

2010 Haitian Earthquake

A real life example of an earthquake and its disastrous consequences

On January 12, 2010, an earthquake of 7.0 magnitude struck near Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. The nation's infrastructure, government, and community were unprepared for a disaster of that size before the quake. At the time, 86% of Port-au-Prince's citizens lived in overpopulated, poorly-constructed slums, 50% had no access to toilets, and 66% had no access to clean tap water. The city's conditions were untenable and were further exacerbated by the natural disaster's effects. In addition, the country's corrupt government lacked the tools to adequately prepare for a massive natural disaster such as the 2010 earthquake.



The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) noted that “Haitians themselves responded swiftly and effectively, saving many lives before foreign help could arrive. However, the domestic response was severely limited by the devastation of the country's capital and the

impact on government staff and facilities.”¹ As a result of the poor emergency preparations and lack of proper government aid, an estimated 220,000 people were killed, 300,000 were injured, and 1.5 million were displaced from their homes. Around 293,383 homes and 4,000 schools were critically damaged or destroyed as well.



PAHO Director DR. Mira Roses stated in her report of the event that “one of the key lessons to be re-learned from the Haiti earthquake is that coordination can only be effective if the national authorities (civil protection, health, and other line ministries) are equipped and truly assume the ultimate leadership and authority for coordination.”² The 2010 Haitian earthquake is a prime example of why a community’s leadership team must be well-prepared to respond to a natural disaster at the stages before, during, and after it strikes.

¹ Pan American Health Organization, “Haiti’s Efforts Were Hampered By Poor Information Sharing,” *PAHO*, January 13, 2012.

<https://www.paho.org/en/news/13-1-2012-haiti-quake-efforts-were-hampered-poor-information-sharing>

² PAHO, “Haiti’s Efforts.”

Sources

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