



## SUCCESS STORY

### Standing Up with the Haitian Government

**USAID readies former U.S. Embassy building for the Office of the Prime Minister.**



USAID/Haiti

*Workers prepare the former U.S. Embassy complex, which was relatively unscathed by the earthquake, for GOH use.*

**May 2010** – When a natural disaster strikes, citizens look to government to coordinate relief and reconstruction efforts. Yet when a disaster literally undermines the government, the challenge to mount a response can be overwhelming.

The January 12 earthquake in Haiti took the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, including 20 percent of the country's civil servants. The earthquake also decimated the country's physical stock, affecting as many as half of the buildings in the greater Port-au-Prince area.

Public infrastructure was decimated: Both the National Palace and the President's private residence collapsed, the Prime Minister's office was severely damaged, and 18 of 19 ministry buildings were rendered unusable.

The public-sector employees that were willing and able to return to work in the aftermath of the quake faced a severe shortage of functional work space, which impeded their ability to contribute to the emergency response and rebuilding process.

In response, the U.S. Government moved quickly to help the Government of Haiti (GOH) get back on its feet. The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), in close coordination with USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the U.S. Military, immediately set out to identify temporary office space for critical government entities and help the GOH take the lead on emergency response.

Fortunately, the U.S. Embassy and USAID buildings in downtown Port-au-Prince were relatively spared by the earthquake and aftershocks, and an engineering survey revealed that minor structural and maintenance repairs would make the buildings fully operational and safe.

OTI worked with a Haitian engineering firm to prepare the buildings for GOH use, making minor structural and cosmetic fixes, buttressing slumped areas, and repairing roadways and peripheral walls.

On April 19, three months after the earthquake, the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Planning moved their offices into the buildings. The temporary facilities are not only providing these essential government offices with a significant upgrade over previous work spaces but also helping nearly 400 civil servants, including President René Préval and Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive, proceed with the work of rebuilding Haiti.