

From: [Rights Action](#)

Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2008 7:36 PM

Subject: HAITI - 1,000 Dead; 1,000,000 Homeless - Emergency Funding Appeal

September 10, 2008

HAITI DISASTER – Update #4

Due to the string of Tropical Storms and Hurricanes to batter Haiti – Kay, Gustav, Hanna, Ike -- , over 1,000 Haitians are dead, 1,000,000 are homeless.

BELOW:

- A funding appeal to support the emergency relief work of Konpay, a Haitian community development and environmental organization Rights Action has supported since the death and devastation of Hurricane Jean in 2004;

- An edited summary of a Democracy Now interview with Dr. Paul Farmer. (To listen to it: <http://www.democracynow.org/>, [September 10, 2008](#)) Just back from Gonaives (Haiti), Paul Farmer wrote:

“After 25 years spent working in Haiti, I can honestly say that I have never seen anything as painful as what I just witnessed. It’s really adding insult to injury. Haitians were already hungry and living on the edge, and sometimes dying on the edge, before these four storms hit.”

“. . . When impure water is the only thing people have to drink, they’re going to drink it. And that’s going cause dysentery. You know, even that’s how cholera outbreaks occur, is because of, you know, fecal oral contamination. The water is contaminated by human and animal waste.”

Rights Action has sent an initial \$3,000 and we aim to raise \$30,000. Please re-distribute this info far ‘n’ wide. **TO DONATE:** See below.

Thank-you. Grahame Russell (and Annie Bird), Rights Action co-directors. 1-860-352-2448 / info@rightsaction.org / www.rightsaction.org

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KONPAY’S EMERGENCY WORK PLAN

GUSTAV -- Over the last three weeks, major storms have hit Haiti in quick succession. The first storm, Hurricane Gustav, made ground in the Jacmel area as a category 2. Plantain fields were flattened, garden plots flooded, and many homes were destroyed. The official report for our immediate region (Jacmel and its environs) is: 34 dead, 1 disappearance, 17 wounded, 8975 damaged homes out of which 2697 destroyed, with 978 families in temporary shelter.

HANNA -- The second major storm was Hanna, which hovered over Haiti for more than twenty-four hours. Flood surge of sixteen feet was reported in Gonaives, and rain created flooding and mudslides in already saturated areas.

IKE -- The third storm, Hurricane Ike, passed mainly to the north of Haiti, sparing the country in terms of its reported 135 mile per hour winds. However, Ike dropped enough rain on the northern part of the country to force the Haitian government to open a dam and flood the critical rice-producing Artibonite Valley region.

KONPAY's emergency hurricane response will focus on the Jacmel area, the first hit. Our major concerns are avoiding major loss of life due to starvation or water-borne disease, rebuilding homes, replanting fields and garden plots, repairing schools and assisting families with tuition costs.

1- FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN CYVADIER AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES: KONPAY staff Joe Duplan and Guyson Catalis are supplying emergency food to families in the area. They have traveled on mountain bike through ravines and where the roads are washed out to purchase corn from farmers who have remaining stocks or whose fields were not destroyed, and then the corn is ground into cornmeal for distribution. Funds will be used to buy gas for our 4x4's once the roads are more passable, to purchase local corn and beans, to grind the corn into cornmeal, and to supplement the rice and beans with cooking oil. We estimate spending a total of \$5-7,000 on emergency food aid.

2- CONSTRUCTION OF ROCKET STOVES FOR HOUSEHOLD USE: In the wake of the hurricane, families will be using their remaining scarce resources for cooking fuel, and in some cases to sterilize water for drinking. Our partners at the Ananda Magra Universal Relief Team have created a model stove that can be built from local materials and increases the efficiency of cooking fuel. KONPAY's Guyson Catalis will train older members of the Youth for the Development of Cyvadier (JDS) on how to construct rocket stoves, and we will build and provide stoves to 250 families in the region at an estimated cost of \$100 for each stove, for a total of \$2,500.

3- PURCHASING MOSQUITO NETS FOR THOSE MOST AFFECTED: People are living in makeshift shelters and standing waters are breeding grounds for dangerous mosquitoes. We will purchase and distribute bed nets for people in the Jacmel region. \$1,500.

4- TUITION ASSISTANCE AND REPLACEMENT OF SCHOOL MATERIALS: KONPAY will visit the local schools and find out the most pressing needs in order to open the doors for the new school year. We will purchase materials and work with local masons to repair damaged classrooms. In addition, we will distribute emergency tuition assistance to the members of JDS and any remaining funds will go to other young people and children with demonstrated

need in the region. Target funding for school repair, material replacement and tuition assistance: \$7-10,000.

5- RECONSTRUCTING GARDEN PLOTS AND PLANTAIN FIELDS FOR LOCAL FARMERS: The heavy rains continue to fall and wash away fields that were not destroyed when Gustav first made land in Jacmel. Ravines are filled with floodwaters from mountain villages north of the coastal area. Most of the farming families of Cyvadier, Meyer, Jacmel and villages to the east are facing a complete loss of harvest and in addition, most of the plantain fields were flattening by winds in excess of 90 miles per hour. The plantain crops were on the verge of harvest time, so this constitutes a major economic blow for this plantain-producing region. Goal: \$7-10,000.

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TO MAKE TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS:

1- Make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

* UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887;

* CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8.

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS:

http://www.rightsaction.org/Templates/donations_index.html

TO WIRE FUNDS, contact Grahame Russell: info@rightsaction.org.

2- Or, send your check – payable to “Haiti Konpay” – directly to::

Haiti KONPAY

7 Wall Street

Gloucester, MA 01930, USA

Please note “Hurricane Relief” on the check. Konpay USA contact: Elise Hansen, elise@konpay.org, 978-283-0068.

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(From the Democracy Now website)

HAITI STRUGGLES WITH HUMANITARIAN DISASTER IN AFTERMATH OF DEADLY STORMS

<http://www.democracynow.org/>, [September 10, 2008](#)

AMY GOODMAN: In Haiti, a humanitarian disaster is unfolding after the impoverished country was hit by four major storms and hurricanes in less than a month. As many as 1,000 people have died. An estimated one million Haitians have been left homeless. Rescue groups say they have no

access to many interior villages across the southern region or to Gonaives, Haiti's third-largest city, which has been cut off after a bridge collapsed. Much of Gonaives remains under water. At least 80 percent of the estimated 300,000 residents have been displaced or otherwise affected by the flooding. The city's population has been stranded for days without food or drinking water. Many are making do sleeping on rooftops, with their animals and furniture, waiting for the water level to drop. Throughout Haiti, bridges, roads, clinics and homes have been washed away.

Dr. Paul Farmer is the co-founder of Partners in Health, a group that provides free medical care in central Haiti. After visiting Gonaives over the weekend, he wrote an urgent appeal for aid supplies to be delivered to Haiti immediately. Dr. Farmer wrote: "After 25 years spent working in Haiti and having grown up in Florida, I can honestly say that I have never seen anything as painful as what I just witnessed in Gonaives.

Dr. Farmer is renowned in the world of global healthcare, a professor of medical anthropology at Harvard Medical School and the author of several books. He joins us now from Boston, just back from Haiti.

AMY GOODMAN: It's good to have you with us. Why don't you just describe what is happening in Gonaives and how you made it in there?

DR. PAUL FARMER: Well, the situation is perhaps most grave in Gonaives, but unfortunately, the entire country has been affected by these storms—southern Haiti, northern Haiti and even central Haiti, where we've never seen flooding before.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, can you talk, though—just describe the picture of what you saw. What are people saying inside? And where is the Haitian government in all of this?

DR. PAUL FARMER: Well, I'll take those as three different questions.

What I saw was something I had never seen before, except in that same city four years ago, when Tropical Storm Jeanne brushed the northern Haitian coast, never making landfall there, and killing 2,000 people in Gonaives. And it was the city—the downtown of the city, the central area of the city, in water, and I saw huge numbers of people in the streets, but they were all people from Gonaives. Very few—this is Friday—on Saturday, very few people from disaster relief organizations had really reached there.

As for the Haitian government, they were there. Their officials were there. And you may recall that over past few months Haiti has not had a government, because the prime minister was—lost his job because of the food insecurity issue, again, which Haitian governments have little to do with. So it was actually not until Saturday, when the new Haitian government was installed. And on that day, Saturday, we met with the new prime minister. And she spent her first day on the job working on disaster relief.

The problem is, the Haitian government and the Haitian state have been so hollowed out over the last several years that they really don't have the resources that they need. But the people in charge of responding, the doctors and disaster relief employees and the volunteers, they were there in the city doing what they could with what they had. The problem is, they just don't have anything.

And so, that leads to the third part of your question: how do the people feel? Well, you know, they're angry, and they're upset, and they're frightened. And they've lost their property. And many of them have lost family members. And they're still stranded on top of these ramshackle buildings. And in one house, for example, there were about a hundred people crowded into one single-family dwelling on top of the roof and, you know, in the dryer parts of the house. And you could see that all over the center of the city. So, again, getting food and water and medicines to the people inside that area and also to those who have been pushed further south towards places like the ones in which we work or into the center of Haiti is going to be an urgent—it is an urgent, has been urgent, and also feasible.

AMY GOODMAN: Dr. Paul Farmer, can you talk about why Haiti has been so hard hit? Is this just the force of these storms and hurricanes? In the headlines, we read about Cuba, that suffered billions of damages to their buildings, but very few people have died, about four. What specifically in Haiti now, aside from perhaps being ground zero, like deforestation?

DR. PAUL FARMER: Well, you're right to signal the difference between those two places, because I have little doubt that Cuba was harder hit by Ike than Haiti and may have been harder hit just in general by these storms. But they have a fairly well-coordinated—a very well-coordinated disaster relief system that allows them to move hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions, of people on fairly short notice into shelters. Haiti doesn't have that. So that's one area.

A second is, as you mentioned, deforestation. The force of these storms is felt principally in flash flooding that occurs because the highlands get hit and then there's no trees to protect erosion, and the rivers from the mountains swell and sweep away bridges and people and homes.

And you also have the ecological disaster that underpins the entire process. And again, the chaos and the ecological disasters are caused by humans and not the wrath of God. So, ostensibly, we could respond to them. It's going to take a long time, but in the short term, disaster relief is, of course, what people are asking for.

AMY GOODMAN: Dr. Farmer, before we talk about what exactly people need, on that issue of deforestation, I don't think many people in the United States are that familiar with how it takes place. Can you talk about the economy of this country and why people cut down trees on the mountains, on the hills?

DR. PAUL FARMER: There is a deep history of deforestation, which has to do with the slave plantations from long ago. In the mountains, the deforestation is now occurring principally because people, the poor who live in them, don't have cooking fuel. They can't, you know, cook a pot of rice without charcoal. And the charcoal comes from trees.

Now, I work in those areas and know that people understand that this is, you know, a short-term gamble. They understand, in my experience, that this is going to be bad for the prospects for their country and their own little bits of land. But, again, they've been pushed into a corner, where they have no option other than to cook with charcoal. And, you know, that's not going to slow down until there is a very aggressive attempt to provide alternative fuels to the rural poor and, at the same time, to link reforestation with some meaningful job creation and assistance, so we can lessen the poverty and food insecurity in Haiti. And that's really the basic reason why people are

cutting down trees.

AMY GOODMAN: This disaster also comes in the wake of a major food crisis.

DR. PAUL FARMER: That's right. And it's really, you know, adding insult to injury. Haitians were already hungry and living on the edge, and sometimes dying on the edge, before these four storms hit, and since, it's affected so much of the country. You mentioned over a million refugees out of maybe nine million people. It's going to make the work that we all know needs to happen to decrease poverty and to lessen food insecurity—it's going to make it all that more difficult. It may also wake up people to the gravity of the situation so that we can have the kind of assistance that we need.

I work with an organization called Partners in Health, as you mentioned, and although we're not a disaster relief organization, we've found ourselves in the position of providing emergency relief to people on the coast and in central Haiti. And we're considering this part of our short-term response, but it's going to be linked to ongoing, long-term investments in infrastructure and reforestation, which we've been doing successfully in the center of Haiti. And I think the reason we've been successful at it is because we've been creating alternatives, including alternative employment for people, so that they don't have to cut down trees, sometimes even cutting down trees for a living to sell charcoal.

AMY GOODMAN: Dr. Farmer, can you talk about water-borne diseases now, as Gonaives is under water and you point out that all of Haiti is in mass crisis now?

DR. PAUL FARMER: I think that the first wave of medical complications of these storms is already being registered. And the biggest problem will be, in addition to just thirst, dehydration, hunger, is going to be water-borne disease. And, you know, it's an obvious mechanism, I'm sure, to everybody who listens to this show, and that is that when impure water is the only thing people have to drink, they're going to drink it. And that's going to cause dysentery. You know, even that's how cholera outbreaks occur, is because of, you know, fecal oral contamination. The water is contaminated by human and animal waste.

And, you know, in Gonaives, for example, and in all these other towns on the way and in St. Marc, the water is standing in the streets. And one of the things that really struck me, in looking at this long line of people, this exodus out of the city on foot, alone, was that they were all thirsty, that they—that was what they asked us for was water.

Now, we hadn't come on that day bearing water, because we assumed that there would be a more conventional disaster relief organization having addressed this already, and that was not the case, alas. So, you know, thirst is the first thing, and then these water-borne diseases.

AMY GOODMAN: You sent out an urgent appeal. What exactly can people do?

DR. PAUL FARMER: Well, that was an appeal to my coworkers and supporters of Partners in Health. And what we're looking for are the means to obtain water, food, temporary shelter. I just spoke to one of my Haitian colleagues, and she said, "Don't forget boats." And that's for central Haiti, which is up in the hills, and so you'd think it wouldn't be flooded. But in order to move people across some of these streams and also to reach other villages that are half underwater,

you're going need boats. She mentioned also the obvious things: soap, you know, and in medical supplies.

The problem we've had is that people do want to help, and yet it's very difficult to move, for example, clothes—I don't know if I mentioned clothes—small shipments of things. You know, how would you get them from the United States to Haiti? You get them there by container by sea. It takes too long. And one needs to put these kind of things together in a single package so that you don't have a huge number of small shipments.

So we're looking for financial assistance for our disaster relief efforts. We're also trying to coordinate our efforts with the Haitian authorities in central and coastal Haiti. That's an important thing for people to keep in mind, is that there is a government human infrastructure to do this work, and coordinating with them is really critical. We're trying to update our own supporters on pih.org on what's going on every day, without putting too much pressure on our Haitian colleagues who are working so valiantly to respond to the urgent needs of those afflicted.

AMY GOODMAN: Dr. Paul Farmer, professor of medical anthropology at Harvard Medical School, cofounder of Partners in Health. The updates are on the website pih.org.

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