

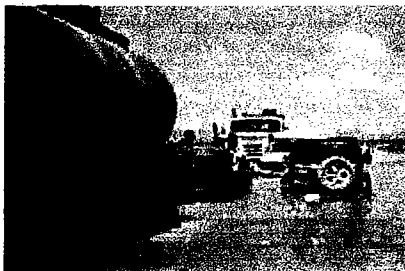
Alerting Humanitarians to Emergencies

Violence, road conditions threaten Haiti relief effort

11 Oct 2004 21:42:00 GMT

Source: NGO latest

Rick Perera



Relief vehicles navigate floodwaters en route to Gonaïves, Haiti

Rick Perera/CARE



CARE - USA

Website: <http://www.care.org>

Political violence and transportation disruptions are posing risks to relief operations in flood-ravaged parts of Haiti, CARE said Monday. CARE called on United Nations member states to send in additional troops to secure aid distributions for destitute residents of the city of Gonaïves.

CARE suspended emergency food distributions Saturday at the request of the Haitian government during a visit to Gonaïves by the country's President and Prime Minister. The suspension was continued Sunday due to violence and barricades erected by demonstrators in the city. Meanwhile, increasing attacks on humanitarian vehicles in Gonaïves are hampering workers' ability to reach needy people.

Unrest in the capital, Port-au-Prince, blocked access to the city's seaport for several days last week, cutting off the major route for UN World Food Programme (WFP) shipments into the country. While shipments were able to resume at the end of the week, poor road conditions have prevented truck convoys from reaching Gonaïves from the capital.

"We have enough food in Gonaïves to meet needs for only four or five days," said Abby Maxman, CARE Haiti country director. "We're already cutting back deliveries to conserve the supply, and we might have to consider suspending them if the security situation doesn't improve."

Vehicles of CARE and other humanitarian agencies are being attacked by looters, and several staff have been injured, said Maxman, putting in question the October 15 target date for a transition from emergency food distributions to medium-term relief and reconstruction work.

United Nations forces are providing 24-hour security at CARE's warehouse in Gonaïves, as well as escorting large convoys of WFP and CARE trucks, she said, but the UN has reduced troop levels in Gonaïves to address rising violence in the capital. At present neither the UN nor CARE has the capacity to protect smaller vehicles delivering food and supplies.

"It's not just food and water that are crucial," said Maxman. "Unless our staff can safely move around the community and build relationships with local people, we can't help Haitians on the road to recovery."

The near-collapse Thursday of the flood-swamped main road connecting the capital to the affected region is also slowing relief shipments, Maxman added. While a slower detour is available, it is inadequate for trucks and other large vehicles.

"For weeks now we've been driving trucks and four-by-fours through a meter-deep lake of water in order to get supplies and staff into Gonaïves," she said. "That was never an ideal situation, but it's been getting much worse."

As of Sunday, CARE had reached 160,000 people with three food distributions to each, for a total of 1,394 metric tons of food supplied by WFP and the US Agency for International Development. CARE is partnering with organizations including the French agency Action Contre la Faim, Catholic Relief Services, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Oxfam, Save the Children US, and World Vision International, to deliver food and water to flood victims.

[Any views expressed in this article are those of the writer and not of Reuters.]

[Printable view](#) | [Email this article](#) | [Send comments](#)