

Women Around the World Pledge Solidarity to Haiti

Hauirou Update, Jan 15, 2010

The Huairou Commission and GROOTS International would like to send a message of solidarity and support to Haitians who have faced unimaginable circumstances throughout the last week. As the photos and news reports make clear, Tuesday's earthquake has brought extraordinary loss to an already impoverished nation. All of us at the Huairou Commission want to express our commitment - through resources and action-that we will help to invest in rebuilding their lives and communities both in the short and long term.

Originating out of post disaster experiences in India, Turkey, Honduras, Jamaica and Peru, the Huairou Commission's Global Campaign on Community Resilience is supported by GROOTS International with members in 17 countries around the world. All of our members have pledged support to the Haitians.

"In these difficult times, we the Emergency Committee Garifuna of Honduras extend our deepest sympathy and prayers to our brothers and sisters in Haiti. From our experience organizing and coming together, the Garifuna community has been able to turn the experience of facing natural disaster into development opportunities where we are empowered to define our future, mission and vision. Organized locally, integrating all the organized community groups, forming teams, we raised awareness and motivations and recognized ultimately there is a light"

--Ana Lucy Bengochea, Director, Emergency Committee Garifuna Honduras

What our members of the Huairou Commission's Global Campaign have found is that disasters, although devastating, present an opportunity to change development strategies and transform social relations, by re-positioning women in their communities to undertake public roles in relief, recovery, reconstruction, adaptation and development towards an enhanced quality of life.

We urge all relief workers in Haiti to recognize and engage grassroots women not as passive recipients of aid but as key stakeholders central to the relief, and reconstruction process. This is an opportunity to empower women at the grassroots level, build more resilient communities, and initiate long-term social change and development. Gender-sensitive programming is essential during emergency relief.

Therefore, grassroots women need to function as community mobilisers and/ or communicators to:

- Conduct damage and capacity assessments
- Coordinate between relief agencies and volunteers
- Rebuild shelter, restore livelihoods, and basic services
- Funds for south-south community to community transfer.
- Have public and safe spaces for women to organize, meet and plan

To this end, the Huairou Commission and GROOTS who have been working with disaster prone communities for over 15 years, are pledging a commitment from our network members in the region, who are expert trainers on: issues of securing and constructing safe housing; managing women and children's centers; restoring agriculture and protecting bio-diversity; ensuring food security during disasters; improving health and sanitation; providing crisis credit; organizing emergency response; monitoring distribution of aid; assessing recovery programmes and negotiating with officials, to host exchanges and trainings with grassroots women's groups in Haiti to ensure that their lives and livelihoods are protected.

Carmen Griffiths, Director of CRDC in Jamaica says *"Our hearts are with the Haitians. In this traumatic period we are issuing a message of solidarity - we will support the women in Haiti in any way we can. We want to be there for the long term. When all the excitement is over, and all the aid*

agencies leave, we will be there, helping women to shape the reconstruction process and invest in strategies for the long term."

Principles of Engagement

The Huairou Commission and GROOTS International are calling on humanitarian aid agencies, NGOs, development agencies and bilaterals to adhere to:

- Protecting women from all forms of violence (: sexual, physical etc)
- Administering resources in a manner that ensure funds are available to sustain women's participation in relief, recovery and reconstruction
- Financing technical assistance and capacity building support that enables affected women to learn from women leaders in disaster devastated areas to organize themselves to collectively take leadership in relief, recovery.

How you can help

We recommend giving to organizations with a longstanding track record of working with community based organizations led by women in Haiti. Our longstanding partner, AJWS, adheres to the principles of engagement listed above. They work directly with community based groups in Haiti and have committed both short *and* long term to ensuring that money received is directed where it is most immediately needed.

To make a contribution to AJWS's Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund:

ONLINE: www.ajws.org/haiti

TELEPHONE: 212.792.2900

Or send a check (indicating "Haiti Relief" in the memo line) to:

American Jewish World Service
45 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

Fonkoze - A national Haitian led micro credit and savings institution of the organized poor (90% of the savers and borrowers are Haiti's market women) that contributes to emergency response and long term development in Haiti.

"Women are the backbone of the Haitian economy and the doorway into the family unit," Haitian Catholic Priest, Founder. <http://www.fonkoze.org/>

MADRE is women's rights organization that is taking an active role in the relief operation in partnership with Partners in Health.

https://org2.democracyinaction.org/o/5095/t/3527/shop/custom.jsp?donate_page_KEY=396

- Huairou Commission, January 2010