

MEDIA BRIEFING: Situation in Haiti following Hurricane Matthew

NEW ROCHELLE, NY & PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI (Oct. 5, 2016) Salesian Missions has released a media briefing about the effects of Hurricane Mathew on its programs in Haiti as well as the organization's current situation in regard to emergency relief efforts.

IN REGARD TO THE RESPONSE NEEDED

Disaster experts agree that one of the biggest mistakes in the Haiti earthquake aftermath in 2010 was that too many people were sent to Haiti (and sent unprepared). Sending more adds to the number of people who need shelter, food and water. There are already organizations in Haiti, staffed by people who live there, who can assist. Only in rare occasions do additional people need to travel to Haiti.

What they need are relief supplies. The fastest way to make sure they get what they need is to donate money to organizations already working on the ground in the affected areas. Salesian Missions has missionaries, schools and programs helping the poor in cities and towns not only throughout Haiti, but also in the Dominican Republic, so this adds to its ability to coordinate response efforts.

The best thing people can do to help is to make a cash donation. Salesian Missions has launched a fundraising campaign, and donations can be made online:

<https://www.salesianmissions.org/haiti-relief/give>

Schools are closed by the government until Monday, Oct. 10. The storm is still active and the government is asking people to stay put at the current time. Therefore, assessment and recovery efforts are in stand-by mode. However, funds are actively being raised and the relief efforts are being prepared.

Funds raised will purchase the following relief supplies which have been identified as a priority by aid workers on the ground in Haiti: water, food (rice, beans, oil), sheet metal and plywood. The goal is to begin offering a hot meal to 3,000 children a day as soon as possible.

After the 2010 earthquake, Salesian Missions in New York worked in cooperation with the Rinaldi Foundation, which headed up Salesian relief and reconstruction efforts in Haiti. The experience both the Rinaldi Foundation and Salesian Missions gained from this work is invaluable at times like this. Not only are Salesian missionaries often called upon by the government to assist, their programs are trusted by locals who know it is a place to turn during emergencies. Infrastructure and logistical capabilities (such as storage warehouses, transportation and distribution channels) allow Salesian Missions to provide assistance during times like this. Additionally, partnerships are key to effectively respond to humanitarian needs

during emergencies such as this. Salesian Missions works with organizations within Haiti, in the United States, and around the globe and therefore has access to the supplies needed.

UPDATE ON SALESIAN MISSIONS PROGRAMS IN HAITI

Phones lines are down, but Salesian Missions has been in contact with missionaries and staff members in Haiti via email.

They have provided photos of the damage to offices, schools and churches affected by the Hurricane. Roofs have been lost and buildings are flooded. An agriculture program has suffered the loss of its crops and animals (including cows and goats).

SALESIAN PROGRAMS IN HAITI

- Salesian missionaries arrived in Haiti in 1935 upon request from the Haitian government to run a professional school.
- There are more than 200 Salesian-run schools in Haiti.
- Today, Salesian programs reach more than 25,000 children and youth.
- Salesian programs are located throughout Haiti, including Port-au-Prince, Fort- Liberté, Cap-Haïtien, Les Cays and Grassier.
- Salesian missionaries operate 10 main centers across the country, each of which has a number of primary and secondary schools, vocational training centers and other programs for street children and youth in need.
- Programs are focused on assisting the poorest and most vulnerable children (and their families) in countrysides, cities and slums. These include feeding programs and vocational and technical education to prepare youth for the workforce.
- Nutritional meals are a key element of the schools, ensuring children not only attend school but also are able to have the energy and focus to learn.
- OPEPB, a Salesian development project committed to working for the improved social welfare of marginalized youth, serves more than 18,000 poor youth living in the slums of the Northern Bay of Port-Au-Prince each year. The program currently has 200 students enrolled in the business technology program and approximately 2,400 students enrolled in the three vocational schools. The placement rate for Salesian vocational schools is well into the high 90 percent. (OPEPB stands for Little Schools of Father Bohnen—or “Oeuvre des Petites Ecoles de Père Bohnen” in French.)
- OPEPB has one the largest free cafeterias in the world feeding more than 25,000 people daily.
- Salesian-run technical and vocational training centers are operated throughout Haiti. Those in Port-au-Prince and its surrounding villages offer courses in a variety of professional fields such as catering, woodworking, agriculture and hotel management. Additional centers in Fort Liberté and Cap-Haïtien specialize in the fields of health,

agriculture, information technology, electricity and hotel management. All of these centers, as well as other Salesian-run programs in the country, focus on providing youth with the educational opportunities and social support they need to succeed.

- In 2015, more than 230 graduates of Salesian professional training schools in Fort-Liberté, Cap-Haitien, Les Cayes and Port-au-Prince.
- In 2015, nine new classrooms were built in the impoverished village of Bergeaud, located in the southwest seaport city of Les Cayes. Here, Salesian missionaries run a vocational training center for youth. The new classrooms are part of what will become a new school that will serve hundreds of students in the area.
- Currently in Les Cayes, phase one of a new elementary school is under construction. Phase two has been funded, while a [fundraising effort](#) is still underway for phase three.
- Salesian schools in Haiti fulfill an important socio-economic mission by providing poor youth a foundation for lifelong learning through education and training in skills and trades to help them escape poverty and establish a sustainable livelihood.
- Salesian Missions was instrumental in the recovery efforts in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake.

ONGOING CHALLENGES IN HAITI

- Haiti's educational system is continuing to rebuild after a January 2010 earthquake destroyed 90 percent of schools and 60 percent of hospitals, killed thousands of people and left more than 350,000 injured.
- Despite ongoing reconstruction and infrastructure improvements, Haiti remains the poorest country in the Americas and one of the poorest in the world. According to the World Bank, over half of the country's population of 10 million lives on less than \$1 per day and approximately 80 percent live on less than \$2 per day. The majority of Haitians lack adequate access to education, healthcare and nutritious food.

ABOUT SALESIAN MISSIONS

Salesian Missions is the U.S. development arm of the Salesians of Don Bosco, working to raise funds and develop programs to aid youth and families in some of the poorest places on earth. Haiti is one of more than 130 countries around the globe where Salesians work to give hope and provide opportunity to vulnerable youth through education and skills training. Learn more about where the Salesians work and the programs they provide at www.salesianmissions.org.

Salesian Missions is headquartered in New Rochelle, New York, and is part of the Don Bosco Network — a worldwide federation of Salesian NGOs. Salesian Missions works in cooperation with the Rinaldi Foundation in Haiti, which is also part of the Don Bosco Network. Both organizations have immense experience and resources in handling humanitarian emergencies. Funds raised by Salesian Missions in the United States will be distributed to the Rinaldi Foundation.