

Haiti

one year on



Sara Fajardo/CRS

On 12 January 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake shook the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. Haiti's fragile houses, schools and public buildings collapsed when the disaster struck at 4.53pm. Port-au-Prince's densely populated slums very soon became the scene of one of the biggest disasters of recent times.

Over 230,000 died in the Haiti earthquake and over three million were affected. Aid agencies found themselves dealing with one of the most complex emergencies in terms of size, scale, logistics and location. One year later, even though signs of hope are evident, the challenges remain. The hopes of new homes, jobs and a stable life have been hampered by hurricanes, floods and a cholera epidemic.

Caritas works with Haitians in their daily difficulties and as they look towards rebuilding their country.

Caritas providing long term help to rebuild Haiti

Close to a year after the earthquake, Caritas relief and reconstruction programmes in Haiti are well-established throughout the country.

Caritas will invest more than \$217 million in Haiti over a one year period that started in May 2010.

This aid will cover further emergency needs caused for example by hurricanes, floods or the cholera epidemic, such as the distribution of hygiene kits and food aid, but also infrastructure and housing projects, education, livelihoods, water, sanitation, capacity building and health programmes.

The funds are additional to the roughly \$14 million that were spent in the first three months after the disaster for emergency relief efforts and first rehabilitation programmes.

As over a million people are still living in camps, shelter remains a major focus of Caritas' work in Haiti.

Activities include building and repairing houses, ensuring earthquake-resistant construction, training construction workers and providing building materials to earthquake victims. They make up almost a third of the budget of the rehabilitation programme.

Over 100,000 people will benefit from Caritas' shelter programmes. Many obstacles had to be overcome in this field over the year. The rubble needed to be cleared, land titles resolved, construction sites were planned and permits had to be obtained.

Health, nutrition and food security are further Caritas priorities in Haiti, representing 29 percent of the current budget and benefitting around 670,000 Haitians.

Caritas has stayed to strengthen long term healthcare. Even before the earthquake, many Haitians did not receive sufficient healthcare.

Caritas is setting up or supporting clinics and mobile clinics in different regions. Awareness for healthcare and hygiene issues is raised through campaigns and training, especially in camps for displaced people.

Towards the end of the year, additional programmes had to be set up to respond to the outbreak of cholera. Caritas invested in staff and equipment at local health centres and people received water purification tablets and training on how to prevent the spread of the epidemic.

Support in the field of food security is through seed and cattle distributions to farmers, reconstruction of irrigation systems and training.

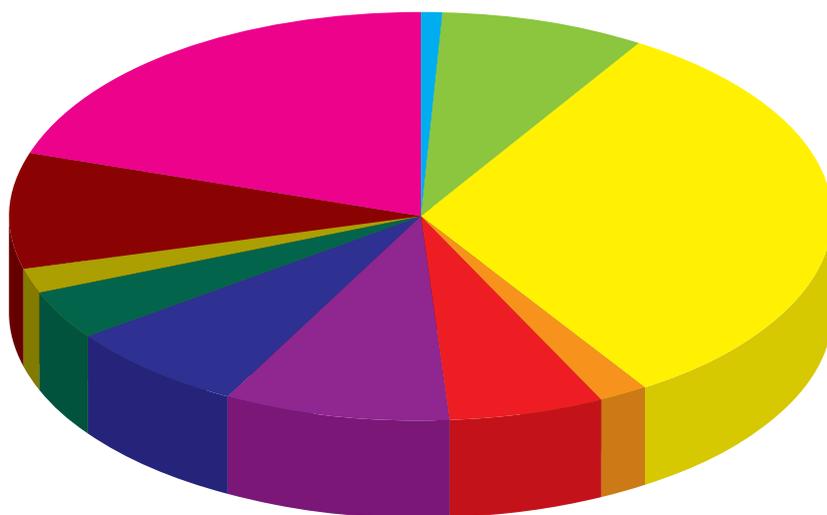
Caritas is also running a wide range of programmes in the fields of education, job skills and capacity building to help Haitians rebuild their lives and give them opportunities for the future.

Initiatives include the reconstruction of schools and orphanages, counselling for traumatised children, scholarships, human rights and management trainings, set up of early warning systems and support for local media.

Caritas Haiti has been working on emergencies, development and social justice for 35 years and is present all over the country through its diocesan offices, staff, parish priest and community volunteers.

Several international Caritas member organisations already had programmes running in Haiti before this year's earthquake.

Caritas work in Haiti (\$217 million)



The first three months – emergency response

Caritas started to send staff, aid and to donate money within hours of the earthquake. Caritas Haiti, Catholic Relief Services (a US member of Caritas) and Caritas Switzerland already had programmes in Haiti. They were on the ground assessing the situation and establishing what immediate needs were from the beginning.

In the first few months, Caritas' efforts were focused on providing food, water, sanitation, medical support and shelter to hundreds of thousands of people in need.

Three months after the earthquake, Caritas relief efforts had reached more than 1.5 million survivors. Caritas members from over 60 countries took action from the first day of the disaster to provide food, shelter, livelihoods, clean water, a safe place for children, healthcare, and trauma counselling. Over \$14 million was spent by Caritas in the first three months to respond to the first emergency and start setting up rehabilitation programmes.

Until April, Caritas shelter programmes



Michelle Hough/Caritas

provided 100,000 people with tents or tarpaulins in the capital Port-au-Prince, in Léogâne, Jacmel and other communities. Working with affected communities meant providing meals for 1.5 million people, trucking in 30,000 gallons of clean water to four camps every day, building latrines and giving out hygiene kits, jerry cans and water purification kits.

To prepare Haiti's regions for an influx of 600,000 displaced people from the capital, Caritas also distributed emergency food aid. "Thanks to its continual presence in the field, Caritas was able to go much further into

remote areas than most organisations. It was able to help affected people where they were," said Bishop Pierre Dumas, President of Caritas Haiti.

Caritas cash-for-work programmes employed 2000 Haitians in this time period and over 350,000 people in Haiti benefited from Caritas health programmes. Caritas also held two seed fairs for farmers and gave counselling to more than 2,000 children in camps. Twenty-five school tents were set up and 53 schools received materials to start lessons again.

A voice in the rubble

Ruth Schoeffel was working for Caritas Austria in Haiti immediately after the earthquake and got involved in a rescue mission.

I went with the Caritas rescuers from Mexico and some rescuers from South Africa to the Cuban hospital one day as I wanted to write about what the hospital was doing. While we were there a dog from a German rescue

team found signs of life in the rubble of the nearby cathedral. The rescue teams split up and started looking in different places.

It was the most surreal situation I had ever experienced. There was shooting nearby and there were people rooting through the rubble looking for valuable things. Then the rescuers said a woman was alive under the bricks.

I climbed up on top of the rubble to talk to her as the rescuers didn't understand French. I also tried to help her keep calm.

When I first talked to her she was still a couple of metres down in the rubble and she was very scared and cried. It took the rescue team almost two hours to get her out of the rubble but as soon as they got her out and she could see the sky she sighed for a brief moment.

Her name was Enu Zizi. She had hurt her

hip and was very dehydrated but after a week in the rubble she was in an amazingly good state of health.

Once they had carried her down the rubble, she was lying in the grass and we sat around her, holding her hand, she told all of us: "Je t'aime". I have never seen so many tough guys like the rescuers break down. They didn't know whether to cry or laugh. I think it was one of the most moving moments of all our lives and it was such a relief from all the sadness and the disaster that was Haiti in those days.

I feel very much connected to the country and its people after being there in January. I had never seen so much sadness but also this amazing will and hope to start up something new. I really wish that people all over the world don't forget Haiti as there is still so much help needed.



Katie Orlinsky/Caritas



Katie Orlinsky/Caritas

Health: Putting the ‘care’ in healthcare

**Caritas Germany,
Dr Joost Butenop,
health advisor**

Following the Haiti earthquake, Caritas was with the most-affected people from very early on and we managed to save lives and alleviate suffering within our capacity. Our health centres always did more than handing out drugs. People came for comfort and support. Holding a hand or hugging a patient was as important and life-saving as giving antibiotics to children with pneumonia. Most of our consultations in the first months were “psychosocial” in nature rather than medical in that we helped people deal with the emotional impact of the earthquake.

Even before the earthquake struck, the state of the healthcare system in the areas affected by the earthquake was worse than those in most countries I had ever worked in. Haiti’s health system was already a shambles before the earthquake with less than 30 percent of the population having access to healthcare services – and even worse, only 17 percent had access to sanitation. I did not expect it to be that bad.

The earthquake destroyed most of what little existed, leaving the many homeless people in particular utterly vulnerable.

One of the biggest challenges when I was in Haiti immediately after the earthquake was seeing the endless needs and desperation and realising there seemed to be no end to the suffering. Even with ten years of emergency response experience as a doctor, I found it particularly hard to identify those in greatest need in those first few weeks. It was our duty as humanitarians to identify those who needed most help, but in Haiti the need was so immense and so many people had very, very big needs. It was very difficult to finally settle down in one area to start our work knowing that so many others would be left without help.

Caritas’ work meant that it dealt with many aspects of the earthquake other than the medical side of things. The Caritas search and rescue team from Mexico are my heroes. Going three to four metres in the rubble and risking their lives to save people is just an extraordinary feat. It was pure humanitarianism and I felt privileged to have shared time with them.

I went to Haiti four times in 2010. There is so much left to do and focusing on seemingly small aspects remains a challenge

for any humanitarian. We have to stay focused on the work at hand and support our local partner, Caritas Haiti. All the work that is being supported from international NGOs will have to be handed over at some point to our Haitian partners. Building their capacity is a big and responsible task, and to enable the partners to take over in the near future requires us to remain realistic about capacities and sustainability. International Caritas organisations will maintain a presence over the years to come to support and strengthen our local partners in this Herculean task. What I have learned is that experience and professionalism are as important ingredients of humanitarian work as are idealism, humanity, flexibility and the ability to manage chaos.

The Haiti earthquake is something that will stay with me for a long time to come. The scenes of total destruction, the smell and sight of the decaying bodies, the smell of cement still in the air, the aftershocks every day and the expression of total shock in everyone’s face still haunt me even now. It will take years to overcome this I think, but it helps to have been back to Haiti many times in the year following the earthquake and to continue my support and see things slowly improve.

Challenges: Poor sanitation, fragile health

Caritas Haiti

Crowded conditions in camps, limited access to water and heat poor sanitation combined to create a cholera time bomb for Haiti's earthquake victims.

The first cases emerged in the Artibonite region in mid-October. Two months later, over 2,300 people had died from the disease and over 100,000 had been ill.

Cholera is spread through infected water. People who catch it can get severe vomiting and diarrhoea which lead to dehydration. If a case isn't treated in time the person can die.

In the first 48 hours of the epidemic,

Caritas Haiti in Gonaïves started to give out over 170,000 water purification tablets, hand disinfectant, rehydration salts and antibiotics.

Caritas Haiti and other Caritas member organisation embarked on an awareness campaigns to tell the public about how necessary good hygiene was.

Caritas in Jacmel focused their awareness raising in schools. Staff trained teachers in hygiene promotion and cholera prevention. They also distributed water purification tablets in schools.

Caritas Haiti also engaged doctors and nurses in various dioceses to back up its cholera programmes with expert advice.

Other Caritas member organisations have been running hygiene awareness programmes to prevent the spread of cholera. But even before the epidemic began, Caritas was providing camps with drinking water, latrines and hygiene education in a bid to keep occupants healthy and safe.

While people are living in cramped spaces, there will always be a risk of infectious diseases. The long term solution is to get people into permanent accommodation with good sanitation as early as possible.



Lane Hartill/CRS



The team in Gressier.
Caritas Austria

Shelter: Brick by brick

Caritas Austria

Nelson Elissier and Michelle Azor built their house brick by brick. They didn't have much money, but every time they got a little, they bought building materials for their house. It took four years to complete their home, but just six months after they had finished, the earthquake destroyed what they had worked for.

Their story is similar to that of many others in Haiti, where poverty means that people have to work very hard to build a house for their families.

Many people slept outside their houses when the earthquake hit. They wanted to protect their possessions and stay in a place they knew when all around them was uncertain.

"We never considered leaving our house to go and live in a camp," said Mr Elissier.

"We stayed here because it's our home. Leaving would have meant losing everything.

Caritas Austria's reconstruction project in Fort Hugo in the district of Morne à Bateau has been devised so that people rebuild near their destroyed homes.

They will build 500 houses over the next couple of years following a pilot project to build seven homes for families in Fort Hugo.

While the homes are being built on the plot of land where their original house was destroyed, the families live next to it in a temporary shelter. They are also involved in clearing away the rubble of their original house and in building their new one.

The new houses have been built so they will be resistant to earthquakes, floods and hurricanes.

Caritas Austria is also helping those who have lost their houses through farming and cash-for-work projects. This is aimed at helping people take control of their lives and avoid falling into extreme poverty in the aftermath of the earthquake.

In the long term Caritas Austria will focus on education, agriculture, livelihoods, disaster risk reduction and building homes.



Nelson Elissier and Michelle Azor in front of their new house.
Caritas Austria

Safe from the snakes

Cordaid (Caritas Netherlands)

Francois Tifabe was walking through an alley near his home on 12 January 2010 when the ground started to shake.

Before he understood what was happening a nearby wall collapsed and the debris fell on his leg.

"I still feel the pain and need a stick to walk," said Mr Tifabe, pointing to his injured leg.

On returning home, his worst fears were confirmed. His house had totally collapsed in the earthquake. However, he was relieved to find that his wife and five children had survived.

Bad times followed in the months after the earthquake. The family went to live in a camp. Following the earthquake, over one million people were without a home. They slept anywhere: in camps, in the street, in improvised shelters made from anything they could find.

"There were snakes crawling in the camp and the ground was wet all the time. Our tent wasn't such good quality and I constantly wished my family was in better conditions," said Mr Tifabe.

In November the local authorities decided to clear the camp. Suddenly, Mr Tifabe and his family found themselves homeless again.

Not long after the earthquake, Cordaid (Caritas Netherlands) launched a project to provide up to 10,000 temporary houses to families who had lost their homes in the earthquake in areas of Port-au-Prince and Léogâne.

Mr Tifabe was chosen as one of the families to receive a house. He and his family helped clear a plot of land for the building work to proceed and now they are waiting for the house to be finished.

"This house means so much to me; it feels good that we'll have our own place again," said Mr Tifabe.



Francois Tifabe and his family in their new shelter.

Cordaid



At École Marie-Esther in Port-au-Prince, pupils are lined up before a table piled high with plates filled with steaming rice and beans.
Development and Peace

Education: Food for thought

Development and Peace (Caritas Canada)

The afternoon of the Haiti earthquake many children died or were left trapped in collapsed schools. An estimated 90 per cent of schools in Port-au-Prince were damaged or destroyed, leaving around two million children without access to education.

Following the disaster, the Haitian authorities made education a high priority and asked humanitarian organisations to give particular attention to educational needs so that children could complete their school year.

Development and Peace (the Canadian member of the Caritas network) responded quickly to this appeal by supporting several religious communities that run schools. Religious communities have a long tradition in Haiti of looking after the schooling of

children, but after the earthquake they faced enormous challenges in re-opening their doors.

"After such a traumatic event, school can be very stabilising for children as it gives them back some sense of normalcy to their lives," said Danielle Leblanc, Emergency Programmes Officer for Development and Peace. "The desire to greet the children back was there, but the walls weren't and many parents no longer had the financial means to send their children to school."

But just a few weeks after the earthquake left so many schools in ruins, with cracked walls and collapsed roofs, students were pulling on their uniforms and making their way to class.

The Sisters of Saint-Anne run École Marie-Esther and École Saint-Antoine in Port-au-Prince. They are both all-girls' schools that have a combined total of 1,270-students. Development and Peace provided funds to offer students a hot meal

and to help cover the costs of school fees, which go towards the purchase of school materials and teachers' salaries.

In families where money is tight following the earthquake, school meals encourage children to come to school. The nutritious meals such as rice, beans and chicken, help children concentrate in the classroom and also keeps them healthy in general.

"It is truly important for us to have a meal here in this atmosphere of friendship, and especially for our parents, who always made sure we had food for our lunches. And especially after the earthquake, since many of our parents are having difficulty finding food to feed their children," said Beverley Millford, a ninth grade student at the school.

The meals programme meant that the students at both schools were able to complete their school year and not fall behind in their studies.

Education: Something solid in the uncertainty

Caritas Czech

Saint Louis Wilner is counting his blessings that his wife and children are alive. He lost family members in the earthquake and also his house and possessions. His wife lost her business and he lost his job as a result of the disaster. It's been a tough year.

He is taking his three-year-old daughter, Julie, to school. This is one reassuring glimpse of normality in a time of uncertainty and difficulties.

Dominic Savio nursery in Sibert, Port-au-Prince, collapsed in the earthquake. Caritas Czech Republic along with the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate helped rebuild it.

They also provided the children with

school uniforms and basic supplies and learning activities.

Mr Wilner has managed to survive on casual work since he lost his job. Caritas Czech helped him with cash-for-work projects and by providing the family with food and essential items as well as a tent to live in.

"It's difficult living in a tent as everything gets wet during the rainy season. My wife and children are often sick because of the damp. I'm hoping someone will help me rebuild my house," he said.

One year after the earthquake Mr Wilner is still anguished by what happened.

"I feel worried that another disaster may occur. Especially knowing that experts have said on the radio that more earthquakes may occur in the future in Haiti. This worries me a lot," he said.



Julie and Saint Louis Wilner.
Caritas Czech

Providing children in camps with a safe place to play and grow

Trócaire (Caritas Ireland)

More than a million earthquake victims in Haiti are still living in camps. Many of them are children as four out of ten people in Haiti are under 14 years old. Difficult living conditions in the camps and uncertainty about the future mark their daily lives. Irish Caritas member Trócaire provides children in camps with a safe place to play, learn and overcome the traumatising memories of the disaster.

Six-year old Christine knows the centre in the Pétienville Club camp in Port-au-Prince inside out. She and her younger sister were among the first children to join the centre when it opened shortly after the earthquake.

"When she arrived, Christine was very stressed," says Armelle Joseph, a local counsellor in the centre. "She cried all the



Helen Níc an Rí of Trócaire (Caritas Ireland) taking part in an art class at the Pétienville Club.
Conor O'Loughlin/Trócaire

time and would refuse to participate and mingle with other kids. She was convinced another quake would happen. But she is doing a lot better now. Most days, she doesn't want to go home!"

Symptoms of childhood trauma can be acute stress, nightmares, emotional distress, behavioural disorders or attention deficits.

"After an incident as traumatising as this earthquake, it is essential to offer safety, comfort and counselling to the children,"

said Helen Nic An Ri, of Trócaire, who worked on setting up the spaces.

Child protection staff working with Trócaire have worked with more than 2,000 children in three different displacement camps. Counselling has been set up to help children and give them back some normality in their lives.

Christine herself says, "It is so nice here! I am having a lot of fun with my friends, we play all day! I also like it because we get food. And there is so much space!"

Trócaire has been particularly active in the fields of mental health and education since the earthquake in Haiti. It is providing community-based mental health support services for 20,000 people in Léogâne and Delmas, supporting the Ministry of Health in training primary healthcare doctors on mental healthcare and conducting a wide range of activities helping thousands of children go back to school.



Elodie Perriot/Secours Catholique

Livelihoods: Helping farmers in rural areas

Secours Catholique (Caritas France)

With Port-au-Prince in ruins following the earthquake, hundreds of thousands of people fled to the countryside.

Les Cayes, in the south of Haiti, is a rural zone. It is very vulnerable to heavy rains, floods and soil erosion due to deforestation.

Enelio Teme is trying to help his relatives who arrived from Port-au-Prince following the earthquake but floods following the earthquake have made his life much more difficult.

“My crops, my seeds, my cattle... everything has disappeared,” he says. “People don’t usually die from hunger here, but this year, who knows? What with my family arriving on top of the floods, life is very difficult.”

Mr Enelio’s story isn’t unusual in Les Cayes. Mass deforestation around Les Cayes has led to soil erosion which leads to floods when torrential rains arrive. The floods in February 2010 destroyed most of the crops and led to the loss of many heads of cattle.

Secours Catholique works with partners in Les Cayes to build up communities and help them work together. With their support,

farmers receive tools, seeds and help to buy cattle. They also learn techniques regarding conservation and the rehabilitation of land.

“Without this aid, I’m not sure I’d have been able to manage,” said Carline Nézaire, who had recently arrived from Port-au-Prince with her four children.

The area is heavily dependent on the help of aid agencies. But despite the displaced population and the risk of flooding, Les Cayes’ future could be bright.

“With the right policies, the southern region of Haiti has real agricultural and tourism potential,” said Fr Wilnès Tilus, former director of Caritas Haiti.

A year in Haiti for one Caritas member organisation

Catholic Relief Services (CRS – an American member of Caritas) had been working Haiti 55 years before the earthquake struck. On 12 January, CRS had a staff of around 300 on the ground who had been working on existing programmes. Here's how the year panned out:

12 January: When the earthquake hits in the afternoon, many people are at work and children are at school. Mary Lineberger, who was in Haiti for CRS, said: "All around us we heard screaming and the crashing down of buildings. The falling of buildings continued for hours. We stayed there at the apartment complex and immediately pulled the mattresses out knowing that we would be sleeping outdoors for several nights."

14 January: Staff in neighbouring Dominican Republic prepare 10,000 packages of food and water with each package containing enough to sustain a family of five for two weeks.

18 January: Doctors at St. Francois de Sales hospital in Port-au-Prince to perform their first operations since the earthquake destroyed about 70 percent of the hospital

using CRS medical supplies. CRS soon forms six medical teams to provide preliminary care at sites where people have sought shelter.

19 January: CRS registers people at the Pétionville Golf Club makeshift camp and provides them with food, water and hygiene supplies.

22 January: CRS sets up a food distribution system to immediately feed more than 50,000 people. Plans are also taking shape to set up 50 more distribution points to reach 150,000 people.

17 February: Over one month after the earthquake, CRS has fed more than 500,000 people. Additionally, CRS helps keep the heavily damaged St. Francois de Sales Hospital running and distributes emergency shelter kits to more than 32,500 people.

5 April: Nearly 3 months after the earthquake, CRS has fed more than 700,000 people, given 45,000 outpatients treatment, provided more than 80,000 emergency shelter kits and hired about 1,700 people in cash-for-work programmes.

9 July: As Haiti prepares to mark the six month anniversary of the quake, CRS had distributed food to nearly 900,000 people in the Port-au-Prince area and 114,000 people received emergency shelter materials. CRS has completed 62,000 outpatient consultations and 960 emergency operations.

22 September: Eight months after the earthquake, CRS begins building transitional shelters for about 8,000 families.

23 October: Immediately after the outbreak of a cholera epidemic CRS and partners go tent to tent in 12 camps in Port-au-Prince, distributing three bars of soap each to more than 10,000 families (more than 50,000 people) and reaching thousands more through an information campaign that promotes hand washing and personal hygiene. CRS and Caritas hire local graffiti artist Jerry Rosembert to spray paint messages promoting good hygiene to prevent the spread of cholera.

5 November: Hurricane Thomas hits Haiti, narrowly missing Port-au-Prince. CRS feeds about 4,000 people seeking refuge in temporary shelters during the storm.

8 November: St. Francois de Sales hospital in Port-au-Prince, which was destroyed in the earthquake, is reopened in a temporary facility. CRS worked with the hospital staff to construct the temporary quarters and move in new medical equipment and supplies.

December 2010: CRS has fed more than one million people, provided shelter to 250,000, conducted around 70,000 outpatient hospital consultations, given short term jobs to 10,000 people and offered protection and education to thousands of vulnerable people.



Dr. Rodrigue Mortel, right, a CRS volunteer, treats patients at CRS partner, the St. Francois de Sales Hospital.

Sara Farjado/CRS

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