



# HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S COMMITMENT TO HAITI RECOVERY:



## YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED

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### The facts

A major earthquake struck the Caribbean nation of Haiti on Tuesday, Jan. 12, causing massive loss of lives and destruction of housing and infrastructure. The magnitude-7.0 quake was the most powerful to hit the area in 200 years, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The epicenter was 10 miles (16 kilometers) west of the capital, Port-au-Prince, a metro area with 4 million people. The number of those affected is in the millions, and Haiti's ambassador to the United States called the quake a "catastrophe of major proportions."

Damage from the earthquake and strong aftershocks will exacerbate the poverty faced by more than 80 percent of Haitians, 55 percent of whom live on less than US\$1 a day. In the past two years, political instability, food shortages, and tropical storms and Hurricanes Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike have made it even more difficult for Haitians to break the

cycle of poverty. More than 50,000 homes were damaged or destroyed in last year's storms.

Traditionally, most Haitian homes have been of low-quality construction and not built to withstand earthquakes. Walls are made of concrete bricks, mud or stones that lack steel reinforcement and are not anchored to a foundation. Roofs often are made of scrap wood and metal sheets; floors are dirt.

Although the full toll of homes severely damaged or destroyed is not yet known, Habitat for Humanity International has begun to respond and will be there after relief efforts have faded and long-term recovery work begins. Habitat brings to its work a solid history of 26 years in Haiti, helping families build decent, affordable shelter.

## A threefold response

Based on what is known now and Habitat's past experience with international disasters, our early response to the earthquake is expected to be threefold: 1) mobilizing people to clear the way for shelter construction and home rehabilitation; 2) distributing building materials and tools in shelter kits; 3) construction of transitional housing. The extent of each intervention will depend on the amount of support we are able to mobilize.

**1) The cleanup:** To clear the way for home repair and construction, Habitat for Humanity plans to assist in the cleanup by mobilizing people to remove debris and salvage materials that can be recycled in new shelter. Working with other organizations, these activities could include a "cash for work" component that would organize local people in affected neighborhoods and provide them with tools such as shovels, wheelbarrows and crowbars. This involvement in productive activity provides a small influx of cash to those affected by the disaster to help them meet other basic needs, and also contributes to their mental health by providing a positive, active opportunity to help with recovery.

**2) Shelter kits:** Shelter kits include building materials and tools and are designed to help families and neighborhoods make immediate repairs. Typically, the kits include items such as wall panels, roofing sheets, hurricane straps and a hammer and nails. For the past three years, Habitat for Humanity has offered vocational education programs in Haiti, so it now has a cadre of certified masons and carpenters to assist families in Port-au-Prince.

**3) Transitional shelter:** Habitat for Humanity also plans to repair and rebuild housing, using a transitional-shelter model. Small transitional shelters can be built quickly and provide permanent base structures that can be expanded over time. The initial transitional shelter will meet Sphere humanitarian standards of adequate living space and provision of water and sanitation. Given Haiti's history of being affected by natural disasters, the structures will be designed with hurricane- and earthquake-resistant features.

In addition to these interventions, immediate response will include working with Habitat Haiti to restore its capacity to fully participate in the recovery efforts. Through all aspects of the work, Habitat will cultivate partnerships with local residents and other humanitarian organizations that can multiply the effectiveness of the response.



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## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**For more information or to support this work, please visit <http://www.habitat.ca>. Donations also may be made by calling 800-667-5137 or by sending cheques to Habitat for Humanity Canada, 40 Albert Street, Waterloo, ON N2L 3S2. Please indicate on your cheque's memo line Haiti fund.**

**Thank you for your support.**

