

3rd Committee of the General Assembly

The International Relief Effort in Haiti

Director's Note:

This report was created during the first week after the earthquake. Major developments have taken place since the time of the report's completion. Delegates are advised to stay up to date on the latest developments.

On Tuesday, January 12, 2010 a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti and devastated Port-Au-Prince and the surrounding area. The destroyed infrastructure and subsequent aftershocks have created one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has seen, directly affecting some 3 million people. Over the next two months leading up to WestMUN 18, there will be many developments relating to this story as well as criticisms of the relief effort. The United Nations has already played a critical role in the aftermath of this disaster. Our goal in the 3rd Committee of the General Assembly is to analyze the actions taken by the UN as well as individual member states, and see what lessons can be learned in order to prepare for future crises. By the arrival our conference, the situation on the ground in Haiti will certainly have changed. In light of these realities, we will be asking the question, "Is the relief and development effort on the right course, and if not, what new measures should be taken?"

In order to properly understand the obstacles Haiti is currently facing, one must take into account the nation's history. Plagued by political instability and environmental mismanagement, the situation in Haiti was desperate long before the earthquake.

According to the CIA World Fact Book, 54% of Haitians live in abject poverty, making it

the poorest country in the western hemisphere¹. Deforestation, due to commercial and private exploitation, has degraded the land and soil, making subsistence farming difficult at best. It has also led to frequent mudslides that have killed hundreds of individuals². Most of the buildings in the country were not constructed to withstand an earthquake and, as a consequence, much of the capital city, Port-Au-Prince, has been leveled. The airport that serves Port-Au-Prince was also heavily damaged, and only one runway was in operation for the first week after the earthquake. This lack of infrastructure along with the Haitian government's lack of material and human resources is now a major obstacle in responding to this emergency.

Medical Relief Needed Urgently

As of January 20, official estimates of the dead vary from 50,000 to 100,000³. In the rush to bury the dead before the bodies decompose and spread disease, reports are coming in that mass graves are being dug, and piles of bodies are being burned in the streets. Front loading tractors have been seen scooping up piles of bodies that have been dragged into the street from the destroyed buildings. They are being loaded into dump trucks and taken outside the city center. CNN has reported from at least one of these mass grave sites and stated that little or no attempts are being made to identify the bodies⁴. Meanwhile, the living citizens of Port-Au-Prince are homeless, injured, hungry, or thirsty; many are experiencing all of these realities at once. Hospitals, clinics and

¹ *Haiti. The CIA World Fact Book*. 27 Nov. 2009. Accessed 20 Jan. 2010.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

² Velasquez-Manoff, Moises. *After the earthquake: Haiti's deforestation needs attention*. CSMonitor.com *The Christian Science Monitor*. 19 Jan. 2010. Accessed 20 Jan. 2010.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Bright-Green/2010/0120/After-the-earthquake-Haiti-s-deforestation-needs-attention>

³ Reuters. *Haiti death toll 50,000 to 100,000: PAHO*. Washingtonpost.com. 15 Jan. 2010. Accessed 20 Jan. 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/15/AR2010011501857.html>

⁴ Cooper, Anderson. *Video: Mass Graves in Haiti*. CNN.com. 15 Jan. 2010. Accessed 20 Jan. 2010. <http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2010/01/15/video-mass-graves-in-haiti/>

pharmacies have collapsed, killing many doctors and nurses, and destroying needed supplies. At the campus of the capital's main general hospital and medical school, a building "pan-caked," killing hundreds of young nurses, doctors, and teachers instantly⁵. The situation for the injured is dire, with an unprecedented number of patients needing and receiving amputations. The doctors on the ground are, for the most part, still without pain medication or antibiotics to stop infection. Many are dying in front of overwhelmed doctors who simply do not have the supplies to save them.

Portable field hospitals have been established outside the city's center. Many NGO's and private citizen doctors have reached the beleaguered country and are providing what relief they can. Unfortunately, basic medicines are still in short supply and the need continues to greatly outweigh the relief effort. While around 10,000 US Marines have begun to make their presence felt in the streets, many Haitians and relief workers are complaining that they need medical supplies more than security forces⁶. After six days of relief planes arriving at the airport, it remains unclear why medical supplies have not reached the largest and busiest hospital in the country.

Food and Water Distribution

Food and water are slowly reaching the people of Haiti. The UN World Food Program has delivered 1,000,000 food rations to 200,000 people with the number expected to grow over the coming weeks⁷. Individual nations and NGO's continue to deliver food as well, but a lack of organization and fear of riots has prevented a consistent

⁵ Goodman, Amy. *With Foreign Aid Still at a Trickle, Devastated Port-au-Prince General Hospital Struggles to Meet Overwhelming Need*. DemocracyNow.org. 20 Jan. 2010. Accessed 20 Jan. 2010 http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/20/devastated_port_au_prince_hospital_struggles

⁶ Goodman, Amy. *Devastated Port-au-Prince General Hospital Struggles to Meet Overwhelming Need*

⁷ Faul, Michelle and Lush, Tamara. *Rescue hopes dim; focus now to help Haiti homeless*. Associated Press. 21 Jan. 2010. Accessed 21 Jan. 2010. http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/cb_haiti_earthquake

and reliable delivery system. Many NGO's and governments have taken to dropping food from helicopters due to logistical problem and because of reports that the people had become violent. While these reports appear to have been exaggerated during the first six days, the Red Cross is now reporting that desperation is driving people to looting and theft⁸. Some reporters have expressed amazement at the grass-roots organizing and patient behavior of the suffering people of Haiti⁹. However, it remains difficult to organize distribution centers and communicate with the public in order to be effective. Pallets of food and water remain stuck at the airport due to issues varying from poor roads, a lack of fuel and trucks, and a general fear that the convoys will be attacked. Overall, the distribution of food seems to be going slower than anyone can entirely account for.

Shelter and Security

Estimates for the percentage of destroyed buildings in the effected area are as high as 70%¹⁰. This has left the people wandering the streets for days with little protection from the elements or the masses of dead and decaying bodies. Reports are now surfacing that groups are banding together to create their own refugee camps, clear areas of rubble, collect the dead, and ration what supplies they can gather. They are also ~~banding~~ sticking close with one another in order to protect themselves and what supplies they have against desperate opportunists. Additionally, there remains a lack of tarps and tents to provide basic protection to most of the victims. With the overwhelming destruction in

⁸ *Haiti earthquake: situation is now catastrophic*. The International Committee of the Red Cross. *Operational Update*. ICRC.org. 18 Jan. 2010. Accessed 21 Jan. 2010.

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/haiti-earthquake-update-180110?OpenDocument>

⁹ Goodman, Amy. *Devastated Port-au-Prince General Hospital Struggles to Meet Overwhelming Need*

¹⁰ *Haiti's earthquake destroyed 70% of buildings: report*. International Business Times. Ibtimes.com. 15 Jan. 2010. Accessed 21 Jan. 2010. <http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/20100115/haitis-earthquake-destroyed-70-buildings-report.htm>

the city, it will be necessary to create camps to house the people while removal and reconstruction take place. The extent of this operation will demand a lot of time, labor, and materials, so it will be necessary to create living situations for an extended period of time.

The UN has had a peacekeeping mission (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti or MINUSTAH) in Haiti since June 2004. Therefore, a force of around 9,000 uniformed troops and 2,000 civilian personnel was already in place to assist in policing the area and providing immediate relief after the earthquake hit. Tragically, however, some UN buildings in the capital collapsed, killing 61 and leaving 176 unaccounted for¹¹. The dead included the two highest ranking civilian officials for the mission. This catastrophic loss is the worst the UN has ever faced, leaving many bereaved and their mission severely hampered¹². Despite these terrible realities, the relief effort pushes on. The Secretary General has appointed Assistant Secretary-General Edmond Mulet to head the mission in Haiti as international donations and support pours in from around the world¹³.

Meanwhile, the Haitian government has ceded control of its main airport to the United States in an effort to boost its ability to receive aid. The earthquake had destroyed the airport's air traffic control, creating an unfortunate bottle-neck at a critical time and place. It is unclear at this time what role the UN is playing in the coordination of what arrives at the airport. Over the past three days, criticisms have arisen that the US has

¹¹ MINUSTAH: *United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti*. UN.org. Accessed 21 Jan. 2010. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minustah/facts.shtml>

¹² *The Secretary-General's Press Encounter on Haiti*. UN.org. 18 Jan. 2010. Accessed 21 Jan. 2010. http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minustah/documents/press_encounter_sg_18012010.pdf

¹³ *Aid deliveries face logistical nightmares*. CNN.com. 14 Jan. 2010. Accessed 21 Jan. 2010. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/14/haiti.aid/index.html>

blocked planes carrying relief in favor of bringing in military supplies. The French Ambassador to Haiti has gone as far as registering a formal complaint with the US embassy in Haiti after a French plane carrying a mobile hospital was redirected to Santo Domingo in neighboring Dominican Republic¹⁴. Questions are arising over what relief material should have priority.

The Next Steps

A week after the initial quake, search and recovery efforts will begin to wind down as relief efforts pick up. As aid becomes more readily available to the masses over the coming weeks, the next goal will be the reconstruction of Haiti's flattened communities. The character of that reconstruction will be very important to the future of the country. If the old model of cheap materials and poor engineering is employed, we are likely to be in this position again when the next hurricane or earthquake hits. This tragic situation affords us the chance to give this impoverished country a new beginning through the generosity of donors around the world and the availability of new technologies.

Research Questions

- In preparing for this dialogue, delegates should consider the following questions:
- What were the main shortcomings of the relief and recovery effort?
 - In what ways was the international response a success?
 - Leadership and control of the airport, forces on the ground, and distribution has been contentious amongst participating countries. How can this be avoided?

¹⁴ Carroll, Rory and Nasaw, Daniel. *US accused of annexing airport as squabbling hinders aid effort in Haiti*. Guardian.co.uk. 17 Jan. 2010. Accessed 21 Jan. 2010.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/17/us-accused-aid-effort-haiti>

- Pallets of aid remain stranded at the airport as hunger, thirst, and disease create more desperation amongst the people. What is the nature of this bottleneck?
- What new technologies and ideas were employed that had not been seen at previous humanitarian disasters around the world? Were these changes beneficial?
- After the 2004 Asian Tsunami, reforms were instituted by the UN to streamline the organization of disaster relief. Were these reforms implemented and effective?
- What contributions were made by the country you are representing at WestMUN 18? What role did the UN as a whole play?
- In what ways can the rebuilding effort provide a better foundation for Haiti? How can Haitians be effectively employed in this effort and take ownership of the process?

Additional Research Links

OCHA- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <http://ochaonline.un.org/>

MINUSTAH- <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minustah/>

World Food Program- <http://www.wfp.org/>

International Committee of the Red Cross: Operations in the Americas-

<http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/america?OpenDocument>

3rd Committee of the General Assembly

Women in Conflict Zones: Protection and Empowerment

When violent conflict erupts, decency and empathy within that society begin to evaporate. Under the context of war or struggle, combatants are able to justify horrible actions that under peaceful conditions would be unthinkable. Murder, abuse, and sexual assault spread outside the battlefield and can infect the culture. Under these conditions, history has shown that women and girls are at great risk. Outside of the tragic physical violence they endure, many women are widowed as husbands take up the fight, leaving single mothers to care for needy families. Casualties amongst males and females alike leave vacancies in many important societal functions and disrupt support systems that might have been available otherwise. The emotional grief from the loss of a child, a husband, or the experience of abuse compounds the physical destruction of armed conflict as well. Most alarming, however, are the cases of *systematic* rape (that is, as a weapon of war) and assault against women that have been documented in crises throughout the world. Speaking to the UN Security Council about the toll that rape had taken on the women and communities in conflict zones, US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, observed, “It shreds the fabric that weaves us together as human beings.”¹⁵

Democratic Republic of the Congo

In order to understand the magnitude of the issue, delegates to WestMUN 18 should examine several cases studies from current or recent conflicts. One of the worst examples of the vulnerability of women is in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

¹⁵ Secretary Clinton on “Elimination of Violence Against Women” Day. America.gov. 30 Nov 2009. Accessed 6 Feb 2010.

<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/November/20091130103020eaifas0.5379145.html>

(DRC). The conflict there was labeled “Africa’s first world war” by the BBC because it has included forces from many of the surrounding countries at various times since 1998.¹⁶ The protracted war is now isolated to an insurgency based in the northeast and crossing into Rwanda. Reports of the use of rape as a weapon of war have come flooding out of the region. Amnesty International reports that “all of the 20+ armed groups involved in the DRC conflict have committed rape and sexual violence, including government armed forces of DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.”¹⁷ The organization’s October 2004 report includes this harrowing, detailed account of the atrocities:

Many victims, aged six to over seventy years, have been gang raped by up to twenty-five combatants or taken prisoner and used for months or years as sex slaves. The rapes have often been accompanied by sexual torture with, for example, bayonets or sharpened-sticks inserted into the woman's vagina or even gunshots to the genitals.¹⁸

This unfathomable description serves to illustrate the severity and urgency of this issue, while highlighting the impunity with which these acts are committed.

Liberia

During Liberia’s 14-year civil war, government forces and rebel groups were also accused of mass rape and sexual assault. According to the documentary, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, husbands were routinely forced at gun point to watch their wives and daughters being gang raped.¹⁹ Despite the horror of these accounts, Liberia may be instructive in a more productive way. Abandoned by the men and boys of their society, a

¹⁶ *Timeline: DR Congo Conflict*. BBC News Online. 17 Jan 2001. Accessed 7 February 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/573051.stm>

¹⁷ *DRC: Systematic Rape and Torture of Tens of Thousands of Women and Girls Leaves Public Health Crisis*. Amnesty.org.uk. 26 Oct 2004. Accessed 6 Feb 2010. http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=15660

¹⁸ *DRC: Systematic Rape*. Amnesty.org.uk

¹⁹ *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*. Dir. Gini Reticker. Fork Films, 2009.

small group of women began a grass-roots peace movement that addressed ethnic and religious strife as well as gender based violence. The loose organization gained popularity throughout the country and even international press when they instituted a “sex strike for peace,” in an effort to distract the fighters and motivate complacent males. Their tactics won them an audience with then President Charles Taylor and eventually an agreement to begin peace talks in nearby Accra, Ghana. In a dramatic confrontation, the women’s movement blocked delegates from leaving the stalled negotiations, even when one trapped male attempted to jump out of a window to escape. Since that meeting, a fragile truce has held in Liberia, paving the way for the election of Africa’s first female head of state, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

While violence, crime, and lack of infrastructure continue to plague post-war Liberia, there have been important developments for the Liberians as well as for the international aid community. The UN maintains a large peacekeeping force within the country to monitor the ceasefire and disarmament agreements. Part of that force is the first all-female peacekeeping unit.²⁰ The unit, which helps police the streets in the capitol, hails from India and has encouraged Liberian women to become involved in the police force. This engagement of women in important roles of government and society helps to break down gender biases.

The history of Liberia demonstrates the positive role that women can take in the peace process. Their ability to organize led to the historic victory of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and laid the path for truth and reconciliation committees to bring an end to the era of civil war. It is hoped that having women in positions of power and responsibility will change

²⁰ *Amnesty International Report 2009: Liberia*. Amnesty.org. Accessed 28 Jan 2010.
<http://thereport.amnesty.org/en/regions/africa/liberia>

the cultural context that tolerates sexual abuse, which often continues or increases after a conflict ends. The Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 to “stress the importance of giving women equal participation and full involvement in peace and security matters and the need to increase their role in decision-making.”²¹ Since the passing of the resolution, more women have been incorporated into peacekeeping efforts, and in some cases it has encouraged local women to form independent groups that communicate with UN leadership.²²

Afghanistan and UNIFEM

UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, is a leading advocate for the inclusion of women in peacemaking negotiations. The organization’s goal is “to provide financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that foster women's empowerment.”²³ Recently, UNIFEM supported women’s rights groups in collecting the stories, concerns, and ideas of Afghan women. When world leaders recently met in England for the London Conference on Afghanistan, a UNIFEM sponsored report and press release was the only voice for Afghan women at the conference. The release criticized the nearly complete exclusion of any Afghan women’s voices in the planning of the country’s future and strongly urged world leaders to include their interests and rights. They warned that any bartering away of women’s human rights with the opposition, even for short-term peace gains, will guarantee the continuation of conflict. The delivery of this statement by prominent Afghan women was especially poignant given the extremely high rates of violence against human rights activists in

²¹ *Women vital to peace in post-conflict zones, Security Council hears*. UN New Centre. UN.org. 29 Oct 2008. Accessed 28 Jan 2010.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28758&Cr=women&Cr1=peacekeeping>

²² *Women vital to peace*. UN News Centre

²³ *About UNIFEM*. UNIFEM.org. Accessed 6 Feb 2010. <http://www.unifem.org/about/>

Afghanistan.²⁴ Without UNIFEM and the work of brave NGOs these voices may never have been heard.

Research Questions:

In preparing for this dialogue, delegates should consider the following questions:

- How can the UN and NGOs reach out to women during conflict?
- How can communication remain open under repressive regimes?
- How can aid organizations identify key female leaders in the community during a crisis?
- Sexual violence is roundly condemned, but many other types of discrimination and abuse exist. How can these issues be addressed without abandoning cultural sensitivity and state sovereignty?
- In South Kivu Province, in Congo, 27,000 rapes were reported in 2006. Many more are believed to go unreported. In the face of such a crisis, where can the international community begin to affect change? As a WestMUN delegate, what does your country generally think about humanitarian intervention?

Further Research Links:

Association for Women's Rights in Development- <http://www.awid.org/>

Human Rights Watch- www.hrw.org

International Rescue Committee- <http://www.theirc.org/ending-violence-against-women>

²⁴ *Peace Is Impossible When Half the Population Is Excluded from Negotiations, Say Afghanistan's Women Activists*. UNIFEM.org. 27 Jan 2010. Accessed 7 Feb 2010.
http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=1017