In Haiti, Adventists celebrate hospital, relief work one year after earthquake
Officials offer gratitude for support

13 Jan 2011, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Libna Stevens, IAD News/NAD staff/ADRA/ANN staff

Elie Henry, executive secretary of the church's Inter-American Division, thanks the world church for its support of Haiti Adventist Hospital, both since the earthquake and before. The hospital was built in 1978. At right is Theart Saint Pierre, president of the Adventist Church in Haiti. [photos: Libna Stevens]

Last year's January 12 earthquake toppled a classroom column, crushing Iney Laguerre's left leg. The teacher was rejected by five hospitals before being brought to Haiti Adventist Hospital, where he underwent surgery to
amputate his leg and two fingers.

A year later, Laguerre is back to teaching full time.

"The Lord has been good to me and I've learned that He gives us the strength and capabilities to move forward," Laguerre, one of several earthquake survivors addressing a crowd of hundreds of worshipers and church officials gathered outside the hospital, said yesterday.

Participants sang and prayed at 4:53 p.m., one year to the minute after the worst natural disaster in the nation's history, which eventually took the lives of some 300,000 people.

As Seventh-day Adventists joined their fellow countrymen in commemorative church services nationwide yesterday, this gathering outside the denomination's hospital here marked what for many has been a highlight amid struggling rescue efforts.

Built in 1978, the structure only suffered minor damage in the last year's earthquake. Operations were moved outside and 200,000 patients were treated by hospital staff and volunteers in the eight months following, hospital officials said. More than 4,000 of those were surgeries.

Nine-year-old Sebastien Lamorthe was trapped for three days in a collapsed house after last year's earthquake. His mother and grandmother died in the collapse and he lost his leg. He can now stand because of a prosthetic leg and crutches. He lives with his aunt and is undergoing rehabilitation at Haiti Adventist Hospital.

Church and hospital administrators yesterday recognized the dozens of organizations and medical teams who treated patients following the disaster.

Dr. Elie Honore, president of the Adventist Health International Services for Inter-America, thanked volunteers who flew in to work at the hospital. "We are so grateful to AHIS and Loma Linda University for their presence and their continued support, before and especially after the earthquake. We also remember all the non-government organizations who came to our aid," Dr. Honore said.

Ensuing support from additional partners has allowed hospital administrators to expand facilities, said Emilie Clotaire, an administrator. Two small facilities have already been built to serve as prosthetic rehabilitation
centers and an in-house prosthetic lab is in construction. Two new operating rooms are also being constructed, Clotaire said.

The hospital has two operating rooms, 70 beds and offers ophthalmology, orthopedic and gynecological services, said hospital medical director Dr. Yolande Simeon.

Church officials also thanked the world church for support. "We are a people of hope, and we continue to celebrate life and how God continues to preserve our lives," said Theart Saint Pierre, president of the church in Haiti, addressing the crowd.

Saint Pierre praised the work of hospital staff for helping save lives and treating the scores of wounded people who flooded the hospital after the quake.

Yesterday was the fifth day of such church-led ceremonies, which began on January 8 in the central and south regions of Port-au-Prince, where nearly 600 church members lost their lives and more than 100 churches were destroyed or damaged.

Earlier this week, a commemorative service was also held at Haitian Adventist University, where some 400 families still take shelter on campus and classes are still held in temporary buildings.

Hundreds gathered on the grounds outside Haiti Adventist Hospital in Port-au-Prince yesterday for the service marking one year since the January 12, 2010 earthquake devastated the Caribbean island nation.

"Today the entire world remembers the earthquake in Haiti," said Elie Henry, executive secretary of the church in Inter-America and a Haitian native. "The world showed solidarity for Haiti, the world cried with Haiti and demonstrated this in 2010 with their outpouring of gifts and we acknowledge that.

"We thank the Adventist World Church for their funds, the solidarity and gifts," Henry said.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has provided more than USD$4 million in aid, personnel and assets to assist Haitian survivors in the months since the earthquake. ADRA has focused on managing displaced persons camps, water purification, food, sanitation and hygiene, psychosocial support, education and semi-permanent shelters.

In Uganda, Adventist among faith leaders calling for free, fair elections

Effort part of trend toward broader church participation in Africa's political sphere

18 Jan 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

The leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uganda joined other faith representatives in the country and
heads of the European Union last week to spur "free, fair and peaceful" elections in the central African nation next month.

The event joins a string of such meetings -- with the country's Electoral Commission, presidential candidates and members of the international community -- meant to shield Uganda from an election potentially beset by fraud and followed by political unrest.

Violence in the wake of contested elections has plagued several neighboring countries in recent years.

"We don't want to see what is happening in Ivory Coast or what happened in Kenya happen here," Joshua Kitakule, secretary-general of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, told AllAfrica News.

Reports indicate a disputed presidential election in Ivory Coast may plunge the country into civil war. At least 25,000 Ivoirians have already fled to neighboring Liberia, fearing possible violence, the Associated Press reported last week.

Kenyans endured widespread violence and unrest following 2007 contested elections, crippling the country's economy and igniting ethnic tensions.

"We hope and pray that our efforts will, along with those of many others, yield peace [in Uganda]," said John Kakembo, president of the Adventist Church in Uganda.

There are some 200,000 Adventists in the nation of 33.4 million.

Kakembo said meetings with presidential candidates, which focused on safeguarding the credibility of the electoral process and media coverage of voting, among other things, were largely well received.

While "very receptive" to the council's efforts, the individuals and groups with whom they met expressed frustration over what they perceive as a fundamentally flawed electoral system, Kakembo said.

The council plans to secure meetings with the heads of Uganda's security agencies and the incumbent president next, he said. Council members have also met for a parliamentary prayer session.

Kakembo is among other church leaders in African countries seeking to achieve fairness in the electoral process. Recently, when elections scheduled on Saturday threatened to marginalize the Adventist community in Zambia, church leaders there -- including an Adventist member of parliament -- were instrumental in changing the day of the vote.

Adventists in Nigeria hope their efforts are equally successful. There, the Adventist Church is poised to take legal action unless the government agrees not to hold 2011 general elections on Saturday, Bassey Udoh, secretary of the church there, told Vangaurd News. Adventists have been shut out of elections for several election cycles, the report said.

Citing Adventist contributions to Nigerian society in the areas of education and health, Udoh said the 270,000 church members in the country are valuable citizens who "should not be disenfranchised."

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**In Brazil, Adventists move to help flood victims**

_Flooding affects Australia, too; ADRA assessing damage there after region's worst flooding in decades_

13 Jan 2011, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Seventh-day Adventists are among those providing aid after heavy rains devastated the southeast region of Brazil this month, church leaders there said.

Most affected is the hillside region north of Rio de Janeiro, where rising water and ensuing landslides uprooted homes and claimed more than 350 lives this week. Parts of the region experienced 10 inches of rain in less than 24 hours, with more forecast for this weekend, the Associated Press reported.

Adventists in the region are distributing food and personal hygiene products to help assist an estimated 100,000 people left homeless during the flooding. To support their efforts, regional church leader Montano de Barros is expected to visit the affected area.

Adventist media in Brazil is aiding flood victims by raising awareness. Those watching Adventist Media Center programming this week will hear broadcasts on how they can help flood victims through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Rio de Janeiro. An Adventist radio station in Teresópolis -- among the most affected towns in the region -- is regularly encouraging listeners to offer their financial support and donate blood to help victims.

The nearby Petropolis Adventist Academy did not incur damage during the flood and no deaths in the Adventist community due to flooding have been reported, church leaders said.

As the search continues for missing people in the coming days, the death toll may rise, officials said.

Meanwhile, in eastern Australia, ADRA is working in partnership with Queensland government to provide aid in the wake of the region's worst flooding in decades.

Adventist-run health food company, Sanitarium, is supplying food for distribution to thousands displaced by the floods, church officials in Australia reported.

This week, Adventist administrative offices threatened by floodwaters in Brisbane were evacuated, church leaders said.

While most residents have been safely evacuated to community centers, "the extent of property damage and personal loss is still unknown," said Chris Olafson, ADRA Australia's Emergency Management director.

"This disaster will require a long-term community response," Olafson said.

-- Aleksandra Marek/Record staff contributed to this report
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