

Disaster Risk Reduction and Environment



A worker removes hazardous materials after the earthquake.

Photo: Sophia Paris/UNDP

The importance of effective Disaster Risk Reduction

The impact of the earthquake, the succession of natural catastrophes, Haiti's endemic poverty, the accelerated degradation of the environment, as well as the global economic downturn, have all contributed to dramatically increasing the vulnerability of the Haitian population.

The earthquake of 12 January 2010 has had deep implications in terms of the management of risks and disasters. In addition to increasing the vulnerability of the Haitian people, it has de-stabilized the National System for the Management of Risks and Disasters, and weakened the operational capacities of the Department of Civil Protection and the Permanent Secretariat for the Management of Risks and Disasters at the central, departmental and communal levels. Furthermore, the devastation and its resultant impacts on the environment, coupled with the onset of the rainy and hurricane seasons, have sharpened the focus on the need for more effective environmental management in Haiti. In particular, the management of watershed areas is seen as a key means of mitigating further disasters brought on by tropical storms and hurricanes.

Even though the earthquake has badly hit the national capacities for Disaster Risk Reduction, it opens up new opportunities to go deeper and faster in the adoption of the necessary policies and strategies that will improve the integration of disaster risk reduction into all sectors of development.

UNDP's Approach

The main objective of UNDP's approach is to increase the resilience of the population to disasters by strengthening the system for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) at the central, departmental and communal levels. Disaster Risk Reduction has become a priority for UNDP in Haiti, particularly since the hurricanes of 2008. It sees DRR as an integral and transversal component of its programme, which can support the sustainability of initiatives across other sectors. To date, UNDP has made a significant contribution to DRR in Haiti through its partnership with the Government. It has supported the establishment of a National System for the Management of Risks and Disasters, and the strengthening of the Department of Civil Protection. Over the next three years, UNDP will build upon and strengthen these initiatives in order to ensure that the Government of Haiti's capacity is sufficient to effectively manage and implement DRR and the central, departmental and communal levels.

Prior to the earthquake, the Government of Haiti through the Inter-ministerial Committee on Town and Country Planning's Vulnerability Reduction Unit (*Comité Interministériel d'Aménagement du Territoire (CIAT) Cellule de Réduction de la Vulnérabilité (CIV)*), which reports directly to the Prime Minister's Office, requested UNDP's assistance for the design and implementation of Watershed Management Plans for 13 of the country's major watershed areas and hydrological zones covering an area of over 10,024 square kilometres. The objective is to improve the management of these areas, as a means of rehabilitating and preserving natural resources thereby mitigating the threat of future disasters linked to landslides and flash flooding. With the Government of Haiti, UNDP will pursue this initiative over the next three years.

Programme Components

During the 2010–2012 period, and given the heightened vulnerability to natural disasters of the Haitian population, UNDP will support the Government of Haiti over three distinct phases.

A first, short-term phase (April–June 2010), during which it will support the immediate strengthening of capacities of the Department of Civil Protection and the Permanent Secretariat for the Management of Risks and Disasters and the departmental and local committees. This is in order to ensure that the system regains its operational capacity and is able to address the new needs created as a consequence of the earthquake and in preparation for the upcoming hurricane season.

A second phase (July–December 2010) is scheduled to last until the end of the 2010 hurricane season. Efforts will focus on reinforcing the immediate capacities of the system to mitigate and manage the threats posed by tropical storms and hurricanes in a context of heightened vulnerability.

A third phase (January 2011–December 2012) will involve the structural modification and strengthening of the Department of Civil Protection on the basis of an analysis of the lessons learned in the course of the earthquake and previous crises.

The key outputs will include:

Strengthening the capacity of the Department of Civil Protection: includes rebuilding and equipping the central offices, building and equipping offices in each department including 10 operations centres, and reinforcing the Department's capacity in human resources.

Supporting the Department of Civil Protection's outreach activities on Disaster Risk Reduction: includes the development of communications strategies and tools, and knowledge and skills development programmes.

Developing an Early Warning System: includes the provision of the necessary equipment (rain radar for the National Meteorological Centre, radios and communications equipment for local committees in order to facilitate early warning dissemination).

Institutional Strengthening and Legislative frameworks: includes the strengthening of the national DRR system including the legal system governing DRR, and supporting the decentralization of DRR.

Mainstreaming DRR within other relevant sectors: includes provision of support to CIAT and CRV, the government agencies that focus on risk and vulnerability

reduction, in order to ensure that DRR becomes a strong component of development strategies in all sectors. Capacity building for integration of seismic risk issues into development planning: includes the continuation of a small seismic expertise unit to advise the Government and partners on seismic risks and its implications for development planning

Developing DRR mitigation activities.

In terms of Watershed Management, UNDP will initially focus on the mapping and detailed socio-economic and biophysical analysis of the 13 watershed areas and hydrological zones. This will lead into the definition of Watershed Area Management Plans, in cooperation with a range of stakeholders including central and local government, land owners and civil society. This will be accompanied by capacity strengthening for local authorities, the creation of watershed management funds and the elaboration of a monitoring and evaluation system. A third transversal component will focus on strengthening the capacities of the CIAT in the area of watershed management.

The key outputs will include:

- Socio-economic and biophysical analysis and mapping of 13 watershed areas and hydrological zones.
- Definition of Area Management Plans for 13 watershed areas and hydrological zones.
- Capacity strengthening of the CIAT in the field of watershed management.

Budget

The overall budget for the Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction component of UNDP's programme for the 2010–2012 period is US\$40.5 million. Of this, \$20 million is to be allocated to institutional support to DRR, with the remaining \$20.5 million allocated to watershed management activities.