



The way forward: Haiti three months after the earthquake

CARE's emergency response, January-April 2010



Life has returned to the streets of Port-au-Prince. Three months after the catastrophic earthquake that all but wiped out Haiti's capital and many outlying areas, its people are going about their lives with courage and fortitude. The long, painstaking work of digging out and rebuilding has begun.

CARE is working hand in hand with the people of Haiti towards a better future for everyone. As we have during more than 55 years in partnership with the Haitian people, we continue to hear stories of heartbreak and hope every day.

CARE's full-time staff of nearly 300 humanitarian workers continues its daily lifesaving outreach. In these pages, members of the team share details of their work, which has reached more than 310,000 people to date. We also hear the voices of affected people about the progress they've made and the difficulties they still face.

We are proud of what we have achieved, aware of the many challenges that lie ahead, deeply grateful to our supporters around the world – and committed for the long term.



Caroline Saint-Mleux, Emergency Response Team Leader



CARE's teams have worked without a break for three months, day after day, to serve those most affected by the disaster. The distribution of immediate relief has received much attention from media around the world, and indeed we are proud of the work we have done in this first phase. But there are also the daily activities, rarely seen by the outside world, that touch just as many people in a gentle and humane fashion. I'm thinking of the counselling and encouragement for pregnant women living in the camps in terrible conditions; of our teams building links with orphanages; and of those who promote hygiene and behaviour change for better health.

Along with those who work directly with beneficiaries, other crucial teams provide the administrative, logistical and financial support without which we could not function. CARE Haiti has increased its workload more than fivefold since the earthquake – and I am proud to say that all of our team members have performed with grace and dedication.

We must not forget that most of CARE's staff have themselves lost loved ones, homes and mementoes; many are living with their families in tents or under tarps, with little comfort and privacy. In fact, the entire Haitian people are facing their immense

challenges with a dignity and creativity that never cease to amaze me. Somehow this image was captured for me by a small boy I met, who proudly showed me the little house he'd built out of cardboard, lit from the inside with a Christmas tree bulb connected to a cell phone battery. His is the generation that will inherit a new Haiti – rebuilt with spirit and innovation – and I am proud that we are standing with them.



Pascal Raveloson, Distribution Coordinator



CARE began bringing aid to survivors four days after the earthquake. Within a week, we were delivering items such as mattresses, waterproof tarps and hygiene kits, followed by a large-scale distribution of food to more than 24,000 families.

The distribution team works around the clock, arriving on site as early as 4:00 a.m. for the sake of security. We take special care in our work to respect human dignity, to ensure that elderly people and pregnant women do not have to wait in the hot sun. In fact, the distribution itself is often completed before sunrise.

Our staff works tirelessly despite the deep personal losses many have endured. One of our warehouse workers lost his wife. He is alone with his little girl, and even had to borrow a pair of shoes to come to work.

We are dedicated to helping people stay healthy and have adequate shelter. We will know we've succeeded when people no longer need aid and can build their own future and that of the country.

I personally find it very rewarding to see the joy in the faces of women who have received CARE's distributions on behalf of their families. Their smiles light up my day.



After the earthquake, my three children and I slept on the ground on cardboard boxes, and then I put a blanket on top of the boxes. I'm very happy that CARE has given me a mattress like this. It will keep us comfortable and dry.

-- Sulette Desstin, age 30,
Léogâne



Jim Kennedy, Shelter Coordinator

Despite very difficult circumstances, CARE has helped a great many newly homeless people provide shelter for their families. Our staff acted quickly to bring emergency materials to keep people safe and dry – since the disaster we have distributed more than 25,000 tarps and 35,000 blankets, to name two examples. Just as importantly, we are committed to long-term solutions so people do not have to stay indefinitely in makeshift camps. Our team will reach people who choose to rebuild back in their home communities, or relocate to safer areas, with assistance like reinforced shelters, emergency repair toolkits, and technical advice on construction. Our commitment is to support people in their own choices.



I am proud of CARE's leadership role among the various humanitarian agencies working on shelter. Our small teams in the field have done amazing work, but given the huge needs, we are working hard to hire and train additional competent staff.

We continue to be inspired by the individual lives that have touched us. One day recently, far up on a mountainside, the CARE team discovered an elderly lady all on her own, with no family members and no land to rebuild. They were so moved that the entire team signed her registration form together, and insisted on putting it on the very top of the pile. We have posted this elderly lady's form in a prominent place on the wall in our office, as a daily reminder of the realities faced by those who need our help the most.

Jean-Dominique Bodard, Livelihoods/Food Security Adviser

Even before the earthquake, CARE was helping Haitians gain access to economic opportunity to support their families. Our disaster recovery plans include efforts to strengthen sources of income, including in Haiti's crucial agricultural sector.



"I am grateful for the help we have received so far, but we need more than food handouts. I have a wife and six children. We need work. Our children need to go to school."

-- Pierre Richard Bayard, 47,
Place St.-Pierre, Pétion-Ville



In the short term, CARE's Cash for Work program is injecting much-needed cash into the economy by hiring local people to perform important cleanup and reconstruction jobs. Thus far, we have financing in place to pay for 80,000 person-days in rural zones of Léogâne. In contrast to food distributions, cash allows people to choose what they need most.

We consult closely with rural people, especially women, about their specific needs. Women tell us they are eager to replant their gardens, so we will supply tomato, aubergine, okra, amaranthus, and hot pepper seeds – many of which we will buy from a cooperative that collects them from Haitian farmers. The produce will help families improve their nutrition and provide income – crucial for vulnerable rural families, especially women-headed households

I was particularly touched by the story of a woman in the mountains of Léogâne's 15th section, whose house was mostly destroyed. Her husband died of shock because he believed that their children, who were in school in Port-au-Prince, were dead. That was not the case, and the children are now with their mother. Despite all her troubles, this lady welcomed us warmly. But behind her smile I could see her deep worry about the future. I hope the support we are providing her family will help her make it through these difficult times.

Nosa Boadi, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Specialist



CARE's ongoing provision of safe drinking water, waste management and sanitary facilities continues to save lives and prevent disease – we have already built 550 latrines out of a planned 3,000, for example. At the same time, our Hygiene Promotion team is bringing about amazing changes in the camps, thanks to training sessions and distribution of hygiene materials. People are developing healthier practices in waste management, the use of latrines and safe drinking water. In the sites where we work, residents take pride in keeping their camps clean and orderly.

We are proud of our close cooperation with community members. We train local health committees, and many have become excellent peer educators, raising awareness about hygiene issues. The Hygiene Promotion team has also taken a leadership role among humanitarian organizations, sharing our expertise so that our work touches many thousands of people, even in zones where CARE doesn't work directly.



The team is increasingly focusing on longer-term efforts not just in camps but among people who are returning to neighbourhoods or staying with host families. Promoting good hygiene is one of the best tools we have to save lives.

As Haiti rebuilds we will continue to monitor the existing water and sanitation infrastructure, both in Port-au-Prince and in outlying zones where thousands of families are finding new homes. Our work plays a vital role in the well-being of the Haitian people, now and in the future.

Marie Linda St. Charles, Maternal Health Nurse

Imagine being a pregnant woman facing delivery in a makeshift camp – or a girl who has endured sexual assault.



CARE's sexual and reproductive health team approaches their work with courage and emotional strength.

Along with awareness-raising seminars for pregnant and nursing women, we provide maternal health materials, such as safe-delivery kits and kits for traditional birth attendants, in order to reduce the risk of pregnancy-related deaths. We also deliver condoms, basic clothing and supplies for newborns, hygiene kits and first-aid materials.

Our next objective is to provide reproductive health services for about 160,000 people and compassionate and comprehensive care for survivors of sexual violence. We're planning women's centres in 20 to 30 neighbourhoods that will serve more than 40,000 women and girls. These centres will provide information on reproductive health, sexually-transmitted infections and family planning. In serious cases, including rape, we refer women to medical professionals or counselling services. CARE will start opening centres in mid-April.

It's especially rewarding to meet a baby born safely thanks to our efforts. My wish is that all deliveries will be just as healthy, and that children will grow up in a new Haiti guided by hope, integrity and respect for human rights.

"There were people all around watching me while I gave birth. I would rather have been somewhere else, in a cleaner place without all those people looking at my body. Fortunately we had clean water from the tank CARE installed; otherwise I would have had to use water that comes out of the pipe at the end of the road."

-- Joane Kerez, 20, Place St. Pierre, Pétion-Ville
(seen with her newborn baby Wadneica)



"At night, we are afraid. We hear stories of rapes in the camp next to ours. There's nothing we can do. There's no protection. Men have started following us to the street to watch us bathe. We are afraid they will come back at night."

-- "Rachelle," 23, Léogâne
(name changed/not pictured)



Claudel Choisy, Education and Psychosocial Support Project Manager



Nearly half of Haitians are under age 18. Young children are among the most vulnerable earthquake survivors – they need a sense of security and, as much as possible, a return to normal life.

Our outreach to families and children is an integral part of CARE's relief and recovery efforts. We are preparing a large-scale distribution of recreational kits to children so they can play, learn, and just be kids. The exact content of the kits – such as sports equipment, colouring books, pencils, etc. – will be

determined with the collective input of the children themselves. Special kits will be prepared for disabled children.

At the same time we will train parents and community members to lead sports and creative activities to help children feel happy and safe. Those who have suffered serious trauma will be referred for professional help. Particular attention will be given to girls, many of them living in camps and vulnerable to abuse.

We work in close cooperation with communities and government officials, including the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Civil Action, to reach the most vulnerable children, including those living in camps with limited or no access to school. Our longer-term priorities include supporting educational and work opportunities for young people who have had to relocate from Port-au-Prince to rural areas. Nothing brings hope in the face of disaster like watching children play. Our goal is to see as many young Haitians as possible enjoy a carefree childhood.

"I'm happy that my children survived, but they've had to leave Port-au-Prince and there is nothing for them here in the countryside. My daughters want to become nurses, but there is nowhere for them to study here."

-- Mme. Jacques, 48, Gros-Morne, northwest Haiti (shown with daughters Camita, 20, left, and Evelyne, 18)



Bringing messages of solidarity from around the world, directors from seven CARE International member countries visited Haiti in March. **At left:** CARE Haiti Asst. Country Director Gary Philoctète; Andrew Buchanan, CARE Australia representative; Chief Executives Geoffrey Dennis (UK); Andrea Wagner-Hager (Austria); Kevin McCort (Canada); CARE Haiti Country Director Sophie Perez; Helene Gayle (USA); Philippe Levêque (France); and Anton Markmiller (Germany-Luxembourg).



Report: Rick Perera/**Photos:** Melanie Brooks, Evelyn Hockstein, Rick Perera, Sabine Wilke