



United Nations photo

A typical scene at the Carradeux camp for internally-displaced persons in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince on Feb. 16, one that UNSC ambassadors on a four-day mission there would have witnessed.

Let's get serious about fixing Haiti problems

■ Once agencies move beyond humanitarian assistance, aid programs need to concentrate on rebuilding a viable Haitian economy that is sustainable when aid flows are scaled back or stopped.

DAVID CARMENT AND YIAGADEESEN SAMY

On the second anniversary of the earthquake that afflicted Port-au-Prince in 2010, there has been widespread disapproval from a variety of corners critical of the current donor strategy in Haiti.

In particular, it has been incorrectly argued that the Haitian leadership should be more involved on how aid money should be spent in order to speed up the rebuilding process.

Approximately 500,000 persons remain homeless or in dire need of proper shelter; about half of the earthquake rubble remains to be cleared; and the country remains at risk of the outbreak of disease. Working in such a dysfunctional political environment is a real challenge for donors who have already spent decades and billions of dollars promoting good-governance programs that have largely failed.

Despite receiving more than US\$10 billion in foreign aid in the past five decades, including significant contributions from the Canadian government, Haiti had very little to show for it even before the earthquake hit.

Its economic and social indicators are appalling: it was recently ranked 158th out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index, more than 50 per cent of its population lives on less than \$1.25 a day, and its public sec-

tor remains among the world's most corrupt, leaving it in the bottom ten of Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

Business as usual cannot work in such a fragile context; channeling more funds through its fledgling government will only reinforce dependence on inadequate structures and processes that historically have produced very little.

Now is the time to seriously consider a properly-sequenced and measured long-term plan as opposed to the massive spending that Jeffrey Sachs and Paul Collier have supported.

An effective donor programme on Haiti should be linked more thoroughly to development planning through a five step process, while recognizing that there are absorptive capacity issues and challenges for aid to buy growth in fragile contexts.

First, structured multi-sector risk assessment data, covering everything from governance and security to environment and demography, should be properly used within Canada and shared among different donor agencies.

Most agencies work from different starting points and assumptions; some emphasizing human rights and security sector reform, others economic development and democracy. By using a common set of benchmarks, misinterpretation, duplication and redundancies will be reduced.

Second, this multi-sector approach should be demand-based and not supply driven. This means that agencies need to identify links between key causes of fragility in Haiti and identifiable focal points of activity in which the donors should be engaged, not where they want to be engaged.

Typically, we see a supply-side approach in which donor resources are thrown into a fragile state situation without question-

ing both the expected impact of that aid or its effectiveness. Past aid flows to Haiti are without any doubt a case in point.

Third, these multi-sector risk assessments should be used in a way that helps donors plan for contingencies in the event of a shock, such as another earthquake or an economic downturn. The goal is to identify a sequence of events that are logically consistent with operational responses and to ensure that mitigation strategies are in place to reduce the deleterious effects of further decline.

Fourth, these multi-sector risk assessments should be used to constantly and consistently monitor and evaluate Haiti's progress. The key goal is to determine if aid is having the desired impact and if course corrections are required.

Structured frameworks for fragility analysis are essential to this task, but many agencies from the Canadian International Development Agency and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to the Department of National Defence and Citizenship and Immigration Canada have all developed significantly different evaluative frameworks that reinforce existing bureaucratic silos and stovepipes.

These are problems of limited information-sharing and the lack of a common problem definition. Both problems can be overcome by structured and systematic evaluation.

To that end, an essential step in moving Canada and other aid donors towards more effective long-term engagement in Haiti (and elsewhere) is the creation of an independent research body that provides the crucial evidence-based frameworks and benchmarks for evaluating aid effectiveness. This body would provide the critical analysis tools in support of aid allocation decisions.

In brief, the main objective for aid organizations working in Haiti must be more effective and targeted aid, rather than just more aid.

Once agencies move beyond humanitarian assistance, aid programs need to concentrate on rebuilding a viable Haitian economy that is sustainable when aid flows are scaled back or stopped. Success will depend on the ability of aid agencies to properly identify and agree on this economic and political end-state, and fully support the sequenced, diligent deployment of resources necessary to achieve it.

Sequencing means that the fundamental elements of a normally functioning state, including authority, legitimacy and capacity, will all need to be present down the road, but that they will not and should not all be achieved at once.

While it is important that there be the establishment and enforcement of property rights, the creation of legitimate institutions to maintain public order and safety, and the rule of law, a key task is to address these issues in a sequential way based on the multi-sector approach highlighted above.

Donors have a responsibility of making sure that the allocation of every single aid dollar spent is carefully monitored and used wisely. Eventually, this process of making aid more effective will result in measured success, and more importantly a country weaned away from aid dependence.

*David Carment is a CDFAI fellow and editor of the Canadian Foreign Policy Journal. Yiagadeesen Samy is an associate professor at Carleton University and a research associate at the North-South Institute. Their most recent book is *Security, Development and the Fragile State: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Policy*. You can access detailed risk assessments on fragile states including Haiti at <http://www.carleton.ca/cifp>.*