

Haiti

AT A GLANCE



Country data *(2005 figures, unless otherwise noted)*

- 2006 Human Development Index: 0.482, ranked 154 of 177 countries
- Population (2006): 8.6 million
- GNI per capita Atlas method (2006, current US\$): 480
- Life expectancy: 53
- Under-five infant mortality rate: 120 per 1,000
- Population undernourished (2001–03): 47 percent
- Population with sustainable access to improved water source: 54 percent
- Primary education completion rate: NA
- Gender-related development index (2006): NA
- Official development assistance (ODA): US\$515 million
- 2006 Corruption Perception Index: 1.8, ranked 163 out of 163 countries

Sources: World Bank; United Nations Development Programme, 2006; Transparency International, 2006

The crisis

- 37 percent of the population, or 3 million people, were affected by the crisis;
- Violence and deteriorating security resulted in civilian deaths, looting, disruption of medical services and water and electricity supplies, as well as food and fuel shortages;
- Civilians, often the poorest in the country, were caught in the middle of inter- and intra-gang violence, and gang clashes with the police and the UN peacekeepers; trapped communities were systematically denied access to education, health care, justice, and humanitarian assistance;
- NGOs report a high incidence of kidnappings and rape, and children face recruitment into armed groups, abduction, sexual violence, and maiming;
- 7,200 UN troops have struggled to break the cycle of violence - there is no peace agreement to enforce and the violence does not follow the typical contours or dynamics of an internal conflict.

Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2004.

The humanitarian response

- The 2003 UN Appeal requested US\$83 million but received only 45 percent ;
- The 2004 UN Flash Appeal achieved only 46 percent coverage, or US\$16 of the US\$36 million requested. The largest donors were: UK (US\$2.5 million), EC (US\$2.1 million), Canada (US\$1.7 million), USA (US\$1.5 million), and France (US\$1.5 million);
- In 2006, Haiti received a total of US\$25 million in humanitarian aid. The largest donors were the EC (US\$10 million), USA (US\$6.4 million), UK (US\$3.9 million), Canada (US\$2.5 million), and France (US\$2.5 million);
- Donors pledged US\$750 million for development programmes and government support following a request for US\$600 million at a donor conference in 2006;
- The 2007 UN Transitional Appeal requested US\$98 million.

Source: OCHA, Financial Tracking Service.

Haiti

Violence, Gangs, and a Fragile State on the Brink of Crisis

RICARDO SOLÉ, Independent Consultant, Development and Humanitarian Aid



Introduction*

The 2006 crisis in Haiti was not a typical internal conflict, characterised by high intensity, and clearly delineated groups or opposing parties with established territorial control and political agendas, or following obvious cleavages within society. Instead, “the situation in Haiti is not a post-conflict situation but rather a protracted and violent 20-year long transition following the end of the predatory dictatorship of the Duvaliers.”¹

In essence, the humanitarian crisis stems from the political violence and instability that accompanied struggles over state power, coupled with structural vulnerabilities, including widespread poverty, the failure of the state to provide basic public goods, and exposure to

natural hazards. This combination pushed segments of the population into circumstances of humanitarian crisis. Following years of neglect by the international community, the deployment in 2004 of the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti force (MINUSTAH) marked a turning point for Haiti. Nevertheless, the humanitarian response in 2006 was still underfunded, poorly directed, and not sufficiently linked to addressing the country’s long-term problems, leaving a large segment of the population vulnerable to humanitarian disaster.

* The opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of DARA.

Causes and dynamics of the crisis: An incomplete and turbulent transition

The long-term roots of the humanitarian, political, social and economic crisis that Haitians face today lie in the country's transition to independence and the corrupt and repressive dictatorships of Francois Duvalier (1957–1971) and his son Jean-Claude Duvalier (1971–1986). The dictatorships of both father and son concentrated power in the hands of the elite, maintained by private armed militias and gross human rights abuses. State institutions and even foreign aid became means to increase and preserve the wealth and power of the dictatorships' elite, while the majority of the population lived in chronic poverty.

The ousting of Jean-Claude Duvalier, followed by the country's first democratic elections in 1991, failed to bring either political stability or security for the population. In fact, the system of corruption, personalisation of power, and the use of political violence perpetrated by the police and private armed groups continued unabated. The international community, with little geo-strategic or commercial interest in the small Caribbean country, has undertaken at least six short-lived—largely ineffective—military interventions. In short, “the crisis is as much the result of a prevailing culture of violence, widespread corruption and the criminalisation of armed groups as it is of neglect by the international community.”²²

In 2004, escalating violence came to a head, with armed gangs and former police and soldiers taking the town of Gonaïves. As a result, then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country, a UN-sanctioned Multinational Interim Force was deployed (succeeded on 1 June 2004 by MINUSTAH), and a transitional government was installed. However, the complex and non-traditional nature of the conflict in Haiti, including the absence of a peace agreement, meant that, at least at first, progress was slow.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, armed groups, former soldiers and police, political militias and, increasingly, criminal gangs, continued to act with impunity. Criminal gangs became not only a means of income for their members, but, paradoxically, a source of protection for local communities. This climate of lawlessness and impunity, coupled with the widespread availability of small arms and increasing influence of the drug trade, saw an increase in human rights abuses in 2005, including mob violence, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, and torture.

However, in 2006, the increased and more robust deployment of MINUSTAH resulted in a partial improvement in the security situation and long-awaited elections. Nevertheless, urban gang violence flourished, “rooted in a mix of politics and economics... thanks to the continued absence of state authority and the lack of socio-economic development.”²³ Areas of Port-au-Prince became no-go zones for the security forces and MINUSTAH. Civilians living in these areas, often the poorest in the country, were caught in the middle of inter- and intra-gang violence, as well as gang clashes with the police and MINUSTAH. These trapped communities were systematically denied access to education, healthcare, justice, and humanitarian assistance. A high incidence of kidnappings and rapes are reported by NGOs, and children, according to a UN report, face “grave violations including systematic recruitment into armed groups, death, and maiming either through direct involvement in violence or in the crossfire, abduction and kidnapping, and sexual violence.”²⁴

Humanitarian impact of the crisis: Insecurity, poverty, and environmental vulnerability

Significantly, when defining the priority concerns for those affected, the UN cited insecurity and lack of humanitarian access as the major determinants of the humanitarian consequences of the conflict,²⁵ and estimated that approximately 37 percent of the population (or 3 million people) were affected by the crisis. According to the 2004 UN Flash Appeal, the displacement of the population was not properly evaluated but was believed to be significant, both into and out of urban areas, depending on the security situation. Similarly, the level of disruption of basic services was not uniform, but contingent on the security situation in different areas at different times. Deteriorating security conditions resulted in looting, disruption of medical services, water and electricity supplies, and food and fuel shortages. This exposed an already vulnerable population to a range of humanitarian threats.

The 2004 security crisis exacerbated existing structural problems, in particular poverty and vulnerability to natural hazards. Haiti's political turmoil and violence, and the deterioration of state institutions have had devastating consequences for the civilian population. The Haitian Institute of Statistics and Information Technology estimated that in 2001, 56 percent of the population was living on less than a dollar a day and 76

percent on less than US\$2. The World Bank estimated that GNI per capita in 2005 was US\$450. By 2005, Haiti was ranked 153rd out of 177 countries by the UNDP Human Development Index, the lowest ranking country in the Western hemisphere. Public services, such as health, sanitation and education, are extremely weak. UNICEF estimated the 2005 under-five infant mortality rate at 120 per 1,000, as compared to 43 in Guatemala, the next Western hemisphere country in the Human Development Index. Furthermore, the combination of poverty and violence has resulted in waves of refugees fleeing the country and large numbers of internal displacements. For example, following the 1991 coup in which 1,500 died, 40,000 fled the country and 20,000 to 30,000 fled the capital.

Nevertheless, there were some improvements in macroeconomic indicators in 2006, with the annual economic growth rate increasing from 1.8 percent in 2004–2005 to a predicted rate of 2.7 percent in 2005–2006, compared to a low of –3.4 percent in 2004. However, it is difficult to gauge how these gains actually improved the lives of ordinary Haitians, as Haiti in 2006 was considered the most corrupt country in the world.⁶

It must be said, however, that, in many instances, the relief strategies applied did not mitigate these structural issues. Poverty is a structural problem, exacerbated, no doubt, by the political crisis. But the eradication of poverty is beyond the scope of any humanitarian response. In addition, in order to avert the humanitarian consequences of the lack of public services, donors and agencies were often prompted into substituting state capacity and obligations. This undermined accountability and the establishment of long-term institutional capacity.

As mentioned earlier, Haiti is also vulnerable to natural hazards, including hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and landslides, the frequency and force of which are believed to be increasing due to climate change. In 2004, for example, major floods left 4,000 dead and 330,000 homes destroyed or damaged. In November 2006 floods affected areas of the country and prompted a reaction by humanitarian agencies, with ECHO mobilising US\$1.9 million.⁷ The population's vulnerability is exacerbated by poverty, high population density, poor infrastructure, unplanned urbanisation, deforestation and the over use of agricultural land. Given its overall condition, it is not surprising that the state itself lacks defences or capacity to prevent, mitigate, and respond to disasters.

The international donor response: Weak instruments for assisting a fragile state

According to the OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS), since the crisis in 2004, 17 of the 23 DAC donors⁸ have provided humanitarian aid, progressively turning it towards development and institutional support.⁹ The FTS for 2006 records a total of US\$25 million in humanitarian aid, but since many donors follow their own strategy, it is difficult to ascertain the global picture. The largest donors were: Canada (US\$15,473,299 or 59.8 percent), France (US\$1,778,108 or 6.9 percent), Switzerland (US\$1,618,588 or 6.3 percent), private individuals and organisations (US\$1,550,021 or 6 percent) and Sweden (US\$1,317,868 or 5.1 percent). In addition, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) provided US\$1 million (3.9 percent). However, humanitarian needs, as illustrated by the levels of funding received by the UN Appeals, are under-funded, while local government institutions are not ready to implement a long-term development strategy.

Already in 2003, the UN launched an Appeal, the Integrated Emergency Response Program (IERP), to address urgent humanitarian needs, and warned of the likelihood of deterioration. The IERP requested US\$83 million which was only 45 percent funded. The situation deteriorated into a full blown crisis in 2004. A UN Flash Appeal was launched, but achieved only 46 percent coverage, US\$16 million out of the US\$35 million requested. The largest contributing donors to the Flash Appeal were: the UK (US\$2.5 million or 13.6 percent), EC/ECHO (US\$2.1 million or 13.1 percent), Canada (US\$1.7 million or 10.3 percent), U.S. (US\$1.5 million or 9.4 percent) and France (US\$1.5 million or 9 percent).¹⁰ This limited success was attributed to the poor quality and lack of consistency of the Appeal, and the UN's limited local operational capacity.¹¹ However, donors actually disbursed up to US\$36 million in humanitarian aid, using alternative mechanisms.¹² Donors therefore directed some of the funds either bilaterally to the government or to their NGO partners on the ground. For instance, including both bilateral and Flash Appeal contributions, the US and EC/ECHO were, in fact, the largest donors in 2004.

Additionally, a donor conference—covering humanitarian but principally development and reconstruction aid—took place in 2004, garnering US\$1,100 million in pledges, surpassing the initial objective of US\$960 million. Needs were identified through the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF), in which the

UN, donors, private sector, and civil society participated. However, some implementing agencies were critical of the weak civil society participation in the ICF, the too overt political agenda in support of the transitional government, and the high proportion of pledged loans, which added to the already critical debt situation of the country.¹³ Moreover, many donors are believed to have contributed to independent humanitarian response activities, deducting these disbursements from their pledged funds. It is likely that the conference received greater donor support than the UN Appeal because of the broader range of activities covered, the deficiencies of the UN Appeal already mentioned, and donor interest in supporting the Haitian government and NGO partners according to their own agendas, especially following the establishment of MINUSTAH.

Another donor conference in 2006 again raised funds over the expected target; donors pledged US\$750 million following a request for US\$600 million, again principally for development programmes and government support. However, at a post-conference meeting in Madrid, the Prime Minister of Haiti complained publicly of the limited disbursement achieved.¹⁴ Donor policies of disbursing funds through specific partners, often bypassing government structures, seem to have contributed to this perception.

Lastly, the UN launched in December 2006 a Transitional Appeal aimed at covering the period, from early 2007 until mid-2008, until the new government's recovery and development strategy could be put in place. The Appeal, for US\$98 million, aims to support the newly elected government during the initial period of its mandate until its poverty reduction and development strategies gain momentum. So far, no data for the Appeal's rate of funding is available.

In addition to the humanitarian imperative, there have been other motivations for engagement in Haiti. As recipients of significant migration and out of concern for the added economic risk of instability in Haiti, the United States and Canada have particular sensitivity to Haiti. The U.S. justifies its involvement by its alarm at the prospect of a failed state in what has traditionally been regarded as its backyard, the possibility of political association with other hostile states, and the window of opportunity Haiti may provide for criminal organisations and drug trafficking.

Meanwhile, the EU profile seems to coincide with the general EU model: major humanitarian contributions, democratisation, and institutional support for good governance. Other donors, such as the Netherlands,

Denmark, Sweden, and Norway follow their usual profile of commitment to relief needs, the promotion of human rights, and an emphasis on linking humanitarian assistance to development and sustainability. The pragmatic approach of Norway in explicitly allowing its funds to be used by MINUSTAH in order to provide humanitarian assistance in insecure areas should be noted.

Despite poor funding for UN Appeals, the establishment in June 2004 of the long-term, robust, and well-resourced MINUSTAH mission marked a sea change in the international community's attitude towards the crisis in Haiti. Six previous UN-sanctioned interventions had been fleeting and ineffective. The original aim of MINUSTAH was to avert a full-blown crisis and to support a credible election process. However, this particular UN mission neglected (at least initially) to encourage a genuine internal process of consolidation and reform. Therefore, despite its 7,200 troops, MINUSTAH struggled to break the system of violence. Because the mission was originally conceived of in terms of traditional peacekeeping, but lacked a peace agreement to enforce, it was unable to cope with or reduce much of Haitian violence—which is not characteristic of the typical form or dynamics of an internal conflict. Traditional mechanisms, such as the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process have had limited success.¹⁵

Although it receives broad support from the international community, especially regional neighbours, MINUSTAH itself has become part of the problem.¹⁶ Sporadic cases of mismanagement and the perception of political bias towards the government undermines its credibility and effectiveness. The increasing sense of mistrust among the population towards the UN, fuelled by a sense of occupation and lack of visible progress, is a source of genuine concern. However, MINUSTAH is involved in humanitarian activities. Recently, a guidance note was issued to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the military in support of relief activities, generally reflecting the provisions of the GHD *Principles*.

Implementation of the humanitarian response: Replacing the state?

As explained above, insecurity triggered the humanitarian crisis by interrupting the provision of basic services and supplies, and impairing humanitarian access to the most vulnerable population. The international community

concluded, therefore, that the most appropriate way to address humanitarian needs was to improve security, first by means of a UN force, and second, by reinforcing the functions of the state. However, despite this long-term strategy for stabilisation, the progress towards improving the state's capacity to impose law and order has been slow and the legitimacy of the government is still weak. In the meantime, humanitarian needs have been acute since 2004, their identification weak, and the funding to address them insufficient.

The activities of relief organisations in Haiti cover the broad range of humanitarian intervention, including protection, human rights, relief, assistance in food supply, food security, health and education services, water and sanitation, and disaster preparedness. However, implementation by relief agencies has been disrupted by security concerns in some areas, preventing access. In addition, during 2006, donors responded to flood damage in some areas, exacerbating the humanitarian situation and requiring donors to increase the scope of their interventions.

The absence of a fully functioning government has constrained the response and reconstruction efforts. Most implementing agencies are committed to development strategies, although in many cases this role and activities related to it are substitutes for the responsibilities of the state. This particularly affects capacity-building initiatives, such as public health policy and disaster preparedness mechanisms. However, the election of a new government and the success of the donor conferences seem to have enhanced the possibilities for long-term strategies. Indeed, the UN 2007 Transitional Appeal explicitly focuses on strengthening local capacity and intends to bridge the period until the elected government can implement adequate measures. The general feeling is that the current situation offers a real opportunity to articulate development and reconstruction strategies that would help to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of any socio-political crisis or natural disaster.¹⁷

After the 2004 crisis, the Interim Cooperation Framework was intended to be a consolidated emergency plan to improve the economic situation and address the population's basic needs during the transition period, to deliver assistance as quickly as possible and to create favourable conditions for an election. The expectation was that a legitimate new government would emerge, which would serve as a recipient through which to channel aid.

However, it would appear that most needs assessments were carried out by individual agencies, with little sharing of findings or follow up. Donors generally required such ex-ante evaluations but did not contribute to the assessment effort by integrating all capacities in order to better address needs and coordinate the response.

Moreover, the UN through the IERP and Flash Appeals established its own evaluation of needs and response strategy, although for many the adequacy and quality was debatable.¹⁸ The fact is, as mentioned earlier, donors were more ready to contribute outside the Appeal processes.

The role of the UN in Haiti is complex, and includes the provision of security, technical assistance, and coordination. Formally, the head of the UNDP acts as the UN Resident Representative and assumes the mandate of coordinating the humanitarian response. Among the UN agencies, the role of UNDP seems consolidated and accepted and coordination with MINUSTAH is reasonable.

Nevertheless, the coordination of the overall humanitarian response is considered quite poor. Even OCHA has a very weak presence and has not been properly funded. Thus, its traditional role has been lost in the complexities of the UN stabilisation force and the remaining UN agencies. However, there have been attempts to remedy this and, as a result, requests for funding for humanitarian coordination were included in the 2007 UN Transitional Appeal.

The cluster approach was not implemented in Haiti, and no real sectoral coordination was put in place, except the one chaired by government departments with technical support from the relevant UN agency. This has resulted in a very weak framework for coordination, other than for bilateral aid. In humanitarian terms, and for most donors and NGOs, this type of coordination has little impact.

Conclusion

Despite only partial funding of UN Appeals, the international response has been able to avert a more serious humanitarian disaster in Haiti. By the end of 2006, a relatively safe environment to strengthen state institutions and democratic governance had been created.

The stabilisation and legitimisation of the new government by all stakeholders and internal factions would increase the effective use of international aid in

development and poverty alleviation programmes which would ultimately render humanitarian aid redundant. However, as yet, the situation is far from stable. Poverty reduction will require time, determination, and generous investments, and the issue of disaster preparedness is still poorly addressed in a highly vulnerable country.

Haiti offers us an excellent case study of the complexity of donor practices and processes, from pledges that surpass expectations to frustration at the limited commitments achieved and the lack of clear disbursement strategies, from weak financial tracking to the lack of transparent information, fragmented coordination, and the predominance of individual donors' strategies for implementation.

References

- BBC. 2006. "Haiti donors in efficiency pledge." 30 November. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6197244.stm>
- Faubert, Carrol. 2006. "Evaluation of UNDP Assistance to Conflict-Affected Countries." New York: UNDP Evaluation Office. Available at: <http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/thematic/conflict/ConflictEvaluation2006.pdf>
- Gauthier, Amélie. 2006. "Security in Haiti and the Madrid Donor Conference." Madrid: FRIDE.
- Mobekk, Eirin. 2006. *MINUSTAH: DDR and Police, Judicial and Correctional Reform in Haiti: Recommendations for Change*. London: ActionAid International.
- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2004. *Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP): Flash Appeal 2004 for Haiti*. Available at: <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/AllDocsByUNID/dede6ff35eb7cb0c1256e520053b393>
- . Financial Tracking Service. Available at: <http://www.reliefweb.int/FTS/>
- Oxfam. 2004. "World Bank, IMF and US Must Lead the Way in Haiti." Press release. 16 July. Available at: http://www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/press_releases/archive2004/press_release.2004-09-15.8077197440
- Transparency International. 2006. *Corruption Perception Index*. Berlin.
- United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. 2006. Report to the Security Council. 17 August 2006. New York. Available at: <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/f45643a78fcb719852560f6005987ad/8f69b86004faedb9852571e90050497b!OpenDocument>
- United Nations Development Programme. 2006. *Human Development Report 2006. Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis*. New York.
- World Bank. Haiti Data Profile. Available at: <http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPProfile.asp?PTYPE=CP&CCODE=HTI>

Notes

- 1 Faubert, 2006.
- 2 Faubert, 2006, p. 69.
- 3 Mobekk, 2006, p. 6.
- 4 Report of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 2006.
- 5 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2004.
- 6 Transparency International, 2006.
- 7 Floods triggered another international response in March 2007.
- 8 The 17 members were: the EC, the United States, the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, Finland, and New Zealand.
- 9 The DARA team learned that, although it was not registered by the FTS, humanitarian funding had also been provided by Luxembourg.
- 10 OCHA, Financial Tracking Service, as of 18 September 2007.
- 11 DARA field interviews, May–June 2007.
- 12 OCHA, Financial Tracking Service.
- 13 Oxfam, 2004.
- 14 BBC, 2006.
- 15 In 2006, only 110 participants either completed or were completing the DDR process and very few weapons, most of which were old, had been collected; estimates indicate that gangs are in possession of 6,000–13,000 weapons and that 210,000 are estimated to be in circulation in the country; see Gauthier, 2006.
- 16 DARA field interviews, May–June 2007.
- 17 DARA field interviews, May–June 2007.
- 18 DARA field interviews, May–June 2007.

