Haiti remains affected by a series of humanitarian crises which were exacerbated by the impact of Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. In addition to causing an estimated $2.8 billion in damages and losses, Hurricane Matthew “added to pre-existing humanitarian needs throughout the country, notably related to the cholera epidemic, the El-Niño induced drought, the bi-national migration crisis, and the displaced following the 2010 earthquake.” Of the 2.1 million people who were impacted by Hurricane Matthew in Haiti, close to 1.4 million remain in need of some form of humanitarian assistance.

The international community is providing assistance to support Haiti’s recovery from Hurricane Matthew, with over $151 million dollars contributed as of February 6, including more than $86 million dollars from the United States. International organizations, foreign governments, and non-governmental organizations have worked with the government of Haiti to: distribute food and provide food assistance; seek solutions for displaced individuals; provide health, water, sanitation, and hygiene support to affected families; and to rehabilitate damaged schools. The number of people facing food insecurity in hurricane affected areas has fallen from one million people in late October 2016 to an estimated 400,000 people as of late December 2016.

However, it will likely take Haiti years to recover from the damages of Hurricane Matthew. Individuals in the most affected areas “still need immediate help to meet their basic needs,” with the impact of the storm continuing to affect “the provision of basic social services in the most affected areas of Grand’Anse, Nippes and South” departments. Damages from the hurricane “exacerbated three years of drought and severe flooding” in Haiti, leaving over 1.5 million people throughout the country food insecure as of late December 2016. Significant losses of crops and livestock in the south and southwest—particularly in Grand’Anse department (Haiti’s “bread basket”)—“renders communities dependent on imported food and increased food prices by 15 – 25 percent.” Hurricane Matthew struck Haiti as farmers were about to harvest their crops in the fall of 2016. A “very poor harvest” is projected for January and February 2017 due to damages from the storm in the most affected areas (where approximately 80 percent of the population relies on subsistence farming). Various non-governmental organizations have warned of a potential food crisis in Haiti; per the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET), emergency food needs in Haiti will likely “remain elevated until the July 2017 harvests.”

Haiti has witnessed a resurgence of cholera since May 2016, and Hurricane Matthew caused an increase in the number of suspected cases, particularly in affected departments. As of early February 2017, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reported that “suspected cholera case counts reported in affected areas continue to decline”; over 729,000 people have been vaccinated against cholera in affected regions since October 2016. An estimated 1.8 million people have been affected by the partial or total loss of health services in
areas of Haiti that were impacted by Hurricane Matthew. Approximately 750,000 Haitians lack safe water, which has facilitated the spread of water-borne illnesses and diseases, such as cholera.

Displacement continues to remain a problem in Haiti. Over 55,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the 2010 earthquake remain in camps without viable options to leave. An additional 175,000 people impacted by Hurricane Matthew have been left without housing. In addition, since June 2015, at least 158,000 Haitian migrants have returned to Haiti from the Dominican Republic “under pressure of various threats, lack of protection and fear of deportation.”

While humanitarian assistance has continued to reach affected populations as roads have been re-opened and repaired, the security situation reportedly remained challenging during the three months after the hurricane, as “humanitarian convoys were regularly attacked and looted.” An increase in political demonstrations related to national elections has reportedly had a negative impact on humanitarian operations in Haiti. In early January 2017, humanitarian assistance efforts were interrupted by unrest in Grand’Anse department following the arrest of a newly-elected senator.

Elections

On January 4, 2017, Jovenel Moïse was officially declared the winner of Haiti’s presidential election that was held in November 2016. Sporadic protests occurred after the results were announced, but there were no reports of significant violence. On February 7, Moïse was sworn in as Haiti’s president. However, the election result “is still being contested by the opposition,” which held protests during Moïse’s inauguration.

On January 29, 2017, Haiti held elections for eight senators and one seat in the lower chamber of congress. Nationwide municipal elections were also held for the first time since December 5, 2006. The Haitian National Police reported that 49 incidents occurred during the elections, and 20 people were arrested for incidents ranging from “the theft of ballot papers, destruction of ballots, possession of weapons, to the possession of false documents and attempted fraud.” These elections represent the closure of Haiti’s “repeatedly derailed electoral cycle that started in 2015.”

5 Caribbean – Hurricane Matthew Fact Sheet #18, Fiscal Year (FY) 2017.
6 Caribbean – Hurricane Matthew Fact Sheet #18, Fiscal Year (FY) 2017.
7 Caribbean – Hurricane Matthew Fact Sheet #18, Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, p.1.
8 Hurricane Matthew: Three months later, Haiti at risk of food crisis, CARE, Jan. 4, 2017.
9 Haiti: 3 months after Hurricane Matthew, 7 years after the earthquake, UN Development Program, Jan. 11, 2017.

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McFadden.