



**Canadian Lutheran
World Relief®**

Christian Service in Relief, Disaster, Settlement and Development

Winnipeg, January 20, 2010 – The following news briefing has been received from Lutheran World Information (LWI) in Geneva. To view other releases on the situation in Haiti, please visit www.clwr.org/Haiti-news.cfm.

**LWF Convoy Brings Relief Assistance to Haitian Capital
Towns and Other Regions Outside Port-au-Prince Also in Ruins**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti/GENEVA, 19 January 2010 (LWI) - Reports coming from staff of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) Caribbean/Haiti program indicate that the severe damage from the 12 January earthquake goes beyond Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.

The towns of Gressier, Carrefour and Leogane, west of Port-au-Prince, have also been destroyed, says Sylvia Raulo, DWS Caribbean/Haiti program director. Getting through anywhere outside the capital takes a long time, she notes, adding that many towns and areas in which the DWS has been working for years were hit hard by the quake, measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale.

Raulo points out that many people who lost their homes in the capital are now moving to other towns and regions. Receiving and caring for these internally displaced persons is one of the major challenges for the LWF program, she emphasizes.

The LWF representative says many locals welcome the arrival of international aid into the devastated country, however, "during the first 48 hours, it was Haitians who helped fellow Haitians, taking matters into their own hands in a spirit of solidarity." She notes the current situation was particularly aggravated by the fact that so many public servants perished, leaving the already weak institutions completely destroyed. The security situation is an additional problem, she adds.

Raulo says the DWS Port-au-Prince office was "not damaged and is functional," and most of the personnel are unhurt. However, the offices of some of its partner organizations in the ACT Alliance - the global network of church and related aid and development organizations - have been severely affected, and DWS is currently providing accommodation for many ACT colleagues. The LWF program's employees and those from partner organizations who have lost their homes are camping on the DWS office compound, which Raulo says "can accommodate about 20 people in our backyard."

Need for Long-Term Aid

Raulo points out that "Internet communication is working and most communications are by Skype." Very fortunately, the water tank had been filled just before the earthquake struck, but "depending on usage," she cautions, "lack of water could become a problem."

The DWS program director emphasizes Haiti's need for long-term assistance. Aid efforts and construction programs "should go beyond the provision of food, water and shelter to include the building and reconstruction of the public infrastructure," she adds.

DWS program staff is currently assessing the scale of assistance required in the capital and other towns. "We are in permanent contact," says Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, DWS program coordinator at the LWF Geneva secretariat. "This weekend alone, we held at least 12 conference calls with our office in Haiti and with other ACT member [organizations]." He underlines the immediate need for temporary camps outside the capital to accommodate people who have lost everything.

As early as Tuesday, 19 January, a convoy was scheduled to set off from Santo Domingo, capital of the neighboring Dominican Republic, carrying urgently needed aid supplies. Bueno de Faria reports that the LWF was currently purchasing basic supplies including water, food, fuel, tents, mattresses and blankets as well as sanitary items for immediate transportation to people in need. Logistics expert Yvon St Martin, sent by the Danish church aid agency DanChurchAid to assist the DWS program, will be responsible for organizing transportation. Haitian by birth, St Martin speaks Creole as well as French, English and Spanish.

In order to provide adequate response to the devastation caused by the quake, the LWF program plans to recruit more local workers, says Raulo. In addition, ACT Alliance partner organizations have promised staff support to the network. Through Church of Sweden, Thomas Brundin, deputy director at the Department for Development Policy with the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs will be seconded to the LWF program for three weeks as coordination and communication officer. He travels to Port-au-Prince on 19 January with former DWS Geneva program staff Elsa Moreno, who is leading an ACT Alliance rapid support team to the Haitian capital.

Nora Serpas from the DWS Central American regional program in El Salvador has been dispatched to Santo Domingo with the primary responsibility of procuring relief supplies and fund-raising.

A senior emergency adviser will be appointed in the next two weeks to assist the DWS team in Haiti in planning and implementing the relief program for at least six months, adds Bueno de Faria.