

Formal and informal material aid following the 2010 Haiti earthquake as reported by camp dwellers

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Following the 2010 Haiti earthquake, more than two million people moved to temporary camps, most of which arose spontaneously in the days after the earthquake. This study focuses on the material assistance people in five Port-au-Prince camps reported receiving, noting the differences between assistance from formal aid agencies and from 'informal' sources such as family. Seven weeks after the earthquake, 32% of camp dwellers reported receiving no assistance whatsoever; 55% had received formal aid, typically a tent or tarpaulins; and 40% had received informal aid, usually in the form of cash transfers from family living abroad. While people were grateful for any material aid, cash was more frequently considered timely and more effective than aid-in-kind. Should this study be indicative of the greater displaced population, aid agencies should consider how they might make better use of cash transfers as an aid modality.

Keywords: aid, cash transfers, displaced persons, earthquake, Haiti, material assistance, remittances, shelter

Introduction

On 12 January 2010, one of the worst natural disasters ever struck Haiti: a shallow, 7.0-magnitude earthquake whose epicentre was close to Haiti's most populous area, the capital Port-au-Prince, as well as the cities of Léogâne and Jacmel. Between 200,000 and 300,000 people were killed¹ and more than 300,000 were injured (CRED, n.d.). Hundreds of thousands of buildings—from shacks in the capital's slums to the National Palace and National Cathedral—were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Many people lost limbs; others died because medical care was not available in the hours and days after the disaster.

Port-au-Prince had not experienced a damaging earthquake since 1751 and 1770 (Eberhard et al., 2010); neither the general public nor the government was prepared for such an earthquake (Zanotti, 2010). The disaster had been building for years, the product of both the accumulated stress along the earthquake fault and the increasing vulnerability of an ever-growing population living in extremely high-density neighbourhoods in buildings not designed to withstand an earthquake. With the exception of a number of geologists who had tried to warn their government of the earthquake risk for years,² few had dared to imagine that Port-au-Prince, already awash with human suffering, could become even more tragic.

In the face of frequent aftershocks, people began to gather in the few safe, open spaces: parks, roads, a golf course. People who lost their homes or were afraid to sleep under cement roofs began to create camps with sheets and tarpaulins. Others left Port-au-Prince and similarly hard-hit areas for the provincial towns and countryside. Of the estimated population of 3 million people in the greater Port-au-Prince area, at least 200,000 were presumed dead and another 570,000 soon evacuated the capital, at least temporarily (CRED, n.d.; Bengtsson et al., 2010). The disaster left more than 1.5 million people without homes (OCHA, 2010). Some were able to camp in a courtyard or driveway, but, more often than not, the street was the only option.

For a time, the world's attention was focused on Haiti. The news media reported on the situation around the clock, and aid rolled in. International organisations and governments pledged more than \$10 billion (CBS News, 2010). A staggering 50% of all US households purportedly donated to the Haiti earthquake recovery cause (Pew Research Center, 2010). The United States sent 14,000 military troops and took over control of the Port-au-Prince airport.³ Though slowed down by Port-au-Prince's damaged seaport and single airport, aid and aid workers streamed into Haiti. Prior to the earthquake, about 10,000 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) worked in Haiti—more per capita than anywhere else in the world (Buss, 2008, cited in Dupuy, 2010a), earning Haiti the moniker of 'Republic of NGOs'. Within weeks of the earthquake, the streets of Port-au-Prince were filled even more than usual with trucks and SUVs marked with logos of international humanitarian agencies.

Twenty-seven months after the earthquake, some 421,000 people were still living in temporary camps (IOM in Haiti, 2012). While many others have moved to more permanent accommodations, some question whether tent camps will be enduring features for the next five or more years. Yet although some progress has been made—lives were saved, schools have reopened, and some rubble has been cleared, for example—and individual success stories have been highlighted, the overall recovery effort has been less than satisfactory at best.⁴ Political turmoil and a cholera epidemic have complicated the reconstruction even further. Much remains to be accomplished. As of March 2012, for example, only 46% of the aid pledged by bilateral and multi-lateral donors had been dispersed (OSE, 2012).

Through interviews with people living in displaced persons camps, this study aims to examine the formal and informal material assistance people received within the first seven weeks after the earthquake struck. *Formal assistance* is defined as aid coming from governments, both foreign and Haitian; multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and United Nations agencies; and aid organisations such as the Red Cross and Catholic Relief Services. *Informal assistance* is the aid people receive from family, neighbours, friends and local or informal social groups. This study examines the levels of both types of material aid, the aid modalities (such as cash, food, and medical assistance), the timeliness of the aid and its effectiveness as determined by the beneficiaries.

The issue of informal aid is especially pertinent to Haiti because many Haitians rely on remittances—usually transfers of cash, food and other goods from relatives

living in foreign localities such as the United States. The value of remittances sent to Haiti each year is huge; it far exceeds all the international aid Haiti receives in a typical year and is estimated to be at least 19% of Haiti's gross domestic product (GDP). Remittances are thought to increase following disaster (Fagen, 2006). In addition, because remittances often take the form of cash, the money is spent locally and supports the local economy. Rather than eating rice imported from Arkansas, for instance, people can purchase local, Haitian-grown rice and support the vulnerable foundation of the Haitian economy: Haitian agriculture.

In summary, the study asks:

- How much and what type of material aid did people in the camps report receiving in the first seven weeks after the earthquake?
- How much of this assistance was from formal sources and how much from informal sources?
- Were there differences in aid modalities, timeliness and perceived effectiveness between formal and informal material assistance?

To answer these questions, the author of this study and two assistants spent one week interviewing people living in the displaced persons camps in the Port-au-Prince area in early March 2010, as described in more detail below.

The Haitian context

Appreciating Haiti's historical context is key to understanding Haiti's current situation (Trouillot, 1990; Dupuy, 2007). In broad strokes, this section outlines how migration within and from Haiti has been a primary organising factor of Haitian society over the past century and how it has led to 1) an increasing reliance on informal material assistance both in everyday life and following disaster, and 2) an increased vulnerability to urban disaster.

Haiti is divided into ten geographic departments, but everyone acknowledges one additional department: the diaspora, or the estimated 1–2 million Haitians living outside of Haiti. Compared to Haiti's population of nine million people, the diaspora is proportionally one of the largest in the world (Collier, 2009). The greatest concentrations of Haitians abroad—comprising about 87%—live in the United States, the Dominican Republic and Canada (Orozco, 2006).

For many generations, a number of push and pull factors of migration have steadily built the Haitian diaspora. The US occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934 encouraged out-migration from Haiti, especially to US-owned sugar plantations in Cuba and the Dominican Republic (Laguerre, 1987). Under the ruthless dictatorship of François Duvalier (1957–71), emigration from Haiti, especially of the educated class, grew. Indeed, 'since the early sixties, migration to Port-au-Prince and emigration to North American have been a fundamental factor in the restructuring of Haitian society, including the social landscape of the capital city' (Laguerre, 1987, p. 120).

Between 1957 and 1982, an estimated one million people left Haiti (Haggerty, 1989). Haitians have continued to leave Haiti in the years since, especially after the Haitian coup d'état in 1991, which was followed by a severe UN embargo. Between 1991 and 1997, an estimated 3.5% of Haiti's population emigrated to the United States; currently, about 40% of Haitians have family living abroad (Orozco, 2006).

Over the past decades, and especially since the Duvaliers' rule, there has been an equally important, concurrent trend of internal migration from Haiti's rural areas to cities, especially Port-au-Prince. The Government of Haiti has consistently sustained itself by profiting from the meagre earnings of the country's farmers, agriculture being the main livelihood for the majority of Haitians and nearly all rural Haitians. Haitians who wished to raise their socio-economic status had few options besides becoming civil servants and thus joining the government's 'predatory state', located almost entirely in Port-au-Prince (Trouillot, 1990). For many years, the primacy of Port-au-Prince and the dependence of the rural areas on the capital—and the capital on the United States—have encouraged both internal migration and emigration (Laguerre, 1987).

Starting in the 1970s, structural adjustment measures implemented by the international community liberalised trade by reducing tariffs and wages in Haiti while privatising state industries and curtailing spending on social services (Dupuy, 2007; Faton, 2010; Maguire, 2010). These policies have worked to destroy the agricultural base of Haiti, forcing people to migrate to the capital in search of work in factories:

Whereas in the 1970s Haiti imported about 19% of its food needs, it now imports 51%. It went from being self-sufficient in the production of rice, sugar, poultry, and pork to becoming the fourth-largest importer of subsidized U.S. rice in the world and the largest importer of foodstuffs from the United States in the Caribbean. Eighty percent of all the rice consumed in Haiti is now imported. Trade liberalization, then, essentially meant transferring wealth from Haitian to U.S. farmers, especially rice farmers in Arkansas and the U.S. agribusiness companies that export to Haiti and those Haitian companies that resell it on the domestic market [. . .]. Trade liberalization not only exacerbated the decline of agriculture and the dispossession of farmers, but when combined with an industrial strategy that located assembly industries primarily in Port-au-Prince, it also propelled migrants from the rural areas to the capital city and its spreading squalor (Dupuy, 2010b, p. 17).

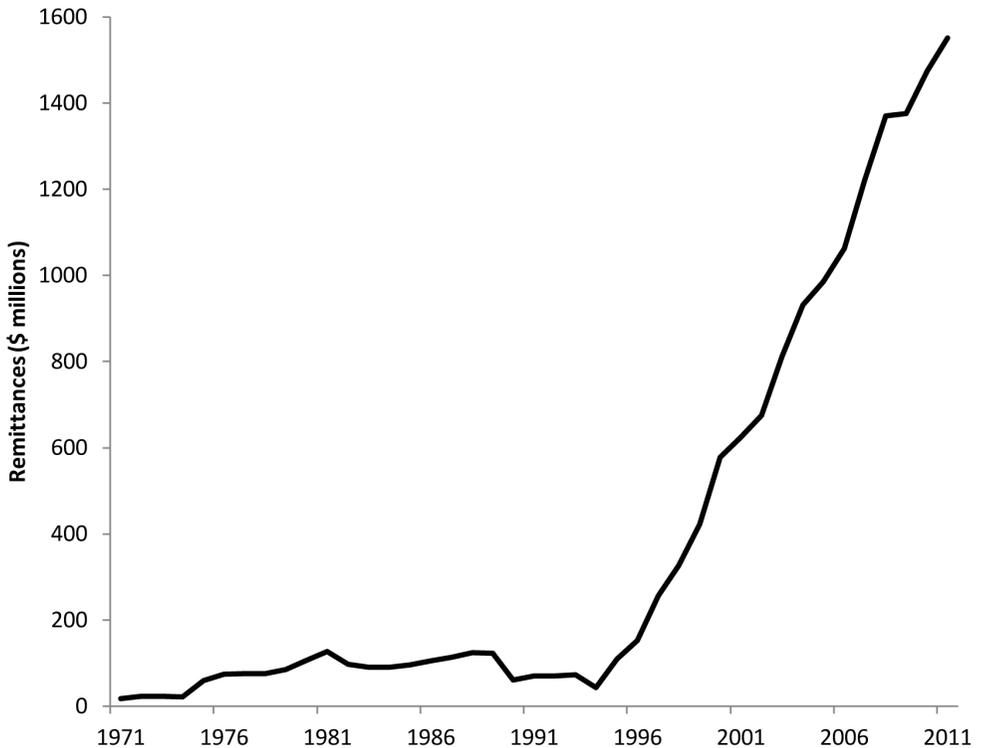
Thus, Port-au-Prince is a city largely made up of people who have fled rural Haiti to seek a better life in the capital. This migration to Port-au-Prince has, in turn, been a key factor in creating the capital's high vulnerability to earthquakes (Maguire, 2010; MCC, 2010). Many of the conditions that made Port-au-Prince so vulnerable to the earthquake—a large population, high population density, crowded living conditions, slums and shoddily built houses—stem from the fact that Port-au-Prince's population outstrips its infrastructure many times over. Haiti's internal, urban migration has created a poor, underemployed population with no choice but to live in slums and ravines with high population densities, usually in rental housing built on the cheap and thus not to earthquake code.

Among the diaspora, many stay in close contact with Haiti; they visit frequently, talk with friends and family in Haiti on the telephone, and send material assistance (Orozco, 2006). The assistance may take the form of cash transfers or gifts in kind, especially clothing or food, either purchased in or shipped to Haiti. The cash transfers may go through banks or other licensed transfer agencies, but the use of informal networks—such as trusted friends who travel to Haiti—is a common practice as well (Fagen, 2006). According to the 2001 Haitian census, one in every five Haitians receives remittances from abroad. Remitters send an average of \$150 per month (Orozco, 2006), although several beneficiaries may share such amounts.

There has been an increase in remittances to Haiti since 1971, when records of these financial transfers begin (see Figure 1). Since the mid-1990s, the trend is indisputably one of increasing reliance on remittances. In 2011, remittances made up 21% of Haiti's gross domestic product (World Bank, n.d.a; n.d.b). Other sources estimate that the rate may be as high as 30% (Abrams, 2010). In 2008, Haiti's was the 9th highest remittance-to-GDP ratio in the world (World Bank, n.d.a; n.d.b). The \$1.9 billion in remittances is double the amount Haiti receives in international aid and is equal to 90% of Haiti's federal budget (Abrams, 2010; Luce, 2010).

Remittances are a major source of revenue for many people in Haiti. The money received is used primarily for food, education, and clothing (Orozco, 2006). It is not

Figure 1. Total annual remittances sent to Haiti, 1971–2011



Source: World Bank (n.d.a; n.d.b).

uncommon that a family in Haiti has no income beyond what they receive from remittances. At the same time, remittances result in only incremental improvements in the quality of life and do little to counter the larger problem of poverty (Fagen, 2006).

Disaster assistance

Those who are affected by a disaster may receive assistance from formal or informal channels—or both; that assistance may take a variety of forms, or modalities. Formal assistance is received from governments, multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and official aid agencies whose purpose is to provide relief and facilitate recovery after a disaster. Informal assistance is received from family, neighbours, friends and other, smaller, local groups, such as churches. The type of assistance may involve material (or tangible) assistance, emotional and psychological support, advice and information, help with migration, encouragement and a sense of belonging, among others. This study focuses only on material assistance, including medical care.

Formal material assistance following a disaster most often takes the form of in-kind assistance such as food aid, but the idea of cash transfers is gaining some acceptance. While aid-in-kind has largely been the norm for disaster agencies, cash transfers, a main modality of Haiti's informal aid sector, offer a number of potential advantages (Dreze and Sen, 1989; Harvey, 2007; Hulme, Hanlon and Barrientos, 2010). First, recipients of assistance consistently prefer cash. Cash allows greater flexibility, autonomy, opportunity to invest the aid and often greater dignity as there is no need to stand in long distribution lines. For governments and aid agencies, the cash may be easier and cheaper to transport than in-kind assistance. In addition, while the potential for local inflation is a danger, cash transfers allow people to invest in local goods and services and thus sustain the local economy.

Why are cash transfers not used more? In seeking to answer that question, Harvey (2007) and Hulme, Hanlon and Barrientos (2010) review a number of factors, including institutional investment in food aid structures and programmes, bureaucratic self-interest, food surpluses in donor states and aid agencies' fear of creating a culture of dependency or 'laziness' or of losing control. In particular, Harvey examines 'attitudes of paternalism and superiority' among donors and aid agencies, which he refers to as a 'rarely acknowledged [. . .] belief that aid agencies know what people in crisis need better than these people do themselves' (Harvey, 2007, pp. 54–55). The debate between cash and in-kind assistance is a classic question in microeconomics. Economists generally agree that cash is best, but gifts in kind are more appealing to donor states, which are afraid the cash might be used for 'anti-social' purchases, such as drugs or alcohol (Frank and Glass, 1999; Perloff, 2007). Moreover, they fear that cash may encourage corruption.

In times of crisis, most people turn to family and other social support before seeking help from more formal channels, such as the government, welfare agencies, or psychologists (Solomon, 1985). Quarantelli (1960) reports that up to three-quarters

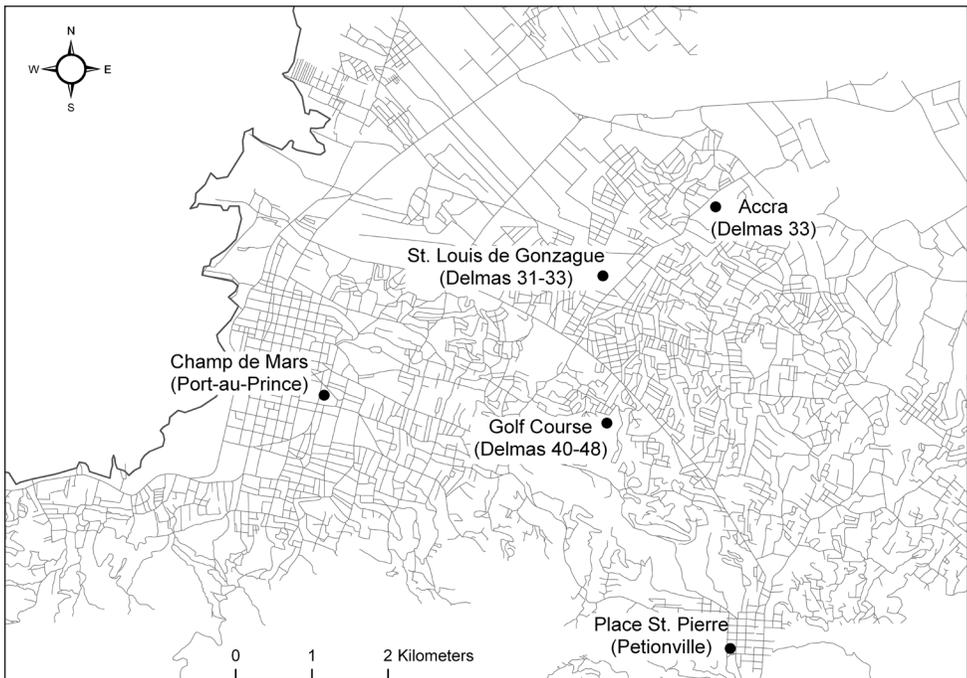
of those affected by disaster receive a substantial proportion of aid from kin. The exception is medical care, for which health care professionals are usually sought out directly.

Much of the literature on informal disaster assistance focuses on the role families and friends play in providing social support after a disaster.⁵ Less is known, however, about the role of kin and friends in providing post-disaster material assistance. This study begins to explore the formal and informal material assistance modalities by interviewing people in displaced persons camps in Port-au-Prince seven weeks after the 12 January 2010 earthquake.

Methods

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 53 persons living in five displaced persons camps in the greater Port-au-Prince area (see Figure 2, Table 1 and Box 1). The interviews were conducted the week of 1–6 March 2010, approximately seven weeks after the earthquake. To select participants, a purposive sampling method was employed in which the interviewers (the author and two assistants) walked through the camps and requested interviews with camp residents. An attempt was made to balance the number of women and men interviewed. People who requested interviews were denied. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes to an hour. If the participant granted permission, the interview was digitally recorded on an audio device.

Figure 2. Displaced persons camps under review in the greater Port-au-Prince area



Source: author.

Table 1. The five displaced persons camps under review, October–November 2010

Camp name	Camp population	Number of interviews
Champ de Mars, Port-au-Prince	28,963	9
Golf course, Delmas 40–48	24,951	12
Accra, Delmas 33	8,616	10
Place St. Pierre, Pétion-Ville	3,500	12
St. Louis de Gonzague, Delmas 31–33	3,420	10

Source: CCCM (2010).

Box 1. General characteristics of the 53 interview participants

Average age: 39 years

Sex ratio: 60% women: 40% men

Marital status: 30% single, widowed or divorced; 70% married or partnered

Average number of children: 3.2

Average number of years in Port-au-Prince: 24

Percentage born in Port-au-Prince: 23%

Average years of education: 8

Percentage unemployed or working in the informal sector only: 69%

Percentage with family living outside of Haiti: 51%

Percentage whose house was destroyed or damaged in the earthquake: 46% destroyed; 52% damaged

Percentage who lost a family member (immediate or extended) in the disaster: 64%

Percentage who received material assistance after the disaster: 72%

Source: author.

Figure 2 shows the locations of the camps chosen for the interviews; for each location, Table 1 provides details regarding population, size, organising body and the number of interviews conducted. The camps under review represented some of the largest displaced persons camps in Haiti. They were formed spontaneously in the hours and days immediately after the earthquake, when people who had lost their homes and others who were too frightened to sleep indoors set up shelters in parks, soccer fields and other open spaces throughout the city. As people were able, they gradually replaced sheet and cardboard structures with tarpaulins and tents.

The largest original camp, in the suburb of Delmas, occupies the golf course of the elite Pétion-Ville Club. Established in 1928 during the first US occupation of Haiti, the American Club, as it was called then, once banned all Haitians except those working there as servants (Schmidt, 1995). After the 2010 earthquake, the club was taken over by the US 82nd Airborne Division and food was distributed by the US military, Catholic Relief Services and Sean Penn's J/P Haitian Relief Organization (Basu, 2010; Sontag, 2010; Vasquez and Daniel, 2010). At the time of the interviews, most of the shelters in this camp were made of tarpaulins donated by various relief organisations. Because the camp is located on private property, the Haitian government

requisitioned that it be moved to a remote area north of Port-au-Prince called Corail Cesselesse (Guyler Delva, 2010); these plans, like many other resettlement programmes, were subsequently abandoned, however (Farmer, 2011, p. 161).

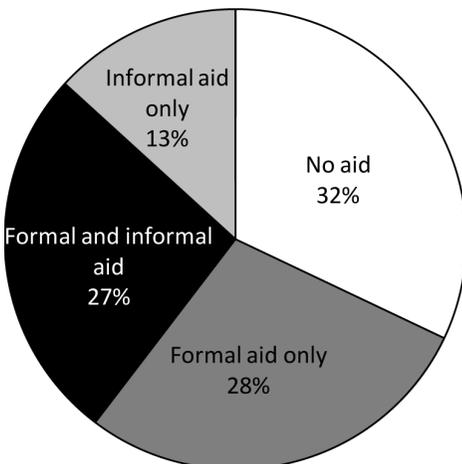
The Champ de Mars camp, which was the third-largest camp in Haiti at the time of the study, sprawled across the system of parks around the presidential palace and former government ministries near downtown Port-au-Prince. Statues of Haitian heroes—some of the few cultural artefacts left undamaged by the earthquake—look out over thousands of tent and tarpaulin shelters. Because the downtown area of Port-au-Prince sustained some of the worst damage in the earthquake, thousands of people who lost their houses moved to this camp. While some have tents distributed by aid agencies, others live under tarpaulins or even sheets. All camps under review appeared to have camp-organised governing committees, although their effectiveness could not be assessed.

The camp at Delmas 31–33 was situated on the grounds of one of Haiti's most elite schools, the St. Louis de Gonzague high school, a private Roman Catholic school. The majority of families in this camp had high-quality tents, although there were some families living under cardboard or sheets. Security was reported to be relatively high in this camp (RNDDH, 2010). The camp has since been disbanded.

The camp at Place St. Pierre arose spontaneously immediately after the disaster. It occupies a small park in Pétion-Ville, often referred to as the well-to-do suburb of Port-au-Prince, but also home to many densely populated neighbourhoods. The camp did not have any formal camp management agency at the time of the interviews.

Established by Islamic Relief, the Delmas 33 Accra camp houses about 3,000 people. Most of the families in this camp have tents provided by Islamic Relief. The land appears to be privately owned by the Accra family (Griffin et al., 2010).

Figure 3. Formal and informal material assistance reported by study participants



Source: author.

Results

Figure 3 summarises the reported sources of material assistance received by people in the camps during the first seven weeks after the disaster. Nearly one-third of the camp dwellers (32%) had not received any material assistance since the disaster, neither from formal nor informal channels.

There is a large discrepancy between the high levels of disaster relief pledged by the international community and the scant amount of material aid reported by people living in the displaced persons camps. Excluding water, material assistance from formal disaster and relief agencies and organisations had reached only

55% of the families participating in the study. (Those not living in camps probably received even less aid.) Most frequently, this aid consisted of a single tent (30% of study participants) or one or two tarpaulins (11%) designed to serve as temporary shelter. Other noted forms of aid were food (25% of study participants), household items and toiletries (9%) and medical care (2%). None of the interviewees had received cash from a formal aid agency. Formal assistance came from sources such as Catholic Relief Services, the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders and Islamic Relief. Sometimes respondents did not know the name of the aid organisation that had provided aid.

The figures for formal aid are similar to those reported in other research. A study conducted in late February 2010 finds that 64% of the population had received formal aid (Griffin et al., 2010).⁶ This study reports that about half of the camp population had not received any food aid, and, in the Champ de Mars camp, this figure stood at 75% (Griffin et al., 2010). An independent study conducted in the displaced persons camps a number of months after the earthquake finds only 53% agreement that 'aid had arrived' (Schuller, 2010). This study's estimate that 41% of displaced persons had received a tent or tarpaulin from an aid group corresponds exactly with that of the United Nations on 5 March 2010 (Bigg, 2010). In all cases, even when considering that some respondents may have underreported aid, it is evident that many basic needs of people in the camps were not being met.

The 'informal aid sector' has played a principle role in the 2010 earthquake relief and recovery efforts. While 40% of the respondents reported receiving informal material assistance after the disaster, 14% of families had received help only from family or friends. In contrast to formal aid agencies, which usually provided in-kind assistance such as food, the informal material assistance nearly always took the form of cash transfers. Nearly one-third of the respondents had received a cash gift from family members or, less frequently, friends. Meanwhile, 10% of the study participants had received a tent or tarpaulin from family, friends or a local church. Those who had received remittances prior to the disaster tended to receive cash transfers following the disaster as well. Many people reported sharing cooked food or other goods with neighbours; because of the various difficulties in measuring such frequent sharing of small amounts of food and other items, the study concentrated on informal material assistance given by family and friends outside of Haiti.

The importance of post-disaster material aid from family and friends abroad is supported by other data. A poll conducted about ten days after the earthquake indicates that 78% of Haitians living in the United States had contributed financial assistance to disaster victims—presumably by wiring them money—and that the average amount of assistance was \$75 (NAM and BAI, 2010).

Beneficiaries reported cash transfers to be timely more often than aid-in-kind. They deemed 85% of cash transfers, all of which were from informal sources, timely; in contrast, they referred to only 46% of aid-in-kind donations as timely (p -value=0.02 from a two-tailed Fisher exact probability test). Respondents said that informal material aid was more frequently timely than formal aid, although the difference is not

Table 2. Effectiveness of material aid from formal and informal sources on a 10-point scale, as rated by beneficiaries

Material aid modality		Number of respondents per rating									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Informal (N=15, average=6.3)	Cash				1	4	1	1			5
	Tent			2							
	Tarp	1									
Formal (N=21, average=5.3)	Medical care										1
	Tent			1		1					2
	Food	2		1		4	1				1
	Tarp			2		3	1				
	Household items					1					

Source: author.

statistically significant. Recipients deemed 72% of informal aid transactions timely but said the same of only 47% of formal aid (p -value=0.14 from a two-tailed Fisher exact probability test).

The results concerning the effectiveness of material aid (see Table 2) are difficult to evaluate because more than half the respondents declined to rate the effectiveness of aid on a ten-point scale (with 10 being highly effective and 1 being completely ineffective). Based on the numeric ratings provided by those who agreed to rate the aid, the overall effectiveness of all material aid was rated 5.7, which suggests that people generally were not very satisfied with the material aid they received. (Note that this average does not take into account camp dwellers who received no aid.) Cash transfers were rated more effective (7.0) than all other forms of material aid (5.1) (p -value=0.07 from a two-sided two-sample t -test, $N=36$). The one case of medical assistance from a formal aid agency was given a 10 for effectiveness. On average, cash transfers were rated 7.0 while tents were rated 6.3, food 4.6 and tarps 4.0.

Another study provides strong evidence that cash transfers were preferred over aid-in-kind by beneficiaries after the earthquake. Noting that local Haitian markets were operating within days of the earthquake, a number of partners of the church-based development organisation Christian Aid chose cash transfers as the aid modality for Haitian earthquake survivors (Christian Aid, 2012). Of the beneficiaries of these funds, 98% reported a preference for cash over aid-in-kind; 58% of the cash was used to purchase food, water and cooking fuel. In order of decreasing importance, the rest of the cash was used for education, rent or shelter, small enterprise, health, debt repayment, household goods and savings. The report notes that one advantage of cash transfers over other aid modalities (such as in-kind aid and vouchers) is that they allow people to repay debts and save money.

Conclusion

In summary, this study finds that:

- A sizable proportion of households in the Port-au-Prince displaced persons camps received no material aid in the first seven weeks after the earthquake.
- Of those who received material aid from aid and relief agencies, the assistance was modest; most often it consisted of only a tent or several tarpaulins.
- The informal aid sector played a major role in providing material assistance after the earthquake.
- There were key differences in aid modalities between the formal and informal aid sectors; the informal aid sector relied predominantly on cash transfers while the formal sector provided aid-in-kind.
- Beneficiaries generally considered assistance in the form of cash transfers to be timelier and more effective than aid-in-kind.

Aid organisations and agencies working in Haiti should consider what they might learn from the informal material aid sector whose proclivity for cash transfers tends to result in timelier and more effective material assistance. Following the example of the informal aid sector, cash transfers should be considered as one way to provide support to those affected by the disaster. Aid-in-kind that replicates goods available in local markets, such as food in the case of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, should be reconsidered. Instead, cash transfers offer a number of advantages. Food aid is known to be damaging to Haitian agriculture (Fatton, 2010). In the months after the 2010 earthquake, the Port-au-Prince markets were flooded with US-grown food aid, much to the detriment of Haitian agriculture (IRIN, 2010; Weisbrot et al., 2010).

In addition, cash transfers may have some logistical advantages over aid in-kind and the transfers may be made quickly using banks and transfer services, which were at least partially functioning within days of the Haiti earthquake. Cash assistance allows the beneficiaries to make their own choices as to how to spend the aid money. It also allows beneficiaries to be more selective with respect to their expenses while saving people the trouble and indignity of standing in lines to receive handouts. Finally, other studies have shown that recipients of cash transfer programmes do not 'waste' the money, but use it efficiently to improve their nutrition, health and education, and as start-up capital (Hulme, Hanlon and Barrientos, 2010).

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Endnotes

- ¹ The number of fatalities remains in question and estimates vary considerably. A controversial draft report commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development in 2011 finds that between 46,000 and 85,000 persons were killed in the earthquake (Archibold, 2011). Another independent study estimates the number of deaths to be between 136,800 and 180,500 (Kolbe et al., 2010). Likewise, other estimates, including of the number of people living in displaced persons camps, vary greatly depending on the source.
- ² See, for example, Delacroix (2008).
- ³ One questionable aspect of the earthquake relief and recovery efforts has been the erosion of Haiti's sovereignty. The takeover of Haiti's international airport by the US military in the name of the earthquake relief effort is but one example (Dupuy, 2010a). The Interim Haiti Recovery Commission, which manages the international grants to rebuild Haiti, includes at least as many representatives of non-Haitian entities on its board as Haitian members; it has been likened to a parallel government (Soirélus, 2011). Such disregard for Haitian sovereignty has been a common theme throughout Haiti's tumultuous history.
- ⁴ See, for example, Hartberg (2011); OSE (2011); Ramachandran and Walz (2012); and Soirélus (2011).
- ⁵ See, for example, Figley (1985) and Kaniasty and Norris (2004).
- ⁶ The February study includes water as a form of aid, which may have led to a higher total percentage of the camp population receiving aid.

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