Relief Across Borders

U.S. choices in the 2010 Haiti earthquake response

9-12.GOV.58 "Identify and evaluate the role of the United States in international organizations, agreements, treaties, and humanitarian relief efforts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two U.S. actions, circle two examples of international cooperation, mark one benefit of U.S. involvement with a 1, and mark one risk or limit with a 2.

Who Helps After an Earthquake?

1 On January 12, 2010, a powerful earthquake struck Haiti. Buildings collapsed, roads broke, and many people needed clean water, medical care, and shelter. Haiti's government asked other countries for help. The United States responded through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and sent military personnel, aircraft, and ships. U.S. forces helped reopen and operate the damaged airport in Port-au-Prince so relief supplies could arrive. This was not a U.S. takeover of Haiti. Haiti remained a sovereign country, and U.S. responders worked alongside Haitian authorities and other aid groups. Speed mattered, but so did respecting Haiti's decisions.

2 The United Nations (UN) also had a role. Its humanitarian agencies and partners helped coordinate emergency aid from many countries. The United States supported UN relief operations and worked with international organizations, including the World Food Programme, to get food to people in need. The UN Charter is a treaty that created the UN and calls for international cooperation on humanitarian problems. It provides a framework for cooperation, but it did not order the United States to send troops to Haiti. U.S. leaders chose what resources to send, while coordination helped different groups avoid working at cross-purposes.

3 U.S. aircraft could bring in supplies quickly, but airport space was limited. Giving a landing slot to one flight could delay another, so coordination and clear priorities mattered. Local knowledge also mattered: Haitian officials and community groups could identify needs that outside responders might miss. In the short term, U.S. equipment and funding expanded the relief effort. In the longer term, aid worked best when it supported Haitian leadership rather than replacing it. The case shows a tension in humanitarian action: international support can save lives, yet a powerful country must not assume it knows what every community needs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did U.S. forces help get aid into Haiti, and why was that role valuable?

2. How could working with the UN and the World Food Programme make the U.S. response more effective?

3. What role did the UN Charter play, and what choice did it leave to U.S. leaders?

4. Why was it important for U.S. responders to work with Haitian authorities and community groups?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A fictional country asks for help after severe flooding. In four or five sentences, propose a U.S. response that uses an international organization, explain one benefit and one risk of your plan, and show how you would respect the country's leadership.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.58

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two U.S. actions, circle two examples of international cooperation, mark one benefit of U.S. involvement with a 1, and mark one risk or limit with a 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did U.S. forces help get aid into Haiti, and why was that role valuable?	**They helped reopen and operate the damaged airport, allowing relief supplies to arrive.**
2	How could working with the UN and the World Food Programme make the U.S. response more effective?	**The organizations helped coordinate aid from different countries and get food to people in need, reducing the chance that groups would work at cross-purposes.**
3	What role did the UN Charter play, and what choice did it leave to U.S. leaders?	**The treaty provided a framework for cooperation on humanitarian problems, but U.S. leaders decided what resources to send. It did not require them to send troops.**
4	Why was it important for U.S. responders to work with Haitian authorities and community groups?	**Haitian officials and community groups knew local needs that outside responders might miss. Working with them supported Haitian leadership rather than replacing it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The United States could send water filters through USAID and coordinate deliveries with UN relief agencies. Working together could help supplies reach more flooded communities without duplicating deliveries. A risk is that outside teams might send filters to places that need other supplies more urgently. The country's officials and community groups should identify the hardest-hit areas and help decide where deliveries go.

Accept other passage-supported benefits and limits, including faster delivery, limited airport space, and the risk of overlooking local needs. For Part 3, look for a proposed U.S. action, a role for an international organization, a benefit, a risk, and respect for the requesting country's decisions.