



PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Preparing the Next Generation of Disaster Responders in Haiti

Overview

Calvens Joseph, a civil engineering student in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, had no idea what to do or where to go when the 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the island of Haiti in 2010. Today, a role model for his country, Calvens is proactively changing to learn how to protect his country and, at the same time, help his community prepare for the country's next adverse natural event.

The Haiti Structural Assessment Program, financed by GFDRR, is designed to assist the Government of Haiti in its post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction efforts by reinforcing the role of the Government's Ministry of Public Works, Transport, and Communication (Ministère des Travaux Publics, Transports et Communications) as the key reconstruction coordinating entity. The program is achieving this objective through enhancing existing capacity. In addition, the program supports the creation of a Technical Unit for Building Assessments and Construction Norms, responsible for the coordination and execution of a public infrastructure assessment campaign and the development of an accurate national database of all physical damages. The program's focus includes strategic and technical advice, capacity building and training in proven building assessment methodologies.

The Haiti Center initiative, also developed under the Haiti Structural Assessment Program through a unique partnership of public sector, civil society and academic institutions, facilitates the integration of Haitian universities into the reconstruction process by building their capacity to inform policy and train future practitioners. The Haiti Center creates a platform for university collaboration to provide students and professors with a forum in which to develop practical field knowledge on disaster risk mitigation and reconstruction, as well as interact with government and reconstruction practitioners.

Challenges

The 2010 earthquake occurred inland, approximately 25 km west of Port-au-Prince. With 87 percent of Haiti's universities located within or in close proximity to Port-au-Prince, 28 of the 32 major universities were completely destroyed, while the remaining four sustained serious damage. More than 200,000 people were killed, among them, thousands of professors and students. Prior to the earthquake, the Department of Civil Protection (Dirección de la Protección Civil), in part through programs with GDFRR, built capacity to respond to natural disasters; however, other key ministries and professional organizations lacked similar skills to guide effective response efforts. Additionally, the Haitian academic community specializing in areas related to disaster risk management (DRM) did not possess an a forum to interact with practitioners on the ground. As a result, a succinct and streamlined resilient recovery process, at both national and local levels, was not possible.

Prior to the 2010 earthquake, the curriculum of students in the architecture departments of the State University of Haiti (Université d'Etat d'Haïti, UEH) and the Université Quisqueya (UniQ) did not focus much on natural hazards, risk, vulnerability and reconstruction or how to conduct research in those areas. There were no leadership, academic or institutionalized programs in DRM. Another difficult challenge faced was the fact that after the 2010 earthquake, the majority of students and professors that survived were left without classrooms and, therefore, had no venue to discuss the best way to address future disaster preparedness.

Approach

To address this need for training in disaster preparedness and response, the Haiti Center supports a broad strategy of linking universities and their coursework to existing government initiatives and capacity building in the next generation of reconstruction and development practitioners. It

Region: Latin America and Caribbean
Country: Haiti



Focus Area:

Preparedness

Civil protection system; pre-positioning emergency response equipment; early warning systems; contingency planning, etc.



Highlights

Builds the next generation of reconstruction and development practitioners, professors and partnerships with Haitian universities.

Strengthens Haiti's Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communication by training students on response and reconstruction at a GFDRR-funded "Haiti Center."

Develops field experience for students.

Improves links between universities and the Government.

Shares knowledge and capacity for disaster preparedness and response.

Enhances capacity to prepare for and respond to a natural disaster event.



also seeks to strengthen the role of Haitian universities in the reconstruction dialogue by building capacity for research in urbanization and risk. The initiative provides universities with educational materials, laptops and projectors. The Haiti Center also funds lectures by leading international and national specialists in DRM and teaches students how to structure and conduct research. Finally, a modest stipend paid by the initiative enables professors to take the time to lecture and mentor students.

Results

Developed with faculty from the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the Haiti Center was successful in building support and leadership among local university faculty and administration. The Haiti Center curriculum can be easily integrated into student coursework throughout the country. The initiative has also created links between the Haitian Government, reconstruction actors and university partners. To date, this initiative has achieved much success, including but not limited to, the following results: (i) the delivery of two field-based courses (winter and summer, 2012), which included selecting students (8 winter students; 28 summer students); (ii) developing course curriculum; (iii) hosting local and guest lecturers; (iv) defining research topics and sites for students; (v) personal mentoring of student projects; (vi) an inaugural lecture with between 50 to 60 attendees; and (vii) the development of a resource library. The beneficiaries of this project include the next generation of reconstruction and development practitioners, professors, academic partners and Haitian universities, which together will strengthen their roles in reconstruction and risk dialogue by building capacity for research in urbanization. Haitian and international students also benefit through their participation in the pilot field-based courses, internships and other initiatives.

The Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy (DRLA), also part of the Haiti Center, focuses on international best practices for reducing disaster losses. The DRLA trains Haitian leaders from the federal and municipal government, multilateral agencies and other implementing agencies, also known as Disaster Resilience Leadership Fellows, to utilize the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), a collaborative action plan promoted by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). Fellows develop and report progress made toward individual action plans, tied to the HFA, in order to document and track how they plan to contribute to their organization and promote disaster resilience in the country.

Partnership

The Haiti Center initiative is one of the initiatives selected by the Haiti Structural Assessment Program, which is financed by a GFDRR grant. In addition to the World Bank, participating institutions include: MIT, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the International Organization of Migration (IOM), Oxfam America, Build Change, the Catholic Organisation for Relief & Development Aid (CORDAID), Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), Société d'Aménagement et de Développement (SODADE) and Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) International. The DRLA is funded in part by GFDRR and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; it also works with several other entities such as Tulane University, local Haitian universities, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the government water and sanitation department (DINEPA), the Ministry of the Interior (MICT), the Ministry of the Environment, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Action-Aid, Act-Alliance, the social and economic development research center (CRESFED), World Vision and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

Next Steps

The Haiti Center is considering a second phase which would strengthen the progress made during 2012 and expand the activities to align with the regular university curriculum. The second phase will incorporate lessons learned, e.g., internships with practitioners early on in student coursework. To ensure the efficacy and longevity of the program, it will be critical to strengthen the relationships between Haitian universities, international universities, the Government, reconstruction practitioners and the private sector. In addition, initiating links with other DRLA programs in Africa and Asia would facilitate South-South learning.



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Students from the Haiti Center: Building the next generation of reconstruction and development practitioners to be prepared to protect communities against future disasters.

“We are managing very well and have been applying what we learned during the field based courses. Many thanks to you and to all your team!”

Calvens Joseph
Civil Engineering Student
Université GOC
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Lessons Learned

It is imperative to involve university and research institutions from the beginning.

It is important to combine academic learning with practical on-the-job training opportunities for students.

Collaboration is critical between diverse partners (i.e. government, civil society, private sector), students and midcareer professionals from all over the country, including more remote areas.



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