

Media Availability

Cyclone Tomas: Anticipated Destruction Will Be a Man-Made, Not Natural Disaster

Although Tomas' winds and rain are a natural phenomenon, the extreme damage the cyclone will inflict on Haiti is in large part the result of a decades-long series of policies that have left Haitians excessively vulnerable to environmental stresses. Any serious discussion of the storm's damage – or the damage from cholera or Haiti's January 12 earthquake – should examine these policies implemented by the Government of Haiti and the international community, both before and after the earthquake, including:

- a) A flawed international response to the earthquake, especially a failure to provide safe housing for the approximately 1.3 million people displaced by the earthquake and living in tent cities, and the failure to deliver promised funds;
- b) A failed response by the Haitian government to the earthquake, including a failure to provide safe areas for emergency and transitional housing after the earthquake or effectively implement projects responding to the four hurricanes that struck Haiti in 2008; and
- c) International aid, trade, debt and governance policies that have made Haiti dependent on foreign food and materials, forced Haitian farmers off their land and into the low-lying cities, encouraged the deforestation of Haiti's hillsides and limited the Haitian government's ability to provide basic services to its citizens, including healthcare, housing and sanitation services.

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(conditions on the ground, especially in IDP camps, impact of storm on women).

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