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# FUTURES IN THE BALANCE

## A WAY FORWARD FOR HAITI'S CHILDREN



World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and their communities world-wide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

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## Introduction

Haitians can bear a great deal. In the last fifty years, they have faced enormous political and economic setbacks, seen their forests reduced to bare hills and their profitable agricultural industry decimated. Year after year, rains, floods and hurricanes have dealt heavy blows to communities. But nothing has ever been as difficult to bear for so many as the heartbreak of the January 2010 earthquake.

In the first few days after the quake, Port-au-Prince was a living nightmare for its residents. Nine out of ten people knew someone who was now dead. Nearly two million people were left homeless. There was little food, less water, and nobody to turn to.

Ten weeks on, the country is still very much in mourning, still dazed by the destruction of lives and property that less than a minute could bring. But signs of resilience are starting to emerge. Teams are clearing the rubble, site by site. Shops and roadside stalls have reopened. Households have grown to accommodate one or two more families, as Haitians have always done.

It is too early to say that the nightmare is over, but now is the time to start dreaming for the future. Haiti's future hangs in the balance over decisions that will be made in the next few weeks.

I came to Haiti to head an organisation which had been working at the local level for over thirty years on key issues facing Haiti's children. Our aim was to change lives, create opportunities, strengthen communities. Just like Haiti, we've had successes and setbacks. We've dreamed of a day when Haitians would have affordable health care with a focus on children, access to quality education, sustainable and self-sufficient food solutions, protection and rights for each new generation – and the resources to protect themselves from future disasters, natural or man-made.

I want to encourage all Haitians, as well as the international community committed to work on their behalf, to share that dream. It is up to us to make it come true.

**Frank Williams**

National Director, World Vision Haiti

## Executive summary

One of the worst disasters of the new millennium ended the lives of over 220,000 Haitians, injuring 300,000 more, and leaving well over a million people displaced and homeless. The impact of the earthquake is still apparent across the capital, Port-au-Prince. Rubble lies thick in the streets, and around 500 spontaneous settlements continue to house at least 600,000 Haitians living in inadequate conditions.

Less than three months on from this disaster, it is already time to start shifting the focus from Haiti's immediate needs to those of their uncertain future.

Already, the international community has united in powerful and innovative ways to rebuild this poor and vulnerable country. The most ambitious relief and recovery plans in the country's history are taking shape. Record levels of funding are on the table. The level of response, of money, of

involvement, represents unprecedented opportunity to reshape Haiti's future. But how is it to be done?

World Vision, a child-focused relief, development, and advocacy organisation, has been working with the poorest and most vulnerable communities in Haiti for over 30 years. During this time, the resilience and determination of Haitians has been demonstrated time and again. Sadly, these strengths have been called upon too often – a history of uncertainty, of crushing poverty, food shortages and lack of basic services has held generations of children and communities back from achieving their potential.

A series of initiatives (such as the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) and various pre and post-earthquake reconstruction and recovery frameworks), led by the Haitian Government in



A man asks to be photographed outside the iconic ruins of the former Presidential palace

consultation with the international community, hold a critical key to Haiti's future. They provide Haitians, their children and those who work on their behalf with direction, coherence, and common goals to rebuild a more resilient, more equitable and more prosperous country.

Because of this, future strategies must be clear and committed in respect of certain critical issues that have the power to deliver lasting change. Many of them relate to children and the opportunities they will either embrace or miss, depending on decisions being made now.

They include:

### Child protection

- Protect child rights
- Reinforce protection services
- Ratify the Hague Conference Convention on Intercountry Adoption

### Education and opportunities for youth

- Free, quality, primary education
- Address socio-economic conditions that prevent children from accessing their right to education
- Education curriculum and delivery reform

### Food security and agricultural reform

- Investment in sustainable agriculture through the UN Flash Appeal
- Address food security simultaneously with livelihoods
- Halt and reverse environmental degradation

### Shelter and land reform

- Guarantee the rights of displaced people to return to their land for now
- Address land rights issues and land reform legislation
- Ensure that resettlement and reintegration involves communities

### Disaster risk reduction

- Prioritise DRR in reconstruction and recovery
- Allocate resources to build community and environmental capacities in DRR
- Place children at the forefront of community DRR

### Aid effectiveness

- Ensure representation of all partners, including communities and NGOs, in a program based approach to partnership
- Consult with other stakeholders regularly during the process
- Balance response between infrastructure and 'software'

### Health care

- Commit greater funds and resources to rebuilding health care
- Continue to waive end-user fees for health care for a fixed period
- Respond to children's health, especially malaria, malnutrition, and sanitation and hygiene-based illness

## Child protection

The success of decisions being made around the reconstruction of Haiti will largely depend upon how much human capital is valued. Nowhere is this more important than for children. The nation's rebuilding must rely on human rights and equity, social inclusion, and protection. With children often the least valued and therefore the most vulnerable, their protection and advancement is critical in rebuilding Haiti.

The pre-quake statistics are enough to act upon. One in seven children did not see their fifth birthday;<sup>1</sup> a high proportion of those who survived were malnourished and did not finish primary school.<sup>2</sup> Out of school, young people have few chances for employment and are vulnerable to exploitation, illegal labour, or trafficking.

A musician entertains children in a child-friendly space at a camp for displaced people in the capital

### Separated children

The disaster split up families, leaving hundreds of children alone and without community protection systems. Separated and unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, exploitation, abuse, or violence. They are more susceptible to malnutrition and diseases, and less able to meet their basic needs for survival and recovery.

After the earthquake the Haitian Government acted on advice from the international humanitarian community to halt all adoptions during the emergency phase. The focus was instead rightly given to tracing and reunifying children with their families or communities. Time was needed to determine which children had truly been orphaned, and which could return to their homes and communities.



## Developing strengths in child protection

The Government is not starting from the beginning on child protection; in fact, some powerful commitments are already in place. In the past few years, the Government of Haiti has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and signed the ILO Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The 2007 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper included a focus on children living in especially difficult circumstances.

Nevertheless, the critical role of children and youth in the country's future, and the extreme hardships they face as a group of citizens forming nearly half the Haitian population, need a bold and well-funded commitment by the Government and the international community.

In addition, a proportion of children in Haiti have always suffered from a most severe lack of rights: victims of trafficking, child slaves or *restaveks*,\* children in the judicial system, orphans or children left without parental care, and those living with special needs.

Before the earthquake, around 200,000 children were living with disabilities, and now many more have been injured.<sup>3</sup> Approximately half a million children were living in the streets or in orphanages. Between 300,000 and 500,000 children worked as unpaid domestic workers.<sup>4</sup>

## Recommendations

World Vision calls for the following actions to be taken:

- International donors to urgently fund child protection interventions in Haiti and meet the Flash Appeal requests for protection;
- The Government of Haiti to take all necessary measures in legislation and action to protect the rights of children, and stand firm on the implementation of the existing international instruments for the rights of children;
- The Government to enact a Child Protection Code that is consistent with international norms and standards and harmonises existing laws regarding children's rights. At a minimum, the Code should expressly outlaw all forms of child abuse, including the *restaveks*; provide for the close oversight of crèches and orphanages and limit their enrolment to 'true' orphans; and make available an adequate number of emergency and long-term safe havens for abandoned or street children;
- The Government to continue to reinforce the national police force (PNH) and more specifically the Brigade for the Protection of Minors (BPM) to enable them to provide additional security for populations made more vulnerable by the earthquake, such as young girls and young women living in IDP camps; and
- The Government to sign and ratify the Hague Conference Convention on Intercountry Adoption, and uphold a moratorium on new international adoptions to prevent unnecessary separation of children from families;

\* *Restaveks*, from the Créole for 'stays with,' are usually girls between the ages of six and sixteen who are given to another person as an unpaid domestic worker. Estimates of the number of such children in Haiti vary from 200,000 to 300,000.



## 2 Education and opportunities for youth

Two friends pose for the camera. Behind them is the displacement camp that has become their home



With more than 1,300 education institutions destroyed in the quake<sup>5</sup> and up to 4,600 damaged (including the Ministry of Education itself),<sup>6</sup> finishing the school year is looking increasingly unlikely for many of the nearly 3 million children previously enrolled.<sup>7</sup> For those children who had previously dropped out or were never able to attend, competition for re-enrolment will be fierce. The likelihood of their being able to access a basic education is now looking even slimmer.

Even before the quake, education, like other basic social services, was not something that many Haitians could afford. Concentrated in the capital city and mostly relegated to private institutions, quality education has traditionally been out of reach for Haiti's poor majority. This has led to the lowest school enrolment rates in the Western hemisphere. Instead, most children whose families could not afford to send them to

school would enter the informal workforce. Without education or opportunities, many young people have been seconded into high-risk illicit industries like drug and child trafficking over the years (see also Child Protection, above).

With robust national and international focus, education reform could go a long way towards improving education and livelihoods opportunities, while limiting the exposure of youth to predators who would exploit and harm them.

### Providing basic education for all

Before the earthquake, only two thirds of children were enrolled in primary school, and less than half of these made it as far as the sixth grade.<sup>8</sup> The Government of Haiti has said that it wants to return children to school as quickly as possible, and is taking



some critical steps to make this happen. It is offering 4,000 temporary structures for students and benefits packages for teachers, as well as paying tuition fees.

What is not clear, however, is whether this assistance will extend to the hundreds of thousands of children who were marginalised under the previous system. Children from poorer families have traditionally been left out, along with those living in rural areas, children with disabilities, and children separated from their parents. More must be done if we are to ensure that a basic education reaches all Haitian children.

### Increasing vocational training and opportunities for youth

Livelihood and employment opportunities for Haitians will not only bring increased incomes, they will provide enhanced opportunities for the next generation of children to access a quality education. A quality educational experience will in turn increase the ability of young people to engage in lawful and productive economic activities.

The Government has announced that alongside the renewal of social services, fostering economic recovery will be a major pillar in their national plan. For this to be successful, the plan must adequately encompass the needs of youth by ensuring linkages between education and economic growth strategies. With many of these youth already engaged in unofficial or illegal work, the opportunity now exists to offer them sustained opportunities in education and employment.

## Recommendations

World Vision calls for the following actions to be taken:

- The Government of Haiti to realise the goal of a free, quality, basic education for all children, as set forth in the 1987 constitution, and starting with universal primary education, through extending emergency and long-term development funding to meet this goal;
- The Government of Haiti to address through livelihoods recovery and agricultural reform the social and economic conditions that have traditionally excluded marginalised children from education, especially those from poorer backgrounds and rural areas;
- The Government of Haiti to expand vocational and life skills programmes for youth, providing livelihoods and broader career path skills for youth, including construction, reforestation and land management skills training, and other disaster risk reduction activities, as well as traditional careers including teaching and small business skills; and
- The Government of Haiti to undertake a long-term reform of the education system, with a focus on improving the quality of education, including curriculum reform and policy evaluation of the teaching profession.

### 3 Food security and agricultural reform

For years, investment in the agricultural sector has been insufficient. Environmental degradation, a lack of modern farming techniques and issues associated with land tenure have all seriously impaired Haiti's ability to feed itself. Since the destruction of livelihoods brought on by January's earthquake, the subsequent population displacement, disruption of the food supply and increasing vulnerabilities, food insecurity is now even more severe for Haiti's most vulnerable.

Displacement to rural areas has begun to overburden local food supplies and has driven up food prices, creating food vulnerabilities even for communities not affected by the quake. A recent World Vision assessment found that more than 60 per cent of households reported reduced access to food as compared to pre-quake conditions, often due to increasing food prices.<sup>9</sup>

Concerns have been raised about the potentially negative impacts that food aid can have on local markets and the agricultural sector in the context of Haiti. Yet with more than half of households assessed by World Vision experiencing food scarcity, food aid remains necessary. Many respondents were already forced to adopt negative coping strategies, such as buying food on credit and begging. And even prior to January's quake, Haiti had a food deficit, and food insecurity among the country's most vulnerable was severe. Addressing this sector is critical in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable.

Women queue to receive food near a camp for displaced people in downtown Port-au-Prince



## Improving food aid; restoring incomes

Immediate and severe food insecurity requires rapid steps to ensure that all Haitians have access to food and do not suffer nutritionally – particularly expectant and lactating mothers and young children. Haiti already has the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the Western hemisphere.<sup>10</sup> It is also critical that livelihoods opportunities are created wherever possible to enable people, especially the youth that make up around half the population, to address their own food needs.

As one of the largest NGOs providing food aid to affected populations in Haiti, World Vision has been providing food to well over a million vulnerable people since the earthquake, in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP). To mitigate the risks to agriculture and markets, World Vision conducts market analysis and ensures strict targeting of beneficiaries. Livelihoods recovery programmes and cash-for-work are helping to re-establish incomes and self-sufficiency.

Whilst many Haitians affected by the earthquake remain food-insecure, the current emergency response must transition into a longer-term, properly resourced approach to sustainable food security. Long-term livelihood security is the current priority, and is critical for populations to achieve improved food security. But until such a time as livelihood opportunities are improved, food vulnerabilities need to be addressed also, particularly among highly vulnerable groups.

## Securing the harvest

Years of under-investment in infrastructure and agriculture in rural areas has resulted in seriously inadequate agricultural capacity across the country. Many farmers have no access to irrigation, electricity, or adequate roads that link them to markets.

Mismanagement of natural resources has led to environmental degradation, deforestation, topsoil erosion, and flooding -- all to the detriment of crop yields. Haiti's historic food deficit underscores the importance of investment in this sector. Yet, as of mid-March, only 15 per cent of the UN Flash Appeal funding had been made available for agriculture.<sup>11</sup>

## Recommendations

World Vision calls for the following actions to be taken:

- International donors to immediately resource investment in early agricultural recovery, through, for example, fully meeting the funding needs of the Flash Appeal;
- NGOs to take action to minimise harm done to local markets in the provision of food aid, whilst also ensuring the nutritional well-being of the most vulnerable;
- The Haitian Government to prioritise agriculture and land reform in its national plan, and take necessary steps to halt environmental degradation; and
- The international community and NGOs to ensure that food security and livelihoods are addressed simultaneously.

## 4 Shelter and land reform

Well over a million Haitians are estimated to have become homeless after the earthquake, with some 200,000 homes reported to have been severely damaged or destroyed.<sup>12</sup> Some of the displaced have taken up residence in the homes of friends or relatives, but most are living in one of the 500 over-crowded, under-resourced spontaneous settlements that occupy virtually every free space in the capital, as well as beyond Port-au-Prince.

A rapid post-earthquake assessment by World Vision, surveying 600 households and 20 camps and surrounding areas in Port-au-Prince and 40 villages, found that nearly one third of respondents identified shelter as the greatest problem they were still facing.<sup>13</sup>

Two women carry scavenged cardboard boxes to use as construction materials for shelter for their homes

### Finding a solution

Up to 100,000 people living in formal and informal camps are being reached each week with tarpaulins and other shelter materials from aid agencies, with a target of reaching 1.3 million people by early May.<sup>14</sup> But even at this rate, the relief operation will fall short of providing the level of support that camp residents are hoping for before the rainy season begins (due to begin between April and June, although the rains have already started).

Those who can return to their homes are being encouraged to do so by the Government, with building surveyors evaluating which structures are safe for return. As a last resort, up to 200,000 displaced people living in high-risk sites, susceptible to flooding and other hazards, will be relocated to temporary settlements on land identified by the Government.<sup>15</sup> But



this solution will not be a fast one. And it is doubtful that this number can be accommodated before the onset of the rainy season. The vast majority of those living in Port-au-Prince's displacement camps will have no choice but to face the rains where they are.

### Land disputes hinder progress

As with some Caribbean and Latin America countries, the land tenure system in Haiti is slow and dysfunctional, exacerbating many of the country's social and economic inequalities.

The majority of Haitians who were living in poverty before the earthquake had no legal right (or disputed rights) to the land on which they were living on. Their ability to return is uncertain. Many of the displaced are now living on private land, including land used by businesses or schools. World Vision found that residents in a third of all camps surveyed were threatened with eviction by private landowners.<sup>16</sup>

Lack of land rights is hindering relief efforts across the board. Efforts to provide basics like sanitation and drainage are frequently held up by disputes over land. Planning for longer-term transitional shelter cannot take place in the absence of land on which the displaced can be accommodated. Government efforts are beginning to produce options, but some proposed sites have not been suitable due to the risks of hazards, proximity to livelihoods opportunities, or protection concerns.

### The right to shelter

The right to adequate shelter is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>17</sup> But shelter is about more than keeping out the elements and meeting physical needs. Adequate shelter is critical in

providing a safe place to store food and possessions, and is necessary to offer privacy and a degree of protection from abuses. Shelter fulfils psychological needs by providing a sense of personal space, and meets social needs by providing a place for families and communities to come together.

### Recommendations

World Vision calls for the following actions to be taken:

- The Government of Haiti to temporarily guarantee the right of displaced people without formal land ownership to return to their pre-quake homes whilst a long-term solution to land tenure issues is sought;
- The Government of Haiti to adopt the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, including its provisions for families and communities returning to property and land;
- The Government of Haiti, with the technical and financial support of international donors, to establish a land transfer commission to oversee national land reform, guided by human rights concerns and humanitarian standards;
- The Early Recovery Cluster, as part of the UN humanitarian coordination system, and the proposed Interim Commission on Reconstruction, to address land tenure and land reform issues related to the emergency, and engage with relevant national bodies overseeing land reform, or the UN Country Team to identify a suitable alternative venue for such discussions and planning to take place; and
- The Government and international community to ensure that resettlement and reintegration initiatives include full community participation.

## World Vision in Haiti

With emergency relief and mitigation among our key areas of work, World Vision's community focus places us at the heart of emergencies and responses world-wide. In Haiti, World Vision's national community-based operations have spanned more than 30 years. Even before it was possible to understand the enormity of Haiti's January earthquake internationally, World Vision was already responding in some affected communities, using pre-positioned stocks in-country.

Since that time, our response has grown to incorporate a team of over 500 local and international staff, working and partnering in the sectors of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health and protection. Responding to children's needs as a priority, World Vision has opened child-friendly spaces and clinics, introduced pre-school education in camps and instigated registration and tracing mechanisms for children separated from their parents.

## World Vision's response

Key achievements in the first 10 weeks after the disaster include:

### Food

- Partnered with the WFP and USAID to reach over 1.9 million people with food aid

### Water and sanitation

- Provided 168 latrines, over 100 showers, cash-for-work drainage maintenance and rubbish removal in the camps

### Shelter

- Distributed tents, tarpaulins, cooking sets and other essential items to over 80,000 people
- Preparation for the construction of up to 15,000 transitional homes

### Health

- Provided primary health care and public health messages for camp families through stationary and mobile health clinics.
- Provided clean birthing kits, baby-friendly spaces for breastfeeding, and mothers' clubs for childcare knowledge

### Children in emergencies and child protection

- Established 19 child-friendly spaces in Port-au-Prince, Fond Parisienne, Mayotte and Central Plateau (with an additional five sites planned)
- Provided education for mothers and care-givers on child protection and psycho-social nurture for children in distress



Children at play on the rural  
Haitian island of La Gonave





## 5 Disaster risk reduction

This year's devastating earthquake, while delivering unprecedented damage and destruction, is not the first recent disaster to strike Haiti. The country was hit by more than twenty disasters between 1990 and 2004.<sup>18</sup> The people of Haiti are being exposed to growing and complex threats resulting from these natural disasters, compounded by high levels of poverty, severe environmental degradation and high levels of social vulnerability.

Physically rebuilding Haiti is just part of the disaster response challenges ahead for the Government and the international community. The other part of the challenge for the Haitian people involves rebuilding a country that is resilient and adequately prepared for disasters through prioritisation and investment in disaster risk reduction (DRR), as committed to in the Hyogo Framework to which Haiti is a signatory.

### Reducing risk

Much hard work has been done in Haiti over recent years by the Government (particularly the Ministry of the Interior and the Civil Protection Unit) and its partners in the field. But January's earthquake has shown how much remains to be done. More attention, more investment, and more community-oriented approaches to DRR are now required if Haitians are to be adequately supported to become more resilient.

At times disaster preparedness and mitigation activities are limited to infrastructural development, building codes, and policy reform – essential components of DRR, but inadequate in themselves. An equally critical component of DRR is investment in community-based resilience. Communities and families that are



A man tends to Arabica coffee plants as part of a World Vision livelihoods initiative. Crops and trees are given to local farmers who are encouraged to re-plant deforested hillsides

empowered as the first line of disaster preparedness and response are far more capable of coping with disasters. If they are kept informed of potential hazards, threats and shocks, and if they have taken steps to plan ahead and adequately prepare, they will be more able to cope with future disasters.

DRR is well served by championing local-level leadership and bringing Government and civil society together to jointly tackle future threats. Local disaster response ownership is also a core principle of international development and is expressed in numerous humanitarian standards, including the Red Cross Red Crescent Code of Conduct and the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship.

### Children as agents of change

Children account for nearly half the Haitian population. They are traditionally the most vulnerable during periods of disaster, where they can become separated from families and cut off from support structures. The active participation of children in preparedness programmes is therefore not optional. Rather, it is critical in order to preserve a future in which children are safe and can participate in the development of their country.

World Vision's research in disaster-prone countries has shown that children can and should be trained as leaders in their community on disaster preparedness.<sup>19</sup> DRR activities can recognise the importance of children through measures such as enforcement of building codes and practice for school construction, through to DRR curriculum development and practice in schools.

### Recommendations

World Vision calls for the following actions to be taken:

- The Government and international community to ensure that DRR is prioritised in the reconstruction and recovery strategy, with a minimum of 10 per cent<sup>20</sup> of total humanitarian funding made available for DRR interventions;
- The Government to allocate resources to build capacities of both communities and local authorities to manage and reduce disaster risk by having access to the necessary information, resources, and the authority to implement actions for DRR, in accordance with the Hyogo Framework for Action and Haiti National Platform for DRR;
- The Government and international community to prioritise the role of children as agents of change, placing them at the forefront of the DRR arena, for example through, strict controls on school construction and adoption of DRR curricula; and
- The Government of Haiti and donors to invest in efforts to support environmental restoration initiatives over the long term that help to maintain and enhance the ecological recovery of Haiti's landscape to minimise the impact of future disasters.

## 6 Avoiding a health crisis



A young girl stands near what she now knows as home – a spontaneous settlement in the Haitian capital

January's earthquake cost the lives of more than 220,000 people.<sup>21</sup> But the human cost is far higher, with some 300,000 Haitians injured in the quake<sup>22</sup> – many of whom require on-going health care to stay alive and to lead productive lives. But too little progress has so far been made on this front. International donors had met only 58 per cent of health needs under the UN Flash Appeal, as of mid-March.<sup>23</sup> And despite positive action immediately after the earthquake, a long-term commitment towards reform has so far been inadequate.

### Patient fees

Immediately after the earthquake the Haitian Government boldly announced the suspension of fees for public health care facilities.<sup>24</sup> The move meant that hundreds of

thousands of injured and sick people could access medical care, regardless of their financial status. Despite this announcement, as many as a dozen hospitals continued to charge patients while their supplies and salaries were being covered by donations.<sup>25</sup>

But just three months on from the event, the Government has announced that end-user fees for accessing public primary health care facilities and costs for medicines will be reinstated from 12 April. This decision has been taken in the belief that the emergency phase of the relief effort is over. But this is not the case. With well over half a million people still living in spontaneous settlements, and the rainy season only weeks away, hundreds of thousands of people remain acutely vulnerable.

## The cost of medication

Haiti's central pharmaceutical store which oversees the importation of medicines into the country, PROMESS (Programme on Essential Medicine and Supplies), is to be commended for taking swift action to offer free medicines to health care facilities immediately after the earthquake. But the program has already begun charging NGOs to access its stocks, despite the fact that much of the supplies are being provided to the programme free of charge by international donors. Perversely, this system means that medicines are provided free to public health facilities, which charge end-users, yet international NGOs like World Vision, which provide medicines to private clinics free of charge, are having to pay PROMESS.

## Reforming the system

A survey conducted by humanitarian medical NGO Médecins Sans Frontières in 2008 found that half of all Haitians faced financial difficulties in accessing health care facilities. As a result, patients had to sell off land, go into debt, or use up savings in order to receive treatment. End-user fees were rarely waived, even for the most vulnerable, with 99 per cent of patients surveyed reporting that they had paid for care during their last episode of illness.<sup>26</sup> A significant overhaul of the public health system is needed if sustainable and affordable health care for Haiti's people is to be realised.

## A new crisis looms

With the impending rainy season, a new and immediate crisis threatens Haiti. If adequate steps are not taken to prepare for this season then water-borne diseases, dengue fever and malaria threaten to reach epidemic proportions. Without access to medical care, conditions will be ripe for disease

outbreak – particularly for those living in displacement camps.

## Recommendations

World Vision calls for the following actions to be taken:

- International donors to immediately commit funds to rebuild and reform the country's health care system, through, for example, fully meeting the funding needs laid out in the UN Flash Appeal, and providing funding that can be used to offset end-user fees by contributing to the salaries of medical practitioners in public health facilities and build the capacity of the public health care system;
- The Government and international community to prioritise interventions targeting hygiene and sanitation, malaria prevention, and addressing severe malnutrition, both in the short term and as part of long-term plans;
- Public health care facilities to provide free health care to those injured or sick as a result of the quake, particularly those with disabilities;
- The Government to suspend the reinstatement of end-user fees by at least six months to accommodate the risks associated with the rainy season, with a view to reforming the health care system and providing free primary health care in the long term; and
- The Government to revise the practice of charging NGOs for access to medicines supplied through PROMESS, to ensure a more equitable system is in place.

## 7 Aid effectiveness



A boy waits at a food distribution on the outskirts of one of the 500 spontaneous settlements around the Haitian capital

The high volume of aid funds pouring into Haiti through a variety of multilateral and bilateral channels has created challenges among stakeholders to implement the Strategic Framework in a coordinated and effective manner. An Interim Commission on Reconstruction is underway and a successor Commission has been proposed to steer this complex and large-scale process. The danger, however, is that the commission may take a 'project-based approach' to implementing this National Action Plan. This approach is frowned internationally as an ineffective means of achieving aid effectiveness and making a lasting difference for children, families and communities.

One proposed function of the Commission is to 'vet projects and programmes' and make recommendations on their suitability to the President of Haiti, who can either veto or approve them. This ensures that Government is not circumvented and projects not driven by donors. However, it

does not foster an enabling environment for decision-making, course correction and oversight that would benefit from the wide-ranging expertise of national and international partners, as well as from the voices of civil society.

### Combined impact includes NGOs

In contrast, a **program**-based approach (PBA) will ensure a more strategic approach for implementing Haiti's development goals. The PBA underpins the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (supported by the National Action Plan) and is a means for donors, partners and civil society to strategically align behind Haiti's development goals and Governmental structures for combined impact.

Behind a programme-based approach in Haiti would be technical working committees for each sector of the National Action Plan, formed by Haitian stakeholders and their



partners including NGOs with expertise or insight into the relevant issues, and chaired at Government (preferably ministerial) level. The Commission should not seek to directly oversee all project undertaken by NGOs. These committees would refer their sector-wide strategies and recommendations to the Commission for review and approval, rather than each project being weighed independently. In addition, the Commission would task these committees to examine emerging proposals and plans and to tackle bottlenecks in implementation.

### Over-emphasis on infrastructure

World Vision, at the Ministerial Preparatory Conference on Haiti, cautioned against an overemphasis on infrastructure at the cost of social services delivery for health, education, water and sanitation, and other core services. Otherwise, schools and clinics will be rebuilt but empty, or filled with sub-standard staff and equipment. The vision of territorial development in the National Action Plan includes economic revitalisation, functioning social services and decentralised governance across the country. But it will not take root without a process that invests in human capital and the ‘software’ needs of public institutions and services.

The importance of reconstructing infrastructure in Haiti is vital and self-evident. Training, budgeting, monitoring and managing interventions for which the infrastructure is prepared have equal importance, but do not appear to be emphasised in the same way. As well, the project-by-project vetting process by the Interim Commission on Reconstruction runs a high risk of institutionalising the infrastructure component, neglecting more subtle programmatic and sector-wide reforms in social services delivery, as well as governance strengthening, the economy, disaster risk reduction, and so forth. These

needs are not often strategically captured by any single project, but require joint strategies and programmes by the Government and partners to address sector-wide challenges – in other words, they require programme based approaches to frame them.

### Recommendations

World Vision calls for the following actions to be taken:

- World Vision strongly recommends that the Government of Haiti and international donors adopt a programme-based approach (PBA);
- The Government of Haiti to insist on capable and credible representation from international, non-governmental aid agencies in the Commission;
- The Government of Haiti, the UN and the World Bank, among others, to similarly support properly timed consultations with the private sector, civil society, partners and other stakeholders throughout the process – including regional consultations to guide decentralisation efforts and promote participatory decision-making; and
- The International Community to ensure a balance between infrastructure and ‘software’ needs, including through PBA-based management models by sector.

## Notes

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Men scavenge for scrap metal in the wreckage of a building destroyed in January's earthquake





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### More information

[www.wvi.org](http://www.wvi.org)  
[www.visionmundial.org](http://www.visionmundial.org)  
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