

Haitians want Hillary Clinton to stop deportations

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[PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti](#) Women selling hot peppers and black beans in a sprawling market in Haiti's capital talk of their unending economic woes, their hungry children and their dismal hopes that politicians will do anything about it.

As U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visits Thursday, the expectations of Haiti's people are dismally low.

Disappointment is widespread over unkept promises of aid. The country hasn't yet recovered from last year's food riots and four tropical storms that killed nearly 800 people and caused \$1 billion in damage.

Political tensions also are running high ahead of Sunday's long-delayed Senate elections, which some parties disqualified from running have threatened to disrupt.

In the noisy Croix-des-Bossales market, women fixate on their families' hunger as they bat beetles away from unsold piles of food.

"There's no money in this country because there isn't any work," said [Therese Bejaman](#), 38, who sells coconuts imported from the neighboring [Dominican Republic](#).

Bejaman's husband lost his job at the commercial port across the street a few years ago.

Now their seven children, aged 6 to 18, depend on her traveling hours over washed-out roads to the border, where she pays about \$5.60 for a dozen coconuts with hopes of making about 5½ cents of profit on each one. It's not going well.

"They aren't selling fast," she said.

With other countries struggling amid the global economic crisis, aid to Haiti has been affected.

A donors conference Tuesday in [Washington](#) was a disappointment. It raised \$324 million for Haiti but — despite entreaties by [U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#), security council members, [Bill Clinton](#) and others — that amount was more than \$600 million short of what the country needs for economic development and hurricane recovery.

[Haitian Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis](#) said Wednesday that the pledge is not as much as the country needs, but is more than she expected from donors, given the crisis.

But Haitian lawmakers said the international community has failed to keep its promises, leaving the country to struggle at a critical turning point.

[Hillary Clinton](#) told the donors' conference that the [United States](#) is providing nearly \$290 million in non-emergency aid to Haiti this year. She is expected to meet with [President Rene Preval](#) on Thursday, then go to the Dominican Republic for a town-hall meeting.

The discussions will likely include a request to temporarily stay deportation orders against an estimated 30,000 Haitians in the United States, whose repatriations would further drain Haiti's resources by eliminating the money they send home.

Preval may also ask for more relief from Haiti's heavy debt burden, estimated to include \$1.6 million in payments to the [World Bank](#) each month.

Amid the glum atmosphere, there have been some incremental improvements in Haiti. In this market, some vendors have left their open-air stalls for a red and yellow building constructed last year by the Venezuelan government.

Their shouts and staccato rhythms drummed out on glass soda bottles by soft drink sellers now echo off the building's metal roof.

And some staple foods are cheaper, a year after skyrocketing prices, especially for imported rice, fueled riots that torched parts of the capital and further discouraged investment.

Last year, [Marie-Louie Louis](#) sold the equivalent of a 2-pound coffee can full of rice from a [Florida](#) subsidiary of [Stuttgart, Arkansas](#)-based [Riceland Foods](#) for about \$4.37. Now that costs \$3.13.

Still, regular meals remain too expensive for most Haitians, 80 percent of whom live on less than \$2 a day.

"The price has gone down, but only if you can afford it. Everyone else is going hungry," said 44-year-old [Yuate Jose](#), a mother of three who also is raising her late sister's orphaned twin daughters.

Down the road from the market lies Haiti's rundown parliament, where unemployed people beg for money and jobs outside the gates.

Inside, legislators worry that unsolved problems will fester into more unrest and suffering.

Haiti faces more than a \$125 million budget shortfall and its decimated economy, once a tourism and manufacturing hub, no longer supports any major industries. Security is provided by 9,000 [U.N.](#) peacekeepers as its police force struggles to rebuild.

The disappointing results of the donor conference at the [Inter-American Development Bank](#) will mean budget cuts and continued lags in job creation, [Deputy Guy Georges](#) said.