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HAITI

SUCCESS STORY

Helping Haiti's Children Return to School

School attendance rates near pre-quake levels.



Townsppeople gather for a ceremony to mark the opening of temporary classrooms constructed from shipping containers.

October 2010 – Throughout its history, Haiti has struggled to overcome a myriad of issues facing its education system, from high rates of illiteracy to expensive school fees. And the January earthquake only increased the challenge of educating 700,000 school-aged children, as 75 percent of the schools in the quake zone were damaged or destroyed.

Understanding the need to address this complex educational challenge and restore a vision of hope for the future, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has worked with the Government of Haiti to remove rubble from school sites so temporary or new classroom structures could be built. In concert with these efforts to get children back to school, OTI also provided underprivileged students with school supplies.

The bulk of the debris-removal work took place in five communes in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area and near the earthquake epicenter in the port town of Léogâne. In close coordination with local municipalities, OTI cleared more than 127,000 cubic meters of rubble from 59 school sites. The effort employed 10,027 temporary workers and provided more than \$1.6 million in income to households in Tabarre, Croix-des-Bouquets, Delmas, and Carrefour as well as Port-au-Prince.

Clearing rubble from school sites was the first step in the effort to bring a sense of normalcy back into the lives of Haitian children. The second step was to erect temporary structures to serve as classrooms until permanent structures can be built. A number of donors have addressed this need, including OTI, which transformed 11 shipping containers into six school buildings for a pilot school serving 600 students in Léogâne.

Education is highly valued in Haiti, and as the new school year began, school-aged boys and girls in Léogâne and other areas devastated by the earthquake were able to return to class. Children are smiling again as they walk to and from school in their brightly colored uniforms and neat attire, and such sights are inspiring communities with a sense of faith in the reconstruction process and bolstering the outlook of the population at large.