B'nai B'rith Europe supports programme for Haiti

B'nai B'rith Europe will fund project to assist displaced Haitians

B’nai B’rith Europe has decided to allocate the funds it raised for Haitian earthquake relief to a humanitarian aid project presented by IsraAID – the Israel Forum for International Humanitarian Aid. IsraAID – a consortium of international Jewish organizations, including B'nai B'rith, and Israeli humanitarian organizations - has fielded a number of teams in Haiti since the January 12th earthquake and has a continuous presence there since then....

The first IsraAID group – an emergency medical team - commenced activity only four days after the tremor struck and treated over 2,000 people. These teams – which have included members of IsraAID member organizations F.I.R.S.T. (Fast Israel Rescue and Search Teams), Tevel b’Tzedek, Alyn Hospital, Herzog Hospital and NISPED (Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Security) – have provided crucial emergency relief, social services and medical treatment to the earthquake-stricken city of Port-au-Prince.

The teams undertook a wide range of programs including: opening and operating schools, post-trauma centers, counseling services and community centers in refugee camps in the major refugee camps in Port-au-Prince that served thousands of displaced persons, primarily children. These activities – funded in part by B'nai B'rith International and with the active participation of the B'nai B'rith World Center in Jerusalem - were undertaken in conjunction with international aid agencies, the UN and local governments.

The B’nai B’rith Europe-funded project will be implemented by Tevel b'Tzedek and will focus the city of Leogane, which lies about an hour westwards of the capital. Leogane, which has approximately 200,000 inhabitants, was close to the epicenter of the earthquake. 90% of the buildings in Leogane were damaged by the quake, and 30,000 people were killed—a substantially higher ratio of fatalities than in Port--Prince.

Before the earthquake, Leogane boasted a hospital, a nursing school and a prestigious private Catholic school. None of these institutions’ survived the earthquake intact. Leogane was completely neglected during the initial stages of rescue and restoration aid except for those organizations that were already active there. At present, six months after the disaster, only a small number of international organizations are working in the city. The Tevel b'Tzedek team will be working in a number of refugee camps in and around where to create models of intervention in one camp and expand the activities to the other camps in the region. The camp where the program will begin is constructed of plastic tarps stretched across bamboo frames--located on a windy hill about 8 kilometers from the town center.

The primary goal of the IsraAID/Tevel b’Tzekek social development program in Haiti is to contribute substantially to the rehabilitation of the affected community after the earthquake, as well as to engage in essential development work with Haitians who may have been impoverished and marginalized even before the earthquake struck. A secondary goal is to provide an avenue for Jews from around the globe to participate in social action activities / Tikkun Olam in Haiti within a rich Jewish context where Israel is a key part of that context and with a dimension of Jewish learning and community.

The methodology involves the synergetic use of the following resources:

a) Volunteers in their 20’s, who come with experience in working with youth and community.

b) Older volunteers with specific fields of expertise, such as education, public health, etc.

c) Experts with previous experience in the developing world,

d) Haitian staff, both those with specific expertise and translators/interpreters,

e) Cooperation with local and international organizations,

f) Judicious use of financial and other resources, often in cooperation with other organizations, in order to leverage crucial programs (microfinance, health, education, etc).

Community Center:

Based on our extensive successful program in the Petionville camp in Port-au-Prince, a community center will be put in place within the encampment (currently there are only small family tents). Two community tents will be used for meetings, adult education, youth, child and preschool informal education and the following services will be offered, carried through until the end of 2011:

a) Post Trauma

b) Community Empowerment and Organization

c) Micro Finance and Medical

d) Youth group Formal education.

e) Women’s empowerment

We once again want to thank our generous donors for their support enabling us to send substantial help to Haiti on behalf of B’nai B’rith Europe.