



**Anticipating
the future**

Children and young people's
voices in Haiti's Post Disaster
Needs Assessment (PDNA)

Plan is one of the largest child-centred community development organisations in the world; with no religious or political affiliations. Through our programme work in 69 countries, Plan seeks to help children and their families in the poorest countries to break the cycle of poverty and ensure the realization of child rights.

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With thanks to the Haitian children and young people who enthusiastically offered their views about the future of their country.

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1. Introduction

On January 12, 2010, a 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti, causing large scale and widespread damages. An estimated 222,570 people were reported killed and 310,928 injured. Over 1.5 million people are affected and presently displaced from their homes.

On January 25, the government of Haiti requested the international community's support to conduct a Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA). The PDNA took place over a period of one month when over 250 international and local technical experts gathered and analysed information of damages and short and longer-term needs and priorities. It provided a mechanism to facilitate planning to support Haiti's transition from relief to longer term development. According to the PDNA's findings, the earthquake's financial damage is estimated at USD\$7.7 billion. The reconstruction costs are an estimated USD \$ 11.5 billion.

Children and youth represent more than half of the population affected by the January 12th earthquake. Children and youth are, on the one hand, among the most vulnerable groups affected by the disaster, yet on the other hand many of them have already mobilized to support their communities in the response and taken on strong leadership roles. Despite this, their voices, needs and priorities have yet to be adequately listened to or taken into consideration.

For this reason, Plan International, in partnership with UNICEF, initiated a consultation process with close to 1,000 children and youth throughout Haiti, to hear their ideas and priorities for the country's reconstruction. Their views were gathered with the purpose of feeding into the PDNA. Local facilitators experienced in working with children and youth conducted 54 focus group consultations in nine departments (West, Artibonite, South-East, North, Grande Anse, Nippes, North-West and North-East, and the South).

This document presents key findings from the consultations with the children and youth.

Current situation

Two months after the earthquake:

- The majority of the population continues to sleep on the streets or in provisional camps. Many houses are damaged and people are fearful of moving back due to aftershocks.
- Around a quarter of a million people are living in temporary shelters. There are increasing concerns about the rains which have begun in affected areas and their implications for families living in inadequate shelters. Landslides are also a concern. The poor sanitation in camps and the risks of diarrhoeal and vector-transmitted disease - including dengue and malaria - is another major concern.
- Many children and adults have sustained multiple fractures of the lower limb, hip and spine and more than 4000 amputations have been performed. This will mean an increased number of people living with physical disability as well as the associated psychosocial impact. Realisation of the rights of the disabled and their psychosocial recovery represent a daunting task.
- Distribution of food, water and non-food items has been scaled up and the health response is now shifting from surgical interventions to primary health care interventions.
- Many government institutions were destroyed by the earthquake and many staff are missing.

1. Introduction

Specific impact on children and youth.

Separated and unaccompanied children and those who have lost parents in the disaster are particularly vulnerable to the psychological impact of the disaster, to illness and under-nutrition, to abduction, trafficking and sexual abuse and violence. Similarly the very young are at particular risk of under-nutrition and prolonged psychosocial problems (particularly as their care-givers have also been so profoundly impacted) and there are concerns regarding the long-term impact of the disaster on their integral development. All children have had their lives disrupted and their daily routine, including their ability to go to school, shattered.

The effects of the earthquake on children, their caregivers and communities will continue for months to years during the extended process of recovery, reconstruction and restoration. The long-term recovery will vary significantly due to the complex interaction of psychological, social, cultural, political, and economic factors.

It must also be recognised that the scale of the destruction and loss of life in Port au Prince and surrounding towns means that this is a national disaster that will impact on the lives and well-being of the entire population over the coming months and years. There has already been a mass exodus from the city as people flee to their rural areas of origin. The arrival of large numbers of displaced children and adults in other parts of the country will unquestionably place a major strain on services, host families and communities and will need to be factored into the planning at the national level.

Meanwhile, vulnerability to new emergencies is extremely high; the rainy season has started and the hurricane season is not far behind. More tremors or even earthquakes are highly likely to occur. The effect of continuing tremors on the population is significant.

At the same time, there is increasing recognition that while the disaster initially impacted on the whole population of affected zones, it will be the children, women, the poor and those from rural areas who in the long-term will bear the greatest impact from the earthquake and who will take the longest to recover. It is these same groups who were already growing up and living under extremely difficult situations prior to the earthquake.

2. Impact of the earthquake on children and youth

The consultations reveal that children and youth in all nine departments are experiencing trauma and fear. Most children and youth show signs of being traumatised by witnessing the numerous deaths, injuries and disabilities caused by the earthquake.

In this regard, an eight year old girl from Cap Haitien gave the following testimony:

“I have headaches. The house where we lived in Port-au-Prince collapsed as my father died inside. And so did a pregnant women and my younger brother. . A cousin of mine was also inside the house. I never heard from her again.”

A 17 year old girl from Jacmel stated that her greatest pain was that

“several people were unassisted under the rubble while injured people were covered by flies at the hospital.”

The consultations with children brought to light symptoms of stress and trauma including lack of sleep and great anxiety. A young boy in the 5-10 age group in the North declared,

“Any noise I hear, I think of the earthquake.”

Another 8 year old in the North stated,

“I can't sleep at home. Seventeen of my friends were killed.”



2. Impact of the earthquake on children and youth

The vast majority of the families are suffering due to the loss of a close person and / or the loss of personal properties and real assets. A 12 year old girl from the Cap Haitien expressed:

“Had I been in Port-au-Prince, I should have died. In the place where I used to spend my holidays all my cousins who were inside the house at that moment are dead.”

A young man of 24 now resettled in Artibonite from Port-au-Prince said,

“I thought it was the end of the world, I saw too many corpses.”

The consultation revealed the fact that many families still lack access to basic provisions within the relief assistance – including shelter and child protection.

“If I had the chance to ask for 3 things, I would ask for tents because my family and I, we don't have anywhere to sleep. We are 5 in the family. Then, I would ask to take care of children, I mean, to protect them without discrimination. And finally, I would ask people to continue to help us, we need support at every level.” 16 year old boy in the Western department

A 15 year old boy in Croix des Bouquets declared:

“At the moment of the earthquake, I was at home, I felt the earth shaking and I was not even sure it was an earthquake. My house cracked, we were afraid of staying there. Now my family and I are staying here (Rony Collin Park temporary camp). Life here is not as hard as in other places, we've had some help. However, we need water, clothes and shoes.”

Children and youth shared their frustrations with the lack of capacity in the country and particularly at the community level to respond to the earthquake, and shared their concerns of not being able to face other risks such as floods. Those living in tents said these will not withstand the flooding expected between May and November. Families need temporary shelters that are more solid to face the adverse weather conditions.

A girl in the 17-24 age group said:

“When the earthquake came, I thought it was the collapse of the earth. I have seen people with broken arms and legs without any chance of being assisted. I think there were so many victims because we were not prepared to face that kind of disaster. I think it is important to provide psychosocial support to young people and to help the people be better prepared.”

3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

The following section provides an analysis of the feedback obtained during the consultation with children and youth on the four priority areas of the PDNA: social sectors, infrastructure, production sectors, governance and security. During the consultations children shared their perceptions of the earthquake's impact on their lives as well as their vision for the future of their country.

a. PDNA Sector: Social Sectors

Education

Prior to the earthquake, access to quality education was already a major challenge with facilities in poor conditions, inadequately staffed and user fees beyond most families' affordability. Due to the earthquake, these services have been further affected not only within the Port of Prince vicinity but throughout the country.

It is estimated that 5,000 schools were damaged or destroyed (50 to 95% of the schools in the affected areas). Staffing is also a major concern as more than 300 teachers were killed during the disaster. Although the Ministry of Education has called for the reopening of schools on the 1st of April 2010, the present challenges call into question the country's capacity to put children back to school. Yet children urge for the returning to classes because they can help bring a sense of normality to their lives and provide the psychosocial support that they need.

“When the earthquake occurred, I was in the school room. I thought the building was collapsing. I fell down the stairs and I was rescued down there. Thank God, I was not seriously injured. Since then, I stay at home, doing nothing. I would really like schools to be rebuilt.” Young girl (Beudet/West)

A young girl from Jacmel of the 5-10 group shared,

“I want to go back to school to be with my friends and my teacher and learn new things.”

“We found help, food and water, but my biggest problem is that we cannot attend school. I really wish schools will reopen soon, I have stayed at home, doing nothing, I can't bear it anymore.” 16 year old girl (Beudet / West)

A nine year old girl from Meyer/West declared,

“After the earthquake, I have stayed at home, I play with children, I do some housework. I feel a bit sad. My school is damaged so we cannot study there.”

Schools in the departments not affected by the earthquake do not have the capacity to enrol the large number of children who have migrated to live with extended families in rural areas. Furthermore, many children and staff fear being in concrete buildings due to the risk of aftershocks and flooding which present a real threat. Heavy rains in February caused the collapse of one school in Cap Haitien killing four students.

Access to temporary schools must be prioritised so that displaced children can benefit from a safe, positive learning environment, which in turn can contribute to preventing risks of growing social unrest and delinquency among young men and provide psychosocial support to those in need.

3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

“Since then, we don't go to school, but we have received some training here.” 12 year old boy living in a camp in the West

Effective temporary and non-formal education programmes at camps are an important intervention to help children maintain the literacy level acquired at school; take part in social and leisure activities; receive information on children's rights and protection; and be prepared when formal education is restored.

For their vision of a new Haiti, children dream of education that is available for all — where user fees no longer pose a barrier to most and where quality education is reflected in curricula and in school premises. According to children, primary education and higher level education including university must be a priority for the government of Haiti.

“I dream of a new Haiti, where children go to school. In my case, I have dreamed another Haiti where I go back to school and meet my friends and teachers. I miss them so much, I think reopening the classes with new training is what we most need right now.” A 9 year old girl (Meyer / Western)

Improved and equitable access is a common concern, with calls from children and youth for each department to be provided with higher learning facilities.

A young boy aged 17 from Port-de-Paix said:

“If there was a university in Port-de-Paix, my brother and my sister who studied in Port-au-Prince would not be dead.”

In children's eyes, Haiti must be a country where all children are educated, can access information which affects their lives and future choices of livelihoods. A large number of children shared the vision of a Haiti where children are informed and grow up to be active citizens, where education caters to all needs (from early childhood to special needs), and where there are alternatives to universities. They wish for a country where education is respected as a right for all children and universal education is achieved throughout the country.

A 19 year old adolescent male from Fort Liberte highlighted the need to accommodate the increase in number of students now living in rural areas:

“The State must establish additional schools for students coming from Port-au-Prince, universities in other departments and also vocational centres.”

Schools should be adapted to the needs of children with disabilities and built to seismic safety standards. A girl in the 17-24 age group in the department of the West provided the following testimony:

“At the time of the earthquake, I thought that was the Apocalypse. I lost an uncle who was killed under the rubble. I wish this were the moment of change in Haiti. We must create jobs for young people. We have to build more schools. I would like to live in a better Haiti, where the Government takes on its responsibilities towards young people and children because they are the future of this country. I would like classes to reopen with good and appropriate education to motivate children to improve their work and be safe at school.”

3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

Children shared the value of education for their future and their employment opportunities:

"I wish the reopening of classes because it is only thanks to schooling that one may become a grown-up tomorrow." A 12 year old girl (Snowshoeing / Southeast)

"My greatest dream is to become a teacher to transmit the training I have received to coming generations." 16 year old male, Department of the West.

Children have also called for changes to the education curriculum so they can learn about reducing risks of future disasters. They spoke about the need for resilient school structures. A nine year old boy in Jacmel, in the South-East said,

"Instead of doing so much math, it would be better to teach on real events and disasters like the earthquake."

A 16 year old boy from the West expressed that:

"I'm in year 7 AF; I sincerely hope to go back to school because I think one is nothing in life without knowledge. Before the event of January 12, I received no training, no information on natural disasters, not even at school. So I think that we have to better prepare for potential earthquakes, avoiding uncontrolled construction, using suitable materials and building to the standards."

Many groups debated the need to promote safer schools and disaster risk reduction in education. They discussed the need to teach children how to protect themselves against floods and earthquakes and also violence and abuse. Young people wanted to be trained in first aid services so they would know what to do and how to help others in case of disasters. A 24 year old youth from Port-au-Prince, currently in Fort Liberty, said,

"The state must train all citizens in the country on procedures in case of natural disaster."

"In the new Haiti, my advice for the government is to implement information units in schools on how to prevent disasters, how to behave during and after a disaster." Female youth from the South-East.

Another female youth from the West concurred:

"In the new Haiti, the youth must take responsibility. We must teach younger children how to cope with natural disasters; many people died because of ignorance."

3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

Health

A very high number of health units were destroyed and demand for care is beyond the capacity of the existing services. Access to healthcare services for children and their families is limited, especially regarding prevention, treatment, care and support for children and adults living with HIV.

The needs are pressing as many children and adults have undergone serious psychological trauma and are still shell-shocked. With limited support to address this need, longer term problems are set to arise affecting their capacity to resume ordinary activities.

People living at risk before the disaster have become more vulnerable, due in part to the disruption in supply of some drugs and services following the earthquake. People living with HIV/AIDS are facing challenges to maintain antiretroviral drugs courses. In addition, distribution of contraceptives and condoms is not being prioritised. This may increase the risk of new cases of sexual transmitted diseases and the rate of teenage pregnancy.

The number of children and adults in need of hospitalisation for physical and psychological reasons overwhelms the capacity of the hospitals in operation. Families who have lost everything lack the necessary resources to purchase increasingly expensive and less available medicines.

Pregnant and breast-feeding women also lack appropriate services to address their needs. Damaged hospitals have relocated children and adult patients to tent facilities, vulnerable to the risks of the approaching rainy season. In addition, a large number of people underwent limb amputations and require specialised physiotherapy centres or prosthesis services. During a focus group discussion in Croix des Bouquets a boy in the 5 to 10 age group illustrated the needs of disabled people through a drawing of a disabled man (see picture below).



3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

The nutritional situation of children has become increasingly alarming due to escalating prices of basic products, the increase in number of extended family members to feed due to internal migration of displaced people and the scarcity of some basic products. Furthermore, food aid is only reaching families in directly affected departments, while the departments that are now hosting displaced people are not being supported with food assistance.

In addition, the quality of drinking water represents a major concern for children in the North-East and West departments, with increasing cases of diarrhoea, typhoid and abdominal pain. The situation is likely to get much worse during the rainy season as mosquitoes create a higher risk of malaria and other vector-transmitted diseases.

For their vision of a new Haiti the children emphasised the need for health centres and hospitals to be better equipped and have qualified staff to better cater to everyone's needs. They should also offer more equitable access, especially for the most vulnerable. They discussed how health facilities should provide patients with information about malaria and typhoid prevention, hygiene and sanitation, about sexual and reproductive health and contraception. They also suggested a greater need to engage the media in public health campaigns.

“I think the Haitian government must hear the voices of children, help the children, particularly homeless children, creating shelters for children, building hospitals so that children can receive the health care services they need.” 17 year old girl from Beudet / West



3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

b. PDNA Sector: Infrastructure

Transportation

Transportation was a key challenge for Haiti even prior to the earthquake, with limited roads and services reflecting the country's lack of a common transportation policy. The January 12th earthquake aggravated the already dire situation. Public access to local transport is at the mercy of private bus drivers who decide how much they charge each passenger. High rates of traffic accidents due to overloading, ignoring traffic rules and poor roads are now a higher risk since the earthquake and the increase in traffic with heavy trucks needed for aid distribution and security. The few roads available are in a regrettable state and occupied by foreign military forces' trucks for humanitarian aid distribution. The route connecting Jacmel and Port-au-Prince, despite repairs by aid agencies, remains very dangerous due to risk of landslides. A large section of this road was damaged by the earthquake.

In February, during heavy rains, the route connecting Cayes and Port-au-Prince was flooded on the South coast of the country. The floods caused the loss of 15 lives including five people who were swept away in their car. During the consultation, children stressed the need for improving roads and transportation access.

“Roads must be more solid to endure landslides,”

said a boy taking part in the 10 to 17 age group in Jacmel.

“We need transportation and to build more bridges to connect the island. We need more airports so that people can go to other towns, apart from Port-au-Prince,”

underlined a girl from the 10 to 16 age group.

Housing

Most of the families and children in affected areas cannot enter their damaged houses. A large number of houses are totally destroyed and families remain in tents or makeshift shelters lacking the minimum hygiene and security conditions for both parents and children, and particularly for young girls. Most camps remain without electricity, drinking water and toilets, and a large number of these are in flood prone areas. Women and girls have complained of the lack of gender segregated latrine in camp sites, which infringes their privacy and safety. Moreover, many people have abandoned their concrete houses, even when the buildings are deemed safe, due to the fear of a new earthquake.

Electricity is a scarce commodity country-wide. Only a selected number of urban areas benefit from a few hours of electricity per day. Inadequate lighting of public spaces and within camp settings constitutes a high risk for children and their families.

Children also identified their limited access to new technologies and the importance of addressing this in the long term planning.

“We have to think about technology. For the sake of the country's development we have to prioritise education and health but also technology because nowadays, technology is the key to development in more advanced countries,”

declared a young boy in the 10 to 16 age group.

3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

For their vision of a new Haiti children discussed the need for more recreational areas calling on the reconstruction process to ensure parks and recreational areas (such as football fields) were included, as well as centres for children with special needs, and that all public buildings (schools, hospitals etc.) must be accessible for all social groups and specially adapted for the growing number of people with disabilities following the earthquake.

Children shared their views that the country needs to be decentralised and pointed out that Port-au-Prince should no longer benefit from all economic and political advantages.

“Reconstruction should not only apply to Port-au-Prince, because if only Port-au-Prince is rebuilt, people in the rest of the towns will be soon leaving to Port-au-Prince and shanty towns will grow and grow. We need schools, universities, industries in towns so that people can stay in their original towns.”

stated a boy in the 17 to 24 age group.

A 22 year old male youth living with a disability from Fort Liberty stated his vision on the country's development:

“We want a beautiful Haiti, where the state cares for the well-being of young people, finally organizes decentralization and where each department has its own university.”

Discussions also centred on the need for the State to better monitor construction and establish building code standards. They suggested that public buildings (schools, hospitals, universities) must be constructed using iron or wood – so that they are more resilient to earthquakes. They felt that the State must ensure that public houses and those built for displaced families and families in camps are built to seismic standards and on suitable land. In addition, they discussed the need for the State to ensure better protection of natural resources. A young woman aged 24 years from Port-au-Prince said:

“Streets must be cleaned and the country must go back to what it was before. Families must be sensitised on protecting our forestation which will help improve security, the quality of drinking water must be improved and water must be accessible to all, especially children and families in vulnerable situations.”

A major issue discussed was that of pollution and waste management, to help reduce the vulnerability to floods. Children repeatedly referred to the need for better garbage disposal as well as to the need to plant trees and enjoy a greener environment. They felt that the State should promote behavioural change and support improved environmental management, as well as promote and facilitate the clearing of drainage canals and river banks.

“As a personal contribution to the reconstruction process, I could participate in cleaning activities in my village – there is so much garbage everywhere.” A 13 year old girl from Raquette/ South-East.

Children discussed how modern communication technologies could be better utilised to disseminate information on disaster preparedness and children's protection. In February, six awareness raising messages in Creole addressing child protection and violence, exploitation and abuse prevention were sent by SMS to over 1 million cell phone holders and broadcast on the radio throughout the country. Some youth referred to these messages as a good strategy to raise public awareness.



3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

c. PDNA Sector: Production Sectors

Prior to the earthquake, the local production sector was characterised as precarious and insufficient to feed the whole population of Haiti. The scarcity in the country's production sector demands a high rate of imports for food produce and other commodities. Despite the capacity of Artibonite Valley to provide the entire population with rice, Haiti imports thousands of tones every year. A child in the 10 to 16 age group said:

“I would like to see industrial progress in my country, so we can become independent, produce so that we no longer have to import, improve our finances, fly with our own wings and be independent from the other countries.”

Farmers must rely on the rainy season for seeding and harvest which serve primarily as subsistence agriculture. Food aid and, in particular, the Food for Work programme provide additional challenges to promote the national production sector and boost the country's economy. In addition, significant losses are expected in the national agricultural sector due to the clearing of farming land to set up temporary camps and provisional shelter.

Since the earthquake, all commercial activities are in sharp decline. Most parents have lost their livelihoods and currently have no means of generating income. Products have become increasingly scarce and expensive. In addition, the flooding in the southern area of the country in February has destroyed the houses of several families in Les Cayes and destroyed the business of several entrepreneurs who lost their goods when the local market was swamped by roof-high raging waters.

With employment scarcity and livelihood losses by heads of households, frustrations, stress and desperation to maintain their family can unfortunately turn into violence and abuse particularly towards children. A 21 year old young woman in the North made the following statement:

“My father is a teacher and we live on his salary, Now we are in trouble with schools closed down, I want things to change and this should not remain the way it is now.”

The tourism industry is at a standstill, which in the past thrived on local tourism during local festivals (including Mardi Gras which this year passed by unnoticed).

The severity of the challenges facing families in terms of economic security is posing a great risk to children's rights and their wellbeing – with lower food intake, inadequate housing, disruptions to their education and poor health care. In addition, children are now more vulnerable to child trafficking with increased cases reported across the border with the Dominican Republic. Lack of paid work is forcing a growing number of young women into the sex trade activities in exchange for money, food, and protection.

For their vision of a new Haiti children and youth shared the need for creation of employment opportunities for their parents and youth and support in increase farming production. Young people repeatedly shared their desire to work for the welfare of their country. An 18 year old girl in the West said,

“Children and young people must find the necessary psychosocial support and must participate in rebuilding the country to avoid stress. We want to work, we want jobs.”

They also discussed how young people and children can play a role in promoting the revival of Haitian culture through tradecrafts and skills learning in arts, music, culture and painting.

Many young people shared their hope to contribute to the reconstruction work and benefitting from “cash for work” programmes, as well as opportunities in their camp settings to take on roles as temporary teachers and community facilitators.

3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

d. PDNA Sector: Governance and Security

The children noted a fresh upsurge of insecurity in communities following the earthquake. In the Northeast, cases of kidnapped children were reported after the earthquake. Thievery is increasing with limited police action. In addition, the risk of violence, abuse and trafficking is very high in temporary camps. Families are concerned and feel exposed as they are forced to sleep outside their houses without any security. The tents, available to many but not all, do not provide safety and protection from floods expected for the rainy season.

The judicial system is further weakened. Courts are closed since the earthquake in the West department and other parts of the country including the country's only Child Court which is located in Port-au-Prince.

Special measures are required to protect most vulnerable children from kidnapping, trafficking, violence and abuse, especially separated and unaccompanied children. In addition, girls and young women are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, and increased cases of sexual violence and survival sex are being reported in camp shelters. The earthquake's impact has damaged many of the community protection mechanisms and further weakened police and judicial systems.

Losses caused by the earthquake and recent floods, also included the loss of identity documents, and many children have no birth certificates, an important document to protect children against child trafficking, early marriage, and child labour. In addition, social protection services lack a public toll-free hotline (e.g. Child Helpline) which provide children at risk the opportunity to report incidents as well as access child protection information and services.

The country's common Restavek practice of sending young children to towns to work as domestic workers – which poses a violation to children's rights to protection and development – is now a greater risk to the increase in numbers of vulnerable children. Given the current situation of widespread needs, this harmful practice will be increasingly reinforced as an alternative negative coping strategy by affected families.

Environmental Management:

The lack of appropriate waste disposal public services means garbage is scattering throughout the cities and gathering in camp settings providing another risk of diseases – endangering in particular the health of children. Although Haiti has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the commitments made at 2002 UNGASS which guarantee all children the right to live in a healthy environment and “A Haiti Fit for Children” – environmental management is presently not a priority concern.

Charcoal is the main source of energy for the people of Haiti. This is a key cause of the high rate of deforestation which in turn is increasing risks of landslides and floods. The vegetation covers less than 3 percent of the country's surface. Local governments do not enforce any regulations on protection of forest coverage or control the cutting of trees. The future of coming generations is being jeopardised through poor environmental management and limited efforts to promote the protection of the country's natural resources.

3. Children and youth's input into the PDNA

For their vision of a new Haiti the children discussed the role of the central government in the country reconstruction process:

“I wish the National Palace be rebuilt following the model of the former monument so that President Préval can find a place to work in the reconstruction of our country,”

9 year old girl, Cap Haitien

“The state must develop a strong team to work on the reconstruction programme.”

23 year old young man, Fort Liberty

Children and young people also discussed challenging issues related to child protection. Concerning this issue, a 12 year old girl from Fort Liberté shared,

“I can no longer sleep comfortably because someone came to sleep with me on my bed.”

A girl aged 17 from Beudet, in the West, said:

“After the earthquake, I slept outside the house, but because of bandits and thieves, we had to go back inside the house.”

They expressed their view that the state and their community networks need to play a greater role in the protection of children. They shared strong views that children must be protected against violence, abuse, prostitution and crime and that discrimination among children must be eliminated.

Nathalie, a 19 year old adolescent girl from the West exclaimed,

“Everyone must know that in the new Haiti, there should be no exclusion, we must do and accept what is good. Children's rights must be respected and above all, we must integrate disabled people according to their abilities to contribute to the new Haiti. We need the strength of the whole nation to make the new Haiti possible.”

A girl in the 17-24 group added:

“I think it is important to provide psychosocial support to young people. Also, the Haitian state must guarantee the rights of all citizens, in particular those of children, care for street children and combat child prostitution.”

In regards to strengthening security, they called on the police force to be better monitored; the army to be better organized so all can better adhere to the rule of law.

They felt that children and young people must play an active role in improving local governance and granted more say as the leaders of tomorrow.

4. Children and young people's overall priorities for the PDNA

Children and young people in the three age groups were asked to define and prioritise their most urgent needs. Below are the findings by department:

Department	Age/Gender priorities					
	5 – 10		11 – 16		17 – 24	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
West	School Reforestation Food Housing	School Food Cleanliness Leisure Security Housing	Reforestation Electricity Health Modern houses Youth supervision	Reconstruction Inclusion Suitable distribution of aid Cleaning Reforestation No poverty	Reopening of schools Equitable distribution of aid Decentralisation	Housing School Drinking water Employment Security Transport
Artibonite	Civics Health Disaster risk prevention	Sewerage cleaning out Agriculture Disaster risk prevention	Civics Communication Disaster risk prevention	Civics Communication Disaster risk prevention	Universities First-aid training Town cleaning-up Disaster risk prevention	Civics Communication Disaster risk prevention Cleaning out Bridges
South-East	Training on disasters Food School	Construction Reforestation activities Health Drinking water	Free schooling Construction Decentralisation	Construction Employment Improved healthcare	Construction Employment Security Roads	School Construction Health River cleaning out
North	School Hospital Electricity Housing	Food Leisure, toys Normal country Security Sanitation Training on disasters	Decentralisation Professional schools Internet State school Justice	Country reconstruction Community School Housing Participation	Training on disaster management Decentralisation Roads	Education Inclusion Universities Employment Modern housing project
Grande Anse	Cleanliness School Sports courts	Training on children's rights Employment Security	Health Youth training Sanitation	Electricity Internet Leisure Decentralisation Appropriate housing	University Employment Decentralisation Training on disasters for population in general	University Decentralisation Communication Employment Sanitation
Nippes	Giving up concrete houses Children protection Health	Schools Leisure Housing Respect for children's rights	New building regulation Transport	Sanitation Health Roads Inclusion	Access to the Internet Professional schools University Roads	Health Electricity New communication technologies Employment

4. Children and young people’s overall priorities for the PDNA

Department	Age/Gender priorities					
	5 – 10		11 – 16		17 – 24	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
North-West	Leisure Health Hygiene Disaster protection	School Hospital Football fields Housing	Roads Transport Education Sanitation	School Hospital University Electricity	Reforestation Information Internet Study grants	Reconstruction Prevention Decentralisation Roads Professional training Employment
North-East	Food School Health	Food School Agriculture Housing	Security Food School Irrigation	Professional training Security Reforestation Participation	Children’s rights Women’s rights Support to quake victims Decentralisation of powers and services	Justice Decentralisation Employment Health University
South	Country reconstruction School	Training on children’s rights Health Environment	Library Communication Youth leisure Church	Youth training Health Housing	Internet Flooding prevention Professional training	Universities Electricity Employment

The table above illustrates some of the different needs and perceptions of children and youth based on their age group and gender. Boys in the 5-10 age group have prioritised education (schools), health, the country’s reconstruction and protection against disasters, while girls prioritised children’s rights, security, leisure, school, agriculture, environment and housing. Across all age groups, among the many priorities, education was widely selected and illustrates the importance of ensuring rapid educational renewal which benefits all age groups – including Early Childhood Care and Development as well as improved access to higher education for youth (see below).

Boys in the 11-16 age group prioritised decentralisation, training on disasters, schools and leisure, while girls chose participation, security, health and education. Here again, education was unanimously selected and as in the younger group, girls gave more emphasis to the issue of security compared to their male counterparts – demonstrating their concerns for greater vulnerability to gender based violence and other child protection risks.

In the older group, 17-24 year old, boys prioritised university, electricity, internet and professional training while girls prioritised employment, university and decentralisation. The unanimous concern with university and employment illustrates their interest in accessing opportunities for future learning and employment prospects and the present lack of opportunities available reflected in the country’s high unemployment rates. In addition, they discussed the challenges of access to university education which is not available at the department level with youth in the countryside having to move to Port-au-Prince to fulfil higher education.



5. Participation in Haiti's long term development

The preamble to the Haitian Constitution of March 29, 1987 states its objective as: "To establish a system of government based on fundamental freedoms and the respect for human rights, social peace, economic equity, dialogue and the participation of all population in major decisions affecting the national life, through effective decentralisation." Yet, nearly twenty-five years after the adoption of the fundamental charter, participation in decision making remains an elusive concept.

The country's population at large, including its largest group which consists of children and young people, have been prevented from taking part in decisions concerning the nation's development and local governance. Yet while ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Haitian State committed to undertake every possible measure to ensure the implementation of the right of children to participation, as recognised by Article 12 of the Convention. An 11 year old boy at Fort Liberty, in the North East, complained about this situation:

"I'm not saying anything because a child's words count for nothing."

However, other children and young people throughout the 54 focus groups shared their willingness to participate in any recovery activity related to improving their lives and their futures. The following testimonies express their commitments as active citizens to partake in the development and improved outcomes for their country.

"I want a different Haiti where we, the youth, have a chance to participate with the government; we can be part of the government and of all activities in the country. In the past, youth had been completely excluded; we need a new strategy or approach to achieve this end." Boy in age group 11-16, Croix des Bouquets

"I'm sure we'll have a better Haiti with the participation of youth and children. Then, Haiti would become a beautiful country. Haiti cannot be rebuilt without the participation of children and youth, we are Haiti's present, we will be Haiti's future." Girl in age group 11-16yrs, Croix des Bouquets

"I want that a chance is given to young people because young people can change Haiti if they are given the opportunity." Boy age group 11-16, Jacmel

"After the earthquake, I have seen a deprived youth. The country had assumed a thinking mind on behalf of Haitian youth. Because in my vision, I saw there was no future for the youth. We need to make men act consciously to facilitate equal distribution of things and to help every citizen according to his needs. My advice would be to decentralize the country, think of the whole country and rebuild the country consciously. Awareness is crucial to achieve a better distribution of international aid so it can benefit those most in need." 22 year old male, Cyvadier / South-East

5. Participation in Haiti's long term development

“First, the focus group was a very good activity; everyone was involved and conscientious. Everyone had the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions freely. About January 12, I think everyone has his or her own way to live, understand and explain this event. But, there is still confusion and fear among people. They are traumatized and desperate. Now, we must reconsider, give room for everyone, listen to every person with positive ideas in the context of the reconstruction.” 18 year old female, Department of the West

“The focus group is a very good initiative. It helps us express ourselves on the impact of the disaster on our community. I was doing the laundry at the time of the earthquake. I lost my uncle in Petit-Goave. In the new Haiti, I ask all the Haitian people for consciousness and positive participation in the reconstruction. I hope the Government will assume its responsibilities. Children should also be integrated, because they have great potential, they are important for the process. I ask the Haitian government to take all appropriate measures for natural disaster prevention.” Female, 17-24 age group, Department of the West

“I fully agree with the [Children's Voices in the PDNA] initiative. Children participated actively. There are many different but enriching opinions. They asked the Haitian State to better prepare and inform the population to cope with future natural disasters. Training in disaster prevention should also be included in the curriculum of primary education., I hope the voice of children is taken into account in the PDNA.” 22 year old young man, Department of the West

“In the immediate time, I think we should build temporary shelters, distribute food aid, work to build a positive image of the country, so that Haiti becomes the Haiti we once knew.” 22 year old female, Cyvadier / South-East

Throughout the discussions, children and youth prioritised the need for the State to allow and encourage the participation of all children and youth, including those with disabilities, in all activities that affect their lives. They also shared their interest for children and youth to participate in activities to support the reforestation of the country. And they felt that children and young people can have a greater role in helping inform others about public safety policies and about how to protect themselves and be able to better prepare to respond to disasters.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

The PDNA consultations provided an opportunity for a large number of children and youth to discuss the impact of the earthquake on their individual lives, what they needed most in the recovery process; and to share their hopes and dreams for the future of their country. Results from the children-centred PDNA show that in the long-term, children are enthusiastic to be involved in the rebuilding of their country, and want to take part in the work being set out towards a prosperous future for Haiti. In the immediate future, the focus groups revealed that children want to get back to school as soon as possible, and also to be better prepared to face future risks (such as floods, landslides and other aftershocks). They also shared their concerns for the protection of children from all forms of violence and discrimination. Haiti's children and young people want to have a say in how the reconstruction plans are decided, monitored and accounted for. Beyond victims of the January 12th earthquake, children and young people in Haiti are ready to learn and take part in making theirs a better future.

Based on an analysis of the country's situation together with the feedback obtained from the children and youth through the consultation process, it is imperative that Haiti's new development strategy in the post-earthquake period ensures the country is fit for all children and youth. It must respect their priorities, hopes and rights. The following areas must be addressed as priorities in the implementation and the monitoring of the country's reconstruction and long term development plans:

Participation

The right of all children and youth to participate in all matters affecting them should be prioritised. Their voices must be listened to as resourceful young citizens capable to contribute to the building of a better future for all. Participation should be central, both in reconstruction planning and implementation and in reshaping the country's governance decision-making systems at all levels. Children's participation should be encouraged in planning and monitoring and evaluation and other accountability mechanisms of the Long Term Development Plans. Children and young people have proven themselves in many countries to be effective, impartial and enthusiastic monitors of public spending, significantly improving delivery rates, promoting accountability and transparency and thus also reducing possibility for corrupt practices.



6. Conclusion and recommendations

Education

The highest priority must be given to children's and youth's right to education through the development of a free, inclusive and high quality education system, that guarantees opportunities for learning and development from early childhood through primary school age, adolescence and beyond (including technical/vocational training and university) where the State has the capacity to perform its normative and regulatory role for all education providers.

School activities over the short-term period is considered one of Haiti's priorities in recognition of the vitality of education to emergency response, reconstruction and long term development.

Disaster risk reduction must become an integral part of education curricula and all children and youth must be guaranteed a safe learning environment with building codes to be enforced in education system construction and ordinances to stipulate that disaster risk reduction is part of the governance plans of learning institutions. Furthermore, accessibility for children with disability must be included in construction plans for educational facilities. School construction should provide an opportunity for "green development" exploring opportunities for utilising solar energy and promoting school gardens and tree planting.

Protection

Children's right to protection against all form of violence must be realised by strengthening the capacity of the Haitian State including its child protection institutions, legal framework and judicial system. Prevention systems and policies to protect children from violence must also be given priority attention as well as the provision of quality psychosocial services for children affected by violence. Recognizing the particular risks and vulnerabilities to sexual violence facing girls and women post disaster, gender mainstreaming needs to be considered during all relevant planning and implementation processes.

The justice system must respond to the special needs of children in conflict with the law by addressing the following:

- Training of the National Police of Haiti (PNH) in children friendly approaches
- Creation of alternative court mechanisms for children
- Establishment of separate correctional facilities for boys and girls - as a matter of last resort
- Creation of rehabilitation programs for children in conflict with the law

All necessary measures must be taken to protect children from being trafficked and to comply with international standards for the protection of, and assistance to, separated and unaccompanied children.

It will be important to prioritise the protection of children from hazardous forms of child labour as outlined in the ILO Convention 182. Given the level of poverty within the Haitian community before the earthquakes, it must be ensured that those children working in non hazardous forms of labour are guaranteed their rights to protection, education, play and appropriate recompense.

Inclusion and Gender Equality

In all reconstruction planning and implementation, priority must be given to Haiti's most vulnerable children and youth and to those who have traditionally been excluded (working children, children in conditions of extreme poverty, street children, children with disability). In the new Haiti being rebuilt, the rights of all of Haiti's children should be guaranteed without discrimination and a gender equality approach must be utilized.



Annex 1: Country Background and situation analysis prior to the earthquake

For the past 50 years, Haiti has been experiencing a situation of increasing extreme poverty. It is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, ranked 149 in the UNDP's Human Development Index, with 76% of the population living on less than \$2 per day. Its GNP per capita is USD\$566. The country's population was estimated at more than 9 millions in 2009; of which 43% were under the age of 18, a total of 4 million children, and 20% are between 15 and 24 years old. In every respect, Haiti is a young country – its life expectancy is 61 years.

Haiti also has the greatest population density in the Western hemisphere according to the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Computing (IHSI in French, 2009), with a density of 352.32 inhabitants per km². Its primarily rural population (63%) is unevenly distributed throughout the country: approximately 37% in the Western department, 6% in the South-East department and 4% in the North-East department. Its urban population is experiencing an average annual growth rate of 4.5%.

Prior to the 12th of January 2010, the situation of children in Haiti included¹:

- **Extreme poverty** four in ten children lived in absolute poverty, and seven out of ten experienced at least one form of deprivation (food, health, education, water, sanitation, shelter, information). One in seven children could not reach the age of 7 and 22% of under 5 suffered malnutrition.
- **Violence of all types**, 46% of girls and women were victims of sexual violence.
- **Maternal mortality**, Haiti has a maternal mortality rate of 630/100,000, the highest in the Western Hemisphere.
- **Low levels of access to drinking water and adequate sanitation**. Only 51% of the rural population and 70% of the urban population had access to clean drinking water, while only 32% of the total population had access to adequate sanitation - 18% in rural areas.
- **Infectious diseases, including HIV and AIDS**, inadequate levels of access to prevention, care, treatment and support particularly for children (over 60,000 children were living with HIV prior to the earthquake). HIV prevalence (among the age group 15-49) was 2.2%; one of the highest rates outside Sub-Saharan Africa. The use of condoms was the lowest in the Western hemisphere and, in some regions, around 44% of girls had had a baby before the age of 20.
- **Low levels of access to quality education and the implications for children's integral development**. 50% of all Haitian children did not attend primary school, less than a quarter attended pre-school and 83% of all schools were non-public, many of which were poorly regulated and supervised. The national literacy rate is under 53%. Over half of the 20 year olds had not completed secondary school and near half of the youth in the labour market were unemployed.
- **Food insecurity**: Prior to the earthquake Haiti had to import 60% of its food requirements. The country had also been experiencing spiralling food prices.

¹ Data sources include UNDP's 2009 Human Development Report; UNICEF's 2007 State of the World Children and Plan International's Country Strategy Report for Haiti.

Annex 1: Country Background and situation analysis prior to the earthquake

In regards to the country's political framework on Children's Rights, Haiti has devoted remarkable efforts over the last eight years to strengthen the normative and institutional frameworks and policies favourable to children, aligning to its commitments as signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Several agreements were ratified at the legal level, including:

- The Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities;
- The Palermo Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its three Protocols, particularly the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons;
- The ILO Convention No 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment;
- The ILO Convention No 182 on the worst forms of child labour;

In addition, supportive laws have been passed including:

- Law of 24 April 2003 on the prohibition and elimination of all forms of abuse, ill-treatment, or inhuman treatment against children;
- Law of September 2001, which prohibits corporal punishment of children.

A number of Ministries are in charge of the implementation of the Rights of the Child, although there is no independent national commission for the monitoring of children's rights in place in Haiti. The Ministries of Social Affairs, Education, Health and Justice are respectively involved in the country's fulfilment of the realisation of child rights to survival, development and protection.

In addition, some public policies have been adopted such as the National Plan for the Protection of Vulnerable Children, developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, supported by UNICEF, which was officially launched in 2007. Over the same period, a national mechanism for child protection was strengthened by the establishment in 2003 of the Minor Protection Brigade (BPM in French) hosted within the National Police of Haiti (PNH in French). Overall most stakeholders believe that this institution could play a much stronger role in the protection of children at risk, in facilitating their recovery and transfer to the competent authority, at least in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince.

Despite some small advances, the actual state of children's rights in Haiti is largely worrying. Rule of law is seldom applied and a large proportion of children are exposed to different types of violence, including in schools and within their families. More than 500,000 school-age children do not attend school and nearly 200,000 are engaged in domestic work, many in conditions comparable to slavery. Haitian's social norm towards children is, in general, strongly influenced by patriarchal values that reduce children to the role of objects at their parents' service and without a say in matters that affect their lives. Such attitudes have an even greater impact on the rights of the girl-child, particularly in the rural environment, where they are often vulnerable to gender based violence, limited learning and development opportunities and exposed to other disempowering treatment from an early age in to their adulthood.

Disaster Vulnerability

In addition to the challenges facing its weak economy and its social and political spheres (including weak governance, high unemployment rate, population growth and violence), Haiti is also a country ranked highly vulnerable to natural hazards (UNISDR), including seasonal risks of floods, landslides, and droughts – as well as seismic risks of earthquakes and tsunamis. Its geographic vulnerability presents ongoing risks as it lies on two active seismic fault lines, one across the South Coast from Pétion Ville to the Southern peninsula and Tiburon, the other one in the North, from Tortuga Island across to the Northern border with the Dominican Republic.

Annex 2: The project's objectives and methodology

Plan International, in collaboration with UNICEF, aimed to ensure that children's rights were addressed in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment process, in particular, the achievement of article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Right of Child which stipulates the right of children to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

The general objective of the project was to ensure children and young people's needs and voices were reflected in the government's recovery and long term development plans, ensuring their participation as active citizens with a role to play in the formulation of plans being set for their country's recovery and long term development.

In particular, the project aimed to:

- Actively inform and raise children and young people's awareness of the PDNA process being conducted by the government
- Ensure children and young people's needs and voices were listened to and prioritized
- Ensure the government and the international community addressed children and young people's needs as a priority in the reconstruction framework.
- Promote commitment by the international community to support the well being of Haiti's children and future generations

The project sought to ensure that children and youth, once informed of the PDNA process, had the opportunity to input into its assessment and strategic planning process, including the opportunity to share ideas for mechanisms of accountability and monitoring and evaluation.

The project sought to include discussions of the root causes of vulnerability and to ensure a holistic approach to the country's risk profile – including hazards such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, as well as social risks such as child trafficking, child protection and violence and abuse.

For this purpose, a children-friendly methodology was developed to be applied through a series of focus group discussions. To ensure disaggregation of data based on gender and age, separate focus groups were held with boys and girls and these groups were further subdivided by age (5-10 yrs, 11-16 yrs, 17-24 yrs). A total of 54 focus group discussions were held covering nine departments of the country ensuring areas both directly and indirectly affected by the disaster had the opportunity to share their views for the future of Haiti.

Annex 2: The project's objectives and methodology

Children's participation in the focus groups was distributed as follows:

Department	Age/gender						SUBTOTAL
	5 – 10		11 – 16		17 – 24		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
West	30	30	42	15	15	15	147
Artibonite	15	15	15	15	15	15	90
South-East	16	19	15	19	16	19	104
North	14	14	12	10		13	63
Grande Anse	15	15	15	15	15	15	90
Nippes	15	15	15	15	15	15	90
North-West	12	15	15	15	15	15	87
North-East	27	28	27	26	29	27	164
South	15	15	15	15	15	15	90
TOTAL	159	166	171	145	135	149	925

During the focus group discussions, children and young people were asked questions around four broad areas: the impact of the January 2010 earthquake on their lives and that of their communities; their views regarding their present situations and future risks they may face; their visions for the reconstruction and long-term development of their country; and their ideas on how they would like to participate in the efforts towards the future development of their country.



Children and young people's voices in Haiti's Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)

Overall recommendations

Haiti's long-term recovery framework provides an opportunity to address root causes of vulnerability which hinder the realisation of the rights of Haitian children. The country's reconstruction provides the opportunity for change:

- To drive forward and promote a pro-child agenda in the relief and reconstruction efforts
- To contribute to the development of new legal frameworks favourable to the rights of the child, with specific emphasis on the national children's code
- To contribute to the elaboration and implementation of policy frameworks favourable to the rights of the child as well as the establishment of regulatory bodies and accountability mechanisms for these
- To advocate for and support the restructuring of education, social protection and health systems to promote universal access to free, quality services
- To advocate for social protection mechanisms which address the needs of the most vulnerable
- To take full advantage of the improved relationships between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. There is an important opportunity now to push forward important cross-border initiatives, particularly in the areas of child protection and economic security
- To ensure that children and youth are consulted regarding their needs, interests, priorities and visions for the rebuilding of their country and that these opinions are fed into broader assessments, particularly the action plans following the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment which will determine the country's Reconstruction Framework
- To promote the meaningful participation of children and youth in the planning and reconstruction of the present and future of Haiti

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Plan is a child-centred community development organisation with no religious or political affiliations. Plan makes long-term commitments to children in poverty and assists as many children as possible, by working in partnerships and alliances with them, their families, communities, civil society and government, building productive relationships and enabling their voices to be heard and recognised in issues that affect them.