



REBUILDING HAITI: DEBRIS MANAGEMENT, RECONSTRUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION AFTER THE 2010 EARTHQUAKE

The devastating earthquake of 12 January 2010 in Haiti affected more than 3 million people. Up to 160,000 people lost their lives in the earthquake, which measured a disastrous 7.0 on the Richter scale, destroying parts of the Haitian capital Port-Au-Prince and surrounding areas. With thousands of people left homeless and unemployed, the earthquake led to an estimated economic loss of US\$ 7.9 billion, exacerbating an already feeble national economy.

Survivors were also exposed to serious health and environmental hazards. With a country left in ruins, building material for reconstruction was hard to come by, and the best way to manage the debris was to reuse the earthquake rubble. To effectively rebuild the country, there was a need to create and develop skills for recycling and transforming debris for reconstruction.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Partners:
UNDP, UNOPS,
UN-Habitat, IOM,
the Government of
Haiti, the Episcopal
Conference of Haiti

Beneficiary country:
Haiti

Timeframe:
April 2011 –
September 2015

Budget:
US\$ 8,211,277
with in-kind support
from the Episcopal
Conference of Haiti

THE RESPONSE

Four UN entities joined forces in the debris management project (funded by the Haiti Reconstruction Fund (HRF), a multi-donor trust fund) and the neighbourhood rehabilitation project (funded by the HRF and the Canadian International Development Agency): the International Labour Organization (ILO); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS); and the United Nations Human Resettlement Programme (UN-Habitat). Working in close collaboration with the Haitian Government and its Ministry of Public Works, Transportation and Communications, the National Institute of Professional Training and numerous municipalities, the project helped those left homeless in and around Port-au-Prince to return to their homes. It also contributed towards revitalizing the economy by encouraging the setting up of businesses that could recycle and transform the rubble into non-structural building materials for the reconstruction of the capital. The ILO was responsible for three components of these ground-breaking projects:

Supporting local entrepreneurs: The ILO developed training programmes for entrepreneurs, encouraging them to harness their potential. Microfinance initiatives supported the establishment of small and micro construction enterprises.

Promoting employment: The ILO provided training on debris recycling and transformation

for potential entrepreneurs, and in the area of occupational safety and health for construction workers.

Rehabilitating the neighbourhoods by recycling rubble: The ILO and its partners used products made by entrepreneurs in the reconstruction process, thus forming a cycle that promoted employment, accelerated rehabilitation infrastructure and boosted the local economy. In addition, the ILO developed and launched a specific training programme to enable construction actors to participate in the reconstruction process, while respecting the norms and standards set by the government for earthquake – and cyclone resistant structures and buildings.

In the context of the reconstruction programme, the ILO was able to sign an agreement with the Episcopal Conference of Haiti to establish an Enterprise Service Center (ESC) in one of the most affected areas of Port-au-Prince. The ESC is a multi-service structure providing a production site and equipment rental services, as well as technical and business management training and consulting services for market research and the formalization of economic activities. The Episcopal Conference allowed the ILO to set up its ESC and related activities in the area where the Great Seminary of Turgeau used to stand. In return, the ILO agreed to demolish the Seminary ruins and recycle the rubble for free.



"At the beginning, my business was not good. Thanks to the 'Know About Business' training, I had many benefits and have paid off my debts. Business is so good that I am going to open the second shop soon."

Steve Simon, a 'Know about Business' (KAB) trainee



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RESULTS

The project has resulted in a wide range of actions and brought about lasting social and economic effects in Haiti, such as:

- 522 entrepreneurs and 33 trainers took part in the entrepreneurship training programme. With access to microfinance, 53 new businesses were established in the construction sector;
- 718 construction workers were trained in anti-seismic and anti-cyclonic construction techniques and received certificates recognized by the State;
- 766 microenterprises were created, which focused on debris recycling and processing. These enterprises were responsible for demolishing more than 7,000 damaged buildings and removing more than 800,000 m³ of the debris, which produced more than 207,000 aduquins (building blocks for reconstruction) and generated 102,060 hours of work;
- The infrastructure was strengthened in affected regions of Haiti. For example, more than 13 kilometres of roads have been repaved using the recycled debris;

- More women now have access to job opportunities in construction, which is a sector traditionally dominated by men;
- Young women and men were less inclined to turn to violence as a result of improved decent work opportunities and living conditions.

This project may be seen as an example of good practice as it paved the way for more ILO involvement in post-earthquake Haiti, in particular in rehabilitation, infrastructure development and construction. Because of this project, the ILO now works with more partners, such as the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH);

By raising awareness within the community, ensuring more and better jobs, improving infrastructure and creating an enterprise service centre, the ILO is now well placed in Haiti to work on other important decent work themes, such as the elimination of child labour and the strengthening of social dialogue.

BENEFITS OF PARTNERING

The Government strengthened its disaster relief capacity through the innovative partnership approach taken by the ILO and other UN entities; UN agencies are now aware of the benefits of forming a systematic disaster relief chain that effectively mobilizes local resources to enhance livelihoods and promote employment. Communities enjoy sustained socio-economic benefits brought about by the project.