

Q & A regarding relief efforts to Earthquake victims in Haiti...

Dear Justice Worker,

You may find the following transcript of a "call-in" to Catholic Relief Services' Director of Emergency Operations Bill Canny helpful. These may be the same questions you are being asked, particularly about how to volunteer, donate, or locate someone.

Thank you for all you are doing on behalf of Haiti.

Tom Garlitz, Director
Diocese of Joliet Peace and Social Justice Office

washingtonpost.com:

Bill Canny, director of emergency preparedness at [Catholic Relief Services](#), and formerly head of ground operations in Haiti, was online **Wednesday, Jan. 13, at 9:30 a.m. ET** to discuss global response to the tragedy and how people can help.

A transcript follows.

Bill Canny: Hi, this is Bill Canny, director of emergency operations for Catholic Relief Services. We're one of America's largest relief and development organizations, working in 100 countries overseas on behalf of the U.S. Catholic community. We've been in Haiti for more than 55 years and immediately began responding to this earthquake. We're moving additional emergency staff in as quickly as possible, as we know it's chaos in Port au Prince and help is needed immediately. I'm open to questions.

Austin, Texas: Bill, is the Catholic Relief Agency/Services providing any direct assistance to Haiti?

Bill Canny: We have a large development program in Haiti -- food assistance, shelter assistance, HIV/AIDS work and health. We also do emergency response -- as started last night.

Virginia Beach, Va.: My parish, St. Nicholas, is twinned with St. Anne's in Maissade, Haiti. Do you know how the areas outside of the capital have fared?

Bill Canny: We know that Les Cayes is fine. We don't think there is extensive damage outside Port au Prince but are assessing now. Aftershocks also need to be considered. We're saying some prayers.

Gaithersburg, Md.: Whom could someone contact to volunteer to go to Haiti and help?

Bill Canny: For people on the ground, it's often best if experience personnel respond. Interested volunteers can also be helpful and can contact Hands-On Disaster Response (HODR). Try their Web site. thanks for your help

Woodbridge, Va.: I am looking for a teenager named Megan that is on a Peace Corp mission where the earthquake hit. She was staying with nuns. Is there any way to get information about these girls?

Bill Canny: The state department has a number people can call to try to locate people. I don't have the number but perhaps you can do a Web search? We'll be thinking of her. The Red Cross may also be setting up a search system.

Fort Lauderdale, Fla.: Do you have any news about the airport being open? How can we find out the best information so that we can deliver aid?

Bill Canny: We know that the airport is closed today. The best way to deliver aid is to send cash to organizations already present in the country, like Catholic Relief Services. We will be purchasing supplies in the Dominican Republic today and shipping them immediately to Haiti. We also have pre-positioned stocks in Miami that we are coordinating delivery for. You can donate at www.crs.org/donate/if you're interested.

washingtonpost.com: Here is the State Dept's [web site](#). The number to locate a missing person is 1-888-407-4747. To help with relief efforts, text "HAITI" to "90999" and \$10 will be given automatically to the Red Cross, charged to your cell phone bill.

Las Vegas: Mr. Canny: Thank you for answering questions during these trying times:

1) How does Haiti's public infrastructure compare against that of the US, and how does it impact execution of relief efforts?

2) How has the economy impacted your resources and operational capability to deal with such crises?

Bill Canny: The road structure is very poor, including in Port au Prince. The building structures are extremely weak and many buildings have fallen. There is really no comparison of the infrastructure -- it's quite poor. We have had a downturn in private donations in 2009 -- a very direct, clear impact of the financial crisis on our agency. That said, we are doing everything we can to respond to this emergency, and as donations come in we'll be able to do even more. You can donate at www.crs.org/donate or by calling 1-888-HELP-CRS if interested.

Washington, DC: Good Morning Mr. Canny,

I do not have much money to give towards Haiti, but I do have some good used summer clothes (adult size and child size), sheets, towels and a blanket to donate. (1) Can I donate it? and (2) Where can I donate them in the DC area?

Thanks Kim C.

Bill Canny: First of all, it's great that you're interested in helping. Thanks. Donations of clothes can sometimes be difficult to handle because of the shipping costs required. You can check newspapers and radios in the DC area to see if they are accepting donations.

Oak Park, Mich.: Which is the saint of victims, and will the church send nuns and priests to assist in the burials and counseling?

Bill Canny: Haiti is a predominantly Catholic country, with 70% being Catholic. There are many nuns and priests in communities across the country. We are hoping that deaths will be minimal, but the destruction was severe and reports of those dead and missing are rising. We will continue to be saying prayers and know that the local Catholic community will be reaching out as much as possible during these difficult times.

Arlington, Va.: With many buildings destroyed, it is going to take a massive amount of work and months, if not years to rebuild to the prior level (much less more). What can be done to rebuild buildings?

Bill Canny: Most importantly initially is setting up transitional shelter for people who have lost their homes. We will start this immediately. Reconstruction will be a longer process and will take some time based on our experience in Gonaives in 2008. Extensive international funding support will be required.

Washington, DC: What is the best way to donate monetary aid that will actually get to the people impacted by this disaster and not into the hands of corrupt Haitian officials and their cronies?

Bill Canny: Again, it's most efficient to donate money to organizations already on the ground like CRS.

Reston, Va.: Clearly the immediate needs of search and rescue, healthcare, and food and water, will take precedence in the days and weeks to come. What are the best ways to help meet these needs? Then, how can people help fill long-term needs, such as rebuilding, rehabilitation, and psychological care, once the initial media frenzy ebbs? Haiti was beset by myriad challenges before this disaster hit, so there need to be long-term approaches to empower local people to rebuild their communities with assistance from outside countries.

Bill Canny: This is all correct. CRS has been working in Haiti for more than 50 years to help build local capacity. It will be national staff who will lead our response. Our work with communities will certainly focus on rebuilding, seeking their feedback in how this is best done.

Arlington, Va.: While the Capital has more people, many Haitians live outside the Capital city. Any idea of how the quake impacted the rural and small towns in other parts of the country? I have been to Anse-a-pitre (on the border with the DR).

Bill Canny: It seems like most of the damage is in the capital. We're still assessing outside areas.

Gainesville, Va.: Can someone organize all able-bodied men on both sides of the border to build quickly a route to Port-Au-Prince to allow the trucks in? Can we get the telecommunication companies to get charged batteries to the people so that each person can report where the trapped are? Can someone set up a command center to allow the people around the world to submit ideas, money, etc.? Can someone organize the I-reports coming in and label them on a map so we can connect the dots and find out where the trapped are? Can we set up rolling food trucks and medical trucks? Is there a place where I can keep submitting ideas and interact with emergency personnel?

We first have to address the wounded and dead. We then need to put those healthy to work so that they are not standing around but helping to get the aid in and rebuild. We need grief counselors, priests to be organized. We need places where people can go check

in and report they are alive and get in touch with family abroad. Those families need to get the word out of what is needed.

What is the weather going to be like in the next few days?

Bill Canny: All of what you said points to a need for close emergency/disaster coordination. The UN and international aid agencies regularly coordinate when disasters hit, and that process has already started. In terms of weather, at this time of year it's normally a bit cool and generally clear, which is what we'll hope for.

Philadelphia, Pa.: Where can people with no special medical skills volunteer? What non-medical assistance do you need?

Bill Canny: Try HODR, noting in another response. Thanks for your interest

Saint Petersburg, FL: Bill - I suggest you make it clear to your readers that the State Department "888" number for missing persons is only to try to locate American citizens in Haiti, and not Haitian or third-country nationals. I've worked in the room that gets those calls, and that's important.

Bill Canny: That's good feedback. Thanks for sharing

Washington, D.C.: Please stress that people should not start collecting clothes or food to send to Haiti. Sorting through, shipping, and distributing these things is absurdly expensive, and goods donated are often wasted. Collect stuff and give it to local charities; collect money and support charitable groups that are responding.

Bill Canny: Your points below are strong ones. The most efficient aid is provided by assessing needs, purchasing specific needed supplies, and then getting them into the country as quickly as possible. Pre-positioned emergency supplies also speed this process. That said, people wanting to help should be encouraged to help. Cash donations are typically most effective -- our donation number is 877-HELP-CRS -- but we want to encourage the spirit of giving in whatever way people can and feel best doing. It's a great idea to give collected clothes and donations to local charities where they can be distributed more quickly and efficiently.

Baltimore, MD: Bill,

What about the cruise ships in the area? I have sister that is out there but do not know how to get in contact with her. Are the commercial cruise lines in contact with authorities?

Bill Canny: I'm sorry I don't have information regarding this. Perhaps you can contact her cruise line directly? The main impact, though, will be on land.

Bill Canny: Thank you all for your interest in this emergency. We will be coordinating with other key agencies and doing whatever we can to respond as quickly and broadly as possible. For more information, visit www.crs.org. Best wishes, Bill