



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**CHR&GJ Survey Suggests Alarming Levels of Sexual Violence in Haiti's IDP Camps**  
*Preliminary Results Substantiate Calls for Immediate Preventive Measures*

(New York, March 16, 2011)—An alarmingly high proportion of households surveyed in Haiti's camps for the internally displaced (IDP) have been victimized by sexual violence since the earthquake, said the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHR&GJ) in a [briefing paper](#) released today. The Center—based at NYU School of Law—released the paper just days before Haitians are set to return to the polls to vote in a Presidential run-off. The paper makes public the preliminary findings of its survey on gender-based violence and access to food and water, conducted in January 2011 in several IDP camps in Port-au-Prince. The findings add weight to what human rights groups and victims groups have been saying for several months now: that sexual violence and the fear of sexual violence are common in the camps and that significant changes in security and access to basic resources are required.

“Since the earthquake, women's groups have been receiving daily reports of sexual assault occurring while women engage in ordinary activities, such as walking to gather water or washing in the morning,” said Margaret Satterthwaite, a Faculty Director at CHR&GJ and the Principal Investigator for the survey. “The results of this survey amplify these reports through empirical data and suggest that immediate action is needed to prevent further assaults.”

Close to a million people continue to live in tents or makeshift shelters in IDP camps throughout earthquake-affected zones of the country, the majority concentrated in the densely populated capital city of Port-au-Prince. In January 2011, CHR&GJ—along with its Global Justice Clinic—conducted a survey of 365 households in four IDP camps in Port-au-Prince. The survey is one component of a larger CHR&GJ study assessing the links between gender-based violence and access to food and water. The project responds to community organizations' concern with increasing sexual violence in the post-earthquake camps.

The survey's most significant results are as follows:

- **High levels of sexual violence:** 14% of respondents surveyed reported that one or more members of their household had been victimized by rape or other forms of sexual assault, or both, since the earthquake. 9% of households reported that one or more members had

experienced rape or forced sex since the earthquake and 8% reported experiencing other forms of unwanted touching or harassment. These prevalence rates are appreciably higher than other post-earthquake data.

- **Notable levels of sexual violence against boys and men:** Although the majority of victims of sexual violence whose gender was reported were women and girls (86%), a notable number of boys and men (14%) were also reported to be victims. The youngest victim documented by the survey was a four year-old boy.
- **High levels of fear about sexual violence:** Almost 60% of respondents said they were afraid of sexual violence against themselves or members of their household in the preceding month. There was very little difference between male and female respondents on this question. 70% of the respondents reported being more worried about sexual violence after the earthquake than before.
- **High levels of food insecurity:** Responses to questions aimed at assessing levels of hunger suggest alarmingly high levels of food insecurity, with a large proportion of respondents indicating that they had gone at least one full day in the past week without a meal. Preliminary analysis also suggests there may be a correlation between levels of hunger and sexual violence. Survey respondents who reported having experienced sexual violence were also notably less likely to report having eaten every day in the past week than respondents who were not victims of sexual violence.
- **Perceived Increases in “transactional” or “survival” sex:** Early results show a high degree of agreement about the prevalence of so-called “transactional” or “survival” sex since the earthquake, with much concern about young women and girls, in particular, adopting the survival strategy of trading sex for basic access to resources.

Although the results cannot be generalized to the whole IDP population, they suggest that many IDPs, especially women and girls, are experiencing sexual violence. The vast majority of people in the camps live in overcrowded temporary shelters or in tents, most of which lack locks and are made of material that is easily penetrated. The camps’ designated bathing areas and latrine facilities often lack lighting, locks, or adequate privacy and the walk to collect drinking water or to the market to obtain food is often treacherous.

CHRGJ believes it is imperative that international organizations and the Haitian government act to address this situation immediately. Concrete and proven measures to protect against sexual violence must be implemented in the camps and the community as soon as possible to prevent further assaults and alleviate the current climate of fear within camps. Led by community-based organizations, simple interim solutions to preventing attacks and reducing vulnerability should be immediately implemented as longer term solutions are being worked out, and both should be a matter of priority for the international community, international NGOs, and the government of Haiti. The international community should expedite funding for such measures and offer technical assistance where necessary.

“How much proof do we need before real change is made?” said Ellie Happel, a student in the Global Justice Clinic at NYU Law, who traveled to Haiti as part of the survey team. “Although we’re pleased that our survey can corroborate what’s been said by Haitians for months, it’s also time to move beyond debates about numbers to concrete action aimed at protecting these populations from sexual violence.”

CHRGJ will release a full report on the situation in the summer of 2011, following additional work in Haiti to conduct focus groups and key informant interviews. In the meantime, it is publishing this briefing paper to help inform immediate steps to remedy this urgent situation.

To read the briefing paper in English, click [HERE](#).

To read the briefing paper in French, click [HERE](#).

CHRGJ and its partners have also released reports on [the right to water](#) and [the right to food](#) in Haiti.

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### **About the CHRGJ**

The Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ) at New York University School of Law was established in 2002 to bring together the law school's teaching, research, clinical, internship, and publishing activities around issues of international human rights law. The Center has been working on economic, social and cultural rights in Haiti since 2003, producing several reports on the right to food and water, as well as campaigning for transparency and donor accountability. To read more about the Center's work in Haiti, see our website at [www.chrgj.org](http://www.chrgj.org).

### **About the Global Justice Clinic**

The Global Justice Clinic (GJC), taught by Professor Margaret Satterthwaite and Adjunct Professor Jayne Huckerby, explores how human rights law can be brought to bear on situations of global injustice. Working on cases and projects that involve cross-border human rights violations, the deleterious impacts of extraterritorial activities by state and non-state actors, and emerging problems that require close collaboration between actors at the local and international levels, students engage in human rights advocacy in domestic and international settings. Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 GJC students have been instrumental to all aspects of CHRGJ's current work in Haiti.