



Transparent and Haitian-led Response

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you...and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its peace you will have peace.”

- Jeremiah 29:7

BACKGROUND

Although Haiti won its independence from France in 1804, the rest of the world did not recognize the Republic of Haiti until 1825.

The United States has been closely involved in Haiti’s national elections and the development of foreign policy since the Duvalier dictatorships ended in 1986.

Financial aid given to Haiti has consistently been attached to economic requirements by donors, including terms of “structural adjustment” which have required the privatisation of government services in a country where the majority of the population cannot afford to pay for education and healthcare.

Since 1993, the United Nations has maintained a strong presence in Haiti, and UN peacekeepers are often credited with the social stability Haiti was experiencing prior to the earthquake on January 12th, 2010.

The current administration, led by President Rene Préval, is often perceived as ineffectual and limited, an image reinforced both by the overwhelming presence of development organizations and by the UN peacekeeping mission. Many Haitians view this international presence as a form of imperialism, and resentment builds as the Haitian government’s sovereignty is consistently undermined.

Préval is only the second democratically-elected president in Haiti’s history, and under his administration the human rights and security situations have improved, Haiti met international requirements for debt relief, and prior to the earthquake, the nation’s GDP was beginning to rise.

TODAY

Haiti is now struggling to recover from the disastrous earthquake of January 12, 2010. Despite the loss of Haitian government personnel and infrastructure, the effectiveness of all recovery efforts will be limited in scope and durability unless the Haitian government is made a central part of the process.

Haitian government, civil society organizations, and community associations are being systematically excluded from the relief and reconstruction process as meetings hosted by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Port-au-Prince are held in English and require passes to attend that are difficult for Haitians to obtain.

Citizens and governments around the world have donated billions of dollars for Haiti. Aid agencies, including MCC, have committed to long-term support. These funds must be used in a transparent manner in programs that are Haitian-led to ensure that every dollar is truly used for the relief, reconstruction, and long-term sustainable development of Haiti. Capacity and skill exists within the Haitian community to address their relief, development, and reconstruction needs. Local civil society, rather than donor requirements, must be the drivers of efforts to rebuild Haiti.

The international aid community should focus on supporting President Préval and his administration, building the long-term capacity of the Haitian government, including Haitians in the reconstruction process at all levels, and striving for transparency in all decision-making processes.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

“Some may think that the extreme weakening of its Government and State [by the earthquake] renders Haiti incapable of self-rule in the short term. Such is not our view. The Haitian people do not need a friendly “coalition” of countries to manage the crisis in their place... something that would cast [further] doubt upon Haiti’s sovereignty.”

*- from a statement
published by a
Haitian-Quebecois
authors collective,
January 30, 2010*

Remind your government that the Haitian people have a right to to define the policies that will guide the nation’s reconstruction through representation at donor conferences and other decision-making spaces.

Call on your government to:

- Ensure that the Haitian diplomatic representative is consulted in developing any policies related to Haiti or to earthquake response and that the Haitian representative is speaking on behalf of the Haitian people.
- Ensure that your government’s policy strategies are clearly outlined and explained in order to increase transparency throughout the process.
- Ensure that funds are allocated to Haitian-led relief and long-term development programs.

Contact aid and development agencies you support and urge them:

- To include local governmental representatives in developing their disaster response strategy in Haiti.
- To respect policies outlined by the Haitian government concerning earthquake response.
- To ensure that donated funds are used responsibly at that all reconstruction efforts are guided by Haitians themselves.

HOW?

- In the U.S., go to <http://washington.mcc.org/congress> to find your Member of Congress. In Canada, go to <http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/index.asp?Language=E> to find your Member of Parliament. Write them a letter, call or visit to share your views.
- Send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.
- Pray for wisdom in the halls of power as policy-makers determine how to respond to Haiti’s needs without undermining Haitian sovereignty.
- Use this information sheet to explain the situation to family, friends, or your church community and encourage them to use their voices for a respectful approach to the situation in Haiti.

RESOURCES

- See “Fault Lines: The Politics of Rebuilding Haiti” a 23-minute documentary that discusses the need for Haitian-led reconstruction at youtube.com/watch?v=AuUt12usDVs&feature=fvsvr
- Visit the Haiti Response Coalition’s website at www.haitiresponsecoalition.org
- For more information, contact MCC Haiti Advocacy Coordinator, Alexis Erkert Depp: alexiserkert@haiti.mcc.org
- To sign up for action alerts related to Haiti, visit washington.mcc.org/alerts or ottawa.mcc.org/haiti