

# ISSUES AND ACTIONS

February 2010



## UN Millennium Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

## HAITI, SO SMALL; THE DESTRUCTION, SO LARGE!

Nobody knows how many bodies are buried in the rubble  
200,000 -300,000? Who knows the overall death toll?

Marie Laurence Jocelyn Lassegue  
Communications Minister

What we are going through is not finished, we must  
reconstruct the country and reconstruct our faith.

Father Glanda Toussaint

The aid we have available ... is being pushed out...  
the need is tremendous.

Lt. Gen Ken Keen, commander of U.S. military operation in Haiti



Most people had little knowledge of, or interest in Haiti until a catastrophic earthquake devastated this small country on January 10, 2010. Now the entire world is hearing as a result of this quake that Haiti:

- has an estimated 1.5 million homeless with no shelter or food.
- has ended the search and rescue phase .
- has buried at least 75,000 victims, many unidentified, in mass graves and this number increases daily.
- has no “after care” measures for the released injured to prevent infection or disease that can lead to death.
- has “released to go home” victims- with no home to go to.
- is just at the beginning of their spiritual, physical and economic recovery; her people overwhelmed, including the government and the professionals.



As the world is trying to digest Haiti’s tragedy, we begin to

recall her past and discover a dismal and complex fact that has been present for many decades here.

## HAITI IS THE POOREST COUNTRY IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

How could Haiti, once known as “The Jewel of the Antilles,” the richest colony in the world--exporting sugar, cocoa, coffee, tobacco, cotton and other exotic products to France, Haiti’s “OWNER”--become today’s poorest country in the Western Hemisphere? The following are a few of the reasons:



- a long history of political oppression..
- soil erosion ( 200 years of deforestation of the mountains with no replanting causes the soil flows into the sea at the rainy season).
- lack of education, knowledge, and literacy.
- greed and power in the hands of the “elite.”

Haiti, the world’s first independent black republic, revolted against her colonial masters in 1804, and won freedom. The new leaders were beginning to learn democratic self rule and management of an economy in which the masses had only worked and lived as slaves, when the international community of slave holding nations, England and the United States among them, placed a boycott on Haitian goods and commerce as slavery was essential to their economy. This lengthy boycott, six decades for the U.S., subsequently destroyed Haiti’s economic growth and the “Jewel of the Antilles” was no more.

The Haiti of 2010, the one we see through the eyes of the media, lies in ruins, pain and loss. But other realities exist along side the stone and adobe rubble that are not quite so evident--**ABJECT POVERTY, NEGLECT, BRUTALITY and CORRUPTION:**

- 1) more than half the population lives on less than \$1.00 a day.
- 2) infant mortality is 60% for every 1,000 births.
- 3) 10% of infants die before age 4.
- 4) life expectancy is 52 years.
- 5) 80% of the people live below the poverty line; 54% in abject poverty.
- 6) a series of natural disasters has destroyed subsistence livelihoods in many parts of Haiti.
- 7) only 2% of forest remain.
- 8) inflation tops 15.5% (2008 estimate).
- 9) violent crime and drug trafficking have increased as poverty deepens.
- 10) infrastructure is near total collapse - roads are inadequate, travel extremely time consuming and rural areas almost inaccessible.
- 11) for over 182 years the Haitian rulers have used terror, killings, beatings, illegal arrests and detentions, forced exiles and torture to control the populace.
- 12) this 7.0 earthquake could be the tipping point toward a failed state.





What we are going through is not finished, we must reconstruct the country and reconstruct our faith.

Father Glanda Toussaint

Prepared by the Peace and Justice Committee