

CORE REFORM PRINCIPLES FOR REBUILDING A STRONGER HAITI

U.S. efforts to support Haitian reconstruction will be most successful if they build on the best practices currently emerging from the Washington debate on how to more broadly reform U.S. global development policy and practice. Specifically, our efforts to support reconstruction in Haiti must:

- Be designed, allocated, and spent transparently and accountably, both to U.S. taxpayers and Haitian citizens;
- Make long-term, strategic investments in the capacity of the Haitian national government, local government, and local civil society to meet the needs of Haitian citizens; and
- Give the Haitian government and all citizens the lead role in setting priorities and managing the effort to rebuild their country, and build an inclusive, pluralistic society and economy that respects Haitian human rights and can fulfill Haitian human needs.

In order to accomplish these goals, our efforts to support Haitian reconstruction should adhere to the following principles:

- 1. Ensure reconstruction is Haitian-led and -owned.** A reconstruction effort that is purely driven by donor priorities is at risk of collapsing when donor attention turns elsewhere, forsaking critical needs and priorities as well as generating resentment among the Haitian people. Furthermore, it suspends the moment when Haitians can look to their own government and hold it accountable for meeting their needs and respecting their rights. An effort that is clearly seen to be Haitian-led and -owned can build the foundation for more effective governance.
- 2. Invest in the capacity of Haitians to take a lead role in implementing recovery and reconstruction.** Much has been rightly said about the lack of capacity within the government of Haiti and Haitian civil society. International capacity has been massively deployed to compensate for these gaps, but an international effort on this scale risks displacing the development of indigenous Haitian capacity. As the center of gravity shifts progressively to Haitian leadership while indigenous capacity is restored, the U.S. should support efforts — with appropriate oversight, monitoring, and accountability — to build and improve the long-term capacity of the Haitian government (at all levels), and civil society to plan, implement, coordinate, and monitor recovery and reconstruction.
- 3. Provide development expertise for reconstruction.** The challenge in Haiti is primarily a development challenge. That means our approach is more likely to be effective when informed by — and led by — development professionals. The main repository for development expertise within the United States government remains the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The President acknowledged this fact early in the current crisis when he named USAID as the lead agency for the U.S. response in Haiti. This needs to remain the case over the longer term as the focus of U.S. efforts shifts from relief to reconstruction.
- 4. Support continued consultation and collaboration with civil society in formulating Haiti's plans for reconstruction.** The Haitian government's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (DSNCRP) and National Recovery and Development Action plan should serve as guides for donors' pledges and commitments. The process of public consultations in the development of the DSNCRP has helped to build trust between state and society — something that has been sorely lacking in Haiti for some time. The U.S. should support this continuing dialogue and efforts to expand it. At the same time, USAID must work conscientiously to engage other U.S. government agencies that have certain skills and expertise that are needed in the development of Haiti.

5. **Promote transparency and accountability to U.S. taxpayers and Haitians.** Transparency will ensure U.S. taxpayers know how their money is being spent, thereby supporting efforts to sustain longer-term U.S. engagement in Haiti. Transparency also means the Haitian government will be able to explain to Haitians the progress of U.S.-funded reconstruction efforts, allowing Haitian citizens to better hold their government accountable. Finally, Haitian entrepreneurs and civil society will have the opportunity to plan their own investments to take advantage of U.S.-funded investments, as well as provide input and feedback that can ensure U.S.-funded efforts are best tailored to meet local needs.
6. **Provide long-term and predictable support.** Haitian recovery will take many years, both because of the scale and scope of destruction, as well as the scale and scope of Haiti's pre-existing poverty and social challenges. The United States should commit to long-term engagement with the government of Haiti by making assistance predictable and more flexible, and by building national and local capacity development into all U.S. plans and budgets.
7. **Raise the role, voice, and concerns of women in reconstruction and integrate gender across all programs and strategies.** Reconstruction provides an opportunity to reduce the severe gender inequality between Haitian women and men. To achieve this, and ensure that such efforts are effective and sustainable, will require gender integration across all relief and reconstruction efforts — governance, security, and development — so that both women's and men's needs and contributions are taken into account.
8. **Coordinate aid with other actors to ensure that reconstruction and development plans are implemented.** One proposed mechanism for coordination is a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) for Haiti. A MDTF makes sense in principle, but, in fragile states, such mechanisms have encountered practical challenges relating to the balance between local and international roles and capacities. To make this approach legitimate in the eyes of the government and the people of Haiti, both the government and civil society organizations must have clear and visible roles in the MDTF, while ensuring that consultative processes do not act as a bottleneck in the implementation of assistance.
9. **Integrate activities that span the continuum from relief to development.** As reflected in the development of the DSNCRP and the upcoming donors' conference, Haitians and donors are already shifting their focus from saving lives to restoring livelihoods. The U.S. should focus on supporting the Haitian government as it restores and improves its capacity to govern, as well as Haitian civil society's efforts to hold the government accountable for investments in development. Also, there must be a deliberate process of engaging the community and improving the ways of measuring community recovery so that aid providers aren't pressured into producing easily quantifiable outputs at the expense of results that may be more relevant to long-term development.
10. **Be flexible, responsive, and accountable, allowing integration of work across multiple sectors.** Too often, most or all of the aid monies the U.S. offers a recipient country are already designated for particular causes—regardless of whether these causes align with the country's developmental priorities. Furthermore, they can limit the United States' ability to invest in priorities that have an impact across sectors. Implementers must be rigorously held accountable for the principles by which they operate and the outcomes they achieve, but given flexibility with respect to how they achieve those outcomes. This flexibility should also allow the U.S. government to consider non-aid avenues to achieving development outcomes, such as rethinking the trade relationship between the U.S. and Haiti.

*The **Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN)** is a reform coalition composed of international development and foreign policy practitioners, policy advocates and experts, concerned citizens and private sector organizations. MFAN's goal is to promote critical foreign assistance reform that will help build a safer, more prosperous world by strengthening the United States' ability to alleviate extreme poverty, create opportunities for growth, and secure human dignity in developing countries. For more on MFAN's leadership and reform plan, please visit www.modernizingforeignassistance.net.*