

# Improving Nursing Education in Haiti by Strengthening Quality Standards



## Current Situation

Haiti has a long tradition of educating high quality nurses. However, in recent years the number of private nursing training institutions has increased substantially: there are now more than 400 private nursing schools operating throughout the country. As a result of the growth in private institutions, little is known about the quality of education provided or the technical skills of their graduates. The public is therefore at risk of receiving questionable care and prospective nursing students have little objective information to help them select a private institution to attend.

To improve nursing education in Haiti, the USAID-funded Health Financing and Governance (HFG) project is working closely with the Ministry of Health or *Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population* to strengthen its ability to manage an effective standards-based quality system for nursing educational institutions. This system is known as “*reconnaissance*.” In particular, HFG is working with the *Département de Formation et de Perfectionnement des Sciences de la Santé* (DFPSS) or the Department of Training and Development for Health Sciences, which is the MOH unit responsible for nursing education.

## What is Reconnaissance?

*Reconnaissance*, which is similar to accreditation, occurs when a neutral party evaluates the strengths, weaknesses and possibilities for improvement within an educational institution, such as a nursing school. The purpose of *reconnaissance* is to improve the quality of nursing education, protect the interests of the public, ensure the program teaches students entry-to-practice competencies, and guarantee that patient safety is a priority. Ideally, the evaluation team compares various elements of the institution’s education system – including curriculum, physical training facilities, practicum sites, and the teaching methods and techniques for grading students – against a set of agreed upon quality standards.



## How is the Haitian Government Improving Reconnaissance?

Last fall, DFPSS leadership met with the HFG project and the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) to review the existing system used to monitor the quality of nursing educational institutions. CASN is a bilingual (French/English) organization that is the official accrediting agency for university nursing programs in Canada. Drawing on the needs identified by DFPSS, HFG and CASN designed a five-day study tour to CASN's headquarters in Ottawa, Canada during October 2013.

In Canada, three delegates from the DFPSS and Director of the *Direction Soins Infirmiers* (DSI) or the Nursing Directorate met with CASN staff to discuss:

- ▶ Best practices to develop and revise *reconnaissance* standards;
- ▶ The role of reviewers who evaluate nursing training institutions;
- ▶ The role of the jury that makes a decision on *reconnaissance* status; and
- ▶ Capacity-building in nursing institutions that may result from the *reconnaissance* process.

After the study tour participants returned to Haiti, the DFPSS, together with the HFG Project and CASN, developed a new set of standards against which nursing educational institution would be evaluated. Standards are the backbone for the *reconnaissance* process: they define the minimum level of quality that must be met in relation to safety, ethics and nursing competencies.

The DFPSS developed seven standards. For each one, the DFPSS also developed a standard descriptor, which explains how the standard will be achieved; key elements, provide qualitative and quantitative measures that can be used to verify that the standard is being met; and interpretations, which furnishes instructions for how to complete the evaluation. The seven standards include:

1. **Graduates:** the graduates of the institution are well prepared to practice in the profession, and have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to provide quality care.
2. **Teachers:** teachers enable students to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to provide quality care.
3. **Curriculum:** the curriculum is clear, coherent and promotes learning.
4. **Resources:** the institution has the necessary resources to facilitate learning and to operate the education program effectively.

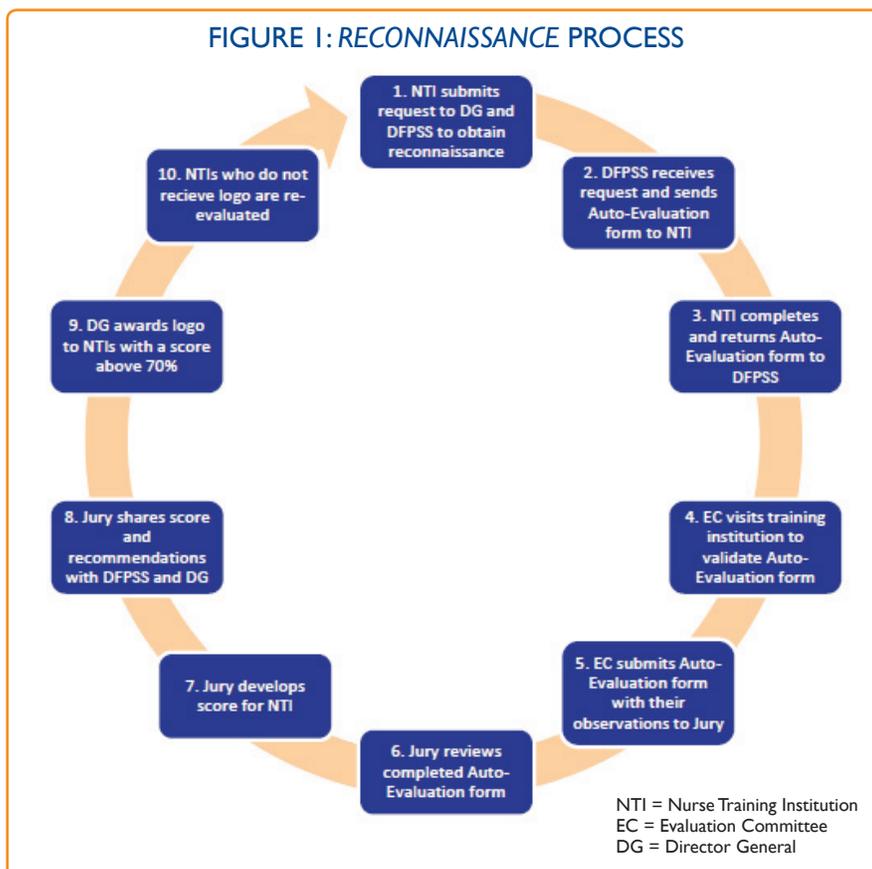


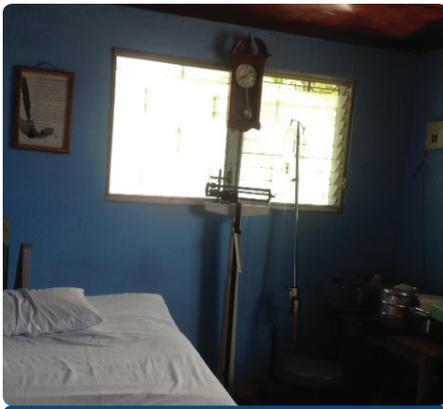
5. **Admissions:** students admitted to the training institution have the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to complete nursing training.
6. **Governance:** governance of the institution is effective and facilitates the attainment of the institution's missions and goals.
7. **Institution:** infrastructure of the institution and practicum sites facilitate student learning.

Once the standards were approved, the DFPSS began to determine how nursing schools will be evaluated against them. In line with international best practices, the DFPSS decided the schools would first complete a self-evaluation assessment against the seven standards, and then an external evaluation committee would complete a site visit to review and validate the self-evaluation.

The evaluation committee would then develop a report with recommendations for improvement to share with an external jury. The jury makes a final recommendation that will be reviewed by the Director General as to whether or not the institution is recognized, and receives the new *reconnaissance* logo (see Figure 2) – a visible indication for students that the school has undergone and passed *reconnaissance*, and offers high-quality nursing training.

The DFPSS also worked with the HFG Project and CASN to document each step in the *reconnaissance* process in an internal manual. The manual includes a set of tools to be used by (i) educational institutions, (ii) evaluators and (iii) jury members throughout the process. The *reconnaissance* steps are outlined in the figure below.





**About HFG**

A flagship project of USAID's Office of Health Systems, the Health Finance and Governance (HFG) Project supports its partners in low- and middle-income countries to strengthen the health finance and governance functions of their health systems, expanding access to life-saving health services. The HFG project is a five-year (2012-2017) global health project. To learn more, please visit [www.hfgproject.org](http://www.hfgproject.org).

The HFG project is a five-year (2012-2017), \$209 million global project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The HFG project is led by Abt Associates Inc. in collaboration with Broad Branch Associates, Development Alternatives Inc., Futures Institute, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Results for Development Institute, RTI International, and Training Resources Group, Inc.



Abt Associates Inc.  
[www.abtassociates.com](http://www.abtassociates.com)  
 4550 Montgomery Avenue,  
 Suite 800 North, Bethesda, MD 20814

**DISCLAIMER**

The author's views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

May 2014

## What Are the Next Steps to Implement Reconnaissance in Haiti?

The steps outline above represent the recommended course of action to implement the *reconnaissance* process in Haiti. As of April 2014, the DFPSS is implementing *reconnaissance* in nursing training institutions throughout the country. After the first round of schools have been evaluated, the Ministry plans to deliver logos to qualified nursing training institutions. The DFPSS, HFG Project and CASN experts will then reconvene to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the process, and to make any required changes.

FIGURE 2: NEW RECONNAISSANCE LOGO

