



Haiti Response Coalition Program Report

July 2021 to July 2022

1. Introduction

The Haiti Response Coalition (HRC) is a cross-sector platform for sharing information and organizing collaborative action for a stronger Haiti, including disaster response that is Haitian-led and human rights-based. Founded in February 2010 to respond to the January 12th earthquake, the Coalition united dozens of small and medium sized NGOs from across Haiti and beyond to work together in response to the needs in Port-au-Prince. A team of Haitian mobilizers worked with existing organizations and leadership in displacement camps to deliver aid with dignity and in solidarity, while members of the Coalition coordinated to respond to needs identified by the team. Coalition members participated in national and international coordination and advocated for the rights of displaced people living in camps across the capital.

At the start of the COVID pandemic in March 2020, the Coalition was relaunched to facilitate a coordinated response and to gather resources that could be shared for a rapid response. Participation indicated that people were seeking a space to have these conversations and to coordinate for a better impact. The Coalition was founded on a set of core values, including Haitian leadership and a holistic, human rights-based approach (see Appendix A for more on values and approach). Members of the Coalition responded to the COVID pandemic and the massive expulsion of Haitians from the US-Mexico border through use of Title 42. At the same time, the security situation in Haiti was further eroding under a non-functioning government.

One of the main activities of the Coalition is coordination and facilitating joint activities. During the pandemic, this work was centered on creating a clearinghouse of existing resources and developing a [communications campaign](#) focused on debunking myths about COVID through trusted messengers. Coalition spokesperson BIC Tizon Dife was joined by Kako Bourjolly, Princess Eud, and the superhero Tanama for a public education campaign including a radio jingle, collaboration on a song and a music video.

The Coalition is based on the framework of Open Space Technology where the goal is to create the time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. Therefore, the agenda is set by people with the power and desire to see it through. Coalition working groups allow organizations to connect by sector or in a subcommittee to carry out a specific activity, while All Coalition calls provide space for



Part of the awareness campaign on COVID focused on de-stigmatizing and protecting health care workers. It says, "Doctors and nurses are heroes. Protect them so they can protect us!"



cross-sector information sharing. Core working groups are the Education Working Group and the Human Rights & Immigration Advocacy Working Group. Additional groups and subcommittees are convened as needed and any member of the Coalition can initiate a working group.

On July 7, 2021, President Jovenel Moise was assassinated in his home. His killing was one of many violent deaths during that period as the insecurity in Haiti's capital was increasing daily. Rights activist Antoinette Duclaire and journalist Diego Charles had been killed only weeks before, and on the same night as a massacre in Delmas 32 when 19 people were killed. The Coalition coordinated information sharing in the days just after the assassination and produced a [Joint Statement and Call to Action](#) on the Crisis in Haiti with nearly 200 organizational signers (see the Joint Statement in Appendix B).

When two earthquakes struck Haiti's southwestern peninsula in quick succession on August 14, 2021, the Haiti Response Coalition was already mobilized in response to the growing crises in other parts of Haiti. Within hours of the news of the quake breaking, members of the Coalition began organizing their responses. During a conference call only 24 hours later, first efforts to coordinate efforts were fully underway.

2. Immediate Emergency Response, August & September 2021

The Coalition's first response to the earthquake was to gather members and others together to share information and coordinate, but at the same time, a small team in Haiti mobilized to begin first-hand assessments in the Grand Anse, Nippes, and the South. These three departments make up what is known as the Grand Sud, and only a few days after the earthquake, a tropical storm drenched the area. Families whose homes were damaged or destroyed asked for tarps for shelter and to save what little they had left, and in response the Coalition purchased 1600 tarps from Maison Handal in Port-au-Prince and transported them to Nippes and Les Cayes during the week of August 17-24, 2021. This was the first responsive direct aid provided by the Coalition, and consequently, we replicated the model that was effective in 2010: working with a team of Haitian mobilizers that connected with local leadership and existing organizations to deliver aid based on their priority needs.



Strengthening Coordination

Throughout the first quarter of post-earthquake activities, the Coalition held weekly meetings for the Education and Human Rights & Immigration Advocacy Working Groups. We also hosted several meetings of the Food Sovereignty working group with simultaneous interpretation. In order to provide updates and share information, All Coalition calls were held three to four times each month during this time.

The Coalition also actively participated in local coordination efforts through Director for Mobilization Job Joseph who attended sectoral meetings at the Departmental Emergency Operations Centers (COUD) in the South and Grand Anse. Jessica Hsu represented the Coalition in national level coordination with the Cash Transfer Working Group, OCHA and the National Emergency Operations Center (COUN). Coalition



Coordinator, Melinda Miles, also met and was in contact with the Director of Haiti's Civil Protection, Dr. Jerry Chandler, and Moise Jean-Pierre.

To support coordination of emergency response and avoid duplication of efforts, the Coalition prepared a survey where organizations could share their activities or resources available called "[Connecting Needs and Resources](#)". In the first couple of weeks after the earthquake, this proved an invaluable tool for identifying places where members of the Coalition could make a big impact and allowed us to connect groups with communities in need. One outcome of this activity is that education working group members [Blue Butterfly/Lakou Kajou](#) and [Summits Education](#) were able to provide materials to members PRODEV and Hope for Haiti for distribution to schools that were damaged or destroyed.



At the same time, the Coalition registered with the OCHA Humanitarian Response Platform and participated in the Haitian Diaspora Emergency Response Unit (HDERU). Through HDERU we were able to gather information about diaspora response efforts and challenges, while also sharing advice and connections with a large WhatsApp group. We monitored other platforms that emerged in response to the earthquake and participated in various briefings including with the US State Department, White House, and the Clinton Foundation's Haiti Action Network.

At the local level, the HRC team worked with the mayors' offices as well as CASECs and ASECs throughout the region to identify communes that had been hard hit by the earthquakes and that were not already receiving aid from other groups working in the department.

Rapid community assessments and reporting

One of the biggest challenges in the first weeks and months after the earthquakes was a lack of reliable information about conditions in communities outside of the urban centers of Les Cayes, Jeremie, and Miragoane. Haiti's southwestern peninsula is dominated by a mountain range which includes Haiti's highest peak. As a result, most of the rural population lives in remote and hard to access areas in the foothills and mountain sides throughout the Grand Sud. Even coastal areas remain extremely difficult to access by land or air. While these communities rely heavily on supplies coming in and local produce going out by boat, their ports are ill-equipped to receive larger vessels or major cargo.

It was quickly apparent that the Haitian government did not have the capacity to visit all the affected communities to perform initial assessments. Urgent responders set up clinics, food programs, distribution, and other operations in the urban centers. Within days after the earthquakes and consequent tropical storm had passed, hundreds of survivors from remote communities began to arrive along the main roadways to set up camps closer to where humanitarian aid was being provided.

In response, the Coalition launched an effort to carry out rapid assessments across the Grand Sud. Journalists from the Konbit Journalis Lib (KJL) team visited communities in Nippes and Les Cayes while Job



began visiting hard to reach zones in the Grand Anse. The assessment teams were generally 1-3 individuals who traveled by moto or by foot to reach remote areas. Members of the Coalition collaborated to prepare an [outline for assessing needs and resources](#) that was used by the teams in the Grand Sud. The assessment was meant to provide information at a community level and dozens of families and local leaders were interviewed through the process.

During the two months immediately following the earthquakes, assessments were a key component of our work to better determine what the needs were and where we could be most effective. The teams



Members of the Coalition team traveled by boat to visit the community of Cayemites in August 2021.

started in areas that were reported to have a great deal of earthquake damage. Upon arrival, they met with existing contacts and local officials to carry out a rapid assessment. Based on those conversations, they determined which local communities had not yet been visited by any official but had reported a great deal of damage. This was based on key informant interviews, as noted, and information shared through traditional and social media, as well as existing response coordination platforms. For example, when Le Nouvelliste journalist Frantz Duval reported the grave water shortages being faced in Pestel and the Cayemites, the Coalition team went to follow up with local officials and community leaders there to ensure they were included in the rapid assessments.

Both Job and KJL produced dozens of short video interviews with people impacted by the earthquake along with photos and reports based on their own observations (see [Haiti Watch blog](#) and [KJL YouTube](#)). After initial visits to the Corail and Pestel communes outside of Jeremie, we hired a structural engineer to assess the damage to household water systems to inform our response there, and he prepared this [technical assessment](#). We also prepared a consolidated [assessment report](#). Using the information about needs and resources that was gathered, we determined what kind of direct support to provide.

Based on the community assessments and extensive firsthand reporting from our team, we learned that the priority needs reported by affected families in September were: shelter materials (tarps, tin roofing) to protect people and belongings from the rain, support in procuring water and food, and other essential household and personal items. Food and water remained readily available at local markets throughout the affected areas, but families were unable to weather the losses incurred by the earthquake and still cover their basic needs.

As a result of the assessments and this analysis, the Coalition determined that the most efficient way to help affected families was to provide multi-use cash grants that could be used to cover any of the needs mentioned above or anything else earthquake survivors determined to be their top priority. Based on the community assessments, it was clear that remote and hard to reach areas were being neglected during the initial urgent relief phase. Seven communities were selected as priority areas: L'Asile, Baraderes, Camp Perrin, Coteaux, Les Anglais, Pestel, and Corail. Through meetings with local officials, the team determined the most important communal sections for Coalition support.



Initially, Coalition member [Community Coalition for Haiti](#) sent a team to Les Cayes to assist with community assessments and begin registering families for cash grants in September. Based on their experience, we realized we would need to recruit experienced, local mobilizers to complete the task. Under the leadership of Job, we recruited six community mobilizers based in the communities where we are working, along with a technician (structural engineer) to support rebuilding activities, and a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialist. The mobilizers participated in two training seminars: the first on the registration for and follow up with cash grant recipients, and the second focused on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and ethics in reporting and photojournalism.

Through the support of Coalition member Beyond Borders, Angela Galbreath also joined the team with a focus on communications and supporting KJL reporting. The KJL team produced dozens of video interviews with earthquake survivors, local leaders, and officials, and first responders throughout the Grand Sud. These human interest stories are available on their [YouTube channel](#) and many are featured on the [Haiti Watch blog](#). More than half of these videos include English subtitles, provided by our translation partners at Makaya Ewa, directed by Daniel Tillias. Because they are first-hand accounts, these interviews will provide an important record of the circumstances and challenges faced by those affected and help broaden and deepen the wider public's understanding.

Local mobilizers were recruited for each of the priority areas based on their experience and geographical knowledge. By identifying individuals who lived in proximity to the affected areas, the Coalition was able to begin work with a foundation of trust. The mobilizers began the process of registering 600 families in seven communities to receive cash grants based on visible damage to their homes and referrals from local organizations and mayors' offices.

For example, in the community of Saut Mathurine in the Camp Perrin area, the Coalition worked with a local organization for disabled people to ensure that members were included in our program. A women's organization in Pestel played a similar role in identifying women-headed households and elderly members of the community in need of special assistance. One of the critical advantages of working with local mobilizers is that they come with knowledge about vulnerable members of the community and existing grassroots organizations. Whenever possible, Coalition team members worked in collaboration with local groups to strengthen their presence in the community, coordinating the registration process with them.

Community	L'Asile	Baraderes	Camp Perrin	Coteaux	Les Anglais	Pestel	Corail
Number of families	100	100	100	50	50	100	100

During November and December, the first transfer of 4000 gourdes (about \$40 US) was made to 600 families. The mobilizers then visited each to confirm they had received the funds. This work also laid the foundation for the larger cash transfers supported by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) grant, which we applied for and received during the last quarter of 2021. In addition to the 600 families enrolled in the program, we made cash grants of \$40 to an additional 130 families who were registered by KJL during their community assessments.



Advocacy: Pledge for New Minimum Standards

In parallel to the relief and coordination efforts launched during the first days after the earthquake, the Coalition worked with a group of activists and Haitian Studies Association President Mark Schuller to promote the [Pledge for New Minimum Standards](#) (see Appendix C for full text). This comprehensive document provides strong guidelines for how to respond to disasters with a human rights-based approach and Haitian leadership and is a powerful tool for advocacy and awareness-raising. The Coalition made it the foundation of our approach in the Grand Sud and the basis of membership in the Coalition. It was launched in collaboration with a collective of organizations including [Nou Pap Dòm](#), [Ansanm pou Ayiti](#), [Konbit pou yon Ayiti Tèt Anwo \(CHW-KATA\)](#), and the [Haitian Ladies' Network](#). See Appendix C for the full Pledge.

3. Ongoing Disaster Response

Konbit Lekòl

In order to build trust and create relationships in communities, the Coalition relied on the local mobilizers and used a *konbit*, or community work team model to engage parents and educators to work side by side with Coalition mobilizers to get kids back in school. Instead of distributing tents and tarps to schools that were damaged or destroyed during the earthquake, we used permanent materials including wood posts, plywood, and tin roofing to build temporary schools.



Konbit is a tradition where community members come together to help those in need without an expectation of compensation, and we built on this cultural model by only providing meals and refreshments to the work team. Members of the Coalition team participated in the projects by camping on site, participating in the physical labor and/or preparation of meals. Job and the others worked to create an atmosphere of shared labor and reward that embraced the spirit of a konbit and encouraged dialogue among the participants about why this model is critical to changing the way disaster and humanitarian aid are used in Haiti. The focus on locally available resources, including labor that is donated by those who will own the product of those efforts, is the foundation of a truly Haitian-led response.

The first temporary school build, or *konbit lekòl*, was organized in Coteaux, South department, and took place over a five-day period in October 2021 at the L'Ecole Congregationalist aux Coteaux. While subsequent schools were national public schools, we chose to work with the sisters in Coteaux for a few key reasons. First, they had already begun to organize the parents and others in the community to be part of a konbit to create space for children to return to classes but had run into a financial challenge and couldn't purchase the materials necessary to continue. Second, they have a large space that is accessible and therefore was a good pilot for the konbit activity. The team built space for six classes. Due to the temporary nature of the structures, this did not include any latrines. Photos and videos, including interviews with the school director, parents who participated in the konbit, and students, are [online here](#).



The [final video report](#) from KJL about this pilot konbit is available with English subtitles on their YouTube channel.

One month later, in the midst of the November 2021 gas crisis, our team organized a second konbit in L'Asile, Nippes department, to build six temporary classrooms for the Ecole Nationale de Ravine Mitant. The school has 78 students, 40 girls and 38 boys. More photos and videos of the konbit in L'Asile (Lazil) are [online here](#). Konbit Lekol were also carried out in Saut Mathurine (Camp Perrin) and Corail for a total of four temporary schools completed by February 2022.

These activities were very successful and have strengthened visibility and relationship building for the Coalition. Additional schools have requested a partnership to get their students back into class and to replace makeshift classrooms under tents and trees. The school builds have also paved the way for the Coalition's technician and mobilization team to provide support for repair and rebuilding of homes and water cisterns during the second quarter of earthquake response activities by establishing a dignified relationship of equals with community members who have seen the Coalition team working side by side with them.

Expanded Cash Transfer Program

Thanks to a generous partnership with UMCOR, the Coalition provided two additional multi-purpose cash transfers to 600 families across the seven communities of Corail, Pestel, Camp Perrin, Coteaux, Les Anglais, L'Asile and Barraderes. Each household was visited a minimum of four times during the grant period for follow up and transfer verification. The Coalition retained a structural engineer throughout this time who traveled to each of the communities to provide technical support to families who were repairing homes and water cisterns damaged during the quake.

Mobile Medical Clinics

During the interviews in the participatory assessment, earthquake survivors identified their priorities for response and accompaniment. Food, water, shelter repairs and school fees could be covered by the cash assistance, however access to medical care remained a challenge for many of the remote communities across the Grand Sud. Only weeks after the earthquake, the Association des Jeune Volontaires Pour les Progrès des Abricots (AJVPA) launched a volunteer-driven mobile clinic program to provide emergency medical care in places that were difficult, if not impossible, to reach in a vehicle.

In October, the Coalition made a grant to AJVPA to carry out a series of ten mobile medical clinics in the Grand Anse. The Coalition made a grant of \$3,500 which covered medications, supplies, transportation, and other related expenses. Photos from the mobile clinics are [available here](#) and below are the details about patients that were treated in each community.

Location in Grand Anse	Number of Patients
Saint Victor	204 patients
Burotte	201 patients
Anse du Clerf	265 patients



Ròch Pyè	165 patients
Batis	133 patients
Dispewou	115 patients
Dezomo	178 patients
Jakè	145 patients
Vil Bonbon	182 patients
Kafou Sanon	158 patients
TOTAL:	1,746 patients

Under the leadership of Dr. Jamesky Blaise, AJVPA was able to do more than two dozen mobile clinics across the Grand Sud in the four months immediately following the August 2021 earthquake, including the ten with Coalition support.

4. Strengthening Coordination: Building Structure and Tools

When news of the earthquakes began to spread on August 14, people began mobilizing throughout Haiti and abroad. Everyone was thinking about the lessons learned after January 12, to the point where fear of repeating past mistakes led to delays during the immediate emergency response phase. A desire to have better coordination led to the creation of multiple platforms, yet none of them provided the functionality necessary for real-time, accurate coordination. Absent from all the response efforts were the voices of those affected by the quake in the difficult to reach, remote communities that were hardest hit. Months went by without any officials from the Haitian government or UN agencies ever visiting the vast majority of communities affected and coordination platforms also struggled to connect with them.

Despite the numerous spaces where responders sought to coordinate for a fast and efficient response in impacted communities, there were many gaps that remained. The Coalition evaluated the existing coordination tools and maps and also surveyed members of the Coalition about what would encourage them to use a coordination platform. We determined that the main objectives of a Coalition Platform would be:

- To facilitate coordinated interventions and support in Haiti during times of crisis (and beyond)
- To connect needs and resources
- To know when interventions resolve needs and the ongoing status of needs by community
- To view/project/print out real time info on a weekly basis to display in the COUD (Departmental Emergency Operations Center)
- To provide a directory of organizations, materials, vendors, lodging, and other useful contacts
- To support transparency and aid accountability

In addition to these goals, we wanted to create a tool that would put Haitian survivors at the center of identifying and reporting the needs and resources in their communities. The existing platforms use mainly French and English and are web-based applications. The Coalition wanted to create something in Haitian



Creole that could be used with the same amount of internet access as texting/WhatsApp and would allow local stakeholders to lead emergency response. This is fundamentally different from the current approach where outsiders, either from the Haitian government or international organizations, must visit affected communities to provide assessments.

Through a partnership with the [Haiti Development Institute](#) (HDI), the Coalition began working with the Haitian-led tech firm [Ayiti Analytics](#) (AA) to build the Platform. The AA team began by building a dashboard and map that includes every commune in Haiti. The development of the application to be used on either telephone or tablets was the main priority during the first six months of work so that if a disaster happens, local Haitian community leaders will be able to easily share information about the needs and resources in their communities.

Making sure that the Platform is showing verified information is an important component of the effort. A first step is that users must be registered to share information on the platform. Community assessments, registration of needs and resources all must be done by an existing organization or local official. This will not prevent any citizen from reporting something through the Platform, but rather encourages local collaboration and ensures some level of accountability for the information being shared. At the same time, AA imported existing data from the UN OCHA's humanitarian response mapping, which shows where registered international and national agencies have provided sector-specific responses across the Grand Sud. This data will be part of the layers of information accessible through the map and dashboard and at the same time provides points that can be used in the verification process.

Eksperyans dwe sèvi nou leson: Beyond Lessons Learned

During the past twelve years, there have been many workshops, meetings, and reports to discuss the lessons learned from past experiences, whether it was the January 12, 2010 earthquake or Hurricane Matthew in 2016, or one of the other disasters Haiti has faced. It is very clear that Haiti remains one of the most vulnerable countries in the face of climate change, as we have already seen the devastation of recent tropical storms, while at the same time, unpredictable earthquakes will continue to impact various regions of the country. When the ground shook on August 14, 2021, many hoped all the lessons learned from the previous responses would bring different results this time. However, without confronting the lessons learned and taking concrete steps to correct the errors of the past, the response effort suffered from many of the same mistakes.



In order to move the dialogue to the next stage, the Coalition and Haiti Development Institute (HDI) brought together over 200 local stakeholders from the Grand Sud to examine the experience of the August quake through the lens of going beyond simply reciting what isn't working, to truly build consensus on the best practices and local structures that are needed for an effective community-led disaster response in



the future. The conference [Beyond Lessons Learned: Coordination for Disaster Response](#) took place June 9-11, 2022 at La Cretonne in Les Cayes with co-hosts Hope for Haiti, Gaskov Clergé Foundation, Haitian Studies Association, W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy.



Together, HDI and the Coalition created a space for participatory discussions, provocative panels, and small group workshops that focused on operationalizing lessons learned by building systems and structures that put Haitian communities in control of assessing and reporting their own needs in times of crisis. We did not want to hold another workshop with the same actors, more than half of whom would fly into the South to talk about the situation. Instead,

the Coalition and HDI took the time necessary to bring together local people from throughout the Grand Sud who were the first responders after the earthquakes last August, just as they were the first responders after Hurricane Matthew. Time has shown that the same local people who were the first responders were in many cases the only responders. At the opening of the program, we screened the short film “[Nou Reponn Dezas](#) - We are Disaster Responders,” produced by Konbit Jounalis Lib, featuring local organizations participating in the conference.

In an effort to strengthen existing structures for coordination, thematic discussions were based on the sectors used by Civil Protection and OCHA to form working groups during emergency response. These include health/medical, cash assistance, agriculture/livelihoods, education, shelter, and WASH. Local organizations shared the strategies they used to respond at the community level and some highlights included:

- Dr. Jamesky Blaise from AJVPA spoke about the local solidarity from the community of Abricots, including volunteer-driven mobile clinics and distribution of local food.
- Linda Thelemaque from Hope for Haiti and Job from the Coalition both discussed multi-purpose cash grant programs using Digicel’s MonCash service, which led to a lively dialogue about the structures that exist to deliver cash support.
- Jovanie Padé from Blue Butterfly/Lakou Kajou spoke about the audio and video programs that Lakou Kajou has produced for distance learning and to support engaging students during times of crisis.
- Civil engineers with experience in the Grand Sud shared insight about earthquake and hurricane resistant construction.

Each sector presentation was followed by discussion or small workshop breakout sessions where participants were asked to think not only about needs, but also resources locally available as a key part of planning and response.



A panel led by Professor Mark Schuller explored the themes of the [Pledge for New Minimum Standards](#) for Haiti. Mark's opening remarks focused on the lessons that should have been learned by now but haven't yet. Professor Ilionor Louis spoke about infantilization and exclusion, two common practices in humanitarian response that may have begun with foreign actors but are starting to be adopted by Haitians as well. Nancy Sherline Saint Louis shared her research about the ways aid has been politicized in Port Salut, where politicians have used aid to win community support. This is possible in large part because local citizens, and often local governments, do not completely understand the larger humanitarian aid system that impacts them locally.



James Beltis from Nou Pap Dòmi and Professor Ilionor Louis at the Beyond Lessons Learned Conference.

The Community Guide to Humanitarian Aid is a new resource that was developed through a community-led process in Abricots. Anthropologist Jessica Hsu presented the Guide and spoke about how it deconstructs myths about aid by providing clear information about different actors, channels for funding, and much more. After Jessica presented the Guide, activist James Beltis from Nou Pap Dòmi spoke about the importance of advocacy as part of the work to move beyond lessons learned. When people speak about their frustration with the lack of response from the Haitian government, and how it appears as though there simply is no government, Beltis reminded participants that the government does indeed exist, and that it continues to collect funds from taxes and international sources. Advocacy can be incredibly effective in raising awareness about corruption, and Beltis cited the success of the Petrochallengers movement in making Petrocaribe a household word across the entire country and beyond.

Ultimately, a new approach to disaster planning and response requires new tools that are tailored to Haitians. Patris Tardieu from Ayiti Analytics presented the new coordination tool that was developed by Haitians for Haitians: the Coalition Platform, and invited all the attendees to download the application so they could begin to share firsthand information about the needs and resources in their communities.

At the conclusion of the conference, several concrete next steps were highlighted including follow up workshops at the local level that are focused on participatory planning and preparation for disasters, as well as building local structures for coordination that connect with national structures and can leverage the international members of the Coalition in the future. Many expressed their frustration that Haiti's Civil Protection and UN coordination actors were absent from the conference, despite repeated efforts to secure their participation. Follow up with these key stakeholders was also determined as a priority for next steps.



5. Immigration and Human Rights Advocacy

Over the past year, the Coalition's Friday afternoon human rights and immigration advocacy working group has been extremely active. The call is usually chaired by Nicole Phillips from the Haitian Bridge Alliance (HBA) and covers issues of security and governance in Haiti, human rights, and immigration rights. Due to the in-depth treatment of current events in Haiti, the notes from these calls provide a great deal of information to all members of the Coalition, even those who do not regularly attend the calls.

Immigration advocacy has continued to focus mainly on the Title 42 policy, established by the Trump Administration and then kicked into overdrive under President Biden, which has led to the expulsion and return to Haiti of over 20,000 Haitian migrants, including many women and children. HBA, the Family Action Network Movement (FANM), Quixote Center, Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), the Center for Global Justice at NYU, and the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) provided information, analysis, human rights-based perspective, and opportunities for joint advocacy in response to the ongoing expulsions, and the horrific treatment of Haitian migrants in Mexico and in the US.

While the working group is focused on immigration and human rights advocacy, events in 2021 made it clear that without a change in governance in Haiti, it would be impossible to make progress on either of these fronts. As a mainly US-based coalition, we determined that one critical advocacy focus needed to be on the ongoing support the US is providing to Haiti's de facto government. With leadership from IJDH, we developed [Consensus Talking Points](#) and launched the [US Hands of Haiti campaign](#) calling on the US government to stop propping up the government and allow a Haitian-led solution to emerge. The talking points document the human rights abuses, corruption, and violence of the Haitian Tet Kale Party (PHTK) that has controlled the country for more than a decade and also explains the civil society effort known as the Montana Accord. It answers many of the frequently asked questions about US engagement in Haiti, even beyond the current situation.

6. The Coalition Members and Team

Currently, the Coalition has 33 [official members](#) and over 40 additional organizations that regularly participate in meetings and discussion groups. Through the broad grassroots response to the earthquake in the Grand Sud and massive mobilization for the Beyond Lessons Learned conference, the Coalition brought together over 60 local organizations to launch a community network that will eventually expand throughout all of Haiti.

The Haiti Response Coalition, known simply as the *Kowalisyon* in Haiti, is growing in response to the need for:

- A new approach to humanitarian and disaster response model that puts decision-making power and leadership into the hands of those most affected,
- Effective coordination that takes into account both needs and existing resources while responding to the priorities of Haitians through participatory and survivor-led processes,
- Transparency in humanitarian aid and disaster response,
- Accountability for actors entrusted with the management of funds donated to help Haitians,
- Haiti to move beyond discussions of lessons learned and actually act on those lessons.

The Coalition has an [executive committee](#) that serves as the coordinating body for the Coalition. The committee meets regularly to discuss the strategic vision for the Coalition, the disbursement of funds for



programs in Haiti, and progress on Coalition-supported programming and initiatives. Currently, the committee includes representatives of the fiscal sponsor of the coalition (Clark Seipt of the Community Coalition for Haiti), the original fiscal sponsor (David Diggs of Beyond Borders), Tom Ricker of the Quixote Center, and Carolyn Mellin of Summits Education. The coalition coordinator, Melinda Miles also sits on the committee. Participation on the committee is open to any member of the Coalition and in Fall 2022, we hope to expand and include new members on the committee.

When the earthquakes happened in August 2021, there were no paid staff working for the Coalition. While discussions were underway to begin providing a small monthly stipend for coordination, Melinda was still working as a volunteer when she began recruiting the key members of the Haiti-based team. Job Joseph was brought on as Director of Mobilization and began working immediately in the Grand Anse and South. Journalists with Konbit Journalis Lib were the first team to head to Nippes to interview survivors and evaluate the situation there.



Members of the Konbit Journalis Lib and Coalition team, including Coordinator Melinda Miles and Director of Mobilization Job Joseph at center, in Aux Coteaux.

Within a week of the quakes, the Coalition received a generous donation from the Ansara Family Fund and executive committee members Beyond Borders and the Quixote Center pledged funds for Coalition activities in the Grand Sud. As the scope of the Coalition's work expanded to include cash assistance and temporary schools, we hired local mobilizers based in the six regions where we were accompanying survivors, as well as a Monitoring and Evaluation Lead and a technician who provided support for school builds, house and water system repairs. In the US, Beyond Borders provided a communications expert, Angela Galbreath, to support the Coalition and Daniel Tillias's firm Makaya Ewa provided ongoing translation and transcription services.

7. Next Steps

Ultimately, this year has made it clear that the Coalition can play a critical role in building a functioning disaster preparedness and response network that is led by Haitians, starting locally and connecting community leaders to regional, national, and international networks. Instead of a model that focuses on outsiders assessing communities to determine what should be brought in, we focus on connecting needs to existing resources. Putting Haitians at the center of the emergency response inverts the traditional disaster response which relies on external assessments of needs and provision of external resources.

By focusing on existing resources and Haitian-led response, these activities are institution building and civic engagement that corresponds directly to urgent vulnerability and Haitians' shared objective of building resilience to natural disasters. People in the Grand Sud are acutely aware of how funds are wasted in their names, and they know that even when response efforts fail them, the organizations that receive those funds benefit nonetheless from a system that provides salaries, vehicles, offices, and contracts to NGOs regardless of whether the people most affected by disasters receive the accompaniment they need.



In 2022-2023, the Coalition will focus on:

- **Expanding Coalition membership:** We have many more participating organizations than formal Coalition members listed on our website, so one key step is to encourage groups to become members by taking the [Pledge for New Minimum Standards](#) and joining our regular All Coalition and working group calls. In addition, we will be making the website bilingual to better serve Haitian members and to bridge with the community network growing in the Grand Sud. In order to strengthen coordination and advocacy efforts, the Coalition will seek to expand Haitian American membership and recruit new executive committee members. Daniel Tillias will be joining Melinda as the Coalition's Director of Outreach to lead this effort.
- **Building the Kowalisyon in Haiti:** Based on the feedback from participants at the Beyond Lessons Learned Conference, we will be launching a rezo kominotè, or community network. Using the existing WhatsApp group from the Conference and through the work of our mobilization team, the Coalition will carry out community level participatory disaster planning and preparedness workshops with skills building in Grand Sud, Arcahaie, the Northwest and Cap-Haitien.
- **Promoting the Coalition Platform** for effective coordination: Using the Platform, we are developing functional structures to support communication, planning/preparedness and coordination for disaster response. Outreach efforts will focus on actors in the diaspora and the international community who have led emergency responses in the past.
- **Engaging with Haiti's Civil Protection (DGPC):** The Coalition, HDI and AA will follow up with DGPC and UN OCHA to propose a joint training with their teams in the three departments of the Grand Sud between now and the end of 2022, to include leadership from the Departmental Emergency Operations Centers (COUD) as well as brigadiers.
- **Development of Emergency Schools program:** The Coalition's education working group has developed an Emergency School program to provide a comprehensive package for crisis-affected schools that includes a participatory community-based approach to establish safe spaces (the konbit lekòl), a kit of materials, activities and curriculum guide, and capacity building training for educators and adults who can engage with students until in-school classes can resume.
- **Continued Cash Assistance and Konbit Lekòl:** Through our partnership with UMCOR, the Coalition will be expanding cash support for families affected by the earthquakes in the Grand Sud while facilitating several additional temporary school builds with community work teams.
- **Training and capacity building for advocacy:** The Coalition will mobilize local stakeholders to advocate for their rights and build a framework to decolonize humanitarian and development aid by putting the power to assess needs and resources and lead in times of crisis into the hands of local actors, including those most affected by disasters and marginalized communities



More highlights from the Beyond Lessons Learned Conference, June 9-11 in Les Cayes



- 1: Conference organizers and co-hosts: Cosy Joseph, Gaskov Clergé Foundation; Pierre Noel, Haiti Development Institute; Linda Thelemaque, Hope for Haiti; and Melinda Miles, Haiti Response Coalition.
- 2: Small group discussion day two.
- 3: Small group discussion day one with Anthropologist Jessica Hsu and Patris Tardieu from Ayiti Analytics at center.
- 4: Pierre Noel, BIC Tizon Dife, Melinda Miles, and Reginald Cean (HDI).



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Haiti Response Coalition Shared Values

We embrace the fundamental principles of a **human rights-based approach** which focuses on those who are most marginalized, excluded or discriminated against (UNFPA). According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, “The human rights-based approach (HRBA) seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind.” A 'Human Rights-Based Approach' is about empowering people to know and claim their rights and increasing the ability and accountability of individuals and institutions who are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling rights. ([See here](#)) The key elements of the human rights-based approach are participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency and access to information, human dignity, empowerment, and rule of law.

We promote **Haitian self-determination and leadership**, desiring collaborative efforts based on partnership and mutual respect, but never seeking to do what Haitians can do for themselves. To this end, the Haiti Response Coalition seeks to collaborate with and/or support the creation of one (or many) Haiti-based platform(s) to ensure that our priorities, words and actions are informed by and aligned with Haitian movements and campaigns. In concrete practice, this also means that despite the international nature of the HRC, we are committed to making our work **Haitian-centered**, and more specifically, centering marginalized Haitian populations so that our engagement and action are in response to Haitian need and aimed toward Haitian benefit.

We see Haiti’s complexity and believe that a **holistic approach** is necessary to bring about the kind of transformative change urgently needed in the country. Focusing on only one challenge or crisis without seeing the bigger picture has led to ineffective intervention and wasted resources, just as responding to an emergency situation without considering the long-term has led to a legacy of failed projects.

We recognize that Haitians and friends of Haiti include a large spectrum of experience and expertise. We respect and lift up the value of lived experience and define HRC as a **community of learning and practice**, where members can be unafraid to ask questions, highlight lessons learned so that we can do better in the future, and be open to learn from one another.

Appendix B: Joint Statement & Call to Action on the Crisis in Haiti

JULY 2021

In response to the crisis in Haiti, which has deepened in the wake of the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, we, the undersigned individuals and organizations, express our condolences and sympathy to all of the Haitian families that have lost a loved one to the ongoing violence. We further recognize that activists and human rights defenders in Haiti are currently facing grave danger as they continue to work for a better future for all Haitians.



In light of the horrific events of the past month in Haiti, including the [massacre at Delmas 32](#) and the high profile killing of prominent [activist Antoinette Duclaire](#) and [journalist Diego Charles](#); the ongoing gang fighting and arson attacks in poor neighborhoods that have displaced more than [18,000 people](#); and the shocking assassination of Jovenel Moïse in his home on the night of July 6-7;

Considering that the Haitian people have been living in a brutal climate of insecurity that makes it hard to get to work, and that there is a growing food crisis; that crops have failed as a result of rising temperatures and climate disruption; that gang violence has blocked roads and shut off access to markets, and more than 4.4 million people do not have enough food to eat every day;

Considering that COVID cases are spiking, and that lack of security and gang violence make it impossible for life saving materials to reach hospitals in other parts of the country while also blocking the capital's main petrol depot, leading to massive gas shortages;

We call on the international community to stand in solidarity with Haitian calls for:

(1) A Haitian solution. Haitians should lead in building the path forward. Foreign actors must not impose solutions from abroad. Even prior to Moïse's murder, Haitian [organizations](#) have been building [consensus](#) for a transitional government. Foreign governments and international institutions must not overstep their role by declaring who has authority in Haiti, particularly when that conflicts with Haitian law.

We need only look to the recent [MINUSTAH](#) mission to see that foreign efforts fail to create lasting public democratic institutions that are necessary for any country to function. Despite spending 13 years and \$7 billion -- [ten times](#) Haiti's GDP-- the MINUSTAH mission left Haiti with more guns and less democracy. The mission also afflicted Haiti's citizens with sexual exploitation and abuse, leaving behind hundreds of [children fathered by](#) peacekeepers, and was responsible for introducing cholera to Haiti, killing an estimated 10,000 people.

(2) A commitment to a participatory democratic process. After decades of foreign intervention and aid policies that have destabilized Haiti, each branch of the Haitian government has been systematically dismantled, and public confidence in Haiti's governance has declined to nearly nothing. Haitian organizations and civil society have long been [calling for a transition government](#) to restore stability, basic security, and democracy. Haiti must have a transition process in order to rebuild its democratic institutions, and this process must be inclusive of all sectors of Haiti's population.

(3) Ensuring that conditions for fair, participatory, and credible elections are in place before rushing Haiti to the polls. Elections are a fundamental part of the democratic process. However, they must be free and fair and perceived as legitimate in order to strengthen democracy. Elections will not be free and fair without inclusive voter registration, an independent and legitimate electoral body, and the security necessary not only to vote, but also to campaign leading up to election day. Meaningful participation requires that women and other marginalized groups also participate in the electoral process. A race to hold elections on an internationally-imposed timeline risks further eroding democracy in Haiti.

(4) Protection for the right to free expression and the right to life. Over the past three years, all Haitian people have learned that there is no safety; there is no guarantee that they will make it home when they leave. Human rights defenders, journalists, and activists are frequent targets of threats and attacks,



and essential health care workers have been injured and killed through kidnappings, attacks and gang violence. Gender-based violence, including rape, has been increasing during this crisis, and thousands of women and girls have been displaced from their homes, making them even more vulnerable.

Three years ago, on July 6-7, 2018, the emerging evidence that government officials had stolen more than [\\$2 billion](#) from state coffers and rising gas prices sparked the first in a series of protests against corruption and impunity. These massive mobilizations of Haitians across class and political lines marched together to call for accountability and democracy. They were consistently met with brutal repression from the government and indifference from the international community.

There have been [18 massacres](#) documented in Port-au-Prince over these past three years. Perpetrators have targeted neighborhoods active in opposition protests, and have not been held accountable. Human rights groups have documented connections between officials and the armed groups responsible for these massacres, including Moïse and other government ministers. Further, some argue that these massacres constitute [crimes against humanity](#).

(5) Recognition of how foreign interventions have contributed to current conditions in Haiti. While many are calling Haiti a “failed state”, what we see is the failure of centuries of policies imposed on Haiti by the international community, including aid policies, that prioritized foreign interests and short-term gains over sustainable democracy and prosperity for Haitians. The 2010 earthquake was an opportunity to rebuild Haiti with strong public institutions. However, despite hundreds of millions of aid dollars, Haiti’s entire public administration was outsourced to foreign institutions and NGOs.

Appendix C: Pledge for New Minimum Standards in Haiti

For a Haitian Solution and [Rights-Based Disaster Response](#)

August 21, 2021

A collective of organizations including [Nou Pap Dòmi](#), [Ansanm pou Ayiti](#), Konbit pou yon Ayiti Tèt Anwo (CHW-KATA), the [Haitian Ladies’ Network](#), and the [Haiti Response Coalition](#) call on all those who operate in Haiti to pledge to meet these minimum standards.

We pledge to respect the dignity of the Haitian people.

We pledge to use respectful language.

We pledge to be specific, transparent and inclusive.

We pledge to respect Haitian leadership and reinforce Haitian capacity.

We pledge to support the public good.

We pledge to align with and support long-term efforts.

Above all, we pledge to hold ourselves accountable, and invite groups in Haiti, especially the communities in which we work, to hold us accountable.

Why do we need new minimum standards for Haiti?

On August 14, 2021, two earthquakes struck Haiti, ravaging the southern peninsula, which has yet to fully recover from the 2016 Hurricane Matthew. The 2010 earthquake that devastated the capital of Port au Prince and surrounding areas likewise still haunts Haiti.



The earthquakes' impact was devastating and vast because of the human-made vulnerabilities that predate them. We cannot look at these events as isolated “natural disasters” but natural events turned into disasters because of human action. The humanitarian aid which followed 2010, that filmmaker Raoul Peck has called “[fatal assistance](#)” left little sustainable improvement and in fact exacerbated existing inequalities and deepened Haiti's dependence on foreign assistance. In other words, the international humanitarian response to the 2010 earthquake [became another aftershock](#) that is still being felt. Led by large international organizations, this aid followed on the heels of centuries of foreign interventions, exploitation, and economic policies that have weakened the Haitian State, essentially rendering it an aid State (often called “Republic of NGOs”) and bled the country's resources dry.

Because of this experience, Haitians living in the country and abroad are justifiably skeptical of foreign assistance. We hope the international community will respond swiftly to this latest tragedy as it has so generously in the past. But now is a time to learn from that past, move away from “fatal assistance,” and support organizations that are a part of [Haitian solutions](#) respecting minimum standards in solidarity to a recovery that builds a more equitable Haiti for Haitians. Good intentions are not enough...good actions must follow.

Minimum Standards

Following Hurricane Matthew in 2016, Haitian NGO professionals and activists collaborated with U.S. peers to draft a set of “new minimum standards” to prevent repeating the mistakes of the 2010 earthquake, despite global “[minimum standards](#)” for humanitarian responses. Indeed, all groups working in aid should learn about, adopt, and aspire to follow existing standards.

There's no time to lose. Haitian lives deserve better.

DIGNITY

We pledge to respect the dignity of Haitian people and reject the voyeuristic normalization of Black suffering. We will not use images that dehumanize people or fail to respect people's dignity, like images of people who are naked or dirty, or that feature people who did not provide consent to being pictured.

RESPECT

We pledge to use respectful language, to not use language perceived as offensive by Haitians, such as descriptions of Haiti as the “poorest country in the hemisphere” without explaining how Haiti became so poor (impoverishment vs. poor), and other clichés that have historically justified interventions that disrespected Haitian autonomy or presented Haitians as passive victims rather than autonomous individuals facing challenges that are the direct result of slavery, colonialism, and racism.

SPECIFICITY

We pledge to be specific, stop collecting donations for “Haiti,” and to instead articulate specific geographic regions and particular needs that we will work to address in accordance with a context-specific assistance plan.

TRANSPARENCY

We pledge to be transparent, make public our work plans for carrying out our efforts, including information on which populations will be served by certain interventions, specific strategies, and



partners (along with information regarding how long we've worked with them and our criteria for selecting them) to the extent practicable permitted without revealing personal information or putting anyone in danger. The information will be made public on our website and, where practicable, on other public Haitian forums such as radio.

HAITIAN LEADERSHIP

We pledge to respect Haitian leadership, coordinate with and/or notify national and local officials in Haiti, including the local councils (CASEC) and mayors in the area and ministry responsible for specific interventions, as well as - where appropriate for disaster response - with the corresponding sectoral working groups coordinated by UN OCHA in partnership with the Haitian Directorate for Civil Protection. We also pledge to involve local community members and civil society into the design, execution, and evaluation of projects that affect or have the potential to affect them to the extent possible.

INCLUSIVITY

We pledge to be inclusive, to carry out our work in a way that prevents discrimination against historically disempowered groups such as women, sexual minorities, disabled persons and impoverished people, and to follow practices that systematically integrate members of disempowered groups into decisions about our initiatives.

REINFORCE CAPACITY

We pledge to reinforce Haitian capacity, prioritize and, to the extent practicable, invest in local resources for procurement and employment. In so doing, we commit to ensuring that salaries for Haitians are sufficient to constitute a living wage commensurate with their skills or relevant knowledge.

SUPPORT THE PUBLIC GOOD

We pledge to support the public good, providing aid that sustainably reinforces public structures and services, including roads, water, electricity, schools, and communication systems.

LONG-TERM

We pledge to address the long-term, to be accountable to existing sustainable development efforts and have a plan to expedite the emergency phase and move into the recovery and rebuilding phases. As such we commit to sharing knowledge and any necessary tools with the affected population to enable local ownership of any ongoing activities.

Above all, we pledge to hold ourselves accountable, and invite groups in Haiti, especially the communities in which we work, to hold us accountable. We commit to respond to all local queries about our work.