



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

## ***HAITI – Complex Emergency***

Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2004

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, at least 60 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.
- The ongoing political turmoil and economic instability in Haiti have created a potential humanitarian crisis, and have affected numerous aspects of development such as food security, health and nutrition, and water and sanitation. Ranked 150<sup>th</sup> out of 173 countries in the United Nations (U.N.) Development Program 2003 Human Development Report, Haiti is the poorest country and the only Least Developed Country in the Western Hemisphere.

### **CURRENT SITUATION**

#### *Security/Political*

- Since the February 5 takeover of Gonaïves, opposition groups have carried out attacks throughout parts of the Central, North, Artibonite, and Northeast departments. The opposition currently controls approximately 15 northern towns, including the cities of Hinche, Ounaminthe, and Cap-Haïtien, the GOH's last major stronghold in the north. According to Haitian officials, 10 people were killed during the attack on Cap-Haïtien. A leader of the armed combatant groups has stated that opposition forces would march into Port-au-Prince within the next two or three days if President Aristide does not resign. On February 23, there were reports of attacks on police stations outside Port-au-Prince, and violent conflicts between opposition protestors and government supporters.
- Armed opposition groups have isolated northern Haiti from the rest of the country by controlling and barricading main roads and highways, particularly in the Artibonite Department. The isolation of the north has prevented the northward transport of food and oil.
- Armed opposition forces have announced the formation of the National Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Haiti, and appointed as commander a former police chief, Guy Philippe, who returned to Haiti from exile in the Dominican Republic.
- On February 17, Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune stated that the country is in the midst of a coup and appealed for international assistance to end the uprising. Neptune also indicated that the GOH's 5,000-member police force lacked the capacity to respond to the opposition's increasing attacks.
- On February 19, a 10-member U.N. inter-agency assessment mission traveled by air to the northwestern town of Port-de-Paix and the northeastern town of Cap-Haïtien to assess the humanitarian situation. The U.N. mission has established an inter-agency task force to coordinate the work of U.N. agencies and other organizations.
- The U.N. is currently in Phase Two of the U.N. security plan for the entire country, with the exception of the Artibonite Department, which is in Phase Three, and the city of Gonaïves, which is in Phase Four.

- On February 21, President Aristide accepted a plan for political reform presented by diplomats from the United States, Canada, France, and the 15-member Caribbean Community (Caricom). The opposition is scheduled to provide a response on February 23.
- Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations (IOs) are evacuating expatriate staff from Haiti or drawing them into Port-au-Prince, but most say they will remain operational through their national staff and remaining expatriate presence. In general, opposition forces are continuing to demonstrate goodwill toward humanitarian organizations.

#### *Health*

- A major humanitarian concern at present is the breakdown in provision of basic health services, particularly in the north. The two main hospitals in Port-au-Prince lack supplies and drugs and are barely functioning. Similar disruptions are occurring in Gonaïves, Haiti's fourth largest city, and other areas.
- The Inter-Agency Crisis Committee, under the leadership of the U.N. World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), is providing main hospitals and operating centers with medical supplies. The Committee is also working with the Haitian Health Ministry to seek a guarantee for the neutrality of health services and the security of health facilities, health workers, and convoys.
- On February 19, a joint International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Haitian Red Cross convoy arrived in Saint-Marc and Gonaïves with medical supplies, including dressings.

#### *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 towards other areas or returning to their native villages in the mountains. Movements have also been reported from rural areas to main cities.

#### *Food*

- While sufficient food stocks are currently in-country and no immediate food crisis exists at present, this could change quickly in coming weeks, especially in the north, due to disruptions of transport and distribution. USAID's NGO partners have more than 10,000 metric tons (MT) of food for direct distribution in-country for its food assistance development programs. The U.N. World Food Program (WFP) also has food stocks in country.
- Most of the rural population was not dependent on government assistance prior to the current outbreak of violence. USAID/Haiti reports that coping mechanisms are strong in rural areas. There is greater concern for the impact of the crisis on markets in urban areas.
- CARE recently distributed 250 MT of food commodities to the population of Gonaïves, and plans to distribute an additional 250 MTs. ICRC and CARE have negotiated a limited safe passage to Gonaïves.
- World Vision International (WVI) reports that there is not a food emergency in Hinche, due to a good December harvest and the population's coping mechanisms.

#### *Fuel*

- Scarcity of fuel is a major problem in many areas, and has hindered humanitarian operations, particularly in the north.
- CARE reports that there is a potable water crisis in Gonaïves due to the lack of fuel. The Haitian electrical company does not have enough fuel to continue to supply Gonaïves with potable water. Although CARE has food stocks in the port of Port-au-Prince, the organization lacks fuel for transportation, particularly for food distributions in the north.

### **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 humanitarian emergency in Haiti. USAID/OFDA 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. In addition, USAID/OFDA approved \$400,000 in funding for the Pan American Health Organization (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.
- On February 24, USAID/OFDA will deploy 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 23, 2004**.

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/).