

June 3, 2010

To Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

We the undersigned members of the Haiti Advocacy Working Group (an ad-hoc coalition of advocacy, human rights, and humanitarian organizations working on Haiti) write to express concern regarding the current crisis that continues today in Haiti. Through our in-country staff, Haitian partner organizations, and eye-witness and news reports, we have received well documented and credible information that portrays a starkly different picture to that which was portrayed during the May 19, 2010 hearing organized by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Contrary to those reports, access to basic goods (food, potable water, and non-food items), basic healthcare, safe and sufficient shelter and housing, jobs and schooling remains limited. With estimates by CBS News that enough aid has been raised to distribute \$37,000 to each displaced family, the status quo in Haiti prior to January 12th cannot be the standard.

In regard to food and water, the situation is grim. Conversations by Haiti Advocacy Working Group member organizations with leadership in multiple camps in Port-au-Prince as well as Jacmel confirmed that many donations of water to camps are non-potable. This forces people in a country, in which 80 percent of the population lived under the poverty line before the earthquake, to pay for potable water. According to UNICEF, water subsidies in place since the earthquake were completely lifted at the end of May. Various NGOs have voiced concerns about people's primary access to potable water for drinking, washing and sanitation.

While there is near universal agreement that growth in Haiti's local and regional agricultural markets is critical, plans to end short-term emergency distribution are premature. USAID's Coordinator for Disaster Response Chris Milligan remarked that, "there has been no increase in malnutrition rates, largely in part due to the enormous food distribution." In March alone, UNICEF partner organizations indicated that over 800 children had been submitted for therapeutic feeding programs (both inpatient and outpatient). Short-term, targeted in-kind food aid should be an aspect of a strategy that includes local procurement and other policies to both vulnerable populations from starvation now while working to rebuild Haiti's long-term food self-sufficiency.

Adequate healthcare and medicine remains absent for the significant majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Haiti today. While Milligan recognized the challenges of the healthcare system prior to the earthquake, he also stated "diphtheria is endemic to Haiti and these two cases are not indicative of an epidemic." Addressing a valid pending health crisis with such an outlook will only maintain the systemic challenges to building a patient-centered, high-quality healthcare system.

The International Crisis Group's Mark Schneider's reference to the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in IDP camps is important, but grassroots Haitian NGOs most closely working on these issues are being systematically excluded from discussions by decision makers in Haiti. Resources created and distributed by the UN Subcluster on

GBV include incorrect information about available medical and protection services, and these services are widely unavailable to women living in IDP camps.

As the length of daily rains increases and the impending hurricane season approaches, adequate and safe housing must be a priority. Haitian and International NGOs have called attention to the specific resource, spatial and security concerns facing IDPs. Insufficient shelter, combined with severe overcrowding, has already been the cause of additional insecurity and violence and inadequate sanitation, as well as the increasing spread of communicable diseases. First-hand reports from officially-sponsored relocation camps show a continued lack of access to employment and education opportunities as well as basic food, water, sanitation and healthcare. Even shelter in these relocation camps, several on top of crushed rubble and debris, is unsafe due to heavy rains, winds and flooding due to inadequate drainage systems.

We look forward to working with your office on these issues to ensure the sustainable and just reconstruction and long-term development of Haiti.

Regards,

American Jewish World Service

International Action Ties

Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti

Jesuit Refugee Service

Mennonite Central Committee US Washington Office

Partners in Health

Quixote Center

TransAfrica Forum

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society