



HAITI UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM

FOOD CRISIS RESPONSE REPORT

JULY 2008

The soaring increase in food and oil prices has had an enormous impact on the Haitian population. Towards the end of 2007, UN agencies started recording increases in prices and alerting on possible consequences on the already weak coping mechanisms of the population.

Even if Haiti is not the only country touched by the global food crisis, it is probably the least capable to compensate any external shock because of its dependence on imports, limited investments, low productivity and lack of social safety nets. In April 2008, the National Commission for Food Security (CNSA, for its French acronym) estimated that around 2.5 million Haitians were in need of assistance.

Haiti imports some 52% of its food, including over 80% of its rice. Local food production only covers 43% and food aid accounts for 5% of the needs. Significant price increases have been recorded since October¹, but have somewhat stabilized or in certain cases decreased since April, when President Preval has introduced a subsidy on rice, and produces from the summer harvest have started arriving in the market. The recession in the US economy is also affecting remittances from the Haitian diaspora in the US, the key coping mechanism for some 70% of the households.

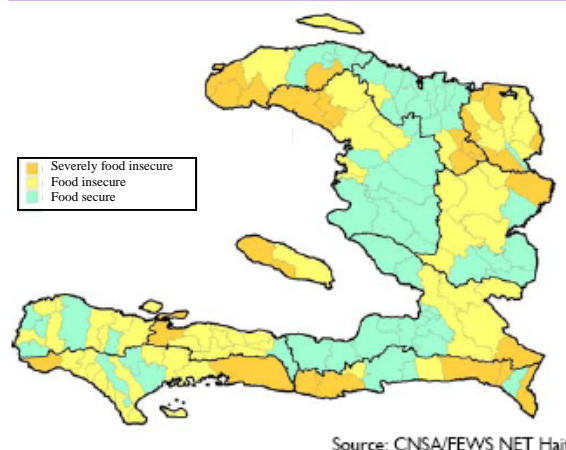
Of the estimated 9.8 million Haitians, 5.1 mil-

The price of imported rice has increased by more than 60% from October 2007 to April 2008. Imported flour has increased its price by 73% during the same period. Local maize rose by 91% and sorghum by 30.5% between October 07 and April 08. Beans prices increased by 42% between March 2007 and March 2008. Fertilizers prices increased by 31% for the complete formula, and 37% for other products. Seeds prices have also increased due to the damages to crops produced by the hurricane season in 2007. Between March 2007 and March 2008 fuel prices (diesel et kerosene) increased by 47%.

lion people live on less than USD1 a day and 7.6 million people with less than USD2 a day. At current prices, one dollar buys only half a meal per day. In 2005, according to surveys, 24% of children under five were affected by chronic malnutrition and 8% by acute malnutrition. FAO 2007 data indicates that up to 47% of the population was undernourished. The crisis forced some families to further reduce food consumption. Agriculture producers have decreased the amount of land worked in reason of the high cost of inputs (seed, fertilizers, etc.).

Social services are almost entirely run by the private sector. This has a huge impact on the already limited economic capabilities of the Haitian families. It is estimated that some 40% of the poorest families' budget is used for poor quality education. Health services, including emergency ones, with the exception of HIV/AIDS, are provided on cost-recovery basis. Water and sanitation quality and accessibility is generally poor. The crisis caused a progressive degradation of the already fragile nutritional status of the poorest among the poor.

Food insecurity estimate—May 2008



Over the years, widespread poverty in rural areas resulted in an increase of urban migration (75,000 persons every year). The slum areas – where some 50% of the urban population lives - are expanding. Recent analysis undertaken jointly by UN agencies, the CNSA and other government bodies indicate that the crisis has hit in particular peri-urban centers where the highest number of destitute is concentrated. Isolated rural areas are also highly exposed. Landless farmers are particularly vulnerable.

The crisis has resulted in the ouster of Prime Minister Alexis on 12 April. The political stalemate continues until now, and has resulted in the weakening of decision-making power of government institutions. Furthermore, the lack of an appointed government has impeded the official launching of a government response plan to the food crisis. Furthermore, this impasse has slowed planning and reaction capacities of the State and has affected, in some cases, program implementation.

The international trend is unlikely to change, and the share of prices increases on the Haitian families will be even more severe in the near future. In April, violent demonstrations resulted in the death of six people, nine injured and various arrests. Frustrations and social tensions continue to exist. Events such as the end of the subsidy on oil prices, which led to an increase in transport and other energy costs, or the forecasted end of rice subsidies, coupled with the lean season, the be-

ginning of the school year and the hurricane season could trigger more social unrest episodes.

UN AND PARTNERS RESPONSE

Since April, the generous contribution of donors and the reprogramming of internal UN resources allowed for an immediate revision of programs and the start of response activities. The UN system has continued to work in close collaboration with the Haitian authorities. All programs included in the June UN letter are in line with government priorities. These include strengthening of local food production, labor-intensive activities and food distributions. Attention is also paid to social safety nets rather than just pure food-related interventions. Government and UN initiatives include projects in the health, education and nutrition sectors. NGOs and other international organizations have as well stepped up or reinforced activities.

In June 2008, a joint FAO-IFAD-WFP-World Bank mission endorsed the UNCT strategy while underlining the need to introduce social safety nets, with a special focus on nutrition. The mission, requested in April by the Haitian authorities, was tasked to provide recommendations on actions to be undertaken in the next 36 months in terms of macroeconomic and financial measures, support to agricultural production and safety nets.

<i>Haiti facts and figures</i>	
<i>Population (2008): 9.8 million (urban 4.6 million)</i>	<i>Infant mortality rate (2005/06): 60‰</i>
<i>Density: 353 inhabitants/ km2</i>	<i>Child mortality rate (under 5) 2005/06: 80 ‰</i>
<i>Population growth (2005/10): 1,64 %</i>	<i>Maternal mortality rate (2005/06): 630/100,000</i>
<i>Life expectancy: 59,9 years (2000/05)</i>	<i>HIV/AIDS prevalence (15-49 years) 2005/06: 2,2%</i>
<i>Human development index 2007/08: 0,526 (146/177 countries)</i>	<i>Acute Severe malnutrition (under 5): 8%</i>
<i>PIB (2006/07): USD6.2 billions</i>	<i>Chronic malnutrition (under 5): 24%</i>
<i>PIB/inhabitant (2006/07): USD 648</i>	<i>Vaccination coverage: 53%</i>
<i>Growth index (2006/07): 3,2%</i>	<i>Alphabetization (15–24 years): 82,4%</i>
<i>Inflation: 7,9%</i>	<i>Enrollment primary education (2005/06): 49,6%</i>
<i>Unemployment rate (2005): 32,62 %</i>	<i>% Water access (2005/06): 55,2%</i>
<i>Population under poverty level (USD2/day): 78 %</i>	<i>% Sanitation access (2005/06): 16,5%</i>
<i>Extreme poverty (USD1/day): 53,9 %</i>	<i>% Utilization of fuel (2005/06): 93,7%</i>
	<i>Chronic food insecurity: over 40% of the population</i>

Results of the 2007 Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) conducted by CNSA with WFP support will be published by mid July. An Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) in urban areas is being started by CNSA and WFP. Results are due at the end of August. An update of the VAM analysis in rural areas is planned for September. These exercises are expected to provide a common platform for the targeting of food and non-food interventions in the most vulnerable geographical areas and population groups; monitor the impact of high prices and of aid interventions; and provide a starting point for the planning and coordination of a viable food and non-food social safety net system.

While providing needed support, the UN – including WFP, UNICEF, FAO, IFAD and World Bank - set the base for a handover strategy. Plans to intensify collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and CNSA are being intensified to build up capacity in the public sector as well as in communities.

As for the public sector, WFP, FAO UNICEF and other key partners started reinforcing the analytical and coordination capacity of the CNSA and of the Nutrition department of the Ministry of Health, which is an active member of the CNSA. Starting August, the CNSA food security analysis and needs assessment capacity will be strengthened through the establishment of an Emergency Food Security Unit with direct technical assistance provided by WFP.

The unit will focus on the consolidation of the analysis on rising food prices, strengthen and expand the current early warning and food monitoring systems as well as upgrade the reporting and monitoring mechanisms. It will also support focus on nutrition issues in the development of the National Food Security Plan for the coming 10 years.

The unit will also provide key reference and advice, together with other authorities and partners, on the feasibility of local food procurement starting with the October harvest

season. There is widespread consensus that while local procurement can support the expansion, diversification and distribution of local product; important bottlenecks exist in terms of market organization, reinvestment strategies, and availability.

The Unit will also provide important reference and will be a valuable counterpart in the development and phase in of a viable system of food and nonfood social safety nets for implementation in 2009. Community based interventions are seen as the most feasible approach.

RE-LAUNCH OF THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Although 51% of Haitians work in the agricultural field, this sector only contributes approximately 25% to the gross domestic product. In 2005, the overall food production only covered 41% of the national food needs. Over half of the country's food needs (an estimated 53%) was mitigated by imports and food aid.

Haitians spend 55% of their income on food while food aid has decreased by 35% over the past few years. Food security is further challenged as the devastating 2007 hurricane season has had severe effects on food and seeds availability for 2008. Prices of seeds and fertilizers are considerably higher than in previous years.

Since January 2008, when the rise in basic food prices started to be reported, FAO strengthened its technical support to the Ministry of Agriculture (MARNDR, in its French acronym) to implement its agricultural policy for 2008-2020. Technical discussions resulted in a policy framework to re-launch the agricultural sector, which takes this crisis into consideration. The document, which includes short, medium and long term actions, was to be validated in May 2008, but the process was postponed because of the political stalemate.

UN agencies are working together with the CNSA for the revision of the 2006 National Food Security and Nutrition Plan (PNSAN). The document includes interventions in the agriculture, environment; health and nutrition sectors; management of food crises and so-

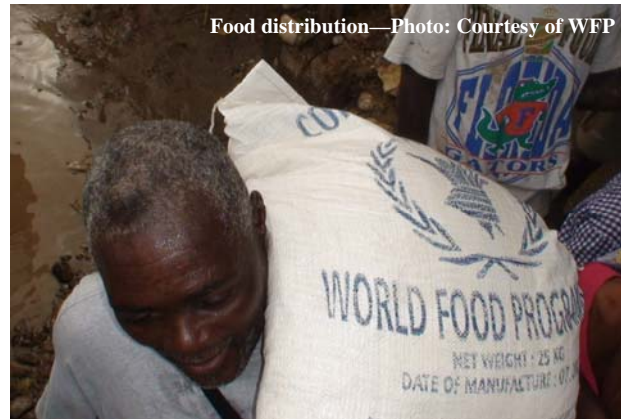
cial research; employment and microfinance; commercial and fiscal policy and governance and the right to food.

Since January 08, FAO has distributed seeds, tools and planting materials to some 15,000 families in rural and urban areas affected by natural disasters. In July, FAO has started distribution of seeds and tools to some 70,000 vulnerable households (350,000 beneficiaries) in rural and urban areas and implemented animal husbandry projects targeting 10,000 vulnerable families. FAO will continue to assist producers in the next campaigns with distribution of agricultural tools and seeds, the installation of motor-pumps and the rehabilitation of irrigation systems.

WFP is working to strengthening local procurement to support local agricultural and food production and the introduction of new tools such as forward purchasing of commodities, or agreeing on pre-set prices with farmers at the beginning of the season. Unfortunately, because of the timing of the agricultural season and due to harvest losses caused by natural disasters in 2007, only imported rice was available in July. At the same time, market research was started to ensure procurement of locally produced commodities during the forthcoming harvest. WFP expects to be in a position to utilize forward purchasing of rice with small producers' associations this autumn. Given the fragile local supply capacity, WFP will be very careful not to impact the overall market.

FOOD AID

Prior to the crisis, planned activities for 2008 and 2009 included two main projects. Of these the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) focused on school feeding, assistance to people living with Aids and Tuberculosis (PLWHA/TB), and Mother-Child-Health (MCH) and targeted some 1.4 million beneficiaries (average of 800,00 each month). The Development project, targeting some 260,000 beneficiaries over two years, focused on food for work (FFW) for environmental protection, agricultural improvements



Food distribution—Photo: Courtesy of WFP

and infrastructure, and emergency preparedness.

Following the food riots in April, the number of WFP program beneficiaries has been increased to reach a total of 2.3 million persons by the end of 2008. The peak of number of beneficiaries receiving WFP food aid in a given month will be reached in September, when it will be close to 1.5 million people. The family rations targeted through WFP's and its partners' network, will benefit families in the urban and selected marginal rural zones at the peak of their annual expenditure period, at school opening, as a safety net to protect household income and allow them to maintain adequate food consumption and avoid deterioration of their health and nutritional status, already at risk.

In May 2008, WFP started distributing immediate food assistance to the most vulnerable population (80% female headed households and families with a large number of children under five and limited access to income) in 10 urban areas in cooperation with CARITAS Haiti. Some 30,000 beneficiaries were assisted in May and 135,000 in June. By end July, 200,000 people will have received a 30-day ration.

Since April, WFP reinforced its Haiti office. A team of experts including VAM, Logistics, Public Relations and Program and the Regional Director visited Haiti and supported advocacy and fundraising efforts as well as working with the country team and CNSA to plan WFP immediate response to the crisis. WFP has also deployed additional surge ca-

capacity and support for logistics, program and data analysis. Planning for the next phase is in high gear, including contracting of additional warehousing and transport capacity, procurement and shipment of needed commodities and strengthening partnerships to further expand and coordinate operations. Key counterparts are CNSA, the Education Ministry's National School Feeding Program, the Public Health Ministry's Nutrition Department, the Ministry for Social Affairs, CARITAS, German Agro Action, the Norwegian Red Cross, IOM, ILO, UNICEF, FAO and local NGOs.

WFP is also assessing the need to expand activities by establishing one or more additional sub-offices and by renting additional warehouse space in the departments. This will reinforce operations and provide greater access and logistical support to the humanitarian community in the event of natural disasters.

During the remainder of 2008, WFP's priority will be to cope with the worrying nutritional conditions, ensure availability of needed food, alleviate household budgets, contribute to some stability in households' daily life and to reduce opportunities to provoke social unrest. Based on the capacity and understanding that developed so far, food assistance can be one of the most appropriate and feasible ways to contribute to these goals if provided through community nutrition, school feeding (including a dry take home family ration), targeted free distributions to the most vulnerable groups within the society (families with malnourished children, pregnant and lactating mothers) and labor intensive food for work activities.

LABOR-INTENSIVE ACTIVITIES (HIMO)

High and steep mountains cover some 63% of Haiti and the road infrastructure is in bad conditions, making many areas difficult to access. In addition, basic social services do not cover the whole country, limiting the possibility to extend nutritional assistance, school feeding and other school-based safety nets to

these areas.

FAO, UNDP, IOM, UNOPS, ILO, WFP and other partners are involved in the rehabilitation of infrastructures, irrigation schemes and other initiatives for the support to the agriculture sector, protection of the environment and prevention of natural disasters mostly using labor-intensive (HIMO, in French) projects and food-for-work initiatives.

Currently, local communities find in HIMO programs one of the few job opportunities, even if of short duration, in the market. HIMO is more and more perceived as the only income-generation alternative for families in preparation of the new school year. HIMO activities will become even more important for the family budget to compensate the likely suspension of rice subventions, and the increase in transportation cost following the recent suspension of fuel subsidies.

The security and institutional context, amplified by the food crisis, hampered to some extent project execution. The situation varies depending on the location. In Les Cayes, in the South department, the fragmentation of the community, political tensions, and friction between the communities and the administration are a major challenge. In Port au Prince, increased criminal activities are also hampering the full implementation of projects. In several occasions, criminal elements in locations such as Martissant or Cité Soleil, attempted dictating the conditions for HIMO projects to be carried out. On the other hand, similar initiatives in peri-urban and rural areas are well received by the communities, as they support agricultural activities.

One of the existing challenges is the lack of consensus over wages. These distortions have created, in some cases, tensions within the same communities. Coordination is needed on this front, and it is hoped that the new government – when in place - will look at this issue as a matter of priority.

HIMO projects have a considerable impact on social stability and improve solidarity mechanisms in the poorest areas of the country, both urban and rural. Agencies are currently

using internal funding to ensure continuation of the programs, but demand goes beyond current funding availability.

In response to the crisis, agencies increased HIMO activities. The original plans included – for the period between January and June – the creation of some 252,500 working days. As of June, 666,000 working days have been created (IOM 103,000; UNDP/ILO 563,000).

In order to strengthen HIMO activities in response to the crisis, agencies reallocated or requested new internal funds, and made an appeal to donors.

Of the USD 10 millions total funding requested to increase its HIMO activities, IOM has obtained USD 6.5 millions, which it plans to increase the 2008 target from 475,000 to over 600,000 person/days of work and to expand activities to areas outside major urban centers. WFP will expand food/cash for work activities to improve rural infrastructure including secondary and tertiary road networks. A total of up to 100,000 beneficiaries is being planned. UNOPS intends to expand its infrastructure program, especially in the South department. Should funds become available, the programs will also be extended to the South East, Nippes, Grand Anse and Centre departments, with the creation of 250-300,000 working days till the end of 2008. Furthermore, UNOPS, in collaboration with Électricité d'Haïti (EDH) should conclude soon the rehabilitation of the hydroelectric power station of Drouet, which will increase

the Artibonite electrical network capacity to 2.4 MW. This initiative will improve the irrigation system, the local rice production and the output of the agro-industrial sector.

SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

Health

Less than half of the Haitian population has access to health services. Most structures are concentrated in urban areas. With the exception of HIV/AIDS programs and for vaccinations included in the national program, healthcare is provided on a cost-recovery basis. Most services are run by the private sector. Some 70% of services in rural areas are provided by NGOs. Drugs quality has been an issue in the recent past, and availability of qualified human resources is limited. Infant and maternal mortality are the highest of the region. Vaccination coverage is 53% and 26% of the women are assisted by qualified personnel during delivery.

Access to healthcare is further limited by the soaring cost of living. This has a direct impact on communicable diseases, and other preventable diseases as well as on maternal mortality.

WHO/PAHO supports the Ministry of Health in the implementation of the national plan 2005-10 which promotes accessibility to basic health services in all 565 Haitian communal sections. Within this framework, WHO/PAHO, in collaboration with MoH, has started in January 2008 a project for the obstetric care in some 57 health centers, of which 48 are currently working. Whilst the project aimed at providing free obstetric services for some 25% of the women, the first months of implementation recorded a 100-150% increase of deliveries in health centers instead of the 40% forecasted by the program. WHO/PAHO is now looking at means to expand the project. Another initiative looks at the purchase of essential drugs to guarantee access to health the most in need. UNICEF and WHO/PAHO supported the MOH in carrying out vaccination campaigns targeting 5.6 million children and women of reproductive age (60% of the population), and are looking at expanding the routine vaccination programs.

Furthermore, since 1992, WHO/PAHO sup-



ports the MoH policy for an increased availability of basic drugs. The essential drugs program (PROMESS in its French acronym) looks into issues of procurement, as well as provision of drugs at an accessible price. Cost-recovery, however, is insufficient to guarantee the continuity of the project, and funds are needed to ensure drugs availability at an affordable price to the poorest segment of the population.

UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO/PAHO have been working for the reduction of maternal mortality through a joint project targeting 30,000 women. UNFPA continues to promote income-generating activities for women in childbearing age, youth and vulnerable groups in four departments. In order to improve access to basic healthcare, UNFPA continues to advocate for no-cost family planning initiatives, including the procurement of condoms and other modern contraceptive methods targeting some 1.9 million beneficiaries. Economic support is also being provided to SGBV victims.

Nutrition

Data prior to the crisis indicate that malnutrition affects 1 child over four. Malnutrition can affect permanently the intellectual and physical growth of individuals, which can in turn cause loss of human capital and economic loss.

Nutritional surveillance is virtually non-existent in Haiti and the limited availability of data does not allow for a thorough analysis and follow up of the impact of the food crisis. Increase in malnutrition rates is likely to become more evident towards the end of 2008. Nonetheless, stakeholders working in nutritional projects started recording an increased number of severe acute malnutrition cases (average increase 2-3 month) among children under 5 years of age.

In line with recommendations from the FAO-IFAD-WFP-World Bank mission, and following a request of the Health Ministry's Nutrition Department, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, international and national NGOs will contribute to a national nutritional survey to provide critically



needed information on the nutritional condition among children below five years of age and pregnant and lactating mothers, and its underlining causes. In July, partners, including the National committee on food security (CNSA), started the preparation of the survey. This tool will complement food security surveys already carried out by CNSA in rural areas.

UNICEF nutritional program gives a special attention to children under 2 years of age and lactating mothers. Micronutrients and Vitamin A distribution continue within the framework of the ongoing vaccination campaign. Between April and June 2008, UNICEF reinforced nutritional activities in the South, Artibonite and West departments, where some 800 malnourished children have been treated.

UNICEF is also advocating with MoH for the integration of nutritional interventions within the national health plans. In the South, a new community-based project provides no-cost healthcare and nutritional services and tar-

gets some 10,000 under 5 children and 20,000 women in childbirth age. UNICEF supports the utilization of Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) in four institutions where trained personnel are already in place. UNICEF provided technical support for the revision of community-based treatment protocols and continues to advocate with MoH for its approval and implementation. Both institutions are planning a massive training exercise to enhance capacities of personnel working in health facilities countrywide. This initiative is due to start in August.

WFP expanded its nutritional support through Mother and Child Health and PLWHA/TB programs by increasing ration sizes, the number of beneficiaries (a total of 370,000) as well as geographic coverage – currently limited to the North, North East and West - to cover also the South East and the North West of the country.

Education

The Haitian schooling system is largely based on the private and religious sectors. Public schools are not free of charge, and cater only for some 20% of the primary level education students. School offer is insufficient, especially in rural areas. Primary school net enrolment amounts to 49.6% (47.9% boys, 51.4% girls), and the secondary one amounts to 22%, and 2% only for children belonging to destitute families. Some 400,000 children between 6 and 11 years of age do not go to schools.

Most schools are in a deplorable state, and are not provided with basic services and equipment. Some 25% of the schools have no water. Most vulnerable and handicapped children are out of school. Girls are often discriminated. Teaching quality is poor, mostly because of lack of qualified teachers, poor curriculum and textbooks and limited teaching hours.

The rising food prices could hamper access to education and decrease school enrollment. All stakeholders agree that the beginning of the 2008-09 school year, in September, will be a critical moment, especially for the most vulnerable families.

The government has elaborated a national



strategy for Education For All (EFA), adopted in May 2007 to promote access to formal and informal education, and improve its efficiency. UNICEF and UNESCO are involved in advocacy for promoting a free education in the context of EFA, especially in primary schools. Recently, the Minister of Education indicated the intention of the Government to implement a no-cost policy for the first grade students in 2009.

Between January and June 2008, UNICEF carried out teacher training, rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities, provision of school furniture and teaching materials targeting 126 public schools in the West department. This initiative benefited 40,000 children. This support will be extended during next school year to about 100 other schools in West and North-West departments for an additional caseload of 75,000 children.

WFP-supported school feeding has continued, covering 325,000 school children per month in April, May and June. In addition, the number of beneficiaries enrolled in food for training activities increased from 9,500 to

17,000 people. From September onwards, the number of children receiving a hot meal at school will increase from 325,000 to 400,000, including also children in the South East and North West of the country. In addition, PNCS will assist an additional caseload of 300,000 children and the World Bank another 30,000. These initiatives will contribute to improving the quality of education, reduce education-related family expenditures and will improve the nutritional status of children.

Water and Sanitation

It is estimated that some 60% of the population has no access to safe water sources. Less than 10% of the houses have water. Over 50% of the population needs some 30 minutes of walk to reach the closest water source. Some 70% of the water consumed at household level is untreated. About one third of the population has no access to sanitation.

Access to adequate water and sanitation is a key factor for the stabilization of the nutritional situation of the most vulnerable. In collaboration with CAMEP, UNICEF has rehabilitated pumping station in Cité Soleil and installed a water treatment system for 200,000 people through labor-intensive projects. In Artibonite, the rehabilitation and construction of latrines, water filters, river protection dykes and cleaning of canals will continue until the end of July 2007. In order to improve sanitation conditions in three poor areas of Port-au-Prince (Warf Jeremie, Red Bridge, Martissant), four community latrines were constructed. In the North West department a new project for rehabilitation of six drinking water systems started in June 2007.



2006 Flooding in Gonaïves

In the South East department, UNDP is accelerating the implementation of its water and sanitation program to increase access to clean water in rural areas.

Protection

The lack of investments and job opportunities is seriously affecting the young generations. Youth unemployment is estimated at 70%. Teen-agers are particularly exposed to violence, and to be recruited by gangs. Children often are subject to abuses and exploitation. Poor government control over international adoption often leads to child trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors in institutions. Some 9 over 10 children in conflict with the law are subject to prolonged preventative detention

The soaring increase in food prices is expected to increase vulnerability among children. UNICEF supports approximately 5,000 orphans and other vulnerable minors, including SGBV victims, through education and health care programs, and socio-economic reintegration of kids through access to micro credit to biologic and host families. UNICEF currently assists about 7,000 street children, placed in domestic service, victims of gun or SGBV and orphans.

In order to reduce the risk of kids being drawn to towns and/or joining gangs, WFP and partners will provide food assistance to 200,000 children through summer activities.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Haiti is particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. In the last century, these events caused over 20,000 victims and affected over 6 millions people. 60% of the buildings and infrastructures suffered damages. Rehabilitation costs following hurricane Dean (Aug 2007) amounted to over USD12 millions, the equivalent of 30 to 40% of agricultural exports.

Haiti is virtually deprived of forests: from coverage of 80% few centuries ago, it dropped to 22% in 1945, and less than 2% in 2008. Over 97% of the 30 watersheds have been affected by deforestation. 50% of the territory suffers erosions which in turn affects soil fertility and agricultural production and, together with population increase, has a direct effect on food insecurity.

Only a third of the households have access to electricity, and blackouts are frequent. Most families utilize charcoal as cooking fuel, as they cannot access to other items such as gas or kerosene with a devastating impact on the environment.

The progressive deforestation, the frequency of natural disasters and the socio-economic situation make Haiti particularly vulnerable to the impact of even minor events. Forecasts for the 2008 hurricane season (June-November) are worrisome.

The UNCT is supporting, together with NGOs and other partners, including MINUSTAH, the national risk and disaster management. UNDP supports the Civil Protection and line

ministries to strengthen the disaster response capacities through development of tools and capacity building. Agencies are participating at departmental level to local committees that are currently revising response plans. A UN and partners contingency plan, outlining the international community sectoral capacities and strategies is being finalized in consultation with national and international partners. Pre-positioning of non-food items and of high-energy biscuits (90 MT which can help more than 100,000 people for 4 days) in key locations has taken already place. Nonetheless, preparation is lagging behind, and the impact of a natural disaster on the already fragile situation could be devastating.