

THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE INDEX 2009



Whose Crisis? Clarifying Donor's Priorities

DARA



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Whose Crisis?

Clarifying Donor Priorities



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DARA aims to enhance global efforts to reduce human suffering and inequity and encourage prevention. Our focus is on the improvement of humanitarian action, the promotion of international stability and development, and the reduction of disaster risk.

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Crisis Reports
Haiti



Haiti at a Glance

Country data

- ▶ Population (2007): 10 million
- ▶ Under five mortality rate (2006) 80 per 1,000
- ▶ Human Development Index Ranking (2008): 148
- ▶ Life expectancy (2006): 60 years
- ▶ Official Development Assistance (2007): US\$701 million

The crisis

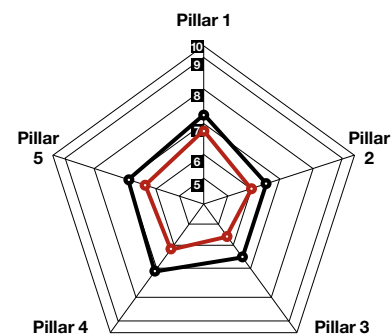
- ▶ Four hurricanes hit Haiti in August and September 2008, killing nearly 800 people and affecting more than 800,000 others;
- ▶ Storms followed sharp rise in food prices and political upheaval, causing nearly US\$1 billion in damage and contracting Haitian economy by 15 percent;
- ▶ Hurricanes paralysed Haitian rice production, heightened food insecurity and left thousands homeless, without prospects for reconstruction or rehabilitation;
- ▶ Cycle of poverty and environmental degradation worsened the impact, leaving the population vulnerable to future disasters.

The response

- ▶ UN Flash Appeal was the third largest of 2008, but only 40 percent covered by donors two months after the storms. It remains only 59 percent covered;
- ▶ Donors blamed financial crisis and difficult operating conditions for delays and underfunding;
- ▶ Clusters were implemented, but agencies inhibited by poor donor support and resulting limited capacity, with basic needs often going unmet;
- ▶ In April 2009, renewed concern for Haiti's humanitarian situation led donors to pledge US\$324 million, but funding still falls short of government's requested US\$900 million.

Donor performance

- ▶ Overall, donors rated below average, with claims of donor disinterest and fatigue;
- ▶ Donors rated marginally better in questions around support for Learning and accountability (Pillar 5), and questions related to finding long-term funding for programming;
- ▶ Donors rated poorly in questions around responding to needs and commitment to neutral, impartial humanitarian action;
- ▶ Donors also criticised for lack of awareness of *GHD Principles* and for poor support for preparedness and the transition from recovery to development.



HRI 2009 scores by pillar

- Pillar 1** Responding to needs
- Pillar 2** Prevention, risk reduction and recovery
- Pillar 3** Working with humanitarian partners
- Pillar 4** Protection and International Law
- Pillar 5** Learning and accountability

- Haiti
- All crisis average

Source: World Bank 2009, UNICEF 2008, UNDP 2008, OECD 2007 Sheridan 2009, OCHA FTS 2009, CNSA/MARNDR 2009, UNiFEED 2009, Goldberg 2008, Caritas Internationalis 2008, ICRC 2009.

Haiti

Skimpy Living Swept Away by Storms¹

Gilles Gasser

Between 26 August and 8 September 2008, hurricanes Fay, Gustav, Hannah and Ike smashed the Artibonite, south and south-east regions of Haiti, killing nearly 800 people and affecting more than 800,000 others (Caritas Internationalis 2008). The disasters hit during a difficult year for the Caribbean country, marked by rising food prices, deadly riots and political instability. Damaging Haiti's already impoverished economy, the storms compounded the pre-existing lack of access to food, water and medical care faced by large segments of the population, intensifying this vulnerable nation's ongoing humanitarian crisis.

The mobilisation of funds by the international community did allow humanitarian agencies to prevent an even greater tragedy. Yet donors adopted a low profile in dealing with the crisis, and their response was slow, partial and not always based on proper evaluation of needs. This raised doubts within the aid community about its effectiveness and ability to manage the transition from relief to recovery and development.

Most worryingly, donors largely failed to respect fundamental *Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship (GHD)*, in particular Principles six, seven, nine, 18 and 21, and many demonstrated insufficient knowledge of the GHD initiative itself.

The *GHD Principles* are poorly disseminated among humanitarian agencies at present. However, they could become a critical instrument for improving the humanitarian response in Haiti, a vital step in promoting the country's future stability and development.

A vicious circle

The origins of Haiti's complex political and social crisis date back to its independence. Decades of violence, instability, dictatorship, international sanctions,² unmanageable debt³ and forced privatisation have left Haiti the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere. Though it was a self-sufficient rice producer until the 1980s, International Monetary Fund (IMF)-supported trade liberalisation slashed national production levels and exacerbated rural poverty. This provoked migration to urban slums and emigration to neighbouring countries, and made Haiti dependent on United States rice imports (Georges 2004). According to humanitarian, political and economic indicators, the people of Haiti continue to live in conditions of extreme poverty that deny them access to both basic necessities and the right to live with dignity (OCHA 2008a).

Some progress had been made prior to the hurricanes. For example, since 2007, joint operations against gangs by the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Haitian National Police had improved security and reduced kidnapping rates.⁴ Inflation dropped to single digits in early 2008 (Fasano 2007), and the US Congress created 7,500 new jobs for Haiti by approving a new Textile Trade Bill the same year (Charles 2009). Yet crime and violence, mainly centred in Cité Soleil and other Port-au-Prince slums, have continued to undermine Haiti's development. Furthermore, the recent world food crisis caused the prices of food staples to spike in the country by 65 percent between August 2007 and March 2008, triggering food insecurity and popular unrest (USAID 2008a).

The Haitian Government does not provide basic public services to its population, and the state lacks the political will and ability to address the country's environmental problems. Poverty and environmental degradation feed on each other, producing a cycle of unsustainable agriculture, deforestation, erosion and landslides. This in turn leads to flooding and increases the population's vulnerability to natural disasters (World Bank 2007). What is more, the 2008 storms hit the country at a particularly difficult time, after a spell of social and political upheaval that culminated in the fall of Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis' government. The new prime minister, Michele Pierre-Louis, was approved as Hurricane Fay was bearing down upon the island.

Fay, Gustav, Hannah and Ike brought heavy rains that flooded Artibonite, Haiti's rice bowl and the location of its third-largest city, Gonaives. The damage was worsened by the absence of an operational sewage system, while widespread deforestation sparked landslides that inundated streets and buildings with mud. As the storms hit during the harvest season, they decimated the agricultural sector in some regions and left others without seeds or reserves for the coming year; this situation could worsen the nation's grave food insecurity.

Estimates indicate that the hurricanes damaged or destroyed 100,000 houses countrywide, with no prospect for reconstruction or rehabilitation in the near future (ICRC 2009). Those people displaced by the storms – 70 percent from Artibonite – took refuge in temporary shelters, mainly churches and schools. In Gonaives alone, 80 percent of the city's 300,000 residents were directly affected by flooding (Taft-Morales and Sullivan 2008).

In the aftermath, the Haitian Government credited efforts by its Office for Disaster Preparedness with reducing the death toll in Gonaives compared to previous storms. Though it is true that 2008 proved less deadly for the city than 2004 – the year tropical storm Jeanne killed 3,000 residents (NASA 2007) – evidence suggests that preparedness campaigns had more limited effectiveness. In fact, Gonaives lacked any kind of prevention or evacuation plan, and people had to flee to surrounding hills when the heavy rains began. The continued absence of official prevention and preparedness policies in Haiti was highlighted by subsequent disasters, including the deadly collapse of two Port-au-Prince schools in November 2008.

Humanitarian response fails to meet expectations

Perception in the field is that the scope of the humanitarian response failed to reach the expected level. The initial response was hampered by a lack of financial resources and by the challenging conditions on the ground. Delivering relief was complex: roads and bridges were destroyed, first-aid workers were themselves victims of the disaster (some lost family members and property) and the government was caught unawares. Humanitarian agencies already present in the country, mainly for mid- or long-term development programmes, redeployed their teams to the affected areas but acknowledged that they were not adequately prepared. They lacked experienced emergency teams, and pre-positioned response stocks.

MINUSTAH and US Army helicopters and carriers supported humanitarian workers in the relief effort. They protected deliveries, prevented looting and landed food, water, relief supplies and medical personnel in hard-hit and inaccessible communities. Still, there were no amphibian vehicles, and World Food Programme (WFP) helicopters arrived late. One of the first challenges of the Humanitarian Coordinator was to ‘demilitarise’ the operation and assume leadership of the response.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) organised cooperation and deployed teams on the ground but was obviously understaffed. Cross-cluster assessments were carried out, but workers in the field deplored the absence of analysis and policy design at coordination level.⁵ Furthermore, despite a series of improvements in cluster coordination, targeting failed in certain areas due to a lack of information and restricted access to affected areas. For example, too little attention was paid to the villages around Bay d’Orange, in the south-east of the country, where severe malnutrition combined with poor access to food, drinking water and health care claimed the lives of 16 children and two adults (FEWS NET 2008).

A few early recovery activities, such as the cleaning of streets and clearing of irrigation ditches and drainage systems, began while emergency operations were still running. In the meantime, the Haitian Ministry of Education urged the evacuation of survivors using schools as emergency shelters, allowing the schools to reopen. Even though damage to schools delayed the start of the academic year, the WFP resumed school feeding programmes throughout most of the country (USAID 2008b).

These efforts, however, were insufficient to reverse the deteriorating situation in Haiti, and the country is now facing a critical socio-economic crisis. Causing nearly US\$1 billion worth of damage and contracting the national economy by 15 percent (UNiFEED 2009), the storms pushed Haiti’s suffering from chronic to acute.

Donor funding falls short

The international community did not provide enough support to Haiti in the wake of the hurricanes. Donations came in slowly, and were not proportional to the scale of the damage. The World Bank Group’s president expressed strong support for Haiti in an attempt to raise awareness of the situation and rally donors, but his message did not generate an adequate response.

On 27 October 2008, almost two months after the hurricanes, UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes announced that only 40 percent of US\$107 million had been pledged in response to the UN’s relatively modest request for emergency aid to the affected population (Goldberg 2008). The revised appeal of US\$121 million remains less than 60 percent covered, with only US\$71 million pledged – a level of coverage that leaves some three million people in need of food support (OCHA FTS 2009, CNSA/MARNDR 2009). This percentage matches the response to tropical storm Jeanne in 2004, revealing a lack of progress and a failure to respect *GHD* Principle six by matching donor response with assessed needs.

Not surprisingly, the largest donor was the US, a country with a large Haitian diaspora and a strong desire to prevent crime and drug trafficking in Haiti. To this end, several members of Congress asked the US administration to concede temporary protected status (TPS) to Haitians residing in the US in order to allow them to work legally and send money home to their families. Though the Bush administration temporarily suspended Haitian deportation, the president refused to concede TPS.

The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was also a key donor. On 29 September, one month after Hurricane Fay, the fund allocated US\$4.3 million to three UN agencies and the International Organisation for Migration (UN News Centre 2008). This went to fund the logistics, coordination and telecommunication needs of the humanitarian community.

France, on the other hand, displayed disappointingly poor involvement. Though continuing to claim a political role in Haitian affairs as the nation's former colonial power, France was far slower to disburse funds or express concrete solidarity. It did, however, send the military ship Francis Garnier from the French Antilles with emergency first-aid supplies. Canada, another key player in Haiti, didn't mobilise important funds for the emergency crisis as expected, but is more involved in longer-term healthcare, community recovery and capacity-building programmes (see Table 1). It also deployed relief supplies to more than 2,000 families in affected communities and urged the Canadian public to support online fundraising appeals.

It is also interesting to note the growing influence of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) in Haiti. A relatively new player there, AECID has provided both emergency and long-term support (vaccinations, agricultural inputs, etc.) (DARA 2009). Regional donors such as Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Venezuela sent in-kind donations.

Although private donations represented only 3.23 percent of the total response, they highlight the generosity of the Haitian diaspora and the success of rallies organised in Canada and the US. Remittance flows to Haiti, which rose from US\$108 million in 1995 to US\$1.83 billion in 2007, provide an estimated 1.1 million Haitians with

crucial financial support (Lee et al 2009 and IADB 2007). In fact, remittances to the country exceed foreign aid, providing up to US\$4.5 per person per day. Rising fuel and commodity prices, however, penalised the Haitian diaspora and led to a fall in the average monthly remittance, bringing a 13 percent reduction in February 2009 (Sheridan 2009). The financial crisis also weakened the value of money received by Haitian families. Experts anticipate the decline in remittances to continue.⁶

The underfunding of the UN Flash Appeal weakened the humanitarian response in Haiti. The WFP, for instance, received only US\$33 million, or 35 percent, of its funding requirements⁷ – too little to support its November 2008 caseload of 600,000 people. In Gonaives, despite cleaning and reconstruction initiatives, the roads remain in a very poor state, the water system is not working and thousands are living in critical conditions in tents or with host families.

Donor fatigue takes its toll

Donors surveyed cited the global financial crisis to explain their inability to raise more funds. There is also a confessed donor fatigue. Some believe that a very significant amount of money has already been invested in Haiti, but that their programmes are still not moving as quickly as they would like. This statement could lead us to the conclusion that the lack of results on high-impact and high-visibility projects has negatively influenced donor response to emergency and recovery programmes.

OCHA's FTS currently records a total of US\$118 million in humanitarian aid spent for hurricane response in 2008. Of this amount, however, only US\$69 million (58 percent) was pledged in response to the UN appeal, which means that many donors followed their own strategy. Out of line with *GHD* Principle ten, this behaviour caused the humanitarian coordinator and OCHA difficulties in collecting information on donors' bilateral actions and in coordinating their responses within a global framework.

Table 1: Main donors' response to the UN Flash Appeal and bilateral aid

Donor	% inside and outside the appeal	Pledges flash appeal	Outside the appeal
United States	30.38%	10,985,208	25,055,775
UN Central Emergency Response Fund	8.58%	10,183,168	
United Kingdom	9.96%	7,152,260	4,663,166
Sweden	7.07%	6,985,223	1,406,538
European Commission	6.65%	4,943,938	2,950,850
Germany	6.65%	5,291,005	2,597,854
Canada	4.30%	3,867,523	1,237,612
Netherlands	3.79%	4,054,054	439,239
Spain	3.75%	3,570,407	874,745
France	3.59%	3,234,990	1,027,722
Private donations from individuals and organisations	3.23%	2,095,395	1,740,296

Source: OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS)

Problems of donor dissatisfaction, however, changed drastically after the March 2009 visits to Haiti of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, former US President Bill Clinton, and Security Council ambassadors. The April donors' conference followed, confirming their commitment to support the Haitian Government in its plan to alleviate poverty and promote economic growth. US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton underlined that Haiti was at a "critical juncture" and donors pledged US\$324 million (Sheridan 2009). However, it remains to be seen whether they will honour this pledge, given that their 2004 agreement to give US\$1 billion went largely unfulfilled.

The GHD in Haiti: work remains

Several elements must be considered when analysing donors' support with regard to the *GHD Principles*. First, Haiti is the location of a UN integrated mission and a long-term crisis in which humanitarian aid is often subordinated to the priorities of powerful regional states. Issues such as politics, reconstruction and good governance have often come before the *GHD Principles* of saving lives and alleviating suffering.

Furthermore, the Haitian Government is insistent on moving donors out of the emergency phase and mobilising resources for reconstruction and infrastructure (GoH 2009 and World Bank 2009). Despite disagreement expressed by humanitarian agencies, including the Humanitarian Coordinator, many donors are following this strategy and neglecting the remaining emergency and recovery needs. There is a lack of leadership, comprehension and financial support from donors when it comes to recovery projects and linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) phases as mentioned in Principle nine of the *GHD*. As one interview respondent from a UN agency summarised: "In Haiti we miss donors with humanitarian fibre." This observation applies well to those implementing agencies most committed to

development projects, which seemed unprepared and inexperienced in the emergency operation. At best, donor representatives on the ground had a confused understanding of the *GHD* and therefore did not integrate it consciously as guidance in their operations.

This series of factors created breaches of the *GHD Principles* by donors and led to poor practice. As explained previously, donors did not respond in a timely manner – a basic and essential responsibility. They also failed adequately to cover identified needs. The gaps in the response not only harmed affected communities but further jeopardised the reestablishment of stability in Haiti. As World Bank President Robert Zoellick explained in the wake of the storms: "We have to deal with the immediate needs to deal with the social instabilities. We need to work with donors to... make sure we ameliorate the terrible difficulties people have suffered" (Charles 2009). Yet donors continued to drag their feet.

For example, as happens too often in humanitarian crises, there was insufficient support for host families that welcomed internally displaced persons (IDPs). In the city of Gonaïves, households living in precarious situations since the 2004 flooding had to support relatives and neighbours. Consequently, poverty and conflict in these communities increased. Many organisations interviewed in the field believed there would be a need for a second and even a third wave of donor funding.

There is also a general understanding that donors gave priority to solving the humanitarian situation in Gonaïves and Jacmel, when the hurricanes hit nine out of ten provinces. Though this behaviour was primarily motivated by the scale of needs, it also had to do with media coverage and the opportunity for publicity in those areas. Agencies claimed they had difficulty drawing donor attention to other, less publicised, critical situations in remote and southern areas.

Donor support needed

The disaster preparedness and prevention policies of donors were also flawed. Donor engagement in strengthening local capacity was insufficient, leaving the most vulnerable individuals unprepared to cope with future natural disasters. Significant financial and technical assistance from donors is needed to build competency and capacity, and the Haitian Government has yet to establish budgetary priorities, focal points, or decentralised laws. Meanwhile, local civil society initiatives lack donor support which, according to local agencies and international NGOs in the field, hampers the implementation of a necessary culture of risk reduction. This absence of local NGO recognition also limits the legitimacy and impact of aid from the international community. Finally, it confines the involvement of local agencies, because they do not feel projects reflect their wishes. In short, civil society in Haiti is too often marginalised from the consultation process.

Donors could have done more to harmonise and coordinate their efforts when working with weak, sometimes corrupt, and disorganised local authorities. They did not deal well, for instance, with the mandatory evacuation of shelters – mainly schools in Gonaïves. Authorities were resolute on this issue and evacuation started at a very early stage, but no alternative accommodation was offered. NGOs, worried about the prospect of forced expulsions, had no alternative other than to witness evacuation operations, in order to prevent protection problems, and to provide assistance to the displaced in their new temporary shelters. Returnee kits and economic aid to rent houses were distributed to the returnees, but these were clearly insufficient (OCHA 2008c). Weeks after the evacuation, spontaneous small tent villages started to spring up, in which people lived in deplorable conditions. Agencies witnessing the forced evacuation expressed frustration that they had to deal with this 'dirty job' without donors' backup or reaction, and regretted donors' silence on human rights and protection issues (MSF 2008).

Lessons learnt and recommendations for the future

- 1 According to one NGO's Country Director, human rights is "a word that seems to make donors afraid in Haiti". Yet, in a country where diplomatic immunity prevails, donors could be more proactive and decisive on protection and human rights issues.
- 2 The lack of involvement of local agencies in Haiti has created frustration and dissatisfaction. The affected population perceives humanitarian aid as a basic and limited tool that does not respond to their needs or expectations. Agencies in the field pressed for a greater integration of Principle seven, as well as for the creation of mechanisms to more directly engage local organisations in the design and programming of projects. There is also a need for greater public scrutiny and dissemination of information about the implementation and progress of humanitarian assistance projects.
- 3 A more sophisticated humanitarian response is required – one that includes firmer financial support from donors, greater consideration for local communities, and support for recovery activities. Donors should also proactively encourage evaluations in order to identify and respond to existing emergency needs. This will smooth a timely transition to development programmes.
- 4 A more significant effort is expected from donors to reinforce the role of the humanitarian coordinator and of OCHA, which implies complete sharing of information on their commitments, spending and activities. Donors should reduce their tendency to develop individual strategies influenced by political priorities that jeopardise the humanitarian agenda. Issues of disaster preparedness and risk reduction, including local capacity-building and strategy, also need to be addressed urgently, before the next cyclone season.

5 The Haitian Government has asked that funds be directly channelled to the Haitian public sector, rather than exclusively to international NGOs – and the new US administration has complied by providing, for the first time, US\$20 million of direct budgetary support (Schaaf 2009). Still, it will be a challenge for donors to reverse the practice of channelling assistance through NGOs, to benchmark their funding by clarifying structural performance and public financial management, and to avoid inept or corrupt official institutions. The largest challenge for the Haitian Government will be to prove its capacity to manage donated funds, as well as to impose law and security while fighting against corruption and clientelism.

6 The mobilisation of funds by the international community in response to the hurricane crisis in Haiti allowed humanitarian actors to prevent a greater tragedy there. Yet donors adopted a low profile in dealing with the crisis, and their responses have been slow and partial. Most worryingly, donors largely failed to respect fundamental Principles 6, 7, 9, 18 and 21, and many demonstrated insufficient knowledge of the GHD initiative itself.

In cases such as Haiti, where a fluctuation between emergency and chronic humanitarian operations exists, humanitarian actors are expected to do more than respond to the population's immediate needs. So far, despite long-term donor presence, the international community has fallen short in designing strategies that address both challenges.

“In Haiti we miss donors with humanitarian fibre.”



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7 Poverty reduction efforts require the reinforcement of state institutions, the development of a secure environment, and greater dialogue among stakeholders. In their latest meetings, President Preval's government, donors, and international institutions have seemed willing to learn from past mistakes and reinforce dialogue to ensure continuous progress. Despite the uncertain global climate of recent months, President Obama's interest in Haiti and Bill Clinton's recent involvement there⁸ could bring renewed hope and optimism to the hemisphere's poorest nation.

About the Author

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Gilles Gasser is a journalist and independent consultant specialising in humanitarian aid issues and communication. He was Head of Mission of the NGO Équilibre in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1993 to 1996 and later worked as an expert from 1997 to 2000 in the humanitarian offices of the European Commission in Sarajevo, Tirana and Pristina. He has undertaken studies for the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, 'Conversations on Democracy' for the Club of Madrid, and various projects with the think-tank FRIDE. As a journalist, he has travelled to Belfast, New Caledonia, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, El Salvador, Guatemala, Brazil and the Dominican Republic.

Notes

- 1** Information based on field interviews with key humanitarian agencies in Haiti from 8 February 2009 to 18 February 2009, and 180 questionnaires on donor performance (including 148 OECD-DAC donors).

The HRI team, composed of Gilles Gasser, Philippe Benassi and Soledad Posada, expresses its gratitude to all those interviewed in Haiti. The opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of DARA.
- 2** In July 2006 Haiti was readmitted as a full participating member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) after more than two years of suspension (Arthur 2006). Argentina, Brazil and Chile offered a joint development strategy and Venezuela added Haiti to its PetroCaribe marketing programme (ABN 2007). The Obama administration announced its commitment to work with Haiti's new government.
- 3** Haiti's external debt is US\$1.4 billion, nearly half of which was accumulated under the Duvalier dictatorship. Haiti has recently been added to the highly indebted poor country initiative (HIPC), but so far the country has not qualified for debt cancellation. Over a third of Haiti's debt, moreover, is owed to the Inter-American Development Bank, which is not involved in debt relief (Schuller 2006).
- 4** In February 2009, "only" seven people were kidnapped. A year earlier the number of such kidnappings averaged one a day (IRBC 2008).
- 5** In the health sector there were no clear guidelines on medicine distribution, or to what extent it had to remain free of charge.
- 6** According to Dr. Manuel Orozco (2009), of the Inter-American Dialogue, Georgetown University, annual remittances from the EU and the US to developing countries will decline by US\$32 billion.
- 7** As of 30 September 2008, the appeal was only four percent funded with variation between clusters: 0 percent of the requirements for food, agriculture and education, 23 percent for shelter, 20 percent for health and 15 percent for water and sanitation (OCHA 2008b).
- 8** UN Secretary Ban Ki-moon named him Special UN Envoy to Haiti.

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