

INTRODUCTION

1. **Members of the IASC Emergency Directors Group (EDG)¹ travelled to Haiti from 2 to 5 November 2016 to review the humanitarian situation one month on from Hurricane Matthew, to take stock of current operational challenges and to identify additional support requirements.** The mission included meetings with humanitarian leadership and partners, as well as donors and senior representatives of the Government of Haiti. The team visited the two worst-affected Departments, Grand'Anse and Sud, where they met with affected people and humanitarians at the front line of the response effort.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

2. **Mission members saw first-hand the destruction caused by the Hurricane in the south-west of the country.** In Jérémie, the team visited a school hosting an unconfirmed number of people whose homes had been damaged or destroyed. Humanitarian conditions were appalling, with extremely limited sanitation facilities, significant overcrowding and very serious protection concerns, including around gender-based violence. The Emergency Directors spoke to affected people who wanted to return to their homes but needed support to do so. As was the case in other locations, authorities were eager to evacuate the site to allow school to resume and to enable the building to be used as a polling centre for elections scheduled to begin on 20 November, without necessarily ensuring the voluntariness of these returns. Authorities were also said to be opposed to the establishment of facilities for fear of encouraging the use of public buildings as places for longer term shelter. Humanitarian partners were planning a pilot project to target aid in return areas to encourage movement out of relocation sites, but stressed that assistance must be provided in relocation sites in parallel, in part to mitigate the risk of epidemic outbreaks.

3. **Response to the widespread shelter needs was complicated by gaps in data and by Government sensitivities around the provision of tents.** More than 140,000 people were estimated to be in official shelters and partners warned that a similar number may be staying with host families or in informal sites. The Emergency Directors observed extensive damage to homes in villages around Jérémie and Les Cayes.

4. **With the most severe damage in rural and peri-urban areas, and the November planting season ongoing, the impact of the Hurricane on agriculture was of particular concern.** In Les Cayes, the team travelled through agricultural land on which crops had been destroyed and where debris and lack of seeds continued to prevent planting. The team was also briefed on livestock losses and extensive damage in the fisheries sector. It was stressed that sustained support for agricultural recovery was needed, with the March planting season – which typically accounted for 50 per cent of annual food stocks – identified as a critical milestone.

5. **In the health sector, key priorities included the restoration of access to health services, including cholera treatment centres, disease surveillance and response to outbreaks.** In Grand'Anse,

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close to half of the Department's health facilities had either been severely damaged or completely destroyed. Thirty per cent of cholera treatment centres had also been damaged across the five worst-affected departments. The Hurricane had caused a major spike in cholera cases, including the worst outbreak since 2010/11 in Sud Department, although the deployment of additional rapid response teams had since brought the number of new cases below levels seen in the months prior to the Hurricane. Partners were also preparing to roll out a major cholera vaccination campaign. However, they stressed the considerable risks that this campaign carries in the current emergency context with significant logistical and security concerns. The need for sustained funding across the medium and longer terms, including investment in the country's health infrastructure was also highlighted. Malaria was another key health concern, with Grand'Anse accounting for 40 per cent of the overall malaria burden in the country and a peak in cases expected towards the end of November. The team visited a mobile health clinic in Arniquet, outside Les Cayes, which had attracted a large number of people, primarily women and children.

6. **Water and sanitation continued to represent critical challenges, with the Hurricane further aggravating extensive pre-existing structural gaps.** The Emergency Directors were informed that just 28 per cent of the country's population was estimated to have had access to improved sanitation facilities in 2015. The lack of sanitation facilities in the relocation centre visited was of significant concern. The team visited water treatment projects in Jérémie and outside Les Cayes, providing critical safe water.

7. **Security was consistently identified as among the most pressing operational challenges.** Several partners reported looting of supplies and there was particular concern around the risk of violence during food distributions. Days before the team arrived, a 10-year-old child had been killed when police open fire on a crowd at a distribution in Les Cayes, in the second such incident in less than a week. The ability of the police to contribute to a safe environment for the provision of assistance had been negatively impacted by the Hurricane itself. MINUSTAH also had an important role to play, but the Mission's resources would be increasingly drawn away from areas affected by the Hurricane to support the elections due to take place on 20 November. The team highlighted these concerns when they met with the SRS for MINUSTAH. She assured them that the Mission would seek to minimise the impact on aid operations, but that an interruption of support would be unavoidable during the election period.

8. **Gaps around coordination were also highlighted at several levels.** The willingness of the Government to assume leadership for the response was welcomed, but there was concern that the inability to activate clusters was contributing to significant challenges around information management and broader operational coordination at the sectoral level, as well as hindering inter-sectoral coordination and fundraising efforts more broadly. The upcoming elections were seen as increasing risks around the politicisation of aid. The Emergency Directors highlighted these concerns during discussions with the Director-General of the Ministry of Interior – the government department with overall leadership for the response effort.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9. **Despite the operational challenges and the limited financial resources available, the Emergency Directors were encouraged by the quality of the humanitarian programming they saw.** Pre-positioning had played a key role and the importance of broader response preparedness was highlighted several times. The response in the food, health and water sectors was seen as impressive.

However the Emergency Directors observed major gaps around shelter, sanitation, protection, gender and community engagement. A shortage of protection capacity was especially apparent, and of great concern in view of the situation in relocation sites and indications that some of the most vulnerable people were unable to access assistance, although some child protection and GBV personnel had recently been deployed to affected areas. Nutrition was also highlighted as an area in which scaled up support would soon become critical.

10. **The recent deployment of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator and OCHA Emergency Response Team were seen as key steps towards improved coordination, and of enhancement of the response in the south of the country.** There was also a sense that confidence between the Government and humanitarians was growing, providing a basis for a more effective partnership moving forward. Improved data and information management, and accelerated delivery were among the key priorities. There was an expectation that improved coordination and strategic alignment would also encourage increased international and national NGO engagement. The Emergency Directors stressed that government objections to the formal activation of clusters should not preclude the immediate deployment of dedicated sectoral coordination capacity, which would be required through the first quarter of 2017.

11. **The Emergency Directors took note of challenges linked to the fact that the natural disaster had primarily affected rural areas, creating considerable logistical challenges.** This was further reinforced during a long drive to Arniquet, outside Les Cayes. Several times over the course of the mission, the Emergency Directors were told that large numbers of people in remote areas had received no aid whatsoever one month into the response, due to physical access constraints.

12. **The Emergency Directors stressed the importance of building on the good work being done in the agriculture sector, and noted that a failure to provide adequate support up until the critical March 2017 planting season could have catastrophic implications for recovery and food security.** There were seen to be opportunities to support the resumption of cultivation as well as other income generation activities, involving relative modest investments, which should be promoted. It was also noted that delays in effectively addressing needs in rural areas around shelter and basic services could result in large-scale movement of people towards cities and towns, complicating future responses.

13. **The immediate development of a minimum shelter response package was seen as critical, in view of unacceptable conditions in relocation centres, and pressure on local authorities to empty these sites.** The need for vocal advocacy around the prospect of forced return as well as inhumane conditions and broader protection concerns within relocation sites was also strongly emphasised, including during interactions with the authorities.

14. **The Emergency Directors highlighted the importance of taking full advantage of opportunities to approach the response from a resilience and multi-sector settlements perspective, and of development actors contributing to building back better.** This was an important priority for senior government interlocutors, who called for both “hard” (i.e. material) and “soft” (i.e. technical capacity building) support, including at the local administration level in Les Cayes and Jeremie.

15. **The Emergency Directors agreed that the humanitarian community should seek to capitalize on donors’ interest in Grand Bargain implementation in Haiti, particularly in view of the weak donor response to date.** It was noted that Haiti potentially presented an excellent model for a new way of

working, involving early engagement of development actors, including through PDNA process. This was seen as critical to avoiding continued repetitive cycles of humanitarian action. It was agreed that a concrete vision around key Grand Bargain work streams, including cash programming, should be presented to donors as a basis for further discussion. It was also stressed that donor outreach should emphasise the good work that was already taking place.

Key recommendations and next steps

- Emergency Directors to mobilize scaled-up cluster and NGO capacity, particularly in the areas of shelter, WASH and overarching information management [*immediate*]
- Emergency Directors to ensure deployment to affected areas of additional capacity for protection programming and coordination [*immediate*]
- DHC to lead the development of an action plan setting out a minimum shelter response package [*immediate*]
- Emergency Directors to engage donors around key Grand Bargain work streams and the potential of Haiti to serve as a pilot for a new way of working with development actors to reduce needs and aid dependency [*immediate*]
- Emergency Directors to proactively support resource mobilization efforts, highlighting in particular the good work already underway in several key sectors, and the urgency of the situation [*immediate*]