Supporting private industry is a critical component of Haiti’s recovery effort, and the expansion of the garment industry presents an opportunity to provide sustainable employment for Haitians and develop an industry that can help lift the country out of poverty.

The first of its kind anywhere in the world, and inaugurated this past August, the Haiti Apparel Center (HAC) utilizes the commitment, resources, and expertise of the Governments of Haiti and the United States, development and apparel industry experts CHF International- Haiti and [TC]², and local and international firms to answer the demand for quality garments for today’s global marketplace. A professional training program is the first of several innovative components to be put into place.

The 30,000 square-foot center will serve as a training center for textile workers and will help develop the skills of the Haitian workforce. By not only instructing sewing machine operators but teaching almost every type of worker in a textile factory, the Haiti Apparel Center will work to build the capacity of the garment industry at all levels. In addition to instruction for sewing machine mechanics, quality control specialists, industrial engineers, supervisors and plant managers, there will be seminars for top executives and factory owners who wish to become more innovative.

Designed in consultation with Haitian factories and international apparel brands, the Haiti Apparel Center is helping to fill the need for skilled workers in Haiti’s growing garment sector. Increased market demand, geographic proximity to the United States, a legacy of reliable, high-quality production, and the need for employment opportunities after the earthquake has made the training of additional garment workers a priority. The Haiti Apparel Center is playing a key role in Haiti’s earthquake recovery by rebuilding Haiti’s skilled and modern work force.
“My dream is that all people infected with HIV can be included in the Haitian society,” says Jean, 23, whose close family member is infected with the virus. He says there is a strong problem of stigma in Haiti and that even within his family there were people that left the house from fear of being infected by sharing food with their relative.

Jean has been included in the workforce development project at the Haiti Apparel Center where he is learning to become a sewing machine operator. He hopes that by getting a job through his training he will be able to help his family, especially the person who is HIV positive.

HAC has trained 143 people living with HIV, a component of the program funded through PEPFAR (US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief). This is 27% of the total number of people trained to date. Since opening, the training center has seen a major demand from Haitians everywhere who are simply looking for the opportunity to work.

Factory owners have the right to contract the graduates for a month on a trial basis. If they are satisfied they will give HAC a trainer’s fee at the end of the month and employ the worker on a long-term basis. The idea is that soon the training center will be able to run independently as its own enterprise.

“Already we have placed close to 100 graduates in factory jobs,” says Patrice Gaetan, Project Manager at the HAC. Factor owners are enthusiastic about getting employees that are trained to international standards.

“Once I have made some money, I would love to set up my own school and teach others how to sew,” says a young enterprising trainee, Marie Michelle Mathurin, 26. She lives with her mother and sister and none of them up to now have ever had a job in their life. She hopes to be the first.
At a Glance

21 trainers trained

294 sewing machine operators graduated up to now

150 sewing machines

156 graduates placed up to now in jobs

24 factories have an understanding with the training center

120 participants up to now are people living with AIDS/HIV

1,350 people have already signed up to be part of the program

Content of Training Course:
Introduction to World of Work: 1 week
Chain Stitch: 2 weeks
Safety Stitch: 2 days and a half
Overlock: 2 days and a half
Coverstitch Cylinder: 2 days and a half
Coverstitch Flat Bed: 2 days and a half

END OF COURSE

Trainees are tested at every level of the training course and can be cut out if they are not performing up to par. At the end of the course they make a small bag.

ENTRANCE EXAMS

Every trainee has to go through an entrance exam to be admitted. They are tested for dexterity and color blindness. Also, they are given a general evaluation test and evaluated to see if they can thread a needle in less than 20 seconds.