

January 19, 2010

Dear Colleagues,

Since the devastating earthquake in Haiti last week, YMCAs in the U.S. and around the world have expressed concern and solidarity for the Haitian people and the Haiti YMCA. Below is an update on the Haiti YMCA, the global YMCA response and ways in which you can support the efforts.

Haiti YMCA Update

Below are excerpts from an email sent by **Gwenael Apollon, the National General Secretary of the Haiti YMCA.**

In general, the situation in Haiti is catastrophic. In sum, during the last six days, everyone that I have had an opportunity to speak with or assist has lost someone as a result of the earthquake or is in search of a missing loved one. Today, basic necessities are generally still not available to most of the people affected by the earthquake.

As for the YMCA, we are thus far missing two persons whom we suspect have perished in the disaster: Frantzi Germain (also known as "Schumacher" to some, because of his tendency to drive fast); and, Roges Lamothe's mother, who had gone to Church moments before the catastrophe, and is feared lost under the rubble of the church, which was completely destroyed.

Besides these two sad cases, I had occasion to speak with most of the staff and volunteers and thus far two staff members, Tania and Agenor, were slightly injured, while assisting the After-school youth out of the Port-au-Prince Center at the time of the disaster.

As it concerns the Youth Centers, the Port-au-Prince Center is completely wrecked. The Camp-Perrin Center and the Kenscoff Center were spared and the latter is being used as a temporary lodging facility for the homeless of the community.

... please note that I have recently learned that a [Latin American and Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs] mission coordinated by Andres Fortunato is to arrive in Haiti shortly. Please be advised that YMCA Haiti is ready to actively participate in such a mission, and is ready to take the lead in upcoming initiatives, including but not limited to any assessments, as well as relief and rebuilding.

Again, while, I thank you very much for your thoughts, prayers and efforts on behalf of Haiti and Haiti YMCA, I want to reassure you that in spite of the communications systems difficulties that I have experienced in the last few days, I am on the job and running on close to all cylinders.

-Gwenael Apollon, National General Secretary, Haiti YMCA

Dominican Republic YMCA Update

Andres Fortunato, General Secretary of the Dominican Republic YMCA and Sub-regional Coordinator for Latin American and Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs reported that he is coordinating with other NGOs and the United Nations to securely travel to the impacted areas with critical supplies and support. The Dominican Republic shares a border with Haiti and leadership from both Y movements have strong relationships with community partners throughout the region. In addition, staff, volunteers and members have donated blood, water, and financial support to the effort. Youth leaders at the Dominican Republic YMCA are also raising awareness and resources for the survivors through collection drives in the community.

Global YMCA Response

YMCAs from around the world have generously donated technical and financial resources to support the immediate and long-term needs of the Haiti YMCA. Leadership from the global YMCA movement, including the Haiti YMCA, are coordinating a phased strategic response to the crisis which will address the immediate needs of the Haiti YMCA and surrounding communities as well as long-term objectives including serving children and families and the recovery and rebuilding of YMCA facilities. Once finalized, the strategy will be shared with the movement.

Two areas of particular interest to YMCA staff, volunteers, members and friends include:

- **Donations**

In this time of great need, cash donations are the most efficient and effective method of providing support to the Haiti YMCA. At this stage, YMCA of the USA will not coordinate the collection/distribution of supplies due to the extreme logistical challenges (including transport, distribution and storage) on the ground in Haiti. The global YMCA movement is responding in a coordinated effort to address the immediate needs of the children, families and devastated communities in Port au Prince, and surrounding areas through financial support. If you would like to help, please donate to YMCA World Service by visiting http://www.ymca.net/worldservice/donate_to_worldservice.html or by calling the YMCA of the USA International Group at (800) 872-9622. (**Please note:** When donating online, it is important to specify "Haiti Earthquake Support" in the "Comments/special instructions" box at the bottom of the online donation page to ensure immediate designation of your contribution.)

- **Volunteers**

Many people across the U.S. YMCA movement have contacted us with generous offers to volunteer in the areas impacted by the earthquake. Relief organizations in Haiti strongly advise that volunteers not enter the country unless they can coordinate with another NGO already on the ground. They further emphasize that unless volunteers are trained first responders, their presence may present more of an obstacle during the immediate response. This is due to the severely damaged infrastructure and critical shortage of water, food, electricity and lodging. Many of the main hotels in Port-au-Prince have collapsed and the remaining hotels are fully occupied. In addition, Andres Fortunato, has reported increased environmental and security concerns in the affected areas and that the access roads between the Dominican Republic and Haiti are severely congested. In consideration of the recommendations by those on the ground, Y-USA will not coordinate a volunteer delegation at this time. A coordinated volunteer plan will be developed and communicated as part of the long-term Haiti YMCA recovery and rebuilding strategy.

Additional updates will be posted as they become available. For more information, please contact the YMCA of the USA International Group at (800) 872-9622.

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