

Tearfund Pembrokeshire Help Bring Hope To Haiti

By Sharron Hardwick

January 12th marked one year since a massive earthquake devastated Caribbean Island, Haiti. As Tearfund Pembrokeshire's Media Officer, I joined Tearfund Haiti country rep, Jean Claude Cerin, journalist Lorraine Kingsley, and 70 others in a Haiti conference call, hosted by Jaime Fyleman.

Jean Claude shared how his home and workplace were destroyed by the quake: "I returned home after a normal day's work, went upstairs and it struck. I lived in the worst days of my life! The house shook violently. I didn't realise its strength till I went outside, my house had half collapsed!"

Knowing his two daughters escaped unharmed, his first thoughts were of his wife: "My wife had phone call in the supermarket parking lot. This was the only thing that saved her life. As she walked towards the building it started. We met twenty minutes later."

Amidst the chaos, Jean Claude received calls from "Tearfund family": fellow Haitian partner, a Tearfund Honduras representative, and Tearfund UK Manager.

When asked how he dealt with the devastation, Jean Claude replied "It was difficult. Tearfund's first response was excellent, their large Disaster Management team arrived with equipment; we were able to communicate again, gathering with other partners. I kept busy helping, which didn't give us time to be anxious. Prayer kept us going too."

Haiti voiced mixed responses to the rescue attempt, emergency responses described as efficient, providing shelter food water and medical supplies. Criticism was raised for lack of co-ordination from Haitian government in the first and second phase of rebuilding.

Lorraine Kingsley visited Haiti to make Tearfund Haiti one year on film: "I've visited African areas, but poverty in Haiti is overwhelming. It was phenomenal to see immense areas of rubble, people carrying around belongings, amongst makeshift stalls. I saw thousands of UK and USA donated tents, people have been living there for 12 months, it was really sobering." she shared.

The film demonstrates how Tearfund's partners and Disaster Management Team continue to work tirelessly, bringing hope and rebuilding lives. During filming the team met Murielle.

Tearfund's £70 grant enables Murielle to make a living. François, volunteers for Tearfund partner Aclam, visits her regularly: "Murielle's everyday life is difficult – if it wasn't for Tearfund she would have nothing. François is a lifeline to mother-of-six, who lost her husband, her home and her livelihood in the earthquake Murielle says: 'He is like a brother to me. He protects me. I know I can depend on him.' " said Lorraine.

Jean Claude and Lorraine thanked Tearfund supporters for their generous donations: "This money goes such a long way. We can feel overwhelmed. It's incredible how God uses churches to do his work."

The conference concluded as participants prayed together.

Jean Claude encourages us to: "Please pray for the different crises that are occurring, the recent cholera outbreak; pray God will provide. Pray for the planned elections and tense political period, that God will cease threats of civil war and for Tearfund's disaster team & local partners."

For information visit www.tearfund.org call 0845 355 8355.