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Authors: Marion Imboden and Cathryn Magno

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HYPERGOVERNANCE AND MULTILAYERED DATA ACCOUNTABILITY IN HAITI: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP OF NGO SCHOOLS

MARION IMBODEN AND CATHRYN MAGNO

ABSTRACT

In this article, we examine the Haitian education data and evidence ecosystem. We focus on schools supported by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating within a system of hypergovernance that is marked by multilayered oversight and systems of data reporting and accountability. We investigate these schools primarily through the eyes of their directors, gleaned from their experience the ways in which data is procured, analyzed, utilized, and reflected on in the provision of schooling to conflict-saturated communities. Through semistructured interviews supported by brief field observations and document review, we identify findings largely consistent with the previous literature: the lack of coherent data collection, analysis, and use; lack of alignment of NGO goals and school-based reality; fragmented responsibilities for collection and oversight of data and evidence; conflicting lines of procedural accountability; and interrupted information flows. Our findings also point to a discrepancy between externally imposed data regulations and the contextual conditions of crisis-affected schools. School directors are under pressure to provide specific types and amounts of data and evidence to be in compliance while being excluded from decisionmaking processes. They are also positioned as intermediaries between the school, the NGO, and international agencies, and are responsible for rendering schools “legible” within a humanitarian-development concurrence. We end by offering recommendations for an EiE data ecosystem that is informed by school directors in order to focus on the crisis-affected communities’ needs and priorities. Key recommendations include training school directors in the effective use of data and involving them in making decisions at the school level.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance and relevance of data in global governance and education in emergencies (EiE) is widely promoted, as it provides information on needs and gaps while also supplying the necessary metrics to improve coordination, support strategic planning, and facilitate resource mobilization (USAID 2026). However, the effective use of data in emergency contexts remains challenging. How constraints on data use manifest in particular locations is little understood, as is what possible measures could be taken to begin to address such constraints. As noted by previous scholars, data use is often context dependent, both in its availability and its operationalization, and delving into contextual barriers to and opportunities for data is paramount to improving education (Buckner et al. 2022). In this paper, therefore, we present the Haitian education ecosystem, with a focus on schools supported by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which have government ties and multilayered oversight. We investigate these schools primarily through the eyes of their directors, gleaned from their experiences the ways data is procured, analyzed, utilized, and reflected on in the provision of schooling to conflict-saturated communities. Acute humanitarian crises are embedded within Haiti's chronic instability and require approaches that combine development and emergency operations in the short-term and strategic contingency planning in the long-term. However, the current data and evidence ecosystem is convoluted, inadequate, and underprioritized. Within this context we ask: How do school leaders in NGO schools in Haiti interface with the collection, analysis, and uptake of education data and evidence?

We ground our exploration in a critical view of normative accountability structures and mechanisms by depicting the complex ecosystem in which Haitian school leaders function. Concepts such as legitimacy and legibility emerged as we untangled the ways in which data and evidence are deployed in a hypergovernance context. By interviewing school directors, NGO staff members, and an education ministry official, with supplemental observations and document review, we captured how school leaders make their schools visible and maintain credibility within overlapping accountability frameworks. We found that, while school directors play an important role in collecting and disseminating information, they struggle to reconcile the demands of multiple stakeholders, some of which conflict with local realities. This highlights the tensions inherent in hypergovernance. School directors mediate between external accountability requirements and the complex realities of their schools, shaping both the legibility of the schools and the perceived legitimacy of the data they provide. Before presenting our detailed methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion, we begin with a brief review of global governance in EiE and a description of the Haitian context.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

Recent publications by international organizations such as UNESCO (UNESCO-IIEP 2021; UNESCO-IIEP 2022; UNESCO 2025) and the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE 2020), along with several academics (e.g., Nicolai et al. 2020), have taken up the question of how to articulate the data challenges in education and emergencies. School personnel and education authorities need information on which to base decisions in their efforts to ensure safe, equitable, and quality education. This right is guaranteed in global agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Safe Schools Declaration, to which Haiti is a signatory. However, many factors negatively influence the identification, collection, and use of data in fragile states and, further, during humanitarian crises (UNESCO 2023a). These include data mismatches, disagreement on data prioritization and availability, use of a nation's education management information system (EMIS), the costs and complexity of gathering data, especially under acute crisis conditions, the ambiguous, competitive, and/or contradictory responsibilities around data collection and data housing, and varying capacities related to the analysis of data and dissemination and the application of results or findings (UNESCO 2023b; INEE 2020; Fontdevila 2023).

These myriad actors and institutions within a polycrisis education environment, all of which have varying—and potentially misaligned—interests and resources, can render even the best conceptual frameworks for data production and uptake relatively ineffectual and unrealistic at the local level. The very concepts and categories on which many global “solutions” rest may in themselves be problematic when applied to specific localities (Rodríguez-Gómez 2019). Menashy and Zakharia (2022) emphasize that partnerships in EiE situations often prioritize data and results that are specified by donors, thereby limiting local decisionmaking and leadership. Global governance is central to understanding the Haitian case. International actors, such as donors, international NGOs, and financial institutions, play a decisive role in shaping domestic policy, distributing resources, and influencing development/humanitarian priorities, and they often replace or limit state authority (Pierre-Louis 2011; Fatton 2025). In a country with unpredictable and inconsistent means of data collection, local data sources become more relevant and consequential (Montjouridès and Liu 2019). However, the capacity to capture granular-level data is often minimal, which contributes to the multiple burdens on individuals such as school leaders, who are already responsible for operating schools under harrowing conditions.

Russell et al. (2025) offer a conceptual orientation to the ways global governance shapes education accountability in Haiti. In order to comprehend the various overlapping legal and policy categories of organizations and services for refugees through the migration process, they refer to organizations as actors of legibility within what they

call a multipolar migratory ecosystem. We similarly consider the current governance in Haiti as a multipolar education data ecosystem in which overlapping reporting (and policy) categories of donors, networks, NGOs, and governments direct data collection, analysis, and use. We question the ways decisions about what counts as relevant data—and who participates in making these decisions—influence institutional legitimacy and the “legibility” of schools.

INEE MINIMUM STANDARDS AND TOOLKITS

International organizations operationalize global frameworks such as the INEE Minimum Standards (INEE 2024), using tools like the Joint Education Needs Assessment (JENA). The JENA was developed by the Global Education Cluster, which supports the implementation of INEE Minimum Standard 4 (assessment), as a way to identify “reliable, comparable, and agreed-upon data points” across agencies and ministries in order to understand education needs and gaps, and to support coordinated, evidence-based planning in crisis contexts (GEC 2010, 4). It typically consists of a standardized set of tools and forms to collect data on core education domains. Findings are shared among cluster members and the relevant authorities (GEC 2010, 2025b). In Haiti, the latest JENA and its secondary data review were conducted collaboratively with Plan International, UNICEF, and Save the Children. The NGO under study in this article explicitly positions its work within EiE, receives funding from JENA participants, and is, therefore, implicated in meeting INEE Minimum Standards (GEC 2025a). Another tool is the 4Ws/5Ws (who is doing what, where, when, and for whom) used for sectorwide coordination, which is sometimes incomplete, inaccurate, or untimely (USAID 2026). Although we did not explicitly ask about these tools in our interviews, the respondents mentioned them in connection with their data-related activities, which illustrates their prevalence in practice under an array of hypergovernmental frameworks and expectations.

INEE Minimum Standard 6 calls for regular monitoring when adapting education programs to the evolving needs of affected populations, with the intention of rebalancing power and increasing the effectiveness, legitimacy, and sustainability of responses in crisis settings (Barakat and Milton 2020). However, when conducted by external or international actors, this carries the risk of drawing misleading conclusions and promoting uniform solutions that may not be appropriate to local circumstances (ElAsad 2025). Standardized guidelines and metrics can clash with context-specific needs, especially when local stakeholders are unfamiliar with the required procedures (Henderson and Smith 2022; Akkari and Radhouane 2023). INEE Minimum Standard 7 recommends that all stakeholders, such as teachers, learners, community members, and education authorities, be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of assessments to ensure their relevance. This can be difficult, if not dangerous, in conflict settings.

Although a country's EMIS usually stores data on education development, EMIS systems are often incomplete or underresourced, which prompts international NGOs to fill gaps. This results in disparate data collection and dissemination that is shaped by differing organizational mandates, methodologies, and donor priorities, with global strategic uses sometimes diverging from local operational needs (Buckner et al. 2022).

The obstacles to obtaining timely and accurate data are immense in fragile states, even more so in crisis situations. We approach the Haitian state as a historically and socially embedded actor shaped by colonial legacies, resource constraints, and interactions with global and local actors. The population's sense of "statelessness" reflects not only government weakness but the confusion caused by "hypergovernance"—that is, the overlap of international and local actors (Kivland 2012, 261). Kivland (2012) suggests that Haitian statehood is performatively constructed. From this perspective, the observed fragmentation and interrupted information flows within the data and evidence ecosystem can be interpreted not as a state "failure" but as a reflection of the complex conditions that shape governance in Haiti.

HAITIAN CONTEXT: POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND FOREIGN AID

Since gaining independence in 1804, Haiti has faced political and economic crises as well as natural and humanitarian disasters. Its history has been shaped by French colonial exploitation, revolutionary resistance, debt extraction, European and US-driven imperialism, as well as ongoing struggles to assert and maintain its national autonomy (Pierre-Louis 2011; Daut 2023; Dubuisson 2022; Alcenat 2021). The 1825 indemnity imposed by France in exchange for diplomatic recognition forced the new state into decades of debt repayment, depleted public revenues, exploitative agricultural systems, and structurally constrained economic growth, which resulted in persistent underdevelopment (Dubuisson 2011; Alcenat 2021). These privations were deepened by a long US imperial continuum, which started in 1915 when intervention entrenched a wealthy urban ruling class that curtailed fiscal and political autonomy. This reshaped domestic political authority limited the state's ability to fund and manage public education (Pierre 2024; Alcenat 2021; Angulo 2010). The Duvalier dictatorship (1957-1986) centralized authoritarian rule, while neoliberal reforms in the 1980s and 1990s deepened economic vulnerability and privatized public services, including education (Charles 2023). As a result, Haiti became increasingly dependent on NGOs to provide services traditionally delivered by the state (Wisner and Concannon 2023).

The turbulent presidencies of Aristide from the early 1990s to 2004, including two coups and his 2004 ouster, intensified Haiti's political instability and led to the UN Stabilization Mission (Pierre 2024). External interventions have produced a governance landscape characterized by the simultaneous presence of (weak) government structures and extreme forms of informal or hybrid mechanisms of rule, where authority is contested and performed across multiple actors (Kivland 2012; Jaffe 2013), including armed groups. Foreign aid often substitutes for, rather than strengthens, state capacity and accountability (Fatton 2014, 2025).

Haiti has been widely referred to as the “Republic of (I)NGOs,” especially since the 2010 earthquake, which reflects the vast presence and influence of intermediaries in almost every aspect of Haitian society (Schöneberg 2016). This international presence has led some scholars to argue that Haiti functions as a kind of “parallel state” (Charles 2023, 1), in which nonstate actors assume functions normally performed by sovereign governments. Others characterize Haiti as “a graveyard of failed NGO projects” (Schuller 2025) or “the main laboratory for U.S. imperial machinations” (Pierre 2023, 245). NGOs are often seen as tools of foreign interests rather than partners in national development (Wright 2012).

The most recent period of unrest was sparked by the assassination of Jovenel Moïse in 2021. In 2023, the UN Security Council authorized the controversial Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti, which reignited debates about sovereignty and neocolonialism (Pierre-Louis 2025). In 2026, Alix Didier Fils-Aimé was installed as prime minister through a procedural mandate, without elections. Haiti remains in a severe, chronic humanitarian crisis, which highlights the enduring consequences of historic exploitation and foreign intervention. The country remains dependent on foreign aid, which impedes Haiti’s long-term self-sufficiency (Pierre 2024; Schuller 2025) and legitimizes neoliberalism and globalization processes. Moreover, NGO accountability in Haiti is limited, due to the high number of unregulated organizations and the lack of consistent reporting mechanisms (Ramachandran and Walz 2015). The current situation threatens data-informed decisionmaking.

Haiti’s political and humanitarian emergencies have significantly impaired access to education and exposed children to increased risks, such as displacement, recruitment by armed groups, and severe psychological and physical distress (UNICEF 2024a). International NGOs focus on education continuity and psychosocial support, albeit in partial and irregular ways (UNICEF 2024b). While NGOs in Haiti have undermined state authority and reinforced privatization (Schuller 2009), they currently fill critical gaps in the underfunded education system. Rather than disbanding them wholesale, NGO practices and transnational aid policies should be improved, at least in the short term (Shah et al. 2024).

HAITI’S EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

The effects of structural adjustment and neoliberal policies, systemic oppression, and the ongoing effects of impoverishment and violence (Wisner and Concannon 2023; Damas 2024) have resulted in a fragmented education system that is heavily dependent on private actors. This includes schools funded and directed by local or international NGOs that provide education services and participate in the governance of education (Charles 2023). In 2012, 154 NGOs were officially registered as active in the Haitian education space.¹ Haiti’s schools are organized into different communes and arrondissements, each

¹ It is important to note that no comprehensive list exists of the NGOs active in Haiti. Estimates are that there are hundreds of officially registered NGOs and several thousand operating in practice.

with varying numbers of public, private, religious, community, vocational, nonformal, international, and alternative schools (MENFP 2025), with little to no guarantee of consistency, equity, or quality. By 2023, it was estimated that 90 percent of the schools were “largely run by non-governmental employees [with] non-governmental funding” (Borger et al. 2023, 8), leading Damas (2024, 436) to describe the privatization as “one of the biggest challenges within the sector in Haiti.”

Colonial and US influence have shaped Haiti’s Euro-American education system, which limits access to local knowledge and creates an enduring epistemic crisis (Gourgues 2022). Trouillot (1995) further notes that external control over historical narratives and policy dampen Haitian perspectives and constrain local agency. The linguistic dominance of French and problematic racial dynamics, along with other sociocultural and socioeconomic divides such as urban/rural disparities, have exacerbated inequality in the education sector (Damas 2024). The need for education approaches that reconnect learning with local realities is one of the challenges that falls to school directors, who must maintain safety and stability while strengthening interpersonal relationships and community (Alon and Schechter 2025).

HAITI’S EDUCATION DATA AND EVIDENCE ECOSYSTEM

Haiti’s 1987 Constitution assigns to the state responsibility for regulating and overseeing all schools, through the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP). However, Haiti’s education data system remains fragmented, with limited coordination among schools, NGOs, and state actors (Freeman and Schuller 2020). Since 2010, the MENFP has collected and stored data on public schools through its EMIS. However, the MENFP struggles with data quality and reliability, outdated information systems and infrastructure, and incomplete national monitoring mechanisms (World Bank 2021). Moreover, the EMIS offers only a partial view of the education landscape; much of the private sector is excluded, although it constitutes the majority of schools in Haiti. NGO schools in Haiti operate in a regulatory gray area in which they are formally expected to comply with certain government regulations and national standards, including delivering certain data, but they often are considered to have uneven education standards as a result of inconsistent funding and lack of proper oversight by the MENFP (Borger et al. 2023; Zanotti 2010). While the MENFP requires private schools to be registered and to report data, by 2017, approximately 70 percent of private schools in Haiti were not accredited by the MENFP, and most do not contribute to national data collection (UNESCO 2017). NGOs, which use their own parallel reporting systems, seem to undermine the development of a functional EMIS, while they are simultaneously both dependent on and accountable to donor-driven initiatives. For example, an NGO may offer leadership training, but because of donors’ influence over school resources and education priorities, it is likely to be designed by international actors, not be aligned with state frameworks, and be disconnected from local realities. Uneven compliance and fragmented “policy implementation” are thus seen across the sector.

Freeman and Schuller (2020) claim that Haiti's aid industry has become a market for "project goods," one in which project delivery is valued over long-term improvements and data is treated as a commodity to secure funding and show accountability. Data practices in overlapping humanitarian and protracted crises often reflect the structural divide between humanitarian and development approaches, which acts to reinforce fragmented accountability and planning systems (UNESCO 2025).

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN HAITI

School principals play a key role in school improvement, education quality, and student learning outcomes (Cruz-González 2019). Effective school leadership can be a catalyst for positive change (UNESCO 2024), particularly in fragile contexts where public institutions are weakened by political instability and transitional governance (Smith and Riley 2012; Magno 2013). Mainstream leadership theory assumes a certain degree of institutional stability, adequate resources, stable governance, and capacity, but these conditions are largely absent in fragile contexts like Haiti, where the very nature of school leadership is muddled (Jean-Marie and Sider 2014). Among the challenges school leaders face in times of crisis are security concerns, communication interruptions, teacher and staff shortages, and student trauma. Typical leadership training does not cover preparation for, response to, recovery from, or reflection on crisis situations (Smith and Riley 2012). Crisis leadership theory recognizes that effective leaders must adapt to uncertainty and disruption and be flexible and resilient (Chiwisa 2024); it also assumes a certain degree of preparation, autonomy, and institutional support to enable option-seeking and decisive action.

In Haiti, the role of school directors, as it is presented in the Guide Pratique d'Administration Scolaire (GPAS), appears to be focused predominantly on administrative, managerial functions (MENFP 2019).² Ongoing revisions linked to the Plan Décennal d'Éducation et de Formation 2020-2030 indicate that the role of school directors may be evolving conceptually, to include a pedagogical emphasis. In ideal circumstances, leaders' decisions are made based on high-quality data (Campo et al. 2025); if the information collected does not accurately capture what it is intended to measure, it is of little use. At the same time, even well-organized data loses its value if it does not meet the actual needs or challenges of decisionmakers in practice (Campo et al. 2025), or if leaders are not able to analyze or apply it to improve schools.

2 While the term "school leader" promotes a visionary, change-oriented connotation aligning with newer theory, in most contexts around the world, earlier notions of school administration prevail, functioning under the premise that schools should be "directed" and "managed" in a top-down, hierarchical manner (Bush, 2003; Magno, 2013). In discussing the case, we use "school director," as that is the term used in Haiti.

To explore how these dynamics play out in Haiti, we conducted an exploratory qualitative case study in which we investigated how NGO school leaders interface with education data and evidence. This enabled us to deeply examine the multiple and overlapping data demands in Haiti's hypergovernance context.

METHODOLOGY: EXPLORATORY QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

This exploratory qualitative case study focuses on the treatment of data and evidence in the schools of one Haitian NGO, for which we use the pseudonym Solèy (Kreyòl for “sun”).

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE

Solèy was founded in 1995 as a local NGO. We selected it for its extensive involvement in educational and humanitarian programs in Haiti, particularly those addressing school continuity, teacher support, and student wellbeing. It is a significant actor in the regions under study and serves as a valuable exemplar of NGO operations in a fragile-state context. Solèy operates a network of 56 schools in underserved neighborhoods across several regions in Haiti. It has a US-based supporting arm and a stated goal: to strengthen the capacity of urban and rural schools by reinforcing the skills of local educators through robust training programs that target teachers and school administrators. According to the NGO, school directors should create safe learning environments. Solèy operates schools independently, but it is an implementing partner of a number of policy initiatives of the MENPF, UNICEF, and other organizations that address emergency responses and provide psychosocial support, child-centered instruction, and other education reforms. In 2025, the NGO received most of its funding from Save the Children and UNICEF. Figure 1 shows Haiti's ten departments, with school-building icons representing the Solèy schools included in this study. The schools in Ouest and Artibonite have been directly affected by ongoing political and environmental crises, the one in Nord less so.

Figure 1: Map of Haiti with Departments and Solèy Schools



Source: Adapted from World Atlas (2025)

INSTRUMENTS, OBSERVATIONS, AND DOCUMENT REVIEW

Semistructured interviews capture in-depth insights and reveal nuance, contradictions, and subtle meanings (Mason 2002). Recruiting a sample of interviewees who could elucidate such meaning was challenging because of the lack of publicly available contact information and security concerns in Haiti. One author has family members who grew up and live in Haiti; they facilitated contact with Solèy's executive director, which allowed us to interview affiliated individuals. Both authors have spent brief periods of time in Haiti in professional capacities, and one's involvement in the Haitian Studies Association further shaped their academic positioning and network.

We contacted school directors and other Solèy staff members and invited them to participate in interviews. Upon confirmation, we sent them written consent forms and requested their signatures to ensure the protection of human subjects, including voluntariness, anonymity, and confidentiality. We conducted three interviews

between February and November 2025, one via Zoom and two on site in Haiti, each lasting approximately 1.5-2 hours; two participants were interviewed twice to capture additional perspectives. Of that total, three were school leaders, one was Solèy's executive director, and one was a ministry staff member (see Table 1). We would not claim that the school leaders interviewed are representative of the population of Haitian school directors, although their experiences may reflect those of other school leaders in NGO schools. We only interviewed one ministry of education official, due to limited access to high-level staff members during the data-collection period. This individual had participated in the revision of the GPAS, a significant process in the evolution of school leadership policy in Haiti. This interview provided broader insight into policy processes and reporting requirements for NGO schools, which is only indirectly reflected in the findings.

Table 1: Summary of Interview Participants

Interviewee Type	Interviews	Modality
School leaders (D1, D2, D3)	3	via Zoom (1), in person (2)
Solèy executive director (ED)	1	via Zoom
Ministry staff member (MS)	1	via Zoom

One author conducted all the interviews using guides developed by both authors and tailored to the participants' roles. We began with background questions to establish a rapport, followed by discussion of school leader preparation, practices, and experiences in the polycrisis context. Two follow-up interviews focused specifically on data collection and use. The questions were culturally sensitive and used locally relevant terms to avoid misunderstandings (Brayda and Boyce 2014), in this case from French, Kreyòl, and English (Brayda and Boyce 2014). We conducted the interviews in French, recorded them, then transcribed them. While French was our shared language, this may have limited expressions better conveyed in Kreyòl. The interviewer clarified unfamiliar terms and paraphrased responses to ensure accurate understanding. The recordings were reviewed several times to ensure accurate word-for-word reproduction and to correct errors. The final transcripts were then translated into English by the authors. The quotes used in this article are our translations from French to English.

Observations enable researchers to witness phenomena firsthand, thus facilitating their perspectives (Merriam 2009). Due to security concerns, only one school visit of approximately half a day was possible to observe leadership in practice. A second observation consisted of a fundraising event in the United States that was organized by Solèy, which lasted about four hours. This event included five conversations, during which one author noted attendees' insights into Solèy's operational processes

and fundraising strategies as contextual information. We consulted one government document (the GPAS) and Solèy's publicly available annual reports and social media. One interviewee also provided an internal document related to Solèy's education pillars, which contained NGO-specific contextual information.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was processed using descriptive coding (categorization and thematic content analysis) (Halkias et al. 2023). The data from the transcribed interviews and field notes were organized in a Word table. The initial descriptive codes and subcodes were determined inductively, covering several topics related to the data and evidence ecosystem in Haiti and Solèy. Our coding was primarily emic, as we did not initially ask about education data or evidence; this emerged as a topic from the school leaders themselves. When developing this article, we applied an etic perspective as we linked participants' comments with the literature on this topic. These initial codes were then grouped into broader categories, such as data collection, responsibility for data, accountability, and communication.

Although a qualitative case study is appropriate for examining underresearched phenomena in Haiti's complex context (Merriam 2009), the study has certain limitations. "Studying up" requires access (Menashy 2025), and ongoing conflict restricted access to certain regions, reliable internet (requiring a greater time commitment), and internal documents, such as data forms. Researcher positionality also matters. As non-Haitian, White, Northern female researchers, we acknowledge our view to be external and took responsibility to conduct research with cultural sensitivity and reflexivity (Brayda and Boyce 2014); as such, we may omit crucial information and inputs to which our position blinded us. Lastly, to mitigate potential researcher bias, we conducted member checks. Member checks were done via follow-up interviews with two participants individually, during which we reviewed their own previous answers, corrected any misunderstandings, and gathered additional details.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following results and discussion of our data analysis reveal a lack of coherent data, a lack of goal alignment, fragmented responsibilities, conflicting procedural accountability, and interrupted information flows during crises.³

³ Please note that interviewees are cited as D1, D2 and D3 (school directors), ED (Solèy Executive Director), and MS (ministry staff member).

LACK OF COHERENT DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND REFLECTION

Data seems to permeate nearly every aspect of Solèy's work, as data was mentioned in all our interviews. It is collected daily, monthly, quarterly, annually, and across "dozens of [short-term] parallel projects," which supports Freeman and Schuller's (2020) view of Haiti as a market for short-term "project goods." Despite this demand for a variety of information, there is no unified system for coordinating or consolidating the diverse data, which reflects the structural divide that sustains a fragmented, multilayered system of accountability and planning (UNESCO 2025). Solèy's executive director (ED) described an organizational landscape in which each donor, including UNESCO, Save the Children, Expertise France, Education Cluster, and the MENFP, requires different measurements, outputs, and reporting formats, which results in a multitude of unrelated microsystems. The ED acknowledged that such disjointed donor demands preclude integrated analysis and prevent the development of long-term planning, which aligns with Rodríguez-Gómez's (2019) contention that, when numerous actors operate with uncoordinated agendas in crisis-affected education environments, the resulting proliferation of parallel systems undermines the applicability of global data models. The ED summarized it in this way: "Each project has its own logical framework and indicators...Our partners...pay us to do very specific things. Maybe one day, if we have money, we'll set up a real system with our own dashboard, something harmonized."

At the school level, assessment and monitoring occur year-round, primarily using attendance sheets to track enrollment and teacher supervision tools to monitor attendance and lesson preparation. One director explained that student performance is monitored through monthly summative assessments "to check students' level of progress," which is supported by a regularly updated database (D2). The MENFP also requires data on the school's GPS location, staff information, and student results, which is needed to make end-of-year decisions (ED, D2). Data provided to the MENFP, however, is often considered incomplete and unreliable, which makes strategic planning and management difficult (MS; World Bank 2021).

Solèy uses standardized numeric evaluation grids to collect teacher performance data as part of its internal data microsystem, but it does not involve a feedback loop. This reveals the weak capacity of the dissemination and application of results to improve instruction quality (UNESCO 2023a; INEE 2020). School directors also complete evaluation forms about their own productivity, communication, and compliance with the hierarchy (D2), which reveals that data is used for accountability rather than school improvement, even though implementing school improvement plans is explicitly stated to be a director's responsibility (Educational Pillars 2025). In fact, Solèy's stated objectives, such as ensuring access, continuity, protection, and quality education in situations of crisis and disruption, align with many of the INEE Minimum Standards; however, they rarely seem to be implemented in practice (D1, D2).

School directors are also required to produce two reports per year for Solèy's executive oversight (ED). These reports provide an overview of the school and the reporting period, document activities undertaken, outline challenges and strategies to address them, and present prospects and recommendations for the next period; this is accompanied by supporting materials (D2). The structure of these reports resembles donor-style interim reporting, which reflects a tacit adherence to the accountability hierarchies prevalent in foreign aid systems, as well as neocolonial requirements from beyond the school itself (Shah et al. 2024).

At the international level, UNICEF sends tools to Solèy to gather information on the needs of schools. However, these instruments are time-consuming and complex and are not used systematically. Solèy's ED noted that "it's not really systematic that there is a collection of needs. Perhaps when there are disasters...they conduct a little survey, but there is no real systematic process for gathering information at the [international] level." They also do not provide direct feedback to support local decisionmaking; they instead are generally unidirectional, from NGOs to international organizations (ED). This reflects findings by Menashy and Zakharia (2022), who show that results-based financing pressures local actors to produce data for external accountability. These instruments tend to reinforce donor-facing legitimacy while limiting local leadership and horizontal accountability.

UNICEF also encourages NGOs to develop their own data-collection mechanisms, but Solèy does not have a comprehensive tool for doing this. Tools such as the JENA can be used to overcome data-collection limitations, but this is also problematic, as it may be applied inconsistently or may not be sufficiently adapted to the context (Buckner et al. 2022), as noted by the secondary data review of the latest JENA in Haiti (GEC 2025).

The directors reported that they would like to utilize data more effectively, but findings suggest a lack of opportunity for participatory reflection about the implications of data (D1, D2, ED). School directors are not trained in data analysis, so much data circulates as information rather than as meaningful, strategic evidence for action. Consistent with neoliberal emphases on accountability, much evidence is reported performatively and hierarchically (Alcenat 2021). School directors are not typically expected to interpret results or set subsequent priorities. This resonates with Smith and Riley's (2012) observation that leadership training provides little preparation for coping with, managing, or reflecting on crisis situations.

LACK OF GOAL ALIGNMENT WITH SCHOOL-BASED REALITY

Goals set by Solèy or its international funders often differ from those the school directors would set if they were allowed to do so. The dynamics of aid, ranging from schools' dependence on foreign benevolence to the need for multiple organizational layers to implement projects, often translates into donors' failure to truly understand schools' needs. One director mentioned specifically that, "if the person helping you doesn't know what the reality is like, it's just temporary help." They go on to say that goals and projects are driven by external funding priorities, and it is "always a question of money" (D1). Another director says that goals set externally are sometimes unattainable or unrealistic because of conditions. He reflects on how he must justify himself when goals are not met, saying that "sometimes it's stressful...we can't achieve our goals because they're too high or irrelevant" (D2). External goal-setting can be understood as an adaptation of colonial logics or imperialist intervention via humanitarian aid (Gourgues 2022).

It remains unclear how psychosocial support, for example, is organized: who provides it, how it is carried out, and what is ultimately assessed and evaluated. External goals for psychosocial health are not grounded in children's immediate experiences. Directors repeatedly refer to psychosocial support measures, but there is a lack of clear structures, personnel capacities, or monitoring tools. Several directors explained: "If the child is not doing well, we can call in a psychologist" (D2); "There are women among the staff who try to be understanding" (D1); and "The children can leave a letter. I take a day to read all the letters" (D1). These examples illustrate a lack of coherence; support and monitoring are unevenly implemented, which echoes Fontdevila's (2023) concerns with data mismatches. The directors also described a persistent stigma associated with psychosocial health (D1, D2). This hinders the transparent discussion of goal-setting and action, and creates conditions in which externally conducted assessments risk generating misleading conclusions and promoting uniform solutions that do not fit local realities (ElAsad 2025).

One director described his frustration with externally designed projects that require parental involvement, even when many "parents can't read" or are unavailable (D1). He said, "It sometimes doesn't work, because the families don't have the capacity or just have other things to do, so they do not help" (D1). He must report that project as a failure when it was unrealistically designed from the outset, which illustrates concerns raised in the literature about standardized approaches (ElAsad 2025; Akkari and Radhouane 2023). The emphasis on measurable performance indicators creates considerable emotional pressure at the school level and causes directors to feel discomforted and maladroit.

FRAGMENTED RESPONSIBILITIES

The Haitian interviewees described a fragmented EiE data ecosystem in which responsibilities are diffused and unclear—a typical obstacle in fragile contexts (UNESCO 2023a). Responsibilities for data collection, transmission, and analysis are distributed among actors such as school assistants, secretaries, evaluation managers, educational supervisors, project-specific monitoring, evaluation, and learning officers, school directors, the school board, resource people, people in charge of school fees, and NGO administrators (D1, D2, ED). One of the directors explicitly noted that “information is first collected by the assistant, who takes attendance, records data, and follows up with the secretary. The secretary also collects information concerning requests to be made to the central office and to the school itself” (D2). School directors are responsible for collecting some data themselves and overseeing additional data collection by others, and the data collection differs from school to school. They deal with overlapping systems of accountability, with one saying, “It’s like being a project manager” (D1) and another saying “I am still a teacher after all” (D3).

Data circulates through school boards and parent committees (D2), but agendas and minutes are not recorded, stored, or shared with upper management (ED). While this broadens the circle of actors, it blurs responsibilities (D2). This highlights the lack of transparency and systematic documentation of context-sensitive interventions, activities, and needs. The interviews revealed a lack of consensus between the education ministry and Solèy as to what school directors’ data-related tasks are, especially in light of the new Plan Décennal d’Éducation et de Formation (M1, ED).

Finally, school leaders who have overlapping mandates and parallel data initiatives feel pressured and overburdened by forms and reporting avenues (D1, D3). As the Solèy ED explained, “If they don’t work the way [Solèy] requires, if they do not reach what we planned, we will be stricter with them.... If they do not improve, they will have to leave.”

CONFLICTING PROCEDURAL ACCOUNTABILITY WITH DIRECTORS AS DATA INTERMEDIARIES

The case of Solèy and its schools reflects a culture of procedural accountability in which the school directors occupy an intermediary position within overlapping systems of reporting and accountability. They are forced to prioritize following procedures rather than focusing on the substance of education (Dawson and Maricut-Akbik 2021). They navigate the everyday realities of school life, maintaining relationships with students, teachers, parents, and the wider community while engaging directly with other members of the staff and with the upper management of the NGO, to whom they must send procedural reports (D1, D2, ED). One director described the hierarchy: “We know what [Solèy] requires, we know [Solèy’s] philosophy. We’re the ones with the lesser role, but who know the reality of the community” (D1).

Our findings highlight the layered authority under which school directors operate, within government regulations and NGO guidelines. As one director said, “The teachers we recruit are part of the Ministry of Education system, but when [Solèy] runs a school, it first defines its policies, the goals it wants to achieve, and trains the team accordingly... The teachers and I must follow [Solèy’s] wishes to the letter” (D2). Even if a school director notes contradicting local needs, they must remain accountable to the ministry for supplying teachers and to the NGO’s directives for education delivery.

One director described a time-consuming administrative environment in which several levels of communication and reporting had to be managed:

Given that the school is managed in conjunction with [Solèy] and we also have guidelines from [Solèy], a good part of the time is reserved for communication with [Solèy’s] main office...There is certainly the equipment that we have to procure in order to work. And it takes a little time to communicate with those responsible for logistics, accounting, and other people who manage the institution’s funds. But...there is also communication with...the ministry, because there is data to be provided...So it is compulsory to stay in constant contact with [both]. It takes time because I’m also in management...there are forms to fill in, attendance forms, educational forms, attendance for teachers and attendance for pupils. So that’s part of the job, apart from the work given to me by [Solèy]. (D3)

This reflects the strategic or operational use of data, depending on the audience (Buckner et al. 2022). The directors thus act as data translators, converting local conditions into formats for Solèy or international donors, while having no influence on the indicators themselves. This makes schools appear legible to external actors even if they are locally illegible. It suggests that directors are implicated in a larger network in which decisions about what data should be collected, when, and by whom are made “above” them, by NGO management. One director said, “[Solèy] is connected with other international partners...who undoubtedly share [Solèy’s] vision. But personally, as director, it is not my responsibility. There is a higher level in [Solèy’s] hierarchy. They are the ones who organize themselves with other NGOs and organizations that share information and experiences” (D2). When NGO projects span multiple schools, directors are sidelined from planning but must interpret and apply decisions and data demands at the school level, thus reinforcing their “intermediary” identity, granting responsibility without giving decisionmaking authority.

INTERRUPTED INFORMATION FLOW DURING CRISES

Data management is disrupted during periods of crisis. The flow of information is often interrupted during periods of insecurity, fuel shortages, or network outages. Solèy's ED said, "The first obstacle is communication. When we can't communicate, we don't know what's going on." Because data is gathered and transmitted by numerous actors and to different authorities, which further complicates information flows, with information moving in only one direction, the ED admits that "sometimes we forget, but we're supposed to feed information collected back into the communities, into the schools, but it's difficult in this situation now, people are very busy." The lack of information available during crises highlights the constraints on school directors' flexibility (Chiwisa 2024) and underscores a broader issue: fragmented information systems produce fragmented data, which in turn impedes informed decisionmaking (Campo et al. 2025).

CONCLUSION

The case of Solèy reveals the complex data entanglement confronting school directors in Haiti. We conclude that the data and evidence ecosystem in Haiti exemplifies the type of hypergovernance and overlapping lines of authority in states with extensive external intervention (Kivland 2012; Russell et al. 2025). With this article, we make a unique contribution to the depiction of school directors' experiences in this context, where private NGO schools are prevalent and serve as sites where state (il)legitimacy and school (in)visibility can emerge, perhaps more so than in public schools. We see that Solèy schools operate not only as education institutions but also as reporting sites within a broader transnational governance network.

Buckner et al. (2022) had previously noted a discrepancy globewide between the use of data for strategic purposes and for operational uses locally. As we note in the Haitian case, this structural constraint reduces localized needs assessments and data collection that could serve as a basis for evidence-based decisionmaking. It also contradicts the importance of the context-specific, participatory monitoring processes emphasized by INEE (2024). Instead of enabling context-sensitive decisionmaking, the current configuration of the EiE data ecosystem in Haiti puts school directors under duress to meet external expectations that might not match local demands (Fontdevila 2023). Furthermore, school directors' management preparation does not include specific training on how to collect and analyze student- or school-level data. Solèy does not have a comprehensive monitoring system, yet school directors are responsible for continually communicating achievement results to the NGO and to the government. Evaluation processes exist but they are not standardized, and it is not clear to the school directors how results influence goal-setting or their future work.

The directors reported that they received little or no training specifically in crisis management and psychosocial support, which raises concerns about how priorities are set and why performance indicators take precedence over strengthening the human and interpersonal dimensions of school leadership in emergency situations, which is contrary to INEE guidance and leadership theory (Smith and Riley 2012; INEE 2020). Governance mechanisms tend to reinforce vertical accountability (upward reporting to donors) rather than horizontal or local accountability (responsive leadership, community engagement, meaningful learning outcomes).

Based on our findings, we understand that school directors have the potential to provide valuable qualitative insights within the EiE data ecosystem, but that their responsibilities for data and evidence are not explicitly treated in the INEE Minimum Standards. Integrating their context-sensitive perspectives could help transition the ecosystem from procedural accountability to the learning-oriented use of insights, with coherent systems and realistic goals.

Caught in the matrix of the foreign aid and NGO industry in Haiti and facing constraints in collecting and using accurate and relevant data, school leaders' positioning raises critical questions about a new vision for aid and development in education (Schuller 2025; Fatton 2025). In the context of Haitian hypergovernance, data generated by national assessments and donor-funded initiatives often circulate at the international level but do not feed back as actionable items for schools. The manifold monitoring and reporting frameworks form an ecosystem of partial and unintegrated databases. Even if current theory and, indeed, emerging Haitian education policy encourage school leaders to be instructional leaders, school directors in Haiti are hampered in doing so, as they are considered civil service administrators within current aid and development structures. Tensions between leadership ideals embedded in international guidance frameworks (e.g., UNESCO's IIEP) and the day-to-day realities of crisis leadership under multilayered oversight have an impact on directors' identity and autonomy.

School directors and organizations act as "intermediaries" and therefore as mediators of "legibility," producing data that make their schools (partially) visible but within externally defined accountability frameworks. We observed that the ministry's EMIS is ineffective and tools such as JENA, while capable of collecting rich contextual data, were used unidirectionally and inconsistently, with school leaders simply filling out predefined forms. This suggests that, in practice, these national and international tools do not capture the complex, rich reality on the ground, thereby limiting the data's legitimacy and depth and, in turn, reducing the schools' legibility. Ultimately, the data collected and delivered, intended for a variety of stakeholders, appears inconsistent, partial, and disconnected, making it difficult for the organizations requesting it and the leaders themselves to learn from it.

We conclude that in Haiti, where state capacities have historically been limited and repeated attempts to improve national data systems have largely failed, strengthening data management at the local level appears more feasible. In this context, NGO schools, which constitute the majority of the Haitian education system, could become transformative actors. But this is only possible if they are not mandated to participate in traditional data and accountability structures and instead are supported in developing robust, locally relevant, and actionable data-management practices. This conclusion requires a conception of the role of school leaders not as actors responsible for complying with multilayered, external administrative regulations but as professional education leaders who have knowledge about and influence over the design of school improvement processes, as envisioned in the new GPAS and in Solèy's Educational Pillars (2025).

Finally, the observed case provides initial clues as to what an EiE data ecosystem informed by school directors would require, and how it could be (re)organized to focus on crisis-affected communities' priorities, needs, and agendas. Our recommendations include the following: (1) targeting school directors as key actors who have access to timely and context-sensitive information and to the professionals who best understand their school needs and dynamics; (2) ensuring that school directors are trained in data collection, analysis, reporting, and planning in order to fill a preparation gap in this sector; (3) including school directors in decisionmaking for their schools, from setting goals and objectives to implementing recommendations; (4) establishing a harmonized data-monitoring system for NGO schools in order to eliminate overlap and reduce bureaucracy; and (5) creating spaces for dialogue among all actors involved across the governance landscape to help translate data into meaningful action and support the development of a more inclusive and accountable EiE evidence ecosystem.

In Haiti's hypergovernance context, our study suggests a shift in attention to harmonizing the data and evidence ecosystem, consolidating lines of accountability, and directly involving school leaders in crafting the data ecosystem that implicates them.

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