



Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti  
*Bureau des Avocats Internationaux*



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Igor Bosc  
Chair, Sub GBV Cluster  
UNFPA/Haiti Representative  
c/o Sofia Beauvoir, Assistant to the Representative  
Fonds des Nations Unies pour la Population  
Boulevard Toussaint L'Ouverture  
MINUSTAH Log Base  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Dear Mr. Bosc,

Thank you for your letter of June 4, 2010. We commend your efforts and quick response after the earthquake and look forward to working together to address the crisis of sexual violence in the displacement camps.

We would like to share with you the report that MADRE, IJDH, the Universities of Minnesota and Virginia law schools and others released last week, *Our Bodies Are Still Trembling: Haitian Women's Fight Against Rape*<sup>1</sup> in an effort to bring to light the crisis and guide governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders in providing for even more effective protection and promotion of women's human rights in Haiti. According to our recent findings, sexual violence is still a critical issue currently experienced by women living in the camps. Many camps lack any security or lighting and women live in fear of violence.

We would like to clarify a few points that arose in your letter and continue the dialogue about how to end the epidemic of rapes occurring in the displacement camps in Haiti. In response to your claim that the Haitian National police have been patrolling camps—at night, on foot, in areas that are problematic, could you provide us with more specific information as to how many police are patrolling and in which camps? Our investigations have held this to not be the case. We agree that this strategy would serve as a deterring force if implemented in a more effective manner.

We also understand that the law enforcement capacity of the Haitian National Police and the justice system was compromised. We commend your efforts to train police officers in gender-sensitivity and establish pilot police stations to receive GBV survivors and would welcome more details about the programs. To our knowledge, female officers are not available in the pilot locations to receive complaints of sexual violence, as reported by women who have attempted to report to the police, and our meeting with Police Director Mario Andresol, where he lamented his inability to staff female officers 24hrs each day.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://ijdh.org/archives/13361>.

We were glad to hear that the United Nations deployed more female peacekeepers—a good start to complying with the duty under SC 1325 to increase gender balance—but dismayed that the female officers’ mandate was not more directly focused around issues of sexual violence and women’s concerns. Director Andresol also explained in our meeting the lack of capacity to sufficiently patrol the camps, including fear and indifference of some of the officers to do so even at his direction and a lack of solid information for where the problem areas lie, given the low rates of reporting and lack of quantitative or qualitative data.

Even in cases where the police have been found to be patrolling the perimeter of the camps, reporting is an exercise in futility for many women. Many women have told us that when they approached the police for help, police officers often said that there was nothing they could do and they should return when she had identified and/or captured their attacker. For example, one woman reported to our delegation that the officer she spoke with disclaimed responsibility for trying to apprehend her rapist, telling her that it was the problem of Haiti’s president, René Préval.

As a result, grassroots groups have had to resort to organizing their own security, including escorting women to the bathrooms and organizing groups of men to take shifts patrolling their areas. We have supported these efforts by providing resources such as whistles, flashlights and walk-talkies. We have heard these tactics have helped—the whistle program thwarted attacks in Champ de Mars, Carrefour Feuilles, and Martissant in the last month.

We encourage the GBV Sub-Cluster to find ways to support these community-driven efforts financially and replicate successful models. We are pleased to report that on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, MADRE had a very fruitful discussion, led by Sian Evans, with members of the Sub-Cluster. The discussion resulted in a commitment towards increased collaboration with grassroots Haitian women’s group working on the issue of sexual violence in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. We were excited the Sub-Cluster has agreed to help make ensure that camps identified by KOFAVIV as having continuous reports of rape, receive proper lighting as funding is made possible.

Everywhere in the world, women and girls are increasingly vulnerable to gender-based violence when living in displacement camps. It is essential to provide access to comprehensive sexual violence services that address health, safety and psychological needs of survivors as well as secure places to report incidents of violence. As the rebuilding process in Haiti moves forward, a coordinated and comprehensive plan that prioritizes the safety of women and girls must be implemented.

The rebuilding process in Haiti, as in other disaster areas, presents serious challenges. However, with persistence these challenges are not insurmountable. With the continued coordination of UN agencies and aid relief coupled with the insight and expertise of UN human rights experts, including Ms. Manjoo, and Mr. Forst, the UN Sub-Cluster System’s efforts will likely continue to prove to be very effective and result in adequate protection of women and girls’ human rights.

The UN Cluster System’s work is commendable as you to continue to work with the Haitian government to establish long-term services throughout Haiti. However, in the short-term, we must act quickly to provide true security and protection from sexual violence to women and girls, especially those in particularly vulnerable situations such as IDPs.

Thank you for your attention in this very important issue. We look forward to your response and continuing this critical dialogue.

Sincerely,

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