Christian Desgrottes. (8.5")

DESGROTTE ON CAMERA

DESGROTTE: (Creole) **M**

"The courses offered are geared towards allowing inmates to learn something new, and to manage emotions, particularly during moments of anger." (12")

WOMEN CROCHETING

NARRATION

For 23-year-old inmate, Marie Madeleine, crochet distracts her from thinking about the child she left at home. She has been waiting for more than two years for her trial. (10")

BACK SHOT WOMAN'S HEAD

MADELEINE: (Creole) **F**

MADELEINE ON CAMERA

"I've really benefited from this. When you have something to do in here, it helps keep your mind off stress. It also keeps you out of fights and arguments with other people." (14")

NARRATION

CLASS

Prison guards say they've seen a drastic reduction in violence since the programme began. Inmates are now prepared for a productive future once they leave here. This new initiative may be the beginning of much wider prison reforms in Haiti. (17")

PRISON GUARD

UN LOGO

This report was prepared by Amelia Shaw and Blagoje Grujic for the United Nations.