TWO STEPS BACK:
HAITI STILL REELING FROM HURRICANE MATTHEW

Alice Thomas
Introduction

Six months ago, Hurricane Matthew slammed into southwestern Haiti, killing hundreds and affecting 2.1 million people, 20 percent of the country’s population. Despite the extent of devastation and acute vulnerabilities among the affected population, the disaster failed to attract both the financial support and attention it deserved from the international community. At present, the emergency response phase is winding down, yet the crisis is far from over. Unable to recover their livelihoods, more than 800,000 people remain food insecure and hundreds of thousands whose homes were damaged or destroyed are living in makeshift shelters. As these essential needs remain insufficiently addressed, food insecurity and protection risks to women and children are likely to increase. With the next hurricane season two months away, coordinated advocacy and targeted resources are urgently needed to avoid a worsening of the crisis. Over the longer term, the international community needs to adopt a more coherent, effective approach to building resilience among vulnerable Haitian communities as they grapple with devastating disasters and climate change.
Recommendations

• The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other humanitarian agencies must ensure that contingency plans are in place for the upcoming hurricane season. The Haitian government must then adopt those plans and provide for their implementation. This will require assessing which evacuation sites/collective centers are still intact and ensuring evacuation plans are in place for Hurricane Matthew-affected households that are still living in makeshift shelters and are at risk of recurrent displacement. In order to support the Haitian government to implement contingency plans, as well as to coordinate the response to the enormous outstanding humanitarian needs, OCHA should maintain the presence of experienced humanitarian staff on the ground, at least until the end of 2017.

• The UN Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) should support the Haitian government to better address protection risks during disasters including:
  - Securing necessary levels of funding and commitments by donors to support the protection response to disasters;
  - Agreeing on a more effective arrangement for co-leading the protection working group such as seconding an experienced protection expert from UNHCR to help lead coordination of the protection working group during disasters;
  - Implementing programs to build the protection capacity of local governments and civil society;
  - Adopting a unified, coherent approach to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in collective centers during disasters that assists them to recover and voluntarily return as soon as possible; and
  - Ensuring that the Haitian National Police receive training on adherence to humanitarian law in disaster response.

• International donors and multilateral banks must immediately scale up funding to support humanitarian assistance and recovery in the areas worst-affected by Hurricane Matthew. Funding should prioritize:
  - Assistance to remote areas that have received little to no relief and which are likely to remain entirely reliant on humanitarian aid well into 2017;
  - Addressing high levels of food insecurity especially through a focus on restoration of livelihoods and alternative socio-economic opportunities; and
  - More durable shelter solutions for populations who remain in makeshift shelters.

• Government donors, led by the U.S. government, should develop a fundraising strategy for Haiti that includes hosting a donors’ conference to increase funding for the unmet humanitarian needs of the people worst-affected by Hurricane Matthew and to support longer-term recovery and resilience.

• The HCT should work with the Haitian government to develop a communication strategy to educate the public and the broader international community regarding the humanitarian impacts of Hurricane Matthew, including media outreach, blogs, and social media.

• The Haitian government, donors, and humanitarian and development actors need to develop a common understanding of and long-term approach to resilience for Haiti and ensure that it is incorporated into government plans and priorities, the UN Development Assistance Framework, and individual donor strategies.
Background

Hurricane Matthew: The Worst Disaster Since the 2010 Earthquake

On October 4, 2016, Hurricane Matthew, a Category 4 storm, made landfall in Haiti’s southwestern peninsula, bringing with it 150 mph winds, storm surges, and between 20 and 40 inches of rain. The strongest hurricane to hit Haiti in 52 years and the third strongest storm ever to make landfall, the storm’s impacts were especially devastating due to high levels of deforestation and the underlying vulnerabilities of the impoverished rural populations it hit.

The hurricane’s high winds and related flooding killed more than 600 people, displaced an estimated 175,000, and affected 2.1 million people. The hurricane also caused widespread damage to homes, roads, public infrastructure, hospitals, and schools. Most of the homes in its path could not stand the force of its impact which blew away roofs and walls, destroying an estimated 90 percent of homes in the worst hit areas. Also severely impacted were the largely agricultural and fishing livelihoods of the affected population whose crops and assets were wiped out. Of the 2.1 million people affected by the storm, 1.4 million were left in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in its wake. Damage and losses resulting from the hurricane are estimated to be US$2.8 billion, or 32 percent of the country’s GNP.

With insufficient resources to respond to the emergency, the Haitian government called on the international community for assistance. In contrast to the 2010 earthquake, however, the government decided to take the lead in responding to the disaster. Rather than activating the UN’s “cluster” system (which had been deactivated in 2014), the government chose to coordinate the response through sectoral working groups chaired by its respective line ministries or government departments with international agencies providing support. In close coordination with the Haitian government and other partners, the Haiti UN Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) launched an initial funding appeal (“Flash Appeal”) on October 10, 2016, seeking US$119 million in emergency funding. On November 5, the appeal was revised to request an additional $19 million – for a total of US$139 million.

Haiti’s Pre-existing Vulnerabilities Intensify the Hurricane’s Impact

Situated along both several major fault lines and the hurricane belt, Haiti is exposed to numerous hazards leaving 98 percent of the country’s population exposed to two or more types of disasters. The country is also increasingly feeling the effects of climate change which pose a significant threat to small-scale subsistence farming upon which 70 percent of Haitians rely for their livelihoods. In recent years, the country has been suffering from multiple years of drought, made worse by a stronger than normal El Niño. Aggravating Haiti’s vulnerability is significant environmental degradation, including high levels of deforestation which exacerbates flooding and soil erosion. Given the combination of the country’s exposure to hazards and the significant pre-existing vulnerabilities of its population – more than half of whom live in extreme poverty – the country consistently ranks among the most...
Among those most vulnerable in disaster situations are women and children who face significant pre-existing protection risks in Haiti. The majority of Haitians living in acute poverty are women and more than 40 percent of Haitian families are female-headed. Levels of violence against women are high with 25 percent of females having experienced physical violence by the age of 15. Haitian children face unique risks arising from the practice among lower income families of sending children to live outside of the home. A quarter of children in Haiti do not live with their parents and while some live with other family members as a way to gain income or educational opportunities, more than 200,000 children are involved in unacceptable forms of child labor. Moreover, many of the poorest families place their children in institutional or foster care. In emergency situations like the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, the risks of child separation, violence, exploitation, neglect, and abuse rise quickly.

The regions worst hit by the hurricane, which included the departments of Grand’Anse, western parts of Sud, and Nippes, were largely rural, under-developed, and extremely poor. This created logistical and physical constraints in accessing affected communities, many of which were extremely hard to reach due to flooding, poor road conditions (which worsened due to storm damage and debris), their remote, mountainous locations, and/or the collapse of communication networks. As a result, it took some time before the government, humanitarian aid agencies, and donors became aware of the far larger extent of the damage. At the time of Refugee International’s visit, numerous communities in mountainous, remote areas had received little to no assistance at all.

In addition, given that it took some time for aid to reach affected communities (several weeks or longer in many cases), security soon became an issue as desperate people resorted to looting and to attacking aid trucks. According to several aid workers involved in the initial phase of the response, some of the frustration and discontent among affected communities could have been avoided had there been better coordination and communication in affected areas to allay people’s fears of being overlooked or not assisted (e.g., avoid driving aid trucks through communities that had not yet been assisted when delivering aid to more remote areas).

Given the security situation, aid agencies often resorted to using the Haitian police, including Le Corps d’Intervention et de Maintien de l’Ordre (CIMO) - Intervention and Maintenance of Order Corps (Riot Police). According to interviews with aid workers involved in the initial stages of the emergency response, the CIMO were not properly trained in delivering humanitarian aid to civilians in disaster settings, which heightened tensions and conflict with affected populations.

The hurricane also coincided with the presidential and local elections, and the implications for the response were evident on numerous levels. A long-delayed and highly contested presidential election scheduled for October 9, 2016 had to be postponed to late November due to Hurricane Matthew. (The election went forward in late November 2016 with Jovenel Moïse, a wealthy businessman, winning with more than 50 percent of the vote, thereby eliminating...
the need for a runoff despite extremely low voter turnout of 21 percent.\textsuperscript{12} One important factor was that schools and other collective centers that were still sheltering people displaced by the hurricane also served as voting sites. As discussed below, this created additional pressure for local officials to force internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were still residing in collectives to leave. In January, aid was again disrupted due to roadblocks and protests in Grand’Anse related to the arrest and extradition to the United States of Guy Philippe, a former rebel leader and popular local politician, on drug trafficking charges.\textsuperscript{13}

In addition, the response ran up against challenges in leadership and coordination. The government deserves credit for stepping in to take the lead. Collaboration between aid agencies and the Directorate for Civil Protection (DPC), the agency under the Ministry of Interior responsible for disaster management, and other government ministries was generally viewed positively. Nonetheless, the lack of human, financial, and technical capacity within DPC (and the absence of a National Disaster Management Law which would have provided the DPC with both the legal authority and budgetary support to more effectively respond) meant that decision-making was slow and sectoral coordination poor. According to one aid worker involved in the early stages of the response, after attending several meetings in Jérémie (the capital of Grand’Anse, which was totally devastated by the hurricane) that started more than an hour late and ran for several hours, he stopped going to the meetings altogether. “The meetings were not at all valuable. I just stopped going.” The decision not to activate the UN clusters and to coordinate through sectoral working groups also meant that the emergency response did not get the same level of resources – either financial or in terms of the deployment of experienced international humanitarian staff.

At the time of RI’s visit in February, despite improvements, many of the problems identified in the RTE were still working to undermine the response. This was especially so with respect to the poor quality of data and lack of a consolidated picture of the outstanding needs of affected communities. As a result, it was unclear whether the full extent of the hurricane’s impact on affected communities had been (and would ever be) accurately captured. At the same time, the emergency response was neither adequately funded nor sufficiently targeted to ensure the most vulnerable individuals would recover. This meant that while the emergency response phase was winding down, the urgent humanitarian needs of hundreds of thousands of people, especially with respect to food security, livelihoods, and shelter, had not been sufficiently addressed.

Moreover, with the exception of the health and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sectors which were viewed as by and large successful in terms of avoiding far larger cholera outbreaks and taking advantage of preventative measures,\textsuperscript{14} it appeared that the approach to the emergency response did not capture opportunities to address underlying vulnerabilities of the affected populations. As discussed below, this was a missed opportunity to at least build some level of resilience among affected communities to future disasters.

\textbf{Six Months On, Hurricane-Affected Communities Remain Vulnerable and Exposed}

At the time of RI’s visit, more than four months since the hurricane hit, one of the greatest concerns among affected families was the need for more durable shelter solutions. Due to extreme poverty and chronic under-development in affected areas, the vast majority of the largely rural communities hit by Hurricane Matthew lived in poorly constructed housing built from timber, mud, and light roofing materials. When the storm made landfall, bringing with it 150 mph winds and heavy rains, it easily demolished many of these homes and caused large-scale damage and destruction to buildings, schools, and other infrastructure. In coastal areas along the hurricane’s path, even concrete structures were reduced to rubble.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{“There is nothing to protect us when the rains come.”  
— Pregnant mother at food distribution site, Anse-d’Hainault, Grand’Anse Department}
The hurricane’s 150 mph winds reduced this home in Grand’Anse Department to rubble.

Churches like this one in Sud Department were used as collective centers to house evacuees during the hurricane. Today, they remain in disrepair.
Initial hurricane damage assessments concluded that in the worst affected areas, 90 percent of homes were destroyed although the October Flash Appeal requested funding to assist only 70,000 families.\textsuperscript{16} By November, the government was reporting 370,000 housing units “affected,” 30,000 homes totally destroyed, and 60,000 homes damaged, although not all areas had been assessed yet.\textsuperscript{17}

In accessible areas, the emergency shelter response focused almost entirely on the distribution of tarpaulins (“tarps”), since the Haitian government prohibited the distribution of tents. Driving through the worst-affected areas of Sud and Grand’Anse Departments, RI’s team observed tarps everywhere, draped over makeshift, corrugated metal shacks along the beach and the remnants of partially destroyed homes high up in the mountains. As of early March 2017, 789,000 tarps had been distributed.\textsuperscript{18}

Unfortunately, however, distribution of tarps was not always accompanied by either “shelter kits” (nails, washers, ropes, and other materials necessary to ensure that the tarp securely attaches to a structure and can withstand the elements) or training that would have provided affected households with the necessary materials and information to ensure that the tarps could be transformed into a more durable, transitional form of shelter. Rather, in many instances, people have used only rocks or bricks to hold down the tarps meaning they are likely to blow away in the first strong gust of wind. As one humanitarian provider told RI, “plastic sheets were given without thinking of the real needs.”

Several people lamented that the shelter kits that were given out were in many instances sub-standard. In addition, many aid agencies reportedly distributed shelter kits or used cash distributions as a means of helping people to rebuild their homes without providing the requisite technical assistance. In retrospect, some shelter providers felt that the low level of community engagement in the response to shelter was a missed opportunity to build the resilience of affected households and impart much-needed technical advice that would allow them to “build back safer” not only in response to Hurricane Matthew but other future storms. Moreover, while some shelter providers had resorted to cash distributions to meet shelter needs, there was concern that funds were not sufficient to allow these extremely poor families to recover and that it was likely that many would use the funds to migrate to Port-au-Prince.\textsuperscript{19}

In addition to funding constraints, the shelter sector ran up against the lack of locally available, suitable materials for transitional forms of shelter, including quality corrugated...
galvanized iron (CGI) for roofing and quality wood. At the time of RI’s visit, four months since the hurricane hit, it was clear that shelter actors were still struggling to launch a more robust response. In addition, while aid agencies were in the process of moving to more transitional forms of shelter, given the enormous outstanding needs and the lack of funding, only a fraction of affected households are likely to receive transitional shelter assistance. For example, the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) “Build Back Safer” shelter program is targeting 6,000 households. Some shelter providers also felt that even the limited number of households that are receiving transitional shelter will not receive sufficient assistance to build shelters with sufficient roofing or durable frames, due to funding constraints. In short, the shelter response is still struggling to deliver.

Given the underlying levels of poverty, combined with the destruction of livelihoods and food sources, the ability of people to recover on their own is likely to be quite limited, leaving significant numbers of people totally exposed to the upcoming hurricane season. For example, a rapid needs assessment of 14 remote mountain areas that are inaccessible by motorized transportation found that 75 percent of shelters in these areas sustained damage from the hurricane. Moreover, although it had been more than four months since the hurricane, the vast majority of damaged or destroyed houses had not yet been rebuilt or rehabilitated because communities in these areas lacked the financial means to purchase the materials needed to rebuild their shelters. Even if they had money, these poor households do not have access to markets due to their remote locations. This is likely to lead to increased levels of deforestation (both for shelter construction and for production of charcoal, an income source for poor households), thereby further exacerbating the country’s future vulnerability to extreme weather.

At present, hundreds of thousands of extremely vulnerable households remain exposed to the fast-approaching hurricane season in June, leaving them at risk not only of recurrent displacement, but also of injury or worse. Of particular concern is the number of schools and public buildings that are normally used as evacuation centers that remain damaged or destroyed. At the time of RI’s visit, insufficient progress had been made on rehabilitation of schools or other collective centers. Nor did it appear that sufficient efforts had been taken to address the return of displaced families to at-risk areas.

In preparation of the upcoming hurricane season, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other humanitarian agencies must prioritize contingency planning for areas affected by Hurricane Matthew that remain vulnerable and exposed. Such contingency plans must be adopted and implemented by the Haitian government. Suggested actions include assessing which evacuation sites/collective centers are still intact and ensuring evacuation plans are in place for those families still living in makeshift shelter and still at risk of recurrent displacement. In addition, public education campaigns are needed regarding disaster risk reduction measures, for example, providing households with information on how to secure roofing and walls, and to safeguard possessions and assets during the hurricane season. In order to support the government in implementing contingency plans, as well as to effectively respond to the enormous unmet humanitarian needs, OCHA is strongly urged to maintain experienced staff on the ground, at the very least, until the end of 2017.

---

**Slow Pace of Recovery of Livelihoods Fuels Food Insecurity, Protection Risks**

One of the most severe and lasting impacts of the hurricane was the destruction of people’s livelihoods. The areas worst affected by the storm were coastal and rural communities that are largely dependent on fishing and farming for their livelihoods. The storm not only destroyed their homes, but also assets upon which Haitians depend to feed themselves, including crops, farmland, fruit trees, seed stocks, livestock, and farming/fishing equipment and tools. At the time of RI’s visit more than four months since the hurricane hit, the slow place of the emergency response, combined with insufficient support to help the worst-affected families to recover, had left more than 800,000 people severely food insecure.
Early recovery interventions to help people to replant crops were met with limited success. The first planting season following the hurricane came in November 2016, not long after the storm hit. In addition to insufficient funding (it is unclear why the Flash Appeal funding request for livelihoods support was less than $7 million, given that 80 to 100 percent of agriculture was reportedly destroyed in affected areas), destruction of agricultural land made it difficult to plant. RI interviewed one man who explained that even though he was able to clear his land to replant, the loss of tree cover exposed his crops to too much sun and they died. Unusually strong rains in November also washed away some of the seeds that had been planted. Others who had been provided with seed did not want to replant at all knowing that the damage to the land meant it was unlikely they would produce anything. In addition, given the levels of food insecurity at the time, there was the risk that people would end up eating the seeds that were distributed to them for planting.

At the time of RI’s visit in February, planting for the spring crop in June and July was getting underway. However, it was unclear whether there would be a sufficient number of seeds to meet needs. For example, in Grand’Anse, an estimated 68,000 households needed seeds to plant for the spring season, which provides 60 percent of food for the year. However, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was only able to provide seeds to 35,000 households and it was not clear whether the gap would be addressed. Moreover, the destruction of permanent crops such as coconut, breadfruit, and mango that do not need to be replanted and which provide a key food source for affected populations, will take multiple years to grow back, meaning that alternative sources of food and income will need to be identified.

The rapid assessment of remote communities conducted in February revealed the enormous impact of the hurricane on agricultural production on which these communities relied to feed themselves. With limited to no alternative sources of income (other than charcoal production and cutting wood), approximately one third of the assessed localities reported that although it had been more than four months since the hurricane, a large part of their communities remained completely dependent on food donations from friends, family members, and food distributions from international organizations. Moreover, due to the significant damage to agricultural land and loss of seeds and equipment sustained in these areas, the assessed communities had not been able to replant. The report concludes that without immediate support to recover their livelihoods, these communities were likely to miss the next planting season, further aggravating the already dire, food insecure conditions.

One senior humanitarian officer expressed to RI serious concern regarding the implications of the inability of many hurricane-affected families to recover given their acute, underlying vulnerabilities: “If I had to rate this response in terms of livelihoods to Typhoon Haiyan, yes, the scale [in the Philippines] was larger, but here it is much worse. People here are going to die.”

Unaddressed Protection Risks

Given the significant protection risk among the areas affected by Hurricane Matthew, especially among women and children but also the elderly and handicapped, prioritizing protection in the emergency response was of utmost importance. Among the populations of concern were an estimated 4,500 children living in residential care institutions (foster care) that had been affected by the hurricane who required assistance to ensure proper documentation and to re-establish family links. In addition, an estimated 10,600 women and girls were at risk of sexual violence following the hurricane. In Jérémie, for example, there were reports that since the hurricane, prostitution was on the rise with instances of women turning to sex work in order to obtain income and meet basic expenses. Unfortunately, despite awareness of pre-existing protection risks in Haiti, it did not appear that protection was sufficiently addressed in terms of funding or staffing in the response to Hurricane Matthew.

Shortly after the hurricane hit, a decision was made that the Office of the High Representative for Human Rights (OHCHR) would assume the role of government co-lead of the protection working group, presumably since it had previously co-led the protection cluster during the response to the earthquake. This was despite OHCHR’s
“If I had to rate this response in terms of livelihoods to Typhoon Haiyan, yes, the scale [in the Philippines] was larger, but here it is much worse. People here are going to die.”

— UN agency representative
limited operational experience and somewhat limited capacity to lead protection coordination, especially in parts of the country outside of Port-au-Prince where it has no field presence. (OHCHR in Haiti is embedded in the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTAH, based in Port-au-Prince.) Thereafter, an arrangement was reached whereby the UN Fund for Children (UNICEF) assumed the role as government co-lead for protection in Sud Department and UN Population Fund (UNFPA), with only one staff member, took the role as co-lead for protection in Grand’Anse. However, splitting protection between UNICEF and UNFPA on a geographic basis was less than ideal given that these agencies each have their specific area of expertise – child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) – but not both. Compounding the protection response was the limited number of local partners in affected areas with expertise in protection. As one aid worker described it, “protection got off to a very slow start.”

When asked about protection issues, humanitarian responders with whom RI spoke responded that an effort was made to mainstream protection as much as possible into all sectors of the response. But with humanitarian assistance spread so thin and absent a better understanding of the specific needs of the affected population, enormous protection gaps remained. RI was concerned when visiting one food distribution site where pregnant women, handicapped, and elderly persons had to stand in the hot sun for more than five hours, waiting for the distribution to begin. Reportedly, they were offered seats in the shade nearby, but none wanted to give up his/her place in line. More concerning, the representative of one humanitarian organization told RI that during a field visit to hurricane-affected areas only a few days earlier, a woman with several small children had approached him and begged him to please “take her daughter.”

Forced Evictions and Risk of Secondary Displacement: Need for an Effective Strategy to Prevent and Address Disaster-Displaced Persons

Before, during, and after the hurricane, people who lived in insecure shelter and could not take refuge with
family members or neighbors evacuated to “collective centers” nearby their homes, including schools, churches, and public buildings. The Haitian Ministry of Interior initially estimated that 175,000 people were displaced by the disaster and had taken shelter in 307 evacuation centers in Grand’Anse and Sud Departments, although this number was later revised upward to more than 700 collective centers.

As part of the emergency response, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) implemented the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) to “identify, register, and monitor displacement following Hurricane Matthew, track movements of people, and identify potential protection gaps (including counter-trafficking, GBV, domesticity, etc.).” Unfortunately, as a tool, the DTM proved ineffective not only in providing an accurate, real-time picture of displacement, including precise numbers of IDPs, their needs, and obstacles to their return home, but also in addressing protection risks faced by IDPs in collective centers. The squalid, unsafe conditions reported in these centers—including lack of functioning toilets, separate latrines and bathing facilities for men and women, and education for children—are particularly alarming. According to one humanitarian worker, “The biggest protection gap was the risk of GBV in collective centers.”

Given the widespread nature of displacement across hundreds of collective centers covering a large geographic area (much of which was hard to reach), identifying collective centers, and conducting monitoring and registration took time. As a result, not all of the IDPs in collective centers were profiled and registered. Even for collective centers that were assessed, the information contained in the DTM often became outdated by the time it was released. Meanwhile, IDPs began to spontaneously return. According to interviews, in numerous instances, IDPs who remained in collective centers were either coerced to leave by local politicians who wanted to ensure that buildings housing IDPs which were also voting centers were available, or by the parents who were eager to send their children back to school.

A compounding problem was the lack of a unified strategy for assisting IDPs who remained displaced in the weeks and months following the storm. Monitoring indicates that over time, it was the most vulnerable people who remained in collective shelters, including significant numbers of children, pregnant and lactating mothers, people who were ill, and the elderly. Monitoring also indicates that vulnerabilities increased over time. For example, absent a durable solution, increasing numbers of IDP families indicated their intention to send their children away to live with relatives or non-family members in Haiti and abroad.

Initially, the government took the position that IDPs in shelters should not be provided with humanitarian aid out of concern of creating dependencies or disincentives to return, as was the case for IDPs displaced by the 2010 earthquake. However, over time, pressure mounted by local mayors and others who pressured NGOs to distribute cash to IDPs on condition that they return home. Other aid agencies tried to stick to the approach of implementing assistance programs back in IDPs’ home areas (also referred to as cartiers or neighborhoods) that would act as a pull factor. However, in the absence of more robust recovery programs in return areas that would have allowed people to rebuild their shelters and restore livelihoods, combined with a poor understanding of the specific obstacles to return among individual IDPs, this strategy proved ineffective, at least in terms of addressing the most vulnerable cases. According to one aid worker, “It really came down to a funding issue. There was not enough money to start tracking IDPs on an individual level and why they weren’t returning. The shelter packages we were giving—$160 to $180—weren’t enough for people to really recover.”

In the end, the overall number of IDPs was relatively small compared to the enormous outstanding humanitarian needs among affected populations. Unfortunately, however, discussions and disagreements among and between the government and aid agencies over what to do about IDPs who remained in collective centers took an enormous amount of time and energy from the ongoing relief operations. Meanwhile, evictions were reportedly ongoing without the knowledge of aid agencies, and collective centers which IOM reported were empty were still housing IDPs who were coming back at night to sleep.
In November 2016, a protection expert from the Global Protection Cluster was deployed to help coordinate and support protection issues. According to interviews, part of his work involved developing a strategy to facilitate the voluntary return of IDPs who remained in collective shelters. It does not appear that his recommendations were ever fully implemented. Given the number of forced closures/evictions and limited evidence that protection issues in collective centers were adequately addressed, it is likely that many extremely vulnerable IDPs fell between the cracks.

Need for an improved protection strategy for responding to disasters

The protection sector in Haiti needs to develop a more workable and effective leadership arrangement, as it is unlikely that OHCHR will be able to effectively fulfill this role going forward. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has significant experience with protection given its mandate for the protection of refugees. Although UNHCR has only a limited presence in Haiti, one possibility would be to support the secondment of an experienced UNHCR staff to act as the co-lead of the protection working group during and in the aftermath of disasters. In addition, longer-term, standby protection capacity will need to be immediately deployed in the wake of disasters to support the protection actors and ensure that protection is effectively mainstreamed across all sectors.

Moreover, given the acute underlying vulnerabilities among the Haitian population, international donors and the UN must work with the Haitian government to develop a strategy to better address protection risks that invariably escalate during disasters. As one humanitarian aid worker involved in the emergency response told RI, “Government agencies in Haiti don’t have a system in place for protection in disasters.” Key to an effective strategy will be securing funding and commitments by donors to support the government to put in place effective processes for identifying and addressing protection risks during disasters, and to ensure that protection is more effectively mainstreamed into all sectors of the emergency response. In addition, more long-term funding is urgently needed to help build the protection capacity of local governments and civil society. Finally, there must be more effective management of security-related risks in disasters. With the anticipated drawdown of MINUSTAH, clarifying the role of the Haitian police including CIMO in disaster response, and providing them with training in humanitarian law, should be prioritized.

Lack of Sufficient Attention Results in Significant Funding Gaps

In contrast to the 2010 earthquake, the response by the private sector and the public (especially the U.S. public) to the hurricane’s impacts in Haiti was lukewarm, reflecting a broader donor fatigue with respect to Haiti. This seems somewhat unjustified given that the poor response to the Haiti earthquake and the perceived ineffective use of funds had little to do with the Haitian people themselves. Making matters worse, the disappointing financial response to the Hurricane Matthew disaster and the lackluster emergency response to date have ended up putting the overall response on a slow track from which it has yet to regain momentum.

More recent announcements that other donors will be providing additional funding for the response and recovery – including for food security, shelter, protection and WASH – is a highly welcome development. Yet overall, current funding levels remain anemic. As of mid-March, the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which covers humanitarian needs country-wide, was only 15% funded.

“The amount of money in the Flash Appeal and revised Flash Appeal was too low. It sent a signal to capitals that this wasn’t a big disaster, that they could send their A-team somewhere else.”

— Donor government representative
In contrast to the 2010 earthquake, the response by the private sector and the public (especially the U.S. public) to the hurricane’s impacts in Haiti was lukewarm, reflecting a broader donor fatigue with respect to Haiti. This seems somewhat unjustified given that the poor response to the Haiti earthquake and the perceived ineffective use of funds had little to do with the Haitian people themselves.

percent funded. Funding for food security, emergency agriculture, and nutrition has received the most funds to date but 70 percent of needs still remain unmet. Funding requirements for shelter and non-food household items, all of which are intended for hurricane-affected areas, will only meet the needs of 14 percent of targeted households.31

Government donors, multilateral banks, the public, and private sector must immediately scale up funding to support humanitarian assistance and recovery in the areas worst-affected by Hurricane Matthew. Funding should prioritize livelihood recovery and more durable shelter solutions for populations who remain in exposed areas. In addition, repair of schools and other public buildings must be prioritized not only to allow more classes to resume, but also in case they are needed as evacuation centers during the upcoming hurricane season.

The response by the United States, the European Union, and other governments to the emergency has been generous. Nonetheless, given the large number of competing humanitarian crises across the globe at present, absent a more concerted effort to raise the profile of the disaster, significant numbers of vulnerable Haitian families affected by Hurricane Matthew will remain vulnerable and unable to fully recover throughout

Many hurricane-affected areas lacked clean water sources before the hurricane hit. Projects like this one in Port-à-Piment, Sud Department, aimed at improving access to clean water have helped to build the resilience of communities to cholera and other water-borne diseases.
Having lost everything in the hurricane, this man has resorted to making charcoal in order to buy food, leading to even greater deforestation in the area. Saint-Jean-du-Sud, Sud Department.

2017 and beyond. Key international donors including the United States should develop a fundraising strategy for Haiti that includes hosting a donors’ conference to increase funding for the unmet humanitarian needs of the people worst-affected by Hurricane Matthew and to support longer-term recovery and resilience. This could include holding briefings at donor capitals such as Washington, D.C., Brussels, and Geneva to report out on the situation and raise awareness of the needs and challenges ahead, as well as the risks associated with not addressing them. In addition to increasing awareness of the crisis in Haiti, these conferences would provide an opportunity to better engage the private sector in the response and recovery. For its part and to support fundraising efforts, the Haitian government needs to develop a communication strategy to educate the public and the broader international community regarding the crisis, including media outreach, blogs, and social media.

Need for a More Coordinated Strategy to Address Longer-Term Resilience Building in Haiti

A significant concern going forward is whether the humanitarian and development sectors in Haiti have envisioned and articulated a longer-term, resilience strategy that will effectively begin to chip away at the country’s chronic vulnerability to disasters, climate change, and other shocks. As mentioned above, during the emergency response, it appears that opportunities were missed to provide technical training and share information with affected populations that would have assisted them to rebuild safer structures. The lack of recovery assistance has forced people to resort to further deforestation of the already highly-degraded environment. In addition, due to the inability of the poorest households to recover their livelihoods, or find economic alternatives, hundreds of thousands of people remain even more vulnerable than
before. While the HRP includes a resilience-building component, several high-level UN officials and donors admitted that in terms of defining a resilience strategy for Haiti, “We’re not quite there yet.”

Further, it did not appear that the humanitarian response was sufficiently aligned with the government’s recovery plan for Hurricane Matthew as articulated in the “Post-Disaster Needs Assessment” (PDNA). The decision to launch both the HRP, which covers country-wide humanitarian needs including the response to Hurricane Matthew, and the PDNA the same week, did not help matters and may have created confusion among outside donors. While some donors in Haiti found this to be a strategic decision that highlighted the need to provide humanitarian assistance simultaneously with longer-term development support, there are not sufficient linkages between the two funding appeals to make that apparent.

The Haitian government, donors, and humanitarian and development actors need to develop a common understanding of and long-term approach to resilience for Haiti. Humanitarian interventions must prioritize opportunities for building longer-term resilience and be bolstered by longer-term sustainable funding streams that endure pre- and post-disaster. Programs are urgently needed that focus on re-planting trees and mangroves in hurricane-affected areas, thereby increasing resilience to future disasters and reinforcing livelihoods. Near-term opportunities for doing so include the new government’s adoption of development plans and priorities, the development of the next UN Development Assistance Framework, and individual donor strategies (e.g., USAID’s next five year strategy for Haiti). Towards this end, a workshop or conference would be useful to draw on best practices and lessons learned in building resilience, drawing on experience from places like East and West Africa. In addition, such a conference could serve to support capacity among local civil society for building resilience to future disasters, emergencies, and climate change.

Conclusion

At present, six months since Hurricane Matthew hit, the emergency response is winding down. Yet hundreds of thousands of extremely vulnerable people across Haiti’s southwest peninsula remain in makeshift shelter despite the fact that the next hurricane season is almost upon them. Tragically, due to an array of factors, the emergency received neither the funding nor the attention it required, and challenges and missteps in the early stages put it on a slow and inadequate course from which it has been unable to recover. Consequently, the international response to the worst disaster to hit Haiti since the 2010 earthquake has set the country back again. In the absence of a more unified, strategic, long-term approach to building the resilience of the Haitian people among and between the Haitian government, development, and humanitarian agencies, it is likely that the country’s tragic pattern of “one step forward, two steps back” will continue.

Alice Thomas and Ann Hollingsworth traveled to Port-au-Prince and hurricane-affected areas in Grand’Anse and Sud Departments in February 2017.

Endnotes

5. Supra n. 3; UN Development Program (UNDP) Climate Change Portal, Haiti, 2015, http://adaptation-undp.org/explore/caribbean/haiti; UN Food and Agricultur-

6. The reliance of Haiti’s population on fuelwood to supply 71 percent of the country’s energy requirements has led to rapid deforestation, at a rate of about 1,000 hectares per year between 2005 and 2010, and has left only three percent of the country with forest cover. UNDP’s Climate Change Adaptation Portal, supra n. 5.


8. Supra, n. 2, at p. 21.


10. Fafo, Child Fosterage and Child Domestic Work in Haiti in 2014: Analytical report. Fafo-report 2015:54, Oslo: Fafo, 2015. Fafo’s report expresses the complexity of the situation for child domestic workers in Haiti. Child domestic work has many motivations: the needs of the sending household, the needs of the receiving household, security for the receiving household that they can send their child if their situation changes in the future, and the children’s want to pay for their education and a better future.


14. Supra n. 11, at p. 31-32.

15. Supra n. 9, at p. 34.


17. Supra n. 9, at p. 34.


19. Tracking by IOM of movements to/from hurricane-affected areas indicates that a majority of displaced individuals (58 percent) were planning to migrate to Ouest Department, where Port-au-Prince is located. IOM, “Hurricane Matthew Response: Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) - Haiti, February 2017,” http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/dtm_matt-10.21.2017.pdf.


23. Supra n. 21.
24. Supra n. 9, at p. 32.
26. Supra n. 2, at p. 27.
28. According to the November 2016 DTM, approximately 35 percent of IDPs in the centers monitored were minors (between 0-17 years old), approximately 8 percent were under the age of five, and approximately 6 percent were aged 60 or above, while approximately 25 percent lacked documentation. IOM, “Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Haiti - Hurricane Matthew Response, November 2016,” at p. 7, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/dtm_hurricanematthew_report_rd1_eng.pdf
29. For example, whereas the November 2016 DTM indicates that 13 percent of registered IDPs were vulnerable including chronically ill, elderly, pregnant or lactating women, and orphaned, unaccompanied and separated minors (supra n. 28, at p. 7), the February 2017 DTM found that 28 percent were vulnerable. Supra n. 19, at p. 13.
32. Supra n. 4.