

# Principles and Recommendations for International NGO Participation in Haiti Recovery, Reconstruction and Development



## Joint Paper of NGO Platforms: Brazil, Canada, Chile, Europe<sup>1</sup>, France, Spain, and the United States

In the aftermath of the devastating January 12th 2010 earthquake in Haiti, its president and prime minister have called for building a “new Haiti.” International NGO platforms<sup>2</sup> from the Americas and Europe—together with their partners in Haitian civil society—stand ready to work in a multi-stakeholder framework to play their part in this important undertaking with the Haitian people.

### Principles Governing Involvement in Haiti Recovery, Reconstruction and Development

International civil society—together with their Haitian partners—are the largest service delivery providers to respond to the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti and possess tremendous operational and outreach capacity. Civil society organizations also play important policy advocacy and accountability roles vis-à-vis the Haitian government, bilateral and multilateral donors. Over US\$1 billion in private resources has been mobilized through international civil society organizations for Haiti. As a critical partner of the Haitian government, international and national civil society must be recognized by all bilateral and multilateral donors as an equal partner in the collective effort to build a new Haiti. Member NGOs of the participating platforms of donor countries and the regional platform from Europe involved with Haiti commit to integrating the following principles in their recovery, reconstruction, and development work in Haiti.

- **Accountability:** Over many years of involvement in recovery, reconstruction and development work in countries around the world, NGOs have learned that accountability to the populations with whom they work is fundamental to achieving effective results. Operating accountably in Haiti means that NGOs will engage with Haitian government ministries, local authorities and, most importantly, with affected populations in planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of proposed initiatives. Establishing a transparent process in which affected populations have access to information that enables them to participate and have influence in programs that affect their lives will be critical to ensuring this accountability. Participatory processes include use of focus groups, engagement with community entities such as women’s committees, farmers’ organizations, youth movements, community development and service councils and citizen and professional groups. Such participation will extend to monitoring, evaluation and complaints mechanisms so that affected populations can intervene to correct mistakes and improve initiatives as problems arise. International NGOs will take steps to ensure that such participation is as inclusive as possible, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable, youth, the aged and the disabled. International NGOs also recognize the right of the Government of Haiti to allow them to intervene in Haiti, to review their activities and to hold them accountable to accepted standards and principles of development practice.

1 All platforms are national in nature, except for Europe, which is regional and represents 24 national associations and 18 international networks.

2 A platform is an apex organization of member NGOs that provides services to its members and promotes joint advocacy positions of its members. The broad representational legitimacy of these apex associations is the formal voice of over 90% of the international NGO capacity and resources in Haiti. The myriad of small civil society groups that are arriving every day in Port au Prince are not members of NGO platforms but reflect the outpouring of compassion of the peoples of the world. International NGOs should not be confused with private aid contractors that are hired by bilateral and multilateral donors to deliver contracts in Haiti.

- **Collaboration and coordination:** Lessons from previous crises demonstrate the need to guard against creating systems of service delivery parallel to the national government. International NGOs will align their aid with the stated priorities of the Haitian Government and harmonize their respective development strategies with those of the government and Haitian civil society. International NGOs will seek to identify synergies between the different levels of the Haitian government, NGOs and civil society, donor-funded and privately funded priorities and strategies, and support democratic ownership (by the municipal government and civil society) of reconstruction and development initiatives. International NGOs will coordinate with one another, Haitian civil society, the government of Haiti, and bilateral and multilateral donors to leverage and strengthen one another's efforts and to avoid duplication and waste. Haitian civil society has been engaged in ongoing discussions with international NGOs during the past month, putting forward their views and recommendations regarding recovery, reconstruction and development.
- **Rights-based approach:** The role of human rights in humanitarian response and development has gained increasing attention, including, for example, through the Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. Broadly defined to include social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights, a rights-based approach requires protecting women's land and housing rights, children's rights (including access to protection and education), preventing gender-based violence, and ensuring access for persons with disabilities. In keeping with this approach, international NGOs are committed to examining the structural causes of vulnerability when assessing needs, providing public information to affected populations and creating opportunities for citizens to voice and exercise their rights. International NGOs will work together with the Haitian government and local authorities to ensure that citizens' rights are met, and that their needs and priorities guide recovery, reconstruction and development efforts.
- **Enhancing local capacity:** International NGOs recognize that affected populations must be in charge of their own recovery, reconstruction and development. In Haiti, international NGOs are committed to prioritizing capacity strengthening of Haitian civil society, including NGOs, associations, communities, community-based organizations, and national and local government on a par with service delivery. International NGOs will give priority to hiring Haitians with appropriate salary and benefits. In addition to enhancing local capacity, international NGOs that have the people and capacity will work to strengthen the capacity of the national and local government to deliver services in key sectors to its citizens.

## The Role of Bilateral Donors and Multilateral Institutions

We call on the assembled community of bilateral donors and multilateral institutions to ensure their value added to the long-term needs of Haitian citizens. Most importantly, the donors and multilateral actors should implement, be monitored by, and held accountable for their commitments according to the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. Predictable aid, transparent timetables, harmonization of assistance with Haitian government programs, untied aid, and an absence of economic policy conditions that are not coherent with reconstruction and recovery plans are all essential for the long-term poverty reduction and well-being of Haitian citizens. We call for donors and multilateral organizations to be accountable to Haitian citizens and for multi-stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation processes.

We recommend that donors also provide the Government of Haiti ministries and local authorities with technical assistance to strengthen their capacity to lead efforts in each particular sector and their ability to engage with NGOs and other actors. The involvement of the Haitian diaspora in the Americas and Europe will also be encouraged wherever possible.

## The Central Role of the Haitian Government and Its Engagement with NGOs

Just as international NGOs are willing to commit to the principles elaborated to ensure the effectiveness of their efforts in Haiti, we hope and expect that the Haitian government will: recognize and support the role of international NGOs in Haiti's recovery, reconstruction and development; engage Haitian civil society and NGOs in regular, meaningful consultations regarding the rebuilding of Haiti; support and invest in the capacity strengthening of local civil society; and include local and international NGO representatives on any entity or mechanism established to manage the recovery, reconstruction and development process.

In its National Reconstruction and Development Action Plan, the Haitian government proposed the establishment of two bodies with responsibility for overseeing and coordinating reconstruction and longer-term development efforts. The Interim Commission for the Reconstruction of Haiti (ICRH), overseen by a Council, would manage the immediate response (18 months) and the Authority for the Development of Haiti (ADH), overseen by a Consultative Committee, would manage development efforts during the following four years. All projects would require approval from one of these two institutions prior to implementation. While international NGOs appreciate the need for a coordinated response, we are concerned that such a system would create bottlenecks and unnecessarily delay implementation of much needed initiatives. We therefore propose that the ICRH and ADH require approval for donors' and civil society organizations' country strategies only, rather than for each

specific activity or project. We are also committed to making information on our work in Haiti transparent in order to facilitate coordination among all actors.

We are also concerned about the limited role currently proposed for NGOs on the ICRH Council and the ADH Consultative Committee. The ICRH Council includes only one non-voting NGO representative, while the ADH Consultative Committee includes none. Given both the significant resources NGOs are contributing to the rebuilding effort and their role as the primary implementers of post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction activities, NGOs should be included as voting members of these institutions. We recommend no less than four and up to one third voting NGO representatives on both the ICRH and the ADH Consultative Committee, with equal participation of Haitian and international NGOs. Haitian and international NGOs would be responsible for selecting their respective representatives through consultative processes.

### **Shaping a Framework for Reconstruction and Development**

Supporting the development of a more prosperous, equitable and inclusive Haiti will require all stakeholders to think in terms of a five-year time frame in order to provide for proper assessments of need, planning and adequate resources to ensure coordinated and sustainable support for the enormous task facing the country. We support the Ministerial Chairman's Statement that an initial commitment of ten years is essential for the country. This will allow for strategic reviews of assessment benchmarks at key intervals and another Donors' Conference no later than 2015 to ensure ongoing, coordinated, participatory, sustainable and well-resourced support for Haiti.

Reconstruction and development efforts should not be limited to the geographic areas directly affected by the earthquake but should take into account the needs of people in other parts of the country, both urban and rural, especially considering the substantial movement of internally displaced persons. Critical elements in such a reconstruction and development endeavor are:

- **Analyzing and addressing the underlying causes of poverty in Haiti:** Addressing poverty and inequality should be at the heart of the international community's and Haitian government's response to the earthquake in Haiti. Root causes of poverty that existed prior to the earthquake, such as environmental degradation, food insecurity and inequities in access to resources and services remain and have been exacerbated by the January tragedy. As planning moves forward, the need to jumpstart the economy, improve agriculture, increase social service delivery, create a functional and quality education system, strengthen good governance, invest in a vibrant civil society, engage in disaster risk reduction

and mitigation and ensure policy coherence for development must all be taken into consideration.

- **Ensure women's participation and gender equality:** Women should be included in all decision-making processes that guide rebuilding efforts, with specific attention taken to ensure the participation of displaced women and single-headed households in planning processes.
- **Minimize the militarization of aid and integrate conflict prevention in reconstruction:** Safeguarding against the militarization of aid by appropriately phasing out foreign military involvement when major relief efforts have ended is essential. Additionally, given Haiti's history, conflict prevention and armed violence reduction approaches should be integrated in rebuilding efforts. Women and girls must be involved in defining security and protection priorities and leading armed violence prevention initiatives.
- **Articulate a coordinated recovery framework for Haiti:** The development of a framework that provides guidance and recommendations on the establishment of a common and coordinated recovery, reconstruction and development strategy for the country should place the struggle against inequality and poverty at its core. Such a strategy will help all stakeholders to work in a common direction and to meet benchmarks and priorities identified by the PDNA. Current assessments should draw on earlier documents such as the 2008-2010 National Strategy on growth and poverty reduction and the "New Paradigm for Haiti" strategy. This framework should be developed and led by the Haitian government at the national, regional and local levels to support strong ties and collaboration among the central government, its entities, and local elected officials and community-based authorities both inside and outside the capital city. Government officials should also actively seek and incorporate the input of citizens, the poor, local civil society, international NGOs, the private sector and donors as they develop this framework.
- **Balance infrastructure with services:** Following the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster of late 2004, in Aceh, Indonesia, infrastructure was emphasized to the detriment of necessary social services planning and spending in health, education, and water and sanitation. This imbalance continues more than five years after the tsunami. Such a mistake should not be made again in Haiti.

International NGOs share the government's vision of a "new Haiti" as a society based on fairness and justice, living in harmony with the environment, in which the basic needs of all citizens are met. This vision is at the heart of the reconstruction and development efforts we undertake and the reality we seek to achieve as we work in partnership with the people of Haiti and their government.