

A new beginning for Haiti – by Peter Hesse – 27 January, 2010

from the Peter-Hesse-Foundation, working for deprived children in Haiti since 1983.

During the first 2 weeks after the devastating earthquake in Haiti, saving lives and emergency help had absolute priority. Now funds for rescue and basic needs like water, food, shelter and medical care have been collected and help is – hopefully – starting to reach the deprived people. Starting from scratch to rebuild Haiti is now the concern not only of Haitians, but also of the woken-up global community.

This provides hope for the country and especially for its children.

For a sustainable development in Haiti, giving children a chance to learn through good quality early care and education is also a basic need, a basic human right. We are engaged in early childhood development in Haiti since the creation of our Peter-Hesse-Foundation in 1983 through the training of over 800 Montessori pre-school teachers and helping to open over 50 Montessori pre-schools for deprived children – together with local initiatives – all over Haiti.

The earthquake has completely destroyed our teacher-training center in Port-au-Prince and most of our project pre-schools in the capital area as well as in Leogane. Our trainers and many of the teachers have, however, survived. We thank God for this miracle! There is still no information on the teachers and children in some of our projects in other affected areas.

We have, however, already started to assemble those teachers and our trainers in one of our larger country schools (in Liancourt) to start preparing the teachers who have lost their schools for a new beginning where it will be most urgently needed – like in some of the tent-cities around Port-au-Prince. New school-projects will start as soon as we get a clear picture on the situation.

Our Montessori directress Carol Guy-James Barratt from Trinidad is waiting to get permission to fly from Trinidad to Haiti. Up to now, rescue workers as well as medical- and security-personnel and media have priority.

A TV-team around one of our foundation's board members and I already have tickets to fly to Haiti from Germany on 20 February 2010. The trip and a TV-film on the possibilities of a new beginning is fully sponsored by the team itself.

We have a clear vision of the future of our Haiti-work for deprived children:

1. To expand our Montessori pre-school network in Haiti according to parents' demands.
2. To start training Montessori primary teachers and expand into the primary sector, since there is already a great parental demand for this extension. We simply need more money to move from this vision to action.

Preferably this extension should be in harmony with a new child-centered educational concept of Haiti's future government. Montessori should influence the national educational system. This would be a model for the whole developing world. The entire formal system having collapsed with the earthquake, there is a unique chance now to leap ahead in educational quality for the good of Haiti's children and the sustainable development of Haiti.

We can only pursue this wider vision with more financial help. Our foundation is simply too small to handle this task alone. We are now looking for a solution to collect funds from outside Germany for this new beginning in Haiti which allows tax-deductible donations. I am deeply grateful for the moral support of our Haiti-work from the USA and Great Britain.

Peter Hesse – www.solidarity.org – 27 January, 2010