

Thursday, 28 January 2010

Dear friends,

We continue to be in touch daily with members of the Movement in Haiti. It is often at 6 am Haitian time that we can speak by phone as they are starting their day. Occasionally, we also manage to reach them in the afternoon. They are then with families who come to visit them. They may also be out and about, attending meetings with the international NGOs skilled in large-scale humanitarian relief, or with local organisations. The team's goal remains the same: to enable families who are isolated from to benefit from the help and support being put in place by aid networks. As we speak with them, we hear them regularly conversing with others and in this way we understand the extent to which their lives are intertwined with those around them.

Yesterday, David told us that he had been to Grande Ravine with two American doctors from the International Medical Corps who are setting up a small mobile clinic for a few weeks. Going higher on the hillside, David found it even more devastated than he had previously realised. "It's one of the worst affected areas of the city," he said. "None of the homes there are left standing, all the paths are blocked or broken, you can't get through for all the rubble. If this medical project comes off, it would be wonderful as it so urgent. So many people haven't yet received treatment since the earthquake. There are also lots of children who haven't eaten for several days; many of them are in a serious condition."

The members of the Movement continue to organise themselves, linking up with others to tackle the urgent priorities. They get in touch with the families known to them through the pre-school and "bébés bienvenus" (*welcome babies*) to have news and find out who needs health care. They support the families so they can get to the food distribution centres.

One of the first reception centres to have been set up close to the neighbourhood, one which families begin to visit, has been created by Fokal (Knowledge and Freedom Foundation). The Movement and Fokal were joint partners in the regional seminar, "Extreme Poverty as a Challenge to Democracy: the Relevance of Joseph Wresinski's Thinking." We were partners in this project to introduce Fr. Joseph's body of work into university debates, and to establish a dialogue that includes new voices. Together with Fokal, we were preparing the follow up. And now together we face this challenge for all families to be partners and taken into account at the heart of this first emergency stage, as well as further down the line at the reconstruction stage over the next 10 years, as announced by governments and organisations present in Montreal.

Thanks to the contact the Movement had in Haiti and the significant work that has been built up between the Movement and Oxfam in the UK, we have a solid basis to envisage a joint initiative.

In these moments of dialogue, we are always impressed to see how, as they go from day to day, the team and members of the Movement build up a knowledge with the families, with the Haitian people, government and international NGO initiatives, to be at the heart of the emergency efforts in a way that builds a future for everyone and with everyone.

In this way, the team shared with is its efforts to clean, prepare and organise in a reception camp the place where small children gather. Together, with the parents, children, the wish to continue the shared-learning projects begun all those years ago in the neighbourhoods, thanks to courage of the families.

Like others, in particular the FAO, the team is worried by the exodus of so many inhabitants of

Port-au-Prince towards the countryside. They ask themselves: how will rural communities cope with such an increase in its population? What are the ambitious projects which mobilise and support the countryside? The team reflects with us: our history in Haiti begun in "the left-out countryside", in the rural areas. The team is already considering whether to send one or more volunteers to share this exodus towards the countryside with a part of the population, in order to be, alongside others, watchful that those who wish can find work in the fields, or in the reconstruction of their city..

With the team, we feel it makes sense for the first reinforcement by volunteers to be able to support the strategies they are developing:

- to be very close to the families,
- to respond to the urgent need for access to medical care
- to advance with Haitian and international partners who are also concerned about some families remaining isolated from everything that is being put in place,
- to contribute to the clearance and reconstruction efforts.

This led us to constitute a group of people who can support the team with these priorities immediately. Next Tuesday, this first group will leave for two months: Régis De Muylder, Benoît Fabiani, Anne Monnet and Dimas Perez. Eugen Brand will accompany them for two weeks. Simon Tiendrebeogo will join this first group after renewing his passport. Tim Lockwood, David's son, will travel with them. He is an electrician and in the 1990s participated in welcoming Kosovar refugees in Macedonia.

Others, in Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Indian Ocean region, Europe and at the International Centre have already let us know their willingness to be part of this chain of solidarity. The strengthening of the team in the long-term is at the heart of our reflections.

At the same time, other gestures of solidarity happen elsewhere. To support the team in Bangui during a temporary absence of Luçay Gaze, Isabelle et Stuart Williams have accepted to leave for the Central African Republic for several months. Other areas of the Movement need to be strengthened in the coming months all well. Given these necessities, all members of the Movement are taking on a lot. We should not be shy of suggesting different forms of commitment to those we meet.

From the outset, the team in Port-au-Prince has shared with us the courage and fatigue they feel, their fears and their needs. Based on their concerns, the group leaving Méry on Tuesday will take with them material including medicine, tools, tents, mattresses, a satellite phone and a solar energy kit. The team has also asked for beautiful albums, paints, and games for children. Their needs are growing and will become more precise in the coming weeks and years. Please do continue to encourage gestures of solidarity to build up a fund for projects today and those to be developed in the long-term.

We receive many messages from all of you. It shows us the extent to which we are conscious of being a truly global Movement, close to one another. We realise how far a real movement is extending and building up. A number of you share with us gestures of solidarity that have been thought up in neighbourhoods, schools, in countries. Hélène Rozet told us of the solidarity with Haiti that exists in Gaza. Members of the Movement, and new friends, send us messages and donations from Japan, New Zealand, California, Brazil, Tanzania, Mauritius and elsewhere. Yesterday, at the People's University in Caen (north of France), everyone recalled the visit of the Haitian delegates last December. Messages were written and 1000 euros collected. In Belgium too, delegates from the People's University wrote messages. In Bron (France), Madrid, and in other places, members of the Movement brought contributions in cash and cheques. In Spain, a man who has a long experience of living in the street said, "What gives me hope is that in Haiti people carry

on day after day." Tapori groups and street library participants write messages of friendship and drawings.

Today, the team in Haiti has no walls to hang beautiful children's drawings. But although the pre-school will remain outside for some time to come, perhaps the drawings will find a place on the laptop screens? And perhaps they will go, with books and art materials, to meet children who hope for schools in the camps, alongside the mobile clinics in the neighbourhoods?

Together, we must ensure that the gestures of solidarity and support, which come from so many places, are in tune with what is occurring and being built in the country.

Together, we must also ensure that the Movement in Haiti feels linked to the entire Movement to continue to draw strength, but also be able to contribute to this combat that we lead for a world free of extreme poverty and injustice which goes against a world which benefits from the richness of everyone.

We are in regularly contact with Marco Ugarte and Jacques Ogier, delegates for the Latin American and Caribbean region. They carry deeply a concern that Haiti be able to rely on the solidarity of neighbouring countries in the region.

At present, the conditions and possibilities of communication remain extremely fragile. The team still cannot access their email. We therefore ask you to continue to pass through us all communication with the team and to let us know, if you wish, your ideas, messages and projects until we can once again communicate as before.

Clearly, it is important to continue to widen our communication network, to not hold back in sharing news with others, and first of all ensuring that all members of the Movement in our towns, countries and regions receive news through one means or another. Some have told us that they have suggested to their friends to consult the International Movement's website, sent news to their network of friends with our fundraising appeal. These initiatives are essential to build support and a long-term commitment.

With all our friendship,

Eugen, Diana, Isabelle