

# **OBI RESPONDING TO POTENTIAL CHOLERA OUTBREAK IN HAITI**

## **18 Deaths Reported, 500 Admitted To Hospital Since 7am Wednesday**

St. Marc, Haiti (October 21, 2010) – Virginia Beach-based humanitarian organization Operation Blessing International (OBI) is responding to a suspected outbreak of cholera after 18 deaths and nearly 500 people being admitted to the local hospital in the last 24 hours with severe abdominal illness. According to local doctors from Partners In Health, which runs the local hospital, over 400 cases were admitted Wednesday from 7am to 7pm, with another 100 overnight. The hospital is treating a similar number of new patients today and has requested that OBI assist in immediate efforts to disinfect drinking water in the surrounding area.

Today, OBI is sending a team headed by David Darg, its international disaster relief director, from Port au Prince to St. Marc today with a WMI water purification plant that can supply up to 10,000 gallons of clean drinking water each day. In addition to the WMI unit, OBI will be utilizing one of its new Sanilec-6 water purification devices to supply enough chlorine-equivalent solution to purify another 120,000 gallons of water on site.

Bill Horan, president of Operation Blessing International, said, “The lack of safe drinking water was a problem in Haiti even before the earthquake. One of the main reasons we came here last year was because none of the hospitals had running potable water systems – doctors and patients were actually bringing their own water with them to the hospital! We have worked with our partners at Zanmi Lasante (Partners In Health) to rectify this in Port au Prince and Belladere, but there is still much to be done throughout the rest of the country.”

To combat these water problems, OBI recently partnered with Severn Trent Services, the leading supplier of water and wastewater treatment systems. The charity purchased three Sanilec-6 Portable Sodium Hypochlorite Generators, two of which arrived in Haiti last week. The other unit is en route to Mexico. These units generate a chlorine-equivalent solution that purifies large quantities of water, and OBI has been running them 24/7 since their arrival in the country.

OBI has been working in Haiti on HIV/AIDs initiatives for more than 5 years. During 2009, OBI expanded their efforts in Haiti to also focus on projects with Partners in Health (PIH) and the Haiti Ministry of Health. Those efforts include providing potable water systems for PIH hospitals, launching a nationwide anti-parasite initiative to treat all school-age children and partnering in an innovative microenterprise fish farm project to help some of Haiti’s most impoverished families.

When the 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck, OBI mobilized its international disaster relief teams and provided emergency aid to tens of thousands of Haitians in the most devastated areas. Included in the relief efforts, OBI donated over 120 tons of medicine to the Haitian Ministry of Health, ran a medical clinic inside the Sylvio Cator Soccer Stadium where displaced people had set up a camp, and deployed over 30 water purification plants throughout Port-au-Prince – including in National Stadium and in General Hospital, the largest hospital in Haiti -- that are each capable of providing some 10,000 gallons of safe water daily. In the first month of the disaster, OBI distributed 1702 pallets of emergency supplies, food, water and medication with total weight of 2,416,559 lbs (1208 tons). OBI’s ongoing efforts include support of numerous schools, orphanages and tent camps with food, water and relief supplies, in addition to establishing Zanmi Beni, a home for disabled orphans and abandoned children in partnership with Zanmi Lasante (PIH).

For more information on OBI humanitarian efforts in Haiti or around the world, please log on to [www.ob.org](http://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. In 2009, OBI was awarded Charity Navigator's coveted 4 star rating for sound fiscal management for the fifth year in a row, a feat that only 4% of rated charities have ever achieved. Forbes, which currently ranks OBI as one of "America's Most Efficient Charities," awarded OBI a perfect 100% rating in fundraising efficiency and 99% efficiency in charitable commitment. 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.

###

For Interviews, photos or broadcast-quality videos please contact:

Chris Roslan

DRC Inc. Public Relations

(212) 966-4600

[chris@drcpublicrelations.com](mailto:chris@drcpublicrelations.com)