

# USAID/OTI Haiti Field Report

January-March 2006

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## Program Description

The Haiti Transition Initiative (HTI) program began in May 2004 in response to growing turmoil in the aftermath of President Aristide's decision to leave office and the establishment of an Interim Government of Haiti (IGoH). OTI works through its implementing partner the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and coordinates closely with the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The focus of the HTI program is to promote community-level stability in key crisis spots by implementing quick, visible projects and activities promoting peace among conflicted populations.

OTI's objectives in Haiti are to: enhance citizen confidence and participation in a peaceful political transition; empower citizens and the Haitian government to address priority community needs; build cooperative frameworks between citizens and government entities at all levels; and promote peaceful interaction among conflicted populations.

## Country Situation

**René Prével Declared President, Awaiting Inauguration** – René Prével, who served as President from 1996 to 2000, was elected president again on February 7, 2006. The initial vote count showed Prével just shy of the 50.1 percent majority needed to avoid a runoff. Prével had been a member of Aristide's Lavalas party in the 1990's but ran in this election under the banner of the newly-formed Lespwa party against an array of other candidates, including remnants of the Lavalas party. Before the election council announced the final vote tally, massive urban street protests - some spontaneous, some specifically planned to stir up public support - erupted when rumors spread that the vote count was being rigged. Thousands of discarded ballots were discovered in a garbage dump near Port-au-Prince, further stimulating claims of election fraud.

Under an agreement between the Interim Government and the electoral council, some 80,000 ballots cast but left blank, were allocated among the candidates in proportion to ballots cast with entries, giving Prével the majority vote needed to win without a runoff. The next closest candidate received 12% of the vote. Prével's inauguration, scheduled for May 14, awaits the runoff election for the Parliament. Haiti's constitution provides that the inauguration must be in the presence of a sitting Parliament.

**Parliamentary Runoff Elections and Prospects for Split Government** – In the February Parliamentary elections, only 3 of 30 Senate seats and 97 of 127 seats in the House of Deputies were finally decided. The legislative runoff is scheduled for April 21, and it seems unlikely that any one party will secure a majority, thus requiring a coalition government among leading parties. Therefore, Haiti faces the prospect that Prével's Lespwa party will not have a ruling Parliamentary majority, which will most likely impact the formation of his cabinet. The five parties leading the initial Parliamentary contests are Prével's "Plate-Forme Lespwa", Fusion des Sociaux-Démocrates (FUSION), l'Organisation du Peuple en Lutte (OPL), l'Alyans Demkratrik (ALYANS) at l'Union nationale chrétienne pour la reconstruction d'Haiti (IMCRH, or UNION). The "Fanmi Lavalas" party of former President Aristide has runoff candidates for just a handful of Parliamentary seats.

## USAID/OTI Highlights

### A. Narrative Summary

The period preceding and following the February election has been relatively calm except for the vigorous street protests when vote fraud was feared or claimed. Shortly before the February round of elections, some of the most contentious armed groups operating in Cité Soleil and other dense neighborhoods announced that they had put down their weapons. The rate of kidnappings-for-ransom appears to have declined, following a major spike in December (150 reported in the Port-au-Prince area alone). National and international authorities fear that the relative

calm is threatened by criminal activities perpetrated by the interlaced assortment of urban center gangs - some are politically -motivated, others profit-oriented.

A March 2006, USAID/DCHA/CMM conflict assessment in Haiti identified the following key potential "spoilers" to stability in Haiti: the role of entrenched, violence-prone and amply-armed elements of Aristide supporters and the disruptive prospect that the unpredictable Aristide would seek to return to Haiti; armed and violent neighborhood gangs and criminal networks; former members of the Haitian Armed Forces (FAdH) and the Haitian National Police (HNP); manipulative efforts by Haitian elites, and a mix of nationalist/anti-foreign/anti-American elements. The CMM assessment identified key, volatile "hot spots" (Port-au-Prince, Gonaives, Saint Marc, Cap Haitien, Petit Goâve - all but one of which are focal areas for the HTI program and sites of HTI field offices) where civil unrest could threaten democratic rule.

In Port-au-Prince, some lethal gangs, feeling the impact of effective UN and police presence combined with community pressure against them, are shifting to new locations. Gangs in Port-au-Prince have been using rape as a conscious tool to terrorize citizens and increase their influence and power. It should be noted that a March 2006 USAID gender analysis identified violence against women as one of the main means of terrorization used by urban gangs, with particularly brutal signs of these tactics evidenced in Carrefour Feuilles.

Outside of the capitol, there was some violence in Gonaives in March, attributed to revival of conflict between gangs associated with pro-Aristide and anti-Aristide factions. The violence has included some rock-throwing attacks against MINUSTAH peacekeeping forces and government offices. These heightened urban tensions in Gonaives were still on-going at month's end.

## B. Grants Activity Summary

HTI grant activities in this quarter have been especially mindful of the need for community stability as a contribution to a peaceful, successful election process. At the end of the quarter, and as the transition from elections to the new administration started to take shape, HTI began to adjust program emphasis to seize opportunities to increase community confidence in the legitimacy and responsiveness of the Préval administration.

USAID/Haiti and OTI commenced active planning for turnover of the HTI program to the Mission by September 30. The Mission wishes to assume long-term responsibility and funding for HTI, including the OTI small-grants mechanism with implementing partner IOM. HTI is to become an integral part of the Mission's new strategy now in preparation, with a focus on stability as a prerequisite for longer-term development. Accordingly, during this quarter, OTI actively initiated a process of steering HTI activities, when feasible, to linkages with longer-term Mission programs. The goal is to accelerate incorporation of HTI into the Mission's portfolio in advance of the turnover. During the HTI "transition" period, OTI will continue to concentrate on community contribution to, and benefit from, stabilization in "hot spot" conflictive areas of Port-au-Prince (Cité Soleil, Bel Air, Delmas, and Martissant), Petit Goâve, St. Marc, Cap Haitien and Les Cayes.

In Port-au-Prince, HTI pursued its strategy of concentrating labor-intensive and high-profile activities in hot spot neighborhoods during this quarter. See below, under "Indicators of Success", accounts of the HTI activities in Bel Air and Martissant. In the most sensitive urban areas of Port-au-Prince, HTI program development and monitoring has remained constrained because of USG and UN security protocols limiting the capabilities of OTI and IOM.

During the run-up to February elections and the immediate post-election period, the provinces remained largely calm with the exception of incidents where forces contending for political dominance disrupted some HTI project implementation. In virtually all instances, HTI staff were able to work with community and government leaders along with MINUSTAH peacekeeping forces to overcome obstacles that could otherwise impact the effectiveness of program activities.

HTI Office	New Grants in March		Total Committed	
	Grants	Amount (\$)	Grants	Amount (\$)
Cap Haitien	4	\$98,005	39	\$ 989,768
Gonaives			11	\$ 485,629

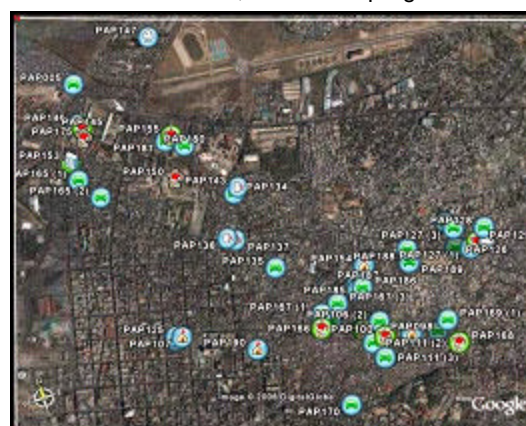
Les Cayes	2	\$74,400	29	\$ 612,219
Port-au-Prince	22	\$444,845	222	\$5,202,098
Petit Goâve	3	\$100,282	63	\$ 1,268,235
St. Marc	2	\$43,750	53	\$1,083,454
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>\$761,282</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>\$9,641,403</b>

### C. Indicators of Success

**Mission intention to continue program for a longer term** - A significant indicator that the HTI program has proven relevant to current transition activities in Haiti is desire by the USAID Mission to absorb and fund the program, including the small grants mechanism with IOM as the implementing partner. The integration of HTI into the Mission-funded portfolio is to take place by September 30, 2006.

**Bel Air** - In a series of project activities and interventions in the Bel Air section of Port-au-Prince, HTI made a significant contribution to stability, reflected in peaceful participation in the recent elections, and in establishing a model for pursuing similar community stabilization in Cité Soleil and other neighborhoods suffering from high levels of gang-related crime and violence. As in all HTI interventions in conflictive urban areas, the Bel Air program consisted of isolated micro-projects in addition to a series and cluster of linked activities which, taken together, had broad community effect.

In 2005, Bel Air presented a clear threat to peaceful elections in Haiti. The community, an Aristide stronghold, was wracked by gang violence and a population that deeply distrusted the IGoH. After several months of HTI discussions in the community, a series of project activities was initiated commencing with repair of a public kiosk that had been burned down by the police during riots earlier in the year. These positive interactions encouraged Bel Air residents to nominate additional projects in the immediate vicinity of the kiosk, which HTI pursued. Associated with these initiatives, MINUSTAH established a base for peacekeeping at Fort National in Bel Air. HTI supported intensive clean-up and road rehabilitation projects – using community labor – to saturate the Fort National area with positive, relationship-building activities. MINUSTAH then established regular patrols throughout Bel Air, enabling a widening of the scope of HTI community projects.



This Google Earth map illustrates the HTI cluster approach used in Bel Air. Activities began in the lower right quadrant and spread towards the border with Cité Soleil in the upper left.

Successes in Fort National started a ripple effect that moved throughout Bel Air, opening the doors for HTI and MINUSTAH to continue to spread into previously inaccessible areas. The end result was that the February elections proceeded with heavy voter turn-out and no disruptions. A March 25 front page story in *Le Nouvelliste* titled, "Bel-Air, Sans-Fil: Le Calme Semble Revenir", contains a substantial number of residents' quotations about new community confidence. Ironically, the story may suggest that a good indicator of normal civil commercial activity in Bel-Air is the return of traffic jams.

**Martissant** - During the past quarter, OTI funded a pilot HTI program in the Port-au-Prince area of Martissant with the aim, as in Bel Air, of supporting community stability. The Martissant activity, however, has the added element of seeking to incorporate an engagement with MINUSTAH's DDR Team to reduce weapons. The program commenced with announcement at Carnival (February 25) of a cluster of community improvement and short term job creation projects – conditioned on maintenance of peace – in the six Martissant neighborhoods involved. This



The mayor of St. Marc visits an HTI water distribution improvement project in St. Marc identified and implemented through the community development council.

announcement led to a ceasefire declaration by armed gangs and participation by some of their members along with other residents in the community improvement activities. On March 19, in a public ceremony widely and favorably covered by local media, representatives from the community, the National Disarmament Commission and MINUSTAH DDR witnessed a symbolic turnover of lethal weapons to HNP by gang members. MINUSTAH DDR and HTI staff are in active discussions concerning improved functioning of this promising start in Martissant, with a view to wider replication in Port-au-Prince.

**Anecdotes** - In a March meeting of Cité Soleil community representatives with UN agency heads and representatives of the Préval transition team, many favorable comments were offered in regard to the work of HTI. One community representative said that "HTI should be a model for the other international

organizations looking to work in Cité Soleil" while another stated that "IOM staff working on the HTI program are able to freely circulate in Cité Soleil without a problem because they enjoy the confidence of the population, based on the good work they are doing." Similar comments of recognition of the importance and value of the HTI program in community stabilization efforts were communicated in March by the Minister of Education to newly-arrived US Ambassador Janet Sanderson during the course of her introductory meetings with IGoH cabinet members.

## Program Appraisal

The OTI program in Haiti continues to be relevant to the changing and inter-related political and social transition. The program's strategy of supporting practical steps to enable community contribution to, and benefits from, stability continues to be valid. Its value has been validated in the March 2006 conflict assessment in Haiti, and its importance as a prerequisite for longer-term development in Haiti has been recognized by the USAID Mission's desire to absorb and continue the HTI program with longer-term funding. The current draft of the USAID/Haiti strategy statement for 2007-2009 also attests to the relevancy of OTI's directions, aims and accomplishments to the dynamic political transition in Haiti and USAID's future directions in the country.

The program has retained and exercised the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions and events in Haiti. The recent election process and the current period of preparation for national governance by a democratically elected regime succeeds an interim government that has directed Haiti for the past two years.

As the Préval administration prepares to assume the helm of government, it will be necessary for OTI to refine and adapt its program objectives to include linkages between community activities and the new administration. Of particular concern is the enhancement of citizen confidence and participation in a peaceful political transition. Thus, the HTI program must include the ability of the new Government to gain legitimacy within the "hot spot" communities as an element in all programs and as a positive force for security and stability.

## Next Steps/Immediate Priorities

- Elaborate the plan for HTI program handover to the Mission and OTI exit from Haiti by September 30.
- Even prior to handover, pursue active linkages with existing USAID programs to accelerate incorporation of HTI activities into the Mission's portfolio.
- Link HTI activities to the legitimacy and responsiveness of the incoming Préval regime as a means to stabilize Cité Soleil and the other urban "hot spots".
- Continue/expand the existing coordination strategy with MINUSTAH.
- Continue to find ways to improve on the initial limited successes attained in the February-March Martissant initiative with the MINUSTAH DDR team.

- Explore project-specific options, within existing geographic areas of operation, to combat the causes and consequence of violence against women and its use by gangs to terrorize the citizenry.