

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Young London women launch final push to put Haiti's schoolgirls back on the map

- Nearly 4 years ago, young professionals took on a vital Haitian disaster response project that the humanitarian community had avoided.
- On Wed Nov 13<sup>th</sup> at 00.01GMT the group, Thinking Development, will launch their final appeal for the support base they need to continue the unique school reconstruction project for their slum-dwelling collaborators. It will be the biggest school crowdfunding campaign for Haiti yet.
- The group brings together international development planners, architects & engineers that not only wanted to empower a decimated community to build back better, but also to make their plan an open-source template for responsible, future-proof school reconstruction in tropical disaster-stricken places worldwide.
- Thinking Development have been working voluntarily for nearly 4 years with one of Haiti's largest educators of women to develop a disaster-resilient, high-density and eco-friendly primary school that can be replicated all over Haiti and beyond.
- The campaign aims to raise start-up money to make the 1<sup>st</sup> of a series of schools a reality. This school will provide 580 school places for girls from the densely populated slum of Fort National in Port-au-Prince.
- On Jan 12<sup>th</sup> 2010, Haiti suffered one of the most devastating earthquakes in human history. 1 in 30 Haitians died, over 1.5 million were displaced and 4000 schools were destroyed. Most are still operating out of temporary shelters, and thousands of children simply don't have schools to go to.
- The international community pledged billions to build back better after the disaster. But in reality, has been no follow-up to emergency response for many of Haiti's most disadvantaged children.

**Official Launch of *The Thinking Girls' School Crowdfunding Campaign*: 13.Nov.2013**



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### Campaign Supported by:

UCL Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction: <http://ucl.ac.uk/rdr>

Squint Opera: [www.squintopera.com](http://www.squintopera.com)

SVI Design: [www.svidesign.com](http://www.svidesign.com)

The Big Tomato Company: <http://www.bigtomatocompany.com>

### Available Images, Videos, Interviewees and Further Info

#### Contact us

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The campaign page will be available to the public from 00.01am GMT on Nov 13<sup>th</sup> at <http://bit.ly/Thinkn>

#### Potential Interviewees

1. Linda O'Halloran, project founder and director  
At the time of the disaster, Linda was a 24-year-old philosophy research student at University College London (UCL). After receiving word of the devastation suffered by her former educators, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, she set about getting them the best support possible. After finding nothing but emergency relief and temporary shelters in other organisations, she set about gathering her own team. She was soon joined by Arup Associate structural engineer, Hayley Gryc, UCL Development Planning Unit disaster reconstruction expert, Dr. Cassidy Johnson, and Thinking Development was born. Linda & her colleagues are now making 1 final push to turn their hard fought battle for sustainable post-disaster reconstruction into a reality.  
Linda now sits on the Board of the UCL Institute of Risk and Disaster Reduction
2. Sr. Meave Guinan, Dublin-based Cluny Sister responsible for supporting the Haitian branch of the organisation..
3. Port-au-Prince-based Sr. Yannick Saieh available for locally based interviews.  
<http://thinkingdevelopment.org/videos/meet-sr-yannick-director-m%C3%A8re-louise-primary-school>

**Find out more about who's involved:** [www.thinkingdevelopment.org/people](http://www.thinkingdevelopment.org/people)

#### Images and footage available

1. Project Photo archives: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/75871448@N02>.  
All credits to Thinking Development.
2. Additional footage available with original sound/ without commentary.  
E.g. footage:  
<http://thinkingdevelopment.org/videos/reconstructing-school-down-town-port-au-prince-haiti>

#### More Information

It will be four years on 12 January 2014 since the huge 7.0 earthquake wreaked devastation across the country. In a matter of hours hundreds of thousands had died and 4,000 schools - equivalent to all the secondary schools in the whole of England - were destroyed.

One of those schools was Centre Rosalie Javouhey, a girls' primary school in one of Haiti's most disadvantaged slums, Fort National. On January 11, 2010 it was providing education to 750 pupils slum dwellers and child workers, running night classes and community projects. On January 12 it had been reduced to a pile of rubble.

The school managers, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, who educate over 10,000 girls annually in Haiti, have not only been trying to re-house these 750 students, they've had to move another school to the same site. After nearly 4 years of running from tents and now transitional shelters, they are still lacking any serious donor commitment for the redevelopment of the complex as a whole.

Sr. Meave Guinan, a Dublin-based Cluny Sister helping support the project said:

“Getting this school built is vital for helping these girls thrive, and not just these girls but many more for years to come. Every day they study in conditions even an adult would find challenging but there is now a real chance of ending that for good.

“Without the support and efforts of the architects, engineers and designers who have all volunteered so much time and expertise we wouldn't have got this far. But now, we need that final bit of help with funding to get these carefully thought out designs put into practice and built.”

Linda O'Halloran, project founder said:

“The site is a perfect example what works and what really doesn't work about international disaster relief. They got emergency aid relatively quickly – tents, portaloos – but we're the only ones who've ever asked what they need to meet their demands in the long run. For one of the most important education providers in Haiti, that's a bad sign.”

Of the 9.3 billion USD promised to Haiti after the disaster, most never made it there, and less still has been invested in permanent reconstruction projects.<sup>1</sup> More common uses of aid money include temporary structures and emergency shelters. The excessive delivery of poorly planned temporary shelters – be they houses or classrooms – have in many cases redefined the infrastructure of a poorly planned city for the worse.

The Thinking Development project was founded to break this trend, and support effective, long-term disaster recovery, starting with women's education. It brings together international experts in development planning, young engineers and architects. Together with the local community, they have designed a disaster-resilient, eco-friendly and replicable school for urban Haiti. When finished, it will provide an open-source design that can be built and maintained by Haitians, and easily adapted elsewhere in Haiti's dense cities.

In addition to serving as a replicable case study, the first school will allow an additional 580 Haitian girls to go to a safe, inspiring school at Centre Rosalie Javouhey.

A crowdfunding campaign launching Wednesday aims to secure £40,000 – just over 5% of the total project costs, to help get the project started. Thinking Development

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<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2013/02/28/172875646/what-happened-to-the-aid-meant-to-rebuild-haiti>

and the Cluny Sisters hope to have the first school underway by the fifth anniversary of the earthquake in 2015.

#### **Notes for Editors**

3. This 100% voluntary post-disaster planning NGO founded by UCL graduates and Arup engineers launch 4 years of work with a tri-lingual crowdfunding
4. Project Founder, Linda O'Halloran, project engineers and architects, and Anglophone Cluny Sisters in London, Dublin and Haiti available any time for radio or TV interviews.
5. The campaign page will be available to the public from 00.01am GMT on Nov 13<sup>th</sup> at <http://bit.ly/Thinkn>
6. Main website with additional information [www.thinkingdevelopment.org](http://www.thinkingdevelopment.org).

#### **About the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny**

An Order of nuns founded in France over 200 years ago to promote health and women's education in the developing world. There are about 3,400 Cluny Sisters in 60 countries and 5 continents worldwide. The 2010 Haitian earthquake destroyed eleven schools, an orphanage and a clinic destroyed by the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Cluny offer their services based on need, not creed.

#### **About Thinking Development**

Founded by UCL graduates in response to January 2010's devastating earthquake in Haiti, Thinking Development was first formed to connect UCL technical skills with local social networks in Haiti to rebuild a girls' school complex in a socially, ecologically and economically sustainable manner. Thinking Development is also committed to facilitating research-NGO collaborations, and to capacity-building in the Haitian construction sector and among development and Disaster Risk Reduction researchers.