

A Critical Review of the US State Department's 2015 Progress Report on Haiti

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Executive Summary

Signed into law on August 8, 2014, the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act (APHA) seeks to “measure the progress of recovery and development efforts in Haiti” since the devastating earthquake of January 2010. Conceived in response to widespread concerns regarding the mixed results and opacity of postquake relief and reconstruction efforts, the APHA’s key actionable component is its reporting requirement instructing the US State Department to produce four annual reports with detailed information on the status of US aid programs in Haiti. If properly executed, these reports should greatly enhance transparency and accountability around the \$3.6 billion that the US government has allocated for Haiti aid since the earthquake.

This review provides a description of the APHA and its objectives, offers a quick overview of the contents of the two State Department progress reports published so far, and identifies significant omissions and deficiencies in these reports, focusing on the second report (for 2015). While the reports have proven to be useful tools for understanding how US assistance funds are used in Haiti, there are a number of shortfalls worth highlighting:

- **Incomplete information:** There is a significant quantity of missing data at the subprime level, equivalent to 34 percent of the \$300 million awarded to subprime partners. In addition, there are many vague terms and assertions that require more context and details to be fully understood.
- **No clear links between projects and outcomes:** The report fails to provide information about what benchmarks and goals have and have not been met at the project level, despite providing numerous other details (amounts expended, identity and location of subprime partners, etc.).
- **No clear picture of who the beneficiaries of US assistance are:** The report provides very little information regarding who (e.g., location or demographics) the beneficiaries of US assistance programs are.
- **Scant information on US coordination with Haitian and international entities:** The APHA instructs the State Department to provide a description of US efforts to “consult and engage with the Government of Haiti ministries and local authorities on the establishment of goals and timeframes, and on the design and implementation of new programs....” There is relatively little information in the report describing these efforts, either because the reporting is incomplete or because this sort of coordination is limited.
- **No information on nongovernmental capacity building:** Though the APHA legislation asks the State Department to describe measures taken to strengthen governmental and

nongovernmental capacity to undertake US programs, there is no information whatsoever in the report on any sort of nongovernmental capacity building.

- A failure to identify mistakes and lessons learned: The most concerning shortcoming of the State Department reports is the fact that they present glowing descriptions of progress that are difficult to reconcile with realities on the ground. The reports' failure to identify errors and shortfalls in the implementation of assistance programs or to discuss measures taken to address these problems undermines the purpose of the APHA report and the objective of providing "transparent post program evaluations."

Finally, Haitian civil society groups were contacted to register their feedback regarding the APHA report. This effort was greatly limited by the fact that Haitian groups are largely unaware of the APHA reports, suggesting that USAID and the State Department have done little to familiarize groups with the reports. In addition, no part of the reports has been translated into French or Kreyòl, rendering them inaccessible to the vast majority of Haitians. Select sections of the report were shared with groups, who provided some feedback and numerous questions in response, all of which are included in this review.

The review concludes with a series of recommendations for improving future APHA reports that we hope are taken into account by USAID and the State Department.

Introduction

On August 8, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act (APHA), first introduced to Congress by Representative Barbara Lee in 2011. This piece of legislation, in the words of its drafters, seeks to “measure the progress of recovery and development efforts in Haiti following the earthquake of January 12, 2010.”¹ Members of the Haiti Advocacy Working Group (HAWG), a group of US-based organizations that came together immediately after Haiti’s devastating earthquake, provided key input to US legislators during the drafting of this legislation and strongly supported its passage in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Over two years have passed since the enactment of the APHA, and HAWG members, while recognizing the significant advances that have been made, consider that more can be done to ensure that the APHA is an effective tool for strengthening transparency and accountability around the over \$3.6 billion that the US government has allocated for Haiti aid since the earthquake.

The key actionable component of the law is its reporting requirement, instructing the US State Department to produce four annual reports providing detailed information on the status of US aid programs in Haiti — underway or completed since the enactment of the law — as well as on any changes to the US government’s aid strategy in Haiti.

Since the passage of the APHA, the State Department has produced two such progress reports. The first report, providing a status of US aid programs in Haiti at the end of 2014, was posted on the State Department’s website in early 2015.² The second report was published in late December of 2015.³

The following review will provide a brief description of the APHA and its objectives and then focus on the second report mandated by the legislation, looking at what improvements have been made since the first report and where there are still serious gaps and deficiencies in the State Department’s assessment of US aid efforts. This analysis will also discuss feedback from Haitian partners regarding the 2015 APHA report and will conclude by offering concrete recommendations on how to make the progress reports more complete, clear, and user-friendly, and on how to better implement key policy guidelines.

1 US Congress (2013).

2 US State Department (2014).

3 US State Department (2015).

What is the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act?

The APHA arose from profound concerns — raised by Haitian civil society groups, Haitian diaspora organizations, international Haiti advocates, and by the media — regarding the very mixed results and opaque nature of international relief and reconstruction efforts following Haiti's devastating 2010 earthquake. Scathing General Accounting Office (GAO) reports on US infrastructure programs (the planned port in the North of Haiti and the postquake housing programs) published in 2013 created added impetus for establishing stronger accountability mechanisms.⁴ In a rare show of bipartisan unity, members of the Congressional Black Caucus, led by Barbara Lee, together with leading Democrats and Republicans from the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, worked together to pass the APHA.

The centerpiece of the legislation is its reporting requirements, which are both far-reaching and quite specific, and require that the State Department provide both quantitative and qualitative descriptions of aid programs. The sheer mass of information — organized into 17 attachments for the first report, and 15 attachments for the second report — is by no means easy to publish in a manageable and coherent form. But perhaps the greatest challenge involves having the State Department perform a function that it doesn't frequently engage in, or at least not publicly: applying a critical lens to foreign assistance operations.

The second salient feature of the legislation is the manner in which it sets forth important policy parameters — both in its policy section and in its reporting requirements — including certain policies that were not previously in place, at least not officially. For instance, the “Statement of Policy” (Section 3) calls for long-term capacity-building support for both Haiti’s government and civil society, the provision of “timely and comprehensive reporting on goals and progress, as well as transparent post program evaluations and contracting data” and the prioritizing of “local procurement of goods and services.”

Similarly, the APHA’s reporting requirements (Section 5) promote specific policy prescriptions for US Haiti assistance, as when the law calls for “a description of mechanisms for communicating the progress of recovery and development efforts to the people of Haiti, including a description of efforts to provide documentation, reporting, and procurement information in Haitian Creole,” or for “a description of United States efforts to consult and engage with Government of Haiti ministries and local authorities on the establishment of goals and timeframes.” Thus, the APHA

⁴ US Government Accountability Office (2013).

effectively mandates the creation of new mechanisms of communication and coordination with Haitian authorities and civil society groups.

If properly implemented, these policy guidelines combined with the transparency and accountability mechanisms found in the APHA's reporting requirements could pave the way for major reform of US assistance programs in Haiti.

However, while the implementation of the APHA represents significant progress, the State Department's compliance with reporting requirements and with the law's policy guidelines is still far from optimal, as will be demonstrated.

What the APHA Reports Help Us Understand About US Aid Programs in Haiti

There is no doubt that the two APHA reports published so far have proven to be useful tools for understanding how US assistance funds are used in Haiti. They have provided an unprecedented amount of information about what is occurring in US assistance to Haiti at the subprime level. Typically, transparency around US foreign assistance only extends to USAID's primary partners — i.e., the contractors and grantees that are the direct recipients of US assistance funds.⁵ Generally USAID provides little or no public information regarding subprime partners, i.e., companies or organizations that receive US funds channeled by primary partners. It is often these subprime agents that are most directly involved in the implementation of aid programs.

However, APHA requires the State Department to report on how funds are being used at both the prime and subprime levels of aid implementation, and attachment B of both the 2014 and 2015 APHA reports provide numerous useful details regarding each USAID-funded project in Haiti including (in the majority of cases) a quick description of each project; the names of the prime and subprime agents working on each project; the start and end dates of each project; the amount of funds committed, obligated, and disbursed for each project; and the budget allocated to each subprime agent.

As a result of specific suggestions made by congressional offices following the publication of the 2014 APHA report, attachment B of the 2015 APHA report contains additional details regarding

⁵ Johnston and Main (2013).

each project. This includes “milestones” achieved to date, the country origin of each subprime partner (which allows aid monitors to better gauge the amount of funding going to local versus non-local organizations) and, perhaps most importantly, each project description includes a reference to a relevant section of attachment D (the report’s “strategy overview” document) outlining the status of strategic objectives for particular assistance programs at different stages in their implementation. These additions are helpful in providing a more complete picture of how US aid programs have been unfolding in Haiti. However, there are still significant gaps in the information provided, as will be explained below.

Other sections of the APHA reports shed significant light on the various dimensions of US assistance to Haiti. Attachment D provides a wealth of information regarding aid plans and objectives within each of the four pillars of the Haiti aid strategy (infrastructure and energy, food and economic security, health and other basic services, and governance and rule of law). Attachment E provides responses to a section of the APHA reporting requirements (3(B) – 3(E)) and useful information on capacity building and institution-building efforts in support of basic health services; on USAID’s postearthquake housing strategy, and how it was completely revised in 2014; on plans for improvement to the port of Cap Haitien; a description of risk-mitigating measures to avoid exposing US assistance programs to waste, fraud, and abuse; as well as other items.

Attachment F of the 2015 APHA report describes efforts to strengthen Haitian governmental and nongovernmental capacity to directly take on US-funded programs. Attachment G briefly describes efforts to consult with Haitian authorities regarding design and implementation of aid programs and attachment I discusses US supported anticorruption and public accountability efforts in Haiti. Additional attachments respond to other sections of the APHA’s reporting requirements, including what USAID is doing to promote public-private partnerships and increase the involvement of the Haitian private sector in assistance efforts (attachment J); what it is doing to address the needs of vulnerable populations in the design and implementation of programs (attachment K); a description of the impact that agriculture and infrastructure programs are having on food security and on small landholders (attachment L); what is being done to communicate more information regarding US aid programs to the people of Haiti (attachment M); what the Haitian government is doing to improve its capacity to receive Haitian deportees from the US; and, an assessment of the actions that, according to the State Department, need to be taken by Haitian authorities in order to move forward with the postearthquake strategy jointly agreed to by the US and Haitian governments (attachment O).

Though these various sections of the APHA report furnish useful and often previously unknown details regarding US assistance to Haiti, a lot of key information is still missing, as will be explained in the next section.

An Incomplete Picture of US Haiti Assistance

This overview of the deficiencies and shortcomings encountered while reviewing the 2015 APHA report will identify specific sets of problems and provide illustrative examples. Among other issues, the report presents incomplete information (missing data and vague descriptions), a failure to link projects with outcomes, and a failure to identify lessons learned. Overall, the report leaves the impression that its authors are more concerned with superficially complying with specific reporting requirements (checking boxes) and with presenting the most positive picture possible of US assistance than with providing the public with an honest, rigorous assessment of the status of aid programs in Haiti.

1. Incomplete Information

Two types of omissions stand out in the APHA report. First, there are easily identifiable holes in the data, particularly in attachment B. Second, there are, in many instances, vague terms and assertions that are virtually meaningless without more details.

As discussed previously, attachment B, the section of the APHA report with the most comprehensive information on assistance on the project level, includes more useful details in the second (2015) report than in the first (2014) report. However it still has a great deal of incomplete data.

In response to suggestions made by Congressional members, the State Department has published additional information on the use of subprime awardees in attachment B. Notably, data on the country location of the headquarters of subprime partners was provided for the first time, allowing an analysis of the amount of local procurement taking place, and of the use of local contractors. However, a significant amount of this data is still missing. Of the roughly \$300 million that the report indicates was awarded to subcontractors, 34 percent is listed as “N/A” or “not available.” In

these instances, there is often no information on the subprime awardee, nor is a project description provided, nor is there any explanation of why this information isn't available.

Of perhaps greater concern are the many vague terms and assertions in the report that leave the reader guessing about important details regarding US assistance programs. A few quick examples:

- Attachment E states that USAID provided “shelter solutions” for around 328,000 of those displaced by the 2010 earthquake, but fails to offer details on what these “solutions” might be. Does a “shelter solution” signify a sustainable, long-term remedy? Can it be as little as a tent or even a tarp? Does it include rental vouchers? These details are critical to understanding what the real impact of USAID’s housing programs may have been.
- Attachment F, which describes US-supported local capacity-building efforts, mentions that the US Treasury has embedded technical advisors in Haiti’s Ministry of Finance to “improve public financial management and economic governance” but fails to tell us who these advisors are, whom they report to, and what tasks they are involved in. Nor is there any information regarding “technical assistance” provided to other ministries and government offices.
- Attachment L states that US assistance has contributed to “strengthening of markets” for Haitian agriculture, without telling us whether these are local markets or international markets. It also discusses linking Haitian farmers with buyers, without any details of whether these buyers are Haitian or foreign. These are important details for those wishing to have a clearer picture of whether US agricultural assistance is focused on building external or internal markets for Haitian farmers, or both.
- Attachment M asserts that the USAID Mission in Haiti “translates into French and Creole information relevant to local stakeholders.” It would be helpful to know what information is considered “relevant” here, especially as Haitian civil society groups that were contacted have criticized what they view as the opacity of US assistance efforts in Haiti (as will be discussed further in the last section of this report).

2. No Clear Link Between Projects and Outcomes

As mentioned earlier, the APHA report’s attachment D provides information on the objectives and real achievements that USAID reports having made within each of the four strategic pillars of the postquake Haiti aid strategy. This attachment — which contrasts 18-month goals with 18-month

outcomes, and 5-year goals with the current status of aid efforts — offers probably the closest thing to a critical review of where assistance programs have succeeded in achieving predetermined goals and where they have fallen short. It looks at each “strategic component” within the Haiti strategy and contrasts the 18-month goal of each component with the actual 18-month outcome, and the 5-year goal with the current status of the component (as of September 30, 2015).

While there is much useful information that gives a sense of where USAID assistance efforts have been relatively successful and where they have fallen short of goals, the “strategic components” and “strategic objectives” often cover broad areas of assistance (e.g., “shelter solutions for Internally Displaced Persons”) and the descriptions of outcomes and current status are often exceedingly vague (e.g., “The USG has met and is in the process of exceeding the goal for this area”).

Perhaps the biggest issue here, for those hoping for a detailed account of whether benchmarks and goals are being met, is the fact that the APHA report fails to provide this information at the project level. The obvious place to do this would be in attachment B, which provides many other useful (though sometimes incomplete) details at the project level, as described above. With this information, it would be possible to form an idea of which contractors and grantees have succeeded in meeting benchmarks and goals and which haven’t.

Last year, members of the US Congress requested that “future reports provide further details in the list of projects [in attachment B], including ... projects’ relation to the benchmarks and goals outlined elsewhere in [attachment C of] the report.” It appears, however, that there has been little effort to accomplish this apart from references to sections of attachment D that are not project-specific and instead cover broader aid areas.

There is also no information on the sustainability of specific projects. For example, many projects listed have long been completed, but the reader has little idea what, if any, enduring impact they have had. The clear intent of the APHA is to increase accountability and transparency in US foreign aid to Haiti, but without any information on the success or failures of specific contractors and projects, it will remain difficult to hold any actor accountable.

3. No Clear Picture of Who the Beneficiaries of US Assistance Are

Another piece of information frequently missing throughout the APHA report is a proximate identification of the beneficiaries of US assistance, e.g., where they are located and what demographics they belong to.

This is the case throughout the description of US assistance projects in attachment B, where there is no sort of information on the beneficiaries of the programs. It is also the case in other sections of the report where there is generally little or no information on beneficiaries beyond sheer numbers.

For instance, in attachment L, USAID reports that “Feed the Future” (FTF) programs will benefit approximately 80,000 farmers. However, “farmers” is not a homogeneous group and, since there is no description of the criteria for selecting project beneficiaries or the demographics of these farmers, there is no indication if the 80,000 farmers include the poor farmers, individuals, and members of farming associations for whom FTF funding would represent seed money for new investments. It is also unclear if project beneficiaries have evolved since the earthquake, or if building the capacity of smallholder farmers over time so that they can successfully access USAID funding is key to the strategy. Having this information would allow the reader to better ascertain if USAID prioritizes the democratization of access to aid to the same degree as cost-efficient project outcomes, and that it is meeting the APHA policy requirement of building “the long term capacity and civil society and reflects the priorities and needs of both women and men so that they may participate equally and to their maximum capacity” (Section 3).

4. Scant Information on US Coordination and Consultation with Haitian and International Entities

A particularly glaring problem affecting postquake relief and reconstruction efforts, as reported by many media outlets and Haiti observers, was the lack of coordination between public and private international aid organizations and between these organizations and Haitian government agencies. This lack of coordination led to frequent duplication of efforts, inefficient aid delivery, and a lack of cohesion and effective pooling of resources, among other serious problems. This is almost certainly one of the reasons that led the drafters of the APHA to ask the State Department to provide “a description of United States efforts to consult and engage with Government of Haiti ministries and

local authorities on the establishment of goals and timeframes, and on the design and implementation of new programs under the Post-Earthquake USG Haiti Strategy” (Section 5).

Attachment G of the APHA report provides an informative breakdown of some of the key areas where the US government is coordinating assistance efforts with the Haitian government. The document makes mention of ongoing collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and Population and unidentified local mayors. Attachment F describes other joint efforts undertaken with the Haitian National Police, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the Minister Delegate of Peasantry, the National Unit of Abagrangou, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the Management and Human Resources Office.

While these bilateral cooperation efforts appear to be significant, it is disappointing to note that the APHA report presents scant additional details on the involvement of Haitian institutions, or even merely on the consultation of Haitian institutions in the development of assistance programs that touch on areas of intervention of state agencies.

To take one example, attachment L describes assistance programs that involve significant infrastructure projects to assist Haitian farmers, but there is no mention of coordination with Haiti’s Ministry of Agriculture. In the same attachment, there are descriptions of USAID’s work with “water users associations to build their capacity to manage irrigation systems and manage any disputes related to association management or allocation of irrigation water.” Water use management in Haiti is a critical issue due to extremely underdeveloped or deteriorated infrastructure, and due to severe water access problems.

Haiti’s National Directorate for Water Supply and Sanitation (called DINEPA after its French acronym) is the public institution tasked with regulating service and coordinating donor assistance. The international community has recognized the critical importance of DINEPA’s role in improving water infrastructure and the importance of strengthening the institution. Unfortunately, many organizations working in water and sanitation fail to interface with DINEPA, in effect undermining the agency’s work. It would be helpful for the State Department to provide information regarding the nature of interactions between USAID and DINEPA, if they did occur, including any successes, and outstanding problems resulting from this collaboration.

5. No Information on Nongovernmental Capacity Building

One of the main goals of US assistance in Haiti, as laid out in the APHA's Statement of Policy (Section 3) is to promote "efforts that are led by and support the people and Government of Haiti at all levels so that Haitians lead the course of reconstruction and development of Haiti..." Accordingly, the APHA asks the State Department to "provide a description of measures taken to strengthen, and United States Government efforts to improve, Haitian governmental and nongovernmental organizational capacity to undertake and sustain United States-supported recovery programs."

The State Department's response to this reporting requirement can be found in attachment F, which lists a series of bilateral cooperation projects with government agencies (mentioned in the previous section). As discussed previously, these efforts are noteworthy, yet it is concerning that the State Department isn't reporting on more systematic consultation of Haitian public entities in the development of assistance programs. Failure to do this ultimately undermines capacity-building efforts.

It is particularly concerning to note there is no mention in attachment F of nongovernmental capacity-building efforts, despite the explicit reporting requirement to describe these efforts. Does this signify that the US government has no programs to strengthen the capacity of local organizations, despite the policy priority of carrying out local procurement whenever possible?

It is clear that much more needs to be done in the area of capacity building. In the seven years since the earthquake, little progress has been made on disaster response and recovery, with the disaster response still carried out in large part by international organizations. It is unclear how progress is being tracked in this area and if there are efforts to improve the strengthening of Haiti's disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. Following Hurricane Matthew, RNDDH (the National Human Rights Defense Network) reported:

The Departmental Centers for Emergency Coordination (COUD) and Municipal Emergency Operation Center (COUM) could not meet the needs of affected populations. Today, these structures are crumbling under the weight of meetings with humanitarian agencies but they are unable to effectively coordinate responses. Moreover, some Mayors' offices have been chosen to receive help from central government while others were ignored.⁶

⁶ National Human Rights Defense Network (2016).

6. A Failure to Identify Mistakes and Lessons Learned

A rosy view of the impact of US assistance permeates the APHA report from the opening lines of the report summary: “US foreign assistance has helped Haiti transition from a period of disaster relief to sustainable long-term development focused on job creation and reconstruction.” This is an extraordinary assertion given that, regardless of USAID’s relative achievements, it flies in the face of reality, as depicted by social and economic indicators. In recent years there has been a severe decline in agricultural production (the main job creator in Haiti) and economic growth has declined.⁷ The World Food Program has noted that food insecurity is higher than ever.⁸

Throughout the APHA report, there are glowing descriptions of progress that are difficult to reconcile with realities on the ground. Little in the report’s descriptions of US Haiti assistance programs suggests that any of these programs have experienced or are experiencing any serious difficulties, despite numerous external reports (including those of the US General Accountability Office) indicating otherwise.⁹

The APHA report’s failure to identify previous mistakes and lessons learned is perhaps one of its greatest limitations. One example that stands out is the issue of housing. Though the report notes, in attachment E, that there has been a “shift away” from permanent shelter programs, there is no information as to why that is the case. The US government initially planned to build thousands of new, permanent homes. The goal was eventually reduced, from 15,000 to 2,600, though this revision of objectives is not documented in any of the attachments to the current report.¹⁰

There is also no mention of the fact that two US-based contractors that were awarded contracts to prepare the land and build 750 houses in Caracol were barred from receiving further government contracts for faulty work and billing related to the development.¹¹ There is no mention of any disciplinary action, no mention of the contractors responsible, and no mention of how this impacted the decision to change strategy related to housing, or how any lessons have been learned. The houses in question required millions of dollars in repairs and, as of this writing, are still being worked on.

⁷ Famine Early Warning Systems Network (2016).

⁸ Haitian National Coordination for Food Security and World Food Programme (2016).

⁹ US Government Accountability Office (2015).

¹⁰ Ibid (2013).

¹¹ Johnston (2015a), Johnston (2015b).

In other sections of the APHA report, its authors recognize that objectives have had to be revised, but little explanation for the revisions are provided. For instance, attachment L notes that USAID reduced by half the targeted number of hectares for agricultural production, and by 20 percent the expected number of beneficiary farmers under the “Feed the Future” program. Only short and vague explanations — “weather conditions,” “difficulties to properly staff the project” — is provided.

To gloss over the problems that USAID has encountered in the implementation of aid programs or to brush off these problems with vague explanations defeats the purpose of the APHA report and the objective of providing “timely and comprehensive reporting on goals and progress, as well as transparent post program evaluations...” as the APHA legislation’s “Sense of Congress” section states.

Haitian Civil Society Feedback

As the APHA legislation’s “Statement of Policy” makes clear, a key objective for the US government is to ensure that the Haitian government and people become the true leaders of development efforts in Haiti. In order to advance this goal, it is imperative for the State Department and USAID to actively engage with Haitians and to seek their feedback regarding US assistance programs.

The APHA calls on the State Department to provide “a description of mechanisms for communicating the progress of recovery and development efforts to the people of Haiti, including a description of efforts to provide documentation, reporting, and procurement information in Haitian Creole.”

Attachment M of the APHA report describes the key components of USAID’s communication strategy, which include “outreach to local media; and direct communication with local implementing partners, civil society, and the Haitian public.” The attachment also discusses how the communication strategy was developed based on a Greenberg Quinlan Rosner survey. While these are certainly positive measures, the report is unclear on how USAID defines local media or radio, and on the location of USAID public events. It would be useful to have details providing an understanding of how communication strategies to civil society and the public were shaped as a response to the public opinion survey. In addition, it would be useful to know what approaches USAID has adopted to ensure that women are equally represented in the consultation process.

Ensuring accessibility of information for certain segments of Haitian civil society represents a major challenge, in particular with regard to Haitians residing in rural areas. Many rural Haitians have no access to the Internet or even national radio stations. Much of the countryside receives information by radio, but more specifically through community radio stations, which USAID's RAMAK program supported in the mid-1990s. There is also an overlap between some of those community radio stations supported by RAMAK and the ones currently within the SAKS community radio network.

Attachment M also mentions the holding of public informational events. Here again it would be helpful to know if accessibility issues are addressed. If public events are held exclusively in Haiti's big cities, transportation for those in the countryside becomes a challenge. Efficient outreach — to create awareness around the events — and accessibility in terms of location and transportation, are essential to reach broad sectors of Haitian society.

In addition, women's groups have indicated that consultation must specifically target women, often in separate women-only spaces, as when they are in mixed-gender groups they are much less likely to participate. If their voices are to be included, this would be a crucial strategy for consultation.

Civil Society Reactions to the APHA Report

The best resource for Haitians wanting to understand the nuts and bolts of US assistance programs and wishing to independently monitor aid efforts is undoubtedly the APHA report. Various partner organizations were consulted regarding the contents of the APHA report, which showed that none of them were familiar with it, suggesting that little has been done by USAID to familiarize members of civil society with the report. Through conversations with partners it also has become apparent that many basic facts about USAID's strategies, structures, and funding are not being effectively communicated with Haitian civil society organizations.

Making at least some sections of the report available in Kreyòl would be a big step toward rendering the report accessible and showing Haitian civil society groups that their voices and input are important. English-language or even French-language publications are often associated with top-down imposed development plans by many local groups, especially those that reside in rural areas.

Notwithstanding this major limitation, sections of the report were discussed with various civil society organizations, including human rights groups, peasant farming movements, research organizations working on development issues, and groups working on the rights of refugees and

repatriated Haitians. The following are some of their reactions and questions related to sections of the report.

Agricultural Support/Food Security (Attachment L)

Strides have been made to shift away from external imports of food aid to support for local production, but there seems to be a continued disconnect in the understanding of food security between USAID and local farmers and the communities to which they belong. Although value chain work is important as an alternate source of income for farmers, many farmers' associations, national peasant organizations, and alternative development collectives believe food security is defined as being able to produce and consume locally and to not become dependent on imported food products. Imported food is extremely expensive in rural areas due to transportation costs. Immediately following Hurricane Matthew, many farmers in rural areas prioritized replanting locally consumed crops such as sweet potatoes, three-month corn, pigeon peas, etc., in order to regain their independence and to move away as quickly as possible from dependence on expensive imports. Questions raised by local groups consulted regarding food security projects include:

- How does USAID define food security?
- What are the value chain crops that are the focus of USAID projects? Why?
- How are farmers selected to participate in these programs? Were they already producing the crop prior to the program? Whom are the crops being sold to, and at what rate are farmers being paid for labor and/or crops?

Haiti has been ranked as the country most vulnerable to climate change and is faced with a number of environmental issues, such as erosion, deforestation, damaged watersheds, and rapid depletion of nutrient-rich topsoil.¹² Many local groups recognize these issues and believe that support and investment in local production is needed to address some of these issues. In this context, questions that arose include:

- What are the inputs being used in these projects? There are concerns over harmful pesticides, fertilizers, and GMO seeds.
- When value chain projects occur, like bananas in the North, what happens to people who have been planting on the land prior to the inception of the project? Why does it appear that

¹² Slagle and Rubenstein (2012).

monocropping is being prioritized by USAID over agroecology when climate change is such a pressing and important issue?

Governance, Rule of Law, and Election (Specific Projects Detailed in Attachment B)

Regarding the completed International Organization for Migration (IOM) project to reintegrate returnees for the United States:

There is little to no information about the success of this project and the methodologies of reintegration. In addition, there are local groups, such as GARR (the Support Group for Returnees and Refugees) that have been working on these reintegration issues for years and continue to do so in extremely effective and culturally sensitive ways. At present, with the number of deportations from the US increasing, what are lessons learned from these completed activities and has this program strengthened the capacity of the government to reintegrate returnees?

Regarding the program on free, fair, and democratic elections, and the strengthening of electoral institutions and processes:

The recognition of the need to strengthen Haiti's electoral institutions and processes is appreciated. Although the recent Provisional Electoral Committee (Conseil Electoral Provisoire, CEP) made substantial improvements in rectifying many of the problems from the October 2015 elections, the timeline to do the amount of work necessary to prepare for the November 2016 elections was limited. It seems crucial that support for electoral institutions means institutionalizing a permanent electoral council. External support is extremely useful and welcomed, but ultimately elections need to be a Haitian affair.

In addition, the groups supported by USAID in these programs are not clearly detailed as to how they function and how they define free and fair elections. Some of the specific questions regarding the work include:

- What are the approaches to integrating women and those with disabilities into the electoral process?
- What guidelines are given for electoral observation groups that are funded by USAID?
- What are lessons learned from this work that affected the August 2015, October 2015, and November 2016 elections?

- How are the civil society groups chosen from among others who do similar electoral observation and monitoring work?

Recommendations

This report concludes with a series of recommendations that we hope can be taken into account in future reports — if not in the 2016 report, which is due to be published soon, then in the 2017 report, which is the last scheduled report under the APHA legislation. Each of these recommendations is based on assessments of shortfalls in the APHA report that were made in previous sections of this report.

Engaging with Civil Society

- The report lists several ways that USAID consults with civil society; however, it seems to take place on an ad hoc basis rather than through a systematic approach. There are other USAID country programs (for example, Colombia) that hold open civil society consultations in-country and follow up with a similar consultation in Washington for US-based groups. This model would be welcomed as a way to ensure more transparent, inclusive participation from a wide range of civil society actors.
- We recommend that the APHA report be presented in one or more public fora in Haiti to which a broad array of civil society groups are invited. Additionally, we recommend that key sections of the report — including the report summary — be translated to Kreyòl and made accessible in hard copy and online.
- The report should highlight efforts to procure information in French and Kreyòl and descriptions of how that information guides the work of the relevant program or project. This involves engaging and listening to local civic society organizations, individual citizens, and local government officials.

Attachment B

- Where data is missing — often with a mention that it is “N/A” (not available) — we recommend that an additional effort be made to retrieve and publish this data, and if it isn’t retrievable, that a short explanation of why the data isn’t available be included.

- We recommend providing further details in the list of projects in attachment B, in particular project-level assessments of what has been achieved in relation to predetermined goals and benchmarks and, in the case of projects that have concluded, on the enduring impact of projects.
- The attachment is published in an unmanageable PDF format that serves as a barrier for outside groups and members of Congress who seek to analyze the data, and also to Haitian organizations interested in learning more about how the US government administers its aid programs. We recommend that the document be provided in an Excel format so that reviewers can more easily study the content.

Attachment F

- There is no description of nongovernmental capacity building efforts here, though that is one of the reporting requirements in the APHA legislation. If no such efforts are underway, we suggest that an explanation be provided for why such efforts aren't taking place.

General recommendations

- Apply a more critical lens and strive to identify where problems have arisen during the implementation of aid programs, and what lessons have been learned and how and where these lessons have been applied.
- Avoid using vague terms and assertions without further explanation of their meaning. (See: “An Incomplete Picture,” “1. Incomplete Information.”)
- Provide more information on the beneficiaries of aid programs, such as which demographic sectors they are from, and where they are located geographically. (See: “An Incomplete Picture,” “3. No Clear Picture of Who the Beneficiaries of US Assistance Are.”)
- We recommend that throughout the report there be more descriptions of the coordination taking place between USAID and its partners and the Haitian government and other public and private aid organizations, in particular instances of coordination with “GOH ministries and local authorities on the establishment of goals and timeframes, and on the design and implementation of new programs” (Section 5, APHA). (See: “An Incomplete Picture,” “Scant Information on US Coordination.”)

- It would be useful for the State Department to provide more information on the process by which USAID selects and designs assistance programs, and how it seeks input from a variety of sources, including relevant Haitian institutional actors and civil society groups.
- We suggest that, in the course of the coming year, the General Accounting Office publish its own assessment of the State Department's compliance with the APHA reporting requirements.

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