

OPERATION BLESSING FUNDS CHOLERA ISOLATION WARD FOR HAITI HOSPITAL

“Cholera Nonexistent In Haiti For Decades, Now Will Leave Lasting Legacy Of Misery”

Port au Prince, Haiti (November 17, 2010) – As the Cholera outbreak escalates in Haiti, humanitarian organization Operation Blessing International (OBI) has partnered with St. Luc Hospital and St. Damien Pediatric Hospital to fund a new isolation ward for the treatment of patients with the disease.

Bill Horan, president of OBI, said, “Fear is everywhere in Haiti right now. Cholera is often perceived as a death sentence. Cholera victims, because of the threat of the contagious disease, are not allowed to enter taxis, most clinics or hospitals in the country. The city morgue will not accept bodies because morgue workers are frightened that they will catch cholera from the corpses. People living in neighborhoods around the garbage dump are so frightened that cholera will come in with a load of garbage, that they stand in the streets blocking traffic and throwing stones to break the windshields of trucks that approach with loads of garbage. It’s like a modern day medieval plague.”

Horan met with the hospital staff three weeks ago when Cholera was first reported in St. Marc. “At the time, the threat of Cholera was looming in Port au Prince and the hospital staff wanted to prepare for that by creating an isolation ward. The team at St. Damien and St. Luc had decided to turn an adjacent soccer field into an isolation ward, and Operation Blessing International did not hesitate to help fund this project.”

The new facility consists of a triage area, a hand washing station, five large tents with beds, a separated area for pediatric patients, an isolated latrine and laundry, and a disposal area for contaminated waste that is pumped into trucks for removal.

Says Horan, “Cholera victims, as well as many patients who think they might have cholera are welcomed by the staff of St Damien and St Luc’s each day. Treatment, which is free, includes antibiotics, injections to inhibit vomiting, hydration medications and intra-venous units of live-giving fluids.

To further assist the hospitals, OBI staff in Port au Prince has been running two chlorine generators around the clock in anticipation of an expanded outbreak. The generators produce 120 gallons of chlorine solution every 12 hours, which is packaged in 5-gallon plastic jugs for distribution. OBI teams have delivered hundreds of gallons of bleach to the hospitals and families all over the area for use in disinfecting their homes, laundry and drinking water.

In addition, OBI continues to operate 35 water filtration and chlorination units throughout the capital and in the areas to the North hardest hit by the outbreak. Each unit is capable of producing up to 10,000 gallons of clean water each day.

Horan adds, “An ominous aspect of this disease, unknown here for many decades, is that some of the bacteria will survive and flair up during rainy seasons for years to come. Earthquakes and hurricanes happen and cause extreme suffering, but eventually, there is an end to it. Cholera will likely add to Haiti's burden for a very long time.”

For more information on OBI humanitarian efforts in Haiti or around the world, please log on to 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.

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 in Haiti, 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. OBI's ongoing efforts include water purification efforts to combat the cholera outbreak, 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).

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