

# Do Catastrophes in Poor Countries Lead to Event-Related Policy Change? The 2010 Earthquake in Haiti

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Received: March 19, 2016 Accepted: April 21, 2016 Published: May 13, 2016

doi:10.5296/jpag.v6i2.9370 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v6i2.9370>

## Abstract

Prompted by Birkland and Warnement's (2014) findings that the earthquake was not a significant focusing event in Haiti, the author reassessed the issue. Using the 2010 earthquake as the starting point, a detailed content analysis of evaluation and strategy report and DRR and developmental plans to find the level of policy adopted and implemented after the earthquake. Using the criterion of event-related implementation as a proxy for event-related policy change the author judges whether and to what extent was the earthquake a focusing event. Among the findings are that not only were there event-related policy change inside and outside of Haiti. Many policy changes were significant in the way they shaped development policy, disaster risk reduction policy and practice as well as humanitarian policy and practices and the tools and methods used in planning for and responding to catastrophes. The more fundamental question is whether, once adopted and implemented, the policy changes can be sustained. Findings show significant challenges in that regard.

**Keywords:** Haiti earthquake, Catastrophe, Disaster risk reduction, Focusing event, Policy change

## 1. Introduction

It is commonly accepted in the public policy literature that catastrophes engender large-scale policy changes (Hall, 1993; Birkland, 1996; 1997; 2006; Gregory, 1989; Birkland & Warnement, 2014; Kingdon, 1995). Catastrophes are “sudden, and relatively rare, and can be reasonably defined as harmful, or revealing the possibility of greater potential future harms, or concentrated on a definable geographic area or community” (Birkland, 1997; 2006; Birkland & Warnement, 2014, p. 40). Much of the literature and empirical research on catastrophes and disasters focus on developed countries, which begs the questions 1) were there event-related policy changes after the 2010 earthquake; and 2) if there were, are the resulting policy changes sustainable? By addressing these questions, the paper adds geographic and context specific information to the existing body of literature.

The questions are relevant to our understanding of policy change and the focusing events that cause them because they take into account economic, social, governance and institutional capacity and environmental vulnerability in a weak state context. Goodin (1982) cautions that any responsible policy must be based on some theoretical understanding of the system in which it intervenes, and Comfort et al. (1999) suggest that human vulnerability should be an integral concern in the development and evaluation of disaster policies. Developing countries like Haiti, lag in disaster reduction policies and programs although they are frequently impacted by disasters precisely because they are poor. Since 1980, over 95% of natural disaster deaths occurred in developing countries and their direct economic losses averaged US\$54 billion per annum (Linnerooth-Bayer & Mechler, 2008). In Haiti, over one-third of its nine million population was affected by the magnitude 7.0 earthquake that struck on January 12, 2010. The earthquake was the biggest the Caribbean region had seen in 200 years and resulted in a significant humanitarian crisis (Holmes, 2010; Morgesson & Taft-Morales, 2010; Zephyr & Cordova, 2011). The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) estimates the damage at between \$7.2 and \$13.9 billion, surpassing the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009. Indeed, the earthquake may have set back Haiti’s development efforts by as much as a decade (de Ville de Goyet, et. al, 2011).

Birkland and Warnement’s (2014) note that “[d]isasters serve as important elements of the agenda setting process in developing countries” (p. 40). However, in assessing the 2010 Haiti earthquake, they suggest that, “from a policy perspective it is difficult to claim that the 2010 earthquake in Haiti was a focusing event with respect to domestic public policy related to natural catastrophes” (p. 49). This finding goes contrary to Castellanos and Ferrero Febrel (2015) observation that, “For the humanitarian community, the world can be divided into “before Haiti” and “after Haiti.” They continue, noting that when a “game-changing” event like this earthquake arrives, it may be time to change the rules of the game. It was a turning point—a “focusing event”—in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and humanitarian policy, not only in Haiti, but globally.

Guided by these contrary findings, this paper reassesses the policy outcome of the Haiti earthquake -was it a focusing event in either or both the humanitarian community and in disaster risk reduction and related policies? The author contends that Birkland and

Warnement's (2014) failed to fully consider the nature of disaster risk reduction in developing countries like Haiti where international public organizations, regional organizations, NGOs, and other governments with close relationships with the country, not only drive policy implementation, but also policy development itself. As such, event -related policy change must be assessed in terms of wider policy actors and their involvement.

## **2. Catastrophes as Focusing Events**

It has been argued (Birkland 1996; 1997; 1998; Kingdon 1995; and others) that catastrophic events are focusing events because they reveal policy failures and offer opportunities for policy change in several ways. First, they cause us to question whether there is significant enough attention and accountability for disaster risk reduction and management at the local or national levels. Second, we try to find answers to whether the policies and actions of humanitarian organizations are appropriately focused on the needs of the local community being helped versus their organization's own needs and goals. Third, we try to learn policy lessons (policy knowledge) in order to strengthen policy and prevent similar situations from recurring. Catastrophes affect broad geographic areas and often cripple the local governments that would otherwise be responsible for a recovery effort. In their wake, considerable assistance is usually required from regional and national governments, as well as from international actors and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Birkland & Warnement, 2014). They therefore create a policy window that brings the issues to the surface and focuses attention on them (Kingdon, 1984; 1995).

Moreover, Catastrophes disrupt the normal workings of society, stakeholder relationships, and operating paradigms. As such, they rapidly expand in the news and on governmental agendas. Although significant, these events provide only a short window for policy change, before the next focusing event surfaces (Kingdon, 2003; Birkland, 1993). Catastrophes are "part of the agenda setting process in which some issues gain and others lose attention among policy makers and the public" (Birkland & Warnement, 2014, p. 40). The agenda space is limited and heavily contested, especially in poor, developing countries because of individual and organizational constraints, including, and in particular, government constraints (Birkland & Warnement, 2014). Policy-interested groups have varying stories of how the problem started, they have to balance a plethora of existing problems competing for scarce resources, and find novel solutions that can leverage goodwill of multiple non-governmental actors.

Underlying the definition of focusing events are 1) that learning has to have taken place because people are motivated to address the problems revealed (Birkland, 2006; p. 173), and 2) that "democratic institutions can criticize government officials, and the notion of free and open pluralistic debate can occur following a disaster" (Birkland and Warnement, 2014; p.176). Birkland (2006) suggests that Change by itself does not constitute learning (p. 175). First, there is confusion over what it takes to improve policy performance; and second, the although the knowledge to improve policy performance exists, political ideology and other factors constrain policy makers' abilities to incorporate these change into policy redesign (Birkland and Warnement, 2014, p. 177). Moreover, organizational features of the policy domain will promote or inhibit learning. Birkland and Warnement(2014) found however, that

media attention, particularly on the highly salient issues, promotes learning. Domains in which ideas for improved policy have accumulated over time are more likely to show evidence of instrumental learning than are those domains that do not accumulate experiences (Birkland and Warnement, 2014, p. 173). The more media attention focused on the event, the more likely are those domains accumulating experiences to learn and act.

In his 2006 book, Birkland lends some guidance as to how we discern event-related policy change, suggesting that perhaps we could look at event-related policy implementation. Among the factors that determine a policy's effectiveness is whether it seems to work after implementation (Patashnik & Zelizer, 2013). According to Birkland going this route is valuable for a few reasons. First, we would see the implementation of a new policy triggered by an event – for example, the creation of the Transportation Security Administration, a clear outgrowth of the September 11 attacks. Second, we would see a renewed effort to implement an existing policy that had been inadequately enforced – for example, increased vigilance by airport security officials in passenger screening. These guidelines will be used to assess event-related policy changes after the Haiti earthquake.

The assumption that “democratic institutions—such as interest groups, have the ability to criticize government officials, and can freely and openly debate issues following a disaster is important for policy change (Birkland and Warnement, 2014). However, the notion is problematic in Haiti. Haiti has a low level of democracy and institutional policy-making capacity. The state political elite often prolonged their tenure not by merit or via elections but through nepotism and dictatorship (Dupuy, 2010a), as exemplified by the reigns of François “Papa Doc” Duvalier (1957-1971) and his son, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier (1971-1986).

A series of coups d'état and forced exiles from 1988 to 1991 paved the way for a transition to democracy as Jean-Bertrand Aristide (1990-1991) became the country's first democratically-elected president. He was ousted in a coup d'état in 1991, and again in 2004 after another stint as president from 2001-2004. And, only recently (February 2016) there were reports that President Michel Martelly had stepped down leaving a leadership vacuum with no one to replace him. So, for the Haitian people the dilemma has remained “whether to respond primarily to the interests of foreign capital and the Haitian business class, or to prioritize the interests of the impoverished majority as articulated by grassroots and popular organizations” (Dupuy, 2012, p. 15).

Much has been written about the decline of the state in the last 20 years (Jensen et al., 2015). Nowhere is this truer than in disaster risk management. Over the past three decades, governments have become increasingly more willing to open up their nations to global developmental and disaster risk reduction (DRR) forces. More and more a country's domestic policies on disaster risk reduction cannot be divorced from global policies crafted and pushed by international humanitarian and disaster risk reduction entities. In developing countries like Haiti, international actors are heavily involved in crafting policy, pushing for their implementation, as well as funding it. This creates a dilemma: will policy beneficiaries be willing to mobilize to defend policies once implemented, if they don't feel a stake in it?

Compounding these, social vulnerability in Haiti is the highest in the Caribbean region, and is impoverished even in global context. Haiti ranks 163rd out of 188 countries in terms of human development (UNDP, 2015) making it the least developed country in the Western Hemisphere. For example, Haiti's high rate of age dependency means that there are fewer employed people to support those not employed. Eighty percent of Haitians are self-employed or work informally, just one percent of Haitians control 50% of the country's economy, and the top 500 taxpayers generate 80% of Haiti's tax revenues (Bailey, 2014). Adding complexity to the above, significant deforestation over the past century has resulted in a mere 2% forest coverage in Haiti. Between 1990 and 2000, the country lost nearly 44% of its forest cover (Rencoret et al., 2010; Herard, 2012). Haiti ranks 155th out of 163 countries in general environmental degradation, caused by rapid population growth and the consequent overharvesting of trees for charcoal to meet energy-consumption requirements (Herard, 2012).

### **3. Methods**

The methodology identifies catastrophe-related policy change in three related policy systems – within Haiti itself; Regional organizations (CARICOM, PAHO, Caribbean development Bank); and international humanitarian agencies with a history of working in Haiti (UN organizations, USAID, CIDA, EU ECHO; IFRC). The author uses qualitative content analysis to unearth and analyze textual data around policy adoption and implementation related to the 2010 earthquake. Textual data were print, or electronic content obtained from articles, books, evaluation and strategy reports restricted to regional and international organizations with a long history of working in the region and who played a large role in earthquake recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Well over 30 documents were selected from these screened. These include newspaper reports containing background and context-specific information on earthquake response and assessment of policy actions one to five years after the earthquake; evaluation and strategy documents as well as reports of high-level meetings from humanitarian and disaster risk reduction actors. The collected documents and reports were examined to develop a picture of the policy changes enacted since the earthquake, and data within a particular code were then examined to find dominant themes.

The use of content analysis presents several limitations, one of which is the potential failure to develop a complete understanding of the context of the data being analyzed (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To overcome this limitation, the textual data were collected according to predetermined criteria about what constitutes event-related policy change. Using this approach can help to establish data credibility by developing themes beforehand. Another challenge is to show causation from qualitative research using content analysis. By restricting assessment to organizations with a strong history of working in the country, and by restricting assessment to evaluation and strategy or benchmark reports the researcher is able to show that strong relationships exist, although we cannot prove causation. This approach also assumes that these organizations will continue to work in the region and thus are invested in making their policy changes work.

## 4. Results

Tables 1-3 outlined in the following sections summarize some of the earthquake-related policy changes that took place as a result of the earthquake. The findings show that not only were there policy changes in Haiti because of the earthquake, but that the changes were consequential for disaster risk reduction and humanitarian assistance outside of Haiti as well. In addition, the findings show that, in the face of a weak state, international actors played a significant role in crafting and implementation policy.

### 4.1 Event-related policy change

#### 4.1.1 Within Haiti

Within Haiti, the comprehensive approach to disaster risk reduction and its integration into a wider development plan represents a shift in thinking about disaster planning and management from a piecemeal and ad hoc process to a more holistic endeavor (Table 1). The 55-page Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti is the first of its kind in that country. This plan, along with the Haiti Reconstruction Fund and the Coordination Framework for External Aid for Development (CAED), significantly enhanced the country's ability to coordinate recovery and developmental needs, both at the community and national levels (Jackson, 2015; GFDRR, UNDP & EU, 2014). The Strategic Plan for the Development of Haiti (Plan Stratégique de Développement d'Haïti [PSDH]) first developed in 2010, was redrafted in 2012 to fill some of the gaps in both the 2010 Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti and the Strategic Plan, indicating some learning took place. So too do the shifts from the early Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) programs launched in 2000 to the current very sophisticated support to the Haitian Civil Protection agency (Grünwald, 2015). Further, the bills currently pending approval by Haiti's parliament to specify the legal mechanisms for humanitarian assistance (Castellanos & Ferrero Febrel, 2015) show that learning is continuing.

**Table 1: Earthquake-related policy change in Haiti**

Actor	Policy/Strategy
Within Haiti	<p>55-page <i>Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti</i> built around four broad pillars (Government of Haiti, 2010):</p> <p>Pillar One: Territorial rebuilding that focuses on the reconstruction of the cities most affected by the earthquake. It also addresses the long-term need for disaster preparation and response planning.</p> <p>Pillar Two: Economic rebuilding, shelter strategies, and population redistribution by spreading the population more evenly throughout the country and moving communities away from at-risk regions. Professionalization of the construction</p>

	<p>sector -building standards for earthquake- and hurricane-resistant materials; other building and construction codes.</p> <p>Pillar Three: Social rebuilding, housing provision, employment, schools, healthcare, food security, water, and sanitation (GOH, 2010).</p> <p>Pillar Four: Institutional restructuring by decentralizing government and enhancing its ability to function. Each region of Haiti will now have its own taxation system and development center (GOH, 2010).</p> <p>Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti (Plan d'action pour le relèvement et le développement d'Haiti) PARDH (Caribbean Development Bank, 2013).</p>
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The approach to integrate risk-informed programming into development planning as the only viable option for Haiti is a paradigmatic shift never tried before in Haiti. The fact that the country is reaping the benefits of the approach imply that the approach has been implemented and is not just a thought in a plan book. In fact, Grünewald (2015) in evaluating the results of DRR efforts in Haiti after the earthquake found that the efforts were slowly paying off thanks to the advocacy work launched by the Political Champions of Resilience including USAID, EC, OCHA, UNDP, and a few governments that worked to push integrated programming at the highest decision-making level in Haiti (ECHO, 2014;Grünewald, 2015).

Importantly, urban challenges are now integrated into disaster planning for the first time. Several urban and land management plans have been designed or are being developed, and new projects were initiated to implement mapping and GIS resources to make it easier to navigate urban centers and deploy resources(Charles, 2015). New entities such as Housing Construction Unit and Public Buildings (UCLBP) were created to oversee urban development, and significant resources are being invested in supporting national institutions that plan for and oversee building and zoning issues. Building permanent structures remains challenging in Haiti (Charles, 2015); housing improvements were slow to emerge after the earthquake, and Haitians started to rebuild in high-risk zones with limited use of para-seismic construction codes (Grünewald, 2015). However, there is now a mix of reconstruction, infrastructure upgrades, and social programs aimed at building safer and more resilient communities (Charles, 2015).

DRR policy requires a facilitative governance environment to support it. Good coordination between players in DRR is a significant step in building a governance environment that leads to more robust and stable policies. In 2011, several initiatives were undertaken in Haiti to strengthen coordination and partnerships between the government (particularly the Directorate for Civil Protection), humanitarian partners, and local organizations like the

Haitian Red Cross in order to better respond to the population's needs after major disasters (CDB, 2013). Moreover, the Technical Coordination Secretariat (TCS), which is the linchpin of the joint mechanism for coordination, supports the governmental mechanism that manages external assistance (CDB, 2013, Appendix 2). Within the TCS are two sub-coordination mechanisms: a high level Committee for Aid Effectiveness (CEA) that brings together GOH under the leadership of the Prime Minister and technical and financial partners to provide a forum for strategic dialogue (CDB, 2013), and the Sectoral Thematic Tables (TST), a platform that allows technical and financial partners, government and civil society to make recommendations around an area or a theme (CDB, 2013, Appendix 2).

#### 4.1.2 Trans-border spillover effects - regional policy system

The earthquake triggered significant policy changes by regional and international actors in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian assistance (Table 3). Major regional actors made commitments to disaster risk reduction and implemented these policy commitments. PAHO for instance made a new institutional commitment to integrate organizational planning and response into its operations. It also established a new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate the overall corporate response and improve information management efforts for the first time. In addition, the new coordination framework created by Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) not only serve to organize external aid but it also complements regional government's strategy to push for good governance in external aid assistance (CDB, 2013) as seen in Haiti.

**Table 2: Event-related policy changes by regional organizations**

Actor	Policy/Strategy
CARICOM/ CDEMA	<p><i>Regional coordination of humanitarian Action</i></p> <p>Brazil established a Brazilian fund for CDEMA to enhance regional coordination of humanitarian actions among CARICOM Member States (CDEMA, 2010; Collymore, 2012). The resources from this fund are managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and made available to CDEMA (Aguilar &amp; de Souza (2012).</p> <p><i>Construction Capacity Building</i></p> <p>CDEMA developed new housing construction Code of Practice; implemented in member countries (Jackson, 2015).</p>
Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)	<p><i>New coordination framework for external aid</i></p> <p>The framework focuses on three levels – strategic, sectoral, and territorial– and rests on two mechanisms – a governmental and a joint mechanism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>The governmental mechanism</b> comprises of a Steering Committee (SC) and a Committee for inter-sectoral coordination, supported by a technical Coordinating</li> </ul>



	<p>Secretariat (CDB, 2013, Appendix 2).</p> <p>The <b>Joint Mechanism</b> brings together GOH under the leadership of the Prime Minister and representatives of the technical and financial partners (CDB, 2013, Appendix 2).</p>
Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO)	<p><i>New Institutional commitment to Emergencies and Catastrophes</i></p> <p>The core objectives of this institutional policy are (PAHO/WHO, 2013, p. 29):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide appropriate and timely technical cooperation to disaster-affected Member.</li> <li>- Facilitate the implementation of the UN Health Cluster, as needed.</li> <li>- Establish a new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate the overall corporate response and information management.</li> </ul> <p>Promote <i>Enhanced coordination capacity of the Health Cluster</i> to respond to disasters (PAHO/WHO, 2013, p. 25-26):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A pool of Health Cluster coordinators created;</li> <li>- The Global Health Cluster guidelines and standards promoted within the Region; and</li> </ul> <p>Health Cluster coordination mechanism implemented in countries and with health sector partners, when activated by OCHA.</p>

Moreover, CARICOM through CDEMA has strengthened humanitarian assistance initiatives and bolstered mutual aid protocols and other simplified systems of disaster response (CARICOM Today, 2015). Through CDEMA, construction sector standards were developed and disseminated to member countries to guide urban redevelopment.

#### 4.1.3 Trans-border spillover effects –Internationally policy system

Among international humanitarian response actors, four broad shifts have been noted (see Table 3). First, they have made deliberate efforts to include local community input into response planning and recovery, acknowledging ongoing complaints by local organizations and their representatives about their marginalization from the earthquake response process and rebuilding efforts (Abdel-Fattah, 2014). Second, they have proposed plans to better integrate DRR into development planning and governance more generally. Third, they have worked to integrate the special conditions of the urban context into DRR planning and policies that had previously been planned around rural contexts. Fourth, they have expanded oversight in the use of humanitarian funds. Again, as with the policy changes inside Haiti, policy change was consequential.

The hardest lessons were learned around (1) need for more holistic approach to DRR; (2). Need for better coordination, and integration of local actors; (3). Integration of the urban context into DRR planning and response strategies and making housing and the housing sector more resilient; (4). improving aid effectiveness during disasters; and (5). building an evidence base for emergency action.

Canada, and the European saw a more holistic approach to DRR was needed as a major part of the remedy to frequent and recurring catastrophes in Haiti. In that regard Canada, a long-time supporter of Haiti, has pushed for the integration of disaster planning into development planning and also put funding into shoring the governmental institutional capacity to build resilience (CIDA, 2015A; 2015B). Further, the EU has undertaken a coherent approach to better connect humanitarian and development actors (ECHO, 2014). These actors realize that leveraging each other's efforts and building on them is better than working unilaterally.

Coordination was by far the most challenging aspect of humanitarian activities at every level. The comprehensive national, regional and global action on this front is an imperative for sustained DRR success. External evaluations of OCHA system-wide humanitarian efforts and the OCHA response document showed that although the system responded well in the initial weeks of the disaster, weak humanitarian leadership and lack of local ownership, the humanitarian sector's difficulty in preparing for and responding to an urban disaster, as well as a weak assessment of the humanitarian situation and needs delayed the response and led to important gaps in geographical and sector-based coverage (Bhattacharjee & Lossio, 2011). Actions were and are still being taken to improve coordination with local groups and increase community engagement, improve communication with beneficiaries and elicit local input about policy prior to implementation. However, progress is not as fast as one would hope. Bhattacharjee and Lossio (2011) found that the interface between clusters and government-led coordination mechanisms remains weak, and there is no clear guidance on how to ensure coherence between humanitarian response and recovery work.

**Table 3: Catastrophe-related policy changes by select International Humanitarian Actors**

Domain	Policy/Strategy
SENDAI Framework 2015-2030	Citing the Haiti earthquake of 2010 as one example, one of the seven targets of the Framework is to “substantially reduce the number of people per 100,000 population affected by catastrophes globally by the year 2030, compared to the 2005-2015 Hyogo Framework period” (Kälin, 2015; UN/ISDR, 2015)).
USAID	<p><i>Improved coordination with local groups</i></p> <p>Haiti Act of 2013: Expanded oversight of USAID reconstruction funds; and improved coordination with Haitian groups (Chen, 2014).</p> <p>Forward Progress Programs increase the amount of money sent directly to local companies and NGOs (Morgessen, 2010; Kushner, 2014b);</p> <p><i>Humanitarian Innovations with implications for future response</i> (Guha-Sapir et al., 2011):</p>

	-new management paradigms, new strategic planning process, new operational mechanisms to coordinate civilian-military opportunities, new emerging Information Communications technologies.
CIDA	<p>Canada's priorities 2015–2020: <i>The renewed strategy for engagement in Haiti</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Whole-of-government approach to increase accountability and coordination (CIDA, 2015a)</li> <li>-Strengthening public institutions, democratic participation, consolidation of security and stability (CIDA, 2015b)</li> </ul>
IFRC	<p><i>New approach to urban humanitarian response</i></p> <p>Strategy 2020 policy changes include (IFRC, 2015):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Modification of existing assessment tools, programs consider Urban Context; -Tools and working methods originally developed for rural contexts now being adapted for application in urban context.</li> <li>-Improved coordination and engagement with local groups and communities</li> <li>-Eliciting local input about policy prior to implementation (IFRC, 2015)</li> </ul> <p>Integrated service provision: now part of the standard operating procedure for some National Societies supporting the Haiti Earthquake operation (Chazaly, 2011)</p>
UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)	<p><i>Evidence-based disaster planning</i>: Since the Haiti catastrophe, extensive work has been undertaken at the global level to address the need for a more systematic and standardized approach to building an evidence base for emergency action ( Gudnitz, 2011; UN OCHA).</p>
Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)	<p>In 2011, the IASC Principals under the leadership of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator adopted the Transformative agenda improving leadership, accountability, and rapid deployment among others.</p>
United Nations, International Law Commission	<p><i>Better harmonization of rules</i>: After the Haiti operation, the UN has nearly completed a draft that is the first step to developing a stronger legal framework (e.g. Global Treaty) to allow for better harmonization of rules, clearer expectations on all sides, and stronger institutionalization of basic humanitarian principles (Castellanos &amp; Ferrero Febrel, 2015).</p>
UNDP	-Housing and Public Buildings Construction policies (UNDP, 2016)

	- Alignment of DRR with national development (UNDP, 2016)
UN OCHA	New approach for emergency action (UN OCHA, n.d)  More localized coordination structures closer to the point of action  Coordination Guides
European Union ECHO	<i>Endorsed a Joint Humanitarian Development Framework to Support A Coherent Approach Between Humanitarian and Development Actors that does the following</i> (ECHO, 2014):  -Prioritize Resilience  -Connect humanitarian and development funds  -Put mechanism in place to improve aid effectiveness, risk informed programming, flexibility and heightened accountability to vulnerable populations  - Improve coordination with other donors

Among UN agencies, the IASC brings together the main operational relief agencies of the UN, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, and international NGOs. In December 2011, after a comprehensive inter-agency review of the approach to humanitarian response and the lessons learned from the major emergencies in Haiti and Pakistan, the IASC's Transformative Agenda was crafted. This is set of actions to address acknowledged challenges in leadership and coordination, as well as enhance accountability to achieve collective results and amend the current modus operandi of the global humanitarian response thereby substantively improving the current humanitarian response model (IASC, n.d.).

Because of the high population density, and the poor construction standards in Port-au-Prince, the death toll exponentially increased during the earthquake. Concerted efforts are being made to shore up the construction sector as one area of high priority. The UNDP, for example, has supported the creation of the Housing and Public Buildings Construction Unit and the preparation of the National Housing and Habitat Policy. And the Housing and Public Buildings Construction policies (UNDP, 2016) opened the door to a larger structural change in Haiti, considering that it did not have a housing ministry or other institution responsible for building construction before the earthquake. In addition, the Housing and Public Buildings Construction Unit and the preparation of the National Housing and Habitat Policy are symbols of the process of connecting the emergency to long-term development (UNDP, 2016).

Many of the evaluation reports, in particular those from USAID, the EU and the United Nations OCHA exposed huge inefficiencies in the way aid was distributed and who received the bulk of the funding. In the United States, congressional hearings on mismanaged funds, a slew of ill-planned projects, and profiteering scandals in the recovery effort led to the passage of the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act of 2013, which expanded oversight of United States

Agency for International Development (USAID) reconstruction funds and improved coordination with Haitian groups (Chen, 2014). Its Forward Progress Programs, aims to increase the amount of money it sends directly to local companies and NGOs (Kushner, 2014). ECHO has put mechanisms in place to improve aid effectiveness; risk informed programming was established, and flexibility and heightened accountability to vulnerable populations are being enforced (ECHO, 2014). These policy approaches were not only pushed in Haiti, but are also being pushed in other developing countries optimize aid monies.

Building an evidence -base for emergency action is one of the priorities of the Sendai Framework. The Framework's Preamble acknowledges the large number of persons displaced by catastrophes in recent years as one of the devastating effects of catastrophes. Data Collection and Normalization -Rationale and Interpretation section notes that the disaster loss data on mortality is significantly influenced by large-scale catastrophic events, that can skew disaster data since they represent important outliers in terms of mortality. Sendai references the Haiti earthquake in 2010, and other recent major disasters (UN/ISDR, 2015). The Framework thus addresses ways to normalize data from large-scale catastrophes.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. *No Question: There Has Been Event-Related Policy Change*

To be clear, there is still much to be done to build the social, governance and institutional capacity for disaster risk reduction in Haiti. However, the current policy and programming efforts in place or being developed in this direction, show that the country has come a long way since the 2010 earthquake. One way to assess whether event-related policy changes took place as a result of the catastrophe in Haiti is to assess event-related implementation. Using this criterion, the author has shown that over the six years since the earthquake there have been a significant number of impactful as well as incremental event-related policy changes to fill gaps or improve systems, procedures and actions. Margareta Wahlström former UN Special Representative on Disaster Risk Reduction at ISDR, noted that “The tragedy [in Haiti] helped to create a greater global understanding of the importance of disaster risk reduction in contexts of rapid urbanization, seismic risk, population growth and widespread poverty.” (UN/ISDR, 2012).

The policy literature shows that domains in which ideas for improved policy have accumulated over time are more likely to show evidence of instrumental learning, and hence are more prone to develop meaningful policy change. In Haiti, much of the policy change was and is being driven by outsiders, who based on their learning on DRR and what is required, stepped up because the government could not. Failed or struggling developing states are more likely than those that are not, to open up their borders to international actors. The practice reflects broader shifts in global and local governance, especially seen in developing countries to address complex and challenging issues like disaster risk reduction. Sustained lack of, or mismanagement of resources mean that developing states, by themselves, often find it difficult to prevent emergencies from escalating into catastrophes without outside help.

In Haiti, the country's domestic policy on disaster risk reduction cannot be divorced from

international humanitarian policies. Nor can it be divorced from regional action on DRR. Reliance on these actors is indicative of a broader trend over the last two or three decades to leverage collective resources to fight the complex challenge of disaster risk reduction. In accepting this aid, though, Haiti has agreed to open itself up to guidance and policy intervention. Overtime these policy efforts will no doubt strengthen DRR, if given a chance at sustained implementation. And, that is the challenge.

### *5.2 Challenges to Keep the Policy Changes in Place*

Several issues are at work here. First, it is true that the state structure in Haiti is weak and that there are legitimate reasons for international actors to intervene, often bypassing the government in doing so. That many NGOs and other international actors providing policy support in Haiti work in their own interest with little input from or coordination with the Haitian government or civil society despite agreements to the contrary is troubling. Some still do not have in place reporting or accountability mechanism at all (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2014). And, despite the best efforts, change is not quick in coming because it does not have a supporting environment to do so leading some to conclude that no policy change took place to begin with or that the catastrophe was not a focusing event.

In the area of crisis-driven regulatory policy, Balleisen et al. (2014) note that the pace of policy change often took a decade or more because, among other things, there is complexity to formulate and implement the policies in the first place. And, once the policies are implemented, there is complexity in assessing causes and impacts. The challenge is to have the local people vested in these efforts, which involves having more of the international funding dedicated to Haiti stay in that country and not return to international communities from whence they came. Only a fraction of the funds committed by humanitarian organizations actually made their way to indigenous institutions and local services organizations or the Haitian people, showing that the international service delivery methodology is flawed. In fact, groups including the American Chamber of Commerce and the Platform for Haitian Human Rights Organizations believe that the outpouring of aid money immediately after the earthquake only widened existing social rifts. The money largely went to international NGOs for ill-planned projects with little oversight or accountability, impeding the country's long-term development goals (Chen, 2014).

We should be reminded that significant policy changes are challenged up to, and even during, implementation. In Haiti, local disaster actors and communities have complained from the beginning that they were shut out of the response, recovery, and reconstruction efforts and hence do not feel a connection to the policies crafted. In addition, in order for policy innovations to be sustainable, beneficiaries must mobilize to defend them or they will fail during implementation. They must see the policy as not only beneficial to them, but as collectively beneficial to their communities. The Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti was developed largely by international actors, with very little input from local governments and NGOs. These organizations mobilized around their individual organizational priorities and mandates, ignoring the Haitian people's insights, needs, and customs.

Policy changes, significant or not, must be sustained over time to make any impact. The question becomes, then, not whether there were DRR policy changes in Haiti, but whether these changes, once enacted, will be sustainable. This question speaks largely to the challenge to macro-micro integration between the global and local levels, a problem evident in Haiti. On the one hand, international actors (public and private) bring resources, but they also bring their own organizational goals and priorities, as well as their vision as to what recovery should look like. Local actors, on the other hand, have little response capacity and so are underutilized, devalued, and marginalized. In Haiti, they were not consulted in the recovery and reconstruction planning, and although efforts are currently being made to integrate them into the process, local actors cannot now be relied upon to ensure an implemented policy's success. The micro-macro challenge is symptomatic of broader trends in governance and the administration of public services.

The growing tendency in the public governance for private and non-profit actors to play significant roles in making public policies and delivering public services is more stark in poor countries. This works to further erode the central role governments used to play in shaping and directing collective actions. Traditional government action has been replaced by multi-centered processes of governing, which are complex and networked. A key observation made in this argument is that the traditional boundaries between “public” and “private” entities are blurred.

But, in poor countries like Haiti, where there is little institutional capacity in the first place, a crisis of leadership exacerbates the challenges to build resilient societies. To address the leadership crisis, there must be integration of local peoples and their needs, culture, and knowledge into planning by global actors. International priorities have to be subordinate to local priorities, difficult as that sounds. Local peoples are vested in how they live and their disaster outcomes, so allowing them to take the mantle is good sense. Developing local leadership capacity as part of disaster risk reduction efforts is an imperative in poor countries.

There is often resentment by residents who on the one hand see international actors as usurping the government's role or that the government has sold out the country. In Haiti several researchers (Grünwald, 2015; Morgesson & Taft-Morales, 2010; Holmes, 2010; Rencoret et al., 2010) have noted that the aid system employed during earthquake recovery was an occupying force in Port-au-Prince. Instead of engaging with local people and authorities, aid workers co-opted the recovery and reconstruction process, marginalizing the Haitian people.

Others (see Patrick, 2011) surmise that the humanitarian community made misjudgments by replacing rather than supporting local actors, thereby disempowering them. In Haiti and other poor countries like it, it is too easy for international agencies to displace, disrupt, and ignore local capacity in order to build up national capacity for indigenous disaster risk management. The Fragile States Principles Monitoring Surveys from 2010 and 2011 confirmed that there is still a long way to go in terms of coordination between the Haitian government and the international community (CIDA, 2015). These examples signal the need for better integration of the macro-micro processes in collaborative governance as seen in the response to the Haiti

earthquake.

In the context of high social vulnerability and low government and institutional capacity, there will be implementation challenges. The Haitian government, lagging behind the technical and financial partners and already in crisis prior to the earthquake in 2010, is having difficulty performing its implementation tasks, but they are plodding through with careful and strategic support.

## **6. Conclusion and Future Research**

The earthquake did serve as a focusing event causing political actors as well as non-political actors within and outside of Haiti to mobilize and craft new legislation and paradigmatic shifts in approach that were put into effect based on lessons learned from the catastrophe. Fundamentally, the findings show that there is a relationship between catastrophes and policy change or policy innovations. The Haiti earthquake resulted in the creation of concerted efforts and international laws around harmonization of humanitarian actors to effectuate better results from disaster response, wider integration of contextual issues such as the urban context, creation of national organizations and developmental policies, and the building of national institutional capacity to reframe and implement new approaches to disaster risk reduction. This is not always the case in poor countries where governance institutions are weak and resources are scarce.

The challenge now is keeping the changes implemented in place. Poor countries like Haiti pay an incredibly high price for being poor. They have very little institutional capacity and resources to support policy development and implementation. And, without broader thinking about solutions, bolder policy decisions and outside help, Haiti will continue to lag developmentally, as catastrophes set them back for decades. The challenges experienced and the efforts made to address them can be understood as a need for better integration of micro-macro processes geared towards disaster risk reduction where locals, who are vested in the outcome of disaster risk reduction efforts will not mobilize to defend the policies crafted. Low levels of engagement with local people and limited cooperation with the local authorities are still an issue in Haiti. It will now require clever marketing and awareness building to build support for the policy changes, some of which are being contested into policy implementation. The research shows that many significant policy changes resulted as a result of the Haiti earthquake, but without champions to defend these types of policy changes, much of the needed benefits will not be realized.

### *6.1 Future Research*

The methodology used in this paper cannot predict causation since the research is exploratory in nature. However, the findings show there is a relationship between the catastrophic earthquake and the sweeping policy changes that resulted in Haiti. It remains now to explore how the impact of such consequential policies can be measured and whether we can prove causation. Perhaps in a decade empirical studies with concrete hypotheses can be tested to establish definitive claims about the nature and scope of policy change after a disaster in poor countries. This would add context-specific knowledge and build on the works done in areas



such as budgeting, foreign policy, and other domains.

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