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HAITI: STILL TRAPPED IN THE EMERGENCY PHASE

Nearly ten months after the January 12 earthquake, the people of Haiti are still living in a state of emergency, with a humanitarian response that appears paralyzed. Camp inhabitants are protesting against their living conditions and threats of evictions and objecting to the arbitrarily appointed or completely absent camp managers. Gang leaders or land-owners are intimidating the displaced. Sexual, domestic, and gang violence in and around the camps is rising. More experienced United Nations personnel and resources for humanitarian protection are urgently required. Further, agencies must focus much more attention on developing livelihood opportunities that would enable people to transition out of the camps.

ESTABLISH PROPER LEADERSHIP

Action is urgently needed to protect the basic human rights of people displaced by the earthquake. Living in squalid, overcrowded and spontaneous camps for a prolonged period has led to aggravated levels of violence and appalling standards of living. As time goes on, landowners are increasingly threatening camp residents with eviction. Many evictions have already occurred, and with nowhere to go, these repeatedly displaced people are absorbed into existing camps or form new ones with no humanitarian assistance.

Despite these alarming conditions, the UN coordination system in Haiti is not prioritizing activities to protect people's rights. The current Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) -- the person who should be increasing the effectiveness of the humanitarian response and aid delivery -- also plays the role of Resident Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General of MINUSTAH (the UN peacekeeping force). Given the competing demands of these various roles, the coordination of humanitarian activities has suffered. There is still no effective protection and assistance delivery system in place. Protection should be considered a greater priority for senior managers within the UN Country Team and MINUSTAH, and senior leadership should be held accountable for improving the protection response. Otherwise the work of lower-ranking

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The UN Emergency Relief Coordinator should establish a full-time Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) post. The HC should designate UNHCR and OHCHR as co-leads of the Protection Cluster and direct IOM and all cluster leads to act on recommendations from the Protection Cluster.
- IOM should assign camp management tasks or, as a last resort, provide their own staff to fill the current gaps.
- Donor governments should fund UNHCR to significantly increase its operational presence and increase funding to staff the GBV sub-cluster and to support grassroots women's groups working on GBV.
- MINUSTAH should provide increased staffing and equipment for its IDP police unit, particularly translators and transport.
- UN agencies and international NGOs should appoint civil society liaison officers.
- Donor agencies should designate more resources for livelihood opportunities in rural areas outside of Port-au-Prince.

staff of UN agencies to address the needs of the displaced will be unsuccessful.

The Chief-of-Staff of the HC's Integrated Office and the top political affairs official have recently put together a Working Group on sexual violence in the camps. Although welcome, such higher-level initiatives do not resolve the fundamental dysfunctions of the humanitarian cluster coordination in Haiti, which has largely failed to provide protection for internally displaced people (IDPs).

RI remains concerned that the protection cluster is being led by the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), which lacks experience in operational protection in disasters. As a result, protection is not a priority across the cluster system. OHCHR's leadership has not committed adequate resources to the protection cluster, including the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection sub-clusters it supports. There is no full-time staff for the cluster, which is utilizing already over-committed personnel spread thin across a myriad of other duties. OHCHR has traditionally worked on long-term law reform issues in Haiti, submitting policy papers to the government and working for incremental changes -- important work in Haiti, but not focused on operational protection response in an emergency environment.

The operation of the cluster system can become more effective. Co-leadership of the Protection Cluster by OHCHR and UNHCR, using their complementary experience, would improve the situation. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has essential operational experience in responding to protection needs in emergencies, but there are only four UNHCR staff deployed in Haiti, seconded to OHCHR. This has not been sufficient to bring about increased engagement by OHCHR in operational protection work. The Protection Cluster should seek additional funding for UNHCR through the UN appeal, to enable UNHCR to expand their displacement-focused work throughout the country. UNHCR should also be given the authority to implement key protection best practices, such as setting up case management systems and Standard Operating Procedures.

The Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster is key for ensuring that protection of camp residents' rights is mainstreamed by all the agencies working in the camps, but it is led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is not a protection-based agency. By taking on CCCM, IOM has taken on a protection role for which they are not equipped. IOM currently has only three junior protection officers, out of 700 staff, and no links with

local protection officers to gain a better understanding of the cultural context and the threats facing displaced people. One agency cannot do protection work alone and more experienced protection officers need to be recruited by the various UN agencies, IOM and international NGOs in Haiti.

ENHANCE SECURITY FOR DISPLACED WOMEN

Whilst GBV has always been a problem in Haiti, there has been a significant increase in reports of sexual violence since the quake. Service providers report increasing domestic violence in the stressful living conditions in the camps. The teenage pregnancy rate is extremely high in the camps, and medical agencies told RI that they are receiving large numbers of cases of failed "street abortions," some from girls as young as ten years old. RI also received reports of women and girls forced to exchange sex for food, especially since the general food distributions stopped in April. Access to income-generation activities would reduce abuse and exploitation of displaced women and girls.

Effective camp management and security patrols would also reduce risks of violence against women. Most camps' inhabitants have established residents' committees, some of which have appointed security committees, but they lack basic equipment, training and funds. In some camps these committees are positive and enhance security; in others they are corrupt and abusive, made up of gang members who are the cause of insecurity. Camp managers should play a role in institutionalizing these camp committees and camp security committees, linking them up with the UN police (UNPOL) and the Haitian National Police (HNP). This could lead to vetting of camp security committee membership, and receiving training and equipment from UNPOL.

There have been some recent advances in policing of the camps, but so far they only benefit a small fraction of camps' inhabitants, and they should be extended to community policing beyond the camps. Since July UNPOL has set up an IDP unit which currently has around 200 officers who are now providing a 24-hour security presence in six camps. They also have three mobile units that are providing random patrols in the most problematic camps. This increased level of UNPOL policing is welcome, but there is still very limited presence by HNP and the UNPOL officers cannot make arrests without them. UNPOL currently has no translators, so they cannot communicate with the camp residents, and it needs more vehicles and other equipment to increase its presence. A positive recent

development is that MINUSTAH military, UNPOL and HNP are now receiving training on prevention and response to GBV. Recruiting and training new HNP officers and reconstructing the HNP women's unit is still vital.

GBV programming lacks resources, particularly for building the capacity of local camp-based women's groups working on GBV, who, unsupported, managed to develop self-defense trainings, security patrols, and GBV awareness-raising sessions. This work has made some of these women a target for death threats. RI was told that local agencies working on GBV in the camps had received three times the number of reports of sexual violence than pre-quake, but there has not in fact been a methodical tracking by any agency of incidents pre-or-post quake. UNFPA leads the GBV sub-cluster with only one staff member. Increased staffing for the GBV sub-cluster would enable cooperation with Haitian women's organizations.

IMPROVE CAMP MANAGEMENT

The management of 1,100 to 1,300 camps -- with both earthquake-displaced people and pre-quake urban homeless and slum-dwellers who have joined the camps -- is an overwhelming task, but IOM has not yet succeeded in filling the enormous gaps. Less than 30% of the camps have managers. This leaves the majority of camps without communications or coordination with the international humanitarian community. As a consequence, most international NGOs have implemented programs in an ad hoc manner, resulting in inconsistent, overlapping and unequal resources and programming, with massive gaps in coverage. This lack of management also places camp residents at serious risk. Even in camps where a manager has been appointed, their presence and communication is often inconsistent.

IOM has recently attempted to fill some gaps by bringing in commune-level managers, and by starting to train some Haitian Government Department of Civil Protection officials. IOM has focused a lot of resources on registration, yet there is still no proper profile of the camp population, nor of their longer-term intentions.

Many camps are in dangerous and untenable conditions. However, camp residents must be given full information and options about where they are being relocated. RI heard many criticisms of the relocations coordinated by IOM (of about 10,000 people thus far), particularly concerning lack of information and alternatives offered to camp residents and lack of discussions about the voluntariness of people's decisions to relocate. The Housing Law and Prop-

erty (HLP) Working Group within the Protection Cluster states that "resettlement of earthquake-affected IDPs has not been consistent with international norms, standards and best practice." Six thousand people have been relocated to isolated Corrail, which sits in a flood-plain, and a further 42,000 are now living around the edges of the new settlement, apparently waiting to see whether the camp residents will be allocated any land or receive other benefits. The lack of communication with displaced people about their future plans is problematic, and there is also a lack of clarity about who is in charge of managing these sites and who is responsible for long-term planning.

Despite the miserable conditions in the camps, the residents express increasing fears of being evicted with nowhere to go. The HLP estimates that 15,000 people have been evicted so far and 95,000 people remain under serious threat of eviction. Even when there is no threat of evictions, many landowners refuse to allow any improvements to be made to the camps on their land, such as installation of lighting or better latrines. RI was informed of many reports of eviction threats being made to the protection and CCCM clusters which resulted in no action being taken to defend the IDPs' rights. One example was that of Camp Immaculée in Cité Soleil where hundreds of people were living. In May "bandits" started to attack residents nightly, threatening people with guns and machetes, and yelling at them to get out. According to camp residents, attempts to get assistance from the protection and CCCM clusters were unsuccessful. The camp committee sought assistance from the HNP who refused to help, and then from MINUSTAH, which did increase patrols in their camp, but not between 1:00 and 3:00 a.m., when the attacks were taking place. The assailants were never apprehended and the camp residents were forced to flee and had to set up their tents half a mile away.

RI was informed of another camp where the landowner burned thirteen tents to get them off his land, leading to the death of a child. In some camps landowners are paying people small amounts of money to leave. In many of these cases the agreements are not really voluntary and result in further repeated displacements. Even if people have a home to return to, many cannot afford the rent as they have no means of earning an income.

BRIDGE THE COMMUNICATION GAP

Despite all the cluster meetings and UN strategic planning sessions and governmental task forces, the majority of Haitians believe that nothing is happening. People's

lives are not improving, and for most, their circumstances are deteriorating. The communication gap is huge, and one sees very little presence of international agencies in the camps or in the streets. People's frustration is increasing, leading to security incidents and more demonstrations against international NGOs.

Haitian civil society leadership has been trying to gain access to the various cluster meetings at the UN compound far out by the airport. With access still difficult, many of those who have been able to participate in cluster meetings felt that their voices and perspectives were not sufficiently valued. Others believed that cluster meetings were not leading to action and were too disconnected from the reality outside of the UN compound. Many civil society leaders have now given up on coordination attempts with international humanitarian and government actors, and are focusing on their work with communities and camp members, where they possess the knowledge and history of effective community action, but none of the material resources to implement community plans.

There must be a concerted effort on the part of the UN and INGO community to bring Haitian civil society and organized camp leadership into the recovery and transition planning and implementation plans. The appointment of civil society liaison officers could help to bridge this gap. UN cluster meetings must be accessible to civil society and camp leadership, both in terms of location, entry, and language. Many of the cluster meetings are still being held in English; none are in Creole. The GBV and Child Protection sub-clusters have demonstrated progress by moving their meetings downtown to the relevant ministries, and are holding their meetings in French.

DECENTRALIZE RESOURCES TO PROMOTE RECOVERY

The earthquake did not just hit Port-au-Prince. Attention nevertheless has been mainly focused there. With the epicenter of the quake much closer to Leogane, and displaced people fanning out across the country, there was a need for an immediate country-wide decentralized disaster response. With the massive nationwide displacement, there was an opportunity to coordinate a more effective and manageable decentralized disaster response while ameliorating some core structural centralization problems which have plagued the country for decades. While the humanitarian response failed to take full advantage of this opportunity, it is still not too late for it to contribute to decentralization.

With assistance not reaching the people who fled to the rural areas of Haiti, many have returned to Port-au-Prince hoping for "cash-for-work" programs, relief resources, or rumored land rights, contributing to already overcrowded camp conditions. In many cases, those returning to the capital from rural areas are heads-of-household, seeking resources and opportunities for their families by moving between the urban and rural areas. This was the case for many displaced families that RI met in the Central Plateau. Currently, it is estimated that there are at least 100,000 IDPs absorbed into host families in this area, who have received minimal support from government or international agencies, and whose very meager resources have been exhausted.

Focusing resources on rural areas and supporting host families would contribute towards stabilizing the country and creating a "pull factor" to the other departments of Haiti. International agencies should invest more resources to support local capacity, including: development of rural infrastructure, employment of IDPs and rural residents to establish that infrastructure, support for rural market chain development, livelihoods training, micro-finance, sustainable agricultural extension to local farmers with repair of rain water systems, drip irrigation, support of bio-pest control, and support of local seed markets and distribution. Such investment would make transitions and recovery more manageable by reducing pressure and population density in Port-au-Prince, and working through local networks of civil society and government.

CONCLUSION

Three months after the earthquake, food assistance to people in the camps was reduced, in an attempt to counter the "pull factor" to the camps. But this took place without assistance for people to transition elsewhere, thus trapping them in the camps in miserable conditions. More resources must be dedicated to protection in the camps. The Haitian Government has declared that the state of emergency lasts until July 2011. There should not be a rush to transfer funds out of humanitarian assistance until real alternatives are available for displaced people. Many heads of households travel regularly from rural areas to Port-au-Prince, and incentives can be created, through sustainable livelihoods programs, for them to move permanently out of the camps.

Melanie Teff and consultant Emilie Parry assessed the needs of Haitians displaced by the earthquake in September 2010.