

To: CRS Friends and Partners

Re: Response to Haiti Earthquake/Sister Parish Relationships

Date: January 18, 2010

As we mobilize our relief effort in Haiti, Catholic Relief Services wants to thank all of the parishes and schools in the US that are twinning with parishes in Haiti. We know that you are a constant source of support and hope for our brothers and sisters in Haiti. We also know you are grieving at this time and are eager to help. CRS has received several questions from groups that are twinning about the best possible way to help at this time. Below are some questions to ask as you consider how to respond to this devastating disaster in the days and weeks to come. We have included [an example](#) of how one parish is responding. ***Our parish/school has a twinning relationship with a parish in Haiti. As a response to the earthquake, should we contribute directly to our sister parish or to Catholic Relief Services?***

Only your parish can determine the best thing to do in this circumstance. No doubt the ongoing needs among the people in your sister parish are great. Before you decide whether your response to the earthquake will go directly to your sister parish or to Catholic Relief Services or both, we recommend that you consider the following questions.

- Is your sister parish in or near Port-au-Prince? If not and it was not directly affected, does it have the capacity to get your assistance to the people suffering after the earthquake? Some parishes and parish twinning programs may have the capacity to respond directly. On the other hand, many of the transportation routes in and near Port-au-Prince have been disrupted, which may make it impossible for parishes in other areas or in the US to get help where it is needed.
- If your sister parish was directly affected, does it have the capacity to provide assistance or are most of its people in need of assistance? Keep in mind that many banks and financial services are not functioning normally in Haiti. Is the infrastructure there for the parish to 'cash the check' or draw on the account? Does the parish have access to the goods that are needed?
- If you decide to send help directly to your sister parish, have you been able to communicate with them so you know what needs they have identified and can respond to their needs effectively?
- Consider the distinction between the immediate need to keep people alive and the long-term need to rebuild. Might you respond to these different needs differently?

Here is background information about CRS' response to the earthquake in Haiti.

- CRS had 313 staff in Haiti at the time of the earthquake and more are arriving every day. All of our staff have survived and we thank you for your prayers for them and for their loved ones who were hurt or killed in the earthquake. Our staff are experts in setting up emergency relief and were immediately able to begin setting up a system to distribute urgently needed aid.
- In the days after the earthquake CRS was able to distribute more than 1500 metric tons of basic food supplies in Port-au-Prince. Much more aid is arriving all the time and CRS is poised to distribute it.
- CRS is working closely with the bishops of Haiti and Catholic agencies to ensure that we are meeting the needs of local parishes and other groups and individuals. However, because of the complexity of this relief effort, CRS will provide relief where it is most needed and cannot guarantee that any particular donation will go to a particular parish.
- In the long run, CRS will be deeply involved in the rebuilding process.

For more information on CRS' response to the earthquake in Haiti and for prayer and educational resources, go to www.crs.org