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Project "Supporting the implementation of the National Strategy for Social Protection and Promotion of Haiti" Final and independent evaluation

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Countries: Haiti

Evaluation date: May 20, 2025

Evaluation type: RBSA-funded activity

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: DWT/CO – San Jose

Technical Office: RBSA

Evaluation manager: Cybele Burga, Regional Evaluation Officer

Evaluation consultant(s): CELLULE D'APPUI TECHNIQUE EN DEVELOPPEMENT LOCAL (CATEDEL)

DC Symbol: HTI/22/01/RBS

Donor(s) & budget: 25,000 USD

Key Words: RBSA/ILO, PNPPS Haiti, Database, Institutional Resilience, Capacity Building/Transfer of Expertise, Informal Sector Workers, Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The HTI/22/01/RBS project, funded by the ILO between 2022 and 2025, was implemented in Haiti in a context of multiple crises: political instability, natural disasters, a pandemic, and institutional weakening. Requested by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MAST), it aimed to strengthen the foundations of a fairer, more accessible, and resilient social protection system, particularly for workers in the informal sector, who are often excluded from traditional social security mechanisms.

This project was structured around three major complementary objectives:

- 1. Extend social security coverage**, including people working in the informal economy;
- 2. Strengthen the capacities of key institutions** (ONA, OFATMA, CAOSS), both legally, technically and organizationally, in order to improve the governance of the system;
- 3. Provide analysis and steering tools** to decision-makers and stakeholders to design, finance and evaluate social policies based on reliable data.

Implementation relied on shared governance between MAST, relevant public institutions, and the ILO Office in Haiti, with regional technical support from the ILO Office in San José. The project enabled concrete progress, such as digital modernization at OFATMA using openIMIS software, the reactivation of CAOSS as a platform for tripartite social dialogue, and targeted training for sector stakeholders. Thanks to a flexible approach adapted to field constraints, this project laid the foundations for a more inclusive and sustainable social protection system aligned with national and international development priorities

Present situation of the project

The project was completed and evaluated by the independent firm CATEDEL between February 9 and May 20, 2025.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The final project evaluation aimed to measure the project's concrete results and draw useful lessons for the future. It had five main objectives: to assess the progress made in the three components of the project, to evaluate the effectiveness of the resources mobilized in a difficult context, to identify the project's strengths and weaknesses, to analyze the sustainability of the results obtained, and to extract good practices that could be adapted elsewhere. Beyond the technical aspect, this evaluation also served as a strategic tool to guide political decisions, better target social needs in Haiti, and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations.

Conducted primarily in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince – where key partner institutions such as ONA (National Old Age Insurance Office), OFATMA (Work Accident, Sickness and Maternity Insurance Office) and CAOSS (Board of Directors of Social Security Organizations) are based – the assessment extended to the national level. It mobilized state, union, community and international actors,

	<p>including MAST, United Nations agencies (such as UNDP, UNICEF or UN Women), as well as technical and cooperation partners (GIZ: German Cooperation, Global Affairs Canada, etc.). It also provides useful data for civil society, researchers, parliamentarians and students, in order to strengthen dialogue, equity and transparency in social protection policies in Haiti.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>The independent evaluation of the project, conducted between February and May 2025, used a mixed methodological approach with a qualitative focus, combining documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, perception surveys, and participatory observation. It relied on a socio-constructivist and adaptive logic, allowing the methods to be adjusted to the constraints of the Haitian context. A total of 64 respondents were consulted, including nearly 46% women, representing a diverse range of stakeholders: public institutions, unions, community organizations, international agencies, direct beneficiaries, and independent experts.</p> <p>Field interviews were conducted when security conditions permitted. At the same time, the team used digital tools (Zoom, WhatsApp, Teams, etc.) to maintain exchanges in hard-to-reach areas. The analysis relied on rigorous data triangulation and a dynamic reading of institutional dynamics, respecting the quality standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). The evaluation cross-cuttingly integrated human rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, as well as the rights of children, people living with disabilities, and people with reduced mobility, to ensure an inclusive, equitable, and representative reading of the project's scope.</p> <p>In addition, the use of prospective analysis tools made it possible to collect data from respondents that was useful for in-depth cross-reflection, leading to the development of three scenarios intended to inform decision-making processes. These scenarios aim to promote the implementation of an exit strategy that is both financially and institutionally sustainable and resilient in the face of contextual uncertainties.</p>

<p>MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS</p>	<p>Despite a challenging context, the RBSA project, coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MAST) with the support of the International Labor Organization (ILO), has enabled several important advances to strengthen the social protection system in Haiti. In particular, it has:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trained the technical teams of partner institutions (ONA, OFATMA, CAOSS) to modernize management and better understand the challenges of social protection. 2. Introduced openMIS software to OFATMA, an innovative digital solution to improve the traceability, efficiency and transparency of social benefits. 3. Conducted strategic studies, particularly on the links between social security and HIV/AIDS, and on the alignment of Haitian legislation with international standards. 4. Relaunched social dialogue through the reactivation of CAOSS, a
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tripartite body bringing together the State, employers and unions.

5. **Laid the foundations for better data sharing** between public institutions, with a view to strengthening coordination and the identification of beneficiaries.

The evaluation highlights that several challenges limited the project's impact:

- The absence of a parliament and instability in institutions (with staff often being replaced) have hampered the adoption of key reforms.
- The lack of statistical tools and trained personnel at OFATMA has reduced the effectiveness of actions.
- Gender mainstreaming remained weak, with few specific indicators to assess the impact on women and little involvement from the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Women's Rights (MCFDF).
- The project remained too focused on the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, leaving little room for rural areas.

The majority of stakeholders welcomed the efforts made to improve coordination, relaunch social dialogue, and strengthen institutional capacity. However, some stakeholders—particularly unions and OFATMA—expressed mixed expectations, reflecting a lack of involvement and/or internal bottlenecks. However, all agreed on the need to better anchor the project's achievements, to further involve local communities, and to make governance more inclusive.

The final evaluation concludes that the RBSA project is:

- **Very relevant**, because it responds well to the needs of the country and to Haiti's international commitments.
- **Overall consistent**, although hampered by certain institutional rigidities.
- **Moderately efficient**, with good use of resources, but a lack of mechanisms to sustain achievements.
- **Effective**, thanks to concrete results in the modernization and strengthening of institutions.
- **With a visible impact**, but still unequally felt depending on the groups and regions.
- **Of uncertain sustainability**, highly dependent on political stability and future resources.

Thus, the project laid solid foundations for building a more modern, inclusive social protection system adapted to Haiti's realities. It demonstrated strong strategic relevance and flexible management capacity, despite a national context marked by instability. However, the results show that to ensure the sustainability of the achievements, it is necessary to strengthen coordination between institutions, expand territorial coverage, fully integrate gender equality, and stabilize the relevant public structures.

To support the transition after the project, three exit scenarios have been proposed. The phased scenario focuses on a gradual transfer of responsibilities to national institutions, with ongoing technical and digital support. The accelerated scenario favors a rapid transition to

external partners (such as the IOM or WFP) but carries risks of loss of coherence. Finally, the deferred scenario proposes a mini-project focused on capitalization and social dialogue, subject to additional funding. All these scenarios take into account the country's security challenges and provide psychosocial support for a realistic and sustainable transition.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main recommendations

The evaluation's recommendations, formulated based on field observations, lessons learned, and good practices, aim to strengthen the sustainability, impact, and transferability of the project's achievements. Structured by order of priority and feasibility, they are addressed to both national institutions and technical and financial partners, and are based on OECD-DAC criteria and three contextualized exit scenarios. The main recommendations are:

- Strengthening and institutionalizing adaptive management in social reform projects : The operational flexibility of the RBSA project has proven essential in a context of multiple crises.
- Sustain and extend structured social dialogue through a multi-party roadmap : The CAOSS has enabled a revival of dialogue, but its functioning remains fragile.
- Adopt a harmonized framework of social and environmental safeguards for HIMO projects : Inclusive and eco-responsible HIMO guidelines have enabled positive impacts.
- Formalize a continuing training system for institutional executives : The positive impact of one-off capacity building remains limited without lasting anchoring.
- Extending the deployment of OpenIMIS to other social institutions : The successful introduction of OpenIMIS at OFATMA is a good technological practice.
- Create a national capitalization and innovation unit in social protection : The evaluation highlights the absence of a structured mechanism to promote and transfer the knowledge produced.

By focusing on inclusion, tripartite governance, and local ownership, the project initiates a paradigm shift toward rights-based social protection, rooted in local communities, and focused on the most vulnerable. While achievements remain fragile, this approach represents a major step toward reshaping a more equitable, resilient social contract that is better adapted to the country's current social dynamics. To ensure its sustainability, a strong commitment from national stakeholders, supported by consistent international support, remains essential.

In the same vein, the evaluation highlights the strategic role of the ILO National Coordination, which assumed the dual role of Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) and operational leader of the project. In a context marked by significant institutional and security instability, this configuration made it possible to strengthen the dynamics of inter-institutional cooperation, actively promote the Decent Work Agenda, and improve the visibility and coherence of actions carried

out in conjunction with partners in the United Nations system, as well as other development and humanitarian actors.

All in all, the project is part of a historical dynamic of reform of a social security system long perceived as elitist, centered on workers in the formal sector and disconnected from the realities experienced by the majority of the Haitian population.

Key lessons learned (LL_i):

- **LL₁ | Adaptive management is essential in a crisis context:** In a context of fragility, an adaptive and agile management approach is not only desirable, but also essential to ensure operational viability and strengthen the resilience of partner institutions.
- **LL₂ | The importance of structured social dialogue to support reforms:** Social dialogue is a long-term process that must be strengthened and institutionalized to prevent progress from remaining fragile or reversible.
- **LL₃ | The need for a strategy of capitalization and continuous capacity building:** The sustainability of capacity building initiatives depends on the institutional anchoring of continuing training systems and proactive knowledge management.

Main good practices (GP_i):

- **GP₁ | Targeted strengthening of institutional capacities as a vector of innovation and differentiated effectiveness:** Although the direct institutional beneficiaries (ONA, OFATMA, CAOSS in particular) share common concerns regarding the extension of social protection, governance and accountability, their operational and institutional needs differ significantly.
- **GP₂ | Implementation of technological tools to modernize social protection services:** The introduction of openIMIS software at OFATMA is a convincing example of initiation into the modernization of social benefits management systems, through the digitalization of processes, thus increasing transparency and efficiency.
- **GP₃ | Environmental and social safeguard approach in High Intensive Labor (HIMO in French) projects:** The integration of guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for labor-intensive projects (PIE) has made it possible to establish social protection mechanisms while minimizing negative impacts on the environment and promoting the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

