

Haiti: A Once-in-a-Century Chance for Change

Beyond reconstruction: re-envisioning Haiti with equity, fairness, and opportunity

Before the devastating earthquake of January 2010, Haiti was showing signs of dynamism. However, the pre-existing extreme levels of poverty and inequality exacerbated the devastation. Haiti's reconstruction, if badly managed, will perpetuate the country's inequality, benefiting the rich and creating new risk for the poor. If well managed, it really could help to build a better Haiti.

The goal of reconstruction now must be a genuinely more equitable Haiti, in which poverty and instability are reduced. The way to achieve that is through reconstruction led by Haiti's government and other institutions, genuinely accountable to all Haitians. The international community must commit itself now to support that effort in the arduous years of reconstruction that lie ahead.

Summary

No disaster is completely natural. The devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on 12 January 2010 was no exception. Haiti's extreme levels of poverty and inequality exacerbated the devastation and determined who was vulnerable.

Haiti does not just need to be reconstructed, but in the words of Oxfam's partners in Haiti, 're-envisioned', too. Before the earthquake, 80 per cent of Haiti's population lived on less than \$2 per day. In rural areas, the figure was 90 per cent. Nearly 60 per cent of the population was undernourished, and one child in four was stunted as a result.

Now nature has compounded these woes. The earthquake is the largest in proportional impact that any country has ever experienced. It could cost US\$13.9bn and take 10 years to rebuild the country.

Badly managed, reconstruction will deepen Haiti's suffering, benefiting the better-off more than the poor, perpetuating inequality, and creating new risks.

But, if well handled, reconstruction can turn the aid industry cliché of 'build back better' into reality. Elsewhere, disasters have sometimes been the harbingers of profound social and economic change. The question is: what do Haitians need in order to recover from the earthquake in a way that can address the problems Haiti has faced for decades?

Oxfam's 32 years of experience in Haiti, 60 years of experience in disasters, and discussions with its long-term partners in Haiti, suggest that the reconstruction effort needs to meet three vital conditions. First, Haiti's government and other Haitian institutions must lead the reconstruction. Second, as they do so, they must be genuinely accountable to all Haitians, including civil society. And third, every Haitian must be given the information they need to make informed decisions on their future. This report sets out recommendations for how to meet these conditions.

Government leadership

Perhaps understandably, strategic leadership from the government of Haiti has been slow in coming. Since disaster struck, it has been slow to make decisions and has been thus far unable to articulate and communicate a vision for the reconstruction of the country. But the government has done well in other areas, quickly supporting people who wanted to return to rural areas; allowing people and goods to enter the country tax free; and facilitating the humanitarian response.

Some of Haiti's civil or local government institutions have also proved well able to respond. The strength of local government, local communities, and their organizations and churches has sustained much of the population of Haiti. Reconstruction efforts need to involve and further strengthen such grassroots initiatives, build on decentralisation efforts, and support local government.

Corruption is both cause and consequence of the weakness of the Haitian state. The Prime Minister of Haiti told Oxfam that he had, 'no illusions about the perception of corruption and inefficiency' in Haiti. Tackling corruption and increasing transparency and accountability at all levels must be integral to the reconstruction effort.

International support

In the arduous years of reconstruction that lie ahead, Haiti needs the dramatic upsurge of international support since 12 January to endure. But it needs that support to be well directed, as well as substantial and sustained over time. Only Haitian ownership, leadership and engagement – not just of the government, but of civil society (NGOs, academics, youth groups, trade unions, displaced communities) and the private sector – can establish the reconstruction process as legitimate in the eyes of Haitians, and ensure that aid is dispersed according to real need, rather than donor preference.

To date, the UN, like the government itself, has shown little strategic leadership. It has failed to make the

most of considerable Haitian expertise. Since the earthquake, most UN coordination meetings are held in English, rather than French or Creole, effectively excluding many local NGOs and other Haitians both from contributing their local knowledge and experience and from building their own capacity to contribute to Haiti's long-term future.

Urgent needs

Shelter: As a result of the earthquake, approximately 1.2 million people are currently living in temporary shelters in the greater Port-au-Prince area.¹ Tremendous efforts have already been made by the humanitarian community to meet their needs, but now those efforts must be redoubled in advance of the rainy season.

Sanitation and public health: Before the earthquake, only 19 per cent of the population of Haiti had access to improved sanitation. Now, with more than one million people living outside of their homes in cramped conditions, sanitation could be a major factor affecting public health in the rainy season, which lasts from April to June and again from August to November. Oxfam and others are working together to ensure that drainage channels are cleared, solid waste is disposed of properly, and people in camps use healthy sanitation methods. And all sanitation actors must concentrate their efforts to ensure that poor sanitation and waste disposal does not lead to poor public health.

Building back better means tackling both long- and short-term housing and infrastructure needs. Previous earthquake responses suggest that it will take years to rebuild Haiti. Even before the earthquake struck, 80 per cent of city dwellers lived below the poverty line, most of them in slum and squatter settlements lacking basic services like water, decent sanitation, and clear tenure status.

Remember rural Haiti: Urban reconstruction must not come at the cost of rural neglect. The rainy season coincides with the beginning of the planting season for rice and the height of Haiti's 'lean' season (*période de soudure*). Urgent action is needed to support the majority of Haitians who depend on subsistence farming.

Gender matters: Reconstruction provides an opportunity to improve significantly the situation of Haitian women and to harness their energy and potential. In a profoundly unequal society, women are subjected to all forms of gender-based violence, including an alarmingly high level of sexual assault and rape. Oxfam's initial assessments suggest that women continue to be vulnerable to violence in the camps.

Donors and government need to increase the participation of women in the reconstruction, from the community level to the highest reaches of government; and to develop women's greater economic capacity through the design of projects that enable them to participate on an equal basis with men, for example through appropriate childcare and support structures, training and capacity building.

Building back better

Haiti was showing signs of new dynamism and hope before the earthquake. The preceding 10 months was a period of relative calm and stability in Haiti. There was a decline in kidnappings, incomes rose, and unemployment fell.

The earthquake itself is throwing up new generations of young leaders. Like the committee of young leaders who emerged at the Delmas 62 camp to help the hundreds of people camped in the yard of a private compound. As one of them, Stephan Durogene, commented, 'I didn't know I had this in me. It's during the earthquake I realized I can be a good leader.'

If the reconstruction listens to and strengthens the voices of people like Stephan, Haiti can indeed build back better.

Introduction

Haiti does not just need to be reconstructed, but in the words of some of Oxfam's partners in Haiti, 're-envisioned' too.² Before the earthquake, 80 per cent of Haiti's population lived on less than \$2 per day. In rural areas, the figure was 90 per cent.³ Nearly 60 per cent of the population was undernourished, and one child in four was stunted as a result.⁴

Now nature has compounded these woes. The Inter-American Development Bank estimates that the earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010 is the largest in proportional impact that any country has ever experienced, and that it could cost US\$13.9bn and take 10 years to rebuild the country.⁵

Since 12 January, Haitians have done an enormous amount to start to recover: breaking up the destroyed walls and carting them to the streets rock by rock, clearing rubble, restarting their businesses. But just as the rubble cannot all be cleared by hand, so Haitians alone cannot rebuild the country. They need an enormous amount of international assistance. Haitians are overwhelmingly telling Oxfam that they want food and water, shelter and jobs – and they expect the government to demonstrate the leadership needed to turn Haiti from 'the poorest country in the Western hemisphere' to a country where everyone has the opportunity to prosper.⁶

The future Haiti will be shaped by the decisions on relief, reconstruction and recovery already being taken. This paper sets out some basic paths and principles for that reconstruction, and highlights some of Oxfam's concerns from the first two months of what will be a decade of effort. It then explores how to improve the effort to address the most urgent needs of poor Haitian men and women as they struggle to rebuild their lives.

Lessons from now: principles for the future

The fundamental principle must be equity. ‘Building back better’ is a cliché of reconstruction worldwide, but for Haiti it must be the reality. The one way to ensure that is for *all* Haitians to be able to choose their future.

Reconstruction with equity

Many Haitians have told Oxfam that the first thing that needs to change is the inequality in Haitian society; that exclusion is pervasive in education and government at all levels. Wealth and power have always been concentrated in the hands of Haiti’s small political and commercial elite. The scale of the challenge to reverse exclusion is already being seen in Haiti’s reconstruction. According to Oxfam’s preliminary investigations, the most marginalised people – renters and squatters and those living in and around the poorest neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince and the areas outside – are not receiving the same amount of assistance as those in more affluent areas.

Box 1: Water and sanitation

Before the earthquake, only about 30 per cent of Port-au-Prince had access to a municipal water supply, and 50 per cent of the city was served by sanitation systems. In rural areas, 48 per cent had water and 23 per cent had access to sanitation services.⁷ More than three million people had to find water from other sources – sometimes by trucking water to fill cisterns, purchasing water from expensive commercial water kiosks and simply carrying it from rivers and springs, with no guarantee that this water was safe and clean. For the poorest families, a very high percentage of their income and time was spent on just ensuring that they had water.

The wealthy had household connections to the municipal sewage systems or septic systems. However, poorer people had almost no sanitation systems – pit latrines, haul-away systems, and street-side drains were the most common forms of sanitation where they existed. Oxfam is providing water and building latrines, and helping state institutions, such as the water authority (DINEPA), to build sustainable and environmentally friendly systems. To help ensure that Oxfam and its partners are accountable, it has established a free call centre for feedback about the work.

Haiti’s 20 years of instability, economic deterioration and periodic conflict has left a legacy of poor governance and lack of confidence by donors. Incoming aid should not exacerbate already skewed wealth distribution; this could heighten historical tensions between the majority and the wealthy elite. The challenge for reconstruction now is to reduce, not reinforce, the inequality that lies at the heart of the

country's instability and violence, already starting to manifest itself in street demonstrations. Every part of the recovery must take a pro-poor approach that reduces the inequalities and tensions between groups, based on a national consensus on the whole reconstruction plan.

Haitian-led recovery

None of this is likely to happen without three vital conditions. First, Haiti's government and other state institutions must lead the reconstruction. Second, as they do so, they must consult and be genuinely accountable to all Haitians. And third, every Haitian must become an active citizen: have the information they need to enable them to make informed decisions on their future, and work together with the government to rebuild the country.

Government – national and local

Strategic leadership from the government of Haiti has been perhaps understandably slow in coming. Even before the earthquake, the government was weak, leading to a lack of building codes and standards, slow implementation of the national disaster management system, and a lack of support to emergency services. Although the government has long recognised its responsibility for providing services, many basic services in Port-au-Prince were provided by NGOs and the private sector. The result, according to one 2009 report, was that services were 'uncoordinated in geographic coverage and seriously undersupplied in some areas; expensive to end-users because they are insufficiently subsidised, and totally detached from [the government]'.⁸

After the earthquake, the national government quickly took some basic initiatives: support to people who wanted to return to rural areas; allowing people and goods to come in tax free; and facilitating the humanitarian response effort. But it has been slower in making decisions and has been thus far unable to articulate and communicate a vision for the reconstruction of the country. If the international community now fails to ensure that the government plays a central role, both the government and the international community will be less able to address the needs of the Haitian people in the future.

Some of Haiti's civil or local government institutions have been better able to respond. As part of the National Disaster Management and Response Plan (PNGRD), some local civil administration and civil protection committees quickly took the lead after the earthquake to assist people in their zones – by supporting them to find safer places to settle, by registering them, and by helping them to organise themselves. The strength of local government, local communities and their organizations and churches has sustained much of the population of Haiti. Reconstruction efforts need to involve and further strengthen such grassroots initiatives, build on decentralisation efforts, and support local government.

Moving from ‘the republic of NGOs’ to the effective state

This may sound strange coming from an NGO: there are too many NGOs, doing the wrong things and focusing their inputs on cities instead of on rural areas. Since the 1990s, the donor community has tended to provide assistance directly through a myriad of NGOs (both Haitian and international), bypassing corrupt and inefficient state institutions. This has helped to fuel the proliferation of NGOs – thought to number as many as 10,000 in this ‘republic of NGOs’ – undermining state capacity.⁹ Donor assistance to NGOs comes in the form of small projects to support individual clinics or schools that are too often poorly coordinated, incoherent, and make no effort at harmonization with national development priorities.¹⁰ State institutions have no money to provide services, hampering their ability to develop their own capacity and thus ensuring that any services they do provide is of low quality. The emergence of effective, accountable government in Haiti depends on Haitians seeing their government as responsible for delivery of basic services like schools and clean water, and accountable to citizens for their delivery. The government, NGOs, and the people should work together to ensure that the country can develop quality services that are delivered with equity, based on mutually agreed priorities.

Getting a grip on corruption

One reason why both ordinary Haitians and donors turn to NGOs, churches and other non-state providers is their disenchantment with corruption of officials. The Prime Minister of Haiti told Oxfam that he had, ‘no illusions about the perception of corruption and inefficiency’ in Haiti.¹¹ Besides the history of corruption of Haitian leaders, there is widespread lack of trust in the government’s ability to act on behalf of the people. Stories of government corruption are rife – from the charges at the hospital to get a sterile syringe or cotton ball to the newspaper articles about widespread graft.

Strengthen government capacity for inclusive, accountable reconstruction

To ensure the reconstruction effort is more accountable, the Government of Haiti should

- With the greatest urgency begin to communicate plans to Haitians directly. There are many possible ways of doing this by engaging the media: distributing free radios, as one station has done, to communicate plans more easily; write more newspaper articles; increase the number of large public screens showing information programmes in the evenings.
- Develop and support government-run information centres around affected areas to provide public information on the relief and

recovery available and to facilitate access to reliable information about citizens' rights and to legal advice;

- Consult with people of Haiti at all levels to develop local and national reconstruction plans that complement poverty reduction plans. For agriculture and food security, this means building a dialogue with farmers' associations and other organizations of rural poor people. In urban areas, it includes engaging with newly emergent leadership in camps and neighbourhoods, and with trade unions and church organisations.
- Develop stronger links with NGOs and the private sector to build a constructive relationship and to support reconstruction and development. Haiti's proposed National Development Authority should be a forum for swift, effective cooperation and coordination, careful to ensure that it does not slow down vital reconstruction and development programmes. In addition, regular meetings, parliamentary task forces, and the development of accountability and transparency mechanisms (budget monitoring, audits, peer evaluations) will strengthen these relationships.

Donors should

- Commit to long-term engagement with the Government of Haiti by making assistance predictable, by building national and local capacity development into all plans and budgets, and by ensuring that disaster risk reduction and support to decentralization are key elements;
- Strengthen local government, including local civil protection committees, to plan, coordinate and monitor recovery and reconstruction. To speed this up, local authorities need support to assess the facilities and institutions available for reconstruction.
- Work with the international community and with national government to develop national priorities for reconstruction, and standards that reflect local plans and complement other national strategies. These should be made public and the government should hold annual review processes that are open to a wide range of public and private actors.

NGOs should

- Work with local government to develop reconstruction plans and support public forums, discussions with community leaders, and public debates on radios and in newspapers;
- Support national and local government by working closely with them and ensuring that capacity development is integrated in all plans.

To make this effective, the government of Haiti, UN agencies, the

private sector, NGOs, and community-based organizations should all comply with principles of transparency, accountability, participation, and capacity building. They should provide publicly available information on funds expended and on progress on project implementation. This should be based on the International Aid Transparency Initiative guidelines.¹²

International support

Haiti needs continuing international support to overcome such an enormous disaster. And the dramatic surge of international support for Haiti's suffering since 12 January needs to be sustained over the long term and to withstand competing priorities.

Supporting, not substituting for Haiti's state

At the April 2009 conference on Haiti's development, donors promised nearly \$400m (half of what the Haitian government had requested); but so far, Haiti has only received \$72m of that.¹³ Donors have often put strict conditions on assistance (such as demands for privatization and trade liberalization), while not recognising the constraints the country's low capacity puts on its ability to meet them.¹⁴

The Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) being proposed for Haiti must follow the same principle of contributing to, not supplanting Haitian-lead recovery. It will be important to get it right from the start by making it legitimate in the eyes of both the government and the people of Haiti. Haitian ownership, leadership and engagement – not just of the government, but of civil society (NGOs, academics, youth groups, trade unions) and the private sector – will help to ensure that the Fund is able to operate effectively and is held to account not just by its donors, but also by the people who are supposed to benefit from it. If the MDTF is perceived as a mechanism for imposing foreign will on Haiti, of controlling the development of the country from the outside, or as some sort of punitive measure following years of governmental mis-management and corruption, it will not work.

Donor governments should

- Begin by challenging their own assumptions about the capacity of the government, working with the government and NGOs together to prioritise areas that are important to Haitians: accountability, the provision of basic services, employment;
- Consider the long-term needs for Haiti in a more sustainable model of development, in an integrated approach which should necessarily include gender analysis, disaster risk reduction, the impacts of climate change, and governance components;
- Coordinate with each other, possibly through MDTF, and with the

government, private sector and NGOs to ensure that reconstruction and development plans are implemented;

- Support decentralisation by ensuring that funds for the provision of basic services go to local government authorities. Ensure that accountability mechanisms are developed; such as quality monitoring, feedback mechanisms; clear, transparent budget and expenditure reporting; and auditing of aid flows at local level.
- Avoid conditionalities that may force the government to reallocate resources away from the provision of essential services such as water, health, and education to their citizens.

United Nations

The UN too must work with Haitian expertise. Since the earthquake, most UN coordination meetings are held in English, rather than French or Creole, effectively excluding many local NGOs and other Haitians both from contributing their local knowledge and experience and from building their own capacity to contribute to Haiti's long-term future.

To date, the UN, like the government itself, has shown little of the strategic leadership needed in this crisis. High turnover and low capacity in the UN's technical coordination bodies (clusters) have meant that overworked coordinators struggle to consolidate even the most basic coordination information. At the same time, when information and messages are communicated, the formal decision-making mechanisms have been seemingly by-passed, raising questions about how decisions are being made. Combined with the tremendous influx of NGOs with little experience in emergency response, the coordination of humanitarian assistance, and in particular the UN's leadership, has thus far been ineffective.

Improving UN support

The UN should

- Appoint a Humanitarian Coordinator for Haiti who can effectively support Haiti's government to articulate and implement a strategic vision for reconstruction. The division of labour between the various UN bodies needs to be clear to the Haitian authorities and population;
- Appoint technical (cluster) coordinators who speak French, and are required to stay for at least six months. They should be given adequate financial and technical support from the lead agencies. NGOs with more experience in humanitarian response should be encouraged to support to the extent that they can.¹⁵
- Require the UN Special Envoy to report publicly every six months on the disbursement of funds by project, on progress on project

implementation, and whether aid has been delivered in a transparent, accountable, and participatory manner.

- In the longer term, the UN agencies should consider their capacity to support reconstruction; more expertise in governance, sustainable livelihoods, gender analysis, urban planning, public policy and budget planning will be necessary.

Investment and trade

Agricultural trade liberalization has accelerated the impoverishment of rural Haitians. Until the 1980s, Haiti was self-sufficient in rice, a staple food for most Haitians. Population growth and urbanization stimulated imports, and a large influx of food aid during the 1991–94 period of sanctions against the military dictatorship often arrived at harvest time, undercutting Haitian farmers. International financial institutions and the USA (the main source of rice imports) pressed for import liberalization. In 1994, the Haitian government cut the tariff on imported rice from 35 per cent to just 3 per cent. Today, subsidized US rice dominates the Haitian market, and the country produces just 20 per cent of its rice domestically.¹⁶

As of the middle of February 2010, importers planned to bring in only 20 per cent of the rice previously imported, partly because the World Food Program (WFP) is providing substantial food aid. However, many importers took loans to buy stock which was lost in crushed warehouses. Food assistance, combined with continued low import prices, will lead to further decreases in agricultural production. While lower prices may be good for urban consumers in the short-term, they will not help Haiti's farmers.

Apparel is a core industry in Haiti, accounting for 80 per cent of export earnings. In 2009, the sector showed impressive growth of 24.5 per cent in exports to the USA, while other suppliers, like the Central American countries, Mexico or Cambodia, experienced a significant decrease. Although the apparel industry in Haiti is a crucial source of foreign exchange, its employment potential is relatively modest, due to quotas and tariffs in the main market, the USA. Export manufacturing employment peaked at 100,000 in 1990, and currently stands at 25,000. Workers in export firms frequently labour under poor conditions. Haiti's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has weak-to-nonexistent capacity to enforce laws on labour rights.

The Government of Haiti should

- Reform agriculture and trade policies that permit dumping, restrict policy space, and hinder growth in Haiti, so that the country can promote its own agricultural development and ensure food security;
- Put in place a competitive industrial policy with improved legal institutions and efficient custom administrations to facilitate

investment, as well as better infrastructure for transport and other day-to-day business needs;

- Adopt trade measures that protect small-scale producers, strategic agricultural sectors, and emerging companies; and in the longer term, consider measures which would allow increased tariffs and subsidies on certain crops that are key to food security. As a Least Developed Country member of the WTO, Haiti can take such measures without being subject to sanctions.
- Ensure that labour legislation is consistent with ILO standards, and put adequate and effective mechanisms in place to ensure rigorous enforcement.

Donors should

- Drop their import barriers to facilitate the growth in apparel exports;
- Follow through on promises to cancel Haiti's debt and ensure that all future assistance is made available as grants, not loans.

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The vital urgent needs

The Government of Haiti and the UN estimate that approximately 1.2 million people are currently living in temporary shelters in the greater Port-au-Prince area,¹⁷ and an additional 600,000 people have moved outside the city as a result of the earthquake. Tremendous efforts have been made by the humanitarian community to meet their needs. As of 16 March, the humanitarian community had distributed some sort of shelter (plastic sheeting, tents) to only 60 per cent of the almost 250,000 households that need it.

Here comes the rain again

To prepare for the rainy season, which lasts from April to June and again from August to November, far more must be done. The challenge of providing adequately for basic needs in an urban setting is compounded by the lack of reliable and credible information. A full registration has yet been done of those people who are homeless or in temporary shelter; there are no estimates based on distributions or site surveys, and little thought has been given to those still living in or around their partly destroyed homes. Neither the government nor the international community has yet engaged the civil protection committees or the newly formed organisations in the sites to consult on what solutions would be most appropriate.

Lastly, the lessons from previous earthquake responses with regard to shelter should be taken into account. It will take years to rebuild Haiti; people will need some sort of shelter for at least five years, and more likely ten years.

Haiti's government, donors and others should

- Comply with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement first developed by the UN in 1998, in particular to ensure that people are consulted and are moved voluntarily:
- Support civil protection committees and camp committees to articulate clear plans for decongesting and/or closing sites where people made homeless by the earthquake have gathered – with the full participation and consultation of the people concerned. In particular, they should take urgent steps to help people cope with the 2010 rainy seasons.
- NGOs and the UN, in particular, need to vastly scale up their operations by hiring more staff, and accepting greater risk in terms of trying out new and innovative ideas, some of which may not work. This will mean committing more organisational resources.

- Invest equally in areas outside of Port-au-Prince that have been affected in some way by the earthquake, ensuring that families hosting displaced people receive assistance. In addition, those in Port-au-Prince who are hosting people or whose homes have not been completely destroyed should have access to some assistance.
- Beyond the design of transitional shelter, start planning shelter, preparedness, and risk reduction for the next two years and beyond.

Agriculture and livelihoods

The rainy season coincides with the beginning of the planting season for rice and the height of Haiti's 'lean' season (*periode de soudure*), and urgent action is needed to support the majority of Haitians who depend on subsistence farming. Although agriculture accounts for only 28 per cent of gross domestic product, it employs two-thirds of the workforce.¹⁸

The earthquake caused riverbanks to collapse and damaged irrigation works,¹⁹ compounding the effects of years of neglect and impoverishment in the agricultural sector. It is undercapitalized and inefficient, and has undergone little technological innovation. Three of every five Haitians lived in the rural areas before the earthquake, and most of the people who have left metropolitan Port-au-Prince since the disaster have gone to the countryside. This has worsened an already precarious food situation, as desperately poor rural Haitians now have to share meagre rations with newly arrived friends and relatives. Plans to upgrade the agricultural sector in rural areas have not been well-funded; decapitalisation of rural areas could possibly lead to people returning to Port-au-Prince in advance of the rainy season, as food stocks run dry and the provision of aid and opportunities for education and employment lure them back.

Meeting vital rural needs

To urgently protect rural livelihoods, the Government of Haiti should

- Assure people in rural areas that they will have access to assistance now and that they too will benefit from reconstruction, and set out how this will happen; including through simplifying and implementing the plans set out in Haiti's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (DSNCRP);
- Develop appropriate social protection programmes that are accessible to rural poor people, such as cash transfer programmes and public works employment schemes;
- Develop a new integrated agricultural approach, based on the needs and wishes of farmers, taking into consideration the particular needs of women farmers.

Donors should

- Ensure the timely delivery of agricultural assistance as called for in the UN's Haiti Humanitarian Appeal, and fund this at least as effectively as the food aid appeal;
- Ensure that all aid efforts take into account what Haiti needs to expand trade capacity, by addressing supply-side constraints, institutional deficiencies, infrastructure needs, and other weaknesses in capacity.

Lost urban incomes hamper recovery

Before the earthquake, approximately one million people in Port-au-Prince were unemployed or underemployed, many living in slum and squatter settlements with poor housing conditions, lack of basic infrastructure and services, poor sanitation, and unclear tenure status.

Most of the poorest people work as daily labourers, have a low-wage jobs or make money from petty trade. Many of these are women who sell agricultural products in the markets during the day. This group accounted for 65 per cent of the population of the capital. If people had remittance income, they were more likely to move from 'very poor' to 'just' poor. As a result of the earthquake, the unemployment rate is likely to increase progressively over the coming months, as seed stocks deplete and agricultural production decreases as a result of the reduced demand. This will likely continue into the medium term.²⁰

At the same time, larger markets and traders in the capital are struggling to rebuild businesses, fighting against the effects of lower consumer incomes, a lack of credit availability, destroyed warehouses, higher transportation costs, and increased looting.

Although the population of Port-au-Prince has shrunk in the short term, the need for employment opportunities will remain the overarching pressing need for most people.

Meeting vital urban needs

To urgently protect and expand urban livelihoods, Haiti's government, donors and others should

- Develop and remain committed to a strategy for developing urban livelihoods that ensures that all men and women have the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge, and to work in safe conditions;
- Set out a clear strategy to address both the humanitarian and the reconstruction needs of renters, squatters, and those living in poorer areas of Port-au-Prince, to ensure that they get minimum urgent assistance, *and* greater access to basic services than before the earthquake;

- Develop a job creation strategy that puts people to work and builds skills.

Gender inequality

Haitian women live in a very unequal society in which they are subjected to all forms of gender-based violence, including an alarmingly high level of sexual assault and rape. Their access to political and formal economic structures is very low and they are especially vulnerable to violence, homelessness and hunger in the wake of disasters. Kay Fanm, a Haitian women's rights organization, estimates that 72 per cent of Haitian girls surveyed had been raped, and at least 40 per cent of women are victims of domestic violence.²¹ Women have always been overwhelmingly responsible for other vulnerable people, including infants, children, the elderly, and people who are ill or disabled. The earthquake has only increased that burden. Women need to provide food, water, and firewood for the household and, in doing so, they face huge practical difficulties as well as the threat of violence and assault. While little concrete information is available, Oxfam's initial assessments show that women continue to be vulnerable to violence in the camps.

Women's economic fragility has increased. Women worked mostly in the informal sector, and have little to fall back on in terms of formal income generation. Both the informal and formal sectors have collapsed, and there have been few opportunities to rebuild their livelihoods.

The reconstruction effort provides an opportunity for all those involved in rebuilding Haiti to improve significantly the situation of women, to harness their energy and potential, and to start to build a more equal society.²² The separate needs of women, girls, men and boys should be assessed – with data collected and analysed by age and sex. Given the existing risks to women and girls, everyone should be informed of their right to receive assistance to avoid sexual exploitation and abuse.²³

Donors and government need to increase the participation of women in the reconstruction process, which offers the chance for women to contribute from the community level to the highest reaches of government. They need to support women to develop greater economic capacity through the design of projects that enable them to participate on an equal basis with men. In order to do so, women's role as care givers needs to be recognized and built into the design of reconstruction projects. Rebuilding should draw on successful initiatives that focus on women and girls, such as microfinance loan opportunities or environmental tree planting movements. Innovative and flexible approaches are needed that enable women's equal participation, such as appropriate childcare and support structures, training and capacity building.

Preparing for future shocks

A central aim in ‘building back better’ has to be reducing vulnerability to future shocks and stresses. The relatively little physical damage caused by the recent earthquake in Chile compared with that in Haiti underlines the contribution of inappropriate urban planning, poor infrastructure, and lack of good construction engineering to the huge loss of life in Haiti.

Livelihoods are already precarious in Haiti, and the general impact of climate change is likely to only increase this. Haiti is very vulnerable to droughts and floods, and environmental degradation such as deforested mountainsides have aggravated the country’s vulnerability to storms, causing water, mud and silt to flood coastal plains, burying houses and people in mud and sweeping crops and livestock out to sea. Deforestation is a major challenge, with more than 98 per cent of trees cut down in the last few decades. In particular, trees are cut down for charcoal, used by more than 70 per cent of people for cooking. As Oxfam has seen from its experience of supporting disaster risk reduction programmes in Haiti, reducing vulnerability means both addressing these problems directly, and also putting in place the institutions and policies to strengthen people’s ability to withstand shocks.

Despite widespread poverty, Haiti has no public social safety net programmes. One academic expert on Haitian development has commented that the country is ‘the complete antithesis of a welfare state.’²⁴

Reducing future risks

To prepare for future shocks and to mitigate the degree of damage, Haiti’s government, donors and others should support

- Disaster risk reduction commitments made by the international community as part of the Hyogo Framework for Action;
- The National System for Management of Risks and Disasters (SNGRD), to help implement revised building codes, develop disaster management plans, etc., and to ensure that this has national coverage;
- Increased reforestation and sustainable forest management. A good community-based forestry management model should be put in place to discourage people from using charcoal, noting that this is a delicate issue, since managing forests is linked to local cultural customs. Crop and livestock production planning should be integrated with tree cultivation.²⁵

- New energy generating projects, such as growing new crops for fuel, so that people do not cut down trees for charcoal.
- Communities to be at the heart of disaster reduction projects, and women to be fully involved in community-level responses. In some communities, women have been very effective at mobilizing local implementation. Communities should be involved in planning, advocating, and implementing long-term risk reduction initiatives.
- ‘Good enough’ building codes need to be developed with urgency. Building codes imported from Europe or the USA will prove difficult to adhere to in Haiti and make enforcement impossible.

5

Re-envisioning Haiti

Haiti was showing signs of new dynamism and hope before the earthquake. Most of 2009 was a period of relative calm and stability in Haiti. There was a decline in kidnappings, incomes rose, and unemployment fell.

And the earthquake itself is throwing up new generations of young leaders. Like the committee of young leaders who emerged at the Delmas 62 camp to help the hundreds of people camped in the yard of a private compound. As one of them, Stephan Durogene, commented, ‘I didn’t know I had this in me. It’s during the earthquake I realized I can be a good leader.’²⁶

I didn’t know I had this in me. It’s during the earthquake I realized I can be a good leader.

Stephan Durogene, Delmas 62 camp committee

If the reconstruction listens to and strengthens the voices of people like Stephan, Haiti can indeed build back better.

Notes

- ¹ UN Shelter Cluster meeting, 16 March 2010, Port-au-Prince.
- ² Comment by Oxfam partners in consultation meeting, 5 March 2010.
- ³ R. Maguire (2009), 'Haiti after the donors' conference: a way forward', *USIP Special Report 232*, Washington, US Institute of Peace, September 2009.
- ⁴ FAO (2010a) 'Haiti Country Brief: Haiti Earthquake', <http://www.fao.org/haiti-earthquake/en/>
- ⁵ E. A. Cavallo, A. Powell and O. Becerra (2010) *Estimating the Direct Economic Damage of the Earthquake in Haiti*, Inter-American Development Bank, February 2010.
- ⁶ Comment by Oxfam partners in consultation meeting, 5 March 2010
- ⁷ Republic of Haiti (2007) 'Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper', November 2007.
- ⁸ P. Collier (2009) 'Haiti: From Natural Catastrophe to Economic Security', report to the UN Secretary General, p. 14.
- ⁹ Comment by Oxfam partners in consultation meeting, 5 March 2010.
- ¹⁰ FAO (2010a) *op.cit.*; USAID (2010) 'Haiti Earthquake Factsheet #36', 17 February 2010; R. Fatton, <http://news.clas.virginia.edu/woodson/x16474.xml>, 'Hope amidst devastation'; M. Schneider (2010) International Crisis Group, Congressional testimony, 4 February 2010, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6517&l=1>.
- ¹¹ Oxfam interview (Marcel Stoessel and Fran Equiza) with Max Bellerive, Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti on 25 February 2010.
- ¹² See <http://aidtransparency.net/>
- ¹³ 'Rebuilding Haiti Transparently,' Editorial, *The Washington Post*, February 3, 2010.
- ¹⁴ R. Fatton (2010) *op. cit.*; R. Maguire (2009) *op. cit.*
- ¹⁵ Oxfam GB (2010) 'The WASH Factor: Oxfam's experience with the water and sanitation humanitarian coordination cluster', Oxford: Oxfam GB.
- ¹⁶ J. Georges (2004) 'Trade and the Disappearance of Haitian Rice', TED Case Studies 725, June 2004, <http://www1.american.edu/TED/haitirice.htm>; R. Maguire (2009) *op.cit.*; Mark Shuler (2008) 'Haitian Food Riots Unnerving but not Surprising', America's Program Special Report, 25 April 2008, http://americas.irc-online.org/am/5186#_ftn11
- ¹⁷ UN Shelter Cluster meeting, 16 March 2010, Port-au-Prince.
- ¹⁸ FAO (2010a) *op. cit.*; US Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*; FAO (2010b) 'Haiti's \$700 million agriculture blueprint', press release, 29 January 2010, <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/39523/icode>; World Bank (2007) *World Development Report 2008*.
- ²⁰ Bulletin Sommaire: 'Haiti, Implications du siesme sur la securite alimentaire en Haiti', 26 janvier 2010.
- ²¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/taina-bienaim/haitis-women-in-the-after_b_428648.html?view=screen
- ²² ALNAP (2008) [Responding to Earthquakes 2008: Learning from earthquake relief and recovery operations](#)
- ²³ UN Inter Agency Standing Committee (2010), 'Importance of Integrating Gender Issues in the Haiti Emergency'.
- ²⁴ M. Lundahl (1992) *Politics or markets? Essays on Haitian underdevelopment*, London: Routledge.
- ²⁵ Oxfam International (2009) 'Haiti: A Gathering Storm – Climate Change and Poverty', Port-au-Prince, Oxfam International.
- ²⁶ C. McCabe (2010), Oxfam America: <http://blogs.oxfamamerica.org/index.php/2010/02/23/as-new-leaders-emerge-from-the-camps-in-haiti-will-their-voices-be-heard-part-i/>

This paper was written by Aimee Ansari. Oxfam acknowledges the assistance of Ed Cairns, Marc Cohen, Anna Coryndon, Yolette Etienne, Marcel Stoessel, Duncan Green, Alison Hayes, Rachel Hastie, Gawain Kripke, Isabel Mazzei, Krista Riddley, Edward Turvill, Ines Smyth, and Philip Weare in its production. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

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The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.



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