

**HAITIAN DIASPORA FORUM:
CONTRIBUTING TO A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN HAITI**

March 21-23, 2010

CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

The Haitian Diaspora wishes to thank the Organization of American States (OAS) for convening some 400 representatives from the Haitian Diaspora in its headquarters in Washington, DC, from March 21-23, 2010, to submit recommendations to the Government of Haiti and donors ahead of the discussion to be held on March 31st, 2010 at the United Nations in New York, as part of its contribution into the elaboration of a strategic plan for the reconstruction and development of its homeland. Following are the recommendations that emanated from the two-day discussions:

URGENT HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND EFFECTIVE DEPLOYMENT OF FOREIGN AID

The Diaspora acknowledges and supports efforts by the Government of Haiti (GOH) and the private sector to address the post-earthquake urgencies. It welcomes their insistence to the international community that, in purchasing food aid, preference be given to local producers and national suppliers in order to avoid the contraction of domestic production. It also welcomes efforts initiated with the help of the international community to assess the structural integrity of existing homes, and to implement cash for work programs.

The Diaspora would like to urge the GOH to:

- R1. Collaborate with the international community to ensure that food distribution systems and shelter arrangements take into account social and cultural factors and respect the dignity of people (e.g. establish distribution schedules and community kitchens; keep lines short at distribution points; target vulnerable beneficiaries for special distribution channels including home delivery; uphold regional equity by extending distribution to areas that have welcomed the displaced population; etc.).
- R2. Transform the idle time at the camps into educational opportunities and provide various trainings, including civic education for children, young adolescents and adults. At the same time, strengthen the educational infrastructure outside of Port-au-Prince including at pre-school, primary, secondary, adult, vocational, and higher educational levels. Emphasize teacher training throughout the country.
- R3. Seek the coordination of distribution efforts with all stakeholders, including local governments, international aid agencies, hometown associations and community groups in Haiti and abroad. Additionally, increase transparency and accountability by requiring aid agencies to publicize a detailed accounting of funds expended in Haiti.
- R4. Given the fast-approaching rainy and hurricane season, seek the collaboration of aid agencies and local Haitian organizations to identify and prepare areas outside of Port-au-Prince that are less susceptible to natural disasters. Build seismic and cyclonic resistant temporary housing, such as modular housing and

prefabricated homes. In the design of long-term housing and shelter plans, adopt and enforce seismic and cyclonic resistant building codes.

- R5. Increase the effectiveness of humanitarian aid by empowering aid recipients through the extension of work-for-food and cash-for-work programs within the camps and throughout the critical areas, with a focus on the youth and women. Collaborate with aid agencies to assess periodically the humanitarian needs and the effectiveness of aid distribution within and outside of Port-au-Prince, including through feedback from beneficiaries.

ENSURING A DYNAMIC AND TRANSPARENT RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS

- R6. Increase accountability through greater transparency and oversight of all reconstruction funds (public or private) with the creation of an Inspector General Office. Such Office shall be required to conduct audits and investigations to prevent fraud, waste and abuse, and shall report its findings publicly.
- R7. Make best efforts to ensure that firms that are contracted in Haiti hire Haitian workers and contractors as a priority, including from the Diaspora, as a means to alleviate poverty, enable job training and creation, reverse the brain drain by expanding human capital that will, in turn, attract foreign investment.
- R8. Recognize the importance of the Diaspora in the Haitian economy and, referencing the *Plan d'Action pour le Relèvement et le Développement National* (March 2010), yield to the Diaspora's strong request for a full voting seat in *la Commission Intérimaire pour la Reconstruction d'Haiti*.
- R9. Create a Civil Service Corps with the participation of Haitian nationals and the Diaspora, particularly women, to assist in the building process. Donors are encouraged to review their personnel's legal framework with the view of facilitating the transfer or detail of Creole-speaking employees to work on loan in Haiti.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Diaspora stands ready to play its part in the development of private capital vehicles for investing in Haiti such as social venture capital funds, and to bring to bear its multifaceted expertise in capital markets, technology, engineering, green energy, etc. The proposals of the Diaspora for a sustainable development are articulated around two themes: (i) greater involvement of the Diaspora and (ii) sector specific recommendations.

The Diaspora urges the GOH to:

- R10. Set an ambitious but concrete and quantifiable goal for the short and medium run, particularly in terms of GDP growth (6% per year or more) and reduction of poverty.
- R11. Work with donors to formally engage the Diaspora in the implementation and follow up of measures and recommendations for recovery and reconstruction. As such, create a platform for exchanging information and ensuring that (i) the Diaspora is updated on business opportunities as well as other developments and (ii) at the same time that the GOH is aware of resources available in the Diaspora (financial and human).

- R12. Publicize eligibility and selection criteria for donor-funded projects and ensure greater participation of Haitian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and Diaspora investors. Moreover, create streamlined/expedited processes for business formation and license applications including a single point of entry for business proposals where investors can get responses from relevant authorities on firm timetables.
- R13. Recognize dual nationality. Although the Diaspora understands that there are no legal impediments to investments, dual nationality will create greater inclusion and incentive.
- R14. Increase accountability, transparency and oversight of all funds with detailed reporting through a public information system and a reformed/strengthened judicial system.
- R15. Have an updated and publicly available inventory of all NGOs operating in the national territory and a mapping of their activities and their sources of funding.
- R16. Promote green (solar, wind, ocean thermal and geothermal) and/or locally produced energy to achieve energy independence and security. Reduce electricity theft through wireless usage meter. Provide training opportunities to sustain a workforce prepared to install and maintain alternative energy solutions.
- R17. Prioritize projects based on their contribution to decentralization, deconcentration, and the participation of women.
- R18. Strengthen the role of the Investment Facilitation Center (*Centre de Facilitation des Investments* -CFI) and institute self-contained, automated regional branches to facilitate the establishment of corporations and investments directly outside the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. Also, amplify the database within CFI of potential partners by sector.
- R19. Create a mechanism to promote Haiti as a tourism destination even in the short term and to address all aspects of tourism security. Provide training opportunities to sustain a workforce prepared to install and maintain a thriving hospitality industry.
- R20. Have a subaccount for the apparel industry within the framework of the Guarantee Fund which is currently being created. Moreover, create a mechanism to make credit readily available for the productive activities, particularly in the agricultural sector.
- R21. Increase productivity by strengthening vocational training and targeting skills demanded by the market, while promoting the employment of women. This would include an assessment of available skills and needs by sector.
- R22. Encourage innovation through the strengthening of intellectual property rights.
- R23. Transform the rural landscape by promoting local farming to better compete with agricultural imports, by aggressively pursuing food security and promoting agro-exports and agro-industry (including vertical integration). Specifically, promote rural units of integrated production including aquaculture, livestock, light manufacturing, services, etc.
- R24. Identify each region's comparative advantage and invest accordingly. Provide for appropriate financing of development activities, particularly through the widening of the tax base.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

The Diaspora views institutional rebuilding and the consolidation of democratic governance as imperative. It believes that social justice, the rule of law, the respect of civil liberties and the protection of private property are key to creating an environment conducive to economic growth and development. Thus, it encourages the GOH to:

- R25. Combat impunity and review immunity provisions in order to prosecute to the full extent of the law officials who have been perceived to abuse their privileges.
- R26. Use the expertise of the Diaspora to continue the process of reforming the Constitution, including those provisions related to granting Dual Nationality to members of the Diaspora and facilitate enactment of new measures and legislations at the Executive and Parliamentary levels that will integrate the Haitian Diaspora in Haiti's society.
- R27. Implement provisions of the Constitution with regards to decentralization.
- R28. Adopt a realistic decision on the scheduling of the elections taking into consideration the special circumstances as a result of the earthquake. Collaborate with international partners and Diaspora organizations to put in place a mechanism to encourage greater participation of the Diaspora as electoral observers in all upcoming elections.
- R29. Pursue the transfer of knowledge and expertise to help strengthen capacity through effective mechanisms such as (i) twinning/exchange programs with Diaspora professionals and through online communities and (ii) partnerships with academic centers for the training of civil servants.
- R30. Establish an independent judiciary and accelerate the reform of Haiti's criminal laws and procedures, including the correctional system, and increase the number of judges, prosecutors, police and corrections officers, and other court personnel.
- R31. Reform the country's justice system, and strengthen the capacity of its Ministries, including the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, to support national government institutions operating in local communities, and to develop and train a core of middle managers to assume leadership roles within their organizations.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION

The Diaspora believes that natural disaster management should be a long-term priority of the State. If Haiti cannot control the likelihood of natural disasters, it must manage the ensuing vulnerability and risks. Hence, the GOH should:

- R32. Strengthen the capacity of the country to react to catastrophes and manage natural disasters through the implementation of a national emergency action plan. Particularly, implement strict building codes.
- R33. Reinforce *La Direction de la Protection Civile* through formal training of public servants at all levels in disaster-related fields. At the same time, implement programs for disaster preparedness and simulation exercises. For example, implement a web-enabled crisis information management system to provide real-time information sharing to improve the response to disasters.

Child Welfare

The Diaspora believes that laws and regulations that govern child abandonment, foster care, kinship care, domestic and inter-country adoption need to be modernized. Diaspora professional social workers and specialists in child welfare models as well as legal experts stand ready to consult and partner with the Ministry of Social Affairs, particularly l'Institut du Bien-Être Social et de Recherché (Institute for Social Welfare and Research), to provide training and technical support. NGOs working with children should be required to register with the Ministry prior to having access to children, and then be monitored by a set of guidelines.

The Diaspora makes the following recommendations for short-term improvements and long-term sustainability:

- R34. Adopt the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention), which aims to prevent the abduction, sale or traffic of children, and prioritize the adoption of children by Haitian families in Haiti and the Diaspora. Further, work with identified partners to develop culturally congruent education and training for those wishing to care for Haitian children in order to minimize additional trauma and maximize adaptive outcomes consistent with Haitian culture and values.
- R35. Support family preservation to prevent child abandonment, by offering support services to families and/or extended families to care for their own children. Moreover, phase out the orphanage system through the re-integration of children into family/extended family like settings (i.e. foster care models).
- R36. Create a central database of all children in out-of-family placement, where progress and services are recorded and tracked ---modeled after best practices.

Education

Members of the Diaspora who are in academia wish to collaborate with the government and the private sector to offer their services in implementing the following recommendations:

- R37. Implement quality *Universal Education For All (EFA)* that assures equitable access to all children, including over-aged students and students with disabilities, that offers health and sports program, and civic education, that supplies second-chance education (drop-outs and youths) as well as youth mentoring and adult literacy programs, and that provides free meals (breakfast and lunch), free transportation, potable water, uniforms, and school supplies. Such education will have to be provided in schools built on the basis of safe building codes and fitted with all modern sanitation and hygiene facilities.
- R38. Strengthen the certification process of teachers and administrators, and implement (i) appropriate training structures to ensure their ongoing professional development and (ii) a mentoring and exchange program between Haiti and Diaspora teachers. Similarly, implement a program of adoption of Haiti schools and students by Diaspora schools and students. Such partnership should occur also at the higher learning level, and extended through collaboration with foreign universities. Moreover, provide incentives to teachers and administrators through decent wages and reasonable benefit packages.
- R39. Design school programs that utilize results-based criteria and reflect national standards. Such programs should be culturally relevant (use of Creole), promote differentiated curricula (by age and ability level), foster STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programs, uphold technologically

friendly tools and conduits (distance learning, media, internet, etc.), and support post-secondary internships for workforce readiness, as well as school readiness programming through a community approach that leads to higher education and vocational training.

- R40. Address the needs of all vulnerable groups (special education, orphans/unaccompanied minors, restavek/children in domesticity, exploited children, disabled youths, etc.). Further, implement psycho-social support services.

Women

Haitian women are facing specific challenges as the impact of the devastating earthquake meets the limitations of their gendered social roles. The disaster has further weakened their ability to perform their already overwhelming tasks as mother, wife, caregiver, educator, financial provider, entrepreneur and activist. International aid and assistance, as well as the involvement of Haitian women living abroad, will be a significant determinant of recovery and growth, dignity, equal opportunity and the overall development of Haitian women during this recovery and reconstruction phase.

- R41. Conduct a Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) with a direct focus on women and from a gender perspective, in order to identify specific challenges and good practices. On the basis of this Gender PDNA, allocate an equitable percentage of funding for meeting these documented needs.
- R42. Encourage the Haitian government, civil society and the Diaspora to take gender issues into consideration in the conception, formulation and implementation of policies, structures and programs (affirmative action), and work with the media to support positive reinforcement of the status of women.
- R43. Reinforce security in temporary shelters, food distribution centers and other environments for women and children by increasing the presence of women among security personnel, including both local and foreign troops. In particular, security personnel should be trained to recognize and gender-based violence.
- R44. Adopt and implement a zero tolerance policy towards violence against women and children and implement the necessary measures to make this policy operational, including detention and prosecution of alleged offenders, stricter punishment relating to sexual offences against women and girls and the protection of victims and witnesses.
- R45. Allow Haitian women, more particularly Haitian women living in rural communities, fair consideration and access to funding (in particular micro-credit), which will permit them to purchase land, supplies and equipment that will strengthen their role in agriculture.

Health Development

The need for medical attention and care has nearly tripled as a result of the seism; and the doubling of medical infrastructure and services is indispensable to avoid a major health care crisis. As a result, the Haitian government needs to:

- R46. Increase Haiti's medical and health care capacities to meet the actual and future needs of the population through a medical assistance program with the Haitian Diaspora where Haitians from abroad will provide their services for two weeks at time on a year round basis.

- R47. Foster a partnership between Diaspora and local health care professionals to provide intense and modern technology training. Particularly, offer clinical mentorship programs to build technical and practical capacity for the numerous medical students who are no longer in school.
- R48. Partner with universities as well as public and private hospitals to achieve uninterrupted medical service through clinical education. Further, maintain a medical residency and fellowship, focusing on diseases that are endemic to Haiti and the Caribbean (use of current technologies where continued training and support of Haitian doctors and nurses can be done through teleconferencing).
- R49. Create a “mini-fellowship” fund in infectious diseases for local doctors and nurses.
- R50. Strengthen family planning, women’s reproductive health and child health organizations, health centers in conjunction with the GOH. Special attention must be given to pregnant women living in precarious conditions in temporary shelters.
- R51. Create mental health clinics to address the various post-earthquake traumas to provide therapy, especially to children and other vulnerable groups. Social workers from the Diaspora can be key in addressing this issue while understanding how culturally sensitive this is.
- R52. Create therapy centers for the rehabilitation of thousands of amputees and for their reintegration in society.
- R53. Urge donor countries to create a program to sponsor a certain number of students (a number to be agreed upon) per accredited medical schools per year during the period of reconstruction.