Haiti: UNSP Research Group in the Midst of the Earthquake

When Humanity Is Your Only Light
By John Burnett

IT’S NOT easy to describe what was seen, heard, and smelt in Haiti. After the earthquake, all of us were moved so rapidly into a world that was and is simply incomprehensible. A place where life is constantly at risk, total destruction is everywhere, and incredible pain eats at everyone around you. Certain memories remain so vivid in my mind: Spending that first long evening under the stars in a walled parking lot, a small handful of peacekeepers standing watch, never knowing what the morning might bring. I remember looking up at the stars, thinking—hoping—that as long as I could see them, there would not be any rain and all the wreckage that would flow from it. I remember the constant shaking of the earth throughout the night from the aftershocks, with a frequency making one think this is the way the world has always been. I remember seeing the initial cloud of dust rising from the city around us as buildings collapsed, and then the faint glow of distant fires burning into the evening sky. I remember that deafening silence of the night, broken by the anguished cries of a woman overwhelmed by the loss of her husband. Those were the first few hours. We left two days later.

I COULD WRITE on and on like this, but words do not do it justice. But there is another vivid memory burned in my mind, which is the response of so many to the destruction around us.

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When Humanity Is Your Only Light

By John Burnett (CONTINUED FROM P.1)

It is the memory of the incredible humanity, stepping forward in ways previously unimaginable. Helping strangers simply because it was needed, asking nothing in return. A humanity understanding that we were all in this together. Where despite, or perhaps because of, the overwhelming force of the earthquake and all it wrought, we were shaken into a truer sense of who we all were inside, with a simplicity of purpose defined only by the need to help one another however we could. 

STARTING WITH my friends, I can only say this. I have never been so proud to be associated with such incredible individuals. Gabrielle Apollon, Annika Allman, Megan Rapp, Gerald Stang, and James Taylor. Each of them reacting in the only way they could, with a vigilance and reason to protect life however they might. From the initial fearless charge to pull people trapped under rubble, to extending love to those who were injured and alone. Every minute we were there. There can be no hesitations, or qualifications, about what my friends did in the first 48 hours after the earthquake. It was simple; they did everything they possibly could to help, and then some.

OUR LEADER, our rock, will always be Professor Elisabeth Lindenmay-er. I won’t ever fully know what she felt and all she did to help us. When I am asked how we were evacuated so quickly, I can only answer that it was because of her. Yet while I feel intense sadness seeing the names and faces of those we met who were less fortunate than us, I can only think that for her these were friends and colleagues forged over an extensive career. None of us will ever forget her courage and direction in bringing us safely home, nor could we.

WHILE WE are back home, life continues, such as it is, for the people of Haiti. I caught only a small glimpse of Haiti’s soul, but it is filled with such strength and solidarity that will help her carry on. In a place where the external destruction is the inverse of the inner force of the people, there will always be possibilities. On an island at the origins of the New World, where the promise and anguish of the Americas have always coexisted, the current torment will also yield once again to the frontier of hope.

THERE ARE many of us here, now, who want to help. My only suggestion is to listen, rather than tell what is needed. To know your own strengths and limitations, and to never lose sight of why you want to help. You may do something now, such as raising funds or collecting essential supplies, or you may help ten years from now. But whatever you do, never forget that the human spirit is at its fullest when we can look each other in the heart, and know that we share the same inner light, burning brightly in a vast universe.

ON WEDNESDAY 31ST OF MARCH, 2010, Prof. Lindenmayer enabled selected students to attend the Pledging Conference on Haiti at the United Nations HQ organized by the Secretary-General and the US Government and based on the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment.

THE UNITED NATIONS STUDIES PROGRAM WILL OFFER THREE COURSES TO THE FIRST SIPA SUMMER PROGRAM 2010:

- THE UNITED NATIONS Contribution to Development Theory and Practice (Prof. Bruce Jenks)
- UNITED NATIONS : History and Practice of Security Council Sanctions (Prof. Loraine Rickard-Martin)
- THE SECURITY COUNCIL and Peacekeeping in Africa in the 21st Century (Prof. Elisabeth Lindenmayer)
UNSP Panels in the Academic Year 2009/2010

WATCH OUT FOR UPCOMING PANELS:
- On April 20th, 2010, the UN Studies Program will organize a panel on “HAITI: PEACEKEEPING, STATEBUILDING AND THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR,” based on its research activities of the previous academic year.
- On April 27th, 2010, the UN Studies Program will organize a panel on MODERN MEDIA.

THE UN AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES: WHY WOMEN MATTER FOR DEVELOPMENT, PEACE AND SECURITY, March 30th, 2010
The UN Studies Program organized a lecture and panel discussion with Helen Clark, first woman head of UNDP and former Prime Minister of New Zealand.

BUILDING A FUTURE FOR HAITI: PANEL AND FUND-RAISER, January 25th, 2010
The UN Studies Program invited UN officials, ambassadors, experts and students to reflect on the consequences of the earthquake and the way for Haiti to move forward. All proceeds of the fund-raiser went to Partners in Health (www.pih.org).
Panelists:
Jean–Marie Guehenno, Former Under-Secretary-General, DPKO; Ambassador Rick Barton, US Permanent Mission; Bob Orr, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of the Secretary General; Jeffrey Sachs, Director, Earth Institute; Tatiana Wah, Earth Institute; Jocelyn McCalla, Senior Adviser to the Government of Haiti; Pablo Ruiz, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN PEACE OPERATIONS – WHAT DOES IT MEAN, WHAT DOES IT TAKE? October 28th, 2009
Panelists:
H.E. Augustine P. Mahiga, Permanent Representative of Tanzania to UN and Chairman of the DPKO/OCHA Independent Study on the Protection of Civilians in Peacekeeping Missions; David Haeri, Chief, Best Practices Section, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); Hans-Joerg Strohmeyer, Head, Policy and Development Studies Branch, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

All panels are moderated by Professor Elisabeth Lindenmayer

Somalia - A Context for the Deployment of a UN Peacekeeping Mission?

STUDENTS IN PROFESSOR LINDENMAYER’S PEACEKEEPING class were treated to an exceptional learning experience on October 14, 2009, when three UN representatives participated in a special class to discuss the political realities of UN peacekeeping operations in Somalia. Making the trek from midtown were officials from the UN Department of Political Affairs, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations as well as a Military Chief and Strategic Planning Officer. They discussed the current situation in Somalia and debated prospects for a future UN Peacekeeping Operation. Efforts by the UN were also contrasted with the current African Union force in Somalia. In the end, despite the oftentimes bleak outlook of the country, the panelists were able to leave the class with a note of optimism, sharing their experiences of working with ordinary Somalis and expressing their confidence that peace in Somalia can be achieved in the future.
Working Lunch Series with UN Ambassadors

DURING THE academic year 2009/2010, Prof. Lindenmayer launched a new initiative entitled “Working Lunch Series with UN Ambassadors” that seeks to give SIPA students access to the current thinking of the UN’s diplomatic community, while at the same time providing UN Ambassadors the opportunity to hear students’ views on topics of mutual concerns and interest. It is meant to continue strengthening the relationship between the United Nations and SIPA and create an ongoing dialogue between the world of international politics and academia.

Working lunches organized during the current academic year include:

AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the UN and President of the Assembly of State Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)

AMBASSADOR GERARD ARAUD, Permanent Representative of France to the UN
“The Security Council seen by a Permanent Member (P5),” January 29th, 2010. Attendance: 20 SIPA students

AMBASSADOR VANU GOPALA MENON, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the UN

AMBASSADOR VIOTTI, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UN
“Rebuilding Haiti,” February 26th, 2010. Attendance: 18 SIPA students

AMBASSADOR PETER MAURER, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN and President of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly,

AMBASSADOR MAGED A. ABDELAZIZ, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the UN and Chair of the Non-Aligned-Movement,
AMBASSADOR PEDRO NUNEZ MOSQUERA, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the UN and AMBASSADOR MOHAMMAD KHAZAE, Permanent Representative of Iran to the UN
“The Responsibility to Protect: Perspectives from the Non-Aligned-Movement (NAM),” April 8th, 2010

AMBASSADOR MR. KHALID A. AL NAIFSEE, Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the UN
“The role of the Kingdom with respect to the issue of Energy Politics in the International Sphere,” April 30, 2010
UN Security Council Open Meetings

**The UN Studies Program** gives SIPA students the unique opportunity to attend Open Meetings at the Security Council. During the fall semester, Prof. Lindenmayr took students to the Security Council to attend the Open Meeting on the question of Haiti; to witness firsthand the passing of resolution 1888 on women and children in armed conflicts; and to follow the debates on the relationship between African regional organizations and the UN during an open meeting on Peace and Security in Africa.

**The First** of these meetings, the Security Council Open Session on Haiti, took place in the first week of the term, before anyone had yet settled into school. The meeting was presided over by then President of the Council, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice, who opened the floor for her former boss and now Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Bill Clinton; then Prime Minister of Haiti, Michele Pierre-Louis and the late Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Hedi Annabi, who lost his life during the earthquake.

**A Few Weeks Later,** Prof. Lindenmayer took students to the 6195th Meeting of the UN Security Council on Women and Peace and Security, which was presided over by Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and saw the passing of Resolution 1888. This resolution is a major step for the Security Council in terms of recognizing women’s role in conflict, and enhancing the ability of the international community to end impunity.

**Finally,** on the 26 of October SIPA students attended the UN Security Council open meeting on peace and security in Africa which was held under the Presidency of Vietnam. During this meeting, member states emphasized the importance of regional organizations such as the African Union in peacekeeping and considered mechanisms to improve cooperation with the UN, and enhance capacity building and financing.

Protection of Civilians in UN Operations: What Does It Mean, What Does It Take?

**On October 28th** the UN Studies Program sponsored a panel discussion on the challenges facing the international community with regard to the protection of civilians in UN Peace Operations. The panel raised a hotly debated issue that is at the forefront of UN peacekeeping today and concerns the tensions between a Security Council that mandates peacekeeping missions to protect civilians, without making available the necessary resources for it to do so. This panel also was an opportunity for students to understand the conflict of interests within the UN system, not only between the Security Council and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, but also between OCHA and DPKO, whose differing interests and professional cultures – humanitarianism on the one hand, military and peacekeeping on the other - make cooperation in the field sometimes challenging.

**Panelists Included** H.E. Augustine P. Mahiga, Permanent Representative of Tanzania to the UN, who is also the chairman of a report commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) on the protection of civilians. The report was made public during the same week of the panel. Other panelists included Hans-Joerg Strohmeyer, Head, Policy and Development Studies Branch, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and David Haeri, Chief, Best Practices Section (DPKO).
UNSP Research Activities

THE UN STUDIES PROGRAM continued to expand its research activities during the current academic year. The research projects are conceived by Prof. Lindenmayer in such a way that they match the research capacity available at SIPA with the research needs of the UN. For students these research projects are an opportunity to meet UN officials, conduct field research in places like Haiti, Kenya, Jordan and Uganda and gain expertise in the issues and challenges facing the UN today.

The Role of the Private Sector in Rebuilding Haiti
Building on last year’s research project on the role of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti, Prof. Lindenmayer is again directing a research project analyzing the challenges of statebuilding and the potential of current new initiatives to consolidate peace and jumpstart development in Haiti. During the course of the fall semester, the research team had the opportunity to meet with Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping and now Special Representative of the Secretary-General; Michele Montas, spokeswoman for the Secretary-General and renowned Haitian human rights activist, as well as Dr. Paul Farmer who has recently been appointed UN Deputy Special Envoy to Haiti. In January 2010 the team travelled to Haiti to conduct further interviews and field research. They were caught in the middle of Haiti’s tragic earthquake which destroyed the capital city and led to the death of several hundreds of thousands of people. The team remained in Haiti for three days before being evacuated to the Dominican Republic. Upon their return, the team made great efforts to refocus their research question, recognizing that a thorough analysis of the role of the private sector, the international community and the Haitian themselves in order to build a viable state is now more important than ever. Their report will be published in May 2010.

KENYA– Restoring Peace and Security post-December 2007 Contested Elections
Prof. Lindenmayer is also continuing her research on the post-election violence in Kenya. At the beginning of December 2009, Prof. Lindenmayer and three students travelled to Kenya to conduct further research on the situation in Kenya and to attend meetings chaired by Kofi Annan with various stakeholders on the reform process. Prof. Lindenmayer also took students to Geneva to attend a conference on Kenya organized by the Kofi Annan Foundation. Last year’s research conducted by the UN Studies Program on the 41 days of mediation culminated in a paper entitled “A Choice for Peace? The Story of the 41 Days of Mediation” and was published by IPI this summer.

ENLARGING THE POOL OF TROOP CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES FOR UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS
The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations also approached the UN Studies Program and requested assistance in the compilation of country profiles of potential new troop contributors to UN Peace Operations. Prof. Lindenmayer selected six students for a UNSP Workshop, which analyzed the incentives for countries to participate in UN peacekeeping operations and produced a framework to assess the profiles of ten potential new troop and police contributors. Regular meetings with UN officials, ambassadors and troop contributors formed an essential part of this research. In January 2010 the Workshop presented their findings to UN DPKO.

UNICEF WORKSHOP ON MOBILE DATA COLLECTION WITH FIELD TRIPS TO UGANDA AND THE IRAQ COUNTRY OFFICE
During the spring semester, the UN Studies Program, under the academic leadership of Prof. Lindenmayer, is conducting a work-shop for UNICEF that will run a pilot study to inform the development of the Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS) that the Office of the UN Secretary-General is preparing to implement. The aim of the GIVAS is to collect real-time data and information from the most vulnerable population in order to establish a mechanism to monitor the impact of crises and external shocks on the world’s poorest.

In December 2009, two participating students were invited to attend a conference in Amman that brought together various stakeholders to discuss their experiences in applying technology for development purposes. During the spring semester 2010, students travelled to Uganda and to Amman (where the Iraq Country office of UNICEF is located) to conduct further research and to explore new technologies for collecting and disseminating data.
ON 24 OCTOBER 2009, 32 students joined Professor Elizabeth Lindenmayer, Director of the UN Studies Program at SIPA, for one and a half days of discussions, presentations, enjoyable food and wine and fall foliage in Chester, Connecticut. The retreat of the UN Studies Program (UNSP) and its student-led sister organization, the UN Studies Program Working Group (UNSPWG), brought together a diverse group of people to share their experiences and perspectives and discuss the challenges facing the UN today.

ONE OF THE GUESTS from the UN, Björn Gillsäter from UNICEF, made a presentation on the Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS)—a unique system that will gather real-time data and provide new tools for the analysis of development indicators. GIVAS is also the topic of Prof. Lindenmayer’s capstone workshop in the spring. The highlight of the evening was the visit of Bob Orr, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning of the UN, who in his presentation stirred up a mix of excitement, real concern, and a profound sense of urgency among students. He discussed the dangers of global pandemics, climate change, and nuclear proliferation and presented some of the UN’s successes in these areas that too often go unreported. After a weekend full of impressions, many lessons learned, and new friendships formed, a happy bunch of SIPA students got on a big yellow school bus to return to the city.

New Media Task Force of the UNSP

Since 2008, the New Media Task Force of the UN Studies Program has been actively involved in developing Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)-based initiatives for UNICEF, UN Regional Commissions at the New York Office and Ushahidi, an open source project which allows users to crowdsource crisis information to be sent via mobile. Information and communications technologies (ICTs) are quickly becoming an integral part of the development toolkit of international humanitarian and aid organizations around the world. ICT have been used in many developing countries in tracking aid delivery, supporting data collection, mapping crisis reports and building social networks to mobilize civil society. New communication technologies are changing the international political landscape by increasing transparency, raising awareness and effecting public’s engagement in international affairs. Through social media, public engagement can be transformed into international cooperation, bringing new meaning to the concept of public diplomacy. This creates possibilities for game-changing implications in the field of international politics. Since 2008 SIPA students have tackled projects on tracking children’s malnutrition in Malawi, developing Regional Climate Change Coordination Tool for African Economic Commission, and designing a system to gather vulnerability indicators in Iraq and Uganda. Most recently, students from the New Media Task Force launched a crisis mapping project with Ushahidi to help in after earthquake international emergency relief effort. In less than 48 hours, more than 60 SIPA student volunteers were trained to monitor social and traditional media reports from Chile and mapped over 100 incidents. Over 150 students have supported humanitarian aid effort and are inspired by the tangible impact they have had via new media.

The New Media Task Force of the UN Studies Program will leverage the momentum of the Ushahidi-Chile crisis mapping at SIPA and promote further dialogue by hosting a panel of key actors who work in data visualization for development. This theme generates a great deal of interest amongst the student body as many students are now already trained and experienced crisis-mappers.

The New Media Task Force of the UN Studies Program will organize a panel on this issue on April 27th at 6:00pm in Room 1512 at SIPA.
ON APRIL 1ST, 2010, 25 students of Professor Lindenmayer’s class: United Nations: Challenges and Opportunities participated in a four-hour simulation of the Darfur peace negotiation process. 2010 is a year in which Sudan may make important steps towards democracy or slip further towards civil war. It would be difficult to imagine a more realistic or relevant student simulation.

In the weeks preceding the negotiation students were fed a steady diet of news articles about the changing real world situation. Each student represented one of the various rebel groups, the government, international actors or civil society. In addition, experts and officials from the United Nations advised the students and ensured that the simulation was as realistic as possible.

The negotiations were demanding and stressful for the two student groups. For the Doha group, the challenge was to negotiate a new Darfur peace agreement that satisfied highly divergent perspectives on issues of ceasefire, political inclusion, power-sharing, wealth-sharing, and assistance for internally displaced persons. Despite ‘breaking news’ that threatened to derail the process, within four hours the parties had reached agreement on all key issues.

Meanwhile the New York group sought to pass the corresponding Security Council resolution. Not to be outdone by their Doha counterparts, the Security Council group managed to reconcile their differences and pass the resolution in the end.