

HAITI MAKING PROGRESS AS 2ND ANNIVERSARY OF QUAKE NEARS

-- Operation Blessing International still present, while many others have left --

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (January 10, 2012) – On Jan. 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake with an epicenter less than 20 miles from Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, killed an estimated 316,000, injured a million, made homeless 1.5 million to 1.8 million, and either collapsed or severely damaged an estimated quarter-million commercial buildings and residences. Some 52 aftershocks measuring 4.5 or greater were recorded within 12 days following the initial quake.

As the 2nd anniversary of this major disaster approaches, a progress report by Operation Blessing International (OBI), one of the relief organizations still on the ground in the impoverished Caribbean nation still working and aiding the victims, shows that significant progress is being made but there is still a great need for support.

According to OBI's president, Bill Horan, while Haiti remains the poorest nation in the hemisphere, many positive and encouraging things are happening, including:

--Better basic infrastructure development emerging especially in the water sector

--There is a better government in place and more people around the world are aware of Haiti's struggle and are willing to help

--Humanitarian groups have started many new initiatives, fueled by quake relief donations. But what is needed most today, aside from more housing for those in tent camps, is what was needed before the quake hit.

Yet, while Horan states there are positives, he also says there are a number of areas that still need improvement in Haiti:

--Sufficient access to basic resources still limited to the majority of the population

--Smoother importation procedures, as bureaucracy is hindering foreign interest in investing in new businesses because of lengthy waits and expense of clearing shipments through Customs.

--Haiti needs better security. The police need modern communication equipment; there is no 911-type emergency service.

--Many humanitarian organizations that exhausted their quake funds have left, with only a few remaining, including OBI.

"For many Haitians, life has returned to normal, but for those who lost homes, life is still completely upside down," said Horan. "For those who want to help, support only the relief organizations that are getting traction and can prove it."

Horan cited several of the numerous projects undertaken and still in progress by OBI including:

--OBI constructed a Tilapia Aquaculture facility in Port Au Prince. This tilapia farm will have a yearly output of up to 50,000 lbs. of fish -- very important for Haiti where many people, especially children, suffer from protein deficiencies. Fish is highly desired, but stocks have declined from over fishing, meaning most fish consumed is imported, and expensive. An added bonus to this project is that excess water will irrigate a field of vegetables alongside the tanks. This water has a high level of nutrients and will decrease or eliminate the amount of additional fertilizer necessary for plant growth.

--Home for disabled orphans, Zanmi Beni, built by OBI that is run in conjunction with Dr. Paul Farmer's Partners in Health. This is a home for some 50-orphaned children with varying degrees of disability.

--OBI hosts U.S. medical teams every month. The first of these were groups of doctors and nurses from Mayo Clinic that provided support to the cholera clinic and outpatient clinic at St. Luc's Hospital. Teams have also included specialist surgical teams who provided essential surgeries in the St. Damien's surgical facility.

--Completed construction of a multipurpose emergency / surgical medical facility at St. Luc's Family Hospital. This facility will house an emergency department with numerous patient bays, two surgical suites, and both pre and post operative care rooms.

--OBI partnered with the Clinton Foundation to install a number of donated tanks for rainwater catchment in villages surrounding Lake Azuei. OBI will build community centers in these villages that will double as a rainwater collection system, channeling the water to connected storage tanks for villager use. This project will begin soon

--A main focus of OBI has been water purification with 35 large units shipped in following the quake. Each unit has the capacity of providing 10,000 gals. of safe drinking water per day. Many units are still deployed in camps and strategic locations in Port Au Prince. At the height of the relief efforts, Operation Blessing was providing safe drinking water to over 100,000 people everyday.

--OBI was a first responder to the Cholera Outbreak in October 2010 with water purification equipment, liquid chlorine and Lifesaver Jerrycans to the Artibonite region. OBI still operates five purification units in the region providing up to 50,000 gals. of safe water per day. The relief org. also worked with St Damien's / St Luc's hospital in Tabarre to construct a cholera treatment center. The center has so far treated over 20,000 cholera victims.

--Installed a ClorTec CT-75 sodium hypochlorite generation system that has the capability to produce 1200 gals. of liquid sodium hypochlorite (food grade bleach), daily. This is enough chlorine to disinfect 3.6 million gals. of drinking water each day. OBI immediately began distributing this chlorine to hospitals, cholera clinics, orphanages, etc. for the disinfections of drinking water, the treatment of gray water, surface disinfection and for general sanitation purposes. Severn Trent Services donated the ClorTec unit to OBI.

--Installed a complete water treatment system at St. Damien's Children's Hospital

--Drilled over 30 wells since the earthquake in various communities and camps. The well drilling program is about to increase significantly with the purchase of a new drilling rig.

--Built a large multipurpose building at Zanmi Beni children's home. The facility includes a large kitchen for meal preparation, large dining hall with seating for 100, two-storage depots, and a room being outfitted as a bread bakery. Construction was completed in June, with the bakery to go online in December. OBI also built a 30 bedroom, two-story dorm to house the children.

--Distributed 3,400 wheelchairs through ongoing partnership with the Free Wheelchair Mission.

--OBI partnered with various pharmaceutical companies to ship over \$150,000,000 worth of medicine for distribution through the national ministry of health hospital network.

--Partnered with the U.S. Military to bring free medical care to three villages in the Artibonite region, the same region heavily affected last year by the cholera outbreak. The clinics lasted 10 days in each village, and included free checkups, medicines and dental care. People treated varied from 700-1000 per day.

--Distributed over 20,000 pairs of Toms shoes to children in various camps and orphanages throughout the country.

For more information on OBI's efforts in Haiti, or to make a donation to these efforts, please visit:
www.ob.org

ABOUT OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL: Operation Blessing International (OBI) is one of the largest charities in America, providing strategic disaster relief, medical aid, hunger relief, clean water and community development in 23 countries around the world on a daily basis. OBI was awarded Charity Navigator's coveted 4 star rating for sound fiscal management for the 7th year in a row (2011), a feat that only 2% of rated charities have ever achieved. In November 2010, Forbes named OBI as the 6th most efficient charity in America. Additionally, the Chronicle of Philanthropy currently ranks OBI as the 23rd largest charity and the 6th largest international charity. Founded in 1978, Operation Blessing International has touched the lives of more than 235 million people in more than 105 countries and 50 states, providing goods and services valued at over \$2.7 billion to date.

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