



AMERICA/HAITI - Two million people living on the street, 600,000 homeless

Port-au-Prince (Agenzia Fides) - In Haiti, 6 months after the earthquake, there are still about 2 million people living on the streets. Approximately 1,300 emergency tents have become their permanent home. 600,000 are homeless, far from the residential areas that remain dependent on humanitarian agencies. All are struggling to survive. Children are malnourished, in need of basic hygiene and medical care. There is no electricity or potable water. A bleak picture of the situation has recently been reiterated by international agencies working on the scene of the earthquake that killed more than 230,000 Haitians. These international agencies continue to provide water and sanitation to hundreds of thousands of displaced persons.

Fides has received a note from Caritas Haiti, where Monsignor Pierre-Andre Dumas, President, along with Caritas Internationalis, explained that Caritas has reached out to more than 2.3 million people. "Caritas – says Dumas – has been able to provide water, food, emergency shelter, first aid, and the necessary aid for nearly 46.8 million USD (€37.4 million). Among them 1.5 million received food aid and close to 400,000 people benefitted from Caritas healthcare programs."

The head of the Red Cross in Haiti, Alastair Burnett, says: "What we're doing can't carry on forever. We don't have infinite resources to provide that." Burnett highlighted that hygiene is a very large problem in urban reconstruction, however it belongs outside the capacity and competence of the humanitarian aid agencies.

A report from US Senator John Kerry, President of the committee on Foreign Relations, shows a lack of leadership, disagreements between among donors, and disorganization, as the fundamental reasons why many Haitians have not yet received the aid being given. "The reconstruction remains uncertain. Rubble is still strewn all over the streets, the majority of buildings are damaged if not collapsed, and informal tent settlements—in penurious conditions—have sprouted everywhere. Emblematic of the stalled rebuilding effort is the Presidential Palace, which remains conspicuously in ruins, without any signs of scaffolding or construction," says the report from the US Senate.

Caritas is also making plans for reconstruction for the next 5 years. Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodriguez Maradiaga, SDB, President of Caritas Internationalis, has drawn up a reflection entitled "New hope for Haiti six months after the earthquakes," where he requests everyone's support in the initiative to rebuild the country, as it lacks schools, homes, and much more. "Millions have been affected, many have lost family members. Schools, homes and lives need to be rebuilt. It is important not to forget about Haiti now. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 10/7/2010)

> LINKS

Caritas Internationalis Report: <http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/HaitiSixMonths.pdf>: