

After the disaster: a new beginning

The Welthungerhilfe programme in Haiti 2010 to 2014

The earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010 has left the country facing huge challenges. Simply rebuilding the infrastructure is not enough: it will be necessary to make a new beginning. Even before the earthquake, the Haitian state was weak; it was ranked among the worst ten countries in terms of the food situation in the Global Hunger Index 2009.

The ruins of the presidential palace and the cathedral are striking images of the destruction brought by the earthquake to the heart of the country. Many ministries were also demolished, leading personnel were killed, documents destroyed. The international community's missions in Haiti were also badly damaged and the UN and EU lost many members of staff.

The international community faces the task of assisting Haiti in developing stable structures, without imposing concepts from outside. In addition to support for the state, however, the people need direct assistance in taking up their lives again and overcoming hunger and poverty in the long term. Haitians' lives should be better after the earthquake than they were before: that is Welthungerhilfe's aim.

A five-year programme is planned, combining immediate and emergency aid, reconstruction and long-term development. One focus will be on rural areas in particular, for as well as affecting the capital city, the quake devastated many rural districts. The north of the country is also under pressure due to the flood of refugees from Port-au-Prince. The UN has counted over 600,000 internally displaced persons.

Welthungerhilfe has a regional office in the capital Port-au-Prince, where aid is coordinated. Two new project locations have been set up in the earthquake zone for the regions Jacmel and Petit Goâve. The three project locations already operating in the north of Haiti before the earthquake, in Jean Rabel, Cap Haitien and Ouanaminthe, will be integrated in the overall programme concept.

Welthungerhilfe works in a continuum of emergency aid, reconstruction and development co-operation. Aid measures are coordinated and mesh with each other. Local connections as well as municipal and state institutions are involved at all stages. Co-operation with long-term partner organisations is particularly important in this context, since they are established in the region and familiar with the particular situation and the inhabitants' needs.

States like Haiti which lack a stable structure are often not able to apply the large amounts of financial support effectively in a short period of time. This leads to the risk that the country's development process may be imposed from outside, resulting in the loss of the sense of ownership which is essential for sustainable reconstruction.

Welthungerhilfe has been working in Haiti since 1974 and has therefore gained long-term experience in co-operation with local and national actors during this period. This enables the organisation both to provide material aid and to contribute to the building of decentralised and civil society structures in the country in the course of its development programme.

Individual phases of the development programme:

The **immediate aid** phase involved the distribution of drinking water and food to thousands of people in Port-au-Prince and in the south of the country. In addition, tarpaulins for shelter, kitchen equipment and sanitary items were distributed to give people who had literally lost everything an initial boost in **restarting their lives**.

The **emergency aid** phase will last up to six months and involves Welthungerhilfe distributing seeds in rural regions to secure the next harvest. The farmers start to cultivate their fields from March onwards. Many of them have lost seeds and tools in the earthquake. Those involved are all peasant farmers who only survived by subsistence farming even before the earthquake.

About 75 percent of these farmers have an annual income between 40 and 500 dollars; only ten percent have an income of over 900 dollars annually. Seeds for basic food crops and vegetables, small livestock, poultry and tools will be distributed according to criteria decided in collaboration with the municipal representatives. The distribution will be combined with improved cultivation methods which will generate more income and at the same time protect natural resources. The overall goal is that Haiti's own food production should cover a greater proportion of its requirements; at present the country produces less than half of what it needs.

Welthungerhilfe is also committed to the **cash for work** system, whereby people receive daily wages of five dollars (nearly four euros) for removing rubble and repairing roads. At the same time, the money helps revive the local economy. Damaged houses are being repaired; where the damage is too severe, the houses are demolished to the foundations and large

tents erected on the site to shelter the residents in the rainy season. Rebuilding demolished houses will take time, but this makes it all the more important for people to remain on their property. There is no land registry office in Haiti, so people are afraid someone else could take possession of their property if they leave.

At the project locations in the north which already existed before the earthquake, internally displaced persons from affected areas are being integrated into the cash for work measures. Their task is to improve local infrastructure, because the roads are in very poor condition. Irrigation systems are also being repaired; less than half of the area which could be irrigated has been developed so far. In addition, erosion protection measures help secure slopes and rivers, thus conserving the small proportion of agricultural land (only 35 percent of Haiti's area altogether) in the long term.

This package of measures creates the basis for **long-term development** which will improve the employment situation for the locals as well as the internally displaced persons, at the same time raising public awareness for disaster prevention. Local groups of workers and day labourers learn new skills.

Social criteria are taken into consideration when selecting projects, and emphasis is placed on ensuring that men and women benefit equally. If property rights are not clear, a long-term solution for this is worked out with the local authorities before or during the project. When private houses are repaired or constructed, most of the work is contributed by the people themselves.

All the activities mentioned are co-ordinated and agreed in close co-operation with the municipalities, local authorities and other national and international actors. Welthungerhilfe's partner organisations are taking on responsibility for some parts of the programme, which also enables them to develop as institutions.

Welthungerhilfe is part of a European **network** of seven aid organisations, the Alliance2015. Starting with the immediate aid phase, close co-operation has been maintained within this group. Assessments to survey needs and ascertain the situation for aid measures are being carried out jointly and the Haitian office and personnel, as well as the logistical basis in the Dominican Republic, are being shared. Joint projects such as storage management are already being planned and the co-operative approach is to be expanded throughout the five year programme.

In the **rehabilitation and development co-operation** phase, disaster prevention and resource management will be increasingly emphasised. These aspects initiate economically and ecologically sustainable development which will secure the livelihoods of the affected population. Welthungerhilfe can rely on its long-term experience and successes in working with partner organisations and local self-help groups in Haiti as the basis on which to build. Our central focus is to strengthen our partners' own organisational capability and so to increase their capacity to help themselves.

Making damaged houses and municipal institutions in rural areas habitable again is a priority; the second step will be to expand them using suitable construction methods. Schools, medical clinics etc, most of which are currently housed in provisional buildings, will be adapted to conform with standardised specifications in number, size and construction type, in agreement with the relevant authorities.

Damaged water supply lines, well protection walls, irrigation systems etc will be examined to determine whether their technical or hydrological function has been altered by the earthquake; then they will be rehabilitated according to new requirements. To do this effectively, expert knowledge must be combined with the local population's traditional knowledge. It is essential to involve the present and future users closely in the planning, to ensure that the solutions are socially and environmentally sustainable.

Parallel to these activities, disaster prevention and resource management measures will be carried out. These include, for example, the protection of drinking and irrigation water sources by targeted reforestation, or cultivation techniques which generate increased income and protect the environment, such as improved fruit and vegetable crops. Haiti is regularly subject to hurricanes, so training activities will take place to enable people to protect themselves from disasters more effectively and to organise themselves more quickly in the aftermath.

Donations:

Welthungerhilfe has recorded donations for Haiti totalling 18.77 million euros so far (as of 24.03). Around one million promised donations are in the pipeline. Of this amount, we predict that around six million euros will be allotted to immediate and emergency aid in 2010. The remaining sum will be spent on reconstruction and development co-operation projects over the next five years. Ten percent of the total sum will be allotted to general administration,

communications and advertising measures and accounted for separately, to ensure transparency. According to the criteria established by the DZI, the German Central Institute for Social Issues, Welthungerhilfe spends a “low” proportion of its money in this area.

Public funding:

Welthungerhilfe has received funding from ECHO, the European Union's humanitarian aid department, totalling 1.1 million euros so far. Further negotiations with bilateral and multilateral donors are in progress.

The Regional Desk for Latin America anticipates that the total volume for the development programme could be 30 to 40 million euros. This estimate is based on previous experience and Welthungerhilfe's good reputation in Haiti (e.g. financial support for extensive development programmes which have also been funded by regional development banks and the Haitian government).

Eberhard Seiler,
Head Regional Desk Latin America and the Caribbean