‘The church has a powerful role to play in transforming communities and that transformation is not simply spiritual, it is holistic – social, material, physical and spiritual.’

ROMNAL COLAS, CCM COORDINATOR, HAITI
HAITI

RESTORING LIVES: BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF NATURAL DISASTER IN HAITI

Haiti is a country trying to develop in the face of two significant insecurities: frequent natural disasters and political instability. Tearfund has worked in Haiti before, during and since the most recent disasters, to repair damage, rebuild lives and strengthen the capacity of local people to be more resilient in the future.

REASONS FOR OUR RESPONSE

Haiti has a Natural Catastrophe Risk Index rating that is among the highest in the world.56 Lying in the Atlantic Ocean ‘hurricane belt’, the island is regularly struck by extreme weather, including hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and landslides. Due to the changing global and local climate conditions, the severity and frequency of these events is increasing.

Not only do these disasters cause loss of life, livelihood, shelter and community, they prevent people from flourishing and living life to the full. They create or accentuate poverty and leave communities more vulnerable to shocks in the future.

The resilience of the Haitian population to withstand disasters is low given the widespread poverty, poor housing, lack of local knowledge about disaster preparedness, and dependence on subsistence agriculture. The country also has a history of political instability, social unrest and underdeveloped infrastructure. This has undermined the government’s ability to respond in the aftermath of disaster and leaves the country dependent on foreign aid.

In the last 10 years, Haiti has experienced two major natural disasters which have drawn worldwide media coverage and an outpouring of humanitarian assistance.

In 2010, Haiti was devastated by its worst earthquake in 200 years, which caused mass destruction to areas around the capital, Port-au-Prince, killing thousands and leaving many more injured or homeless.57

Then, in 2016, the south west peninsula was struck by the heavy rain and raging winds of Hurricane Matthew. Extensive flooding and mudslides destroyed homes, assets and infrastructure and left 1.4 million people in desperate need of assistance.58

‘When the storm started coming, I was sitting on the bed when the roof above me flew off and the rain came in. I was wet and scared because of all the debris flying everywhere, and I was also very worried about my children and their safety.’ – Darline, hurricane survivor.

Tearfund is committed to going where the need is greatest and was working in Haiti before and during these two disasters, and remains there today. This work has involved meeting people’s immediate needs, restoring infrastructure and livelihoods, and building resilience for the future. Tearfund strives to work in a sustainable and localised way by operating through local partners, networks and the local church.

Throughout this work there have been achievements to celebrate as well as learning points for future work. This chapter looks at what Tearfund’s work in Haiti has to teach about effective humanitarian and disaster resilience work and how Tearfund is adapting and developing to improve in the future.
1. EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY
When the 2010 earthquake struck, Tearfund’s established presence and relationships with local partners, churches and communities enabled a quick and effective response. An emergency appeal was launched, raising £4.2 million (US$5.33 million), and a strategy was agreed to support relief, recovery and reconstruction.

Working alongside local partners, Tearfund’s disaster response team focused on communities in the mountains while our partners focused on areas around the capital. For the first two weeks Tearfund provided emergency food, water, medicine and temporary shelters 24 hours a day. Next, Tearfund began longer-term recovery work to help rebuild lives. Priorities were restarting livelihoods, improving food security and getting children back to school by repairing buildings.

2. RECONSTRUCTION AND RESILIENCE BUILDING
Reconstruction and resilience building continued over the next two years, including re-establishing WASH and healthcare facilities. Communities’ capacities to respond to future disasters were built by delivering disaster risk reduction (DRR) training in schools and churches and setting up a vocational school teaching earthquake-resistant building.

Tearfund also offered psychosocial support to survivors; contributing to emotional, as well as physical and social, wellbeing is central to Tearfund’s way of working. An evaluation in 2012 highlighted the ‘striking emergence of hope’ being restored, ‘giving individuals and communities back their sense of dignity and purpose’.

But despite good intentions, the global humanitarian response was criticised for lacking coordination between agencies and local actors.
The overall international aid distribution method was challenged for creating a dependency culture and failing to build local communities’ capacity.62 While Tearfund does work through established local partners who understand the context, and delivers long-term resilience training, an evaluation recommended even more joined-up planning with other NGOs and local organisations to ensure local actors play a lead in future.63

3. CCM & SHGs INTRODUCED
Since the earthquake, Tearfund has been building the capacity of communities to lead their own development by working closely with the local church. In 2012, CCM was introduced to pastors to encourage congregations and their neighbours to work together to improve their situations, using their own resources.

In 2015, SHGs were introduced as part of the CCM training to build people’s resilience by enabling them to save small amounts of money collectively to spend on food, healthcare, shelter or starting small businesses (see case study).

4. RIHPED NETWORK FORMED
Tearfund also formed a network, RIHPED, of 13 international and local organisations to prepare for future disaster response in Haiti. A contingency fund was established (to which Tearfund contributed 90 per cent) to support local capacity-building activities and future humanitarian responses through the network.

5. HURRICANE MATTHEW RESPONSE
When Hurricane Matthew landed, RIHPED mobilised its members and provided grants for them to deliver localised, rapid assistance to the most vulnerable communities. In addition, larger grants were made to bigger Tearfund partners to form a wide-reaching response. Recovery and rehabilitation work is now underway, including cash grants and training to restart farming and rebuild homes in hurricane-resistant ways so communities are more resilient in the future.
Following the 2010 earthquake, Haiti received an outpouring of international aid. The £7.4 billion (US$9.4 billion) given was three times the revenue of the Haitian government between 2010 and 2012. However, the delivery of this well-intentioned support was criticised for failing to build the capacity of local communities to recover and be more resilient to disaster in the future. Instead, many people were left feeling dependent on external assistance to solve their problems.

SELF-HELP AND SELF-VISION THROUGH CCM

Tearfund has brought a new model of community-led development to Haiti through training local pastors in the church and community mobilisation (CCM) process. This sustainable model of development inspires, empowers and builds the capacity of local churches and communities to work together to achieve positive change, using their own skills and resources.

‘This is a transformation from a dependency mentality to a new one – together we can!’
Romnal Colas, Tearfund’s CCM coordinator, Haiti

From a pilot project in 2012, training 40 facilitators, by 2014 Tearfund was working with 127 churches and 254 facilitators across 57 communities, reaching over 5,000 people through CCM.

Many positive changes are resulting from the local initiatives started through CCM. Buildings, roads, wells and gardens have been built and repaired, providing improved shelter, access, water and food supplies.

One of the first churches to begin CCM was in the capital, Port-au-Prince. They first mobilised the wider community to clear rubble left after the earthquake, then began a sanitation project to distribute clean water to the whole community. This reduced the time people spent fetching water by an hour or more. They were also inspired to turn the land behind their church into a community garden to grow bananas for local families.

‘A deep change takes place in the mentality of people, churches and communities,’ says Romnal. ‘Before, most people were entirely dependent on external support to solve their problems, but CCM encourages self-help and self-vision, it helps people to do things by themselves.’

SELF-HELP GROUPS BRING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

In 2015, Tearfund introduced self-help groups (SHGs) to the CCM process, bringing together groups of 15 to 20 people to save a small amount between them each week. As capital grows, members can take small loans to pay for food, schooling, healthcare and home improvements, as well as investing in small businesses to increase household income.

So far, 174 SHGs have been set up across three geographical regions in Haiti. Tearfund has trained 122 volunteer facilitators to help the groups develop good relationships, set up their saving scheme and agree rules and procedures.

Combining CCM with SHGs in this way demonstrates how the church can be a facilitator of sustainable development and give people the tools and processes by which to support themselves, grow in confidence and become drivers of change in their own lives and communities. This is key to helping people be more resilient in the future.

The SHGs are sanctuaries where members can come to discuss their problems, find solutions and build a support network. Seventeen of Tearfund’s SHGs were based in areas that were badly affected by Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Being part of an SHG provided members with a safety net from which to access credit to repair their homes or restart income-generating activities.

Tearfund continues to provide resources to meet people’s basic needs, but by also building people’s capacity to help themselves Tearfund can have a more sustainable long-term impact.

‘People always describe Haiti in one way – the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. If all the churches work together, if people can access credit and start businesses, they can take care of themselves and their children. It might take a long time, but one day that perception will be different.’
Romnal Colas, CCM coordinator

SELF-HELP GROUPS CHANGING LIVES

The Plaisance region of Haiti has been leading the way in introducing SHGs to its communities. The area is very poor, with a lack of government services, few income-generating opportunities and high incidence of disease.
Since members of the community were invited to join Tearfund’s SHGs, to start saving small amounts of money among themselves, families have seen many positive changes in their living standards and have a more positive outlook.

The groups make small weekly savings which enable members to access credit to invest in income-generating activities and productive assets to grow their businesses and improve their standard of living. The groups are very proud of their progress.

‘I used to take loans from microfinance institutions, my economic situation was a disaster. But when I joined the SHG things became different, now I can take credit from what we, as a group, have saved together.’

Daniel, SHG secretary

Beyond economic benefits, SHGs are having a holistic impact on the community. The members have received training about hygiene, income-generating activities and farming and, as a result, parents now have more money to spend on their children’s education and healthcare.
"If another big drought hit, it wouldn’t be like before, ample food would still be available within the community since some farmers have greatly increased their production and we have savings from previous years...we are much more secure now."

PARTICIPANT FROM TEARFUND’S DISASTER RISK REDUCTION TRAINING, MALAWI
ANNEX B

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC – Antenatal Care
CA – Conservation agriculture
CAG – Community Action Group
CCM – Church and community mobilisation
CHO – Cambodian Hope Organisation
CTP – Cash Transfer Programming
DFID – Department for International Development
DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo
DRR – Disaster risk reduction
ICD – Integrated Community Development programme
MBC – Myanmar Baptist Convention
MCPP – Malawi Church Partnership Programme
MoH – Ministry of Hope
NGO – Non-governmental organisation
ODI – Overseas Development Institute
PAG – Pentecostal Assemblies of God
PSVI – Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative
QuIP – Qualitative Impact Assessment Protocol
SGBV – Sexual and gender-based violence
SHGs – Self-help groups
SWIFT – Sustainable WASH In Fragile conTexts
TNE – Theology Network Engagement
WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO – World Health Organization

ANNEX C

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Following Jesus where the need is greatest