# 400,000 still homeless three years after Haitian earthquake

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Three years after the devastating Haitian earthquake of January 12, 2010, hundreds of thousands of people continue to suffer from its effects, while foreign donors worry that aid has been insufficient to pacify the population.

Citing UN statistics, the web site *Alterpresse* estimates the number of people still living in camps at more than 400,000. At the end of December, the *New York Times* reported that these people are spread among nearly 500 camps. Only $215 million in international aid for the purpose of safe, affordable housing had been disbursed as of December.

Having failed at forcibly evicting people from certain camps, the government is now trying to bribe people with cash payments of about $US470. It claims that these "return cash grants" are enough to cover a year of rent, but there is a critical shortage of available housing. The *Times* reported last August that of the more than 200,000 houses damaged or destroyed by the earthquake, only 15,000 had been repaired and 5,700 replaced.

Like housing, medical care is still in crisis. *Alterpresse* recently interviewed a specialist in trauma psychology, who estimated that 10 to 15 percent of a traumatized population is likely to suffer psychological problems afterward. Of the more than 1.5 million people who survived the earthquake, well more than 100,000 fall into this category. Yet Haiti has only 27 psychiatrists, of whom eight work in public clinics. The country has fewer than one social worker per 100,000 people.

Despite a 2010 promise by Hillary Clinton and then-French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner to spend $70 million rebuilding the General Hospital in Port-au-Prince, the work has not begun. The *New York Times* reported in December that preparation of patients for surgery is being done in a section of the building that is missing outside walls.

No such delay occurred in the building of an industrial park near the town of Caracol in Haiti's north, which was inaugurated by both Bill and Hillary Clinton and paid for with $220 million from the US government and the Inter-American Development bank.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has reported previously on the rush to profit in the earthquake's aftermath. (See "WikiLeaks exposes US profiteering after Haiti earthquake") The *Times* article gives new examples, such as the decision by the Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund to invest $2 million of private donations into the equity of a new luxury hotel.

At a UN-sponsored conference in New York shortly after the earthquake, foreign governments pledged more than $US5.5 billion in aid; that amount eventually grew to $9.5 billion, including amounts for relief of the subsequent cholera outbreak. This sum was never enough to cover reconstruction—the World Bank estimated the total cost at more than $11 billion—and actual spending has been much less. As of the end of September 2012 only $5.9 billion had been disbursed, and far less than that amount actually spent.

Of the $3.85 billion pledged by the US government, $1.2 billion remains undisbursed—that is, not available for spending. In addition, $500 million of the funds credited to the relief effort by the US were actually spent on its military intervention immediately after the quake.

While private donors have added to the total relief spending over the past three years, the American Red Cross was sitting on $500 million in donations as of the end of September. The *Times* ' December reporting focused on such "inefficiencies" and complained about the administrative costs of Non-Govermental

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Organizations (NGOs). Behind such criticism is the concern among the US elite—and those of other imperialist countries—that the sheer number of NGOs in Haiti is weakening the government and therefore making it more susceptible to revolt.

A May 2012 report by Vijaya Ramachandran and Julie Walz of the Center for Global Development (CGD) gives some background to this concern. Titled "Haiti: Where Has All the Money Gone?" the report differentiates between humanitarian aid—defined as immediate relief funding—and longer-term funds for reconstruction. Of the former category, only 1 percent of donated funds went to the Haitian government, with the remainder going to NGOs and for-profit companies.

Out of 23 NGO reports surveyed by the CGD, "only four program and organization reports have any detail about how the money was spent." The CGD also references a report by the Disaster Accountability Project, which looked at 196 NGOs and found that "only eight had public and regularly updated situation reports on their activities in Haiti." Many of the organizations that have not issued reports instead "provided emotional appeals or anecdotal case studies on their web sites." The CGD refers to NGOs as the "Quasi-Private State in Haiti."

For-profit companies are also in on the game. Chemonics, which found profits in Afghan construction projects after the US invasion, received $1.9 million to construct a temporary building for the Haitian parliament. Without bothering to install internal walls, it claimed that the project was complete. After a Freedom of Information Act request, it provided a cost breakdown with all dollar amounts redacted.

This situation worries the *New York Times* and its backers in the US government, who are well aware of the protests that threatened President Michel Martelly this fall. (See "Martelly government cracks down on Haitian protests"). In a December 23 report, the *Times* complains about the amount of money spent on tents, bottled water, and other immediate relief after the earthquake, mindful that such temporary supplies were not enough to pacify the population.

Attempts to subdue the Haitian population are, of course, nothing new. In a two-part collaboration this week, *Alterpresse* and the media organization Ayiti Kale Je reported on the effects of a World Bank program implemented for this purpose after the 2004 overthrow of democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The program, which made small grants (in the realm of $US15,000-$20,000) to about 1,500 local projects, resulted in failed projects but successful careers for the local politicians who obtained funding. It was modeled after similar programs in post-invasion Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor. For its part, the World Bank is not shy about its intentions in Haiti, complaining in a September 2012 Interim Strategy Note about "the absence of clear rules for market-based competition" in the country.

Worries about Haitian unrest are also leading to infighting among imperialist powers. Earlier this month International Co-operation Minister Julian Fantino of Canada—the second biggest donor country in terms of disbursed aid—told Montreal's *La Presse* that his ministry has frozen any new funding for aid programs. A former police commissioner and chief of police, Fantino made the decision after visiting Port-au-Prince and seeing trash strewn in the street. The announcement drew a warning from the US State Department not to modify any Canadian programs.

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