



HAITI INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PROCESS INITIATIVE

REGIONAL PROGRAMMING OPTION FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

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HAITI INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PROCESS INITIATIVE (HIPPI)
Under USAID/OTI SWIFT V Transforma 3, RPO-Haiti

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ACRONYMS

CNT	Le Conseil National de Transition (National Transition Commission)
HIPPI	Haiti Inclusive Political Process Initiative
MSI	Management Systems International
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PAP	Port-au-Prince
PDO	Program Development Officer
PEN	Le Protocole d'Entente Nationale
PM	Prime Minister
PNH	La Police Nationale d'Haiti (Haitian National Police)
RPO	Regional Program Option
SWIFT IQC	Support Which Implements Fast Transitions Indefinite Quality Contract
T3	Colombia Transforma 3 Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Impetus for program initiation: The July 2021 assassination of Haiti's President Jovenel Moïse in the absence of a constitutional plan for succession threw Haiti into a constitutional crisis and paved the way for political transition. A political accord process aimed to set the stage for constitutional reform and elections over the next one to two years. However, divisions between political parties and the current government, a high-impact earthquake, lawlessness, and a worsening security environment all presented challenges to this transition. The United States Government (USG) committed to supporting a Haitian-led solution to this crisis, with USAID's Office of Transition Initiative (OTI) regional program option (RPO) deployed to better understand Haitian priorities and promote inclusion, participation, and engagement in the ongoing political process.

Dates of program duration: The Management Systems International (MSI)-implemented program, originally intended to operate for six months, officially began when it launched its first activity on November 22, 2021. At OTI's request, the program obtained a two-month, no-cost extension on December 21, 2021. However, due to a shift in strategy, operational closeout concluded on February 28, 2022, and programmatic closeout concluded in mid-March 2022.

Initial purpose and objectives: OTI launched the Haiti Inclusive Political Process Initiative (HIPPI) to support Haitian-led solutions in response to the political crisis triggered by the President's assassination. The program primarily focused on working with Haitian actors to increase inclusivity and compromise in the political transition process.

HIPPI aimed to contribute to achieving the following objectives:

- Objective 1. Increase understanding of key issues and build relationships with diverse stakeholders essential to the political transition
- Objective 2. Contribute to efforts to increase inclusivity and confidence in the political transition

Program location: Due to the program's focus on political processes, OTI anticipated most activities would take place in the capital, Port-au-Prince (PAP), and in other urban areas of the country. Due to the limited timeline of the project, HIPPI did not explore programming for other parts of the country.

CONTEXT

Political and operating landscape in Haiti at time of launch: President Jovenel Moïse's assassination triggered a constitutional crisis. The Haitian Supreme Court's Chief Justice was next in the line of succession, but he died of COVID a week prior to Moïse's death. Parliament was non-functional as the Moïse Administration never held legislative elections. Finally, the Prime Minister (PM) had just resigned, and the designated successor had been appointed by Moïse, but not yet been sworn in. This all occurred amid a landscape of chronic political dysfunction and instability worsened by Moïse's extra-constitutional measures to maintain power, and an economy struggling under the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Various political actors proposed competing solutions for the transition, challenging the legitimacy of PM Ariel Henry (appointed by President Moïse two days before his death) to usher in political stability. This situation complicated efforts to build consensus around a concrete timeline for democratic elections and constitutional reform. Stalled political negotiations took place amidst increased insecurity due to gang activity (including violence and kidnappings) in all neighborhoods of PAP and political unrest in the form of sporadic protests and roadblocks throughout the country. There was also a strong public perception that the gang activity was linked to political actors and the ongoing transition negotiations. The program, therefore, had to operate in a context of heightened political sensitivity and uncertainty.

Broader USG objectives in Haiti: Several high-level USG officials visited Haiti in the months after the assassination of President Moïse. They consistently communicated a message of USG support for Haitian-led solutions to organize and hold inclusive, credible elections. The USG also supported efforts to strengthen the Police Nationale d’Haiti (PNH) — the Haitian National Police — to combat gang activity in the interest of strengthening citizen security ahead of democratic elections. In addition, the forced return of Haitian migrants from the United States’ southern border, the humanitarian crisis after a 7.2 magnitude earthquake in the south, and the abduction of 16 U.S. citizens all heightened attention to USG involvement and impacted the USG’s strategic objectives in Haiti.

Evolution of Haitian context and USG priorities over the life of program: At the start of HIPPI, elections and constitutional reform were expected to take place in the coming months. Ongoing challenges for political power from coalitions of civil society organizations and political parties who signed political accords - such as the Montana Accord - and the failure from PM Henry to secure a consensus around his own roadmap for the transition led to a stalemate with stakeholders unwilling to compromise. This resulted in no politically significant milestones during HIPPI’s life of program. At the same time, a steep increase in gang-related kidnappings, violence, and supply chain disruptions (particularly of fuel) led to major fuel shortages that lasted weeks and paralyzed daily life.

On January 17, 2022, Haiti’s *Conseil National de Transition* (CNT) — National Transition Commission — created by the Montana Accords to elect a transitional government, published an electoral calendar for the election of a new PM and president without buy-in from PM Henry. On January 30th, members of the CNT elected Fritz Jean as president and Steven Benoit as PM. However, the Haitian public did not widely recognize this government as legitimate, and political accord negotiations with PM Henry — who argued there is no constitutional basis for such a government — stalled.

Proponents of the Protocole d’Entente National (PEN) (an accord by another coalition of civil society and political organizations) and Montana Accord pushed for PM Henry to step down on February 7, 2022 - the date when former President Moïse’s term would have ended. However, PM Henry insisted that his mandate did not end on February 7th and that only a president elected by the Haitian public could replace him. PM Henry had also set himself a goal to constitute an electoral council by February 7th. He failed to rally enough support to assemble a credible electoral council, however. Media coverage alleging the PM’s complicity in the former president’s assassination also affected perceptions of his legitimacy and credibility to lead the political transition. The failure to form a consensus around a political roadmap and the increasing insecurity led many to believe that free and fair democratic elections would not be feasible in the near term.

PROGRAM STRATEGY AND EVOLUTION

The HIPPI start-up conference in October 2021 identified two main project objectives:

- Objective 1. Increase understanding of key issues and build relationships with diverse stakeholders essential to the political transition.
- Objective 2. Contribute to efforts to increase inclusivity and confidence in the political transition.

By the end of December 2021, HIPPI's objectives shifted in response to the stalled political transition and changing context in Haiti. The HIPPI team held a Field Based Orientation (FBO) from January 18-20, 2022, to redefine the program's purpose and objectives to account for a delayed electoral timeline and heightened political sensitivity around USG involvement with political accord negotiations. As such, HIPPI revised the objectives as follows:

- Objective 1. Strengthen the ability of civil society and media to foster political and civic engagement around issues of substance related to Haiti's political transition.
- Objective 2. Increase understanding of key issues and build relationships with diverse stakeholders essential to the political transition process.

Closeout justification: By February 2022, the USG strategy for supporting a peaceful and credible political transition in Haiti has shifted to focus more on citizen security, deemed critical for free and fair elections to take place. Due to this reprioritization of USG objectives and the indefinite delay of democratic elections, OTI terminated HIPPI. The project closed field operations on February 28, 2022.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PROGRAMMATIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The HIPPI field team implemented one activity and conceptualized 24 potential activities for programming consideration. Of these 24 activities, two were at the "Ready to Implement" phase, and 13 were at the "Initial Conversations" phase by February 2022. The latter category indicates that HIPPI staff spoke to potential grantees to discuss activities, but final details and logistics had yet to be developed. Nine activity ideas were at a very early "Brainstorm" phase.

The **Rapid Virtual Perception Survey** was the sole activity cleared for implementation. The objective of the activity was to provide HIPPI with accurate perception data reflecting Haitian opinions on current events, the security situation, political processes and civic engagement covering a three-month period. This direct distribution of goods and services (DDGS) activity procured the services of a company to conduct a three-month public polling campaign, with the goal of reaching 2,000 Haitians each month.

Due to HIPPI's early closure, the team was only able to conduct the initial month's survey, collecting 2,080 responses. Key findings from the first survey included:

- Improvements in security and promoting progress of constitutional reform were important pre-conditions for holding elections.
- Security was the primary issue, as most Haitians had been impacted by gang violence in the past year.
- Women and youth were critical constituencies, since women tended to be the most disconnected from political engagement and youth were the least likely group to vote.

Two activities made it to the "Ready to Implement" phase:

- **Civil Society Mapping and Network Analysis**, which aimed to increase the team's understanding of the civil society landscape in Haiti and the role that civil society can play to increase the public's confidence that Haiti's political situation will stabilize and improve.
- **Monitoring Media and Current Events in Haiti**, using a variety of techniques including monitoring of social media and traditional media in conjunction with qualitative data collection. This activity aimed to track important stories, narratives and perspectives on current events in Haiti.

Partnerships developed: HIPPI identified 75 Haitian civil society organizations active in the political participation realm and reached out to 21 organizations to discuss potential activity ideas for implementation.

OPERATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Human resources: MSI hired and onboarded its Chief of Party immediately after OTI activated the RPO in late September 2021, enabling her participation in the Start-up Conference and early program development. MSI remotely recruited two highly skilled Program Development Officers (PDOs) and onboarded them by the end of November 2021. The knowledge and connections of these Haitian PDOs facilitated the development of impactful program ideas. During the RPO, the HIPPI field team did not fully staff up, as a leaner team can be more flexible and responsive to changing circumstances.

Security: In October 2021, MSI established a secure, temporary office based out of a hotel. MSI took a proactive approach to security, and despite the dynamic and insecure environment, no incidents impacted HIPPI staff or operations during the RPO. This proactive approach to security is exemplified by the evacuation of the Chief of Party from PAP in October 2021 during the weeks when fuel was in short supply and security tensions in PAP had risen. The Chief of Party led remote operations successfully but returned to PAP as soon as possible to continue direct programming. MSI identified and brought on a security firm operating out of PAP to assist with daily monitoring of the security situation, local transportation, and armored vehicle transportation and other security assessments, as requested. MSI also procured and equipped field staff members with satellite communications.

Workshops: Using proper COVID-19 safety protocols such as physical distancing and mandated wearing of masks, MSI hosted a successful in-person design workshop in December 2021 and an in-person, FBO in January 2022. There were no reported cases of COVID-19 after the two events.

Rapid closeout: MSI was able to suspend and close its field operations within two weeks, reflecting the flexible operating modalities MSI used to accommodate the RPO's short timeline and Haiti's dynamic environment.

CHALLENGES

PROGRAMMATIC CHALLENGES

Project objectives: The constantly evolving political context and subsequent changes in USG strategy were among HIPPI's biggest programmatic challenges. To ensure the project constantly aligned with USG policy, the HIPPI team supported OTI in close coordination with USAID and other local partners when developing program content and activities.

Timelines: Haiti's political transition timeline remained unclear for the duration of the RPO. Despite this, the HIPPI field team worked to develop activity ideas and potential partnerships with Haitian organizations to respond to the evolving political transition with Haitian-led solutions.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Security: Security was one of the biggest operating challenges. Conditions in PAP continued to deteriorate, with frequent disruptive protests and high rates of kidnapping and other gang-related violence. HIPPI minimized movement of staff and local partners and redoubled efforts to operate and coordinate remotely between the field-based staff, OTI, and the MSI home office corner. Despite the great reduction in movement, MSI had to budget for increased security-related costs.

Fuel shortages: Long-standing fuel shortages due to an expanded gang presence in PAP's fuel reserve location drove up costs and caused large operational disruptions, particularly due to a lack of fuel for transportation and power generators which provide most of the electricity in Haiti. To ensure continued project operability, MSI temporarily relocated the HIPPI Chief of Party to Miami, Florida, on October 25, 2021, to facilitate continued operations.

Pandemic: The COVID-19 pandemic also created challenges that reduced the ability to meet in-person, e.g., for the Start-up Conference. As a result, HIPPI increased its use of remote management approaches, such as video conferencing.

Home office travel: Security and COVID-19 posed challenges for MSI home office staff to travel to PAP to support operational and programmatic start-up and closeout. Given MSI's and the Chief of Party's extensive OTI and Haiti experience, HIPPI completed most main start-up and close-out tasks remotely.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAMMATIC

Managing grantee expectations: HIPPI determined it was critical to manage grantees' expectations, as many potential grantees had not received grant funding in years and sometimes had unrealistic

expectations about what HIPPI could reasonably fund and implement given the short timeline of implementation under the RPO.

OPERATIONAL

Fuel shortages: Fuel shortages are common in Haiti, at times intentionally caused by gangs to coerce political outcomes, and impact project operations and general implementation. Projects should identify solutions early to remain operational in the face of fuel scarcity, including exploring the potential use of solar panels; procurement of power banks to ensure staff can use their electronic devices; and provision of an internet stipend for field staff to continue working remotely when travel to the office is not possible.

Security: Projects need to allot sufficient funds for security-related services, including secure local transport. Implementers need to continually monitor the security context and situation and establish contingency plans in advance, with teams and security services ready to act at a moment's notice. If U.S.-based teams are unable to travel to Haiti due to security or COVID-19 concerns, having local teams travel from Haiti to the United States for essential meetings or training workshops may be a viable alternative.

Remote management: With an engaged, communicative, and dynamic team, remote management can work well to move programmatic and operational efforts forward. Frequent and open contact between the various corners fostered a successful one team approach.

Start-up: The registration process should begin as early as possible and be monitored with frequent follow-up. Given limited availability of certain products in Haiti, items such as laptops are best procured in the United States.