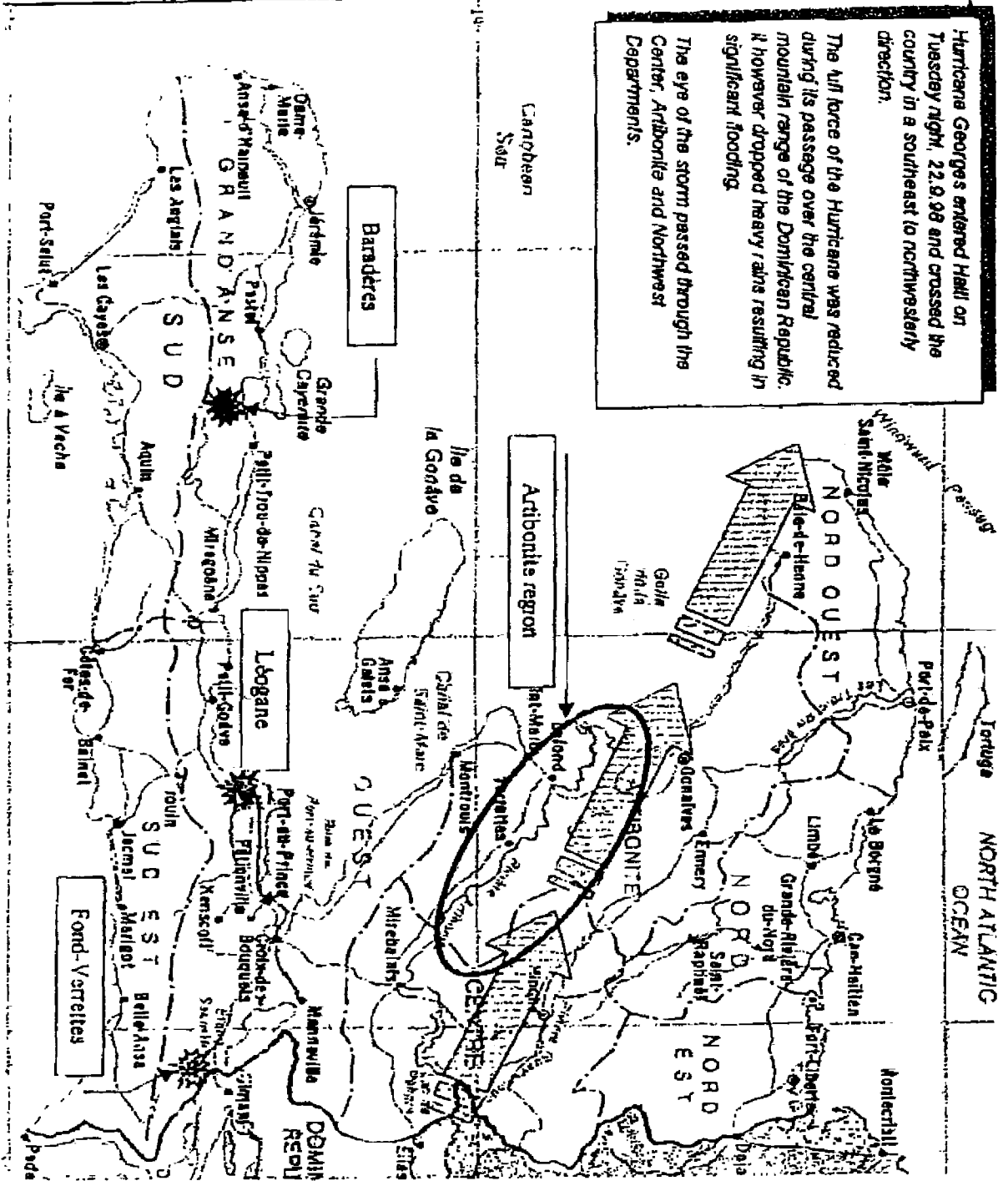


Hurricane Georges entered Haiti on Tuesday night, 22.9.98 and crossed the country in a southeast to northwesterly direction.

The full force of the Hurricane was reduced during its passage over the central mountain range of the Dominican Republic, it however dropped heavy rains resulting in significant flooding.

The eye of the storm passed through the Center, Artibonite and Northwest Departments.





UNITED NATIONS DISASTER ASSESSMENT AND COORDINATION
TEAM

HAITI – HURRICANE GEORGES
MISSION REPORT

27 September – 9 October 1998

Team: Maria Olga Gonzalez
Erik Haegglund (1st week)
Walter Jaeggli
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Summary

The mission arrived in Haiti on Sunday 27 September, with the exception of Ms. Gonzalez who arrived on Tuesday 29 September due to the cancellation of flights between Miami and Port-au-Prince.

The team met with the Resident Coordinator on Monday and discussed the terms of reference and the first activities envisaged for the mission, most of them consisting, at that time, of meetings with the major actors in the emergency. Thus, an agenda was agreed starting with the Directorate of Civil Protection. The agenda and minutes on the most important meetings are included as Annex 1.

From these discussions and the written information provided it was evident to the team that assessments had been made by various agents for their respective sectors and geographical areas, although not coordinated, and that the emergency relief stage had finished.

One of the main tasks of a regular UNDAC mission had already been completed and therefore the team was clear that an additional assessment was not required. The team's decision was later supported by the IFRC delegation who adopted the same attitude towards assessment, i.e. "humanitarian tourism" was not appropriate at this stage.

Another aspect that came up in most of the meetings was the lack of a centralised overview of the emergency, mainly in the Government side, where no Emergency Operations Centre, involving the main Government actors, was set-up from the beginning to carry out this task. In spite of this fact, it was clear that no major gaps remained uncovered in the relief stage, as everything was taken care of very rapidly by the Government itself and by major international organisations in country.

A second meeting with the Civil Protection revealed that the purposes and scope of the UNDAC mission were not clear to these authorities; they had envisaged a team to support them in a global, in-depth, nation wide assessment to be used by the Government to plan for recovery. This was later clarified in a further meeting with the Resident Coordinator.

Based on the above mentioned situations, the Team met again with the Resident Coordinator to establish the mission objectives according to the circumstances and the needs detected:

- 1 To prepare a United Nations consolidated report on the agencies' emergency relief interventions and planned rehabilitation/recovery support.
- 2 To assist in the preparation of an outline for a medium-term capacity building programme to strengthen the national capacity to face disasters and protect development gains.

Although it was agreed that the emergency was over, the mission decided to visit the region of Fond des Verettes, considered to be one of the hardest hit, in order to have a first-hand look on the impact of the disaster. On Sunday 4 October, the team went by road to Fond des Verettes. The level of destruction was evident: the flash flood reached the houses on the river bank, the church was completely destroyed and its structure is now located in the middle of the riverbed. Local sources reported a death toll that went from 89 to more than 100 (official figure 85). Some 10 days after the hurricane, the village seemed to be back on track. The market was operating, churches were open, there was no sign of temporary shelters in use, meaning that traditional community coping mechanisms were taking care of the situation.

Conclusions

1. There is little awareness among the UN system of the UNDAC concept, scope of activities and limitations, which may lead to misinterpretations as was the case with the Haitian authorities.
2. The UNDAC team in Haiti practised one of the main principles of coordination in *not duplicating* what was already been abundantly well done (i.e. assessment), and to build on this to foster further exchange of information needed to plan for rehabilitation.

- 3 All inter-agency meetings convened during the team's stay had ample participation, which means that the exchange of information and coordination is deemed necessary and important.
- 4 The team concurs with the main international and local actors on the need to strengthen the capacity of the Directorate of Civil Protection to perform its role as leading agency in disaster response.

Recommendations

1. OCHA-Geneva must take all necessary steps to improve UNDAC concept dissemination within the system, particularly before the departure of all missions, in order to reduce the risks of misinterpretations within the UN system as well as with concerned national authorities.
2. Whereas in the Agriculture and Health sectors impact assessment and planning for rehabilitation are well under way, other important social sectors could be the subject of further evaluations, i.e. education and employment, in order to identify impact reduction strategies to prevent further deterioration of the country's social indicators.
3. UNDP can play a major role in fostering coordination and exchange of information, much needed in an emergency, in a two-fold effort:
 - 3.1. At the United Nations level, by regularising the Inter-Agency Disaster Management Team, assigning tasks according to the agencies' comparative advantages. A DMT workshop on lessons learned from the Georges emergency could be a good starting point for an improved DMT.
 - 3.2. At the government level, by promoting the concept of an "Emergency Operations Centre", involving the main governmental actors, aimed at operating efficiently during an emergency. Training and design of procedures, manuals and user-friendly tools could be part of an overall capacity building programme in disaster management.
4. The recruitment of an expert to follow-up the information gathering related to the rehabilitation phase has been recommended by the agencies. This recruitment should be for an initial period of 6 months.

Acknowledgement

The team members wish to express their appreciation to the UNDP Office in Port-au-Prince for providing the mission with all the necessary facilities to perform their duties. The team also wishes to highlight the permanent disposition of the Resident Coordinator and the Disaster Focal Point, to discuss findings, solve problems, convene meetings, etc., which was a major contribution to the team.

The UNDAC team
8 October 1998



UN System Response to Hurricane Georges Emergency and Rehabilitation Phases

Background

Hurricane Georges hit Haiti on the night of Tuesday 22 September 1998. The eye of the hurricane entered the country by its central plateau and left at its North Western portion. The trajectory followed by the storm and its considerable dimensions resulted in various scale damages nation wide. The wind force was attenuated by the mountains which separate Haiti from the Dominican Republic, but the speed reached 130 km/h and it was accompanied by rainfall in the mountains which caused swelling of rivers, floods and flashfloods which were accountable for most of the deaths and destruction.

In figures, Georges was not especially severe: death toll 150 (still raising), some 40 missing, 169,000 people affected. It is foreseen, however, that the longer-term impact of the disaster will contribute to further deteriorate the already precarious economic and social situation.

In response to a request from the Resident Coordinator of the UN system, an UNDAC (*United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination*) team was deployed to Haiti on 27 September 1998. The main purpose of deploying an UNDAC Team, constituted of general disaster management experts, is to assist the national authorities and/or the UN Resident Coordinator in a quick assessment of the situation and the emergency needs. When appropriate, the team also provides support in the coordination of the relief assistance, in an immediate phase after a disaster. Normally, an UNDAC team would not be able to involve in thorough sectoral evaluations or in the assessment of rehabilitation needs.

As the emergency assessments had been carried out by various agencies, the team concentrated in the second part of its mandate, coordination, by collecting information on the overall efforts of the UN system. The following is a compilation of such efforts, both in the response and rehabilitation stages following Hurricane Georges. It is based on a questionnaire prepared by the team to which the agencies kindly answered

The purpose of this document is to provide the system with a working tool to strengthen its capacity to respond in a coordinated fashion to future emergencies. Therefore, a summary of lessons learned is contained in the final chapter.

Agencies present in country: FAO, PAHO/WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, UNPFA
 UN missions in Haiti: Mission de police des Nations Unies en Haiti (MIPONUH), Mission civile internationale en Haiti (MICIVIH).

Partner agency : IOM

UN Emergency Response

Inter-agency meetings were organised long before the hurricane, which allowed the international community to better prepare for the possible outcomes. These meetings were also supported and attended by non UN agencies such as USAID and its network of NGOs, as well as multi- and bi-lateral donors. The assessments and information produced by these agencies were the main sources for responding to the needs.

In general terms, all agencies were able to rapidly respond with their internal emergency mechanisms. It is worth mentioning that offered services and assistance surpassed the official requirements and many facilities in place remained unused, for example:

- SUMA software, Food and transport, Warehousing facilities, Tools, wheel barrows

The following is the summary of pledged emergency contributions

Agency	Assistance	Amount in US \$
PAHO	Medical supplies	60,000.-
PAHO	Vector control	60,000.-
PAHO	Laboratory equipment	50,000.-
PAHO	Perdiem to Health ministry staff	5,000.-
UNDP	Civil Protection (40,000. + 50,000.-)	90,000.-
UNOCHA & Norway	Humanitarian Aid (40,000. + 20,000.-)	60,000.-
UNICEF	Tools, blankets, material	10,400.-
UNICEF	Trucks rental	16,565.-
UNICEF	ORS	27,000.-
MIPONUH	Logistics support plus 2 helicopters	
WFP	20 MT food supplies and tools	

N.B. Some of the figures mentioned in the above table are not final as procurement process is still on-going for some agencies

UN Involvement in Rehabilitation

The most affected sectors appeared to be Agriculture (with consequences on food security), Health, and Infrastructure while little has been mentioned on other sectors such as Education. The specialised agencies, i.e FAO/WFP, PAHO/WHO are conducting in-depth assessments to plan for recovery. For infrastructure, assessments are being carried out by other donors. The results of these assessments will probably lead to a reorientation of on-going programmes and the mobilisation of additional resources. Any approved programmes will be executed through their official counterparts.

Agencies' planned activities

Agency	Planned activities	Amount in US \$
FAO	Sectoral evaluation	Not yet available
PAHO	Vector control and Sanitation Epidemiologic surveillance	514,500.-
UNDP	Capacity building of Civil protection	Not yet available
UNDP	Sectoral evaluation / support to FAO	5,000.-
UNESCO	Rehabilitation of school in Fond Verrettes	25,000.-

FAO

- Independent evaluations will look at the major damages to the agriculture, livestock and fishery sectors
- Will target the main food production and will care essentially for small farmers, breeders and fishermen
- Additionally the evaluation missions will indicate whenever possible the consequences of the damages on the supply chain of the population (mainly rural) regarding staple food during the "soudure" period (also known as "hunger gap")

An emergency programme to allow the rehabilitation of minimum capacities of production will then be prepared for further action with all actors involved in the rehabilitation process, including the Haitian State

A targeted and temporary emergency food aid may be needed to assist the most affected farmers and fishermen, in order to fill the hunger gap until they can again be food self sufficient.

Budget, unknown at this stage. FAO funds will not allow covering all proposals that will be formulated as a result of the evaluations. Existing donor funds as well as funds existing at the Government level should cover most of the identified needs.

PAHO/WHO

Assessments are being carried out jointly with the Ministry of Health focusing on water, sanitation, health services and future epidemics. PAHO has provided technical support to the ministry's teams at the departmental level. Resources were mobilised for the following priorities:

- Vector control
- Sanitation
- Epidemiologic surveillance
- Laboratory and medical supplies

Budget US \$ 514,500.- almost covered by Canada, UK and USAID contributions

UNDP

- Support FAO for field assessment through the UNDP project Progress Haiti
- Possibly proceed with the recruitment of an expert to assist the major donors to coordinate their assistance during the rehabilitation phase
- Engaged in the design phase of an institutional capacity building project with the Civil Protection. The project outline has been prepared by the UNDAC team. Inter-agency discussion and coordination will be required, in particular with PAHO/WHO and the European Union, in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

UNICEF

While rehabilitation is not part of UNICEF mandate, needs assessments with PAHO/WHO have been carried out and reports will be available in coming days.

UNESCO

- Support the rehabilitation of school in Fond Verrettes, using the Emergency cash contribution allocated to Haiti.

WFP

- Participate in missions within their mandate to assess agricultural rehabilitation needs and eventual food aid needs
- Make use of development projects to provide food aid for food security

IOM

- Ready to carry detailed field needs assessment for rehabilitation and resettlement of affected persons in the Artibonite region.
- A rehabilitation programme for 2,500 families, including provision of construction material and basic tools is estimated at US \$ 250,000.- Such programme will need external resources.
- Such rehabilitation programme would be carried out with local counterparts such as the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Social Affairs, and coordinated with PAHO/WHO and WFP.

Programme documents or project outlines are available from FAO, PAHO/WHO, UNDP.

Lessons learned

The hurricane has brought to light a series of structural weaknesses on the part of the national authorities, among them its limited capacity to respond to the emergency.

Donors, outside the UN system have expressed their intention to grab this opportunity to pursue some structural reforms aimed at improving the national disaster management capacity.

On the part of the UN system, the lessons learned may be summarised as follows:

Strengths

- Immediate access to cash resources
- Rapid mobilisation of an UNDAC team
- Rapid mobilisation of UNOCHA financial resources
- Preparation and distribution of daily situation reports
- UNDP role in the coordination of the emergency assistance, through the dissemination of information and the facilitation role of the office
- Immediate availability of food for needy affected people, thanks to WFP in-country stocks
- Good inter-agency coordination and cooperation

Weaknesses

- Lack of preparedness in front of natural disasters
- Misunderstanding, both inside UNDP and with the DPC, on the role of an UNDAC team. It was believed that an UNDAC team would provide a more direct support to the national authorities
- WFP would have benefited from funds for immediate assessment of damages

Opportunities

- To provide long-term support to the national authorities in terms of disaster management (*could be an inter-agency process*)
- To have a rapid response team (for example an UNDAC team) able to assist the national authorities in disaster management
- To set-up a functioning network and modus operandi between the UN agencies for emergency response with appropriate funding and expertise
- It is important to establish and maintain a UN system working group with focal points assigned by each agency which, in coordination with the Civil Protection, may constitute a permanent technical advisory body regarding disaster management to support the country
- PAHO/WHO has the technical backstopping required to foster an inter-agency workshop to train focal points in disaster management
- Try to incorporate disaster mitigation programmes in WFP (*and in other agencies*) assisted activities. For example, WFP will have as part of its assistance to the agricultural sector in the North and Northeast a total of 1,000 MT per year for responding to emergencies

Recommendations

The UNDAC team feels that the system in Haiti has an opportunity to establish a Disaster Management team as a permanent inter-agency coordination mechanism based on lessons learned during Hurricane Georges emergency. To achieve such goal, the following should be looked at.

- Training of designated focal point in each agency (both international and local staff). PAHO/WHO has offered to conduct a DMT workshop for this purpose.
- Aiming at a full disaster management / emergency awareness among all UN staff.
- Establishing / developing internal procedures and user-friendly guidelines to act in an emergency.

The team also supports the initiative to recruit a short-term consultant to follow up on the rehabilitation stage in order to extract further lessons in disaster management and its link with development projects.

The capacity building programme for national authorities should be an inter-agency effort in which each partner would participate according to its mandate and comparative advantages.

The UNDAC team has taken note of the little awareness among the UN community of its mandate and scope of activities and will recommend UNOCHA-Geneva to take the necessary steps to improve UNDAC concept dissemination within the system.

The UNDAC team members wish to express their appreciation to the United Nations system for their willingness to cooperate, share information and participate in meetings even at short notice.

The UNDAC Team
8 October 1998