

Dr. Jim Yong Kim
President
The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20433

11 January 2013

Re: World Bank operations in Haiti

Dear Dr. Kim,

We write to you on the occasion of the third anniversary of the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Many among us are members of the Haiti Advocacy Working Group (HAWG) and Coordination Europe-Haïti. As members of civil society focused on relief and reconstruction efforts in Haiti, we are heartened by your commitment to carrying out broad reforms aimed at transforming your institution into an effective "solutions bank", focused on ensuring sustainable results on the ground.

We are optimistic that with your deep understanding of and personal commitment to Haiti, you and your colleagues at the World Bank can help steer development efforts in Haiti that truly benefit all Haitians.

On February 5, 2013, the HAWG and members of the US Congress will mark the third anniversary of the earthquake with a day of discussion to which we cordially invite you. We also request to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss the concerns presented in depth in the enclosed letter to the Bank's Lead Country Officer for Haiti, Michelle Keane. Below is a summary of our concerns with respect to Bank operations as articulated in the 2013-2014 Interim Strategy Note (ISN) for Haiti.

Agricultural policy and food security

With forty percent of the Haitian population food insecure, as the ISN notes, we ask that the Bank's agricultural policies focus primarily on reducing hunger in Haiti: making Haiti self-sustaining and sovereign in food production, distribution, marketing and consumption. The Bank should prioritize equipping the Haitian government to better coordinate national strategies on nutrition, food security, agriculture and health, working with the government to identify where gaps in nutrition intervention exist in Haiti, where institutional and inter-agency coordination mechanisms are weak; and scaling up existing nutrition interventions which have a broader remit. Nutrition objectives should be integrated into the Bank-funded training programs identified for women at the community level, especially in rural communities where rates of child and maternal mortality are higher.

Haiti's "open for business" model

We are concerned that Haiti's "open for business" model benefits largely foreign investors with inadequate safeguards that these investments will benefit ordinary Haitians. We are equally concerned that large private sector companies in Haiti will benefit from contracts on terms that bring little tax revenue to the country. We ask that Bank inputs help to strengthen government capacity so that it can negotiate concessions granted on favorable terms, and establish internal mechanisms to invest tax revenue raised in poverty reduction programs. One way to do this would be to support the Haitian government in reforming its tax policy and improving tax administration capacity. As one of the top five public sector donors to Haiti, the Bank's influence is considerable. We ask that you and your staff mobilize your considerable influence to encourage the Haitian government to prioritize the immediate needs of its people whenever they conflict with business interests.

Fighting cholera

Nine months after the earthquake, a cholera epidemic erupted in Haiti. Over 7,750 Haitians have since died from this disease, and over 625,000 have been infected. Fighting cholera should mean putting in place sustainable water and sanitation infrastructure. The Bank, as a UN institution, should play a leading role coordinating this effort with a view to providing public water and sanitation infrastructure in the shortest timeframe possible.

Housing for Haiti's homeless

An estimated 358,000 people remain in tent camps in and around Port-au-Prince, as of October 2012. We are concerned that the Bank promotes the Haitian government's 16/6 relocation program, which is not a sustainable reconstruction model. Haiti's Bank-financed draft Housing Policy, however, has no safeguards for poor and vulnerable Haitians, and certainly not for women. Its promotion of private over public solutions is worrying. We ask that the World Bank work with the Haitian government to ensure that its housing strategy is more responsive to those most in need of adequate shelter, in particular those still living under tents, and women without secure housing, who are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

Women's equality and gender-based violence

We appreciate that the Bank recognizes women and girls' extreme vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) but the scale of the Bank's investments does not match the dimension of the problem. Effort should be made to ensure that program interventions link up strategically so as to protect the neediest and recognize the link between hunger and SGBV. Beyond promoting awareness of SGBV and victim services, the Bank should also invest in Haiti's health system to purposefully improve services for SGBV survivors, including sexual and reproductive health services; assist the Haitian government to strengthen its police force and legal system to better respond to allegations of SGBV; invest in projects that empower women and girls and challenge dominant gender norms that fuel SGBV in Haiti.

Increasing governance and aid transparency

We applaud the World Bank's path-breaking efforts to render its programs more transparent and accountable to the public. We hope to see the Bank engage with Haitian civil society groups to help monitor the implementation of Bank programs in Haiti, and also encourage you to ensure that your implementing partners, whether private contractors or NGOs, also apply rigorous transparency and accountability mechanisms so as to allow the public to fully monitor their work.

Bank investments will only be productive if high standards of programmatic and fiduciary accountability are maintained. The Bank's Haiti program should incorporate sustainable and long-term anti-corruption strategies with clearly identifiable targets. Anti-corruption strategies should build the overall architecture for financial accountability, reinforce public institutions, and strengthen functional cooperation between varying public and non-governmental institutions which address corruption. Clear benchmarks and targets for public accountability are also needed, as are opportunities to hold dialogue on corruption and accountability openly in public. The Bank should also include specific anti-corruption measures in all of its own projects in Haiti.

Following up

Three years after the January 2010 earthquake, Haitians still struggle to rebuild their lives. We hope that you and your staff will consider the points presented above in implementing the World Bank's FY 2013-2014 strategy for Haiti.

We look forward to engaging with you further in person on Haiti's urgent reconstruction needs.

Sincerely,



American Friends
Service Committee



Bank Information Center



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HAI TI
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Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

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cc: Michelle Keane, Responsable principale du pays - Haiti

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