

Introduction

Haiti has historically been a nation plagued with political instability and significant socioeconomic challenges. From its original founding as the first successful slave revolt in the world in 1804, Haiti has been subject to considerable political unrest contributing to long-standing poverty and lack of necessary infrastructure. The most significant example of this was the Duvalier regime from 1957-1986, which involved the embezzlement of large sums of public funds and the unrestricted disbandment of any form of resistance through an expansive secret police force (International Crisis Group, 2021). Although conditions improved towards the end of the regime, significant protests and demonstrations forced the dictator, Jean-Claude Duvalier, to flee in 1986. Several interim governments were established until the 2000s, each characterized by instability and lack of foundation, collapsing just a few years after their inception. Eventually, with the help of the United States, Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide dismantled the Haitian military in pursuit of a more democratic and politically stable nation. Aristide continued to modernize Haiti, establishing free-market reforms for economic security and attempting to implement a US and UN sponsored police force using international loans. However, despite Aristide's efforts, Haiti continued to face severe political and economic problems. International aid sanctions implemented after the uneasy transfer of power during the 2000 elections further exacerbated the country's economic downward spiral. As protests and civil unrest grew, Aristide was forced to flee, leaving behind a polarized and weakened nation (Goldberg).

During the devastating 2008 hurricane season and the 2010 Haitian earthquake, which left over 200,000 people dead and displaced millions, the deep-rooted infrastructural weakness of Haiti became especially evident (Reliefweb, 2020). With a weak central government and a severe lack of resources, international aid was the only possible solution to the relief problem. However, with numerous NGOs and national governments such as the US operating without any form of centralized control, coordination became a pressing concern, resulting in the rapid

unraveling of relief efforts. Today, the 2010 earthquake response is characterized by a lack of efficiency and inadequate preparation.

Haiti reflects a unique humanitarian aid predicament; with little government influence, coordination and efficient allocation of relief resources across a wide array of humanitarian organizations is very difficult. However, if a large organization attempts to serve as a transitional government in order to alleviate coordination and logistical resource issues, corruption and civil unrest become much more prevalent. This became evident when MINUSTAH, a large UN organization created to ensure political security and promote human rights in Haiti, was eventually convicted of human rights atrocities against protestors and widespread usage of violence (Goldberg).

Although organizations such as MINUSTAH were failures in contributing to Haitian civil society, the underlying concept of dominant international NGOs focusing on constructing disaster preparation infrastructure is still viable. As a result, I believe that a memo directed at the UN and its integrated office in Haiti (BINUH) would be the most impactful to Haiti's future disaster relief program. The UN has historically been very active in Haiti through large-scale INGOs such as MINUSTAH. Although the organization was flawed in several aspects, the concept of an INGO for relief and infrastructure development is still an effective measure to protect Haiti's future political and humanitarian security. In addition, the United States, Haiti's largest contributor of monetary aid, can be driven by the UN to help institute programs to reduce the human and capital cost of future natural disasters in Haiti.

This policy memo aims to integrate successful disaster countermeasures utilized by Japan into Haiti, such as a more organized government disaster program and improved infrastructure. Japan is a country well-equipped to address severe earthquakes and tsunamis, and implementing such countermeasures into Haiti's relief sector would help ensure long-term disaster security. Japanese buildings and skyscrapers are constructed with a specific emphasis on earthquake resistance. In addition, awareness and preparation initiatives have standardized

a comprehensive earthquake response program among Japanese families, limiting earthquake damage on a national and individual level. Integrating similar policies in Haiti would allow the nation to minimize damage from inevitable future natural disasters and allow NGOs to slowly withdraw, developing a more autonomous and independent Haiti.

The premise of this memo is based on literature from Reiff and UN OCHA. Reiff's "In Bed for the night: Humanitarianism in crisis" (2002) provides an insight into the constraints of NGOs involved in addressing a crisis as well the role of altruism and corruption in the humanitarian sector, a relevant topic to this memo as Haiti experienced both beneficial and detrimental humanitarian aid. UN OCHA's Global Humanitarian Overview (2022) evaluates the financial state of humanitarianism worldwide, which is important in determining the financial feasibility and monetary cost of enacting such policies.

Humanitarian Crisis in Haiti: Overview

Haiti has struggled significantly with addressing natural disasters as a result of its weak government and lack of economic security, reflecting a national humanitarian crisis. These problems developed as a result of political corruption during the 20th century, prompting a heavy reliance on international organizations. Due to the severe civil rights violations and abuse of power during the Duvalier regime of the late 20th century, Haiti proposed a new constitution, with the central aim of preventing a corrupt authoritarian government (International Crisis Group, 2021) The new constitution also employed an expansive system of checks and balances, decentralizing government control. Although the possibility of future authoritarian rule was eliminated, the constitution led to the Haitian government becoming significantly weaker and less cohesive. As a result, Haiti became heavily dependent on international aid during the severe humanitarian crises of the 21st century. This overreliance on aid organizations would result in an ineffective nationwide relief initiative, as several different organizations would operate at once without defined roles, often getting in each other's way.

In September of 2008, Haiti was struck by four severe tropical storms: Hurricanes Fay, Gustav, Hannah, and Ike. Perito describes the nature of the disaster; the hurricanes devastated Haiti, leaving over 800 people dead and 500 more injured. 150,000 Haitians were also displaced as a result of the extensive flooding and high winds. The resulting damage to Haitian infrastructure was so significant that certain parts of the island were only accessible by helicopter, due to roads, cities, and towns being inundated with mud. The extensive mud damage left over 80% of the most affected cities' populations homeless. With many of the displaced forced to take shelter in school buildings, schools were closed indefinitely. A third of Haiti's rice crop was destroyed, wiping out Haiti's primary source of food and livestock, with destroyed farm equipment making recovering losses much more difficult. In addition, the hurricanes occurred during the harvest, meaning the coming year's crop would also be impacted due to loss of seeds and reserves. The devastated agricultural industry left millions at risk for starvation. International aid officials calculated that dwindling food supplies could lead to severe food riots like those earlier in the year, with little prospect for immediate repair.

A joint assessment of the crisis conducted by the European Union, the UN, and the World Bank concluded that the hurricanes wiped out more than 15% of Haiti's GDP through losses in infrastructure and industry, a devastating blow to the already struggling economy. With Haiti in no position to effectively address the crisis independently, an international coalition of NGOs and governmental aid organizations attempted to provide emergency monetary and humanitarian relief. The UN, US, and World Bank contributed a collective \$164 million towards general aid as well as more specific needs such as medical supplies and plastic sheeting. In addition, Congress allocated \$100 million to the Caribbean region under the Disaster Assistance and Continuing Appropriations Act, with \$97 million going directly to Haiti. However, the international response to the crisis fell short of the estimated \$1.2 billion relief package required to fully address the extensive damages. In addition, the monetary aid allocated towards Haiti was lacking in reference to other comparable crises in the Latin American region, with Hurricane

Mitch prompting a comprehensive long-term multi-billion dollar response program. John Holmes, the UN emergency relief coordinator concluded that less than half of the \$108 million dollar UN relief estimate was reached, emphasizing the lack of resources available for disaster alleviation (Perito, 2008). The 2008 hurricane crisis highlighted Haiti's severe lack of infrastructure to prevent flooding and further destruction, in addition to the lack of adequate funding to address the disaster.

While Haiti's economy and infrastructure was slowly recovering from the severe 2008 hurricane season, the nation was hit by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake, killing over 230,000 people and injuring 300,000 more (Reliefweb, 2019). Property and infrastructure were especially damaged due to the lack of adequate building code. With no foundation, buildings collapsed immediately, crushing occupants, a large contributor to the overall death toll (Goldberg). Governmental organizations such as USAID played a major role in monetary relief. 2 days after the earthquake struck, US president Barack Obama issued \$100 million towards immediate humanitarian assistance and relief efforts. By March 4th, this number had increased to a total of \$712.9 million, allocated towards providing food security, transition initiatives, and DOD assistance. Within 24 hours of the crisis, USAID deployed search and rescue teams in order to prevent further casualties and assess the situation. 12,000 military personnel were also deployed to assist in transportation of supplies, provide relief and rescue operations, as well as address casualties (Khan, 2022).

Despite the significant human and capital resources allocated towards the Haitian earthquake crisis response, there has been considerable criticism that the international response was far too slow. In the days after the earthquake, press reports commented on the critical lack of food and water, slow and inefficient search and rescue, and the almost complete absence of law and order. Oxfam, an internationally renowned NGO, was also involved in transactional sex work with earthquake victims, a severe violation of humanitarian aid and local law (Khan, 2022). In addition, a study conducted by Tulane University concluded that

international humanitarian aid for the earthquake was, in some cases, more harmful than beneficial, as a result of a lack of cohesion between NGOs and local organizations, contributing to the general theme of critical unorganization (Sylvestre et al.). The 2010 earthquake serves as yet another example of the consequences stemming from several organizations operating without defined roles, coupled with monetary constraints.

The 2008 Hurricane season and the 2010 Haitian earthquake relief responses were, although largely successful, faulted in numerous aspects. A lack of funding and the neglect of constructing long term disaster-preparedness infrastructure has led Haiti to be especially susceptible to future natural disasters. In addition, organizational difficulties and hindered coordination between aid organizations have proved to be severely detrimental to the relief response, resulting in an inefficient utilization of already scarce resources.

Policy Analysis

To attempt to address the lack of adequate natural disaster response programs in Haiti, I will draw influence from nations such as Japan who have a more established network of response initiatives and infrastructure to address similar crises.

On April 14, 2016, a series of powerful earthquakes estimated to be of magnitude 7.0, equivalent to the 2010 Haiti Earthquake, struck the Kumamoto Prefecture in Japan. However, despite the severity of the earthquake, Japan's comprehensive earthquake response and preparation initiatives limited the casualties of the quake to only 60 (Hashimoto, 2017). Although over 8000 residential buildings were destroyed, a majority of these were constructed prior to the 1981 modified building code, which emphasized seismic design provisions. The damages incurred by the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake reflected a major improvement in earthquake response and preparedness. For example, the 1996 Kobe Earthquake, which registered a similar 6.9 on the Richter scale, resulted in much more damage, killing over 6,000 citizens and destroying more than 100,000 homes (Japan Guide). Japan's earthquake infrastructure improvement programs targeted infrastructure that would be most affected: skyscrapers,

transportation, and convenience stores. Japan's earthquake response reflects resilience and a defined effort to implement programs to mitigate damages from future crises. Haiti is particularly lacking in this aspect, as the country has not modified its building code sufficiently to prevent repeat disasters of such scale. As a result, natural disasters are far more damaging to the economy and take much longer to recover from, which is a significant concern to Haiti's already weakened economy.

The extensive improvement and revamp of building codes proved to be an essential element for adequate earthquake preparation. Japan's cities are composed of tightly packed skyscrapers to allow for a more effective use of limited land. Although beneficial for living space and max capacity, taller buildings are highly susceptible to earthquake damage as they experience more violent swaying during a quake. However, Japan has implemented complex systems of weight distribution and counterbalances to reduce swaying in the event of an earthquake. For example, Japan's tallest skyscraper, which preceded major building code changes in 1981, swayed over a meter on either side during the 2011 earthquake. To prevent such significant movement and the potential of the tower collapsing in a future quake, the city constructed a 300 ton device on the roof of the building that reduced swaying by over 50%. In addition, this device was cost-effective and relatively easy to implement as it was non-intrusive to the building's foundation or interior (Prime Minister's Office of Japan, 2017). Although Haiti does not have skyscrapers, implementing similar engineering developments in important government buildings and hospitals would allow for Haiti to still maintain essential buildings even during a natural disaster, allowing for a more streamlined relief effort.

In addition, Japan has a comprehensive resource allocation protocol to transfer necessary resources and essential items to people in need quickly and effectively after a disaster occurs. Japan's main source of necessities and food products are convenience stores, found commonly in all prefectures. The convenience stores stock items that are very useful during an earthquake, such as cheap, nutrient-dense food, as well as essentials such as

clothing or personal care items. During an earthquake, a detailed and organized plan is enacted which distributes resources from the North of the distribution center to the South in a systematic manner, alleviating all supply chain complications that typically occur during a crisis. Haiti would greatly benefit from a similar system. With no defined resource distribution program and NGOs operating independently and in an uncoordinated fashion, severe logistical complications arise during a disaster.

Once an earthquake strikes, affected individuals go to dedicated disaster shelters and temporary living quarters to provide a safe placeholder space until more permanent living arrangements are established. This practice is exercised in many nations around the world during a crisis. However, these shelters can quickly become overcrowded, resulting in a lack of privacy and the potential spread of disease. Japan has developed a portable tent that can cheaply and easily be constructed from locally sourced materials to be used in disaster shelters. These tents create a more orderly and efficient living space, while protecting privacy and preventing the spread of disease (Prime Minister's Office of Japan, 2017). This is especially useful in Haiti, which has suffered through severe cholera outbreaks (Britannica).

To consistently address earthquakes more effectively in the future, Japan implements building regulations and infrastructure improvements based on failures in prior earthquakes. For example, subsequent tremors and secondary quakes can occur hours to days after the initial quake, causing sometimes even more damage. To combat this, the Japanese building code has ensured that newly constructed buildings should be able to withstand the strongest seismic activity on the Japanese earthquake scale numerous times, accounting for secondary waves. In addition, to account for fires, which have devastated Japan after earthquakes in the past, houses are now constructed with inflammable materials. This ideal of continuous improvement would be highly beneficial to Haiti, which has not implemented sufficient protocol and infrastructure improvement to prevent future disasters.

Policy Recommendations

With Japan as a reference point, Haiti should implement several policies in order to promote a more comprehensive disaster response program in addition to long-term relief programs and infrastructure. They are as follows:

- *Create a detailed registry accounting for all international and domestic humanitarian organizations with clearance to operate in Haiti.* This would prevent inefficiencies in the aid process as historically, several organizations have attempted to address a natural disaster crisis at once, creating unnecessary conflict between organizations and logistical complications. Japanese convenience stores successfully working together in a crisis to distribute resources provides the basis for the future success of this provision.
- *Coordinate with the Haitian government to establish a conference involving representatives from all humanitarian actors in Haiti to discuss the specific role each organization plays in Haitian civil society.* This provision will promote more cohesion between the various unaffiliated humanitarian organizations operating in Haiti. In addition, involving the Haitian government allows organizations to identify a single leading group, creating a more effective humanitarian sector. This policy is based on literature from David Reiff as well as prior successes in Japan. Reiff asserts that media coverage and sympathy for a disaster is related to the familiarity the reader has with the crisis. For example, 9/11 sparked a significantly larger international outcry than the Rwandan Genocide, despite the Genocide killing much more people (Reiff, 2002), Creating a coalition of aid organizations in Haiti will prompt more media attention than isolated organizations providing aid, subsequently resulting in more donor funding, which is essential to Haiti's weak economy. Japan also employs a similar organization composed of convenience stores, allocating a convenience store or distribution center to a particular area, streamlining the relief process.
- *Implement and enforce a Haiti-specified version of the Shin-Taishin 1981 building code utilized in Japan.* Despite significant damage during the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, no

defined building code was established or regularly enforced to prevent future damage. This reflects a lack of improvement in earthquake response and preparedness, preventing Haiti from progressing and releasing humanitarian organizations within the country (Pearson, 2021). Despite skyscrapers not being present in Haiti to implement policy similar to Japan's provisions for taller buildings, the nation's residential building code could be potentially improvised to function in Haiti. The Shin-Taishin 1981 Japanese building code is a collection of comprehensive and detailed regulations regarding the construction of buildings to withstand seismic activity. It requires all residential buildings to be able to withstand the highest magnitude recorded on the Japanese scale in addition to protecting occupants from potential injury. A clear distinction between approved and unapproved buildings and prior outdated homes in the real estate market establish effective means to enforce earthquake resistant homes (Real Estate Japan, 2017). This is because it could potentially be lucrative for homeowners to invest in earthquake-resistance renovations to increase home value. Lobbying the Haitian government to implement such regulations would be helpful towards Haiti's long term resistance to earthquakes as well as lessening the dependence on international humanitarian aid.

Conclusion

The political and economic weakness of Haiti resulting from decades of political corruption and lack of a strong centralized government has left the nation increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters. Due to Haiti's geographical location, earthquakes and hurricanes occur commonly, leaving the nation in an almost constant state of requiring aid. The recommendations in this memo allow for disasters to be addressed more effectively, in addition to improving infrastructure to build a future where Haiti no longer requires humanitarian aid. Although the UN integrated office for Haiti, BINUH, has resources and personnel necessary to enact these policy changes, the local government could prove to be unwilling to provide

assistance or legal permission to enact such changes. However, the UN has a negative track record in Haiti after the MINUSTAH human rights allegations, which could potentially lead the Haitian government to prevent these provisions from being implemented. Lobbying will prove to be an important asset to provide the details of the plan and its projected effectiveness to the local government, ideally gaining access to operate within the country. If granted permission, implementing these changes will be the first step forward to developing Haiti into an independent and economically secure nation in the long run.

UNOCHA's Global Humanitarian Overview is especially important to fully understand the extent of the Haitian plight for humanitarian aid. It compares the status of humanitarian aid and the current needs of Haiti to other nations, providing insight into the significance of the crisis, and the urgent need to allocate UN funds. For example, the Global Humanitarian Overview states that 43% of Haiti's population is in need of humanitarian aid, emphasizing the urgent need for the UN to work towards developing a more independent and secure nation. Reiff's "In Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis" provides a theory-based analysis of the impact uniting humanitarian organizations in Haiti would have. Reiff's book suggests that organizing humanitarian actors under a single governing force or establishing a regulated coalition would increase media attention by legitimizing the crisis and hence solicit more donations. This is another added benefit of implementing the policies provided by this memo as Haiti is low on funding with a lack of nationwide economic security. In addition, these policies would help pursue a long term solution to Haiti's inadequate crisis response and help build a future where Haiti can effectively combat natural disasters independently and ensure long term economic and political security.

Bibliography

- Action against Hunger. "10 Years On: Haiti's Devastating Earthquake." ReliefWeb. Last modified January 12, 2020. Accessed July 30, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/10-years-haitis-devastating-earthquake>.
- "EARTHQUAKE BUILDING CODES AND TECHNOLOGY IN JAPAN." Real Estate Japan. Last modified November 22, 2017. Accessed July 30, 2022. <https://resources.realestate.co.jp/buy/earthquake-building-codes-and-technology-in-japan/>
- "Earthquakes." Japan Guide. Accessed July 30, 2022. <https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2116.html>.
- Goldberg, Maren. "Military regimes and the Duvaliers." Britannica. Accessed July 30, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alfred-Metraux>.
- Hashimoto, Manabu. "Special issue '2016 Kumamoto earthquake sequence and its impact on earthquake science and hazard assessment.'" Springeropen. Last modified 7 24, 2017. Accessed July 30, 2022. <https://earth-planets-space.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40623-017-0682-7>.
- "Japan: Designed for Recovery [Full version]." Cloud video, 21:55. Youtube. Posted by Prime Minister's Office of Japan, September 22, 2017. Accessed July 30, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNFHd_a5tjQ.
- Khan, Adnan. "Humanitarianism in Haiti." Knightlab. Last modified July 24, 2022. Accessed July 30, 2022. https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1_xb0VihGvgfbCEUingej046_q205wa5XdTaCWnIw3BY&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650.
- Pearson, Samantha. "Quake-Hit Haiti Failed to Learn Building Lessons After 2010 Disaster." The Wall Street Journal. Last modified August 19, 2021. Accessed July 30, 2022. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/quake-hit-haiti-failed-to-learn-building-lessons-after-2010-disaster-11629402778>.
- Perito, Robert M. "Haiti After the Storms: Weather and Conflict." United States Institute for Peace. Last modified November 11, 2008. Accessed July 30, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2008/11/haiti-after-storms-weather-and-conflict>.
- Sylvestre, Nelson. "UEH Tulane DRLA Haiti Humanitarian Aid Evaluation ENGLISH May 2012.pdf." Last modified May 2012. PDF.
- "10 years after the earthquake." ReliefWeb. Last modified December 20, 2019. Accessed July 30, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/10-years-after-earthquake>.

International Crisis Group. "Haiti: A Path to Stability for a Nation in Shock." International Crisis Group, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep36471>.

Ignatieff, Michael. "Introduction" and "Chapter 1". In *Empire lite: Nation-building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* London: Vintage, 2003

UN OCHA. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2022*. New York: United Nations, 2021.