

ISTM 6204

Final Project Report

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Introduction (Micah)

In 2007, the Haitian government mandated the creation of the Office of the Secretary of State for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, whose stated goal was to implement “a national policy to support the integration of persons with disabilities, improve their living conditions, raise awareness among the public about disability, strengthen the capacity of organizations working in the field of disability, and put in place a legal framework for the protection of persons with disabilities” (Tassot and Wilson). Later, more legal progress was made in 2012 when the Haitian government passed a law for the integration of “Disabled Persons”. “The application of this law takes into account all aspects of a person's life: housing, transportation, education and vocational training, employment, sport and leisure, access to justice among others” (Haiti Libre). While this was a step in the right direction, it was clear more work would be needed to facilitate the link between persons with disabilities and proper employment opportunities.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Haitian government started a job placement program to connect individuals with disabilities to relevant job opportunities. Eight years later, in 2015, the World Bank stepped in to help expand the work of the Haitian government, with a grant and support to diversify the services offered in Haiti to citizens with disabilities.

The World Bank identified three broad goals they hoped to achieve:

- “[E]stablish a registry of persons with disabilities to assess the needs of persons with disabilities and support more effective planning and targeting of social programs and services

- [S]trengthen government institutions to foster an effective design and implementation of disability policies and programs
- [I]mprove employment access and retention to economically empower persons with disabilities, as well as their household members and the communities where they live” (Tassot and Wilson)

To that end, the almost \$2.3 million grant offered by the World Bank was spent over the course of three years, starting in 2018. It was largely successful in achieving the objectives outlined in the project proposal. However, the project had a rocky start. It was only due to several key modifications to the project requirements that the project ended with its eventual success. As such, this report will outline the errors made early on in the project timeline, as well as the changes made to this project that led to its success.

Haitian Background

When this project was first being appraised in 2015, Haiti was “168[th] out of 187 countries according to the United Nations Human Development Index, based on social indicators such as literacy, life expectancy, infant and maternal mortality, and child malnutrition” (Tassot and Wilson). The effects of the 2010 earthquake, where 1.5 million people were displaced, were still being felt. 60% of the Haitian population fell below the national poverty line, with people with disabilities making up a disproportionate share of that population.

Furthermore, though there were governmental organizations and NGOs working to alleviate the situation, their “uncoordinated and unregulated service provision contributed to significant variation in the quality and reach of services provided” (Tassot and Wilson). Groups on the ground providing assistance specifically targeted at persons with disabilities ranged from

the Organization of American States to USAID to the Christian Blind Mission. Still, no government agency was prepared to serve as a clearing house to direct services to the most vulnerable.

Literacy Challenges

Persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable populations, especially in a third world country like Haiti. Adding geographical risk such as natural disasters like hurricanes, cyclones, torrential rains, flooding, and earthquakes, can create life altering challenges that impact people with disabilities even more severely. Figure 1, below, is a bar graph displaying the literacy rates across households with at least one person with disability, when compared to other household members. From the graph, it becomes apparent that persons with disabilities are half as likely to learn how to read as other family members with the same familial resources (social, cultural, religious, economic and medical resources).

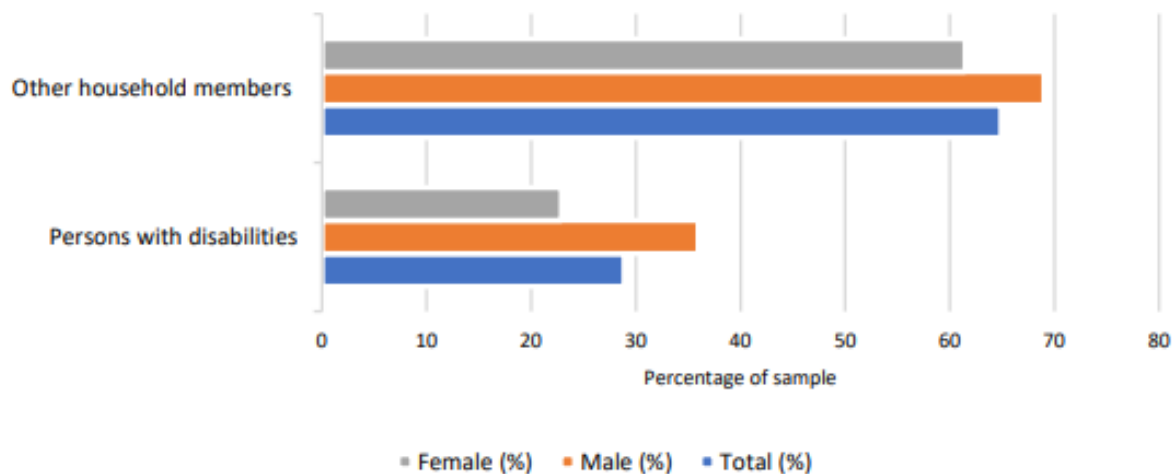


Fig. 1 *Literacy Rates across disability and gender*

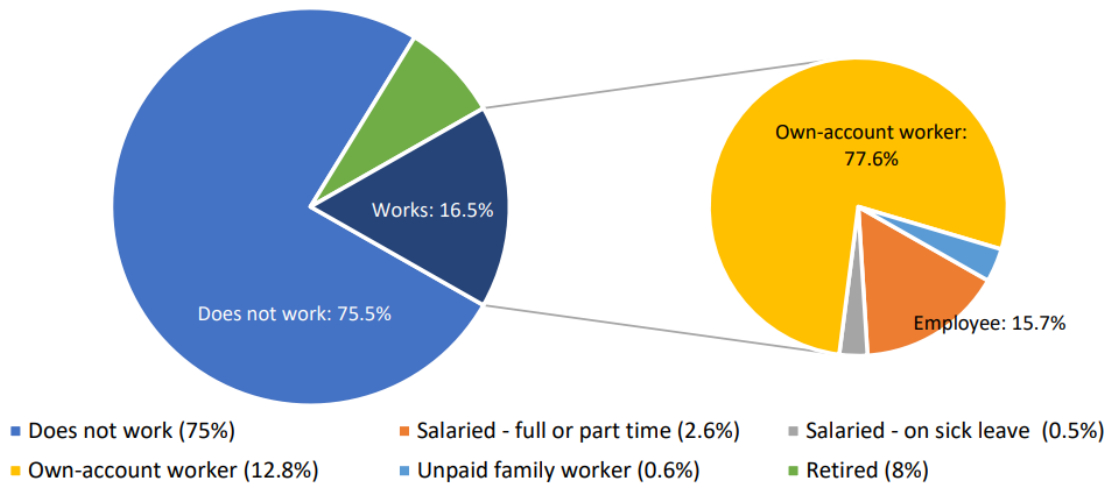


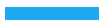
Fig 2. *Labor Market participation of persons with disabilities*

Literacy is just one challenge that can affect a person with disabilities. Another challenge is the ability to find employment. The above pie chart shows the small percentage (approximately 17%) of people with disabilities that are employed in some fashion in Haiti – the majority of whom are self-employed. The chart clearly accentuates the disproportionate number of people with disabilities who can find salaried full or part time work. Thankfully, with the World Bank’s grant, this project was specifically designed to address this issue.

Stakeholders

Though this project being “only” \$2.3 million dollars in size, was relatively small, there were still a variety of stakeholders, ranging from the World Bank to the Haitian government to the disabled citizens of Haiti. Each of these stakeholders sought different outcomes from the project, and each received varying degrees of benefit.

This project was initiated at the request of the President as part of an expansion of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (Tassot and Wilson). In the beginning, this gave the project



a good starting point with a lot of top-level political will behind it, as Schwalbe, in Information Technology Project Management notes that “several studies cite executive support as one of the key factors associated with virtually all project success” (Schwalbe 60).

Beyond high level buy-in, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor also sought to “progressively increase the management and fiduciary capacity of the BSEIPH to expand the scope and reach of disability-focused initiatives in Haiti” (Tassot and Wilson). In doing so, the project increased stakeholder buy-in, as several new groups were brought to the table, including “external firms to organize the job fairs and support the communications campaigns to promote outreach, raise awareness, and register persons with disabilities in the SIMAST and the job placement service” (Tassot and Wilson). All of this preparation led to the eventual first roll out of the product to employers and persons with disabilities in Haiti.

Taken together, this project did a good job of organizing the various stakeholders and including them early on in the development of this project. First, the Haitian government and the World Bank collaborated together to decide on the overarching goals they hoped to achieve. Quickly, they brought in outside groups, such as firms to run job fairs and public communications, and charities to identify the most vulnerable persons with disabilities in Haiti. With that level of preparation, only then did they bring in the employers and persons with disabilities to test out the new system. Still, project management did point out that “relevant Bank teams could have more effectively managed key stakeholders (notably the PHRD management team), increased engagement with the GoH during preparation, and proactively identified and resolved issues during the period while the grant was idle, in order to lessen the impacts of certain setbacks that arose during the early years of implementation and were

ultimately corrected during the June 2020 restructuring” (Tassot and Wilson). Even though it wasn’t perfect, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor took time to build stakeholder relationships, which paid off with the successful implementation of the project.

Objectives (Neharika)

- 1) In this project three significant objectives have been identified:
 - a) Establish a registry for persons with disabilities so that their necessities can be evaluated and create an efficacious and functional designing of social programs.
 - b) Bolster the government organization and its functionality to aid in planning of a productive and effective groundwork and implementation of disability policies and programs.
 - c) Enhance employment access and retention to economically empower persons with disabilities, in addition, it supports their household members and communities where they reside.
- 2) The other objectives aimed to highlight the Haitian government’s efforts to improve the living conditions of people with disabilities:
 - a) Support the Bureau du Secrétaire d'État à l'Intégration des Personnes Handicapées (BSEIPH), the office of secretary of State for integration of people with disabilities, so that they can develop a fine and an adequate registration system, which will be linked to national social registry to focus on social protection programs.



- b) Increase the accuracy of the initiative by identifying the needs, strengthen the access to healthcare.
- c) Promote a model to improve the employment opportunities for market persons with disabilities, consisting of supporting the job placements through training, counseling, fairs, and the development of a management information system (MIS) for the job placement database market.
- d) Conveying information through initiatives, such as a public relations campaign
SIMAST is a critical instrument for the government and its partners when it comes to planning social protection measures and determining who should receive them.

Challenges (Neharika)

1. Limited Information: One of the shortcomings in the projects was that limited information was available on prevalence with persons with disabilities in Haiti, which poses an issue in the registry of people in the database and delays provision of disability cards or other benefits.
2. Restricted Access to Employment Market: Persons with disabilities are at highest risk, as their access to jobs in the market are limited, this is one of highest vulnerability and shortcomings. Moreover, persons with disabilities will need training, counseling for jobs suited to their convenience.

3. **Challenges in Accessing Jobs:** As awareness for employment for persons with disabilities is limited among employers, it is important to recognize their efforts and challenges. In continuation, connection with employers must be improved and persons with disabilities need to refine their skills for jobs suitable to them.
4. **Proper Evaluation of Needs:** A sound management system needs to be created to feed the data of the people with disabilities into the database; so that their needs can be identified and improve their access to healthcare. Government should increase the awareness through events and fairs, moreover, improve communication with BSEIPH to improve the quality of social programs and services.
5. **Political Unrest:** Haiti's economic and social development continues to be hindered by political instability, increasing violence and fragility. Haiti remains the poorest country in the LAC region and among the poorest countries in the world. Budget allocation for the social services and healthcare access has been restricted and limited, the section of persons with disabilities.
6. **Earthquake or natural disaster:** The 2010 earthquake, resulted in 10 percent of Haitian households to experience loss of, or injury to, a family member, increasing the number of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in the country.

Project Restructuring (Neharika)

The project went through restructuring in June 2020. Restructuring was focused on addressing exogenous turmoil, primarily political unrest, the COVID-19 pandemic, and zone-

specific restrictions such as limited availability of social assistance and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The important changes that came about from the restructuring were:

- Extension of the project closing date from June 30, 2020 to June 30, 2021
- Revision of the objectives and project title to align with revised timeframe and constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Revision of the “Results Framework”
- Revision of the component funds allocation
- Revision of the disbursement category allocation

(Tassot and Wilson)

Extension of the Project Due Date and Revised Project Title

The project closing date was extended by one year from June 30, 2020 to June 30, 2021 and the project title “Improving Access to Social Services & Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities” was revised to “Promoting Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Social Protection and Employment Programs.”

The initial objective to “identify persons with disabilities and increase their access to social services and employment opportunities” was revised to “identify persons with disabilities and increase their access to employment services.”

The restructuring was made for two reasons. Firstly, social services were not as available as predicted during evaluation. Haiti’s government initiative Kore Fanmi, which focused on enhancing service through community agents with financing from the World Bank was eventually discontinued.

Secondly, employment opportunities were changed to employment services due to shortcomings in project framework and execution of timeframe which was not sufficient to achieve anticipated employment outcomes.

Revision of the Results Framework

The Intermediate Results Indicators and Project Development Objectives (PDO) were revised to enhance the initial design, moreover, the pandemic and the political unrest have affected the results. PDO indicators were not specified under Component 2 in the original project design, the focus was directed to focus on access to employment services rather than employment opportunities to attain efficacious results in a restricted time frame. Lastly, the new Project Development Objectives removed reference from access to social services.

Revised Timeline and Constraints Imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic

Targets (in the project) were altered for specific project development objective indicators to correct for an ambitious project design. In addition, delays in execution and the COVID-19 pandemic restricted or limited in-person data collection and training activities. The number in the registry dropped from 100,000 to 50,000. For people trained to identify persons with disabilities, the target dropped from 1000 to 30. Following which, employers working for the database, the target has been dropped from 100 to 30.

Revision of the Disbursement Category Allocation

During restructuring, for the component one allocation increased from US\$709,000 to US\$1,244,320, the change is due to misinterpretation in cost allocation, where costs were predicted higher than predicted. whereas Component 2 decreased from US\$1,138,700 to

US\$600,000. Component 3 increased slightly from US\$446,620 to US\$450,000. Component 1 cost allocation was increased due to higher than estimated costs of the registration survey.

Outcomes & Evaluation (Brian)

Overall, the Project Development Outcomes were given an efficacy rating of “High” – ranking the overall success of the project as very successful. However, this rating was assessed after the restructuring of the PDOs in June of 2020. The restructuring was primarily due to unforeseen circumstances (i.e. the Covid-19 pandemic and political unrest inside Haiti). The chart below lays out the efficacy ratings pre and post-restructuring – as evaluated by the Social Protection & Jobs Global Practice Latin America & Caribbean Region (Tassot and Wilson).

Outcomes	Efficacy Rating	
	Pre-restructuring (Original)	Post-restructuring (Revised)
PDO 1: <i>to identify persons with disabilities</i>	Substantial	High
PDO 2: <i>to increase access of persons with disabilities to social services</i>	Negligible	N/A (Dropped)
Original PDO 3: <i>to increase access of persons with disabilities to employment opportunities</i> Revised PDO 3: <i>to increase access of persons with disabilities to employment services</i>	Modest	High

Fig. 3 *Project Development Outcomes*

Aligned with the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the Republic of Haiti, the project improved social protection services for persons with disabilities and enhanced their access to social and employment services. Much of this was achieved by identifying persons with

disabilities and the creation of a social registry to contact and support their ability to gain employment (Tassot and Wilson).

Another positive was the ability to stay under budget, even after change requests and restructuring late in the project's lifecycle. Below, this chart displays the financial totals for the project as a whole.

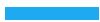
FINANCING			
	Original Amount (US\$)	Revised Amount (US\$)	Actual Disbursed (US\$)
Donor Financing			
TF-18710	2,294,320	2,294,320	2,152,776
Total	2,294,320	2,294,320	2,152,776
Total Project Cost	2,294,320	2,294,320	2,152,776

Fig. 4 *Project Financing*

Quality of Project Management

The initial planning phase of the project left multiple challenges to overcome. Much of this was due to the “overly ambitious” framework and missing project activities and indicators that did not line up with the PDO. For example, the PDO to increase access of persons with disabilities to social services was not reflected in the project theory of change nor did it have activities linked or indicators in the results framework to measure progress (Tassot and Wilson).

However, after the restructuring of the project objectives, financing allocations and the hiring of a management specialist to manage the project more effectively, the implementation phase was viewed largely as very successful. Using the Agile methodology, the project was broken up into several phases and included constant collaboration with stakeholders (specifically

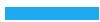


the World Bank) and a constant collection of data to maintain up-to-date assessment of the outcomes (Tassot and Wilson). By using the Agile methodology for their project management strategy, the stakeholders and managers were able to more effectively obtain the goals laid out for the project. Through collaboration, the entire project team were able to work together quickly and easily to overcome the challenges of the nation of Haiti – specifically constant political unrest and the world wide Covid-19 pandemic.

Lessons Learned (Micah)

One of the biggest lessons learned overall through this project was that instability in Haiti was the proximate cause of most of the issues with this project. At the beginning of the project design and proposal phases, there were both natural disasters and political unrest, which created delays in securing funding. This should have been a clear indicator to the project team that they would need to account for any future external incidents which might impact the project schedule. However, such considerations were clearly not top of mind, as the subsequent project restructuring clearly pointed toward an over-ambitious project that was delayed due to COVID-19 and the associated monetary and political concerns.

To add to Haiti's current predicament, even following the final deployment of the product and the official conclusion of the project, there were yet more unforeseen difficulties that affected the viability of the product. Not six months after the project ended, the “presidential assassination on July 7, 2021, the magnitude 7.2 earthquake in southwest Haiti on August 14, 2021” occurred, leading to “political instability, institutional turnover, and the high threat of natural disasters pose large risks to development outcomes” (Tassot and Wilson). Clearly, it is

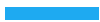


more than true that “all industries, especially the software development industry, tend to underestimate the importance of project risk management” (Schwalbe 465). If more risk management had been implemented during the course of the project, it is likely that the World Bank would have been more prepared to complete their project objectives, “determining their scope, and developing realistic schedules and cost estimates. It helps project stakeholders understand the nature of the project, involves team members in defining strengths and weaknesses, and helps to integrate the other project management knowledge areas” (Schwalbe 464). Taken together, the project’s overall success happened in spite of project planning, not because of it.

Conclusion (Micah)

All in all, it is clear that Haiti is one of the most challenging environments to run any project in, let alone a heavily technology-based one. The lack of infrastructure, natural disasters, and political instability all played a major role in the shortcomings of this project, of which there were several. But we can draw several lessons from the failures of this project, namely the need to start with a strong risk management plan, and also to not be afraid to go back and change the project goals if it becomes clear that such changes are necessary. Despite the short timeline for this project, and the continuous external issues the project team faced, they still managed to deliver a working product in the timeline they agreed to.

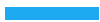

On paper, this project was merely a way to centralize information about persons with disabilities in Haiti, and better connect those citizens with employment opportunities. However,



this project is also about giving opportunities to some of the most vulnerable populations in one of the most vulnerable countries in the world. And even though the price tag was relatively modest, for any one individual helped by this project, it would likely be a lifeline to be connected with an employment opportunity or better help from an NGO. With that in mind, though there were many ways this project could have been structured more effectively, it was still an overall success.

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