In December 2014, Management Sciences for Health (MSH) sponsored a delegation of United States congressional staffers (delegates) to Haiti to witness first-hand the health progress made and the work still to be done to achieve a healthy future in Haiti following the devastating 2010 earthquake. The five delegates work on global health or foreign affairs, or have a focus on Haiti, and all expressed interest in seeing the impact of US investments on Haitian reconstruction and health programs.

The delegates during the site visit to the GHESKIO MDR-TB facility in Port-au-Prince.

PHOTO: THERESE CAFARO, USAID/HAITI
Introduction

The five year anniversary of the 2010 Haitian earthquake brought the country’s rebuilding efforts to the forefront of international development conversations once again. Much of the post-earthquake development dialogue has focused on the setbacks and delays of large-scale infrastructure and rebuilding projects without considering sectors such as health that have made relative progress. It is clear that greater awareness is needed among US decision-makers and the press to disaggregate the good from the bad and to recognize the health progress being made in partnership with the Haitian Ministry of Public Health and Population (Ministry of Health).

The MSH study tour allowed delegates to understand the progress made in Haiti’s long-term development through US health investments and collaboration with local partners, as well as the work that remains to be done. By touring both Haitian and US-led projects, and meeting with local implementers, participants left with a broad understanding of the achievements and remaining challenges in the effort to build a strong and sustainable national health system.

Objectives of the Trip:

- Understand the successes that have been made in Haiti’s health sector post-earthquake
- Meet with Haitian government, private sector, and civil society leaders as well as local US officials and staff
- Understand the roles of civil society organizations, public-private partnerships, and the local government in building and sustaining strong health systems to address major health challenges, such as natural disasters and crises
- Gain a better understanding of Haiti’s remaining health challenges
- Get a current view of the status of communities impacted by the 2010 earthquake

“We saw the difference US-funded projects are making in the lives of Haiti’s most vulnerable and Haiti’s poorest people.”

—Delegate
Background: Haiti

The January 2010 earthquake that devastated much of Haiti caused a severe setback in the country’s development. Socio-political upheaval in 2004 resulted in an interim period with an acting government and uncertain progress toward elections. Haiti’s infrastructure had deteriorated due to a series of natural disasters combined with a lack of financial resources, operational capacity, and leadership within the country. And increases in criminal and gang activity disrupted daily life. Even with these challenges, a network of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) —including MSH— continued delivering health services and essential medicines despite being unable to work with the interim government.

Eager to improve long-term health impact and sustainability by working with the government, MSH, with USAID support, developed a protocol for involving Ministry of Health authorities in project activities as soon as possible and sought the Ministry’s input and cooperation. The government stepped up, coordinating its efforts and resources with civil society organizations and the private sector. With cooperation across all health system sectors and in partnership with USAID and MSH, the people of Haiti established a functional health system serving four million people (nearly half of Haiti’s population) in all ten geo-departments by late 2009. With this success, the government reaffirmed its commitment to health as a human right and to extending the reach of the health system to all Haitians. New plans were put in place for a long-term health strategy, including major changes in leadership in the health sector.

Then, on January 12, 2010, the most devastating earthquake in Haiti’s history hit. The earthquake impacted Haiti’s health infrastructure, economy, politics,
“Despite the fact of all of the challenges that come from having such a massive earthquake five years ago, the Haitian people are very strong, very innovative, and very focused and driven. And they are focused on being the change that they seek.”

—Delegate

and daily life. Despite the new challenges the earthquake posed to Haiti’s development, the Haitian people persevered. The partnerships between the Haitian government, international donors, and NGOs like MSH grew stronger as they worked together to continue building on their pre-earthquake achievements to shape a healthy future for Haiti.

In addition to rebuilding the nation following the earthquake, Haiti has made progress toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, Haiti has reduced child mortality by 44 percent since 1993, in part due to a focus on vaccination campaigns implemented by the Ministry of Health. While not yet achieving 100 percent primary school enrollment, Haiti has nearly reached equal gender participation in the education system. Substantial work still remains to combat infectious diseases such as HIV and AIDS and tuberculosis, to address the growing burden of chronic non-communicable diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular disease, and in the fields of maternal and newborn child health.1

Haiti’s long-term development is a priority for the United States. The large Haitian population in the US unites the two countries, enabling a powerful alliance in the effort to expand development and business opportunities that benefit both Haiti and the US. To advance this important objective, the US developed a comprehensive strategy in consultation with the Haitian government. US assistance focuses on stimulating economic activity, investing in key infrastructure, and enhancing the delivery of basic services. US programs focus on three geographic development corridors: Port-au-Prince, Saint-Marc, and Cap-Haitien. The Saint-Marc and Cap-Haitien corridors support an important Government of Haiti objective—to create centers of economic activity outside the overcrowded capital of Port-au-Prince. US assistance invests in four sectorial pillars: 1) infrastructure and energy, 2) food and economic security, 3) health and other basic services, and 4) governance and rule of law.

Since 2011, the Haitian Government has emphasized encouraging foreign investment and developing private sector-led, market-based economic growth. Haiti encourages the inflow of new capital and technological innovations and has stated a commitment to improving its business environment and attracting foreign investors. Haiti’s Center for Investment Facilitation aims to promote investment in the local economy by reducing administrative delays and streamlining the creation of enterprises. Private investment set a ten-year high in 2013, outpacing foreign assistance spending in Haiti by more than 100 percent. The US and Haiti have a bilateral agreement on investment guarantees that permits the US Overseas Private Investment Corporation to offer programs in Haiti.
Overview of Study Tour Activities:

Day 1– Arrival and Orientation

Upon arriving in Port-au-Prince, the group attended a welcome dinner where delegates received an overview of the trip. During the dinner, delegates met with study tour coordinators, MSH staff including Acting Country Representative Miriam Castaneda and project directors Karen Caldwell and Sandra Guerrier, and USAID/Haiti health staff Michele Russell and Wenser Estimé.

Day 2– USAID’s Community Health and Infrastructure Services

The delegates started the second day of the trip bright and early with a visit to the Services de Santé de Qualité pour Haïti (SSQH) project headquarters, from where they accompanied a community health worker (CHW) on her home visits around Calebasse, located in the Centre region north of Port-au-Prince and home to approximately 675,000 people. The SSQH project is Haiti’s largest health service delivery program, funded by USAID in partnership with nonprofits and the Ministry of Health. The delegates learned how the project trains CHWs to administer basic services, make referrals to health clinics, and provide basic health education. CHWs are nominated by their communities and given extensive training on how to administer vaccinations, monitor pregnant women, provide HIV counseling, identify at-risk patients, and utilize mobile health (mHealth) technologies.

After the visit, the delegates met with USAID/Haiti global health staff to learn more about the team’s other health projects and the advancements made in Haiti’s development since the 2010 earthquake. During this meeting the delegates met with staff from the Haiti Health Infrastructure Program, which reconstructs, renovates, and equips major Ministry of Health facilities and facilities in the US development corridors.

Before attending a special dinner and discussion event, the delegates viewed different locations around Port-au-Prince where tent city settlements were once located. These former tent city locations, which have now transitioned back to parks and common spaces in the city, demonstrate the progress made in Haiti’s post-earthquake reconstruction, as the tenants have been able to resettle into permanent housing. As of June 2014, more than 90 percent of the 1.5 million
displaced persons in camps have found alternative housing and nearly all of the earthquake debris that initially obstructed the recovery has been removed.³

The day concluded with a dinner and discussion on the big picture of Haiti’s development agenda with USAID/Haiti office chiefs and MSH staff.

**Day 3 – Urban Health, Economic Development, and Governance**

The third day of the study tour focused on services in Port-au-Prince, with a visit to an urban community health center in Petit Place Cazeau, operated by the SSQH project. While there, the delegates followed a community health worker to a “rally post” and toured a USAID-funded clinic that provides a fully integrated package of health services. SSQH supports the Ministry of Health in improving the health status of the Haitian population by enhancing the quality of health services in 80 such facilities. The project emphasizes increasing the utilization of the Ministry’s integrated package of services at the primary and community levels—particularly in rural or isolated areas—where patients can receive services for pre- and post-natal care, family planning, nutrition, HIV and AIDS, immunizations, and more. The SSQH project is harnessing the power of science and technology as it integrates new financial tools for facility management and innovative mHealth applications to expand the network’s mobile data collection, health mentoring, and referral capabilities.

After the health center, the group visited **Caribbean Craft, a Haitian women-owned manufacturing company** based in Port-au-Prince that employs more than 300 local artisans. Caribbean Craft trains local artisans, provides design assistance, and exports the artisans’ work around the world. Their furniture and other crafts can be found in stores such as Crate & Barrel, West Elm, Restoration Hardware, Williams-Sonoma, HomeGoods, and Wal-Mart.

“One of the things that most impressed me on this trip was the...field visits. It was just very impressive to see a community health worker who had a cell phone with a new health data tracking app in Haitian Creole and who was very eager to teach us what she was doing. Healthcare was not just sitting in clinics in hard to reach areas, but being brought out to the people and helping prevent diseases by doing preventative healthcare where the people are.”

—Delegate
The delegates met with Melissa Rosser from USAID/Haiti’s Office of Democracy and Governance following their visit to Caribbean Craft for a lunch discussion on governance in Haiti. Delegates learned how good governance enables effective use of medicines, information, human resources, and finances to deliver greater health service performance and better health outcomes. Poor governance, on the other hand, undermines the vitality of a health system, making it less effective, less efficient, less equitable, and less responsive to the people it is intended to serve, thus contributing to poor health outcomes overall.

The delegates and Rosser also discussed Haiti’s election process and the 2015 elections. The first-round vote of the upcoming election, which is scheduled for August 9, 2015, will elect two-thirds of the Senate and the entire lower chamber of deputies. The presidential vote, along with local and municipal elections, will be held on October 25, 2015, and if necessary a run-off will be held December 27, 2015. Installation of the new parliament and president are expected in January and February of 2016.

Following lunch, the group visited a multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) hospital operated by GHESKIO. This MDR-TB facility is the only one of its kind in Port-au-Prince, serving the Ouest region. The facility provides in-patient treatment to MDR-TB patients suffering from the most drug-resistant strains of TB and who require at least 22 months of closely monitored follow-up care. Haiti has the highest rate of TB in the Western Hemisphere, with 36,000 active cases—about half of which are in Port-au-Prince. Damage from the 2010 earthquake caused overcrowding in the capital, which led to an increase in disease transmission. After five years, the government’s goal to reduce TB prevalence by 25 percent through better diagnostics, treatment, and surveillance is making progress. However, tuberculosis remains a significant problem within the Haitian prison system due to severe overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and a lack of adequate nutrition or medical care.

The day concluded with a dinner and discussion on Haiti’s health priorities. Local experts and the delegates discussed the state of health in Haiti and how diverse partners are engaged in improving health and overcoming emerging challenges.

“One of the most touching meetings we had was with [Disabilities Secretary] Gerald Oriol and learning about his plans and the work he’s doing to make sure that Haiti’s disabled are included as part of the recovery.”

—Delegate
Day 4 – Meeting Haitian Government Officials

The last full day in Haiti started with a meeting with Gerald Oriol, Jr., who serves as Secretary of State for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities. Secretary Oriol is the head of the Bureau du Secrétaire d’Etat à l’Intégration des Personnes Handicapées (BSEIPH), which aims to establish public policy for the integration of disabled people into all spheres of life in Haiti. After the 2010 earthquake, the needs of people with physical disabilities rose dramatically. Under Oriol’s leadership, the government and civil society are working together to create a more accessible country for Haiti’s disabled population. One key change Oriol and BSEIPH enacted is the requirement that all new buildings in Haiti have disability ramps and bathrooms. Additionally, thanks to the US government, many schools have been modified for ramp access.

After their meeting and overview of BSEIPH, the delegates visited Healing Hands for Haiti (HHH) Rehab Center in Port-au-Prince. HHH trains Haitians to deliver quality, sustainable physical medicine and rehabilitation education, training, and care for adults and children with physical disabilities. HHH also makes and fits prosthetic limbs on site. Through their meeting with Secretary Oriol and visit to HHH, the delegates gained a better understanding of how Haiti is meeting the needs of its disabled citizens and empowering them to help themselves.

“We got a better perspective on where Haiti is going health-wise by meeting with the Health Minister Florence Guillaume. She gave us a couple of her plans which we took back to our bosses. That was very important to have. It tells us that there is strategy, there is vision, even though we may not have the resources at the moment, there is the will.”

—Delegate

During the afternoon, the group had the opportunity to meet with the Haitian Minister for Public Health and Population Dr. Florence Duperval Guillaume. Minister Guillaume provided the delegates with an overview of the Ministry of Health work and how it addresses health systems strengthening, donor partnerships and investments, and successes and challenges in ongoing earthquake reconstruction efforts. The delegates engaged in discussion with Minister Guillaume on Haiti’s health plans for the future, including the National Health Plan. During their visit to the Ministry, the delegates discussed the rebuilding of major Haitian health facilities, including L’Hôpital Universitaire d’État d’Haiti and National Campus of Health Sciences. Thanks to a joint effort between the Haitian, US, and French governments, L’Hôpital Universitaire d’État d’Haiti has continued to provide free services to Haitians in the city.
Finally, the trip concluded with a networking reception celebrating Haitian food and art. The delegates were welcomed to Kolektif 509, a local art gallery whose mission is to promote the artwork of contemporary artists in Haiti by showcasing their talent both locally and internationally. Haitian art is recognized for its vibrant colors, surreal compositions, and unique blend of Caribbean, European, and African elements. Kolektif 509’s collection provided the perfect backdrop for an evening of discussion and relationship-building as the delegates engaged with Haitian and US leaders from both the public and private sectors. Guests included USAID/Haiti staff and members of both the NGO and private sector communities, as well as Haitian health leaders, including Uder Antoine, General Coordinator of the Management and Human Resources Office of the Government of Haiti.

Day 5 – Meeting US Government Officials

The delegates’ last morning was an exciting one as they started the day with a breakfast meeting with the US Ambassador to Haiti Pamela L. White. Ambassador White and the delegates discussed the US investments in Haiti’s health and development. The meeting was a great opportunity for the delegates to engage and learn more about the overall role of the US in Haiti.

Following their meeting with Ambassador White, the delegates learned about supply chain management as they met with staff from the Supply Chain Management System (SCMS) project. SCMS, a PEPFAR-funded project through USAID, implemented by the Partnership for Supply Chain Management, operates the most reliable and sophisticated supply chain in Haiti, including a 21,500-square-foot, state-of-the-art warehouse, which the delegates visited.

SCMS’s activities are focused on ensuring the provision of best-quality antiretroviral drugs and other HIV commodities through needs assessments, forecasting, procurement, shipping, warehousing, and distribution at the national level. SCMS improves infrastructure, provides technical assistance, and improves the ability of clinics to manage supplies to ensure proper storage.

SCMS in Haiti delivers HIV commodities to 150 USAID-supported sites throughout the country and its impact is clear. From October 2013 to September 2014 alone, SCMS helped test nearly one million people for HIV, and as of September 2014, more than 43,300 people living with AIDS are on antiretroviral treatment. SCMS was also instrumental in delivering emergency supplies after the 2010 earthquake and cholera outbreak. Since July 2013, SCMS supports the Ministry of Health’s efforts to collect and secure storage of pharmaceutical waste from 80 health facilities across the country.

“One of the things I was really impressed with is the emphasis on capacity building.”
—Delegate
Before concluding the tour with a debrief discussion, the delegates met with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) In-Country Director Dr. David Lowrance and Senior Policy Advisor for Health Systems and Strengthening Zara Ahmed. Lowrance and Ahmed provided the delegates with an overview of the CDC’s work in Haiti, highlighting another way the US invests in Haiti’s development.

“I would say that [the trip] definitely helps to be able to relate the things you learn from research, news articles, and also talking to experts. When you see it for yourself, it definitely brings a different perspective... It definitely helped me give [my Congresswoman] better insight on the conditions on the ground.”

—Delegate
The US Congress and the 2010 Earthquake:

Following the 2010 earthquake, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) helped pass the Supplemental Request into law, which approved additional funding for humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts in Haiti. Through its Foreign Affairs and National Security Taskforce, the CBC helped coordinate disaster response efforts with USAID and the American Red Cross.

To better measure the progress of recovery and development efforts and improve aid accountability in Haiti, CBC member Representative Barbara Lee and First Vice Chair of the CBC Representative Yvette Clark introduced and co-sponsored the 2011 Assessing Progress in Haiti Act, which directs the US president to report to Congress on the status of post-earthquake humanitarian, reconstruction, and development efforts in Haiti. After numerous introductions in both the Senate and House of Representatives, the 2014 Assessing Progress in Haiti Act introduced by Senator Bill Nelson successfully passed and was signed into law by President Barack Obama on August 8, 2014.

“Coming back to Capitol Hill, having seen a lot of the on-site visits and talking with [the Congresswoman], there are a lot of challenges in Haiti. There’s a lot in every sector, but what I was able to see was a lot of the potential and a lot of the progress in those sectors to address a lot of those challenges.”

—Delegate
Conclusion:

This study tour provided delegates with a unique opportunity to see first-hand the positive impact of US investment at all levels of the Haitian health system. From community-level service delivery to pharmaceutical supply chain management at the national level, the US is working with the Haitian government and civil society to build local capacity and strengthen the country’s health system.

Delegates appreciated the opportunity to meet with Haitian stakeholders at all levels of the health system—from community health workers to Ministry of Health officials. This level of personal interaction helped delegates understand how communities have benefited from foreign assistance and what challenges they still face. Not only did delegates gain a better understanding of progress in the health sector, but they learned how improvements in other sectors will have positive impacts on health outcomes. Minister Guillaume highlighted the importance of improving governance, infrastructure, and donor coordination to build a comprehensive national health system.

Following the study tour, MSH partnered with the USAID-funded, MSH-implemented Leadership, Management, & Governance Project (LMG/Haiti), InterAction, International Medical Corps, Partners In Health, and Pathfinder International in January 2015 to host a one-day policy summit on Capitol Hill highlighting the impact of US health investments in Haiti. More than 100 people participated in sessions on topics such as health financing, heard lessons learned from delegates and local implementers, and shared ideas for what is next for Haiti’s health. Both the summit and the study tour emphasized the health successes in Haiti five years after the earthquake and the strong local leadership at the helm of the country’s health sector. Delegates and participants alike left the tour and summit with a renewed commitment to ensuring a healthy future for Haiti.
Additional Resources

During the study tour, MSH created and updated a website where staff posted daily recaps and blogs as well as photos. Visit the website at http://studytours.msh.org/haiti2014/.

Learn more about MSH’s 35 years of work in Haiti by reading our report, Management Sciences for Health in Haiti: Thirty-Five Years of Progress at http://www.msh.org/resources/management-sciences-for-health-in-haiti-thirty-five-years-of-progress.

For a full recap of the 5 Years After the Earthquake: Moving Forward for a Healthy Haiti summit, visit http://www.msh.org/blog/2015/02/18/celebrating-health-progress-in-haiti.

“The public health sector in Haiti is one to be modeled after, it truly is. From top-down, it is very efficient, it addresses a lot of the true challenges, and it's not shy to admit what needs to be changed and what the challenges are.”

—Delegate

Endnotes


About MSH:

MSH is a global health nonprofit organization using proven approaches developed over 40 years to help leaders, health managers and communities in developing nations build stronger health systems for greater health impact. Since its founding in 1971, MSH has worked in over 150 countries with policymakers, health professionals, and health care providers and consumers to improve the quality, availability and affordability of health services. Working with governments, donors, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and health agencies, MSH responds to priority health problems such as HIV and AIDS; tuberculosis; malaria; maternal, newborn and child health; family planning and reproductive health; and chronic non-communicable diseases. Through strengthening capacity, investing in health systems innovation, building the evidence base, and advocating for sound public health policy, MSH is committed to making a lasting difference in global health.

MSH in Haiti:

Since 1980, MSH has been working in Haiti in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and Population to strengthen the health system and develop effective and efficient ways to meet the needs of the Haitian population. MSH staff in Haiti, most of whom are Haitian, carry out activities in each of the ten administrative departments across the country. MSH improves the capacity of local partners to conduct, manage, and govern their organizations efficiently and effectively to improve organizational sustainability and health services, and achieve better results. MSH activities range from strengthening leadership and management skills within the Ministry of Health, to the provision of quality family planning commodities, to supporting a nationwide distribution system for high quality health products.

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