

## 2.2 Challenges in Haiti



**Main Idea** Haiti faces many great challenges in its efforts to build a strong economy and decrease poverty.

In the 1700s, the French colony of Saint-Domingue (san do MANG yuh), which is today's Haiti, was the richest in the Caribbean. Today, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with 80 percent of its people living in poverty.

### Poverty's Historical Roots

Haiti gained independence from France in 1804. Because most of Haiti's citizens had been slaves, they did not have any money or means of income. European nations feared slave revolts in their colonies in the Caribbean, and so did not support Haiti financially when it became an independent nation. In the 20th century, political conflict and outbreaks of disease kept tourists away, making it difficult for Haiti to grow economically.

**Critical Viewing** Members of a Chinese emergency rescue team work in Port-au-Prince two days after the 2010 earthquake. Based on the photo, how might past building practices have contributed to the extent of the devastation?



## RESPONDING TO THE EARTHQUAKE

# 1.5 million

Number of Haitians displaced from their homes and living in temporary housing after the earthquake

# 28,000

Number of displaced Haitians that had moved into new homes six months after the earthquake

# 1,340

Number of tent cities and camps still being used six months after the earthquake

Source: 2010 United Press International



The day after the earthquake, Haitians set up this tent city amid the rubble. In this aerial photo, the colorful squares in the center are the roofs of tents used as temporary shelters.

## 21st Century Haiti

The **Human Development Index (HDI)** is used by geographers to compare quality of life in different countries. HDI combines measures of the health, education, and **standard of living**—the level of goods, services, and material comforts—of people in a country. People in countries with a low HDI, such as Haiti, are often less healthy, less educated, and poorer than people in countries with a high HDI, such as the United States.

Politics in 21st century Haiti have been marked by instability and corruption. Due to violence between political groups, U.S. forces were sent in 2004 to Haiti's capital city, **Port-au-Prince**, to maintain security. Over the next few years, further efforts toward peace in Haiti were unsuccessful.

Adding to Haiti's challenges, a massive earthquake struck in January of 2010. Port-au-Prince and the surrounding area were nearly destroyed. Over 1.5 million people were **displaced**, or forced from their homes. Damage to the airport and to seaports made it difficult to receive immediate help from other countries.

As Haiti tried to recover, organizations from around the world began donating money and supplies such as food and medicine. Some countries also sent emergency rescue workers. Many nations and global organizations excused Haiti from paying back billions of dollars in loans, so they could rebuild at home.

### Before You Move On

**Summarize** What factors contribute to the difficulties Haiti faces in overcoming poverty?

## ONGOING ASSESSMENT

### DATA LAB

- Analyze Data** How many displaced Haitians were in new homes six months after the earthquake? How many were still homeless?
- Make Inferences** What factors might explain this difference in numbers?
- Draw Conclusions** What do the photos show about how Haitians and the international community responded after the earthquake?