

CBC Haiti Hearing – July 27, 2010

Notes – Elise Young, Action Aid USA

Participating Congressional Members:

CBC Chairwoman and Sponsor, Rep. Barbara Lee	CBC Chairman and Sponsor, Rep. Donald Payne
CBC Member, Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee	CBC Member, Rep. Maxine Waters
Rep. Janice Schakowsky	CBC Member, Rep. William Lacy Clay
CBC Member, Rep. Charlie Rangel	CBC Member, Rep. Al Green
CBC Member, Rep. Donna Christensen	

Overview: The July 27th Haiti Hearing was a monumental occasion, as it marked a large CBC commitment to focus on sustainable Haitian redevelopment, and as it presented the first opportunity for Haitian Civil Society members to testify before Congress since the January 12th earthquake. Overall, the Hearing constituted a positive contribution to Haiti advocacy efforts. The event started off on a good foot, with wide CBC participation and a good turn out from media, congressional staff and partner organizations. Positive outcomes included vigorous, insightful questions and statements from CBC members, progressive testimonies from Partners in Health's Loune Viaud and PAPDA's Camille Chalmers and media attention to the current needs around Haiti reconstruction. Challenges included a disproportionate time allocation to USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, an hour interruption of the Hearing due to a congressional vote, a sub-par translator, and a thinning of CBC members during the Haitian Civil Society testimonials.

Opening Congressional Statements:

Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee:

Quotes: - "The Congressional Black Caucus means business. We intend to hold ourselves accountable and everyone else."

- "I said in an individual prayer (to Haitian people,) I will stand by you."

- "We need transparency, we need a road map and a plan, we need to help the Haitian people."

Overview: Need to put pressure on the Haitian government. \$1.1 b from congress provided already.

Unclear where is has gone. If only 2% of pledged money has been given, this is unexcusable. Need to improve conditions of the camps. Concerned about the risks of women giving birth. Concerned that rich people are getting the work. Needs to be the poor and middle class that receive the jobs. Also concerned that there's no vehicle for the diaspora to work with local contractors.

Rep. Yvette Clark:

Quotes: - "Progress will come only if the country can be rebuilt by Haitians for Haitians."

Overview: Furious that Cheryl Mills and Paul Weisenfeld have been saying that conditions in the camps are better than what people had pre earthquake. This is not true. People want jobs and the ability to leave the camps. Insisted that Rajiv Shah puts an end to this. Concerned that GBV is up, camp conditions deteriorated, best practices not widely used. Need standard mechanism for accurate flow of information. Concerned with danger of manual labor due to physically breaking up rubble in Cash for Work prog. Concerned her Haitian American constituents don't have vehicle for working w local Haitian contractors.

Rep. Janice Schakowsky:

Quotes: - “Haitian people need to be front and center in the decision making process.”

Overview: The Haitian people are to be admired for their strength, endurance and solidarity. Concerned with the issue of land ownership and people’s lack of access to land. Concerned about GBV, health of women, participation of Civil Society, capacity of the gov.

Rep. Maxine Waters:

Quotes: - - “The vexing problem confronting those people trying to help Haiti is the difference between philanthropy...and governance.”

Overview: Very passionate about the needs of the people, of the poorest. Frustrated with the CEP and the elections and if they will happen or not. Believes that CEP has done sub-par job. Recognizes the importance of sovereignty of Haiti...concerned with gov. capacity. This problem needs to be addressed. Very concerned with Haitians not having access to UN cluster meetings and that meetings are not conducted in French and Creole.

1) USAID needs to revisit its rotation system. New people don’t know enough about Haiti. Need continuity. 2) Need to put in place a procurement system that makes sense. Need to talk with Haitian business people. Clear that USAID had not put thought into this. Ex. USAID talked to Haitian businessmen about need to have 3 or 4 yrs of audited receipts in order to get contracts. Ridiculous. Also, nothing written in local creole for businesses to participate. 3) Camps are in such bad shape. Concerned about needs of women and the food policy. Fears future instability is this is not addressed. 4) Concerned that food has been held up in warehouses and not distributed due to the LRP theory. Definitely supports LRP and wants food to be purchased from local markets where possible. However, doesn’t want food that could feed hungry people to be wasted. 5) CEP is not representative. Parties cannot be excluded.

Rep. Donald Payne:

Overview: Concerned with how the gov. is functioning. How is the President running the gov? Is the gov. getting guidance from the senate? Will the IHRC be able to come up with effective policy with so many different interests being represented?

Rep. Rangel:

Quotes: - “I want the Haiti-US relationship to be an example for the world.

Overview: Concerned with the upcoming elections and with some of the people who are preparing to run, such as the Haitian Ambassador.

Rep. Conyers:

Quotes: - “This is a historic hearing and will not be duplicated anytime soon.”

Overview: Urged Rajiv Shah to stay for the whole Hearing so that he could hear Haitian Civil Society.

Rep. Donna Christensen:

Overview: Concerned with health care needs.

Rep. Al Green:

Quotes: “Can a country be efficaciously built with NGO’s as opposed to the government?”

Overview: Recognized the honorable work that many NGO's are doing, but concerned that government capacity really needs to be a main focus for reconstruction.

Testimonies:

Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator:

Overview: \$70 billion in damages have taken place due to the earthquake, which is more than the overall GDP of Haiti. 10 to 15% of the civil service work force was killed. The majority of government infrastructures were destroyed. Internal capacity can be very difficult.

USAID's contributions: 3.5 million people fed by food programs...largest in history. Improved access to clean drinking water, reduction in diarrhea to below pre earthquake levels according to CDC. 1.5 million provided with shelters.

Thinks that only 2% contributions from pledged is an inaccurate reflection. Had positive impression of the March 31st donors conference. Strong transition planning programs. Impressed with Haitian Government's development of a Haitian-led reconstruction plan.

Reconstruction Plan pillars are 1) Decentralized economy 2) Reprioritization of ag, energy and infrastructure 3) Commitment to social protection, starting with health and education.

USAID's 3 Main Goals Around Reconstruction:

- 1) Procurement – investing in local firms. Reaching out to Haitian diaspora. Wants strong construction sector that is Haitian led. Believes that half of the 400,000 structures he survey on last trip can lived in and used after they are improved, as opposed to demolishing them. Working with local Haitian firms on this, helping them to improve masonry, use local materials, improve infrastructure such as latrines, rain water catch systems and piping.
- 2) Align strategies with other countries so that all sectors are covered.
- 3) Program Design – How are we designing programs? Want to move quickly to collect baseline data and do strong monitoring and evaluation. Make info transparent and accessible. Use best practices from Peru, Pakistan and other places that have suffered disasters. However, in many ways, Haiti will be a test case.

Ira Kurzaban, Aristide's Lawyer:

Overview: 4 Main Asks

- 1) President Obama and Paulitano should enact humanitarian parole for persons with medical needs, children, vulnerable people, etc.
- 2) Move eligibility cut-off date to May 15, 2010 for TPS.
- 3) Reconstruction must benefit and be done in consultation with Civil Society, not just the elites.
- 4) Support political stability in Haiti and will of Haitian people by returning Aristide to Haiti.

Paul Farmer, Partners in Health: [Paul Farmer's Full Testimony](#)

Loune Viaud, Zanmi Lasante (Partners in Health): [Loune Viaud's Full Testimony](#)

Camille Chalmers, PAPDA: [Camille Chalmers' Full Testimony](#)