



Haiti earthquake

Three months on



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The earthquake that hit Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on 12 January 2010 left around 200,000 people dead and 1.5 million people homeless. Most Haitians were working or studying when the tremor measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale struck, destroying everything from schools and hospitals to government buildings and the presidential palace.

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere and has endured several floods and hurricanes in recent years. Over half the population lived on less than \$1 per day before the earthquake, and the disaster has driven more people into poverty. According to estimates, it could take 10 years to rebuild Haiti, and it will cost at least \$8 billion.

Islamic Relief's work so far

Islamic Relief Worldwide was one of the first humanitarian organisations on the scene in the aftermath of the earthquake, delivering food and aid to thousands of survivors.

Our staff set up the first organised camp for displaced people, eleven days after the earthquake, on a football field in Parc Sainte Claire. Islamic Relief also organised another two camps, Accra Nord and Yasin Community; the three camps accommodate 1,100 displaced families in total.

Three months on from the earthquake, we are completing the construction of drains, washing areas and showers in two of our camps and finalising plans to improve facilities in Accra Nord camp.

Islamic Relief is improving facilities in Yasin Community Camp by providing residents with toilets, washing areas and showers, as well as a footbridge, drainage system and gravel to prevent flooding and the outbreak of waterborne diseases. As part of efforts to improve security for the residents, we are setting up a lighting system in the camp to help reduce the risk of assault.

Our work includes:

- Regular water and food distributions (including rice, beans, oil, sugar and powdered milk)
- Tent distributions
- Cooking set, blanket and plastic bucket distributions
- Plastic sheeting distributions
- Hygiene kit distributions
- Jerrycan distributions
- Organising rubbish bag distributions and collections
- Construction of washing and shower facilities



'I am trying to take my mind off things'

Residents of Parc Sainte Claire employed to construct washing facilities within the camp, March 2010



Three months ago Françoise Luc, 38, was a teacher of maths and social sciences. In the afternoon she would teach students to crochet hats, belts and skirts. Françoise's home was damaged during the earthquake. "Of course I want to go home," she said, "but I can't...it is unstable". Françoise and her two sons,

Laurence and Rogers, took refuge in Islamic Relief's camp for displaced people set up on a football pitch in Parc Sainte Claire, Port-au-Prince.

Since the earthquake, Françoise has been running a small business from her tent, selling crocheted items. "I am trying

to busy myself to take my mind off things," she explained, "so I spend my time crocheting and selling the skirts, hats and belts I create. I also sell soap and washing powder to other people in the camp, so that they can clean themselves and their clothes."

Many people ask Françoise to teach them to crochet, but she has not been able to get hold of crochet hooks since the tremor. "I would like to be able to open a centre to teach our children to crochet. That way they would also be able to sell them to make money."

Françoise hopes that her situation will continue to improve. She said, "Please do not forget us. Take care of us and never forget about us."

Impact of the earthquake:

- 200,000 people dead
- 300,000 people injured
- 1.5 million people homeless
- 300,000 homes damaged or destroyed
- 5,000 schools damaged or destroyed
- 50 hospitals damaged or destroyed



'I lost everything in the earthquake'

Kaleb Juste and his family

Kaleb Juste shares his tent in Parc Sainte Claire with his wife Justelenne, and three children, Isadoremom, Gregory and Juste Jamaica.

"The earthquake was a terrible experience," said 28-year-old Kaleb, "I lost many friends and family members and I badly injured my foot. At the time I thought it was the Second Coming of Christ! Now, whenever I think about the earthquake I get very scared." Kaleb's wife, Justelenne, gestured to the tent and said "I lost everything in the earthquake: my house, my television, my computer and my generator. All I have is what you see here."

Ten-year-old Isadoremom was in school when the earthquake happened. "I thought I was going to die. I didn't understand what was happening so I just stayed in my seat." Gregory, 14, added "I tried to run out of the school but I fell over in front of the door. We haven't been back to school since the earthquake and we need you to build us schools so that Haitian children can study. I like to study and when I grow up I want to become a pastor or a doctor because they don't sin."

Kaleb explained, "We came to this football pitch because we had nowhere to sleep. One week later Islamic Relief came and gave us this tent. Life was really difficult before they arrived."

Blog from Haiti

Ruqaya Izzidien joined Islamic Relief's team on the ground in Haiti. Here are some extracts from her blog.



"Coming in to land, the ground is littered with blocks of blue; plastic sheets that shelter the lucky few who have found protection from the impending rains. The

road to our base takes us through one of the worst-hit areas; building after building looks as though it has been carelessly tossed onto the pavement. I try to direct my gaze towards an area that is not occupied by a makeshift campsite, or broken buildings but I struggle to find a house that has not been reshaped, bent in half like a piece of wire or facing the pavement at a 45 degree angle.

There are mounds of rubble which you would never guess once stood as houses if not for the metal frames poking out like skewers from amidst the broken bricks. Just when you think you have found a structure that withstood the earthquake, you view it from another angle and realise that it crumbled from the inside, or that it has no floors, or that it is only the front wall that is still standing. One building resembles a tower of pancakes; every single supporting wall has disappeared, leaving just four floors layered one on top of the other.

Although I have yet to speak to an earthquake survivor, the physical devastation alone is overwhelming. One of my Haitian colleagues tried, but failed, to contextualise the effects of the tremor; "This is something you cannot explain- the country was working and in one single minute everything turned upside down."

Plans for the future

Thirteen-year-old Senetus Betiana teaches herself French: "I'm reading so that I can become knowledgeable. I want to be a great doctor so I can help people who are sick."

Islamic Relief's recent projects have been aimed at improving the levels of sanitation in our camps. During the next stage of our programme in Haiti, we will be shifting focus from emergency relief to reconstruction and rehabilitation.

We have just launched a rubble clearance programme which will provide employment for over 100 people. Opportunities for work, however temporary, play an important role in restoring hope as earthquake survivors begin to rebuild their lives and their country.

Plans are being finalising for Islamic Relief to construct five schools large enough to accommodate at least 5,500 students whose schools were forced to shut as a result of the earthquake. It will be managed by the local community and in addition to running classes and recreational activities, it will provide students with learning materials and lunch.

Funding allocated by the UK Disasters Emergency Committee and from Islamic Relief's supporters around the world will allow us to continue working to help the people of Haiti for at least two years.

'Now we have somewhere to live, life is better'



"Before the earthquake I was a barber and a painter," said 42-year-old Alexandre Monteau. Alexandre, his wife Ketia, and their six-year-old son, Samuel came to Parc Sainte Claire after their home was destroyed in the earthquake.

"Four months ago I lost my ID, my phone...everything," said Alexandre. "At first, I didn't know what was happening, it took me a while to realise that it was an

earthquake. I was at home when the earthquake struck. When the building began to collapse, I tried to jump out. I managed to move out of the way but part of my body got stuck and I lost consciousness. When I came round, I saw that I had lost my leg and I started to cry."

Alexandre wanted to get up and look for his wife and son, who were lost in the rubble, but he wasn't able to move because bricks had crushed his leg and trapped his body.

"When I woke up, I had been rescued by my neighbours who told me that my wife and child were safe and that God had saved them - this made me happy. Six days later I came to Parc Sainte Claire, which is where Islamic Relief found us living in tents made of sheets. It wasn't a good life. Islamic Relief recognised that the way we were living was unjust so they helped us. Now we have somewhere to live, life is better and we hope we keep seeing improvements. Islamic Relief has helped us and I really appreciate the way they work.

To the people outside of Haiti, I would just like to ask that they be patient with us; times are difficult and some people get desperate, so please forgive them. I also would like to be able to support myself and my family. We don't just want donations, we need jobs."



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