

WOMEN & GIRLS **IGNORED**

CARACOL INDUSTRIAL PARK



“

*They gave us what
they wanted to give us.
They didn't ask us
how we saw things,
how we evaluated
what we needed.*

– Ilina St Jean

”

Front Cover Photo by Marilia Leti / ActionAid



Photo by Antoine Bouhey / ActionAid

LAND WAS SEIZED, AND COMMUNITIES LEFT BEHIND, TO MAKE WAY FOR HAITI'S CARACOL INDUSTRIAL PARK.

In January 2011, approximately 3,500 people were forced from their land in Northeast Haiti to make way for the Caracol Industrial Park, a compound of garment factories and related infrastructure funded by the Inter-American Development Bank and other international donors with earthquake reconstruction funds.

The land taken for the park was the most fertile agricultural land in the area. Almost overnight, the farmers and their families lost their primary source of income and food security. They waited almost three years for promised replacement land, only to be told that most families would instead receive an inferior and inadequate cash compensation package.

Almost all of those families now struggle to meet their basic needs.

On 12 January 2017, the seventh anniversary of the earthquake, the Kolektif Peyizan Viktim Tè Chabè, a collective of hundreds of displaced farmers, filed a [complaint](#) with the Bank's accountability office. The Kolektif, supported by [Accountability Counsel](#), [ActionAid](#) and local partners, is calling for fair compensation for their lost land and for the Bank to address the many other environmental and social problems, including pollution and poor working conditions, linked to the industrial park.

GENDER IMPACTS OF CARACOL INDUSTRIAL PARK: WOMEN AND GIRLS IGNORED UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE



Photo by Marilia Leti / ActionAid

Female heads of household received on average US\$1,000 less final compensation than their male counterparts, a [review](#) of 180 agreements found.

Women play a significant income-gaining role in the agricultural sector in Haiti. Women headed at least 32 of the 442 households displaced by the Caracol Industrial Park and many more worked on that land to support their families.

Smallholder farmers generally face difficult conditions in Haiti, with [high rates of poverty](#). For women, and especially rural and poor Afro-descendent women, the situation is even more tenuous. Compared to men, they:

- Tend to have [more financial instability](#) and reduced access to healthcare.
- Have primary responsibility for feeding their families but [struggle to secure the necessary resources](#) to do so.
- Have a harder time accessing [formal work opportunities](#) and education resources.
- Face [obstacles to equal participation](#) in decision-making, making it difficult to protect their interests.

Because these inequalities are not uncommon, the Inter-American Development Bank has adopted policies that require it to pay particular attention to [gender risks and impacts](#) when investing in a project like the industrial park. [Compensation packages](#) must take into account gender differences. The Bank and its client must obtain and take into account the distinct views of women.

In violation of those obligations, neither the Bank nor its client discussed gender issues seriously at any point in the process of determining how to compensate displaced families. Nor were the views of women specifically collected and taken into account. [When directly asked](#) by the Kolektif and its representatives, **the Bank and its client could not describe any gender-specific planning.**

Unsurprisingly, then, the compensation packages lacked any features to support women and girls’ specific needs. We have identified only one female-headed household that received additional support after being categorized as a “vulnerable” household. The other female-headed households received cash compensation without any tailored support.

Interviews conducted by our partners with 16 female heads of household confirmed the increased harm suffered by women and girls:

- All reported that their incomes are unstable.
- None reported satisfaction with their living conditions.
- Two reported that they had no income-generating activity at all.
- Many have struggled to pay for their children’s education. It is likely that girls have suffered disproportionately that [loss of education](#).

Families are also worried about other impacts of the industrial park that disproportionately affect women and girls in their communities. Women and children who wash clothes in surface water sources like the Trou-du-Nord River are especially vulnerable to water-borne diseases should the water become contaminated. Women are also disproportionately impacted by [poor work conditions](#) at the park, including [sexual harassment](#), as it employs three times more women than men.

Although the Bank has improved its efforts to take into account gender-specific risks, for the women of the Kolektif it is too little, too late.

“

The money wasn't much at all. With the money they gave us, I could just pay some small things for the kids, reimburse small debts I had, pay for health expenses. I didn't have money to do anything else. Today I struggle a lot... I have more and more debts.

– Vigénise Bien Aimé

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Antoine Bouhey / ActionAid

THE WAY FORWARD

In spite of how they have been treated, the Kolektif believes that fair compensation remains possible. Working in collaboration with approximately 210 victims of the displacement, the Kolektif has developed a detailed proposal, including fair financial and non-financial compensation to reestablish sustainable livelihoods as well as specific support for their children's education. Their complaint seeks a constructive dialogue with the Bank and its client, facilitated by the Bank's independent accountability office.

Additionally, the Kolektif requests a new, meaningful, consultation process to explain the broader environmental and social risks and impacts of the Caracol Industrial Park to affected communities and to facilitate their input into how those risks will be managed.

For more information about the complaint, see accountabilitycounsel.org/communities/current-cases/haiti-caracol-industrial-park/.



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