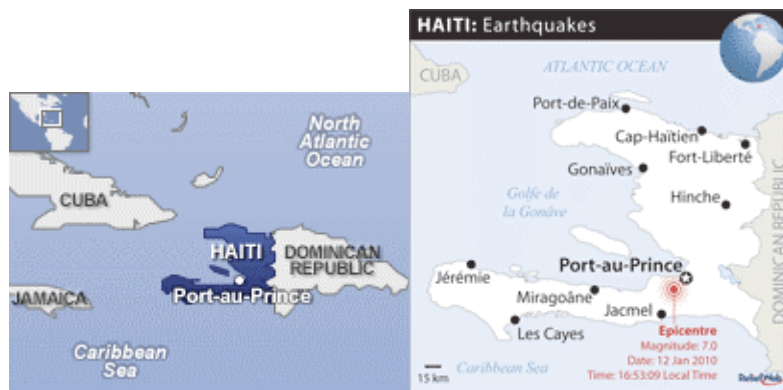




## FAQ: Haiti Earthquake Appeal Updated: 19 January 2010



**Haiti:** (pronounced “HAY-tee”)

### **Background:**

Haiti (pronounced “Hay-tee”), an island nation in the Caribbean, is the poorest country in the Americas, in fact it is the poorest country in the western hemisphere.

Haiti has a population of 9 million people, 70% of who live on less than \$2.15 per day. Half of its people are unemployed. It ranks 146<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries on the UNDP Human Development Index. Conflict, recent natural disasters, and poverty have left Haitians with a weak infrastructure. According to official figures, food insecurity already affects more than a quarter of Haiti’s population, some 1.9 million people, with women and children the worst affected.

Haiti has suffered extensive storm damage throughout its history, with the most devastating in recent times when it was battered by hurricanes in late 2008. A series of wild storms led to the deaths of hundreds of people; damage was worsened due to deforestation of hillsides.

## **What has happened?**

***On Tuesday 12 January at 16.53 local time, an earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter Scale occurred 17 kms southwest of the capital, Port-au-Prince.*** The initial quake was followed by two aftershocks.

The quake was “shallow”, meaning it was very forceful at the epicentre but was concentrated and hence had a limited impact zone. Port-au-Prince, with a population of over 2 million, has been very heavily affected.

***The number of people affected by the devastating quake is uncertain. Media reports suggest that up to 200,000 people have lost their lives, whilst up to 3 million people have been affected by the quake which has left an estimated 1.5 million people homeless.***

## **What is the situation?**

Hundreds, possibly thousands of people, are buried beneath the rubble. The number of casualties is enormous due to the violence of the earthquake, the densely populated city and the poor standard of housing.

Electricity is not available, water supplies have been badly affected and normal communications have been cut off.

The Cathedral in Port-au-Prince, adjacent to the Caritas Haiti office, is badly damaged. The Archbishop of Port-au-Prince, Serge Miot, was killed in the earthquake, along with several other prominent figures.

Several UN and many national buildings and infrastructure have collapsed or have been damaged.

## **What is Caritas Australia’s response?**

The Caritas network has extensive operations across Haiti supported by global Caritas members. Caritas has been working in Haiti for 55 years. Caritas has experience in Haiti providing food, shelter, clean water, and health care through 200 medical clinics. Caritas and its members are well prepared to respond to emergencies in Haiti through church and community partners and our extensive experience there.

Caritas began working immediately after the earthquake providing assistance to survivors including food, shelter, medical assistance and comfort through churches and parish networks.

The Caritas network is providing aid to the survivors of the January 12 earthquake from pre-positioned supplies in Haiti and from goods purchased in the Dominican Republic and brought in by road.

**Distribution of supplies:**

**More than 5,000 people have already been assisted with aid including medical care, food, clean water and hygiene kits. In the coming weeks Caritas plans to assist a further 50,000.**

Over 300 Caritas local staff continuing to deliver **relief supplies, including: blankets, tarpaulins for shelter and food including peanut butter and sardines. Hygiene kits, cookware and plastic sheeting** stored in Caritas' Port-au-Prince warehouse are also being distributed.

Teams of volunteers and staff are packing food boxes for 50,000 people. The first 5,000 boxes (each suitable for 5 people for 2 days) have already arrived in Port-au Prince and been distributed.

Caritas coordination centres have been established.

**23 food distribution points are being coordinated in Port-au-Prince and a further two in Jachmel district, which is also badly affected.**

Caritas organisations from around the world have sent 200,000 blankets, 15,000 tents, water cans and purification tablets, as well as food, water and hygiene kits. Twenty trucks of aid arrived in Port-au-Prince on Sunday as part of relief efforts from Caritas members which are set to top \$30 million.

The US based Caritas affiliate, Catholic Relief Services is also due to receive more than 1500 metric tons of food (200 tons of cooking oil and 1300 tons of bulgur wheat) in the devastated capital.

In the neighbouring Dominican Republic, Catholic Relief Services is **preparing five-gallon buckets loaded with juice, sardines, sausage, peanut butter, nuts, granola bars, canned fruit, black beans and saltine crackers. Water storage containers, water purification tablets, mosquito nets, and hygiene kits are also en route to Haiti.**

**Thirty-four tonnes of aid will be flown into Haiti** from Germany on Tuesday. Half will be given out in Port-au-Prince and the other **half will be distributed closer to the epicentre, in the south of the country, yet to receive significant aid supplies.** A ship with 80 containers of food has also arrived.

**Medical clinics:**

**Caritas has set up two mobile operating theatres with pre and post operative care and provided medicines and fuel. Six mobile clinics will soon be operational.**

**An emergency clinic is being flown in from Holland, with personnel including a surgeon, six technical staff for installing water purifying installations and seven water purifying installations.**

### **Where will funds be directed?**

Caritas Australia is accepting donations to the Haiti Emergency Response Appeal. This money will be directed through our Caritas partners working in Haiti. Once immediate needs are addressed funds will be utilized to promote the long term rehabilitation of the affected populations.

### **Responses to specific questions:**

#### *1. What are we doing about security?*

- The security situation in Haiti has always been difficult and our experience there, our broad network and links through the Church ensure we have great access at the grass roots level into the affected communities.
- The planning starts a long time before the disaster occurs and our staff are highly trained
- Our warehouses have good security and we have had no trouble shipping goods from DR (except for traffic and logistical difficulties caused by aftermath of earthquake)
- Local staff ensure we have good understanding of community and aware of changing situations/dangerous scenarios

#### *2. How will we work with the Haiti government if they are non-responsive and corrupt?*

- Governance has long been a problem in Haiti.
- The Caritas network is coordinating with local church, government and non-government agencies who are involved in the emergency response efforts. This coordination is essential to ensuring we can get the aid moving more quickly and assist more people who are in desperate need.

#### *3. Adoption of orphans*

- The full extent of the disaster is not known and although there is anecdotal evidence to suggest there may be a significant number of orphans - at this point we simply don't know if this is the case.
- Caritas' preferred approach is to support extended families and home communities to continue to care for their children, rather than separating them from their natural environment and sending them abroad.
- Our first priority is delivering immediate assistance and once these systems are established we will look at the medium to longer term needs of those affected.
- Adoption of orphans to Australia from Haiti would be something Caritas Australia would be unlikely to support as such significant trauma needs appropriate culturally sensitive care, something in Australia with such a small Haitian community, we would be unlikely to be able to offer.