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## **HAITI – NEXT STEPS**

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Following a series of discussions with key stakeholders in Haiti and with international press freedom partners over recent weeks, framed by an initial Concept Note, the Association of Caribbean Media Workers (ACM) has determined that there are at least three areas of concern requiring urgent collaboration and joint action.

We are aware that opportunities for joint action in situations of crisis and emergency involving journalists already exist through the Journalists in Distress (JiD) Network and other multilateral mechanisms.

Media development concerns are also actively addressed through a variety of organisations associated with networks such as IFEX and GFMD, with expertise and resources to guide media enterprises in distress through potentially fatal challenges.

Within the various networks reside numerous platforms for journalistic content with focused emphasis on developmental concerns with the potential to actively engage journalists in troubled territories.

We wish to propose a series of streamlined interventions with support from the ACM in the following key areas:

### **Emergency Action/Lives**

This includes the provision of assistance in evacuating journalists in immediate danger of physical harm to safe havens in nearby states. The ACM is prepared to explore possibilities within the Caribbean, through the devices of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and to collaborate with international agencies with competence in relocating journalists in address to other destinations.

There is also a recognisable need for counselling services to journalists affected by continuing violence in Haiti, and attention in the event of serious physical injury.

The possibility of supplying PPE to journalists requiring such protection is heavily subject to the current state of disorder and there is a risk that such equipment can be seized by criminal elements and/or employed as a tool for targeting of receiving journalists.

Some of the parties with which we have discussed these subjects include: CPJ, RSF, FPU, IMS, and Freedom House. Should assistance be forthcoming, as prescribed by our ACM Focal Point in Haiti, there would be the need to coordinate such support to avoid overlapping responsibilities.

### **Livelihoods**

Dwindling financial support for the working journalists of Haiti poses the danger of significantly reducing the outputs of independent journalists – even as propagandists and other operatives dominate traditional and new media platforms with mis and disinformation.

The near complete absence of women journalists covering the unfolding crisis has also been noted. This is in part a function of generalized assaults on women, but also because women journalists have frequently been the subjects of harassment and other targeted attacks.

The loss of income-earning potential by women journalists therefore signifies a disproportionate financial impact.

It is proposed that women journalists benefit from specific, focused attention including new income-earning possibilities through journalistic projects exploring issues of emergent healthcare challenges, defective or absent social support systems, and the balance of political possibilities across the gender divide.

Sources of potential support can come from CPJ, the Media Institute of the Caribbean, Global Voices, and other online platforms with budgets and space for stories in French and English.

### **Media Viability**

Among the more serious threats to the survival of independent journalism in Haiti are the shaky economic circumstances of credible, professional outfits. An estimate of the scale of such needs can be conducted as part of a nationwide media scan that examines the current situation both in rural communities (largely radio), and the more diverse markets in and around Port-au-Prince.

The ACM can secure the appointment of a capable professional based in Haiti to lead such an effort, but there will be the need to determine a budget and to identify funding sources.

Funding would also need to be accessed to provide short-term financial support to media houses where needed.

This area of concern can possibly involve a collaboration involving CPJ, OSF, FPU, the Media Institute of the Caribbean and other agencies.