Localization: Views From Haiti

A FEINSTEIN INTERNATIONAL CENTER BRIEF

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Foreword: In memory of Sabina Robillard

This research was conducted as a part of a broader study on the localization of humanitarian action that spanned several years, conducted a number of in-depth case studies, and produced a landscape report for the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance at United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The individual who led most of this research was Sabina Carlson Robillard, who was certainly the driving inspiration behind much of both the research and advocacy agenda around localization. The research conducted for this case study was also part of Sabina's doctoral dissertation research.

Tragically, Sabina passed away on November 16, 2022, after a long battle with cancer. At that point, this case study was not quite completed. Her friend and frequent collaborator, Jessica Hsu, volunteered to complete the remaining interviews and finalize the analysis that can be found here, as a tribute to all the work that Sabina had devoted to the cause of localization, and all the work that she had done in Haiti, where she had spent much of her life since the devastating earthquake of 2010.

The Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University thanks Jessica Hsu, as we all mourn the passing of Sabina Robillard.

> "I care immensely about the work that I do and its value in the world. These are peoples' lives, their livelihoods, their children's health, and their futures. If we do not approach this work thoughtfully with full consideration for the humanity and agency of the people we work with, we can inflict real damage. But if we can do it well, we can make real, positive, and lasting changes."
>
> Sabina Robillard

Introduction

In 2021, the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) commissioned the Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University to undertake a series of "landscape papers" to explore certain key issues in the humanitarian research space. One of the issues identified as a priority by BHA was the "localization of humanitarian assistance." Localization is a loosely defined agenda meant to correct for historic and systematic exclusion and marginalization of actors from crisis-affected countries, often referred to as "local actors," in the structures of international humanitarian response. The agenda was somewhat formalized through the Grand Bargain commitments that came out of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. These emphasized increasing funding to local humanitarian actors, more-equitable partnerships between local and international actors, more-integrated coordination efforts, and increased capacity building for local actors.

However, many issues related to the localization of humanitarian assistance, including who is a local humanitarian actor and what reforms are seen as necessary to achieve localization, are inherently context specific. Therefore, in shaping the broader landscape study, the study team decided to include four case studies that would deliver "deep dives" into four countries to provide context-specific insights into key aspects of the localization discourse. Each study worked with researchers who were from or deeply connected to the countries being studied and engaged with a broad range of stakeholders in those countries. The case study countries were Uganda, South Sudan, Haiti, and Honduras. Insights from

interviews in these countries were integrated into the general landscape study and used to develop the individual case studies.

The objective of these cases is not to provide a comprehensive or definitive take on localization in each context, which is a longer process that should be led by researchers from the countries. Rather, it is to provide additional nuance to the concepts being discussed in the broader landscape paper and illustrate how these differ across contexts.

Methodology

Key informants were purposefully selected to represent a wide variety of perspectives and geographic regions across the country, with special attention to areas that have been affected in the past years by different humanitarian emergencies or crises. Between May 2 and July 29, 2022, 19 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted. An additional 11 KIIs were conducted in January and early February 2023, engaging key informants affiliated with organizations that are Grand Bargain signatories, and adding a focus on humanitarian interventions in the context of the armed conflict that began in Cité Soleil July 2022.[1] In total, 30 KIIs were completed. The informants have experience working with local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs), national non-governmental organizations (NNGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), diaspora groups, and a government institution. Informants included academics, a local journalist, and a funder, as well as community members. The majority of the interviews were conducted via phone, WhatsApp, or Zoom; a few were in person. The interviews were conducted in Haitian Creole or in English. Those conducted in

Haitian Creole were then translated into English. They were manually coded and analyzed.

The informants chosen for this study are not necessarily representative of the population of Haiti, but do feel like they are representative of humanitarian aid in Haiti.

Complementing the KIIs completed in 2022/2023 is additional research conducted by members of the research team in partnership with Dr. Mark Schuller[2] preceding and following 2016 Hurricane Matthew in various communities outside of Port-au-Prince. The community conversations around resources, needs, perspectives on aid, NGOs, and the State resulted in the creation of a pilot project to collectively write and circulate a "Community Guide to Humanitarian Aid"[3] in Abricots, Haiti. The guide has been expanded into other communities where Dr. Schuller's earlier research was conducted, including Camp Perrin, Port Salut, Marbial, and Bourdrouin in the commune[4] of Jacmel, and Çaira and Abita in the commune of Leogane.

The methodology and approach to this study shifted due to the changing context and corresponding challenges in Haiti. The original study was intended to focus on Cité Soleil, one of the most marginalized urban communities in the country. Due to the increase in armed violence, what was intended to be KIIs in person became remote conversations. The scope was expanded into other regions. Then, due to the shift in Haiti's situation to one with increased urban violence, which some categorize as nonstate armed conflict, actors in, or intervening in, areas of heightened violence were included in KIIs.

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[1] The current context in Haiti and specifically Port-au-Prince has not officially been categorized as "nonstate armed conflict" by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), but some international agencies and organizations are operating under those terms. Others are operating under "urban violence," a category that historically has not been straightforward or clearly delineated for humanitarians.

[2] Dr. Mark Schuller is professor of anthropology and nonprofit and NGO studies at Northern Illinois University and affiliate at the Facultè d'Ethnologie, l'Universitè d'Etat d'Haïti (State University of Haiti).

[3] The Community Guide is forthcoming in summer 2023.

[4] Haiti is broken down into departments, then communes, then communal sections, and then zones within those communal sections.

Objectives

This case study is intended to supplement the Feinstein and Oxfam report, "Anchored in Local Reality"[5] published in March 2020. Providing an overview of three countries, including Haiti, "Anchored in Local Reality" was focused on the response in the southern peninsula to Hurricane Matthew in 2016. This report will examine the broader landscape of locally led response and localization in Haiti's current complex humanitarian situation from the perspective of local, national, and international actors.

Although the case study engaged various actors, including the Directorate General of Civil Protection (DGPC), the Haitian government body responsible for disaster response, INGOs that participate in formal coordination mechanisms, and multimandate and development INGOs, it foregrounds the perspectives of key informants from crisis-affected and marginalized communities.

The objective of the case study is to disrupt the binary of local as "good" and international as "bad." It attempts to disaggregate what it means in the context of Haiti "[to make] principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary," as the Grand Bargain commitment defines localization.

In particular, this case study would like to illuminate the mutual aid and solidarity that neighbors, family, and community members provide in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster.[6] These acts are rarely detailed by the media, international actors, or by policy makers. Much of the narrative around aid that circulates portrays Haitians as "victims" waiting for aid and foreigners as "saviors" bringing aid. That narrative has been internalized and requires disrupting on many levels. Moreover, in order to think about locally led response, INGOs must acknowledge and understand these existing forms of collectivity and support of these local systems, as outside aid begins to flow into crisis-affected communities.

Structure of the report

The case study includes seven sections, which are broken down into further subsections. Each of the subsections are followed by a summary to describe key takeaways.

The report will begin by providing a bit of historical background and the current humanitarian context. The first section is broken down into five subsections. It begins by describing why the localization agenda is so important in the context of Haiti. The next subsection will describe the current context of insecurity, urban violence, and governance followed by another subsection discussing recent natural disasters and their impact on out-migration and Haitians being returned to Haiti. The next subsection will define concepts according to key informants relevant to localization, including the terms "humanitarian aid" and "local actors," illustrating how these terms are not homogeneously defined.

Following the brief history and the definition of terms, the report highlights the immediate, initial mutual aid and solidarity that neighbors, family, and community members provide in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster.

Then in the second section, the report examines the state of localization, first from a local perspective, and discusses some efforts to shift towards locally led response, but largely the continuation of old patterns of aid. Then, the report turns to the international perspective, which describes the lack of systematic, concerted efforts to localize, although there has been increased coordination within formal coordination mechanisms between international efforts and Haitian institutions. The report goes on to discuss local actors

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[5] Sabina Robillard, Isabella Jean, Tara Gingerich, Carlos Esteban Mejia, Ledis Bohòrquez Farfan, Daryl Grisgraber, Tonny Joseph, and Daniel Maxwell, "Anchored in Local Reality: Case Studies on Local Humanitarian Action from Haiti, Colombia and Iraq: A Joint Study by Oxfam and Feinstein International Center" (March 2020).

[6] The term natural is used, although reluctantly, because the impact of hurricanes and earthquakes in Haiti is not natural, but shaped by human-made factors that exist prior to the event. The scale of disaster is determined by preexisting vulnerabilities and structural inequities.

and the state of localization in the context of armed conflict/urban violence, which is part of Haiti's current reality, especially in Port-au-Prince.

These sections lead to the next section on barriers to localization, which discusses both structural barriers as well as concrete barriers that have kept humanitarian actors at a distance from local actors.

The barriers section is followed by a section on the enablers of localization, and recommendations that address both long-term structural reform and concrete short-term reforms in order to move towards more locally led humanitarian response in the specific context of Haiti. The recommendations are followed by the conclusion.

The Haiti context: Why is the localization agenda important?

Haiti continues to be rated amongst the countries **most vulnerable to climate change**. It has also been listed by the World Bank as the country **most exposed to natural disasters** of any country in Latin America and the Caribbean region. The country has witnessed an increase in natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, flooding, drought, etc. over the last decade, as well as greater impacts from them due to increased deforestation for subsistence agriculture and lack of investment to build community resilience in order to mitigate these impacts.

Furthermore, Haiti is frequently called a **"Republic of NGOs"** due to the sheer number of NGOs present on the island, paired with limited government capacity and weakened institutions. Some Haitian activists argue that foreign non-governmental organization (NGO) presence has contributed to the further weakening of the government and local systems. Prior to the 2010 earthquake, it was estimated that somewhere between 3,000 and 10,000 NGOS were present in the country. The United Nations (UN) Special Envoy to Haiti, former president Bill Clinton, noted that Haiti had the second-highest number of NGOs per capita in the world.[7] The majority of these NGOs continue to be unregistered with the NGO Administration and Coordination Unit (UCAONG) under the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation (MPCE).

The island country also holds a **central place in humanitarian discourse**, largely because of the 2010

earthquake. The devastation caught global attention, and the international humanitarian effort was one of the largest and most visible, with pledges from international agencies reaching $13 billion and those from individuals totaling $3 billion. Yet the response also has been highly criticized for not only bypassing the Haitian government, but for also systematically sidelining all Haitian stakeholders.

Since then, the humanitarian system has had multiple opportunities to exhibit what it learned from the 2010 earthquake, including in the response to Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and the August 2021 earthquake, and now in the context of a complex crisis that includes escalations of insecurity and armed group violence. These various histories leading to the present make Haiti a significant case study for the "localization" agenda and its implementation.

The humanitarian situation: insecurity, urban violence, and governance

Since the joint Feinstein and Oxfam report, **Haiti has spiraled into an increasingly complicated situation and is suffering from acute and overlapping crises.** The impact of the current, complex crises is **contoured by preexisting inequities** caused by what the World Bank has characterized as a missing

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[7] Daniel Trenton, "Bill Clinton Tells Diaspora: 'Haiti Needs You Now,'" *Miami Herald*, August 10, 2009..

social contract between the State and its citizens.[8] Academics have raised this issue for many years in texts such as Robert Fatton's *The Predatory Republic: The Unending Transition to Democracy* and Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Haiti: State Against Nation: Origins & Legacy of Duvalierism.*[9] Many of these texts mark the absence of a social contract since Haiti's independence from France.

The lack of a social contract has led to another name commonly used to describe Haiti: "The Republic of Port-au-Prince," because basic services, institutions, and monetary resources are consolidated in the capital.[10] The neglect of the areas outside of Port-au-Prince has continued the decline in living conditions, forcing many to migrate to the capital in order to *chèche lavi* ("in search of livelihoods" in English), dramatically growing the population of Port-au-Prince. Built for 200,000, the population currently exceeds 3 million,[11] with many living in densely populated shantytowns.

Moreover, "building back better"[12] has not been the reality for Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, or after Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Both of these natural disasters have left impacted communities in increasingly difficult situations, with additional unresolved humanitarian needs.

With the backdrop of a country already in crisis, Haiti is now plagued by pervasive insecurity due to a resurgence of armed group activity at unprecedented levels spurred by Haiti's predatory politics. Historically, armed groups have been weaponized by politicians and the private sector for political and personal gains, as well as for protection. The current scenario appears to have armed groups moving away from their traditional patronage, multiplying and consolidating power. The estimated number of different groups is about 200, with 40 considered significant in terms of size and influence. They are said to control about 60% of the territory in Port-au-Prince, while affecting 100% of the country. The violence, mostly concentrated in the capital, has included massacres, killings, kidnappings, destruction of property, and different forms of gendered violence including rape and gang rape. There are escalations of violence when armed groups wage battles amongst themselves or with the police, terrorizing most of the capital. The violence limits fuel supplies, access to essential institutions such as hospitals, schools, markets, humanitarian access, and circulation in general. The cost of living has skyrocketed, exacerbated by armed violence.

To date, the violence has displaced approximately 155,000 people.[13] In July 2022, during a five-day period in Cité Soleil, just under 250 people were killed.[14] October 2, 2022, marked the reappearance of cholera when the Ministry of Health confirmed its first new[15] case in Cité Soleil, largely attributed to the lack of potable water. Since that time

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[8] World Bank Group, "Haiti: Towards a New Narrative, Systematic Country Diagnosis" (May 2015), accessed February 2, 2023, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/319651467986293030/pdf/97341-SCD-P150705-IDA-SecM2015-0130-IFC-SecM2015-0071-MIGA-SecM2015-0046-Box391466B-OUO-9.pdf

[9] Robert Fatton, *The Predatory Republic: The Unending Transition to Democracy* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); Michel Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti: State Against Nation: Origins & Legacy of Duvalierism* (Monthly Review Press, 2000).

[10] As reported by Lebret-Irfed International Centre and Karl Lévêque Cultural Institute in their 2006 report, "Relations Between Civil Society and Public Authorities in Haiti," only 1% of the national budget was allocated for all of the other departments outside of the west where Port-au-Prince is located. See http://www.lebret-irfed.org/IMG/pdf/070125_rapp-Haiti_engl.pdf.

[11] This is prior to the 2010 earthquake. There has not been a census conducted, but many estimate that number has stayed relatively steady due to outmigration and urban violence. People have returned to countryside homes for safety when possible.

[12] "Building back better" was the mantra after the 2010 earthquake. It is defined by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction as: "The use of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phases after a disaster to increase the resilience of a nation and communities through integrating disaster risk reduction measures into the restoration of physical infrastructure and societal systems and into the revitalization of livelihoods, economies and environment."

[13] United States Agency for International Development (USAID) situation report, "Haiti Complex Emergency Fact Sheet - Fact Sheet #2 Fiscal Year 2023," https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/haiti-complex-emergency-fact-sheet-2-fiscal-year-fy-2023.

[14] Al Jazeera, "The UN Decries Rising Death Toll, Rights Violation in Haiti," July 16, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/16/un-decries-rising-death-toll-rights-violations-in-haiti.

[15] Haiti had been considered cholera-free for over three years, with no new cases reported. The reappearance of cholera in October of 2022 is of the same initial strand introduced after the earthquake by UN troops.

until January 28, 2023, the Haitian Ministry of Health reported a total of 27,099 suspected cases throughout the country, including 2,056 confirmed cases, 23,196 hospitalized suspected cases, and 560 registered deaths.[16]

Furthermore, the recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)[17] from September 2022 indicates that 4.7 million people are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, including 19,000 who are classified in IPC Phase 5, extreme hunger/famine level. This is the first time any country in Latin America and the Caribbean region has experienced an IPC Phase 5.[18]

As of February 2023, armed groups have continued to battle each other, spilling into all areas of Port-au-Prince.[19] Humanitarian access continues to be a serious issue, and many larger agencies have brought on staff specifically to facilitate humanitarian access.

Other humanitarian emergencies

On August 14, 2021, Haiti was hit with another 7.2 earthquake on the southern peninsula, which never fully recovered from the devastation of Hurricane Matthew in 2016. The earthquake impacted approximately 650,00 people, caused 2,248 deaths, and injured 12,763 people.[20] Since the initial quake until September 2, 2022, Haiti's DGPC recorded more than 900 aftershocks, and approximately 400 of those registered were a magnitude of 3 or stronger.[21]

These various disasters have created further pressure for Haitians to migrate out of Haiti. While there has been an uptick in numbers of people leaving Haiti, tens of thousands have been expelled and returned to Haiti by the United States, Bahamas, Cuba, Turks and Caicos, Virgin Islands, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Their situations upon return are more difficult than prior to their departure, due to not only the exacerbated conditions in the country, but also because families have pooled money, sold land, and even borrowed money to support their voyages, impoverishing their network of support.[22]

Definition of concepts

Humanitarian aid

Prior to discussing localization, key informants were asked how they understand the term "humanitarian aid." A few of the key informants affiliated with CBOs and LNGOs, and community members perceived aid as something that arrives from the outside. Generally, the community is not very involved, and the aid is enacted by foreigners. Although many see themselves and their community members as working collectively in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters, they perceive themselves as outside of the formal humanitarian aid system.

A key informant who heads a community-based NGO responded to the question by stating, "I hear human in the word 'humanitarian.' And so what it should be doing is helping someone become a person again. After a crisis, someone loses everything that makes them a person, so we have to

16 Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Epidemiological Update, Cholera, January 31, 2023, https://www.paho.org/en/documents/epidemiological-update-cholera-31-january-2023.

17 IPC was originally developed in 2004 to be used in Somalia as a method of analysis for food security and nutrition. Since then, 15 organizations are leading the development and implementation of it globally, regionally, and locally. It is a classification and analytic approach used by governments, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society, and other relevant actors working together to determine the severity and magnitude of acute and chronic food insecurity and acute malnutrition. The scale is from Phase 1 (none/minimal) to Phase 5 (catastrophe/famine).

18 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification for Haiti, September 2022, https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155963/?iso3=HTI.

19 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Haiti: Rise in Extreme Gang Violence Makes for a 'Living Nightmare,'" February 10, 2023, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/haiti-rise-extreme-gang-violence-makes-living-nightmare-turk.

20 International Medical Corps, Haiti Earthquake Situation Report #2, September 10, 2021, https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/2021-haiti-earthquake-situation-report-2-september-10-2021.

21 Ibid.

22 Amnesty International, "They Did Not Treat Us Like People: Race and Migration Related Torture and Other Ill-Treatment of Haitians Seeking Safety in the US," September 22, 2022.

support that person in finding things that can help him find his humanity with dignity, his rights as a person."[23] Despite that, he reinforced the idea that for many Haitians the term humanitarian has become synonymous with organizations that come from elsewhere. Another key informant from an LNGO supported by an INGO for funding noted that humanitarian aid implies verticality.

Other community-based key informants believed that humanitarian aid does and must come from the community first, and that communities need to remember their collective strength and resources. Others recognized themselves as first responders after a natural disaster before INGOs arrived. Then the collective momentum of recovery is disrupted by top-down aid that appears in their communities for distribution, largely without engaging the community.

This case study also shows that for the majority of key informants who do not participate in the formal coordination mechanisms, the distinction between humanitarian aid and development aid is unclear. The case study looked at how humanitarian crises are perceived in order to further understand the lack of definition between different forms of aid. One key informant from a CBO in the northwest noted that when they say humanitarian crisis in their area, it generally refers to food insecurity and it is not a real crisis but a disguised crisis. He noted, "People sometimes have local products like manioc, sweet potatoes, corn but because of the education that is being given, even kids do not want to eat these foods. So people are not adapted to local food anymore, they want to eat imported foods like spaghetti, flour, and rice. Humanitarian aid plays a role in de-solidarizing them. Humanitarian aid makes it difficult for CBOs to actually work together to resolve the problems of the community."[24]

For other key informants, the definition of human-itarian aid varied from sudden natural disasters to urban violence, food insecurity, lack of access to water, cholera, and impoverishment. Perhaps the explanation is that the current state of normalcy for many Haitians is already a state of crisis where basic needs are not met, including access to food, water, education, healthcare, livelihoods, etc. A key informant who works with an NNGO based in the department of Grand'Anse noted that every time there is a natural disaster or increased violence that dramatically augments humanitarian needs, it is like an *abse sou klou* ("a blister on an open wound" in English). He added that many NGOs address the blister and not the existing wound. He noted that after a disaster, INGOs will appear with more resources and funding and then they leave, not leaving resources or investing in capacity between disasters to heal the existing wound.

This notion was further reinforced by another key informant affiliated with a UN agency as he discussed the process of deciding who qualifies for humanitarian aid in Haiti. He stated, "Some people are in need of humanitarian assistance because of a natural disaster or conflict, but other people have the same needs because of poverty, neglect of the government, and you see that there is a big chunk of people who need humanitarian aid, and big gaps between need and response. For example, we generally prioritize aid for people categorized in IPC 3, but we cannot respond to half of the population, so then [we] prioritize IPC 4."[25]

Summary: Although some local key informants noted that communities themselves provide humanitarian aid, the majority stated that humanitarian aid is largely perceived as something that comes from the outside and is provided by foreigners. Furthermore, it is clear that for many key informants, the categories of "humanitarian aid" and "development aid" are blurred. Therefore the comments, critiques, and suggestions in this case study are more broadly related to external aid and NGOs in general. Even the term NGO appeared for some to be unclear, as sometimes the term NGO was synonymous with external interventions. Some community members categorized a private company working on road infra-structure in the south as an NGO.[26]

[23] Interview 2.

[24] Interview 12.

[25] Interview 14.

[26] From Dr. Mark Schuller's National Science Foundation (NSF) research before and after Hurricane Matthew. Overview of this research can be found at http://www.anthropolitics.org/post-matthew-2017-research/.

Local actors

When key informants were asked who is considered a local humanitarian actor, the response included a broad range of local, national, and international actors. As noted, many local actors do not consider themselves humanitarian actors, so this section addresses local actors implicated at the intersections of development and humanitarian aid.

In defining "local," one of the biggest factors was physical proximity to a crisis-affected community, if not the community members themselves. A key informant affiliated with a CBO who is also a journalist stated, "When [we] are talking local, someone might be local to Haiti, but they might not be local to the community. Someone who lives in Port-au-Prince doesn't have the experience of someone in the south."[27] Along these lines, many key informants talked about the distinctions between rural and urban and stated that each community has its own specific traits and realities. One key informant also advised that specific groups need to be looked at within a community, therefore adding more nuance to what "community" is as well.[28]

Many key informants stated that proximity is not only geographic, but more importantly is seen in terms of local realities. An academic key informant stated that a local humanitarian actor is not necessarily on the ground, but "has a governance that is grounded in Haiti, and decisions which are made based on local realities."[29] Another key informant from an INGO further elaborated, "The idea that people who are inherently embedded in the situation are going to respond better is so clear."[30] Many informants noted that, beyond proximity to local realities, the actor must be a trusted organization, institution, authority, or community leader that provides value in their community and is widely respected in a crisis-affected community if effective localization is to occur.

Informants cited local associations, churches, civil protection, schools, and community leaders as important local actors, as well as administrators of the communal sections of a commune (CASECs), who are local authorities living in the community with an obligation to the population as well as pressure to act correctly. Many community-based key informants stated that even though these individuals may be local actors, it is crucial to understand how they are perceived by the community before engaging them.

A key informant affiliated with a CBO suggested that a way to assess an actor's level of community trust of them and value "is to ask them what they have done already, what they do in the community. You can ask people what these groups have done already—are these groups functional, do they participate in community life. And then you can work with them because they have some credibility already."[31] Another key informant stated criteria as being sincere people who are creating synergies, cooperating, mobilizing resources in and for their communities, and who believe in collaboration and partnership. He further noted that many of these social leaders are connected because they have similar objectives of serving their communities.[32]

Other key informants cited the importance of including community members like *mambos*,[33] pastors, professors, and parents in the conversation, as well as local community radio stations, which are able to disseminate information and create transparency. There are also individuals considered *notabs* (or influential leaders in English) in communities who key informants believe should be included as well, in addition to women and members of other vulnerable groups. Another key informant added that engaging youth leaders and supporting capacity building of these leaders is crucial for the future of the communities.

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[27] Interview 3.

[28] Interview 29.

[29] Interview 11.

[30] Interview 16.

[31] Interview 3.

[32] Interview 1.

[33] A *mambo* is a priestess in the Haitian vodou religion.

What is clear from key informants is that local actors play different roles within the community. Some are CBOs, LNGOs, institutions, or associations that can be trusted to receive funding or resources for the community. Others can be facilitators, leaders, and decision makers. They all require different types of engagement to ensure equitable participation within a community with the idea of strengthening civil society.

Almost all key informants from all sectors noted that the State is the most important and currently most problematic humanitarian local actor. "State" includes the Central State as well as local authorities. A key informant who is affiliated with an NNGO stated, "The State needs to play a transversal role that really is about setting up the rules of the game. What is an NGO? What are the limits of the things they can do?"[34]

According to many key informants, the State includes its institutions, like the Directorate General of Civil Protection (DGPC). DGPC is seen as a trusted actor by many INGOs that participate in the formal humanitarian system, but one that is centralized and lacking resources. DGPC partners with local authorities on the regional level in emergency centers.[35] Frequently, mayors are unaware of their role as head of communal emergency operation centers, and they were accused repeatedly by key informants of politicizing aid. Therefore, they are generally less trusted as local humanitarian actors by community members. Yet most key informants still believe that local authorities should not be bypassed. Instead, they should be included and encouraged and supported to fulfill their role, while being held accountable by the inclusion of a wider array of civil society groups.

One key informant stated, "Local authorities know the problems in their community, the needs of the community, where it needs and where it doesn't need help. As a local authority, you should know all of this, so [you] should play the role in directing aid where it is needed. When the State neglects its role in this sense, then we find organizations that come into the community and do whatever they want."[36]

A key informant from a NNGO with CBO partners noted that local actors are ultimately "doing the ongoing work of building capacity [in crisis-affected communities] based on local realities. [They are building] a network created by local people."[37]

Summary: Local actors are embedded in the situation and trusted and respected by the communities they serve. Local actors can include a wide variety of community-based actors, from CBOs to NGOs to institutions, associations, local authorities, influential leaders (notabs), and community members in general. Each of the trusted local actors may play a different role within a local network, but should ensure the engagement of the most marginalized and vulnerable. Ideally the local network should include representatives of civil society, community members, and local authorities in order to promote transparency and accountability.

Immediate, initial responses are locally led

This case study confirms the findings of the "Anchored in Local Reality" case study conducted by Feinstein and Oxfam in 2020 after Hurricane Matthew in terms of exclusively locally led response in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters in Haiti. Many community-based informants talk about community members, neighbors, friends, and family members as first responders. In the moments immediately after a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, earthquake, or flooding, they noted

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[34] Interview 5.

[35] There is a national emergency operation center (COUN), which includes the Prime Minister and line ministries. Then there is a departmental emergency operation center (COUD), followed by a communal emergency operation center (COUC) headed by mayors. The communal emergency operation centers are listed in the humanitarian response architecture as local emergency operation centers (COULs) headed by administrators of the communal section of a commune (CASECs), but they in practice do not really exist.

[36] Interview 7.

[37] Interview 17.

how mutual aid resembles past forms of collectivity, which have been steadily deteriorating. Furthermore, many of these actors would not necessarily identify themselves as local humanitarian actors.

After the 2010 earthquake, neighbors helped to pull neighbors out of rubble, found medical attention for the injured, and shared food and resources. The population of Port-au-Prince was cited as having decreased by 23%,[38] (almost 600,000 people) 19 days after the earthquake. This decrease was due to people seeking safety in their communities of origin. These communities outside of Port-au-Prince took in victims of the earthquake and shared their limited resources. Households swelled to support those who had fled Port-au-Prince, without any external aid replenishing what they offered to those they took in.

In the days that followed Hurricane Matthew's passage, many international humanitarian organizations were based in Port-au-Prince and were not able to arrive in the impacted areas quickly. The Ladigue Bridge on highway Route Nationale 2 that connects the southern peninsula to the rest of the country was taken out by the hurricane. In addition, phone service in the Grand'Anse was down for almost a week. In the meantime, family and friends walked between town and the communal sections to check on friends and family. Public spaces like town squares and roads were cleaned of debris by the population. Community members who had houses still standing sheltered family and friends, with all sharing resources. Family members from other regions traveled to bring food and water, and to help build temporary shelters. Those who were most vulnerable to the conditions in the aftermath were sent to family and friends in Port-au-Prince.[39] One of the key informants talked about the comprehensive assessment of his commune that he led by establishing a partnership with the other local institutions. The assessment detailed lives and homes lost, those injured, damaged houses, and loss of domestic animals, crops, and resources specific to each zone

in all of the communal sections. The assessment was shared with formal coordination mechanisms, but the key informant said it was largely ignored because aid continued to come in that did not correspond to local needs.

Community members cited the ways in which outside aid elevated competition and jealousy, and broke down much of the strong mutual aid within communities immediately after the hurricane. Community members witnessed the distribution of aid in the center of town (*bouk*), which then was sold to those who were in need living outside of the *bouk*. Some residents hired by INGOs would create their own beneficiary lists for distribution, and aid did not reach those most in need. Also, political candidates used aid as a campaigning tool for the upcoming elections. These outside interventions have been cited as slowly deteriorating local collaborative/mutual aid systems. Although significantly less prevalent than in the past, some forms of solidarity continued to persist even when outside interventions ended.[40]

In the aftermath of the 2021 earthquake, the patterns were similar in communities impacted. Key informants talked about a local group mobilizing local doctors and nurses to support areas that were not being reached by medical care, using mobile clinics. Mentioned by a few community-based Haitian informants was an incident where a less-impacted community in the southwest mobilized to provide food from their local gardens and brought them to the island of Cayemite, where people were very isolated and in need of food. The farmers contributed food, and community members helped gather the food and put it on the boats that were owned by the fishing cooperative. Then they brought the food to these communities to distribute to those most in need. This act was mentioned by a few of the community-based informants; it was clearly a source of inspiration and pride.

[38] Columbia University and Karolinska Institute, "Internal Population Displacement in Haiti - Preliminary Analyses of Movement Patterns of Digicel Mobile Phones; 1 January to 11 March, 2010, May 14, 2010," https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/internal-population-displacement-haiti-preliminary-analyses-movement-patterns-digicel.

[39] Kaiting Jessica Hsu and Mark Schuller, "Humanitarian Aid and Local Power Structures: Lessons from Haiti's Shadow Disaster," *Disasters* 4, no. 4 (October 2020): 641–665, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/disa.12380.

[40] Ibid.

A key informant from an NNGO with an international fundraising INGO located in the south stated, "It was difficult to reconcile the idea that we would be expecting some of our team to be first responders who were also victims, but it didn't take long for our colleagues who are adamant about their work and country to step up and tell us they were ready to work. Why is it that people who are going through trauma will choose service and choose service for others? Service heals, and it's one of the things that people can use to heal while going through trauma. It was certainly true of our colleagues. They were finding their own healing."[41]

Summary: The mutual aid of neighbors, family, and community members in the immediate aftermath is rarely highlighted by the media, international actors, or by policy makers. It is important to acknowledge. It is crucial for INGOs to reinforce these local systems of mutual aid that exist within a crisis-affected community. Outside interventions that are not in alignment with existing local, collective systems create competition and jealousy, and forge divisions that ultimately weaken civil society.

The state of localization

Local perspective

Key informants who are local, nonstate actors were asked what they thought about localization currently. The majority of key informants in this category were unfamiliar with this term as part of a global commitment, nor were they familiar with the Grand Bargain. Furthermore, some key informants added that there is little awareness of how the humanitarian system and NGOs in general function. The study provided a bit of background on localization for those unfamiliar with the term in order to contextualize the question.

Some of the key informants noted increased efforts by some INGOs to partner with Haitian groups. They witnessed some real will to make a shift towards allowing communities to take charge. The efforts included the elements of equitable partnership and capacity building. Another informant cited INGOs recognizing local resources and choosing to buy from local planters.

Even with this marked progress, all community-based informants believe that the patterns and power dynamics still continue to remain largely

the same. Those who have lived through crises said that there still is a long way to go for aid to be accountable to crisis-affected communities. When there is no accountability, "it's like parachute that comes down, and it doesn't correspond with local realities, and it creates more dependency socially,"[42] said one key informant. Other key informants noted that sometimes these same dynamics are reproduced by national or local organizations. Some even take aid received and distribute it to their own people or not at all, taking advantage of a system that has not been transparent or accountable.

One key informant from an NNGO said, "It seems like there is more of an obligation for them [INGOs] to work more closely with local organizations, but they make it feel like they are doing everyone a favor. Whether out of good faith or poor faith, they are trying to trap the local organizations to show that local organizations are not trustworthy. They are trying to prove that they don't manage money well, etc. I'm not sure if they do this on purpose, but they create conditions that they impose on the communities that contribute to demonizing local organizations."[43]

While almost all of the community-based informants noted a skepticism of NGO aid and much

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[41] Interview 10.

[42] Interview 11.

[43] Interview 2.

criticism as to how NGOs function, almost all of them located the root of the issue in governance and more specifically saw the problem as rooted in their State. Many talked about the State as absent, negligent, and not playing their role. In addition, many key informants talked about corruption and the politicization of aid.

A key informant from a CBO illustrated what he believes should happen versus the current reality: "The NGO comes with aid; the State connects them with grassroot organizations. The State should play a role of bridge between the two. The State currently does not play that role, because they are still in a position of diverting aid for their own aims."[44]

A CBO-affiliated key informant reinforced the dynamic, but added, "People are now very skeptical of NGO aid. The only ones worse than the NGOs is our State because the State basically does not exist. It's a system that permits people to become hostages of aid."[45]

A number of key informants noted that there are increasing frustrations within communities. One key informant working with an INGO that partners with CBOs cited that Pestel and Corail communes after the 2021 earthquake had denounced incoming food aid arriving from INGOs because it was not what they needed. They made it public that their biggest needs were water and shelter.

Some of the frustrations were expressed by this key informant: "When you leave [a community] as an NGO, you should leave things behind. If there is a weakness in the community, you should not ignore it. But you need to go to the community and analyze problems; don't just bring tarps. They do not correspond with people's needs or strengths. Look to see if there are strengths and resources in the community, can you buy food locally, can you create jobs so people can rebuild themselves back on their own,"[46] stated a key informant affiliated with a CBO.

There is increasing frustration with the lack of locally led response. Many community-based groups and their members believe something similar to what this key informant stated: "People in communities need to be strong in their advocacy to make NGOs who come [to their communities] know that they need to participate in what is happening. And the local authorities, they need to create the conditions and an environment that allows actors in their community to participate. They need to create a road to orient NGOs towards local actors."[47] Other key informants raised the issue of popular education, stating that a majority of the population are not fully familiar with the role of local authorities, nor how INGOs function. They note that awareness and understanding of the two systems would allow communities to make more informed decisions and take more collective action.

Summary: Although some individual organizations have made efforts and have shown real commitment towards communities leading, the general patterns and power dynamics with INGOs have largely remained the same. People are increasingly frustrated with and skeptical of NGO aid, but even more of them locate blame with their government. Many local actors believe that communities need more information to make informed decisions about the humanitarian aid system and NGOs in general.

International perspective

The majority of key informants familiar with the term "localization" were not aware of systemic efforts to "localize," and members of some UN agencies noted that localization is not necessarily something that they prioritize in Haiti. One UN affiliated informant said, "As humanitarians, we are just doing and doing, almost mechanically and have no time to reflect. Now that I am at headquarters [HQ], I have time to think and talk about localization. There's more discussion on localization at the HQ level than in

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44 Interview 3.

45 Interview 8.

46 Interview 3.

47 Interview 7.

the field because people are so under pressure."[48] Another UN-affiliated key informant noted that localization seemed like a global commitment that was made without consulting country offices. Other UN affiliates spoke of proximity of offices in department capitals and Haitian staff, and partnership with local groups who help facilitate aid distributions, rather than localization.

A study conducted by Le Cadre de Liaison Inter-Organizations (Inter-Organization Liaison Framework in English) (CLIO)[49] was mentioned by another key informant, who noted that it was intended to initiate discussions amongst the membership, but no consensus was reached. Since that initial conversation, there has been very little follow-up.

Other key informants said the word localization is overused and trivialized, and another called it a buzzword that is linked to funding.

Another key informant[50] noted that some individual organizations are working on localization and that their headquarters are responsible for monitoring and adherence to the Grand Bargain. Her organization created a team to work on partnership capacity strengthening.

Other individual organizations are implementing survivor and community-led response (SCLR) methodologies. Not all of the organizations that engage SCLR principles use the term. The first listed principle for Local2Global's[51] SCLR methodology states, "Crisis affected people are first and last responders." There are 12 other guiding principles

outlined by Local2Global.[52] One key informant affiliated with an Act Alliance[53] INGO collaborating with Local2Global mentioned the intention of setting up communities of practice in a number of countries. Haiti is amongst them. In addition, the key informant further noted the importance of ensuring that an organization institutionalizes its definition of localization because shifts can happen with changes in organizational leadership. The definition that was pushed by this key informant summarized localization in this way: "It is about shifting power dynamics to people most affected by an event so that they are involved in decision making and [so] that funding is catered to these people's goals. It is also a process of unlearning helplessness and dependency,"[54] which other informants called "humanitarian aid syndrome."[55] The informant noted that there are other members of the Act Alliance who are using the SCLR approach.

The other INGO/NNGO[56] key informants who use similar SCLR methodologies, but do not use the term SCLR, are not connected in any way but are implementing these methodologies as individual organizations. They are outside of the formal coordination mechanism, but are present in communities. When a natural disaster happens, they engage their local partners and community members immediately and provide the space for communities to decide how they would like to respond. One of the informants noted, "Communities naturally function as humanitarian systems when the moment arises. The problem is that frequently they are not connected to the foreign aid system or vice versa, the foreign aid

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48 Interview 14.

49 CLIO is an association of organizations that was established in 2005 and currently has a membership of 80 organizations that are both Haitian and foreign. The report published in March 2015 is titled, "Localization in Haiti: From Words to Actions."

50 This key informant is from an organization that is a Grand Bargain signatory.

51 Local2Global is a working group documenting and supporting local responses to protection, survival, and recovery in major humanitarian crises.

52 Local2Global Guiding Principles are at https://www.local2global.info/sclr/guiding-principles/.

53 ACT Alliance is a coalition composed of more than 140 faith-based member organizations working in long-term development, advocacy, and humanitarian assistance in more than 120 countries. Their stated goal is "to promote a locally-led and coordinated approach to advocacy, humanitarian and developmental issues."

54 Interview 29.

55 Humanitarian aid syndrome is defined as the impacts of not allowing crisis-affected communities to be a part of decision making, which creates dependency on aid, causes people to lose their dignity, and makes them forget their own strengths and resources.

56 The international arm of these INGOs is for fundraising, while the NNGO is in charge of programming, with the community leading. Other INGOs have a director and office based in the community in charge of leading programs with the community.

system is not connected to the community system."[57] So this key informant's INGO seeks out international funding for the affiliated LNGO to address the needs determined by the community. The INGO is therefore attempting to connect the two systems by establishing partnerships based in communication, respect, and trust.

Many organizations and agencies that participate in the formal coordination mechanisms, as well as the Directorate General of Civil Protection, remarked that the formal mechanism shifted to being more Haitian led after the 2010 earthquake. Currently, there are permanent sectors led by a Haitian ministry or institution and supported by an international organization. For example, the food security sector is led by National Food Security Coordination (CNSA) and supported by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Participants noted that the more-technical sectors were more efficient than the others. Those who participate are largely INGOs, with the inclusion of a few NNGOs. Sector meetings are held in various locations, including government offices. Although there has been a shift from English to French, still less than 5% of Haitians speak French fluently.[58]

After Hurricane Matthew and after the 2021 earthquake, coordination meetings were held in the Departmental or Communal Operation Centers of the south as detailed in the National Response Plan for Disaster Management and Response. Many INGOs participated in these coordination mechanisms led by Directorate General of Civil Protection. There was some participation from NNGOs and LNGOs, but crisis-affected community members, especially the most vulnerable, continue to be excluded from the coordination meetings.

After Hurricane Matthew, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) took six months to put accountability to affected populations (AAP) staff in place. A key informant from a UN agency noted, "[The AAP person] was so helpful, because it helped us connect with local administration, get a feedback process setup, and it completely changed things."[59] He noted that despite the presence of the AAP person, "local NGOs were frustrated because to be a part of the process, you must be a part of the formal coordination mechanism, but then you are likely not to be reached out to during the assessment process."[60] This case study did not have informants able to comment on the AAP and communication with communities (CwC) policies of UNOCHA after the 2021 earthquake, but a report was released on February 22, 2022, by the Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities (CDAC) network.[61] The study details the efforts made, and concludes that there is still much work to do in these areas of AAP and CwC.

In 2016/2017, UNOCHA closed the Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF) fund, which was a fund that was mostly distributed to local NGOs to help with humanitarian recovery projects, noted a UN key informant. The key informant believed its closure was a step backward and limited resources that were getting into the hands of local humanitarian actors.

In 2020, the Directorate of Civil Protection (DPC) changed its name to Directorate General of Civil Protection (DGPC), indicating a restructuring and shift, which allowed for first-time funding from the national budget. The key informant from DGPC noted that despite having limited national funding, having their own budget is a step towards providing more leverage to negotiate with international groups. The key informant further noted, "It is very difficult to position DGPC in a decision-making process when dependent on internationals for funding."[62]

[57] Interview 26.

[58] Michel DeGraff, "The Politics of Education in Post-Colonies: Krèyol in Haiti as a Case Study of Language as Technology for Power and Liberation," *Journal of Postcolonial Linguistics* 3 (2020): 89–125.

[59] Interview 14.

[60] Interview 14.

[61] CDAC, "Haiti Six Months On: Good Intentions, Bad Memories, and Local Frustrations: Was Communication, Community-Engagement and Accountability Considered in the 2021 Haiti Earthquake Response?" (February 22, 2022), https://www.cdacnetwork.org/learning-evaluation/haiti-six-months-on.

[62] Interview 28.

Furthermore, parallel coordination mechanisms exist, largely consisting of development aid INGOs, some NNGOs/LNGOs, and diaspora INGOs working in the country. These organizations largely did not participate in the formal coordination system supported by UNOCHA, either due to lack of awareness of the mechanism or lack of trust in the UN system. Amongst these groups, the localization agenda seems largely unfamiliar, according to key informants who fall into this category.

As exhibited by the numerous perspectives from this case study, we see that there are deep divisions amongst the external stakeholders who are responding to humanitarian crises. One of the key informants noted that the humanitarian community is very divided, consensus is very difficult, and objectives are not the same. He further stated, "We may be able to put together a humanitarian response plan and flash appeal, but our analysis and approach to the situation is very different and consensus challenging. The humanitarian community is a reflection of Haiti, which is a fragmented place, the government is fragmented, society is fragmented and is a complex mosaic."[63]

Summary: Despite some progress since 2010 towards more Haitian-led/DGPC-led coordination, there are only individual organizations that are effectively facilitating locally led responses. There have been some efforts to reach out to CBOs/LNGOs to participate in formal coordination mechanisms, with little success. There is no systematic effort towards localization and largely no consensus around it within the humanitarian community. It is largely unknown as a commitment amongst INGOs that do not participate in formal coordination mechanisms, and some of these groups have their own parallel coordinating mechanisms. Overall the humanitarian community, and INGOs in general, is very fragmented and divided.

Perspectives on urban violence and armed groups

Local actors

Many key informants residing in urban neighborhoods with armed groups stated that the one category of local actor that cannot be ignored is armed group leaders. They are not trusted or necessarily respected, but they are feared and must be engaged. Despite the varying degree of influence or power of armed group leaders, their presence overshadows local authorities and social leaders. The majority of key informants who are from the neighborhoods, or INGOs that have had extended engagement in these neighborhoods, emphasize the importance of including the participation of other local actors in addition to the armed group leaders.

Geography was considered even more crucial in these urban settings than in other situations of humanitarian crisis because of the closeness of one block to another one that has different armed group leadership. A key informant from Cité Soleil noted, "If you are in Cité Soleil, you can't come from somewhere else and work here. If you are an NGO that is Haitian, but not from here, you can't work in Cité Soleil. Even if you are from the zone, you have to be from the specific block to work there. If you are from Belekou, you can't work in Brooklyn.[64] The question of local, if you put aside the question of INGOs, it would be difficult for a Haitian organization to work in Cité Soleil. Even if you are from one block, you can't work in another block. In Martissant, Carrefour Feuille [communes], etc., you have to be from that block."[65]

Key informants noted a consolidation of power by which armed group leaders from other areas have become involved in neighborhoods where they are not based. This adds complexity, but also has contributed to the consolidation of power, which makes it essential to understand the quickly shifting landscape and the dynamics of conflict in these areas.

63 Interview 23.

64 Citè Soleil is divided into 34 neighborhoods or blocks. Brooklyn and Belekou are two different neighborhoods.

65 Interview 4.

In general, key informants noted that the demographics of these communities have changed with the increased presence and power of armed groups. In areas such as Cité Soleil, some of the key informants who were once also community leaders or affiliated with CBOs noted that they had left the area in order to protect their lives and the lives of their families. One key informant noted, "When you reduce the power of CBOs, power ends up allocated elsewhere."[66] Another key informant stated, "[Armed groups] used to leave space for social leaders. If you weren't someone who would betray them to the police, they would leave you alone. They might ask a favor, but now they have control of everything."[67] Another key informant added that many of these armed groups have organizations or foundations. When a committee is formed to represent a community, "the gangs can't not be represented. They will always be represented, and the person they send will talk for [them]."[68]

Key informants from CBOs, LNGOs, and communities in these neighborhoods made a distinction between times of stability versus times of violence, the latter being specifically when armed groups are battling. Many key informants noted that during times of increased violence, there is even less flexibility to engage multiple local actors. If a relationship has not already been established with existing local actors, there are few options other than to work with armed group leaders and their representatives for humanitarian access.

Although violence has increased over the last three years, as many key informants stated, there are moments that are more stable than others. During those times, some INGOs have made a focused effort to engage a broader range of local actors, including people who are able to influence armed group leaders. In addition, the INGOs' consistent presence in these neighborhoods is a crucial aspect of relationship building and trust. One INGO stated the importance of everyone within the hierarchy of

an armed group being aware of their work and their movements. In addition, they have facilitators from particular neighborhoods who receive training in programs. These facilitators are liaisons who understand the dynamics that are part of the network of people who assist with logistical operations. One of the factors that is prioritized for facilitators is their ability to circulate, because in some neighborhoods with armed groups people are blocked and unable to move. A key informant further stated, "If these people tell us not to come on a particular day, then we listen."[69]

Other local key informants noted the possibility of working with professionals and community leaders who are from the neighborhoods, as well as others who have been displaced but continue to be connected with the daily dynamics. Many of these individuals still have family, friends, CBOs, etc. in the area and may try to maintain their community activities when the situation allows.

The more-recent escalation of violence has dramatically increased the humanitarian needs of the population, and INGOs that have recently started to intervene with distributions find themselves with limited options. Therefore, they negotiate access with armed group leaders who direct, facilitate, and likely also benefit from the incoming aid, said a key informant facilitating humanitarian access. Other key informants believed it necessary because of the challenges to connect with local and international organizations that have been working in the area beyond these times of escalated violence.

Summary: Key informants from urban neighborhoods repeatedly acknowledged the dwindling space for other social leaders and trusted actors as armed groups continue to become more powerful. Even so, they emphasized how crucial it is in the present to try to broaden engagement despite the clear challenges so that these armed groups do not gain full control of governance in these communities.

[66] Interview 21.

[67] Interview 4.

[68] Interview 4.

[69] Interview 27.

Interventions

Key informants working or residing in these urban areas of escalated violence described a widely variant landscape of interventions. Some INGOs have a more consistent presence in these areas, and are engaged in peacebuilding and development activities. There are a few multimandate organizations with a presence in these neighborhoods. Other humanitarian organizations began to intervene in early 2022 or immediately following intensified armed group clashes in Cité Soleil. These clashes left hundreds dead and residents trapped in particular neighborhoods, with no access to basic goods, which increased humanitarian needs. The blockage of Terminal Varreux, the main receiving port for petroleum goods, exacerbated conditions, and humanitarian agencies have also started to intervene in the different neighborhoods of Martissant, Lower Delmas, and other areas. Key informants from intervening INGOs noted that other INGOs still consider it too dangerous to go to these areas. Furthermore, the key informant affiliated with DGPC noted "that there are some areas we will not go—they are too complicated, and we will not negotiate with gang leaders and do not want DGPC people to be victims."[70]

Beginning in July 2022, the priority became access for those beginning to intervene. Some UN agencies started with convoys of food, nonfood items (NFI) kits, and water. Access was granted by armed group leaders. Since the initial interventions, the key informant noted they have changed their strategy in order to not provoke reactions that might put staff or beneficiaries at risk.[71]

A few INGO key informants noted that security is the determining factor of access. One INGO informant stated that for some, "there is a belief that there is a crisis of access rather than a crisis of security management." The key informant added, "It is a difficult balancing act to gain and maintain access without compromising neutrality. It is a very dynamic situation."[72] The case study confirmed that some INGOs had compensated armed group leaders for access.

One UN-affiliated INGO key informant noted that when they first gained access in July to one area, nobody wanted to go. Their [Haitian] staff did not want to go, other staff refused, and their partners did not have access. He noted that "working with an access team of local NGOs, and international staff, Haitians then felt protected by international presence, and perhaps it's the neutrality that international institutions can bring."[73]

Key informants residing and working in proximity to communities affected by current forms of urban violence commented that there are very real challenges to ensuring accountability to those most impacted and with the largest humanitarian needs. These challenges are due to the current strength of many of the armed groups in different neighborhoods. Armed groups have varying sway, but the majority have complete control of social, political, and economic life. That control means that all actions in their territory require their authorization, or at a minimum their knowledge.

Regarding distributions that have happened since the escalation of violence in areas such as Cité Soleil, a key informant who is a displaced CBO community leader described the process: "[INGOs] find a person to connect them—the armed group sends a leader to represent them with what the INGO wants to do, but they are defending their blocks, so aid does not really reach those most in need."[74] The same informant described a distribution by two UN agencies that connected with two armed group leaders. When they arrived, the two leaders told them it was not enough and to leave with the aid. He said, "They have all the power."

This same key informant advised INGOs to not give 100% to the armed group leaders. He stated, "They should not have 100% responsibility. They should

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70 Interview 28.

71 Interview 23.

72 Interview 24.

73 Interview 23.

74 Interview 21.

only have a percentage. They give to who they want, and people can't even say, 'I did not receive anything.' Perhaps, ask the armed groups for other organizations in the area. Create another alternative. The reality is that they cannot not benefit, but reduce that benefit."[75]

Other community-based key informants were critical, stating that INGOs assist in ensuring the violent system by enriching the system. They enrich the beneficiaries, and the reality is that these armed groups continue to get more powerful. Amongst the key informants, one further added, "A lot of times the work of NGOs can lead to conflict and war in the area. They reinforce guns and bullets in the area. I think with this kind of work, you need to have better management."[76]

One key informant from a LNGO noted that an INGO had provided funding but demanded full transparency within the community, leaving the LNGO vulnerable to armed groups demanding funds.

Many community-based informants added that it was dangerous to speak poorly about these projects or interventions because those who benefit will perceive the critique as a threat.

INGO informants who had been working in these areas before the escalation of violence worked to build relationships with the communities and have people affiliated with them who live in the communities. Some of these key informants noted that the more-recent interventions by newcomers in areas such as Cité Soleil, Martissant, and parts of lower Delmas have disrupted their preexisting relationships and deteriorated trust within these communities.[77] A key informant from DGPC stated that some of the recent humanitarian aid distributions reflect poorly on them and deteriorate the population's trust in them as an institution.

One key informant noted that in areas where there is urban violence, there must also be an understanding of the quickly shifting context. Some days, the neighborhoods have more stability, while at other moments there are groups waging violent wars. These contexts impact not only the level of humanitarian need but also the access to those in the most need. A key informant from Cité Soleil stated, "An organization that would want to work in Cité Soleil—they have to know the area, they can't just run into the area, they need to understand the area, find people to ask questions, and gather information. And get sources from multiple different organizations. You need to do this analysis ahead of time. Know the country, know the community, analyze politics, the geography, and social issues. The way people outside of Cité Soleil analyze, it is not the same. You need someone inside, and this person is going to have his bias. If you choose someone from Brooklyn to give you an analysis, it will be different than someone from Boston.[78] You have to diversify your sources of information in order to plan what you are doing, so in that way your strategy is aligned with the ways in which zones are divided. In planning an intervention, [community-based leaders] would define a committee based on geographic leadership, to sit with these people to present what you would like to do and with whom, block by block, without mixing [leaders from different blocks]."[79]

A suggestion from a few community-based key informants is to consider gathering people outside of these neighborhoods for discussion before a project proposal is written. The suggestion is to not come with a predetermined project. These informants suggested that the INGOs work to understand the different contexts of each block and to identify priorities together with the community, and then write the project proposal together.

[75] Interview 21.

[76] Interview 3.

[77] Interview 27.

[78] Brooklyn and Boston are neighborhoods or blocks in Citè Soleil.

[79] Interview 4.

Summary: Overall, there are some INGOs that have built strong relationships in these urban settings, whereby the communities have a say in what interventions occur. Yet key informants describe the patterns as largely remaining the same. Those who are most impacted and marginalized are not being reached by aid, nor are they a part of decision making. Much of the aid they have seen preceding and into the last three years continues to be top-down. Many key informants emphasized that access cannot be the only focus. Although including as many leaders as possible is full of challenges, it is crucial to do so in order to promote wider governance in these communities. Otherwise, the armed groups will continue to gain power.

Barriers to localization

When key informants were asked about barriers to localization, their responses covered a wide range of issues. These are discussed below.

The Haitian state

The primary barrier to locally led responses by local and national actors is the State. Key informants cited issues of corruption, politicization of aid, and more generally the State's neglect of and absence from most communities. Many local actors were unaware of the DGPC coordination systems supported by UNOCHA. Although there seemed to be more trust by international and some local actors, DGPC lacked capacity to effectively coordinate and was not inclusive of local organizations from crisis-affected communities. Many noted that centralization is an issue and, for DGPC, that its regional structures were weak and lacking in technical, human, and material resources. A number of international actors believed that strengthening nonpolitical, democratic leadership and regional structures that are oriented towards crisis-affected situations in DGPC would enable better locally led responses. In addition, key informants noted that more national funding would provide DGPC with more leverage as equitable partners of international organizations that provide the institution with funding.

Despite the reality of the State, local and national actors believe it is possible to localize. They also emphasized that local authorities should not be bypassed to engage directly with grassroot organizations. Key informants suggested not providing resources directly to local authorities, but to include them in conversations and facilitate connections with grassroot groups or CBOs.

Humanitarian system governance and INGOs

Most local and national actors noted that governance of the majority of international organizations is based elsewhere, and these organizations drive top-down projects serving interests based elsewhere. Many INGOs have no locally based accountability mechanisms or legal obligations and have not supported the building of the State and its institutions. Furthermore, many key informants noted the negative impacts of this type of aid, which is predetermined and in which communities are left with little power to say anything. One glaring example cited by a key informant is the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, which provides US food products for food aid when food products could be locally procured. Locally procured food would not only ensure a more locally led response, but would also support local economies.

Furthermore, many key informants spoke of rigid project cycles, noting that the landscape quickly changes and grants should be able to shift with the changes. The enforcement of exact implementation, driven by outcomes, and accurate reporting frequently creates a situation that forces the allocation of funding towards needs that may no longer exist or have changed. These focuses also increase pressure on organizations to be less than transparent in reporting in order to try and fulfill grant commitments.

In urban violence settings, funding or distribution only through armed groups have been cited as

a barrier to locally led response. Funding and distribution through armed groups increases their control of territories and further limits the space for social leaders. It also renders the communities they control increasingly vulnerable to their control and further violence.

In these urban settings, governance concentrated in the hands of armed group leaders generally means that these leaders will select the beneficiaries and that those most in need will not receive support. The armed groups will also profit from humanitarian aid. Community members do not have the power to say anything against the armed groups and how they distribute aid.

The mindset of dependency

Many local actors raised the issue of the inter-nalization of victimhood due to the countless aid interventions that have labeled community members as solely victims or beneficiaries, rather than as decision makers and in control of their own recovery. This process has contributed to individuals and communities forgetting that they are not only first responders, but also active partici-pants and decision makers.

Many key informants described the aid intervention experiences that have made Haitians believe they are victims and created a mindset of dependency whereby people wait for aid to come because they do not think of themselves as resources or as having resources. A few of the key informants from INGOs labeled these forms of dependency "humanitarian aid syndrome."

Other key informants noted that providing funding directly to CBOs or NNGOs without accompa-niment is not enough. Accompaniment means that INGOs need to ensure the CBO or NNGO is a trusted local actor and therefore can engage with the community. INGOs also need to ensure that the local organization has the necessary capacity to manage the funding. Furthermore, key informants

also recommend that INGOs ensure that the money arrives in the hands of those it is intended to benefit to counter some of the negative impacts of past aid interventions. This requires follow-up and ideally, that INGOs to have a presence in the community after implementation.

One CBO key informant stated, "Make people in the community understand [that] when they are in this situation, they are the first people who are there to help their community. People have gotten so used to external aid, they neglect the support they can give. They need to remember the solidarity in the community. I think doing this kind of work will help make sure that solidarity is the first thing that leads to change, so we are not always waiting for outside institutions and neglecting our own resources."[80]

This shift away from dependency is crucial for communities to claim their rights as not just first responders, but also as last responders in response, recovery, and rehabilitation.

Narratives about corruption and community capacity

A few international key informants raised the issue that many INGOs are reluctant to fund local actors because of circulating narratives of corruption and lack of transparency. One international key informant stated, "INGOs have to believe and respect that there is local capacity. A mindset change is necessary."[81] Key informants noted that funding must be accompanied, and, when required, there must be investment in capacity building of the organizations.

This key informant's comments are related to community-driven funding. They also disrupt the narrative of corruption and lack of community capacity. The argument she puts forth is that while INGOs are willing to give multipurpose cash grants, they should be able to accept that a community can decide on its needs. A mindset change would include

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80 Interview 7.

81 Interview 29.

an understanding by INGOs that communities need time to decide collectively how they will spend money to address humanitarian needs.

Some key informants noted that a narrative shift towards acknowledging that communities are filled with resources and capacity would also help to address the dependency in many communities that has been witnessed in response to non-locally led responses.

Many national and international key informants stated that there is too much focus and investment on humanitarian assistance in which influxes of aid and resources come in immediately after an event,

then disappear without leaving any aid to address preexisting humanitarian needs or allow local organizations to build capacity.

Summary: There are four major barriers to localization that were cited by key informants. The first two are governance issues of the Haitian state and the humanitarian system. The third barrier listed is the mindset of dependency, which has been developed in response to non-locally led responses in communities in Haiti. The last is narratives around corruption and community capacity, which have limited direct funding to local organizations.

Enablers of localization

Key informants were asked what would make localization possible. They listed a number of enablers; these are discussed below.

Building equitable partnerships and trust

An academic key informant noted, "Many people [say] if the humanitarian actors talked to them, even if they didn't get anything, they would feel better. They would feel like they existed."[82]

Key informants stressed the importance of relationships in which there is mutual learning and willingness to understand. Many informants noted that the building of trust and mutual respect is foundational. Doing so requires a shift in how crisis-affected community members are perceived. The shift must be to seeing them as leaders and decision makers. Many key informants stated that a different type of aid is needed. They advocate a bottom-up, community-driven form of funding.

Flexibility was also cited as important. Implementation should be on the community's timing

and allow for more focus on community capacity building. There should be more room for authentic conversations around lessons learned, rather than communities feeling they need to hide mistakes or blunders, which many key informants noted as frequently occurring in the present system.

Many key informants cited individual INGOs that model good practices of building trust and equitable relationships, which enable community control. They cited engagement as one of the key enablers that shifts the power dynamic towards local control.

Many key informants noted that relationships should be established before a natural disaster occurs and layers a humanitarian crisis on top of existing needs. If that is not possible, then true engagement is necessary, which requires asking about the needs of a community through a range of trusted local actors, rather than coming with predetermined aid for distribution.

One key informant noted, "We don't go by 'do no harm,' but we say 'do less harm' because it is impossible not to have an impact, but that also creates the space to talk about lessons learned. We also have what is called 'safe to fail' because things

82 Interview 11.

frequently do not go as planned, and rather than try and force it, create a space for everyone to learn."[83] The informant added that this space strengthens the relationships within the community, but also the community's partnership with outside organizations.

In building a partnership with the community there needs to be an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the local organization. This case study confirmed that foreigners/INGOs need to work closely with local organizations to help reinforce their logistical, technical, and material capacities. Sometimes capacity means simply access to a computer, an understanding of Excel, or having the tools to fulfill the reporting commitments of a grant. With other local groups, there needs to be a strengthening of democratic leadership. Strengthened leadership will increase transparency and accountability.

In the context of urban violence, a key informant noted, "If an armed leader has something to say, we should listen, and figure out if there is a way to address or come back with a response—they want to be recognized. They want to be heard. We must invest the time."[84] In general, key informants strongly urged taking the time to locate other types of social leaders other than armed group leaders and involve them.

Understanding local realities

INGOs must become more proximate to the community or establish strong partnerships with local actors in communities. They must leave their offices in Port-au-Prince and at times walk in different communities to engage different local actors. INGOs must understand the distinctions between Port-au-Prince and the countryside, and more specifically, they must recognize that all areas have their specific resources and strengths, as well as needs.

Understanding of local realities, or deferring to those who do understand the local realities, is a factor that

was listed as a crucial enabler by many key informants. Key informants noted that this understanding includes a shift away from the traditional forms of need-based assessment towards understanding the strengths and weaknesses of a community, including its human resources. Some examples of questions provided by KIIs as helpful in understanding community capacity included: Can you buy food locally? Can you create jobs so people can rebuild themselves back on their own? What are needs based on dignity and self-worth?

Many key informants added the necessity of understanding preexisting humanitarian needs, whether these needs are due to structural inequities or other prior natural disasters. Therefore there should be a shift of approach towards an equity lens rather than just a humanitarian lens. A few community-based key informants noted that this shift would encourage other forms of investment beyond humanitarian assistance, such as investment in appropriate agriculture, fishing, etc.

A number of key informants suggest social mapping as a means to understanding the existing local, geographic networks that exist and ways to strengthen those networks. The mapping would identify formal and informal community leaders as a preparatory methodology before a crisis so that INGOs or outsiders understand who is a trusted and respected leader and should be involved in aid interventions. Mapping would also identify local resources that might facilitate a quicker, more effective response.

In the context of urban violence, key informants stressed the importance of an analysis of conflict and an understanding of the different dynamics within it. Key informants emphasized repeatedly that, despite the challenges involved, it is vital to support and increase space for social leaders and CBOs in order to broaden governance.

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83 Interview 29.

84 Interview 27.

Committing to transparency and accountability

There are many different elements that key informants noted would enable crisis-affected communities to claim decision-making power and the right to participate.

The first element is transparency and popular education. Many community-based informants, as well as some INGOs, understand that information is power. If there is more access to information, then communities will be better able to defend themselves. As one key informant articulated, "We cannot count on the good will of international actors."[85]

Many community-based informants, as well as development INGOs, were unfamiliar with formal humanitarian coordination mechanisms and were unable to distinguish between humanitarian and development aid. Many were also unfamiliar with the existence of government institutions such as DGPC or UCAONG, which, although they may be weak, are intended to ensure accountability. Various key informants from INGOs within the formal coordination mechanism, as well as DGPC, noted that they have little knowledge of who the development actors are or what they do.

Other community-based informants noted the overwhelming presence of NGOs that are like a parallel State and sometimes are more influential than the State. They noted that if they had knowledge on how the humanitarian system and NGOs function in general, it would allow them to decide how they would like to navigate their relationships with them.

Another community-based key informant added, "The spirit of helping each other is so important. When people ask for outside support, they must know that they can participate in that because they have experience in resolving community problems. A community can't sit and wait for outside help, it must be the first responders."[86]

[85] Interview 11.
[86] Interview 7.
[87] Interview 29.

Furthermore, as key informant interviews were being conducted, it became clear that many were unfamiliar with the Grand Bargain commitments. The principal investigator attempted to share the Grand Bargain commitments with key informants who were unfamiliar with them. Unfortunately, they were only available in English and therefore were inaccessible to many of our Haitian key informants. Access to Grand Bargain commitments in French or especially Haitian Creole would help local actors hold INGOs accountable.

Many community-based key informants talked about strong traditions of mutual aid. Many stated that these traditions have been weakened due to lack of local governance, and due to ineffective localized aid that has fragmented communities. They added that reinforcing these mutual aid traditions engages and activates different accountability mechanisms.

One key informant stated, "Upward accountability is not the only way. There are forms of horizontal accountability. It is not just about receipts. There are other checks and balances."[87] With a stronger, mobilized community, these accountability mechanisms come into play to support each other and make decisions that are collectively appropriate to local realities, as mentioned by a community-based key informant.

An integrated approach: The triple nexus

Many KIIs noted the necessity to invest in preparedness, mitigation, rehabilitation, and in general a much more comprehensive approach in which the impacts of natural disasters are reduced by addressing community vulnerability to them. The "triple nexus" approach emphasizes the need for humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors of aid to integrate their efforts to comprehensively address humanitarian needs, as well as vulnerabilities shaped by preexisting structural inequities.

A key informant stated, "Internationals should strengthen the gaps that they see in institutional capacity of local organizations. Many times local organizations are restricted to 6% administrative costs, which is understandable because they want them [the funds] to go to programs, but it does not necessarily allow local actors to progress. They should be allowed to invest in organizational growth."[88] This sentiment was repeated by a number of CBOs and LNGOs who notice an influx of money in the aftermath of a natural disaster but then a significant drop-off after about six months. Support between disasters would enable not just maintenance, but also growth.

Some international key informants advised that funding for humanitarian response should be linked to existing efforts in development and peacebuilding, which would be a much more integrated, triple nexus approach.

Summary: Key informants cited four enablers to localization. All of these enablers make localization possible despite the absence of a strong Haitian State. The first enabler listed is developing equitable partnerships that focus on listening and mutual learning and are rooted in trust and respect. The second is knowledge of local realities that enables aid to be aligned with real needs, as well as local resources. The third is a commitment to transparency and accountability, which is multidirectional and not just vertical. The last is an integrated approach, or the triple nexus, which means that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding organizations must coordinate their efforts to address not just needs after a natural disaster, but needs that exist before, or continue to exist between, disasters, as well as addressing vulnerabilities.

Recommendations

When key informants were asked how an ideal locally led humanitarian response could be strengthened in Haiti, many key informants acknowledged that some long-term structural reforms are necessary, but stated that there are also some short-term and concrete steps that can be taken. The sections below discuss these needed changes and the necessary steps that should be taken to enact them.

Long-term structural reforms

Structural reforms would look at power dynamics, and more explicitly at power and access. Doing so requires extended commitment and the political will to address the varying interests and perspectives that shape donor funding. A concrete example given by a key informant is to look at legislation that impedes locally led response such as the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, which uses food from the US

for school meals in Haiti. There are many examples of homegrown school canteens where the food for school meals is procured locally. It is the actual community that then feeds its schoolchildren.

Local actors noted the need for a State that is much more representative of its population, has its interests at its center, and plays its role. This is something that would require much more research to discuss specificities of how to address this long-term structural reform, but the general opinion of many key informants for this study is that the State needs to play its role. But key informants stated that locally led response is possible even in the State's absence. There are shorter-term recommendations for some of its more trusted institutions as well as for local authorities. These are discussed in the next section.

88 Interview 29.

Short-term, concrete shifts

In the absence of the State, international actors may need to play nontraditional roles in order to move towards locally led humanitarian response. Some recommendations from key informants are listed below.

1. **International or national organizations should take comprehensive steps to understand local realities.**
    Funders and implementing organizations should support **social mapping**[89] of communities before (and between) natural disasters. Mapping would highlight the strengths and resources, as well as the weaknesses and needs of the communities. The community should be involved in this process, as well as local authorities. The social mapping should include the trusted local actors, whether formal/informal, or traditional/nontraditional, and understand the appropriate roles they can play in response. Also, there should be information about those who are the most marginalized and vulnerable and the local actors who are able to engage those populations if direct engagement is limited.

2. **Invest time in relationship building.**
    Although many local actors understand the importance of funding and resources, there is a greater value to having their voices be heard and for them to have the ability to participate. Therefore, **prioritize engagement** and **dialogue**.

    Donors, policymakers, and implementing organizations must promote not just inclusion, but **equitable partnerships** in project design, implementation, and follow-up. All actors should move away from transactional relationships that build dependency. Relationships should be transparent and have accountability, and include accompaniment, follow-up, and real space to discuss lessons learned.

All actors should commit to understanding good practices that already exist and learning from individual organizations that model equitable partnerships.

3. **All implementing organizations should commit to increasing transparency and accountability.**
    With few accountability mechanisms or legal obligations in place for INGOs in Haiti in general, INGOs functioning in the territory should make a commitment towards accountability by **registering with UCAONG**.

    INGOs should create awareness around the work they are doing in crisis-affected communities, as well as make information available to LNGOs/CBOs in terms of criteria for applying and fulfilling the commitments for a grant.

    Funders and implementing organizations should invest in **building capacity of radio stations** and **creating inclusive radio programming**. Community radio stations are one of the best ways to communicate with a community. Information that can be shared in programming might include grant criteria, information about a potential project/intervention, knowing your rights as a community, how the humanitarian system and INGOs function, etc.

    Implementing organizations should include a broader group of local civil society actors in addition to local authorities in order to increase inclusivity, and activate and engage different collective accountability mechanisms. There must be concerted efforts to reach out to civil society groups to include crisis-affected communities in coordination and sector meetings, and to create a space for equitable participation.

    Implementing organizations should put in place accessible feedback mechanisms or, to be even more effective, a direct line for local actors within communities so they have consistent access to two-way communication.

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[89] Examples of social mapping include the forthcoming Community Guides to Humanitarian Aid, which were created in partnership with various communities. The guides are funded by Dr, Mark Schuller's NSF research grant. The communes of Abricots, Port Salut, Camp Perrin, and sections of Jacamel and Leogane will be included in this social mapping.

4. **All actors should participate in donor advocacy.**
   This process can be a short-term and long-term one, depending on the donor. The advocacy should work with donors to shift top-down, predetermined funding towards funding that is aligned with needs collectively decided within the community that take into consideration dignity and respect.

   Advocate for increased funding for mitigation, rehabilitation, and capacity building. Furthermore, funding should have a much more integrated approach that prioritizes causes of vulnerability, as well as structural inequities. There should be more focus on integrated approaches, in line with the triple nexus.

5. **Invest in local governance structures.**
   Funders and implementing organizations should invest in the decentralization of DGPC and in strengthening the capacity of democratic and regional leadership and structures, with an orientation towards crisis-affected communities.

   Funders and implementing organizations should invest in UCAONG to make INGOs aware of its existence, to make registration more fluid, and to increase capacity for managing an accessible database.

6. **Invest in capacity building of local organizations and community-level leadership.**
   Funders and implementing organizations must invest in capacity building of local organizations, including technical and material capacity, as well as in strengthening democratic leadership. Consider improving access to computers and training in programs such as Word and Excel. Consider holding workshops or open forums to share information on grant criteria and fulfillment.

7. **Understand the dynamics of urban violence.**
   Implementing organizations should take the time to understand the conflict. They should conduct a conflict analysis that includes the participation of community members block by block.

   Social leaders from these communities should be located and included, so the focus is not solely on armed group leaders.

Conclusion

"Localization does not take out the role of international partners, but rather than doing the same thing over and over again, they need to shift." [90]

Haiti's security situation continues to decline as armed groups persist in terrorizing the capital, with the violence occasionally spreading into rural regions. With the increase of insecurity and violence, humanitarian needs are rising in a country where structural inequities paired with histories of natural disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, drought, etc.) have already left the majority of the population in need.

The injection of humanitarian assistance after natural disasters has not helped crisis-impacted communities recover, or "build back better." Instead, it has created a status quo whereby the majority of the population requires humanitarian assistance. Under these circumstances, the humanitarian community has been left to define criteria without the input of crisis-impacted communities as to who is more eligible based on supply. That supply not only does not meet demand, but also is largely not aligned with the capacities and real needs of the population.

Key informants from this case study noted that increasing frustration has been witnessed within the population. Some key informants evidenced this claim with the multiple lootings of large INGO stocks throughout the country. If communities continue to be sidelined from defining their own recovery and

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[90] Interview 28.

determining their own futures, some key informants predicted the frustration will only continue to grow.

This case study confirms the necessity to disrupt the binary of "local is good and international is bad." There are individual cases of international organizations who are facilitating locally led responses, and there are local actors who have emerged at the confluence of an absent State and aid without effective accountability mechanisms who receive funding but direct it towards their own aims or people.

Ideally, international actors would be willing to play nontraditional roles and work more closely with grassroot organizations and CBOs, while not bypassing local authorities. INGOs should commit to being more accountable, despite the absence of local governance. In cultivating both physical proximity and increased understanding, INGOs can play into the strengths of the community, while at the same time filling the gaps. They will ultimately need to focus on capacity building to strengthen local communities.

Local actors ask for access to information in order to make more informed decisions, but also as a process of mobilizing networks and communities, which will strengthen civil society. If civil society is stronger, it will be able to play its role of holding the State, and the humanitarian system, accountable, and vice versa.

The situation in the country cannot wait for large structural reforms to occur, and despite the looming challenges, there exists immense capacity. Haiti is a triple nexus environment that requires an integrated approach. While working on smaller, concrete steps to make humanitarian aid more locally led, the country requires the bigger-picture goals of strengthening governance through accountability and transparency.