



BUILDING  
HOPE IN  
HAITI:

EZRA MILLSTEIN

ONE YEAR LATER

# Solving a complex crisis

## NATURAL DISASTERS

OFTEN HAPPEN IN AN INSTANT and are measured in universal terms, but recovery is much more complicated to gauge or quantify. Real recovery can take years.

One year after a magnitude-7.0 earthquake in Haiti destroyed nearly 190,000 homes and left more than 1.5 million survivors homeless or displaced, visible progress has been painfully slow.

But recovery is not a destination; it is a path.

Even before the earthquake, Haiti was one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Rebuilding for lasting change must be based on the concepts of empowerment and self-help that

have always distinguished Habitat for Humanity's work. The foundation for long-term, sustainable change has been built here. And hope is alive.

It is most evident in the faces of the Haitian people, who have resumed their lives with stoic resilience. Against a post-apocalyptic background, people sell fresh produce, spare tires, fried bananas and intricate wall sculptures made from discarded steel drums. Since the earthquake destroyed the university in Port-au-Prince, classes have been meeting under shade trees or in tents. Younger students march off to school every day in brilliant, perfectly pressed uniforms.

On Sunday mornings, the sound of hymns—hundreds of voices strong—wafts up the hillsides from churches that are still mostly rubble. In sanctuaries without walls, the worshippers are there to praise God.

“There is still a long way to go,” says Claude Jeudy, national director of Habitat for Humanity Haiti. Over the past year, “I’ve seen desolation. I’ve seen devastation. I’ve seen people crying. I’ve seen strong people become very weak. I’ve seen families who didn’t know what to do, where to go.

“But today, if you visit some villages where Habitat has provided some housing solutions, you will see families coming together, joking, singing, playing. It’s a good sign of hope.”

## ‘Life begins with a house’

Josue Lesperance and his family have lived since 2007 in a community of 186 Habitat houses in Cabaret. Their home stood firm in the

**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY** and its partners have distributed more than 21,000 emergency shelter kits.



# requires time, creativity

Jan. 12 earthquake, but Lesperance had been unable to find construction work since.

Now he is among more than 100 workers employed full time at the Habitat Resource Center in Cabaret, fabricating transitional shelters to be shipped and built on sites where families are starting their lives over.

He knows why this work matters.

“This is very important for our society and for our daily lives,” Lesperance says. “A family without a house is not a family. Life begins with a house.

“We are helping each other,” he says. “Each house that Habitat provides is important, but it is only the beginning of making a good life for oneself.”



Self-empowerment has been the cornerstone of Habitat for Humanity’s mission from its beginnings more than 30 years ago in south Georgia, USA. In Haiti, where Habitat has been an active presence for more than 26 years, the monumental challenges of rebuilding since the earthquake have required inventive solutions.

Hurricane Tomas and a widespread cholera outbreak affected the timetable of Habitat’s rebuilding, but they also showcased the organization’s ability to react quickly and creatively to immediate threats. Since Tomas, Habitat and its partners have built more than 200 latrines, distributed 750 household hygiene kits and held hygiene promotion classes to stem the deadly spread of cholera.

Once the life-threatening emergencies are addressed, Habitat can focus again on the ultimate goal of building permanent shelter. Habitat’s mission is always to offer comprehensive, empowering support that will result in long-term, sustainable change.

Habitat Haiti has five resource centers—in Cabaret, Léogâne, Cap-Haïtien, Gonaïves and Hinche—with future centers planned for Port-au-Prince and other locations as funding allows.

These resource centers are the heart of Habitat’s work in post-quake Haiti. Each center will respond to the needs within its area, providing a range of services that include vocational training, damage assessments, repairs and retrofits, assistance in securing land and tenure, loans of tools and equipment, materials fabrication, water and sanitary solutions, transitional shelter and shelter upgrades.

As the recovery progresses, housing microfinance will be introduced so that families can continue to manage home improvements and additions.

Every community is unique, and every family has different needs, says Mike Meaney, director of programs at Habitat Haiti. Some

*“We are helping each other.”*

Left: Josue Lesperance is one of 100 skilled laborers employed at the new Habitat Resource Center in Cabaret, Haiti. A former stonemason, Lesperance has learned to do wood construction.



STEFFAN HACKER

A year after the Jan. 12 earthquake, thousands of Haitians continue to live in tent encampments in the hills and valleys around Port-au-Prince.

*“With a little help, every family can go a step further on their pathway to permanent solutions.”*

Mike Meaney, director of programs at Habitat Haiti



STEFFAN HACKER

Ciltan Sedie, 49, and her son, Miguel, 10, live in a Habitat transitional shelter in Cabaret, Haiti. It stands next to the ruins of their home, which collapsed in the Jan. 12 earthquake.

families own land but need help rebuilding, while others are landless and unemployed.

“With a little help, every family can go a step further on their pathway to permanent solutions,” Meaney says. “The critical part is what we do to enable the resources that already exist out there. That way we can have a much wider impact.”

The Jan. 12 earthquake didn’t create all the problems in Haiti, but it exacerbated them on a devastating scale. The quake hit many dangerously overcrowded, poorly constructed urban areas, exposing the house of cards that had been built on steep hillsides.

Many of the people who fled Port-au-Prince and other urban areas are now stretching the already-scarce resources in the more rural north of the country and in the central plateau. Habitat Resource Centers have been built in those areas,

which were not severely affected by the earthquake but have been hit extremely hard by the mass displacement of people, most of whom have little or no livelihood.

Frantz Oscar was a carpenter before the earthquake. Since the quake, he has received training at the Habitat Resource Center in Cabaret on how to build more seismic-resistant structures. With his new skills, Oscar was hired as a co-leader at the resource center in Léogâne.

“When you know someone cares about you, you feel less pain,” Oscar says, stressing the importance of Habitat’s support in his personal recovery. But he also expresses a sentiment of self-empowerment that is common throughout Haiti.

“I feel joy because I’m working,” he says.

*read more on page 7*

## Milestones in Habitat’s recovery work in Haiti

Soon after the earthquake in Haiti, Habitat for Humanity set an audacious goal of serving 50,000 families over five years, helping them move toward safer, more secure, permanent places to call home. One year into that five-year plan, some milestones are worth celebrating.

- More than 21,000 emergency shelter kits are in the hands of people who needed them most. The kits included tools—hammers, pliers, chisels, work gloves, rope and tarps—that have allowed Haitians to clean up debris, do basic repairs and create emergency shelter. In addition, more than 3,300 emergency shelter kits have been stockpiled, ready to distribute quickly whenever disaster strikes again.
- More than 900 families had received transitional or upgradable shelters by December 2010, with a total of 2,000 scheduled to be completed by the end of January 2011. The newest model of upgradable shelter features a timber-frame skeleton with pressure-treated plywood side walls, a tin roof and concrete perimeter foundation. The structure is built so that concrete blocks can be added later, as the family’s finances improve.
- More than 2,000 housing damage assessments have been conducted; the goal is to conduct an additional 6,000 assessments through June 2011. Assessments help determine which structures can be made safe and which need to be torn down, making way for new, permanent shelters.
- More than 500 Haitians have been trained in earthquake-resistant construction techniques.
- More than 200 Haitians have been hired by the Habitat Resource Centers to build shelters. In a nation with an unemployment rate of 60 percent, job opportunities are a crucial part of rebuilding.

**21,000** EMERGENCY  
SHELTER KITS

**2,000** FAMILIES TO  
BE ASSISTED

**2,000** DAMAGE  
ASSESSMENTS

**500** TRAINED IN  
EARTHQUAKE-  
RESISTANT  
BUILDING

**200** HAITIANS HIRED  
BY HABITAT  
RESOURCE CENTERS

BUILDING HOPE IN HAITI: ONE YEAR LATER

## AT A GLANCE

### **What is Habitat for Humanity's commitment in Haiti?**

In the 26 years before the Jan. 12 earthquake, Habitat had partnered with more than 2,000 families in Haiti, building new homes and repairing or improving others. Habitat Haiti also trained workers in construction skills, disaster mitigation and financial literacy. Since the earthquake, Habitat Haiti has increased its staff to more than 100 people and hired more than 200 Haitians full time to build transitional shelters. Habitat's goal in Haiti is to serve 50,000 families in the five years following the earthquake.

### **How important is shelter to Haiti's recovery?**

Shelter is critical to good health, stable employment and effective education. If building homes is not a priority, other humanitarian investments will fail to have any long-term, sustainable impact. Decent shelter not only improves the quality of life of Haitian families, but also helps stimulate a local economy by creating jobs, upgrading skills, and attracting investment and commerce.

### **Does Habitat coordinate with others?**

Habitat works closely with government agencies, community-based organizations, the donor community and other nongovernmental organizations, including the American Red Cross, Catholic Relief Services, CHF International, CARE USA, Save the Children and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. Habitat is a member of InterAction, a consortium of U.S.-based agencies involved in international development and disaster response. And Habitat is a member agency of the Haiti U.N. Shelter Cluster, which coordinates the activities of all shelter organizations in the country. Claude Jeudy, national director of Habitat Haiti, is a voting member of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission.

### **How does Habitat work at the community level?**

Community engagement is crucial to Habitat's work in Haiti. Community leaders provide direct input at every step, from identifying the most vulnerable families to setting priorities for rebuilding. In five communities—three in Léogâne and two in Cabaret—residents have selected 1,150 earthquake-affected families to receive the next Habitat



## Community solutions

This Habitat Resource Center in Léogâne has construction supplies for Haitian workers who are building shelters. HRCs focus recovery work in communities throughout Haiti, giving people a place to plan and work together for a better future.



EZRA MILLSTEIN

transitional and upgradable shelters. Also, Habitat works with municipalities to locate and acquire available land, and Habitat Resource Centers respond to the specific needs of each community, offering a wide range of services and training.

### Why is Habitat building shelters rather than permanent homes?

With 1.5 million left homeless or displaced after the earthquake, the sheer volume of need compelled Habitat to try to serve the most people possible in the most cost-efficient way. Other complicating factors—among them, lack of secure tenure and slow rubble removal—have delayed construction of permanent houses. But in addition to transitional shelters, Habitat is building upgradable shelters that can be turned into permanent homes. For the long term, Habitat remains committed to building hurricane- and earthquake-resistant cement-block houses.

### What is secure land tenure, and why is it a problem in Haiti?

Even before the earthquake, land titles were nebulous or unknown, with much property in Haiti lacking clear ownership. Many deaths during the earthquake have not been formally documented, making claims on land by heirs complicated, if not impossible. Habitat for Humanity has been working with the Haitian government and the international community to develop a clear, legal process for owning land.

### What has Habitat accomplished so far in Haiti?

- Assembled more than 21,000 emergency shelter kits for distribution.
- On track to build up to 2,000 transitional and upgradable shelters by the end of January 2011.
- Conducted more than 2,000 housing damage assessments.
- Trained more than 500 Haitians in seismic-resistant construction skills.
- Hired more than 200 Haitians to help in building activities.

### What can you do to help rebuild Haiti?

Donations are urgently needed. You can donate:

- Online at [HabitatHaiti.org](http://HabitatHaiti.org).
- By phone at +1-229-924-6935; or toll-free in the United States at +1-800-422-4828.
- By mail to Habitat for Humanity International, 121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709-3498 USA.
- Text "HABITAT" to 25383 to make a \$10 donation.



Natasha Louis, 31; her husband, Barthol, 32; and son Barnavens, 2, sit inside their new Habitat upgradable shelter. Their shelter is a new model, with a two-pitch roof and 250 square feet of living space, including the front porch. The shelter is made of a timber-frame skeleton and pressure-treated plywood side walls, with a corrugated metal roof and concrete perimeter foundation.

*continued from page 4*

## A place to begin rebuilding

Natasha and Barthol Louis recently moved into the first new-model upgradable shelter built in Léogâne, only a few yards from the concrete slab where their home stood before the earthquake. Since the quake, the young couple and their toddler son, Barnavens, had been living in a shack made of rusted metal scraps.

Both Natasha and Barthol teach elementary students in the Christian school across the street from their shelter, which can be expanded as the family's needs change.

“We will need more space soon,” Natasha says, smiling as she pats her very pregnant stomach. “This shelter is great, but we are growing.”

The new one-room shelters measure 12 by 16 feet. They have a two-pitch roof design, three windows and two doors, a concrete perimeter foundation and a porch. Families can choose to upgrade with a concrete floor.

Natasha had decorated the shelter with great attention to detail, hanging bright orange curtains in the windows and doors to accentuate the painted green plywood walls.

For this family, the shelter is an important asset as they begin to rebuild their lives.

Small construction crews—hired through the Habitat Resource Center in Léogâne—can build an upgradable shelter in two days, says Fritz Ciceron, an engineer at Habitat's Léogâne office.

Golles Antoine, the co-leader of the crew currently building three shelters in the Louises' community, sees it as a big value, as families like the Louises can take the first step toward rebuilding their lives, and local workers are gainfully employed in the process.

“We are building Haiti back together,” Antoine says.

Right: Habitat's new model of shelter is designed to be expanded and upgraded as the homeowner family's situation improves.

Far right: On Miracle Street in downtown Port-au-Prince, much rubble has been removed, but much remains. Thousands of people who live in nearby tent encampments come here every day to sell goods in the bustling street markets.

*“We are building Haiti back together.”*

Golles Antoine,  
construction crew leader



STEFFAN HACKER

Workers at Habitat Resource Centers learn construction skills while assembling Habitat transitional and upgradable shelters for earthquake victims.

## Better, stronger, smarter

In the capital city of Port-au-Prince, the sheer magnitude of the destruction is still daunting. Mounds of rubble the size of a city bus lie in the middle of busy streets, shutting down traffic in some cases. Tent cities have sprung up in every public space, including in the Champs de Mars district at the heart of the capital, with its sprawling parks, museums and memorials to the country's turbulent history.

The flag of Haiti still flies at the National Palace, whose collapsed cupola is a universally recognized symbol of the

earthquake's devastation. The massive bright white building in ruins, juxtaposed against the brilliant blue sky, symbolizes the jarring realities of this place.

Travel guidebooks have long warned of the “impoverished chaos” of Port-au-Prince, but that doesn't do justice to the mesmerizing rhythm and compelling pageantry of daily life here. The city's infrastructure has never kept pace with its unrestricted growth, and the chasm between the haves and the have-nots is stunning. But the spirit and the self-sufficiency of the people is a miracle to behold.



STEFFAN HACKER



*“They seem to be able to deal with anything that’s dished out.”*

EZRA MILLSTEIN

Sanon Solange, 60, is moving into an upgradable Habitat shelter with her daughter and three grandchildren.

Even a year after the earthquake, much debris is still being removed brick by brick, one shovelful at a time. Here, workers clear rubble at a collapsed health clinic in Port-au-Prince.

Mark Andrews is Habitat for Humanity International’s vice president in charge of Haiti recovery. In that role, he has seen firsthand the legendary resilience of Haitians.

“They seem to be able to deal with anything that’s dished out,” Andrews says.

In the year since the earthquake, Habitat Haiti has had to contend with unforeseen challenges, including a hurricane and a deadly cholera outbreak.

“We’ve built some really strong partnerships and a really strong team,” Andrews says. “After the first of the year, we’ll begin to see that investment really pay off in terms of the number of houses we’re able to build on a weekly basis.”

The biggest obstacles to rebuilding in Port-au-Prince and elsewhere have been secure tenure—having clear legal ownership of land—and rubble removal.

Land ownership was a complicated matter in Haiti before the earthquake, and it is murkier now because of all the deaths in that tragedy.

“Obviously, we can’t build any kind of permanent structures on land that we don’t own,” Andrews says.

Habitat for Humanity has been working with the Clinton Global Initiative and the Haitian government to create a clear land title process. Once that happens, the pace of recovery will pick up tremendously, Andrews says.

And simply building back is not the goal. Building back better and stronger and smarter is the key to Habitat’s success in serving 50,000 families over the next four years.

“We can’t solve every single problem in these communities,” Mike Meaney says. “Working with each community, through the Habitat Resource Centers, we can help them prioritize what they want to do and give them support and guidance on how to solve their issues.”

The resource centers are providers, in that they employ local workers and expedite the construction of transitional and upgradable shelters and core houses.

But they are more importantly enablers, giving Haitians the resources and skills to help themselves.



deal with  
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Mark Andrews,  
vice president, Habitat  
Haiti recovery

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Adam Gassaint, who was previously unemployed, works on a Habitat construction crew, building upgradable shelters.

## Looking forward

In 2011, Habitat’s focus will remain on transitional and upgradable shelters but will also include repairs and retrofits, and permanent house construction.

Habitat already has plans to begin building 665 houses in Léogâne—where an estimated 90 percent of the buildings were destroyed by the earthquake—as early as the spring.

In addition to a strong focus on vocational training, the Léogâne settlement will include a comprehensive urban plan, leaving space for a community center, schools, upgraded infrastructure and home expansions.

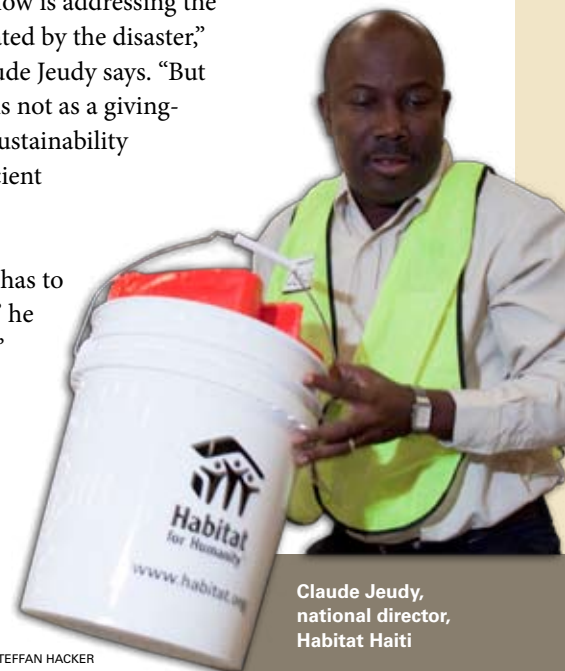
In 2011 and again in 2012, Habitat for Humanity International’s Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter Work Project will be held in Haiti, helping to refocus the world’s attention on the work that remains to be done. The back-to-back annual projects are a testament to Habitat’s commitment—and the Carters’—to serving families in Haiti.

The Jan. 12 earthquake did such extensive damage to an already fragile nation, Habitat Haiti has had to adapt its

long-held model of partnership with homeowner families. The sheer need made it necessary to offer transitional and upgradable shelters at no cost. But the ultimate, long-term goal is to build permanent houses, with families paying into a revolving fund that allows more houses to be built.

“What we are doing now is addressing the immediate needs created by the disaster,” national director Claude Jeudy says. “But the future of Habitat is not as a giving-away program. It’s a sustainability approach, a self-sufficient approach.

“The next generation has to see something better,” he says. “That’s our goal.”



Claude Jeudy,  
national director,  
Habitat Haiti

STEFFAN HACKER

A young girl in Simon Pele, an impoverished community near downtown Port-au-Prince where Habitat Haiti has begun an outreach program.

EZRA MILLSTEIN



## Help Habitat help Haiti

We can't do it without you! Habitat's work in Haiti depends on the continued generosity of donors who believe in empowering people to build their nation back better. Donations from foundations, affiliates, corporations, faith partners and individual donors already are improving the lives of thousands of Haitians affected by the Jan. 12 earthquake.

You can donate:

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