

STORY

After Two Years, Haiti Still Struggles to Rebuild

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http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/july-dec12/haiti_01-12.html

January 12 marks the two-year anniversary of the catastrophic 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck the Caribbean island of Haiti, killing an estimated 316,000 people and leaving almost two million people homeless. The United Nations estimates that 50 percent of the rubble left by the earthquake still litters the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince. As one of the poorest countries in the world, Haiti has struggled to rebuild while facing outbreaks of disease and political unrest.

Haiti became the first independent nation in Latin America and the first black-led republic in the world when it gained independence as part of a successful slave revolution in 1804 from France.

According to the Human Development Index, Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas with more than 70% of the population living below the poverty line, surviving on less than \$2 per day. Since the bad water disease cholera broke out a year ago, nearly half a million cases have been reported, resulting in almost 7,000 deaths. The Haitian Ministry of Health recently reported that it expects the cholera epidemic to continue for the next two to three years as it spreads from cities to the countryside.

Despite Donations, Progress is Slow

In a nation where the minimum wage is \$5 a day, international aid groups say seven-figure donations intended to rebuild the health care, housing and school systems were just not enough to alleviate a country mired in poverty. In the aftermath of the earthquake the world rushed to Haiti's aid, sending money via text message, telethon, debt relief and through foreign ministries. In the United States, Americans pledged more than a billion dollars for disaster relief efforts.

But many families continue to live in plastic tents, and will for years to come. Experts say that even if billions of dollars continued to flow in, it would be another 10 years before people see serious results.

"The world's response to the disaster is slowly coming to an end," said Sam Worthington, who heads InterAction, an umbrella group of major international aid

organizations. "I look at what's left to be done and how much money is left - \$360 million - there's no way that amount of money can address the problems that exist down there."

Hope for the Future Starts with Schools

While infrastructure is vital to improving the living conditions in Haiti, rebuilding schools and improving the country's educational sector is a top priority for several organizations.

For example, Hope for Haiti has served Haitian children through education, nutrition and health care programs for 22 years. Before the earthquake, the organization supported children and teachers in 37 schools in Haiti's southern peninsula.

In response to the disaster, the organization built temporary structures at other damaged locations so school would not be interrupted during reconstruction. To mark the second anniversary of the devastating 2010 earthquake memorial services are planned throughout the deeply religious country and in Haitian communities around the United States.

Memorial services are planned at a U.N. base north of the capital where thousands of quake victims are buried. President Michel Martelly is attending the opening of a new university with former U.S. President Bill Clinton. Located near the border of their neighbor, the Dominican Republic, the Roi Henri Christophe University will be one of Haiti's biggest buildings and Martelly hopes the event will send a signal the country is taking steps forward. "This year is a year when we will really start rebuilding physically but also rebuilding the hope and the future of the Haitian people," said President Martelly.

In Miami, a partnership of 11 Haitian-American professional, community development and arts organizations are releasing a plan to address the ongoing needs of earthquake survivors still living in tent cities in and around the capital of Port-au-Prince.

- Compiled by Imani M. Cheers for NewsHour Extra