

Haiti: Three Years after the Quake

“If we do a tour of different countries that have experienced major disasters such as ours, the promises of international aid arrived only partially.”

Muller Pierre-Louis, ICKL

Even before the magnitude 7.0 earthquake of January 12, 2010, poor Haitians struggled. For many, life post-earthquake has been much worse. Two hurricanes in 2012 caused major damage to infrastructure, homes, crops and livelihoods. A poor harvest and high food prices made things harder for many. Child malnutrition is on the rise. After the quake CWS funded ACT Alliance members undertaking large scale relief and its long time partner the Institute Cultural Karl Lévéque (ICKL), a local NGO. In three years NZ\$373,043 (including \$134,000 from the NZ government) has been sent thanks to the generosity of our supporters. Funding in the last year has enabled ICKL to consolidate and strengthen its effective community work. When there are so many questions about the effectiveness of aid in the country, ICKL shows what can be done in a way that empowers local people for the long haul.

2012 Achievements:

- More than 300 farmers received help with goat breeding, seed distribution and projects through microcredit.
- Three small community businesses have been set up and/or supported: a grain mill in Tet Kole Marigot and two bakeries, in Belle Fontaine and Verrettes. Work on a third bakery in Dorilas, Petit Goëve has begun. These businesses help fund local schools and a community radio. ICKL trains and supports the managers as well as providing the necessary materials and working capital.
- 41 homes have been repaired in Dorilas, Petit Goëve (68 km southwest of capital Port-au-Prince).
- With ICKL help in Dorilas, 70 farmers have been able to boost their economic performance.
- ICKL worked with a women’s group Tet Kole Marigot (southeast) to evaluate their microcredit programme. This successful programme enables women to earn additional income without cutting down trees.
- With four other groups organised the tenth Popular University Summer School to provide training for community workers.
- Provided additional funding for four community schools in Marigot, Belle-Fontaine and Verrettes and set up community businesses to help fund them (see above). The grant subsidises teacher salaries and training, furniture and materials. 3000 books and other school supplies were distributed to 511 students. The schools are run by local peasant farmer associations without government support.
- Consolidated their system of local self-training committees enabling the training of 87 farming managers – 66 men and 21 women.
- A member of the Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organisations, a coalition of seven human rights group that has defended human rights for 22 years.

Grist mill, Cotterelle, 2011



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Haitian Perspectives on the Current Situation

Almost US\$10 billion has been spent on international humanitarian efforts over the three years, but ICKL believes “Haitian people have been cheated on both sides.” ICKL is critical of overseas experts who earn wages many times higher than Haitians, live in luxury, drive a large fleet of 4 wheel drive vehicles yet do not know the culture or language. In their view the Haitian government has deliberately allowed this situation to ‘flourish’ by not formulating a plan or strategy. ICKL believes the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Haiti (IHRC) chaired by former US president Bill Clinton made endless promises but has achieved little for Haitians. The Haitian government has given away more national sovereignty to international players by following a neoliberal path.

The Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (POHDH) of which ICKL is a member strongly critiques reconstruction and the situation in the tent camps. “Indeed, interventions, be they state or private, local or international, do not alter the situation of the people at the bottom. The housing issue remains urgent. Several million dollars was spent on gift ‘hot interventions’ without resolving the [underlying] structural problems. National and international institutions provide temporary shelter, which deteriorates rapidly. The failure of the IHRC is also a great sign.... Large sums of money were spent with poor results. The social housing projects already completed and / or underway have shown very clearly that the chance to give this country another building system has been violated.

“The current situation of people living in temporary shelters requires a particular and deep focus. [An estimated 350,000 plus people live in 496 camps across the country]. Residents face many problems including: lack of sanitation, overcrowding, lack of hygiene, limited access to clean water, inadequate nutrition, economic hardship, rape, violence and insecurity. The latter is very common in the camps. Some camps serve as havens for armed gangs. They indulge in unhealthy practices in the eyes of the children who are there, such as prostitution, abuse of alcohol and drugs.”

Many camp residents live with the constant fear of eviction. POHDH cites examples of vicious attacks on residents, leaving burnt tents, gunshot wounds and the destruction of what little they own.

POHDH Recommendations:

- Put an end to all forms of forced evictions of people still living in tents in host camps
- Implement a public policy of social housing
- Strengthen national institutions for housing, including the Public Enterprise for the Promotion of Social Housing and Unit Housing Construction and Public Buildings, by allocating sufficient funds for viable long-term projects
- Take urgent measures to improve the living conditions of people living in tents now, while preparing their resettlement in a way that respects their rights and their dignity. This would imply that they have easy access to various basic social services
- Erect a monument in memory of the victims of the earthquake of January 12, 2010
- Adopt a code of reconstruction in the country.

Port-au-Prince, January 11, 2013

Octavio's House before and after

