

Ayiti demen

Contribution of ATD Fourth World Movement in Haiti to the project “Yon vwa pou pep la” (One Voice for the People), a project supported by the UN and Haitian civil society, with the active participation of families from Grande Ravine and neighboring districts of Haut Martissant. March 2010

A belief is shared by all: Haiti can stand up again. A belief often expressed in faith: “After night, the Good Lord gives us day.”

To succeed in this enormous undertaking, **a few essential conditions:**

- **The solidarity** that people demonstrated since the earthquake, especially in the neighborhood, **must continue:** there needs to be **a change in mentality such as the one inspired by the nation’s motto “Union creates strength”:** *“Since the earthquake, everyone is stricken, the rich along with the poor. During reconstruction, I would like for all people to be as one, without division.”*
- **International aid must come, but Haitians must stay on the front lines.** *“Countries that have experienced earthquakes should give us advice on how to reconstruct.” “We see that the National Palace is destroyed. I would not like foreign engineers to rebuild it; this work should be given to Haitian engineers. That way, when people look at the Palace, they can say: Haitians were the ones who rebuilt it.” “Foreigners should come help us, but not exploit us!”*
- **The Haitian state must take its place and exert its authority.** *“Reconstruction should not be an opportunity for some people to fill their pockets. We must act in the interests of all.”*
- **We must take each person into account, including those at the very bottom, those who are the poorest.**

The young people really emphasized **the importance of relying on youth for this reconstruction:** *“Today, we are young; it is we who must work to rebuilt Haiti, in friendship. If we don’t have love in our hearts, for our children, it will be even worse.”*

The young people are sad that many young, well-educated Haitians end up leaving the country.

In the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, young people insist on necessary change. First, that there is work for everyone. They express how difficult it is to live in isolated districts that are looked down upon. *“All districts deserve respect, just like all those who live there.”* We must build confidence in young people who feel excluded. *“When one is scorned, one has no role to play.”*

The adults are ready and willing to contribute, especially through their work. We must count on the strength that coming together brings, like what happened after the earthquake. *“If people find work, they take it. And as we did just after the earthquake, we will be able to help others.” “Before taking action, the authorities or the United Nations must come observe what life is like in these neighborhoods.”*

The immediate needs expressed:

- First, “**a place where people can sleep**”, “**a place where parents are with their children**”. Temporary structures are necessary, but people should not lose sight of the prospect of a real house.
- **Food needs** are mentioned, for hunger is present and aid did not reach everyone.
- **Work**, linked to reconstruction. *“If each person can find a job, life will certainly start up again and the country will be rebuilt faster.” “Someone who works can respond better to his/her essential needs and is more independent.”*
- **Health needs** and access to care.
- **School** is mentioned as a need, and **training for young people**, for without a trade there can be no work...
- The need to **live through the current period in peace and solidarity**.
- The importance of **the neighborhood being considered and taken into account** in programs to come.

Essential future needs of the country:

- First **to have good leaders and a good government** that is expected to treat all Haitians equally, with **more justice and equal opportunity for each person**. A new climate where **solidarity replaces “dog eat dog”** must be sought after.
- **A housing policy, drawing lessons from the earthquake**. Each family should have access to housing, however modest but stable, in neighborhoods where houses are not crowded on top of each other, where there is access between houses and, most of all, safety.
- **An “affordable school where our children can learn,” allowing young people to learn a trade that will lead to work**. *“There are too many children who do not go to school; too many children who begin school, but must stop.” “A child deprived of knowledge has nothing. He/she is not taken into consideration by the rest of society.”*
- **Hospitals and healthcare systems** to ensure that each person have access to quality care.

When they express **their dreams** for their country, those consulted resonate with the **implementation of the loftiest stated objectives**.

To stay put or to leave?

Almost unanimously, **people chose to stay in the district, even if their house was destroyed**.

It’s where they live, their memories are there, they built their house there. *“That’s where I raised my eight children.” “I was born there.” They have ties there. “Here, people know me and I know people.”* They can count on others, they feel safe. *“Here, if I go out at 11:00 at night, says one woman, nobody says anything to me; if I do that somewhere else, they take me for a werewolf.”* That’s where they think they have the highest chance of finding ways to survive.

People therefore wish to be able to continue to live in this district, and to rebuild their house and environment there under good conditions. *“I would like for the State to take everyone in the district into consideration, including those in the lowest categories. We have often built our houses illegally, in the sense that we didn’t have the*

proper papers from City Hall. But I wish the State would think of us anyway, because we have also been affected by the earthquake.”

“Leave? To go where? I have nowhere else to go.” *To go to the countryside you need to have family there. “Elsewhere, people don’t know me.” “When you come from a neighborhood that has a bad reputation, people don’t accept you somewhere else.”*

The State can not displace people or families without making sure that they can find each other again. *“It’s the State that runs the country. So the State should be there to protect and serve. Therefore if the State tells me that I need to move, leave the district, it should be to protect me. In these conditions, I think that the State should give us compensation, or else what people call decentralization, but there really need to be activities helping people to find work...”*