

Humanitarian Crisis in Haiti: A Call for Help

Haiti is reeling from four back-to-back hurricanes (Fay, Gustave, Hanna, and Ike) that have hit the island in less than a month. An estimated 800,000 people have been affected by dangerous flooding, lethal mudslides, and the destruction of roads and bridges. A recent report from UNICEF states that 300,000 of the people affected are children.

Over 700 people have been killed, many more are feared dead, and hundreds of thousands are in desperate need of food, clean water, and shelter. "What has happened here is unimaginable," said Pierre-Gerome Valcine, a member of Parliament from the town of Caberet, 22 miles north of the capital, Port-au-Prince. A UN envoy called the flooded streets of Gonaives as "close to hell on earth." And Paul Farmer, with PARTNERS IN HEALTH, wrote: "After 25 years spent working in Haiti, I can honestly say that I have never seen anything as painful as what I just witnessed."



Fortunately, Pastor Bernard's church and school, Good Shepherd in Port-au-Prince, has escaped with minimal damage. However, his church and school at Village of Peace lost a good portion of its roof and the church and school in Leogane has been completely destroyed.

The series of storms comes at a critical time, with Haiti having experienced food riots in April. The recent skyrocketing costs of basic staples such as rice and cooking oil (Already high prices have risen by 60% since the storms set in), coupled with the upheaval caused by the hurricanes have made the country even more vulnerable. "The situation has gone from impossible to catastrophic," said Anne Catherine Kennedy of the CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. "About 80% of the food-growing area is affected, and the heartland of Haitian agriculture is wiped out."

The current crisis though is part of a longer-term problem that has made life in Haiti a misery for many of its 8.6 million people. Haitians' life expectancy of 53 is the lowest in the Western hemisphere and yearly earnings average no more than \$600 a year. Most of Haiti's trees have disappeared as destitute people cut them down to produce fuel. A massive reforestation program and public works projects in the cities are what is needed in the long term. But in the short term all we can do is help out with disaster relief. One relief worker declared, "In the wake of four destructive hurricanes, Haiti is facing another crippling humanitarian crisis, and America must stand with the people of Haiti."

Here's how you can stand with the people of Haiti and help our fellow Lutheran brothers and sisters:

(The Heart 4 Haiti Committee has set the following short-term goals):

- **1. Food= \$5,000-\$10,000**
- **2. Repair roof @ Village of Peace Church/School= \$5,000**
- **3. Repair walls/complete classrooms @ Good Shepherd= \$5,000**
- **4. Diesel fuel for vehicles/generators= \$2,000**
- **5. Continued support of Good Shepherd Lutheran School (K-12 grades w/465 students)= \$10,000**

(The Heart 4 Haiti Committee has set the following long-term goals):

- **1. Food= \$5,000**
- **2. Rebuilding Leogane Church & School= \$40,000**
- **3. Continued Support of Good Shepherd School for 2008-09 School Year= \$5,000-\$10,000**