

Washington, D.C., Jan. 19, 2010

Jesuit Refugee Service establishes centers to coordinate relief efforts in Haiti

(Washington, D.C.) Jan. 19, 2010 – Jesuit Refugee Service in the Dominican Republic – working in coordination with JRS Haiti and other Jesuit relief efforts there – has established three centers in the Dominican Republic to coordinate the transfer of food, medicine and other emergency supplies to the people of Haiti.

The three operations centers are located in Santo Domingo, at the JRS Bono Center; Jimani, on the southern border between the DR and Haiti, the main port of entry because of its proximity to Port-au-Prince; and Puerto Tabar Principe, at the premises of the Jesuit novitiate there.

Fr. Mario Serrano, S.J., is helping to organize and process the supplies from the Dominican Republic into Haiti; he has made several trips into Haiti to assess needs there.

“We’re still in the process of responding to the emergency, offering a supportive presence, food and medicine. Little by little we are building the most effective methods for supplying timely and beneficial aid to the people,” said Fr. Serrano.

The supportive presence mentioned by Fr. Serrano embodies the concept of accompaniment, one of the core missions of JRS. “Our close and direct contact with people, our presence with them ... allows us to understand their real needs,” says Fr. Bernard Arputhasamy, S.J., Regional Director of Jesuit Refugee Service – Asia Pacific.

JRS has established several sites throughout the hardest hit areas of Haiti. Some of these, and the partners JRS is working with, are indicated on this map. <http://bit.ly/86cUp7>

“Emergency needs are many,” added Fr. Serrano. “We need bathrooms, tents and vehicles to transport the aid. In the long term we must think of where to concentrate our efforts. This should be education – we must help all the children of Haiti have good schools with good teachers,” said Fr. Serrano.

Education has long been a priority for Jesuit Refugee Service. Speaking on the occasion International Human Rights Day in 2008, JRS International Director Fr. Peter Balleis, S.J., said “Given educational opportunities, (children) have the potential to rebuild their lives, to help rebuild their communities and thus to strengthen and stabilize their countries for generations to come.”

After a series of natural disasters over the past 15 months, Haiti is entitled to some stabilization, and the children of Haiti deserve a future filled with hope and opportunity.

To support JRS/USA’s humanitarian response to the emergency needs of the Haitian people: http://www.jrsusa.org/support_donate.php

An index of stories about the earthquake in Haiti and the JRS response: <http://www.jrsusa.org/haiti/>