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Oxfam surveys Haitians Ahead of Crucial New York Conference on Haiti – March 31st

Haitians say jobs key to recovery

New York: As Ministers, delegates and aid organizations meet in New York this week to discuss the reconstruction effort for Haiti following the devastating January 12th earthquake, the people of Haiti say they want jobs to be their path toward rebuilding. In a survey of over 1700 people carried out by an independent Haitian polling consultant and funded by international agency Oxfam, Haitians most pressing needs are jobs (26 per cent), schools (22 per cent) and homes (10 per cent). Haitians in the survey also expressed little confidence in their government's capacity to unilaterally lead the reconstruction plan to be agreed upon in New York this week. Instead, they believe a combination of the central government and Haitian civil society or a foreign government is best placed to implement the reconstruction plan.

These opinions are the result of an extensive one-on-one survey of Haitians of different age groups, socio-economic status and location, the full results of which will be available in April. Haitians shared their views on issues ranging from aid effectiveness, leadership of the reconstruction effort and what should be prioritized for the New York conference. The consultant undertook the study between March 9-12 in various neighborhoods in Leogane and the capital Port-au-Prince, including Pétion-Ville, Delmas and Carrefour.

"Haitians are telling us loud and clear that they want to get back on their feet and start working for the reconstruction of their country. Ensuring that the people of Haiti can return to work must be at the top of the list for the New York conference and beyond. Haitians are not expecting charity; they want to get jobs, to educate their kids and to make sure they have a roof over their heads at night. As a community, we should be able to do this," said Marcel Stoessel, Chief of Mission of Oxfam International in Haiti.

Haitians also expressed their opinions on the relief effort following the January 12th quake and the overall performance of agencies on the ground. Despite recent criticism on the effectiveness of their overall response, over 60 per cent of people surveyed thought the quality and efficiency of aid distribution by international NGOs was positive. Over 70 per cent praised the actions of foreign governments during the post-earthquake relief period. Many people did not give an opinion on the effectiveness of aid distribution, showing the gaps and misunderstandings about such a massive aid operation.

"It's understandable that people feel anxious about their own government response. The international community should do everything it can to help the Haitian government back on its feet. There can be no durable reconstruction without the government," said Philippe Mathieu, a native of Haiti and Country Director of Oxfam-Quebec.

In a separate report published last week, Oxfam recommended that the Haitian government and its people be central to the reconstruction effort. Oxfam says the strengthening of the central government will be essential so that all levels of Haitian society, ranging from media to local charities to farmers associations, can participate openly in the decision-making and implementation process.



In its report "Haiti: A Once-in-a-Century Chance for Change", Oxfam calls on governments and international lenders to urgently prioritize sanitation and shelter needs.

With heavy rains arriving next month and with over one million people still living in extremely precarious conditions, Oxfam gives a sobering assessment of the immense challenge that awaits the country in the weeks ahead. In the report, the aid agency notes that a full registration of displaced people has yet been done. Also, neither the government nor the international community has yet truly engaged and consulted with local groups - in displaced camps or within city neighborhoods - that have shown tremendous leadership following the January 12th quake.

Oxfam says the overall coordination and leadership of all agencies, including NGOs, on the ground must improve, including between the central government and the United Nations. It calls on the New York Conference to give all stakeholders involved a clear direction for the future of Haiti.

"The funding mechanism that will be decided cannot hamper efforts to get Haitians back on their feet. We want a system guarantying that the reconstruction and recovery processes are on track effectively," said Stoessel.

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*****NOTE:** The opinions expressed and shared in the survey are those of the people only. They are not the positions of Oxfam International.

Link to a short video filmed by Haitians in Jacmel with FilmAid and Oxfam:
To download <http://bit.ly/bGP6yR> or view on Youtube: <http://bit.ly/9PRq9T>

Link to photo project of Jeremy Cowart, a photographer who teamed up with Oxfam for an exhibit at the United Nations for the New York Conference. Cowart's work, shot only days after the January 12th earthquake, captured the strength, hope and spirit of Haitians: <http://voicesofhaiti.com/photos>

Link to "Haiti: A Once-in-a-Century Chance for Change" paper:
<http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/haiti-once-century-chance-change>

Table 1: Considering your needs and those of your family, what should be the three priorities for the reconstruction of the country? Choose three.

Priority needs	Score	%	Rank
Schooling	376	21.8	2
Security/Reduction of violence	94	5.5	6
Jobs	448	26	1
Roads	93	5.4	7
Drinkable water	39	2.3	10
Sanitation needs	26	1.5	11
Healthcare	75	4.3	8
Shelter	174	10.1	3
Support to local production	142	8.2	4
Environment	106	6.1	5
Alternative energy	17	1	13
Reinforcing central government	41	2.4	9
Reinforcing local authorities	26	1.5	12
Others	16	0.9	
No answer	51	3	
TOTAL	1723	100	

Table 2 - After the earthquake of January 12th, various national and international organizations brought relief to affected families. How do you evaluate the quality and the distribution of aid for each of these organizations?

Type of organizations		Scale of performance						Total
		Very Good	Good	Decent	Bad	Very Bad	No answer	
Central Government	Score	52	178	308	418	315	452	1723
	%	3	10.3	17.9	24.3	18.3	26.2	100
Foreign Government	Score	201	601	426	97	62	336	1723
	%	11.7	34.9	24.7	5.6	3.6	19.5	100
Foreign troops	Score	186	516	342	143	67	469	1723
	%	10.8	30	19.8	8.3	3.9	27.2	100
Local NGO	Score	83	264	353	229	91	703	1723
	%	4.8	15.3	20.5	13.3	5.3	40.8	100
Local Church	Score	187	419	325	158	71	563	1723
	%	10.8	24.3	18.9	9.2	4.1	32.7	100
Neighborhood committees	Score	82	264	372	332	151	522	1723
	%	4.7	15.3	21.6	19.3	8.8	30.3	100
International NGOs	Score	271	552	279	111	42	468	1723
	%	15.7	32.1	16.2	6.4	2.4	27.2	100