

Aid to Haiti, 6 months on: a long way to go

Emergency relief effective, but long-term challenges remain

The outpouring of global public support in response to the earthquake enabled Oxfam and other agencies to get aid through to the Haitian people and make a real difference. However, recovery in Haiti is one of the most complex humanitarian and development challenges in modern times. There are no short-term solutions for Haiti.

Before the quake

On January 12, 2010, Haiti was hit by a major natural disaster in a crowded urban setting plagued by widespread poverty and social inequality. Haiti was already in a perilous state before the earthquake.

The two million people living in the earthquake-affected zone crowd into an unplanned city sprawl, in a country where very few people own nearly all the land, where over half the population are reliant on imported food, where the vast majority of people cannot find a job, and where there is extremely limited access to basic services like education, healthcare, transportation and sanitation.

It is going to take a lot of international support - and more time - to rebuild the capacity of the Haitian government and civil society to lead the country's rehabilitation.

Undoubtedly, that is the task now.

Oxfam's response

Oxfam had been working in Haiti for 32 years when the quake struck. For the past six months, our programs have scaled up to provide water and sanitation, public health education, and ensuring people have access to food and basic needs through cash-for-work and cash grants programs. We are currently helping over 440,000 people through our relief and recovery programs. That accounts for over 20 percent of the earthquake-affected population of 2 million people. Our staff has grown from less than 100 people before January 12th to around 700, of which over 80 percent are Haitians.

The earthquake of January 12 struck a country already mired in poverty and struggling to recover from earlier disasters:

- 55 percent of people lived on less than \$1.25 per day *Office of the UN Special Envoy to Haiti*
- 86 percent of people in urban areas lived in slums *UN Habitat*
- 47 percent of people had no access to basic healthcare *World Food Programme*
- 83 percent of people had inadequate access to toilets *World Food Programme*
- 58 percent of people did not have access to clean drinking water *Office of the UN Special Envoy to Haiti*
- 70 percent of the agricultural sector was devastated by hurricanes in 2008 *UN Consolidated Appeals Process*

The scale of the disaster was tremendous:

- The damage and losses caused by the earthquake are estimated at US\$7.8 billion. This is equivalent to more than 120 percent of the 2009 gross domestic product and represents the highest economic impact of a disaster compared to national income anywhere in the world in 35 years.
- The earthquake created approximately 19 million cubic meters (25 million cubic yards) of debris that have to be removed. It would take a standard pick up truck more than 8 million trips to a waste facility to move this amount of debris. The majority of Haitians are removing the debris from their plots by hand.
- The earthquake struck an area more densely populated than the 2004 Southeast Asia tsunami zone and the area affected by the Bam earthquake in Iran (over 1,000 people per square kilometer [over 621 people per square mile] in Port-au-Prince compared to between 250 and 1,000 people per square kilometer [between 155 and 621 people per square mile] in Sri Lanka, India, and Iran.
- The Haitian government lost much of its operating capacity: 13 of 15 ministry offices were destroyed, and one-third of Haiti's 60,000 civil servants died.

In the past six months, Oxfam has:

- Provided clean drinking water and sanitation facilities to over 317,000 people
- Constructed over 1,400 latrines
- Cleared debris from drainage canals, benefiting over 110,000 people
- Provided public health education for over 210,000 people
- Distributed hygiene kits (soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, sanitary pads, towels) for 120,000 people
- Provided cash-for-work and cash grants benefiting over 134,000 people
- Developed partnerships with over 30 Haitian national and local organizations
- Provided tarps and tents for 98,000 people

Elsie Delpha, from the Carrefour-feuilles neighborhood, participates in an Oxfam community canteen. She cares for two orphaned girls. Elsie also received two cash grants totalling US\$180 to help her provide for her basic needs and to restart her business.



“After the earthquake things were very difficult. Then Oxfam started the canteens, and we were able to eat every day for two months. That helped. And since then, Oxfam also gave me money. With that money, I was able to repay some debt that I had so that I could feed the children, and then I bought some stock and opened this stall. It allows me to eat and to feed the children.”

Funding the humanitarian response in Haiti

After the earthquake, our donors generously gave their financial support.

- Countries where we raised funds: Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Germany, United Kingdom, India, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, United States, European Union
- Raised to date: US\$90 million
- Spent to date: US\$30 million
- Duration of humanitarian earthquake response program: 3 years

How far does one dollar go?

In a large-scale emergency response, we must move quickly to put a lot of people and equipment on the ground. To help us reach hundreds of thousands of people with aid, Oxfam made major purchases immediately after the quake, including US\$1 million for four-wheel drive vehicles to get around Haiti's 3,000-plus kilometers (over 1,862 miles) of unpaved road, and US\$2 million for air shipping for relief materials like specialized latrine slabs and 10,000-liter water bladders.

"Our post-earthquake program in Haiti is one of the largest we've ever run. It's on the scale of our Southeast Asia tsunami response, which was the biggest emergency program for a natural disaster Oxfam had ever run at the time. I've worked as an aid worker for over 15 years in places like Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Haiti right now is one of the most challenging places I've ever worked." - Roland Van Hauwermeiren, Country Director for Oxfam in Haiti

How much does it cost to provide water, sanitation and hygiene services to 45,000 people every day at the Golf Club camp?

→ 45,000 is 14 percent of the total number of people we are currently reaching with our water, sanitation and hygiene work in Haiti.

Some of our costs for the Golf Club camp to reach 45,000 people:

\$2,000 per day for water trucking

\$12,750 per month for 51 community mobilizers, who educate residents about good public health practices. This is the best way to prevent an outbreak of waterborne disease.

\$11,880 for four water bladders holding 100,000 liters of water (total)

\$120,000 to build 400 latrines

In the past six months, we've spent the following dollars amounts per camp resident at Golf Club, per day:

\$1.70 for water

\$.90 for latrines

\$.40 for public health education (community mobilizers, hygiene campaigns)

**Costs at the Golf Club camp are not necessarily the same as costs at other camps.*

Oxfam's Next Steps

For the next six months Oxfam will focus on recovery: making sure people have sustained access to water and sanitation to prevent disease, helping them earn an income, and assisting people to move back into their communities and away from camps. We will continue to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable people who remain in camps, while working to rebuild communities and foster livelihoods.

Over the next six months, Oxfam intends to scale up our current partnership with the national Haitian water and sanitation authority, DINEPA. Our work with DINEPA includes recruiting expert water/sanitation engineers to work within DINEPA to improve the professional skills of its staff, and providing guidance on major canal clearing projects in Port-au-Prince. With DINEPA, Oxfam is helping to write Haiti's first water quality guidelines and sewage standards. Strengthening Haiti's water and sanitation infrastructure will help to prevent disease, improve people's quality of life and provide an impetus for people to move back into homes that are structurally sound.

To help people earn an income so they can provide for their own needs, we will expand our cash grants programs to reach more people who want to start or rebuild a small business. We're also supporting community organizations to do vocational training for carpenters, masons, beauticians, and other tradespeople. Helping to create job opportunities is a long-term project in Haiti. Before the earthquake, the unemployment rate in the formal sector was over 70 percent. However, estimates show that around 70 percent of all Haitians with a job worked in the informal sector, in jobs such as street vendors or day laborers.

Thus far, relief work in Haiti has seen major successes and significant progress can be seen. However, real recovery – and development – requires a long-term vision and sustained commitment from the Government of Haiti with support from the international community.

As Oxfam implements recovery programs over the next half-year, we will also continue to advocate for a just and sustainable rebuilding strategy in Haiti, led by the government with meaningful participation of Haitian civil society, including community and religious leaders and local nongovernmental organizations.

For more information, please contact:

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