



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

A Statement for a Just and Compassionate Response to the January 12, 2010 Earthquake in Haiti

“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

Our hearts are broken by the suffering of the Haitian people that has come from the massive earthquake on 12 January 2010. In a nation of approximately 8 million people, more than 3 million have been affected by the earthquake. More than 210,000 people have been killed and some 300,000 have been seriously injured. More than a million people have been made homeless.

Despite weeks of efforts by local and international humanitarian actors the needs in the earthquake affected parts of Haiti continue to be enormous. Conditions for most of the estimated 1.2 million people living in improvised camps and shelters remain cramped and poor. Trauma will be felt by many in later months, possibly creating violence. Women and girls are forced to defend their dignity before the threat of personal violence so common in situations of crisis and despair. The specter of racism, that has affected U.S. attitudes toward Haiti since its foundation in 1804, hovers like a threatening cloud portending more suffering and despair. There is a direct correlation between the extensive damage from the earthquake and the impoverishment and oppression of the Haitian people imposed or supported by outside powers.

And yet our spirits have been uplifted by the witness and inspiring faith of Haitian people, by their stories of courage and compassion, in being themselves the greatest first responders to those in need in their midst.

As a gracious God extends mercy and acts with justice and compassion, so the human family is called to extend aid to those in need without seeking reward or repayment. Jesus says, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36).

The tragedy occurring in Haiti must call forth our own and the world’s most compassionate response and elicit a more just future, one that rejects the hunger and poverty of the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

- (1) CWS-supported ACT Alliance has assisted more than 150,000 people, the majority of whom have been helped with water, sanitation, shelter or regular food supplies/meals. Others have received cash, family kits or hygiene sets. Others have benefited from medical assistance and supplies to health clinics;
- (2) CWS member communions have churches and local partners in Haiti with whom they will expand their relationships following the earthquake. Churches and faith-based agencies in the Dominican Republic have been a vital part of the response. This is part of a strengthened regional approach to disaster mitigation, response and development;

- (3) CWS's medium term response will build on and expand pre-disaster efforts, including programs serving at-risk children and persons with disabilities, and support for a spontaneous settlement that has come into being on the Haiti/DR border. In the longer-term, CWS anticipates creating an agricultural development/food security initiative with Haitian communities, especially communities of the newly-displaced;
- (4) CWS has supported Haitian-Dominican peace-building and reconciliation efforts, which must be expanded by governments and civil society as a basis for effective aid and protection of Haitians;
- (5) Church World Service advocacy in cooperation with other faith-based and humanitarian organizations have included calling for: cancellation of 100 percent of Haiti's foreign debt; emergency supplemental aid to meet needs for relief and reconstruction for all; aid to Haiti to be in the form of grants not loans; and a successful call for Temporary Protected Status for Haitians in the United States, allowing some Haitians to live and work legally in the United States. CWS offices and affiliates around the US are assisting eligible Haitians to file TPS applications. At the same time Church World Service condemns the continued use of discriminatory practices, such as the "shout test" for Haitians attempting to enter the United States to apply for asylum;
- (6) The United States Government has responded to this disaster with close to \$600 million to date in emergency assistance to Haiti following the earthquake, including support for emergency medical assistance, food, shelter, water and sanitation. These activities have been supported by deployments of personnel from USAID, the Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services and other federal agencies, as well as through partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies providing assistance on the ground;

Therefore, the Church World Service Board of Directors

- (1) Recognizes the tremendous courage and compassion of the Haitian people in bearing and responding to this terrible tragedy;
- (2) Recognizes the vital importance of effective cooperation among international aid organizations, local Haitian organizations, and the Haitian government to ensure that resources are made available to all areas of need equitably, and to ensure that local communities play a key part in defining their own recovery process;
- (3) Strongly affirms the need for a Haitian-led broad-based development strategy and planning, in which the Haitian people and their community leaders are fully participant, and which includes rebuilding of infrastructure with attention to disaster risk reduction, creating growing economic opportunities, and addressing the need for greater food production capacity within Haiti;
- (4) Expresses appreciation for the U.S. Government for granting of Temporary Protected Status for Haitians living in the United States, and continues to urge Congress to enact immigration reform that will provide a pathway to permanent legal status for these Haitians and other immigrants living outside typical legal status in the United States;
- (5) Affirms the U.S. Government for its support for 100 percent debt cancellation and emergency aid in the form of grants, not loans, calls on the United States and international financial institutions to cancel Haiti's external debt immediately, and urges the U.S. government and

the international community to provide needed aid to Haiti for ongoing relief, recovery and reconstruction in the form of grants based on the following principles:

- Haitian-led reconstruction, which respects Haitian sovereignty and in which the people of Haiti lead their own national recovery and reconstruction, and which includes Haitian non-governmental and community based organizations as well as the government of Haiti in the design and implementation of the reconstruction plans.
- The full and empowered participation of women in the reconstruction and development of Haiti, including the active presence of women and women's organizations in leadership roles; fair and equitable distribution of resources for reconstruction and development; and provision of capacity building to women's organizations, including training and financial support.
- Built on existing plans, specifically using as a foundation Haiti's National Strategy for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty (DSNCRP).
- Decentralized, sustainable development that includes the provinces and rural sector of Haiti, with a focus on investing in rural development and sustainable agriculture, to reduce rural poverty through job creation and increase national food security. Reconstruction must also include strategies to mitigate risks related to future natural disasters.
- Regional approach to assistance for and protection of Haitians - in particular processes and structures that facilitate cooperation between Haiti and the Dominican Republic - among all stake holders on a range of issues, including human rights, disaster preparedness, mitigation, and relief, and environmental protection.
- Protection for vulnerable populations, ensuring that internally displaced persons (IDPs), women and girls, orphans and vulnerable children, and persons with disabilities in particular are integrated into the Haiti earthquake recovery plan.
- Extension in fellowship of the talents of the American people as part of its national treasure, working in solidarity with the Haitian people towards the rebuilding and restoration of Haiti.
- Additional funds for relief, recovery and reconstruction in Haiti, rather than diverting funds from other humanitarian and development efforts worldwide.

Approved by the CWS Board of Directors on March 11, 2010