

Contextual Overview:

Jan. 12, 2010, started as a normal day. A 7.0 tremor struck the Port-au-Prince area at about 4:55 pm. According to the government of Haiti, 316,000 died, 300,000 were injured, and over 1.3 million displaced. 285,000 structures, especially government buildings, received damage beyond use/repair. Several government officials perished. The Archbishop of Port-au-Prince was among the victims as he worked in his office that afternoon.

Click on this link for a map:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hispaniola_\(orthographic_projection\).svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hispaniola_(orthographic_projection).svg)

Figures for fatalities are subject to political considerations—the UN put it around 222,000, while others go as low as the 100,000 mark. **By all measures a major catastrophe.**

Observations:

Haitians are proverbially hospitable—immediately sharing openhandedly as occasion demands. Canada responded liberally at the federal, the provincial and the municipal level. Canadian Churches and NGO's did the same, as did the global community.

CVX-CLC World reminded us that “**prayer, community, SERVICE**” are at the heart of CLC. **A major catastrophe** in the heart of the Caribbean, next door to North America, is a **call to ALL** in the region.

Jesuits of Haiti (French Canada Province) and Dominican Republic (Antilles Province) prayed and planned together. Thanks to the close collaboration of CLC-CVX with the Jesuits, we in Central Canada drew up

a COMMON APOSTOLIC MISSION (**CAM**) based on the Jesuit 5 year plan approved August 19,2010, at Port-au-Prince. Here is the text of CAM:

“We, the Central Region of CLC Canada, will commit ourselves to actively support the poor and disadvantaged Haitian people in their efforts to raise up and rebuild their country making every effort to collaborate with CVX, other North America CLC and the Society of Jesus, to be evaluated in an ongoing way annually.”

➤ See more details at:

<http://www.christianlifecommunity.ca/central.aspx#sthash.eDu1Wf3S.dpuf>

Haitian Jesuits strategy has recently undergone revision for 2014-2019...prioritized as shown:

Created 19 August 2010 For 2010-2015	Adopted 12 May 2014 for 2014-2019
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education (thru Fe Y Alegria – Foie et joie – Cristo Rey collaboration) 2. Accompaniment of Displaced Persons 3. Social Centre to Strengthen Civil Society 4. Spirituality Centre 5. Haitian-Dominican Respectful Relations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Education (thru Fe Y Alegria – Foie et joie – Cristo Rey collaboration) B. Challenges in Contemporary Haitian Society C. Cultural Identity D. Church’s Presence in Haitian Society E. Migration (still under study) F. Environnement & Écology (still under study)

CLC Central Canada meets Saturday, June 4 in Streetsville ON to revisit our CAM and discern together for the upcoming period until 2019.

Towards an Evaluation of CAM 2010-2015:(insertion visit 2016)

During the period, CLC-CVX Central Region has promoted **PRIORITY # 1/(A)** – Education. *Here is a sampling of our efforts:*

- Collaborated in the 4% project for primary education, resulting in the construction of new schools and
- **The right of Haitian children in the Dominican Republic to attend school** (denied until 2012) as Dominican children do
- Opened a pre-school (Centro Educativo) for illiterate children of La Cienaga favela—enabling them (**98%±~ Haitians**) to meet academic levels necessary to enter school at an age appropriate level
- Focused on education more intentionally beginning in year III, so that today 100~ children are now in regular/Fe y alegría schools. These 100 would be otherwise illiterate and maltreated



- Initiated a nutrition school lunch program for morning and afternoon session. A volunteer woman from the favela donates her time to prepare about 100 such meals per day

- An alumna of the Centro Educativo, who happens to be physically disabled, is showing much interest to work as a chaplain in technical schools

Please click on this link to get an overview of the favela called ‘La Cie’naga’ <https://youtu.be/nn5kx4X2Qxs> (The slum is practically all Haitians).

Approaches that we tried, then modified, in light of circumstances

- ❖ Cooperation within the CLC community and with others both on site and on the home front is essential, e.g., with a Belgian NGO
- ❖ Regular review to keep our focus—we wanted education for La Cienaga children but initially helped with other needs. Alas, our ‘students’ oftentimes could not meet the academic standards of the regular school system after “graduation” from Centro Educativo.
- ❖ Annual visits, by CLC-CVX, to the school are important. Dropping in to some of the homes in collaboration with the teachers / volunteers is highly appreciated. These visits are at the participants’ own expense.
- ❖ We still need to build many bridges between English and Spanish speakers...not to mention the cultural barriers between west Hispaniola (Haiti) and east Hispaniola (Dominican Republic). As Canadians we can help significantly in creating such links. {Priority # 5}

CLC-CVX Central and **PRIORITY #4/ {#D}: SPIRITUALITY**

Following the 2010 Earthquake, CVX-CLC Canada Central discovered that the Spirit is at work in so many ways in Haiti. A member of the Peres de St. Jacques had organized many young people into a pre CVX community in Port-au-Prince. Eleonore and Denis Tchuente worked closely with him to establish the community. Upon his appointment as Bishop elsewhere in Haiti, the Tchuente's got a number of Haitian Jesuits involved. The CVX community continues to grow and flourish.

A sampling of our efforts since 2011 looks like this:

- Our insertion visits are usually timed so we can celebrate together on Mar 25, World CVX Day, in Port-au-Prince.
 - CVX members with families often attend with their children...for whom there are special programs.
 - Celebrations are joyous moments, centered around the Eucharist and sharing.
 - Proceedings are in French causing our Haitian colleagues to exercise significant patience and energy as Anglo Canadians try to converse. Most communications in Haiti are in Creole.
 - Haitian CVX often express their heartfelt appreciation of our participation and accompaniment.
- Leanne Salel (Calgary) and Gilles Michaud (PEI) led a CVX retreat at a retreat house outside Port-au-Prince in 2013. It was well attended. Participants rated the experience very favorably.
- CVX Haiti has written to CVX World requesting necessary steps to become a member of the World CVX community. Our president, Leah Michaud, and husband Gilles, offer their invaluable experience of their Rome years, to aid this process.

Challenges remaining:

- ❖ Joining the world CVX community is a longer process than originally envisaged...an intermediate step can happen in 2018 with formal recognition possibly in the 2023 World Assembly.
- ❖ Additional CVX communities are in the making, in the metropolitan areas of Port-au-Prince and in the north e.g. out of the Ouanaminthe base. Their creation and sustained activities of “**prayer, community, service**” are solid hallmarks of a healthy community.

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS 2014-2019

OUR CLC-CVX CENTRAL CANADA contribution has been sustained, generous, and modest. Without collaboration with Jesuits of Hispaniola, Central Canada CLC-CVX might still be pondering a CAM.

Our continued involvement with Priority # 1 and Priority # 4 seems to harmonize well with our CAM.

In addition, about 30 Haitian boys are living on the streets of Dajabon (DR). HOGAR de Cristo {HOGAR henceforth – with a silent “H”} provides a safe, clean, refuge overnight. FR Mario SJ is the inspiration for HOGAR coming to their aid.

HOGAR was blessed on 24 December 2014. Volunteers from Central and Latin America, as well as our own Shelly Kohler of Guelph, help out as their time permits. The boys, aged 12 to 17, do not lack street smarts. Getting a safe, clean place for the night, two warm meals daily, a shower in a welcoming safe environment...does not come about through the use of street smarts. In addition, these unpaid helpers lovingly supervise games, teach basic literacy skills, and even oversee nascent painters!

30 teenage boys: think 60 meals per day –then shoes, shirts, pants, notebooks, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, coloring pens, games, etc., etc.

Anything CLC-CVX can do to impart love and acceptance is a step forward.

Conclusion:

To visit Hispaniola is an insightful experience. Despite the devastation, Haiti is rebuilding – life is returning to normal. I experienced that when my Haitian bus from Santo Domingo arrived 30 minutes early! The new Haiti. The Beatitudes are not just religious thoughts—they describe the reality of the Haitian street kids of Dajabon, and the Haitian slum children of La Cienaga—**WE** are their sisters and brothers.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Mt 5:6