

# STRENGTHENING HAITI'S RESILIENCE TO MULTIPLE DISASTER RISKS IN A VOLATILE CONTEXT

## Investments in diverse capacities improve resilience to multiple concurrent hazards

### AT A GLANCE

**Country:** Haiti

**Risks:** Multi-hazard

**GFDRR Areas of Engagement:** Promoting open access to risk information; Deepening financial protection; Strengthening hydromet services and early-warning systems; Enabling resilient recovery

*"Thanks to the support of the World Bank and the European Union, key investments were made in spatial data production, open data platforms, and technical training, to the advantage of DRM activities in Haiti."*

—Boby Emmanuel Piard, the Director-General of the National Center for Geospatial Information (Centre National de l'Information Géo-Spatiale - CNIGS), in January 2021.



Si vous êtes à la maison ou dans un endroit sûr

[Video campaign](#) launched by Haiti's General Directorate for Civil Protection (DGPC).

### Abstract

Efforts to strengthen disaster risk management at multiple levels of Haiti's policy and decision-making gained even more relevance after repeated disaster events.

### Context/Introduction

Haiti continues to endure a cycle of disasters with extreme human and economic impacts. The latest events on record are the August 14, 2021, 7.2 magnitude earthquake that struck near the city of Les Cayes, in the southern peninsula, causing over 2,000 deaths and affecting over 800,000 people.<sup>1</sup> This was followed two days later by Hurricane Grace, which resulted in severe flooding and caused massive disruptions to earthquake relief efforts. These events took place in a volatile political context following the assassination of president

Jovenel Moïse in July 2021 and growing insecurity across the country. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to place an enormous strain on Haiti's beleaguered public health infrastructure, bringing into sharp focus the institutional deficiencies and inadequate capacities of its disaster risk management agencies and further aggravating the country's social and economic vulnerabilities.

These events have underscored the challenges inherent in establishing a viable strategy for disaster risk management that addresses multiple risks, especially in a country with severe exposure to hazards and political instability that can hinder a coordinated response. In this context, support from Haiti's international partners—including the European Union (EU) and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)—has been crucial in providing local disaster management practitioners and stakeholders with improved institutional capacities. These efforts have also contributed to promoting sustainable and inclusive resilience practices.

<sup>1</sup> UN OCHA. "Haiti: Earthquake Situation Report No. 7 (7 October 2021)." Accessed via ReliefWeb at <https://bit.ly/3GenvPM>.

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## Approach

Despite the events that have repeatedly hindered Haiti's progress in developing resilience, it is important to note the progress that have been made possible by sustained investments and a strong partnership between the EU, the World Bank, and the government of Haiti, which have contributed to reinforcing institutional, technological, and infrastructural capacities for disaster risk management. In this regard, the support provided to Haitian disaster management experts through several technical assistance (TA) initiatives under the European Union (EU)'s Caribbean Regional Resilience Building Facility (CRRBF) have been instrumental in developing knowledge and sharing best practices.

Under the Building Physical, Fiscal and Inclusive Resilience in Haiti project, Haiti's General Directorate for Civil Protection (DGPC) received guidance on how to manage overlapping risks. For example, a public communication campaign was launched by the DGPC ahead of the 2020 and 2021 hurricane seasons, promoting messages on early warning, evacuation, and community mobilization to the public, with an added emphasis on outreach to women, girls, and the disabled population. Some of the technical benefits received by the DGPC under this partnership include improved shelter management, recommendations on how to include COVID-19 guidelines in shelter management practices, and institutional support to streamline the organization's internal management structure.

Under the same project, Haitian stakeholders were provided with technological advances to better inform their policies on risk levels, especially by supporting the development of geospatial data collection and analysis capacities. These activities have helped the National Center for Geospatial Information operationalize their new drone labs, which were created in the aftermath of the August 2021 earthquake and Hurricane Grace, and which gather data later used to coordinate humanitarian response as well as the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA). This technical assistance also supported Haiti's Hydrometeorological Unit (*Unité HydroMétéorologique d'Haiti* - UHM) to better monitor and analyze meteorological, hydrological, and climate data.

The Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Management in Public Infrastructure Management in Haiti project also

contributes to improved data collection and management practices for categorizing different types of buildings and infrastructure to determine the feasibility of retrofit designs. Activities emphasized the importance of building resilient infrastructure systems to provide reliable services to fulfill critical needs in the aftermath of disaster shocks by providing a diagnostic of critical public infrastructure sectors, such as transportation, energy, and water.

These different activities have been undertaken in partnership with the EU and have also helped build Haiti's path to financial resilience against disasters. Disaster risk financing (DRF) activities are critical to strengthen the country's resilience and protect poor and vulnerable communities. In partnership with the EU-funded CRRBF, Haiti is currently developing a comprehensive DRF strategy and finding innovative ways to enhance the government's understanding of disaster-related contingent liabilities and financial capacity.

## Highlighted Results

### o Improved emergency preparedness and response capacities

The successful [video campaign](#) launched by the DGPC has contributed to strengthening systems for emergency preparedness and response and raised awareness at the most local levels, bridging the gap between institutions and the community. Furthermore, detailed research was carried out on how behavioral insights can inform the design and construction of emergency shelters. Insights were gathered from the behavioral sciences, architecture, and design to understand how to promote good behavior and safety, enhance management, and ensure equitable access to shelters.

### o Increased gender activities

The enhanced focus on gender in DRM has led to an increase in activities that address the needs of women and girls in emergency situations. This has led to outputs such as the Gender Gap Analysis in the DRM sector, published in the frame of the integrating Gender and Behavioral Sensitive Approaches to Enhance DRM in Haiti TA.

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Photo: REUTERS / Alamy Stock Photo

o **Development of open data platforms**

Data platforms such as [HaitiData.org](http://HaitiData.org) have become valuable resources to consult geographic information systems and cartographic data, making key information such as the updated locations of emergency shelters available to disaster risk management experts. Additional trainings were provided to Haitian practitioners on how to use this tool. This platform was built with initial support from the African Caribbean Pacific-European Union Natural Disaster Risk Reduction (ACP-EU NDRR) Program and further developed under the CRRBF, and is a testament to the partnership with the EU.

o **Informed, high-quality recommendations for resilience-building**

A rapid diagnostic was delivered on school infrastructure, which provided recommendations to the government and will be informing the development of an infrastructure investment plan.

o **Increased coverage and identification of households in case of emergencies**

New methodologies have been explored to reach out to households that should be included in protection programs in case of emergencies.

o **Increased predictability and reduced budgetary uncertainty**

Assisting the government in developing tools and financial mechanisms to promote resilience has been a building block of the support provided to Haiti.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Haiti's multiple upheavals in the past year have led CRRBF project teams to adopt flexible implementation strategies and contingency plans to maintain the continuity of activities.

The importance of building partnerships with local stakeholders with in-depth knowledge of Haiti cannot be overstated. This is crucial to ensure the continuity of project operations during crises such as the recent earthquake. This approach also contributes to long-term resilience, benefiting local actors and institutions.

Maintaining the political independence of DRM institutions contributes to their capacity to weather political upheaval and unrest, and ensures that the body of DRM knowledge is preserved regardless of government capacities.

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