

Haiti can no longer remain in a continuous state of emergency. We need permanent action.

Once again, Haiti is prevented from moving forward. The country has barely begun to heal from the 2010 earthquake that killed more than 220,000 people and left more than 300,000 injured. On October 4, 2016, yet another disaster struck Haiti. A major hurricane struck the Island just a few days before the national election - an election that many Haitians hoped would bring stability to the country. Political tensions were high as a result of many social problems, including, but not limited to professors not being paid and public hospitals having to shut their doors due to lack of funds. These issues have caused many young Haitians to flee the country and seek opportunities abroad. Many believed this election could help rectify the immense poverty and devastation experienced by the Haitian people.

Six days before this election, the catastrophic Hurricane Matthew devastated the cities of **South department** of 18 and **Grand'Anse** of 13. Those who have seen the effects of the Hurricane describe the aftermath as apocalyptic. Public infrastructure like hospitals, schools, and police stations, as well as private homes, have been destroyed by the flooding and terrifying 235 km per hour winds forcing thousands of Haitians out of their homes and into the streets.

“Tout moun jwenn;” said an old woman in Creole at Les Anglais. It means “everybody got something,” The day after the hurricane hit, rivers were overflowing and cholera made a reappearance in Haiti.



The natural disaster killed more than 800 people and left thousands homeless. More than 2.1 million people (600,000 of them children) have been affected. While many of these people found shelter in schools and surviving houses, the majority of Haiti's most vulnerable residents are forced to sleep in the open or in emergency shelters which exposes them, particularly women and young girls, to higher levels of gender-based violence.

The total destruction caused by the Category 4 storm has inflicted damage to crops, food stock, and livestock. Some of the hardest-hit areas have left over 800,000 people in need of immediate food assistance and more than 112,000 children at risk of acute malnutrition. An estimated 50,000 children have been left homeless and are staying in temporary shelters. These families are in need of access to proper nutrition, clean water and sanitation services. "According to Haitian officials, MSPP"

Up to 80% of hospitals and health centers in Grand'Anse have lost their roofs. An additional seven health centers in Grand'Anse, four in South, and three in Nippes are no longer operational.



International Humanitarians have failed Haiti



One month after the hurricane, life for more than half a million children in Haiti has yet to return to normal. Thousands of people have lost everything and feel abandoned, without hope.

“Yo pa janm pote anyen pou nou;” “They never brought us anything,” said a 50-year old woman at Port-à-Piment, *“When the help comes only the one that are strong enough to fight get something some time they even brought guns with them.”* Starvation and desperation have turned the people against each other, the bad management of the aids catalyse the chaos.

A 35-year old woman in that same location desperately reported that her local leaders confiscated all the food that had been sent to them while many have gone days without food. *“They keep all the food to support their political parties to use to buy people out to vote for them, they make distributions at night to their own people”,* said the 35-year-old. In Les Cayes, the capital of the Southern Department, a teenager was shot dead on Tuesday as a ship was unloading humanitarian aid.

Millions of dollars from overseas have been donated to various organizations to assist Hurricane victims, however, people are still living amid the rubble. Meanwhile, a myriad of international NGOs are having endless committee meetings and spending unnecessary money on hiring professionals from outside Haiti with no expertise nor knowledge on how exactly they will help rebuild Haiti. These organizations are spending exorbitant sums of money on incentives for non-locals and in effect are effectively undermining the work they are supposedly trying to do in Haiti. For example, the expats who are supposed to be carrying out the relief work are provided with high salaries, expensive houses, and paid trips back to their home countries. Instead of the donated monies going to the relief efforts in Haiti, the money is continuously spent on staff and expenses that have nothing to do with the betterment of Haiti. It is imperative that non-governmental organizations partner with local Haitian organizations in order to create true sustainable development. While Haitians remain frozen out from the reconstruction process, it

should not be forgotten that the first response to the emergency came from the Haitian people themselves. Demonstrating the country's long standing tradition of *youn ede lòt* (helping each other). It was Haitians who jumped into action after the quake that tore down the country on the 12th of January, 2010, It was the Haitians who were there to help the victims of the Hurricane as well.



Haiti has been abused and manipulated for centuries. The Haitian people have learned to survive no matter the condition. They have learned to adapt and persevere. “*Ròch nan dlo pa konnen doulè ròch nan solèy*” is a Haitian quote that means, “Rocks that are in the water can't understand the pain of the rocks that live under the sun.” The country has the strongest women and the most courageous men in the Caribbean, who, despite their life conditions, always have a big smile on their faces. Although they are struggling to survive, they never complain and they live with one mindset: *reziyasyon fè lòm* or *resignation makes man*.

Now, families are forced to return to their battered homes and others are choosing to rebuild their own homes rather than wait any longer for NGOs to step in. Many families remain severely vulnerable while the news agencies are already leaving the island and international aid is not going very far. Similar to the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, the world will turn a blind eye to what Hurricane Matthew victims are still experiencing.

Despite these issues, Haitian communities are very grateful for the assistance and recognize the good intentions of many that have come to bring the country support over the last few years, thousands of lives have been saved as a result of this support. Haiti depends heavily on NGOs who have permeated every aspect of life on the Island. Because NGOs provide 80% of basic services in the country, it's imperative they operate in an ethical, equitable, and financially sound manner. By including Haitians in the rebuilding process, NGOs can provide extensive employment for Haitians desperately in need.

Non-governmental organizations must partner with local Haitian organizations, which will lead to true sustainable development, and maybe they will actually get homes built.

We can no longer remain in a continuous state of emergency, we need permanent action:

- Haiti needs industrial reform to support national production, not a constant flow of donations. The needs of the people will not be understood until they are consulted in order to propose solutions.
- NGOs are not the long-term solution. This is why if they want to help, they should work with local organizations that make positive impacts without undermining the local economy.
- Now is the time for the international community to help Haitians do what they really need to do, rather than carry on with these pre-prepared projects from abroad, that don't match the reality in Haiti.

We, in Haiti, agree it is extremely difficult to work with the Haitian government due to their lack of coordination, constant fight over power, and so many corrupt politicians. This makes all progress slower and harder; however, we can begin by collaborating with local leaders and local non-profit organizations to effect change.



This is the way the relief efforts could be in order to achieve the greatest impact for Haitian people:

Government (Gov)

- Serve as monitors, present the issues targeted the help the country's needs, present what they have and need to local and international NGO's
- Gather plans of each NGO (local and international), unite NGO's with common goal, provide all the support in their power to make the NGOs' work easier.
- Provide security
- Be transparent and demand transparency

Local NGOs

- Follow all the legal registration processes as an NGO
- Corporate with government and international NGOs
- Share plans with government and international NGOs
- Share expertise of the local communities with international NGOs
- Make Haiti your primary goal
- Be transparent
- Help the International NGO understand the people in the culture

International NGOs

- Follow all the legal registration processes as an NGO
- Work with local NGOs and the government
- Share plans with the government and local NGOs
- Be transparent
- Make Haiti the primary goal

