

# INVESTING IN HAITI'S FUTURE



SUPPORTING **LONG-TERM RECOVERY** IN POST-EARTHQUAKE HAITI

September 2010





## INTRODUCTION

Haiti's January, 2010 earthquake—rated at 7.3 on the Richter scale—was the worst natural disaster to strike the Western Hemisphere in the last 200 years. An estimated 300,000 individuals died in the quake and its aftermath; as many as 1.2 million remain homeless.

The earthquake has exacerbated what was already a series of complex challenges in Haiti. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, where as many as 1.1 million people have sought refuge since the quake, are overcrowded, have little security, and provide limited shelter and access to services. Rural communities struggle under the burden of 600,000 urban dwellers who moved from cities to their families' villages. The Haitian government estimated in February that between 2,000 and 8,000 of the country's residents lost limbs as a result of the quake, with more amputees likely.



YOUNG GIRL OUTSIDE THE MARIE THERESE REFUGEE CAMP.  
PHOTO EVAN ABRAMSON

In the face of such massive devastation, local communities and leaders took immediate action by providing support to the injured, looking for survivors, moving debris from roadways to facilitate rescue and aid distribution, and conducting needs assessments. AJWS drew upon our 10 years of expertise in funding in Haiti to identify effective local responses. Within 48 hours of the quake, AJWS-provided aid enabled the organization's longstanding Haitian and Dominican partners to provide food, clean

water, temporary shelter and medical care to survivors. These grassroots organizations were among the first responders to the earthquake and, in some cases, provided the only help that individuals in outlying towns received. By supporting AJWS's close work with our partners on the ground and relying on local expertise, AJWS's donors and political supporters have helped empower a growing network of community-based and grassroots organizations in a way that truly reflects local needs and builds upon local accomplishments.

The outpouring of support AJWS donors offered has enabled the organization, now, to consider Haiti's intermediate- and long-term relief, reconstruction and development needs. In its grantmaking, advocacy, education and outreach to the U.S. Jewish community, AJWS has prioritized Haiti's most vulnerable populations—women, young people, residents of IDP camps and rural areas, and individuals with new and existing disabilities. We have committed to at least four years of intensified grantmaking in Haiti, followed by a return to our pre-quake support in the country, to ensure that communities not only recover but thrive over the long term.

Our efforts have allowed Haitian civil society organizations a voice in U.S. and international decision-making processes from which they have been otherwise almost uniformly excluded. And AJWS's advocacy efforts in the U.S. and the international arena have contributed to increased government funding of relief and reconstruction. We have promoted practices that will advance Haiti's development in ways that are focused on social justice and equity and that will benefit the most marginalized members of society.

Our community-based, grassroots partners are leading the way to a new Haiti.

*AJWS's work reflects our ongoing commitment to the people of Haiti. Their resilience and courage in the face of such unthinkable adversity energizes us every day. In our work around the world, we strive to respond to disasters with our partners' tenacity and seriousness of purpose. They inspire us by confronting calamity with hope.*

## FUNDING EMPOWERMENT: FROM DISASTER RELIEF TO BUILDING BACK BETTER

The massive destruction, displacement and death caused by the earthquake has affected virtually everyone in Haiti. The already-limited resources of rural communities have been strained by the hosting of urban refugees. IDP camps, dangerously overcrowded and lacking in adequate

infrastructure, have done little or nothing to diminish vulnerability to disease and exposure. In many of these camps, murder, blackmail, and theft are commonplace; rape is rampant. One survivor of gang-rape told investigators, “nothing good happens in the camps after it gets dark.”<sup>1</sup> Residents of these camps are at high risk for diarrheal diseases including typhoid, as well as malaria, meningitis and tuberculosis.

Since the earthquake, in an effort to address these and other pressing concerns, AJWS has built upon its more than 10 years of experience promoting human rights and sustainable development in Haiti. Working with existing and new partners, and drawing upon the nearly \$7 million in donations the organization has raised for Haitian relief and recovery, AJWS has provided aid to those directly and indirectly affected by the disaster. The organization has supported work with IDPs as well as those in rural, quake-impacted areas. AJWS has used its funding to empower grassroots organizations, thereby strengthening communities’ capacities to meet their own needs, rather than creating local dependence on outside assistance.<sup>2</sup>

AJWS is committed to “building back better.” It envisions a Haiti where all people, including those most marginalized, are able to participate as full members of society. The funding AJWS has granted to existing and new partners supports urban and rural community-based organizations. In particular, this funding underwrites groups working to empower women, youth and people with disabilities. AJWS funding has been used to build technical capacity and strengthen organizations. It has helped community-based organizations (CBOs) and grassroots movements network more effectively with donors, international institutions and movements that prioritize grassroots empowerment and perspectives.

The funding AJWS has committed to Haiti will be deployed in three phases, over a four-year period. From January through April 2010—the emergency relief phase—AJWS provided more than \$685,000 in grants to 15 grassroots partners in Haiti and the neighboring Dominican Republic. Its support of partner organizations such as MOSCTHA, Fonkoze and Oganizasyon Gwoupman Peyizan pou Devlopman 8eme Seksyon Kominal Akaye (MPB) helped provide food, clean water and shelter to the earthquake’s survivors. This funding assisted groups in mobilizing community volunteers to search for survivors, remove debris from roadways to facilitate rescues and aid distribution, and conduct needs assessments. AJWS

support underwrote the provision of emergency health and psychosocial services, as well as education on hygiene and disease prevention. Our emergency grantmaking enabled partners to provide relief to their staffs and increase the safety and security of vulnerable populations. It allowed Dominican groups to coordinate relief efforts there and lobby their government for greater aid to Haitians in need.

AJWS has committed to secondary relief for the period from May until October 2010. In this phase, the organization will continue to underwrite its grassroots partners in meeting ongoing medical, psychosocial and housing needs. It will enable CBOs, particularly those serving women and people with disabilities, to actively participate in and benefit from international and national response efforts. AJWS will develop new partnerships with organizations that utilize a human rights-based, empowerment framework in their provision of services

From November 2010 through December 2013, the third phase of AJWS’s grantmaking in Haiti, the organization will focus on human-rights-based, long-term community development. AJWS will support, and encourage other international non-governmental groups to support leadership development initiatives among CBOs and their constituencies. The organization will fund and advocate for the inclusion of grassroots groups in all levels of the relief and reconstruction process, and will support future natural disaster mitigation by integrating funding for disaster-risk reduction into new grants. Finally, but not of least importance, it will continue to sponsor grassroots groups that advocate for human rights and sustainable development both within Haiti and within the international arena.

## **PURSUING JUSTICE: PROMOTING PROGRESS THROUGH POLITICAL ADVOCACY**

AJWS’s political advocacy complements and advances the organization’s grantmaking role in Haiti. Indeed, AJWS’s advocacy work, in collaboration with that of other human-rights, faith-based and progressive development organizations, has significantly improved the country’s ability to rebuild after the January earthquake. This advocacy contains the potential, as well, to radically transform Haiti’s economic, political and social landscape over the long term.

To understand AJWS’s advocacy goals, one must first grasp the ways in which the devastation wrought by the January earthquake was magnified by finance, trade and aid policies that the U.S. government and U.S.-government-

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<sup>1</sup> “Our Bodies Are Still Trembling: Haitian Women’s Fight Against Rape,” [http://www.madre.org/images/uploads/misc/1280239955\\_2010.07.26%20-%20HAITI%20GBV%20REPORT%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.madre.org/images/uploads/misc/1280239955_2010.07.26%20-%20HAITI%20GBV%20REPORT%20FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Such dependence can be an unintended consequence of an infusion of outside aid after a large, internationally recognized disaster.

backed international lending organizations have promoted. These policies have long contributed to Haiti's position as the poorest country in the Western hemisphere.

For hundreds of years, Haiti has struggled under the burden of crushing international debt—debt held largely by the U.S. and the multilateral financial institutions it dominates.<sup>3</sup> Incurred primarily by dictators who used loans to fill their bank accounts and to brutally repress their citizens, this debt's principal had been repaid many times over by the time the earthquake struck. The debt service, however, had not. Until recently, paying the interest on these loans cost Haiti between 25 and 35 percent of its annual gross domestic product (GDP). (By contrast, Haiti's healthcare budget is smaller than 10 percent of GDP.)

Working with allied non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the U.S. and abroad, in 2009, AJWS helped persuade the U.S. government to forgive Haiti's bilateral debt. After the earthquake, AJWS and its allies assisted in convincing international lending organizations to forgive more than \$700 million in Haitian debt. The International Monetary Fund, for instance, this July cancelled all of the country's outstanding liabilities, worth approximately \$268 million. As a result of the loan forgiveness programs that AJWS and others have championed, Haiti will have greater financial resources to meet its domestic needs over the long term.

Crippling debt, however, is not the only factor that has undermined Haiti's self-sufficiency and its ability to respond to January's earthquake. In recent years, the country's agricultural sector has been devastated by U.S. and U.S.-backed trade policies that have enabled North American conglomerates to flood Haitian markets with cheap rice. This problem has been exacerbated by U.S. in-kind food aid dumped on Haiti with no thought to the impact that short-term "boom and bust" cycles have on long-term food security. Haiti's farmers have been unable to compete in this marketplace. As a result, Haiti, which once produced its own food, became dependent on imported food and on food aid.

For these reasons and more, policies and legislation that can promote progress in Haiti have topped AJWS's advocacy agenda for several years. When the earthquake struck, AJWS ramped up its already-existing advocacy efforts. The organization's Washington, D.C.-based staff lobbied key decision-makers in Congress and the Obama administration. Many of AJWS's most engaged activists have visited their Congressional representatives in Washington. Since the earthquake, AJWS's network of

Internet activists has sent an average of 1,000 messages a month in support of legislation that can advance best practices in Haiti, such as the Haitian Empowerment, Assistance and Rebuilding (HEAR) Act (H.R. 6021/S. 3317). This legislation will promote local purchasing of goods and services to help grow the Haitian rural and urban economies and support the inclusion of Haitian civil society in reconstruction.

AJWS has also played a founding and ongoing leadership role in the Haiti Advocacy Working Group, a coalition of more than 30 allied NGOs. In that capacity, it has helped to bring the otherwise absent voices of Haitian civil society organizations to at least one Congressional hearing and to a major UN donor conference this spring.

In the U.S., these efforts have not only helped persuade the Obama administration to forgive Haiti's debt and Congress to provide more than \$1 billion in reconstruction aid. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, AJWS helped convince the Obama administration to extend so-called temporary protected status to Haitians residing in the U.S. The extension of this status has prevented Haitians from being deported back to Haiti while the country has no capacity to absorb them.

## **COMMITTING TO ACTION: BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL SERVICE**

The earthquake generated an extraordinary outpouring of support for the people of Haiti. In the days and weeks after the disaster, many in the American Jewish community—including individuals and synagogue- and college-campus-based groups—contacted AJWS about the possibility of volunteering their professional skills and their manual labor in support of the relief and rebuilding efforts.

At that time, organizations with on-the-ground operations in Haiti were better positioned to screen, select, place and support volunteers in assignments immediately related to the disaster. AJWS referred many potential volunteers to these organizations. Now, as AJWS's emphasis in Haiti moves from disaster to development, the service department is piloting a volunteer program to address some of the medium- and long-term needs of AJWS's Haitian partner NGOs.

The model for this program is AJWS's Volunteer Corps (VC). Founded in 1993, VC has placed hundreds of adults with skills in public health, education, management,

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the International Monetary Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

fundraising and other professional areas in volunteer assignments with NGO partners in developing countries. The program has benefitted AJWS's partner NGOs and VC participants alike. For more than 15 years, VC members have shared their talents and offered general support to NGOs and communities, which have continued to benefit from the training and support these volunteers have offered—in many cases, for years to come. VC participants, for their part, have returned from their 3-12 month volunteer assignments committed to and passionate about their role as global citizens and their abilities to create a more just world.

This fall, AJWS will begin the international-operations and recruitment phases of this pilot volunteer project toward a goal of deploying five to eight skilled VC participants, many of them drawn from the VC alumni community. AJWS's service department will explore with other volunteer-sending organizations the challenges and opportunities involved in volunteer work in Haiti. These organizations have reported that volunteering in areas significantly impacted by the earthquake has been extremely demanding. AJWS's first-hand knowledge of individual volunteers' attitudes, skills and resilience will help ensure that this pilot program is a success.

In the early phases of the project, the service department will recruit and train a country consultant; collaborate with the grants department to identify and select potential partner NGOs; assess risks; and develop a site-specific training program. The service department will match VC

alumni with partner NGOs, and create and distribute to volunteers materials that can teach them about work in post-disaster settings and about Haiti-specific cross-cultural engagement. It will also develop an in-country volunteer orientation.

The final phase of the pilot project will begin in May 2011. AJWS will train the selected volunteers and place them with partner NGOs for two months. They will receive regular support from U.S.-based and in-country AJWS staff while in Haiti as well as upon their return to the U.S. AJWS will evaluate the volunteer program and hopes it can pave the road for further collaborations among volunteers and Haitian partner NGOs, and for the creation of short-term service projects for groups of college-aged adults and delegations from synagogues and other American Jewish organizations.

While the immediate crisis in Haiti has begun to fade from public consciousness, the challenges confronting the country—compounded by the challenges of its history—will continue for a long time. Accordingly, the opportunities to assist our partners in building a just, humane and environmentally sustainable society there remain. These are the opportunities AJWS seeks to maximize through our grantmaking, advocacy and service programs and our outreach to the American Jewish community.

Your help has been greatly appreciated.



CHILDREN IN AN IDP CAMP IN PORT-AU-PRICE, HAITI.

PHOTO RUTH MESSINGER

**BACK COVER** MANY HAITIANS WHO LOST THEIR HOMES IN THE 2010 EARTHQUAKE TOOK REFUGE IN CAMPS LIKE NAN CHARLS IN PORT-AU-PRINCE (PICTURED), WHERE AJWS GRANTEES ARE WORKING TO HELP SURVIVORS REBUILD THEIR LIVES. **PHOTO** EVAN ABRAMSON





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