

Haiti earthquake diary: Orphans and a sense of community

We visit two orphanages where the buildings are fine, but everyone is still sleeping outside. We put a human face, a child's face on this tragedy. But how long will the rest of the world care?

A Haitian orphan huddles on the ground of a tent set up by the Dutch Urban Search and Rescue team at the UN compound located in Port-au-Prince Wednesday.

Wolfgang Rattay / Reuters

Port-au-Prince, Haiti -

It's Friday, Jan. 15. I am having a bad day. Last night was particularly difficult because there are so many planes coming and going from the Port-au-Prince airport now that there is no relief from the noise. There is increased security, too - everything is very tight now. To get in and out of the airport entrance is like battling crowds at a sports match. Skip to next paragraph **Kathie Klarreich**

Kathie has lived and worked as a writer in Haiti for more than 20 years. Her memoir, "Madame Dread: A Tale of Love, Voodoo, and Civil Strife in Haiti," is about her life in Haiti with her former husband, a Haitian musician, and their son.

Still, I feel a bit guilty watching the frustration on people's faces as I move in and out like I own the place and they are stuck in line, sweating for a chance to talk to someone who might get them on a plane out. I've met a few people who were here doing service work, really important work building wells and clinics and they can't get home and can't get word to their families in the states. The lines only seem to grow longer during the day rather than thin out.

The story ABC is covering today is about an orphanage, people trying their best to make sure that kids in small orphanages receive enough food and water and are in safe conditions. We visit two different facilities - there's minimal damage but no one wants to go back inside. It's the same story being played out all over the city.

Putting a human face on the story, a kid's face, increases the appeal. But I feel discouraged. Maybe I'm just feeling cynical: the press comes in, there's this incredible international appeal for help, sensitizing people with horrific pictures and stories and photos of the damage. For a nanosecond in history, Haitians get a sense that people care, and then after a week or two, a month or two, the interests wanes. Then what? What can be done differently this time so that there is a sustainable recovery?

The kids at the orphanage are adorable. Alan, one of our security guards, shows a particularly soft side around the kids. He has nothing but business cards in his pocket and yet when he hands them one, they hold it like it is worth a million dollars. It's amazing what they are grateful for. Cliché I know, but I'm always amazed by this inverse ratio: the more you have, the more you want, the less you have, the more you make do. I'm determined, when I go home, to clear out all the toys that Kadja, my son, has stashed in his closet and give them away.

The only thing I'm feeling good about today is the sense of community. I want to remember the feeling I had the first night when I arrived. Was it really just a few days ago? Everyone was in the street, sleeping side by side. Everyone was looking out for everyone else's back.

That's the Haiti that I believe in, and have to believe will prevail.

Around 800 homes in the Los Angeles area were issued evacuation orders as the fourth storm to hit the region this week arrived Thursday, causing power outages and chaos for drivers. Heavy rain is unusual in this area.

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