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BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)  
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

## ***HAITI – Complex Emergency***

Fact Sheet #2, Fiscal Year (FY) 2004

February 27, 2004

*Note: The last fact sheet was dated February 23, 2004.*

### **BACKGROUND**

- Haiti's 200-year history has been marked by political instability and weak institutional capacity, resulting in a severely debilitated economy and an impoverished population. The current complex emergency is rooted in the country's inability to resolve a four-year political impasse. Following a military coup that ousted elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991, the international community intervened militarily to restore Aristide to power in 1994. In May 2000, Aristide's party, Lavalas Family, claimed an overall victory in disputed legislative and municipal elections. In November 2000, the opposition boycotted the presidential election that Aristide won unopposed with low voter turnout. On December 17, 2001, the crisis escalated as armed commandos stormed the presidential palace in Port-au-Prince in an assault that the Government of Haiti (GOH) characterized as an attempted coup d'état.
- Since 2000, the electoral controversy has paralyzed the Aristide administration despite ongoing negotiations between the opposition and the GOH facilitated by the Organization of American States. Aristide has lost popular support due to the inability of the government to attract investment to the country, create jobs, or reduce poverty. As a result, growing lawlessness, instability, and politically-motivated violence began to overwhelm the country in 2002.
- In late 2003, anti-government demonstrations in Port-au-Prince, Gonaïves, Petit-Goâve, and other towns began to increase in size, frequency, and violence. The most recent surge in conflict and violence began on February 5, 2004, when members of armed opposition groups seized control of Gonaïves, Haiti's fourth-largest city. Armed groups opposed to President Aristide have since expanded their control throughout most of the northern region. The democratic opposition has distanced itself from the armed groups. Since the takeover of Gonaïves, approximately 80 people have been killed in the violence. Despite the significant levels of violence, President Aristide maintains that he will complete his term, scheduled to end in February 2006.

### **SITUATION OVERVIEW**

- Structural and institutional weaknesses in Haiti, closely linked to the country's historical, socio-economic, and agricultural development, have had long-term effects on numerous aspects of Haiti's development, such as food security, water and sanitation, health, and nutrition. For many years, Haiti has been the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and is currently the only Least Developed Country in the Western Hemisphere. The country was ranked 150<sup>th</sup> out of 173 countries in the 2003 United Nations (U.N.) Development Program Human Development Report.
- Due to the ongoing and chronic nature of Haiti's underdevelopment, the country is vulnerable to rapid deterioration of humanitarian indicators in a complex emergency. However, certain impacts of a complex emergency, such as malnutrition, are not sudden-onset situations and typically require several months to develop. Two important factors may contribute to food insecurity in Haiti: rising or unstable prices, and a drop in remittances. Haiti is heavily dependent on remittances, receiving an estimated \$800 million on average annually. In addition to food insecurity, the rising incidence of disease and displacement may also contribute to a humanitarian crisis. USAID and its implementing partners are monitoring all of these indicators as closely as possible.
- The U.S. Government (USG), through USAID, is Haiti's largest bilateral donor. In FY 2003, USAID contributed \$71 million. During FY 1995 to 2003, USAID provided a total of \$850 million in direct bilateral assistance. For FY 2004, USAID has planned \$52 million in assistance for programs including health, democracy and governance, education, and economic growth. To ensure that assistance goes to those Haitians most in need, USAID assistance is channeled principally through non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The USG provides food and food-related assistance directly and indirectly to 640,000 Haitians.

### **CURRENT SITUATION**

#### ***Security/Political***

- Since the February 5 takeover of Gonaïves, armed opposition groups have carried out attacks throughout parts of the Central, North, Artibonite, Northeast, and South departments. Armed opposition groups now control all of northern Haiti, including the cities of Hinche, Ouanaminthe, Cap-Haïtien, and Port-de-Paix. In addition, armed opposition groups have taken over Île de la Tortue, an island with a population of 50,000 located off the coast of northern Haiti; the southern city of Les Cayes and two neighboring towns, Côtes de Fer and Cavaillon; and the crossroads town of Mirebalais, located 57 km northeast of Port-au-Prince in the Central Plateau department. Police abandoned the main

police station in Les Cayes, which has a population of approximately 125,000, after an attack by a group calling itself Base Resistance.

- The armed opposition has effectively isolated the north from the rest of the country by blocking the two main highways at Gonaïves and Hinche, preventing the northward transport of food and oil. The armed groups appear to have coalesced under the leadership of at least three former members of the army, Guy Philippe, Louis-Jodel Chamblain, and Remissainthe Ravix. Another armed opposition leader, Buter Metayer, recently declared himself President of the Independent Country of Artibonite.
- Armed combatants are reportedly moving closer to the capital city of Port-au-Prince, which the armed opposition has targeted for takeover, unless President Aristide resigns. An attack on the capital could result in high numbers of casualties, as the *chimères*, or armed gangs in support of Aristide, are known to be well armed. Armed opposition groups have also threatened to carry out an attack on Saint-Marc, a port city located approximately 70 km northwest of Port-au-Prince. Haitian police officers have deployed 50 heavily armed Special Forces agents to Saint-Marc in preparation for an attack.
- Civil unrest has mounted in Port-au-Prince, as residents prepare for a possible attack. Over the past week, there have been reports of violent conflicts between opposition protestors and government supporters, isolated cases of looting, robberies of civilians at roadblocks erected throughout the capital to prevent the entrance of armed opposition forces, and attacks on two police stations outside of Port-au-Prince.
- *Chimères* successfully robbed a business office and a warehouse at a private port in Port-au-Prince on February 25. On the same day, there was a disorganized attempt to loot warehouses containing USAID-funded commodities, but this attempt was unsuccessful. The port in Port-au-Prince is now closed. On February 26, there was an attempted attack on warehouses in the Port-au-Prince port. Police and others repelled the attack, during which one warehouse burned, but food stocks were left intact. No USAID commodities were affected in this or other looting attempts to date.
- On February 24, the Democratic Platform coalition, a broad alliance of opposition groups, formally rejected the peace plan for political reform presented by diplomats from the United States, Canada, France, and Caricom, and insisted that President Jean-Bertrand Aristide must resign. Aristide had accepted the terms of the plan on February 21. The democratic opposition in Port-au-Prince has tried to distance itself from the armed combatant groups that now control the northern and central departments. A spokesman for the Democratic Platform coalition in Port-au-Prince announced that the democratic opposition refuses to have contact with the armed combatants, as well as with Aristide. The spokesman further stated that the opposition is a nonviolent movement that supports the goal of the armed combatants to bring about Aristide's resignation. Aristide maintains that the armed combatants are a wing of the political opposition.
- On February 26, a GOH delegation arrived in Paris for talks proposed by the Government of France (GOF) to find a political solution to the crisis. The political opposition stated on February 25 that it would not attend the talks. The GOF has called for Aristide's resignation and the immediate establishment of a transitional government. The Government of Canada (GOC) and the USG have also suggested that President Aristide should consider resigning. The USG and the GOC have indicated that a security force should only be sent to the country once a political settlement is reached. On February 26, the GOF called for the immediate formation of a U.N.-backed security force to go to Haiti. On February 26, the U.N. Security Council held an emergency meeting to discuss the crisis. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed John Reginald Dumas as his Special Adviser on Haiti.

### ***Food***

- USAID's NGO development food aid partners and the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) currently have nearly 15,000 metric tons (MT) of food stocks in country. Daily contacts with USAID's four partners in Haiti – CARE, Save the Children Foundation (SCF), World Vision International (WVI), and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) – indicate that none believe the situation requires re-programming of food assistance at present.
- On February 22, a crowd of looters broke into a WFP warehouse in Cap-Haïtien and took 800 MT of food stocks, mainly vegetable oil and pulses. Despite the loss of food stocks, WFP estimates that it still has sufficient stocks either in Haiti or en route to the country to provide assistance to 373,000 people.
- WFP has reported that the shipment of 1,200 MT of rice scheduled to arrive at the Cap-Haïtien port is on hold until the security situation improves. According to WFP, a total of 268,000 people are in need of food in the north and northeast, where prices have increased by 20 to 30 percent. However, the prices of these commodities have decreased after the February 22 looting of the WFP warehouse in Cap-Haïtien.
- WVI does not anticipate a food crisis erupting in its targeted areas of Central Plateau and Île de la Gonâve, even if distributions stop for a few months because of the strong coping mechanisms among the populations and the good December harvest. WVI is currently operating at 100 percent on Île de la Gonâve. On February 27, WVI plans to conduct an assessment of the Central Plateau.
- According to CRS, only 30 percent of orphanages in Haiti recently received food supplies to meet needs into the next month. Other orphanages may begin to run out of food by early next week, and CRS is considering using available funds to provide these orphanages with cash to purchase food on the local market.

***Humanitarian Access***

- USAID and its implementing partners continue to report that the primary humanitarian concerns at present are access, security, and safe passage for the transport and distribution of relief supplies, fuel, and food commodities. NGOs have asserted the need for a statement on behalf of all parties to the conflict ensuring the free passage of humanitarian operations.

***Fuel***

- USAID reports that there is currently enough fuel in storage in Port-au-Prince to supply the country, according to fuel companies, but access and distribution remain obstacles for humanitarian deliveries as well as for regular consumption. Fuel is vital not only for transport, but also for the continued operation of facilities and equipment such as hospitals, bakeries, and forklifts at ports.
- On February 24, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reported that fuel shortages are becoming a major problem. IFRC also indicated that there are concerns that the lack of fuel may lead to the shutdown of the electrical plant and the water treatment station in Port-au-Prince. In addition, some rural areas are supplied with potable water by trucking in water tankers, which may be hindered if the scarcity of fuel continues.

***Health***

- **ICRC operations:** On February 19, a joint International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Haitian Red Cross convoy carrying medical supplies arrived safely in Saint-Marc and Gonaïves. On February 25, ICRC sent another convoy of medical supplies from Port-au-Prince to Gonaïves. PAHO sent measles and polio vaccines, as well as propane gas for the cold chain, along with the convoy. The convoy had significant difficulty leaving the capital, and had to continually negotiate passage en route. ICRC is now organizing regular convoys to Gonaïves and Cap-Haïtien, in cooperation with the Haitian Red Cross. On February 27, ICRC sent a plane carrying equipment for two hospitals to Haiti.
- ICRC has pre-positioned one medical/surgical kit in each of the following cities: Saint-Marc, Gonaïves, Cap-Haïtien, Jacmel, and Port-au-Prince. An ICRC team is now permanently based at the hospital in Gonaïves, and a complete ICRC expatriate surgical team will arrive in the city next week for a total of seven staff. ICRC plans to maintain the private Canapé Vert Hospital in Port-au-Prince under its protection, and will treat the injured free of charge. If necessary, ICRC is prepared to triple the capacity of the hospital, from 42 beds to 120. ICRC has 15 expatriates in Haiti, in addition to local staff, and more expatriate staff are expected to arrive. At present, ICRC's first priority is the protection of medical staff, convoys, and medical supplies. ICRC is also conducting visits to detainees in prison and police stations.
- **UNICEF operations:** On February 20, the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) began visits to hospitals and health centers in the capital. Occupancy rates have reportedly decreased 80 percent in some medical centers due to fears of violence inside the centers. UNICEF is supporting public infrastructures with medicine and surgery kits supplies.
- According to UNICEF, the immunization coverage in Haiti was estimated at 60 percent in 2003. Although this is a 30 percent increase from previous years, the immunization rate is still not adequate to prevent serious outbreaks. The Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) has sentinel sites in Haiti, of which 30 to 40 percent are still functional and operating. Currently there are no reports of an outbreak of the six major childhood vaccine-preventable diseases.
- **PAHO operations:** A Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) epidemiologist recently arrived in Haiti to reactivate the health surveillance system, as Haiti lacks adequate surveillance data from health facilities throughout the country. PAHO will monitor data on measles outbreaks, polio, diphtheria, typhoid, and violence, as well as acute malnutrition. According to PAHO, there is a shortage of tuberculosis (TB) drugs and a disruption of TB programs in the north. Médecins Sans Frontières-Belgium (MSF-B) is requesting TB drugs from PAHO.
- **MDM operations:** Médecins du Monde (MDM)-Canada is operating in Cité Soleil, a chimpère stronghold with an estimated population of 600,000. MDM-Canada plans to assist the hospital in Cité Soil with a medical team composed of a nurse, surgeon, and generalist/obstetrician. The hospital has been barely functioning due to low staff levels, even prior to the recent unrest. The hospital has one functional operating room.
- MDM-France operates a post-operative care center in Port-au-Prince referred to as a Safe House for trauma patients. MDM-France opened the Safe House on February 24 because trauma patients have feared possible retribution if they stay in hospitals. Only one patient is being treated at the center to date. MDM-France has started the program with private funding and has requested funds from the Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Commission (ECHO).

***Displaced Populations***

- USAID and its NGO partners continue to report very limited displacement and no "sites" with concentrations of internally displaced persons (IDPs). According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), numbers of IDPs cannot be accurately assessed at present. However, UN OCHA notes that significant numbers of residents are moving from insecure cities toward other areas or returning to their native villages in the mountains. Movements have also been reported from rural areas to main cities.

- On February 23, the Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR) indicated that the Dominican Republic does not have structures in place to manage a migratory wave of refugees. The GODR also noted that Dominican authorities have reinforced the border with Haiti along critical points. On February 24, the GODR sent 1,200 additional troops to patrol its border with Haiti. The GODR has declined to state the total number of troops along the 225-mile border.

#### U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

- From February 9 to 11, two USAID/OFDA Regional Advisors traveled to Port-au-Prince to assist USAID/Haiti and partner organizations with contingency planning for humanitarian assistance.
- On February 18, U.S. Ambassador to Haiti James B. Foley issued a disaster declaration due to the ongoing complex emergency in Haiti. As an initial response to the situation, USAID/OFDA has provided \$50,000 through USAID/Haiti to support the transport and distribution of emergency relief supplies, including 12 medical kits and three surgical kits, valued at approximately \$87,000. Each medical kit is equipped to serve 10,000 people for approximately three months. On February 26, the medical kits arrived in Port-au-Prince. In addition, USAID/OFDA approved \$400,000 in funding for PAHO to purchase additional medical supplies and to conduct emergency relief activities in Haiti.
- On February 23, the U.S. Government deployed approximately 50 U.S. Marines to Port-au-Prince as part of a Fleet Anti-Terrorist Security Team to secure the U.S. Embassy and staff. The forces' mandate does not extend to any stability operations within the country.
- On February 24, USAID/OFDA deployed a three-person team to Port-au-Prince, including a Senior Regional Advisor as Team Leader, a Health Officer, and an Information Officer.

#### U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO HAITI

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<b>USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE<sup>1</sup></b>			
USAID/Haiti	Transport and distribution of emergency relief supplies	Port-au-Prince and other affected areas	\$137,000
Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)	Medical equipment and emergency health activities	Nationwide	\$400,000
<b>TOTAL USAID/OFDA.....</b>			<b>\$537,000</b>
<b>TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO HAITI IN FY 2004 (TO DATE) .....</b>			<b>\$537,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> USAID/OFDA funding represents committed and/or obligated amount as of **February 27, 2004**.

#### PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for their response efforts in Haiti can be found in the "How Can I Help" section of [www.usaid.gov/haiti](http://www.usaid.gov/haiti). USAID encourages cash donations because they: allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, warehouse space, etc.); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.

More information on making donations and volunteering services can be found at:

- USAID: [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov) → "Our Work" → "Humanitarian Assistance" → "Disaster Assistance" → "How Can I Help"
- The Center for International Disaster Information: [www.cidi.org](http://www.cidi.org) or (703) 276-1914
- InterAction: [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org) → "Guide to Appropriate Giving"
- Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

USAID/OFDA bulletins appear on the USAID web site at [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/disaster\\_assistance/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/).