

Problem

The 2010 earthquake was a massive disaster. It left more than 230,000 people dead, an estimated 2 million homeless and compounded long-standing issues. A deteriorated agriculture sector, inadequate land tenure policy, weak government institutions, and conflict contributed to a weakened Haitian state. Environmental degradation had left much of the population at risk of frequent natural hazards, notably hurricanes and seasonal rains. Weakly enforced building standards placed Haitians in vulnerable, easily collapsible housing structures. These and additional factors have exacerbated the effects of the earthquake and are factors in the slow recovery and rebuilding process.

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Haiti

Recommendations & Actions

- To build back a better Haiti, concrete steps must be taken to ensure that reconstruction is fully inclusive, transparent, sustainable and well-coordinated. Support the approval and implementation of a comprehensive settlement and shelter strategy. The strategy should: support the development and enforcement of improved building standards; facilitate the provision of rental stock; provide guidance for establishing and managing large resettlement sites; and improve access to job opportunities and social services. Ensure reconstruction includes areas outside Port-au-Prince in order to establish other areas of Haiti as centers of growth. Invest in agricultural and rural development initiatives that include Haitian civil society organizations, decentralize income generation efforts in each district, and improve small-scale farmers' access to land, technical training, equipment and local markets. Adopt food security strategies that support local purchase.
- Incorporate preparedness for future disasters, protection from natural hazards and environmental conservation into reconstruction planning and efforts. Advocate with and provide funding for UN and international agencies to deploy experienced protection staff, including more staff for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the displaced persons police unit of the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH), to mitigate gender-based violence, child abuse and other risks in camps. Work with the Haitian authorities to develop a cadre of Haitian social workers and support the institutionalization of a social protection system for children.
- Ensure Haitian civil society, including local women's organizations and peasant movements, and vulnerable and disenfranchised groups have a key role in reconstruction planning and implementation.
- Provide the necessary technical and financial assistance and training to Haitian Government and local government officials to resolve land tenure issues and other impediments to reconstruction. Actively engage the government on resolving complex issues like the slow approval of supplies by customs agencies. Coordinate U.S. reconstruction plans with other donors and support and resource the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) to ensure its coordination activities are inclusive, transparent and work toward the best interests of the Haitian population, especially the most vulnerable. Ensure experienced development actors are an integral part of creating and implementing the U.S. Government's Haiti reconstruction strategy.

Results

With Haitians in the lead, supported by experienced development actors, effective coordination among donors and NGOs, and a sustained international community commitment to sound and inclusive development, Haiti will have a better chance of overcoming the challenges presented by decades of poverty and the devastating earthquake.

Background

Even before the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010, Haiti was one of the most impoverished nations in the Western hemisphere with 80 percent of its people living in poverty. The massive earthquake exacerbated existing weaknesses including endemic poverty, frail governance and a lack of preparedness for natural disasters.

Because the earthquake occurred in an over-populated urban area with many poorly-constructed buildings, it resulted in far more deaths, displacement and crippled infrastructure than other recent earthquakes of equivalent scale. One in eight Haitians was directly affected, and one in fifteen of those affected were killed.

Buildings and infrastructure in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince and elsewhere were severely damaged. Infrastructural casualties included numerous prominent government buildings, limiting government effectiveness following the earthquake. Educational infrastructure was also severely affected, with almost 5,000 schools affected and 1,500 educational staff dead. In the health sector, 60 percent of hospitals were damaged. Massive post-earthquake migration to rural areas burdened social safety nets and already strained smallholder agricultural systems.

The Government of Haiti led the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) conducted from late February through March estimated that the damage and loss totaled over \$7.8 billion, more than the country's 2009 GDP.

Disaster-affected Haitians have faced an array of stressors, including increased susceptibility to crime, psychological trauma and increased insecurity, particularly for women and children, who have become more vulnerable to sexual abuse and trafficking.

The complexity of the existing economic and political issues, the magnitude of disaster and the diversity of actors on the ground created a very difficult situation in the earthquake's immediate aftermath. While aid was rapidly mobilized, the effectiveness of the humanitarian response was affected by a multitude of constraints including the challenging urban environment, the human and emotional toll sustained by NGO and UN staff in country when the earthquake struck, and insufficient attention by the international response community to coordination with Haitian NGOs.

Despite these challenges, immediate humanitarian operations delivered life-saving support on a massive scale. According to an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) report completed six months after the disaster, 4 million people had received food assistance, emergency shelter materials had been distributed to 1.5 million people and basic needs such as health, water and sanitation had been

attended to in camps. In addition, 1 million Haitians had benefited from cash-for-work programs, 195,000 children had gained access to education and 142,000 households had received agricultural inputs for spring planting.

Proper coordination between all parties will be critical in the reconstruction phase. The Government of Haiti has established the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) to coordinate efforts and ensure rebuilding activities align with the priorities identified in its Action Plan for the National Recovery and Development of Haiti. The IHRC is intended to work in concert with government ministries. It is responsible for approving all reconstruction projects over \$1 million. Representatives from the Haitian Government, donor community, multilateral institutions and the international and Haitian NGO communities sit on the IHRC board.

As attention shifts from the emergency phase to recovery and reconstruction, it is important to address the humanitarian needs of the affected Haitians, including those still living in planned or makeshift camps, with greater urgency. However, plans for recovery and reconstruction need to be addressed simultaneously to ensure Haitians can also meet their long-term goal of "building back better." Unfortunately, these reconstruction efforts may be derailed by the weak capacity of the Government of Haiti, among a complex web of other challenges. For example, with over 1 million Haitians living in overcrowded, insecure and inadequate spontaneous settlements, resettling internally displaced persons (IDPs) will pose huge operational challenges and face major complications including the lack of adequate land tenure policy. Such issues must be addressed in a coordinated manner because without appropriate resolution, progress towards recovery or long-term development may be limited, and the Haitian people may be vulnerable to social unrest or further crises. Reconstruction efforts should include the development of all of Haiti, not only the highly populous urban areas. Agricultural development, including livestock-based agriculture, is just one mechanism for meeting immediate livelihood needs while rebuilding long-term nutrition and asset bases of poor families.

Ensuring adequate security and protection, especially for women and girls, and equal access to basic health, sanitation, education services and food security will also remain critical—both in temporary camps and resettlement sites in the short term and in permanent communities and dwellings in the long term. There must be increased communication and coordination between the international and Haitian NGO communities, the Government of Haiti, the IHRC, the international donor community and other stakeholders to ensure that reconstruction benefits the most vulnerable and contributes to a sustainable, efficient and just Haitian state.