



Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
Bureau des Avocats Internationaux



August 9, 2010

Nigel Fisher
Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator in Haiti
United Nations Development Group,
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Via email: nfisher@unicef.org

Dear Mr. Fisher,

We are writing to express our concern about the alarming rate of sexual violence against women and girls in Haiti's displacement camps since the January 12, 2010 earthquake and the lack of adequate response by the UN GBV Sub Cluster System.

We have reviewed your report, *Haiti: 6 Months After*, and commend the United Nations (UN) Cluster System for its initiatives aimed at providing humanitarian assistance and recovery work in Haiti. According to your report, the Gender Based Violence (GBV) Sub-Cluster members have worked to ensure that women are not at risk of sexual violence and that patrols of camps are adequate and responsive to women's concerns.

However, according to our recent findings, lack of security is still a critical issue for women and girls living in the camps, which has exacerbated the already grave problem of sexual violence. We wanted to share with you the report that MADRE, IJDH and others released last week, *Our Bodies Are Still Trembling: Haitian Women's Fight Against Rape*¹, 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.

Recognizing UN Cluster System's overall efforts to date, we ask that you make the safety and wellbeing of women and girls a high priority throughout the relief assistance efforts in Haiti by prioritizing the organizing of security in the camps. We urge you to consult, and encourage others to consult, with UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti, Mr. Michel Forst, and UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Rashida Manjoo. Ms. Manjoo's expertise and experience in recommending measures, at the national, regional and international levels, to eliminate violence against women and its causes, as well as to remedy its consequences would be invaluable for addressing the current situation of sexual violence in Haiti, which has been exacerbated after the humanitarian emergency derived from the earthquake.

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

We also ask that you consult with the Haitian women's organizations operating within the camps, as mandated under UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and recommended in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Additionally, the recent UN Human Rights Council statement, reaffirming and building upon its resolution 11/2 of June 17, 2010, calls for women's participation in and the effectiveness of the decisions that impact their lives and safety in efforts to eliminate violence against women.

Everywhere in the world, displaced women and girls are increasingly vulnerable to gender-based violence. 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—as you have demonstrated with the work you have completed to date—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 that provide for safety and access to justice. 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 and consideration in this very urgent matter. We look forward to hearing from you and strengthening our continued work together.

Sincerely,

Lisa Davis, Esq.
MADRE
121 West 27th Street, Suite 300
New York, NY 10001
(212) 627-0444
ldavis@madre.org

Malya Villard-Appolon
KOFIVIV
No. 3, 2eme Impasse Lavaud
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
509-3-453-0081
fanmkofaviv@yahoo.fr

Blaine Bookey, Esq.
Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
Bureau des Avocats Internationaux
PO Box 52115
Boston, MA 02205
(617) 652-0876
blaine@ijdh.org

Deena R. Hurwitz, Esq.
University of Virginia School of Law
Human Rights Program and International
Human Rights Law Clinic
580 Massie Road
Charlottesville, VA 22903
deena@virginia.edu