

ICPCN REPORT ON A SITE VISIT TO HOLY ANGELS HOSPICE & ORPHANAGE AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI

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Background

Haiti was already in a vulnerable state when the massive earthquake of January 12th, 2010 occurred. For most of the population, providing the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter was already a challenge. The earthquake led to the death of at least 110,000 persons and as yet an unquantified number of injuries. It caused colossal damage and destruction to both infrastructure and homes causing between 900,000 and 1,100,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Children have been greatly affected by the earthquake and the number of Orphans and Vulnerable Children left in its wake is yet to be quantified. Orphanages, especially in the Port-du-Prince area are responding to the need. One such orphanage is Holy Angels Hospice & Orphanage, situated in La Plaine zone of Port-du-Prince.

Holy Angels Hospice & Orphanage, Port-du-Prince, Haiti, is dedicated to helping the children of Haiti- in particular, those who are terminally ill or who have serious disabilities both mental and physical.

Their mission is: *“to reach out to these children - the most helpless and voiceless among us. They are brought to us by parents who cannot care for them, through other medical missions and clinics, and sometimes they are simply left at our doorstep. We provide a safe haven - a clean, warm bed, regular nutritious meals, medications and medical care, and ensure that older children who are able can attend school. When possible, we arrange through local doctors or through the generous donation of services by doctors and hospitals in the U.S., for treatments or surgeries that will help some of these children live normal lives. Too often, however, all we can offer a child is comfort and prayer in their final days.”*



The damaged entrance to the Holy Angels Hospice in Haiti

Fr. Tony Cortesi, a Catholic priest, who directs the centre was out of the country having surgery at the time of the earthquake and the local coordinators were difficult to contact therefore little information was known about the state of the children, staff and building. The benefactors in the US were worried and therefore the **ICPCN** undertook to seek information from local NGOs in Haiti. Colette Cunningham, a volunteer with Catholic Relief Services and a Scientific Committee member of ICPCN received an email request from the chair, Joan Marston, to seek information about the state of the Hospice and especially that of the children.

Site visit and assessment

A site visit was undertaken to Holy Angels Hospice & Orphanage on Wednesday, 3rd February, 2010. Dr. W. Cadet, Dr. M. Dorcelus and Colette Cunningham were present during the visit and assessment. We met with the Coordinators Mr Jean Pascal Bain and his wife Michelle Charlotte.



A House Mother with some of the children from the Holy Angels Hospice

Findings:

The children

There are 17 children resident in the Hospice – 16 are confirmed orphans and 1 has family who visit him occasionally. The children range in age from 3 - 14 years. Most are severely handicapped with spina bifida, hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy and other neurological disorders. There are also children with mental disabilities. The children were clean, well dressed and it was obvious that they are being well taken care of – there is a team of 7 ‘House mothers’ who take care of the children.

Peterson

One child, Peterson (6 yrs) is severely handicapped with advanced hydrocephalus and is dependant of being tube fed with ENSURE – this is a challenge in the wake of the earthquake as they lost some of their stock during the event. Peterson is dependent on being fed with ENSURE and we were informed that he loses weight quickly when he does not receive it.



Peterson, who is dependent on sufficient quantities of Ensure to keep him alive

The Hospice lost one child during the earthquake- this child had been ill and was hospitalised in the General University Hospital, Port-du-Prince, when the Pediatric Ward collapsed. After two days of searching, the Hospice Coordinator, found her body under the rubble and she was brought home to the Hospice, where she died comfortably 24hrs later.

Currently all staff and children are sleeping outdoors at night which has caused some of the children to suffer with the flu but they are otherwise well despite the difficult circumstances. There is a Hospital nearby – Foyer St. Camille, where the children can receive medical care or they attend the General University Hospital in the centre of Port-du-Prince.



Area where the children spend the day and night



The damaged sleeping quarters

URGENT Needs

- Tents for sleeping outdoors – a request for 10 tents has been given to CRS Emergency Response Shelter Team and it is hoped to have these available for distribution early next week.
- Food for staff and children
- A supply of ENSURE for Peterson - at the time of the visit they estimated that they had approximately 4 days' supply remaining. ICPCN have sourced an urgent supply in the US and are willing to get it CRS Baltimore if CRS can facilitate its transfer to Haiti with the next shipment of items. Volume specifications and quantity have been requested from ICPCN and these should be available no later than Tuesday 9th February.

Infrastructure

On the whole the infrastructure of the Hospice was not too badly damaged; however, there are some cracks in the structure that warrant review by a professional structural engineer. The boundary walls were damaged and the staff have tried to reconstruct these from the rubble for security reasons.

The damaged boundary wall



Water and Sanitation

The Hospice has appropriate sanitation (latrines) and a regular water supply. They also have a water treatment machine which is not working correctly at the moment so they have reverted to boiling water for drinking and food purposes. Outside they have a draining area that is causing some problems with mosquitoes as the water tends to stagnate there – this area is not near where the children spend the day or sleep at night.

Recommendations

- CRS Emergency Response Shelter team to provide the Hospice with at least 10 tents
- CRS to add the Hospice & Orphanage to their list of orphanage recipients for regular food distribution and Non-Food Items (NFIs)
- ICPCN to urgently source a supply of ENSURE for Peterson and CRS to facilitate its transfer to Haiti with other CRS shipments of equipment and medication for the emergency response
- Holy Angels Hospice to be added to the CRS list for the Child Protection Program.

HOSPICE CONTACT DETAILS

Mr. Jean Pascale Bain, Hospice Coordinator,
Tel: +509 3508 1444
Mrs. Michelle Charlotte (wife): Tel: +509 3467 2036

Email: Mr.Bain123@yahoo.fr (Please note that he does not have email access on-site and needs to go to a cybercafé, therefore the telephone is the best means of communicating with him. SMS beforehand if there is an urgent email)