



ROBERT F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR JUSTICE & HUMAN RIGHTS



Institute for Justice
and
Democracy in Haiti

Zanmi Lasante



Sante ak Dwa Moun



For Immediate Release
January 14, 2010

Contact:

Donna Barry, PIH, 617-432-6017, dbarry@pih.org

Brian Concannon Jr., IJDH, 541-432-0597, brian@ijdh.org

Nicole Lee, TransAfrica Forum, 202-223-1960, nlee@transafricaforum.org

Veerle Opgenhaffen, CHR&GJ, 212 992 8186, opgehaffen@exchange.law.nyu.edu

Alison Roh Park, CCR, 917-805-8899, apark@ccrjustice.org

Monika Kalra Varma, RFK Center, 202-463-7575 ext 228, monika@rfkcenter.org

Rights Groups Urge Respect for Human Rights in Delivering Aid to Haiti
Call for Transparency and Consultation with the Haitian People and Government

(January 14, 2010, New York, Washington DC, and Port-au-Prince)— In the wake of the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti, six prominent rights groups issued a statement today calling for relief efforts to be grounded in human rights principles, transparency, and respect for the human dignity of all Haitians. The groups—the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHR&GJ), the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), Partners In Health/Zanmi Lasante, the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights (RFK Center), and TransAfrica Forum—warned that failure to do so could aggravate the already disastrous impacts of the earthquake.

“There is no doubt that Haiti’s hungry, thirsty, injured, and sick urgently need all the assistance the international community can provide, but it is critical that the underlying goal of improving human rights drives the distribution of every dollar of aid given to Haiti,” said **Loune Viaud, Director of Strategic Planning and Operations at Zanmi Lasante**. “The only way to avoid escalation of this crisis is for international aid to take a long-term view and strive to rebuild a stronger Haiti—one that includes a government that can ensure the basic human rights of all Haitians and a nation that is empowered to demand those rights.”

The groups cited past relief efforts in Haiti that were uncoordinated, unpredictable, and lacked community participation, often leading to increased suffering. They called on the international community to seize on this opportunity to advance human rights and sustainability in the ravaged country.

“The magnitude of the catastrophe is not entirely a result of natural disaster but rather, a history of deliberate impoverishment and disempowerment of the Haitian people through a series of misguided policies,” said **Brian Concannon Jr., Director of IJDH**. “Lack of donor accountability and continued aid volatility will only guarantee even greater suffering.”

In their statement, the groups call on the international community to employ a rights-based approach at all stages of the relief effort, from planning to implementation and monitoring by:

- ***Following the [UN’s Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#)***, which include the right to assistance from the government and the right to return;
- ***Complying with the [Paris Principles on Aid Effectiveness](#)***, which aim to ensure aid harmonization, alignment, and management for results with monitorable indicators;
- ***Recognizing the human rights context that existed prior to the earthquakes*** and take steps to ensure that humanitarian and development efforts do not exacerbate or reinforce the marginalization of vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the landless;
- ***Ensuring that relief is coordinated and provided in a transparent process***, including through shared needs assessments and a high level of coordination with the government of Haiti itself; and,
- ***Empowering all strata of the Haitian population to participate in decision-making*** at each level of the aid and development process, from the initial needs assessment to project planning, implementation, and evaluation.

“All too often, aid has been slow to arrive, uncoordinated, and planned with no input from the people most affected—that legacy must and can end today,” said **Monika Kalra Varma, Director of the RFK Center**. “We have an opportunity to break with the past and ensure that assistance is given in a way that strengthens Haitians’ fundamental rights to food, water, and health. The Haitian people deserve no less.”

To read the full statement, please click [HERE](#).

For more information about the organizations involved, please see their websites: www.ccrjustice.org, www.chrgj.org, www.ijdh.org, www.pih.org, www.rfk.org, and www.TransAfricaForum.org