



## Letter from Haiti

by Susana Perez Diaz, Communication Officer, ECHO

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One of our partners, Solidarités, contacted us yesterday to say they had discovered a neighbourhood that hadn't received aid so far. We left for the Peguyville district to look at the situation and see what we could do.

In Port-au-Prince, we found open areas, clear of rubble, where people had assembled. There were a few tents and some plastic sheeting. Churches had distributed some material to members of their congregations, but in minimal quantities. It was clear that the people had been left to fend for themselves since the quake.

We visited the neighbourhoods of Bristout and Bobin, where we met Orival Auréelus, from the neighbourhood committee. He estimated that around 20,000 people were assembled there. From what we could see, food was available from street merchants who had set up stalls. But drinking water was a major problem. There were only two water points for all these people and it was unfit for drinking; it could only be used for washing. Before the quake, people relied on trucks to supply drinkable water, but these had not been seen since 19 January. Left to their own devices the main concern was that, out of desperation, people would begin drinking from the water points.

Solidarités offered to install a water tank on a raised area they had already identified. Together with Orival, they arranged members of the community to help set it up. The next step would be to organise and manage sewage and waste. The remarkable resilience and organisational capacity of the Haitians deserves respect. Everywhere, makeshift shelters have sprung for use as dormitories, with material from demolished houses used to level the ground.



In some places the street was so crowded with shelters and tarpaulins that the passage was blocked, and we had to weave in and out to move forward.

The neighbourhood committee began work immediately after the quake and had already carried out a census of the people on site. Everything was in place: they were ready to react and coordinate once the aid began arriving at their location.

**For more information:** [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm)

**Contacts:**

Santo Domingo ECHO's Office, Daniel Ureña (Spanish, French, English)

Mobile : +1 829 807 51 84 – santodomingo@echodom.net

Expert ECHO, Vicente Raimundo (Spanish, French & English)

Mobile: +1-809-910 05 46 - Satellite : 881-631-451-262

ECHO's Information responsible, Susana Perez Diaz (French, English, Spanish)

Mobile : +509 3 491 8683