

Camp Visit Report – May 31, 2010

Last week I visited a small camp on Rue Perchotte in an area in Delmas 75 called Puit Blain. MCC is aware of this camp because we have an employee that lives in the neighborhood, but the approximately 70 families living in this community have not received aid from anyone else. They have had to purchase the NGO tarps that they are living under on the black market. Large, sturdy tarps – the kind that NGOs have been



IDP Camp on Rue Perchotte in Puit Blain, Delmas 75

distributing in preparation of the rainy season - sell for 1,500 gourdes, almost \$40.00 US, apiece.

Maranatha Medna, a young single mother of a 3-year old son that lost her home and small business in the earthquake, says that she and several friends responded to a government call to register as victims. They went downtown and put their names on a list, assuming that someone would contact them with assistance, but no one ever did. “We had hope,” she says.

Marie-Carole Bellande is in her 60s. She lost her home in the earthquake – “kraze nèt (totally destroyed).” It took her ten years to build her home and although she is still running the small commerce she had before the earthquake, at this rate it will take her at least another ten years to build



Maranatha Medna and her son, Isaiah, in front of their temporary home

it again. It’s been four months since the earthquake and she has still not had the means to start clearing away the rubble. Marie-Carole has two teenage girls and with no place to live, she worries about not being able to protect them at night.

When asked about the cessation of direct food aid, she replies, “God created food before he created us. We need food to survive, but food is not everything. I can’t build a house with food. I need a place to sleep.” She adds that necessity prompted the food aid that they have received,

but that Haitians would be more satisfied with having the means to buy food for themselves.

Other members of the Puit Blain community agree. They want jobs. Coeury Sonel, 37, is a mason but has been unable to find work since the earthquake. He hopes that when reconstruction officially begins he

will have plenty of work, but in the meantime he, his wife and their five children (ages 12, 9, 6, 3 and 18 months) are living under scraps of corrugated tin and a tarp. He says that life wasn't easy before the



Coeury Sonel and his son in front of their temporary home

earthquake, but now his family is "not living." "We are in the mud, exposed to the sun and the rain." He says he doesn't dare to hope that he'll ever be able to rebuild his home.

It has rained hard every day this week, and for several days, it has rained all day long. When Maranatha shows me the inside of the makeshift shelter where she and her family are living, I can see the indentations

in the dirt made by water running through when it rains. I ask her about privacy and

she says that this is a problem. She and the other women in the camp have to seek out private spaces to bathe. Shady places where they can hang out during the day to escape the heat that gets trapped in their shelters are also limited.

No one in the immediate vicinity of the camp owns a water reservoir, so they buy and haul 5-gallon buckets of water for 5 gourdes apiece (about 12 cents). 5 gallons of drinking water costs almost \$1.00.

Most Haitians put their life's savings into building their homes and in Puit Blain, most of those homes are destroyed. None of the people I spoke to are formally employed. As is the case for most Haitians, they sell items in small quantities or do odd jobs, scraping by however they can.

Because many members of this community owned their own homes before the earthquake, they are not as vulnerable as many other displaced people in Port-Au-Prince. They are still living among their neighbors in a community structure that provides a higher level of safety and accountability.

Nevertheless, the challenges that face them are overwhelming. With the world's aid and attention slowly dwindling, it seems hard to imagine that the situation will improve anytime soon.

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