

Post-earthquake support started for Haiti's environmental NGO sector

Title

The BirdLife Caribbean Program has secured over US\$250,000 from the [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](#) (CEPF) to strengthen Haiti's environmental civil society/ NGO sector in the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake. While attention remains understandably focused on the human dimension of the disaster and the continued need for large-scale humanitarian assistance (shelter, food, water, health care and sanitation), the environmental community in Haiti and abroad has expressed serious concern about the earthquake's immediate impact on the fragile environment, particularly with respect to Haiti's last remaining forests and its globally important biological diversity. Inside Port-au-Prince, the environmental community has been hit hard, as the country's already limited conservation capacity has been set back significantly. As with virtually all government agencies, the building that once housed the Ministry of the Environment was destroyed and ministry staff lost their lives. The earthquake happened at a critical time when the ministry was being reorganized and as key UNDP, GEF, and IDB initiatives were beginning to mobilize to enable the Haitian government to manage the last remaining natural areas of the country. Members of Rézo-Ekolo, Haiti's informal network of 12 local conservation and sustainable development organizations, survived, but many of them lost their offices and places of employment, and at least one of them has had to cease operations. Most however remain in contact with each other and have managed to continue or recommence their activities, but they still lack the basic office equipment and resources to work, to hold meetings, and to engage in efforts to ensure that the country's environmental resources are safeguarded during this difficult time. The support provided by CEPF will allow BirdLife, working locally through [Société Audubon Haïti](#) (SAH, a leading member of the Rézo-Ekolo network), to (re)build and strengthen civil society institutions at the national level (strengthening legitimate Haitian organizations that are involved in research, advocacy, education and related aspects, and helping them to build an effective network). At the same time, it will establish the strategic priorities for appropriate interventions within the high priority key biodiversity areas of Massif de la Hotte and Massif de la Selle. Both of these areas are under increased pressure as a result of the earthquake. The support from CEPF builds on BirdLife's work to strengthen the capacity of SAH with funds from the MacArthur Foundation (see: [MacArthur Foundation helps build a long-term future for Haitian biodiversity](#)), expanding that assistance to the whole Rézo-Ekolo network that is made up of the following institutions:

- Société Audubon Haïti (SAH)
- Association Paysans Vallée (APV) (Petit-Goâve)
- Fondation Ecosophique haïtienne
- Fondation Haïtienne de l'Environnement (FHE)
- Fédération des Amis de la Nature (FAN)
- Fondation Macaya pour le Développement Local
- Fondation Seguin
- Groupe 73
- Groupe d'Action Francophone pour l'Environnement (GAFE)
- Haïti Environnement et Développement
- Organisation pour la Réhabilitation de l'Environnement (ORE)
- Réseau des Professionnel d'Intervention en Education (REPIE)

Strategic conservation interventions in the Massif de la Hotte (complementing BirdLife's existing activities with SAH around Macaya National Park) and the Massif de la Selle will hopefully start early in 2011.