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ORE Haiti Earthquake Relief
<http://www.oreworld.org/>

Camp-Perrin, 27 January 2010

Dear Friends,

First of all, thank you for your generous support and the concern you have expressed during the past 10 days. Thank you also for your patience waiting for news from Haiti.

I can feel your love, and believe me this is as a great a help as your donations. It is difficult to put in words what is going on... so I'll start with the bare facts of the funding status.

This is where we stand today in regards to the total amount of donations:

Network for Good	\$ 18,898.35
Paypal	\$25,729.20
Other	\$7,380
Direct Bank wire transfer:	<u>\$14,563.16</u>
Total:	\$66,570.71

This is what has been done so far thanks to you:

After organizing the first evacuation on January 16th, bringing back 130 people, four more trips were organized between the 17th and the 20th January. A total of 726 people were evacuated from Port-au-Prince - though this figure is still an estimate, as babies and toddlers were not counted, so we are now collecting the final number which will be higher.

Each trip was an odyssey. The team going into the stricken capital, Daniel, Ploma, Wilson, Ruben, Willio, Manes, Edoine, all came back recounting their horror and disbelief at what they had seen. First on the road driving in as soon as they came to Morne Tapion, a mountain pass, they saw that whole sections of the road had crumbled away and deep holes had been ripped in the asphalt, with trenches along the sides. They were the first to report the devastation of the towns of Petit-Goave and Leogane, on the road to Port-au-Prince. They kept repeating '*Leogane is no more, it has been flattened!*' We later learnt that the epicenter of the earthquake was indeed at Leogane.

Their stories of driving through Port-au-Prince were all tales of devastation and death. The smell of it, the bodies lining the streets, and later bodies being piled up. Always the smell, telling of bodies decomposing under the crushed houses. Even when the dead had been removed from the streets, the ones trapped inside the collapsed buildings made their presence known. Among our team of '*rescuers*' there were some who just couldn't bear to return...

But, by the 18th, new stories were being told... about the resilience of the people. They had set-up their camps, the '*tent cities*'. Everyone was collecting all the scraps they could find to erect some kind of a '*home*', a place to live with a minimum of decency, to protect their privacy... Bed sheets, any piece of material became a wall, a roof, to make a separation. *Solidarity and sharing became the rule of law.*

The role of our team was to search for family members of anxious parents, relatives, about whom they had had no news, and to bring them back to Camp Perrin. Also to invite survivors from various neighborhoods to leave Port-au-Prince and join their families and friends in the countryside. The news about the evacuation program rapidly spread by word of mouth: homeless people congregated and waited patiently for the next ride. We set up a meeting point and the trucks and buses stopped there, collecting and bringing back an average of 120 people per trip. By the 18th, we had three vehicles involved, because so many persons had been expressing their wishes to leave Port-au-Prince.

Reaching Camp-Perrin, the drivers would stop at the request of the passengers at our gates (at O.R.E.), announcing their arrival with loud '*klaxon*' (horn beeping), often dropping of a few people, but above all just stopping by to say thank you... cheering and clapping! Then they were greeted by ecstatic relatives, kissing, hugging, each other, crying together.

They told us their tales, that same evening, the next day and the day after... All the displaced people showed the signs of trauma, all hesitating to enter a house, first checking to see if it was made of concrete. If it was, they wouldn't go further than the porch, and that was where they slept during the first few nights, and for some that is still where they sleep, a week later. After oversleeping well into late morning, a rare feast for them... then they began to have a different look on their faces, realizing that they were miraculously alive, feeling so grateful and thankful to God. Often they become thoughtful, remembering their losses, the sisters, brothers, cousins, friends.

Many had returned to their families, and their families welcomed in their friends and neighbors from Port-au-Prince. No one wanted to join a refugee camp. The traditional hospitality was in place and no one refused to accommodate a guest!

A total of 726 people were evacuated from Port-au-Prince ... However, the situation of people still staying in Port-au-Prince is very critical for many - especially those who are not on the main aid circuits, and are not receiving the help they need. We were directly solicited for help through Makil, our '*messenger*' for O.R.E. in Port-au-Prince: to help three camps in the badly hit neighborhood of Turgeau, which is close by his base (his former home).

There is a real urgency to help people in Port-au-Prince find food. Food is still available in Camp-Perrin although prices have increased dramatically. But it is available fairly abundantly, specially the local staple foods. So a plan was formed to help those communities who were isolated and desperate in Port-au-Prince. This effort is starting with our first delivery tomorrow. The last four days we've been busy preparing the corn grit and corn flour; buying and packaging the rice, locally grown beans, selecting yams and avocados.

Among the workers involved with this, are many faces from the Port-au-Prince exodus, who are already integrated in the work force, lending a hand to help the ones left behind in the capital. The food will be sent to 160 families (based on an average of 5 persons per family). The rations sent should last two weeks. They consist of 7.5 kg of rice, 2.5 kg of corn grits, 2,5 kg of beans, together with a quantity of yams and avocados.

In Camp-Perrin we are offering food to the following groups: to the hospital of St Anne, to 26 kids who are all survivors from a orphanage which was destroyed in Port-au-Prince who were evacuated and are now staying in a church in Camp-Perrin - because the supplies they came with have run out and there is no support yet from their parish. Also a latest group of 11 refugees whose friends in Camp-Perrin could not host them as they already have 10 relatives recently returned from Port-au-Prince staying in their house.

Our relief program is in fact part of a larger combined effort, involving the community and many other entities. So far, all together we've been able to do the following:

- A total of some 1,500 people were evacuated from Port-au-Prince by other institutions: the local community bank (CAPOSAC), an agricultural mechanization workshop (AECF) and individual business initiatives.
- We have also secured the collaboration of the Ministry of Health through services provided at the small hospital in Camp-Perrin, Sainte Anne - with a capacity of 20 beds, a laboratory for basic tests, and with dressing facilities. A requisition for emergency supplies from the regional general hospital in Les Cayes was processed the same day it was submitted. (Les Cayes is the regional capital, 20 km from Camp-Perrin). To date, 4 patients were hospitalized, one was transferred to Cayes for further treatment and one died, and about 35 were treated for minor wounds.
- The Les Cayes Rotary Club is also providing medicine as well as clothing. This is great boon as most refugees came with only the clothes they were wearing on the day of the earthquake.

- The Minustah, UN mission in Haiti, is still in the planning stages as their coordination is on a very large scale. But we have submitted a request for tents and lodging infrastructures if we have to set-up camps later, as the flow of refugees coming into the area grows.

All the survivors have a story to tell and I marvel at their resilience. And I want to share with you their expressions of gratitude. They have experienced such relief, being helped to escape... to escape the weight of the horror, the discomfort, having to sleeping outside, with no access to basic necessities, fearing every noise, terrified again and again by each of the repeated aftershocks.

The last group to arrive in Camp-Perrin had no ties to anywhere in Haiti apart from Port-au-Prince. But Port-au-Prince was utterly unbearable, so they called a friend, Smith, in Camp-Perrin and told him 'we are coming!' They set out walking, and eventually got a ride on a truck only to have it break down on the way. It was getting dark and they were stuck in the countryside. They had no idea where they were, and even the name of the village didn't mean anything to them. As they said, '*we had no idea what to expect from the provinces.*' But they found hospitality, they were welcomed in to spend that night at a nuns' home. Food and beds were provided for all 13 of them. But they were determined to reach Camp-Perrin. With no more money, they called their friend again. Smith could not offer them a place to stay, as he himself had escaped Port-au-Prince with 5 of his siblings, returning to his own family, now all living their small very overcrowded home. So when we received his request for help, we sent for them - and arranged for them to be guests at the EFACAP school... and one tiny four-month old baby, Anne Coralie, has such a beautiful smile that she has already conquered the hearts of neighboring well-wishers.

Their thanks are all for you... who have made this relief possible, who are making it possible for more relief to be offered during this uncertain period, lifting from their minds the worry of the basic necessities: health, food, shelter, clothing.

A special thanks to you from Yves-Lyze and her 3 kids (1, 4 and 6 years old) who survived against all odds, their home at the second floor crumbling around them and under their feet, escaping through their bathroom window to the roof of the next door house. She is mourning the loss of her sister-in-law who lived a floor below. Thanks from a fragile Ludgie who had gone to live with her aunt, who had 4 daughters and a son, to attend business school; sadly, Ludgie is now the sole survivor of that household.

Thanks also from Joane who had to search for her 5 year-old in the rubble, pulling out many bodies who looked the same age as her son, digging with her bare hands, going through every pile of bodies in her street, until she finally discovered him alive. Now, one day after arriving in Camp Perrin, they are sleeping soundly, despite their recent memories. Joane said: '*We, the survivors all became strong in an instant, we ignored the horror we were seeing, we were filled with a sudden surge of energy, looking for our loved ones. I never knew I had that strength inside me.*'

Thanks from Marie Michele, Josie, Mirline, Melissa, Kenley, Osner, Sherline, Tatoune, Viviane, Magalie, Astride, Dieuseul, Islande, Claudine, Patricia, Samantha, Jonel, Sedene, Valencia, Nadine, Sergo, Carole, Schecania, Emeraude, Rita, Alourdes, Odette, Romual, Jordany, Manoucheka... and so many more...

Thank you all and God bless!

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