



Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Post-Earthquake Haiti The International Finance Institutions' (IFIs') Response

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Introduction: Gender Action and IFIs in Post-Earthquake Haiti

Gender Action is the only civil society organization dedicated to: (1) promoting women's rights and gender justice in IFI investments in developing countries; and (2) holding IFI investments accountable for gender impacts. Gender Action tries to influence systemic IFI reform because IFIs are the world's largest financiers of reconstruction and development efforts such as those in Haiti. From January 2010 through May 2011 alone, the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) granted almost \$500 million for relief and rebuilding projects in Haiti.¹ U.S. taxpayers are the largest underwriters of IFI investments.²

Since Haiti's earthquake, Gender Action has continuously monitored all World Bank and IDB investments in Haiti, analyzing them for the extent to which they address Haiti's rampant gender-based violence (GBV) in addition to broader gender impacts.³ Gender Action's advocacy successfully influenced the World Bank to approve its first GBV operation in 2011 and cancel most Haitian IFI debt.⁴

GBV and IFIs in Post-Earthquake Haiti

While Haiti is no stranger to GBV, the sudden spike in internally displaced persons (IDP) living in camps has seriously heightened insecurity. Women and children in these camps are routinely subject to systemic rape, and rarely have access to medical care or justice after being assaulted.

Of the 78 post-earthquake grants that the World Bank and IDB approved to date, only one addresses GBV.⁵ This World Bank GBV operation resulted from Gender Action's relentless exposure of the astonishing lack of attention paid to GBV in IFI operations. Gender Action pressure included our July 2010 letter to President Obama demonstrating that IFI post-earthquake investments in Haiti had not addressed rampant rapes and other forms of GBV.⁶ In response, in January 2011 the World Bank approved a \$500,000 grant for "Women and Girls in Haiti's Reconstruction: Addressing and Preventing Gender based Violence." We are pleased that the World Bank approved this grant a year after the earthquake. Unfortunately, almost a half year since approval the World Bank website contains neither a

¹ In contrast, the U.S. Congress has delayed appropriating most USAID funding committed for post-earthquake Haiti because of Congressional concerns about the effectiveness of USAID spending in Haiti. Reported to Elaine Zuckerman by Tim Reiser, Senator Leahy's senior staff on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, mentioned in this report:

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2011/05/florida-lawmakers-manage-the-debate-on-haiti-oversight-bill.html>

² Other nations' taxpayers also support IFIs but the U.S., as the largest shareholder, has the greatest voice and sole veto power in IFI decision-making.

³ Our methodology includes applying Gender Action's Essential Gender Analysis Checklist, included in our online [Gender Toolkit for International Finance Watchers](#), which Oxfam Novib concluded is the best existing gender toolkit in the world.

⁴ Out of about \$600 million in debt that Haiti owed IFIs in spring 2010, only one \$60 million IMF loan remains. By the summer of 2010, the World Bank and IDB transformed all their Haiti loans to grants.

⁵ As of May 2011 the World Bank approved 12 post-earthquake grants totaling over \$231 million and the IDB approved 66 post-earthquake grants totaling over \$233 million. Gender Action continuously monitors and analyzes these data.

⁶ See letter at www.genderaction.org homepage.

project description nor grant agreement.⁷ World Bank officials, in a spring 2011 meeting with Gender Action staff and Haitian activists, revealed few details about this project.

The other 77 World Bank and IDB grants approved for Haiti, comprising 99.9 percent of their post-earthquake expenditures, ignore GBV. Remarkably, all of the IFI's solar lighting projects' stated objectives -- to provide generators for emergency centers, medical units, refugee camps, and refrigeration for vaccines -- neglect to include the reduction of GBV.

Gender Action's Haiti Outputs

Because of the tragic escalation of GBV since Haiti's earthquake, Gender Action launched multiple advocacy initiatives to ensure that IFI and other donor spending address GBV. Most of Gender Action's activities are accomplished through coalitions and partnerships because there is power in numbers. Our coalition activities include:

- *Haiti Equality Collective (HEC)*: The ad hoc HEC, composed of many women's rights activists, wrote [The Haiti Gender Shadow Report: Ensuring Haitian Women's Participation and Leadership in All Stages of National Relief and Reconstruction](#). Gender Action published and widely disseminated the GSR in late 2010.⁸ The GSR provides crucial gender content missing from the Haitian government's World Bank-led Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) -- the operative post-earthquake recovery blueprint. The PDNA, not only never mentioned GBV, but all together failed to address gender issues. In contrast, the GSR repeatedly addresses GBV as an urgent development priority.
- *Haiti Advocacy Working Group (HAWG)*: Gender Action is a founding member of this effective ad hoc coalition.⁹ Gender Action chairs the HAWG sub-group on IFIs and Debt and participates actively in HAWG's GBV sub-group. Gender Action raised, and serves as the fiscal agent for, HAWG's only grant to date.¹⁰ The funder expressed interest in supporting HAWG further because of the coalition's successful advocacy initiatives including:
 - In spring 2011, HAWG organized a Haiti Advocacy Week which brought 15 Haitian civil society representatives and 10 representatives from the Haitian American Diaspora to Washington DC to participate in 34 meetings with Congresspersons, and officials from the State Department, World Bank, and IDB to discuss GBV and other post-earthquake issues. A few highlights include:
 - Representatives Yvette Clarke, Gwen Moore, Donald Payne and Jan Schakowsky co-sponsored a briefing by our Haitian visitors on GBV in Haiti that underlined the need for effective GBV protection mechanisms, as well as greater aid accountability and faster, more sustainable reconstruction. Haitian grassroots leaders spoke about their organizations' challenges and successes in addressing post-earthquake GBV.
 - House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Barney Frank's senior staff met leaders of Haiti's only advocacy organizations for GLBT and Haitians living with HIV. These Haitian activists felt that Frank's staff provided valuable assistance toward ensuring that U.S. aid for Haiti addresses their issues.¹¹
 - The State Department's Global Ambassador for Women at Large Melanne Verveer and Special Assistant for Violence Against Women Sandrine Rukundo hosted separate

⁷ The World Bank Information Disclosure policy, created in response to concerted civil society pressure, requires the taxpayer-funded Bank to place such information on its website.

⁸ <http://www.genderaction.org/publications/2010/gsr.pdf>.

⁹ HAWG comprises about 40 active civil society organizations that jointly lead advocacy to improve the effectiveness of donor aid in Haiti. HAWG is ad hoc because it has no staff, offices, or legal status. Members meet in weekly plenaries supplemented by sub-group meetings.

¹⁰ A \$20,000 one-year grant made by an anonymous funder.

¹¹ Gender Action organized this meeting.

- meetings with our Haitian partners focused on how to improve U.S. support to combat Haitian GBV.¹²
- World Bank and IDB officials directing Haiti programs hosted meetings where they described IFI activities in Haiti and fielded questions on many issues including GBV.¹³
 - The Rayburn House Building lobby displayed HAWG's Haiti post-earthquake photo exhibit for three days and hosted HAWG's celebratory reception featuring keynote speakers Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY), Chair of the Western Hemisphere subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; American Jewish World Service President Ruth Messenger; and Haitian activists including Marie Charles Juste-Luce, IDP camp leader, and Rosy Auguste, National Human Rights Defense.
- HAWG successfully co-organized a July 2010 standing-room only hearing with the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) on Haiti. HAWG initiated this first Congressional post-earthquake hearing presenting Haitian voices to complement previous Congressional hearings on Haiti that heard only U.S. voices.
- *Haitian Women and Girls Allies (HWGA)*: Gender Action also actively participates in HWGA, a small coalition comprising less than a dozen civil society groups focusing on GBV in Haiti. Examples of other members include Madre, Other Worlds and TransAfrica Forum.
 - *Jubilee Debt Cancellation Coalition*: To achieve debt cancellation for Haiti and other poor countries burdened by illegitimate IFI debt, Gender Action is an active Jubilee Debt Network Council member. Jubilee played the leading role in achieving IFI debt cancellation for Haiti. Bolstering Jubilee efforts to end IFI loans to Haiti and relieve previous debt, Gender Action's President Elaine Zuckerman sent a letter to President Obama expressing dire concern that the largest U.S. tax funded assistance for Haiti, channelled through the IFIs, did not address escalating rapes and other forms of GBV and indebted Haiti further.¹⁴ Following receipt of this letter, the IMF announced it was cancelling Haiti's \$279.1 million dollar debt, and the World Bank and IDB announced all post-earthquake investments would be made in the form of grants. In a twist of irony, however, the IMF then loaned \$60 million to Haiti for relief and reconstruction efforts, in the form of a three-year credit that would begin to accrue interest at the end of 2011. The Jubilee Network, including Gender Action, is trying to cancel this debt.
 - *Oxfam USA*: Gender Action wrote and presented report entitled, "World Bank and Inter-American Bank (IDB): Haiti Post-Earthquake Track Record on Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development," at an October 2010 Oxfam event. Although GBV was not this report's main theme, our analysis revealed how IFI rural-focused grants ignore GBV.¹⁵

¹² Gender Action organized these meetings.

¹³ Gender Action organized these meetings.

¹⁴ Letter to President Obama, July 1, 2010, http://www.generationaction.org/obama7_2010.html.

¹⁵ The report can be found at http://www.generationaction.org/publications/2010/haiti_ifi_ag.pdf. The Oxfam event called "Haiti: From Crisis to Resilience" was held at the Ronald Reagan Building International Trade Center in Washington DC.