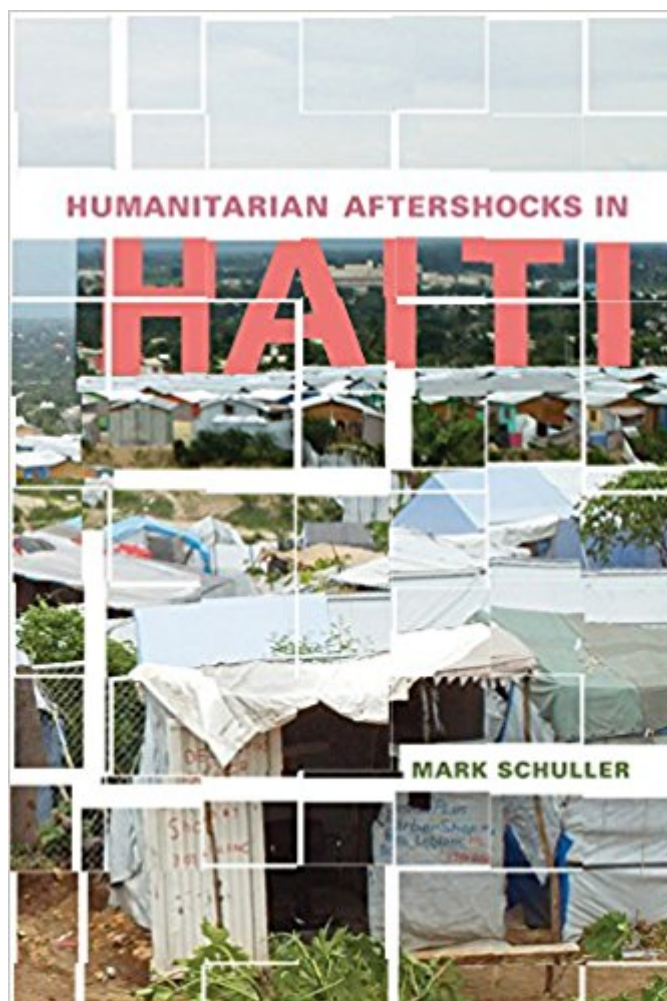


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# Humanitarian Aftershocks In Haiti



## Synopsis

The 2010 earthquake in Haiti was one of the deadliest disasters in modern history, sparking an international aid response "with pledges and donations of \$16 billion" that was exceedingly generous. But now, five years later, that generous aid has clearly failed. In *Humanitarian Aftershocks in Haiti*, anthropologist Mark Schuller captures the voices of those involved in the earthquake aid response, and they paint a sharp, unflattering view of the humanitarian enterprise. Schuller led an independent study of eight displaced-persons camps in Haiti, compiling more than 150 interviews ranging from Haitian front-line workers and camp directors to foreign humanitarians and many displaced Haitian people. The result is an insightful account of why the multi-billion-dollar aid response not only did little to help but also did much harm, triggering a range of unintended consequences, rupturing Haitian social and cultural institutions, and actually increasing violence, especially against women. The book shows how Haitian people were removed from any real decision-making, replaced by a top-down, NGO-dominated system of humanitarian aid, led by an army of often young, inexperienced foreign workers. Ignorant of Haitian culture, these aid workers unwittingly enacted policies that triggered a range of negative results. Haitian interviewees also note that the NGOs "replanted the flag" and often tended to "just do something," always with an eye to the "photo op" (in no small part due to the competition over funding). Worse yet, they blindly supported the eviction of displaced people from the camps, forcing earthquake victims to relocate in vast shantytowns that were hotbeds of violence. *Humanitarian Aftershocks in Haiti* concludes with suggestions to help improve humanitarian aid in the future, perhaps most notably, that aid workers listen to "and respect the culture of" the victims of catastrophe.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Although the earthquake caused more devastation than the post-disaster response, Schuller's examination suggests how and why the aid response rubbed more hurt into the wound. Based on field-level data, collected with cool rigor, his argument becomes a powerful indictment. Could it have been otherwise? Read Schuller to find out." (Michael Barnett George Washington University)"Mark Schuller offers clear analysis, informed by empirical knowledge. This sets him apart from the usual experts on Haiti. A challenging book from an author who goes the distance to understand the 'other.'" (Raoul Peck award-winning Haitian filmmaker and director of Fatal Assistance)

MARK SCHULLER is an associate professor in the anthropology department and at the Center for NGO Leadership and Development at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois, and is also an affiliate at the Faculty of Ethnologie, Université de Haïti. He is the award-winning author or coeditor of seven books including *Killing with Kindness: Haiti, International Aid, and NGOs* (Rutgers University Press), coeditor of *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti since the Earthquake*, and codirector and coproducer of the documentary *Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of the Global Economy*.

powerful book for anyone who is planning a trip or a mission trip to Haiti

Schuller has done a remarkable presentation of the many voices of humanitarian aid, most notably by giving Haitian voices prime position at the beginning of each chapter. Schuller is deeply fluent in Haitian Kreyol, thus enabling people's everyday speech, with its metaphors and allusions and parables, into an English that retains the original meaning. (If I were a poet I would want him to translate my work.) The long quotes at the top of the chapters make the data presented take on a physicality that informs the rigorously conducted research. And it is rigorous, presenting multiple aspects of the knotty problems of aid from the several points of view at issue. Anyone who is concerned with humanitarian response to such disasters as fire, tsunami, war, massive migration, flood, tornado, should read this book with care, even if your involvement is only to write a check,

and especially if you are thinking of buying a plane ticket to go pitch in, or or head to the scene with a medical team. It is an extraordinary primer for thoughtful action.

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