



SUCCESS STORY

Haitian Diaspora youth contributing to build back Haiti better

USAID uses returning Haitian citizen to provide key relief and reconstruction functions



Photo by Parsons

USAID provides unique opportunities for Haitian nationals to return to Haiti and contribute their professional and expert skills to the relief and reconstruction efforts, and to build capacity within the Haitian community to manage complex projects to international standards. Caroline has expressed her desire to remain in Haiti as long as her skills are needed and she can be of value to the reconstruction efforts.

Caroline Zennie was born in Haiti and grew up in Port au Prince. In 2002, she elected to follow in her father's civil engineering footsteps by obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering with a Minor in Technology and the Environment from the University of Virginia (2006), and a Master of Science in Civil Engineering and Construction Management from Columbia University (2008). Upon graduating, Caroline joined Parsons in New York, where she provided engineering and construction management services associated with the United States Postal Services (USPS) Leased Space Accessibility Program (LSAP).

Immediately following the January 12, 2010, earthquake, Caroline contacted her local chapter of Engineers Without Borders, expressing an interest in participating in any planned disaster-relief mission. Within hours she was contacted by the Multi-National Center for Earthquake Engineering Research at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York (MCEER), to be part of a team of engineers travelling to Port-au-Prince for one week, to perform preliminary structural evaluations of remaining buildings. During that week the team reported to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office, and completed more than 100 building inspections.

On her return to the United States, Caroline reached out to Parsons to determine if the corporation was pursuing projects in Haiti, and was later assigned the position of Camp Mitigation Project Manager for the USAID-Haiti Program Management Coordination Cell Support Task Order. As the camp mitigation project manager, Caroline is responsible for developing and implementing complex civil engineering works at IDP camps that, if not executed, put lives at risk.

Within days of arriving in Haiti, Caroline was assigned the camp mitigation project at Carradeux, an informal camp that was hastily constructed by cutting terraces into the area's hills. The resulting slopes are steep and need to be stabilized to ensure they do not slide into the tents along the terraces. To complete the project, Caroline worked with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to create a topographical map of the site, design slope stabilization methods, draft the scope of work, and she is acting as project manager to ensure the work will be completed according to the specifications.