

Following the 2010 earthquake, Haiti faces overwhelming social and economic challenges. The organization Development and Peace is working directly with local Haitian groups to help build a better, sustainable future in the country.

HAITI

ONE YEAR LATER

Partnerships for a greater good

As many as 1.5 million Haitians who survived last January's devastating earthquake lost their homes and communities.

As a result, many of the country's rural peasants welcomed these displaced members of their extended families into their already-crowded one-room homes. They have been feeding them with the only food available – the seeds saved for next year's planting.

The generosity and resilience of the Haitian people has been remarkable, says Danielle Leblanc, a programs officer for Development and Peace, a Canadian organization that has been working in Haiti for 40 years. But there is an enormous amount of work yet to be done in this hard-hit country.

Partnership is the foundation of the organization's integrated development strategy. "Grassroots organizations in Haiti have programs, strategy and the capacity to expand to meet the huge demands created by the earthquake," Ms. Leblanc says. "With our support, they are able to do more of what they do best. Our local partners establish our priorities."

Development and Peace is the Canadian member of Caritas Internationalis, a worldwide confederation of 165 Catholic development and relief organizations, and has partnered with more than 20 groups in Haiti to develop and implement its reconstruction program. Through these partnerships, the organization is supporting agricultural and other economic activities, empowering women and youth, helping to rebuild communities and assisting community radio stations.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, Development and Peace supported the efforts of Caritas Haiti, which distributed water, tents and food, and organized mobile medical clinics. Today, that support network is responding to the cholera outbreak.

"We assist those who are the most vulnerable," says Ridana Cornet, communications and liaison officer of Caritas Haiti. "We need change, so we need to stay optimistic."

Development and Peace tries to create opportunities for its partner organizations to share successes and strategies with each other. The organization recently arranged for representatives from its partners in Haiti to visit groups in El Salvador who had experience in earthquake reconstruction following the 2001 disaster in that country, which is fruitful for both sides.

The voice of Haitians is key in the reconstruction process, but

about

Development and Peace is a Canadian international development organization working to address the root causes of poverty and injustice in the Global South. Founded in 1967 by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the organization's aim is to reach out to the most poor and vulnerable regardless of race, gender or religion.

Beyond raising awareness of social justice issues among Canadians, Development and Peace works in over 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, partnering with local organizations to bring change in their respective countries. It is the Canadian member of the Caritas Internationalis confederation of the Catholic Church and receives program funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

by the numbers

51.2%, 54.8%
Literacy rates in Haiti for women and men respectively

3,000
The number of cholera-prevention kits that Development and Peace has helped Caritas Haiti distribute in camps in Port-au-Prince

40
Number of years Development and Peace has been working with local organizations in Haiti

often goes unheard. Development and Peace works with its partners to support community radio, an important communication tool in a country with poor infrastructure and a high rate of illiteracy.

Even under these conditions, "many families can gather around a radio, even in the most remote communities," Ms. Leblanc says. "When the Ministry of Health wants to share cholera prevention (information) with the population, or let them know about facilities and schools available for children, that information is conveyed by radio."

One of Development and Peace's primary partners in the community radio effort is REFRAKA, a national community radio association started in 2001 by 15 women working in radio, says REFRAKA training

co-ordinator Marie Gyrleine Justin.

"We noticed that women were working in isolation, even though they were facing the same difficulties, and lacked opportunities to gain the skills necessary," Ms. Justin says.

The training and education REFRAKA provides to women spans journalism skills and technical production to gender equality issues, she says. "We also create content that represents women's issues. We once did a program on children who are sent to live with people to do housework, talking about how these children lose their identity and don't go to school. After, when we spoke to our female listeners, some told us that they no longer sent their children to do that kind of work."

Educational programming like this also helps empower women, enabling them to speak out about attacks against them and other issues, Ms. Justin says. "It is a process that takes time. At first women were afraid to speak; now they are not."

The earthquake destroyed REFRAKA's office, but after a month spent recovering from their injuries, the staff members were back at work at a new office that Development and Peace has helped fund.

Ms. Justin says recent programs have addressed "the new reality" that Haitian women now face following the earthquake, such as violence against them in camps for displaced people. Without community radio, these important issues might never be heard by those they affect the most.



Women living in camps face threats to their security. The issue is being talked about on community radio thanks to Development and Peace partner REFRAKA. PHOTO: DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

ON THE GROUND

Through local citizens and partnership efforts, Development and Peace is making a difference

REFRAKA is a national community radio association for women that aims to give women a voice in Haitian society. Community radio is an important way to reach the most isolated and vulnerable people in a country with a literacy rate of around only 50 per cent.

REFRAKA has 27 member radio stations across the country, with an audience of 250,000 listeners.

Each member station has two REFRAKA representatives who participate in meetings and workshops, and who learn how to train others. They can then pass on their knowledge to female colleagues and other women interested in radio.

Since the earthquake, REFRAKA has tackled issues that affect women directly in the country's new context, such as the violence and abuse faced by women living in camps for displaced persons. By giving women a voice,

REFRAKA is letting all women in Haiti know they matter.

Sherlyne Joseph, 28, was hosting a popular music show on Radio Zetwal (Star Radio) in Fondwa, a rural community accessible by only a winding dirt road, when the earthquake hit.

The station collapsed in the quake, but Sherlyne managed to crawl out of the rubble. Despite her injuries, she was back on the air at the first opportunity.

That's good news for Haitian women. The small radio station is one of the few that reach the isolated communities in this part of the country.

"I host a show that talks about female issues like health, or how women can handle arguments with their husbands," she says.

By training others, Sherlyne is helping pass on the power of radio to other young women. The message is spreading. On a recent day,

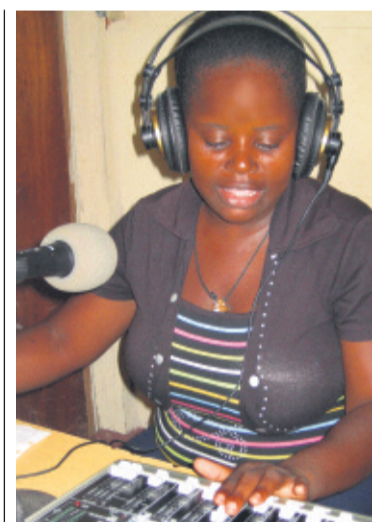


PHOTO: DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

she was heartened to find a group of teenage girls outside the studio, waiting for her to come out and start a workshop with them.

For these young women, as for Sherlyne, radio and community go hand in hand.

online? visit globeandmail.com/haitioneyearlater.

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So·cial Jus·tice \ expression of hope \ today, this woman has enough food to feed her family

Development and Peace

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