

One Year Later, Donated Money for Haiti Sits Stagnant

When a 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti on Jan. 12, 2010 the world community came to its aid. Millions of private citizens in this country and around the world reached into their household budgets and gave generously to the Haitian people who were grappling with the devastation.

We sat in front of our televisions and watched men digging for their families. We gave more. We heard doctors lament the lack of supplies. We gave more. In March, the United Nations member states and international partners met in New York and passionately pledged more than \$5 billion over the next 18 months to help Haiti recover.

Despite the billions of dollars pledged from private citizens and

TRANSAFRICA
FORUM

Nicole C. Lee



the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. Throughout Haiti, a year after we opened our hearts and wallets, the latrines are not cleaned on a regular basis and human waste spreads into the streams by the frequent rains. Now, a year later, limited water distribution continues, with little development of sustainable, municipal water-filtration systems.

it a better place to live. Each of these organizations conducted their own fundraising campaigns after the earthquake and collected millions of dollars.

With millions of dollars at our disposal do we really lack the ability to support basic sanitation and clean water? Do we lack the ability to stop a preventable, deadly water-borne disease right off our coast? What happened to all of the money?

Many of the charities on the ground have reported they are setting aside a portion of their donations (sometimes up to 70 percent) for the "reconstruction" period. It's clear from the outpouring of support many of those who donated from their own scarce family budgets believed they were giving to save lives immediately. In the face of a preventable public health emergency, like cholera, many will be surprised that more than half of their donations continue to sit in U.S. banks.

My organization has attempted for nearly a year to get the Red Cross to account for the money they collected for Haiti. In a recent meeting, I was told that 70 percent of their donations remain in "reserve" to be used for longer-term reconstruction.

Long-term development to secure transitional and permanent housing, build infrastructure outside of Port-au-Prince and promote public health campaigns are all extremely important

issues. But if the Red Cross, whose mandate and expertise lie in emergency and crises management, is not responding to continued immediate emergencies on the ground, then who is? Who is responsible for the deteriorating quality of life and preventable suf-

the thousands of NGO's on the ground accountable for the money they collected from U.S. families and families around the world? Moreover, who is pressuring the international donor nations to make good on their promises to help to Haiti?

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world governments, a serious health scare has arisen. With poor sanitation, malnutrition, little safe drinking water and no sewage systems, the over-crowded temporary housing tent communities provide an ideal breeding ground for cholera.

One independent report has conservatively estimated that there is one toilet for every 273 people in

In the face of these conditions, Haiti remains the non-governmental organization (NGO) capital of the world. Before the earthquake, there were more than 5,000 organizations on the ground in Haiti. From the International Red Cross to Save The Children to any number of church and civic organizations, Haiti is replete with people of good will who are there to make

fering faced by those most affected by the earthquake?

We have asked the House oversight Committee, to hold a hearing on large private NGOs and USAID partner organizations to ask one simple question: "What happened to all of the money?" Though significant promises of donations have been made, many communities of earthquake survivors continue to face challenges in accessing even the most basic of services. Our repeated requests to determine where the money went have fallen on deaf ears.

We need to know who is responsible for coordinating the money donated to Haiti? Who is holding

Indeed, there is very little coordination of the aid to Haiti. The Interim Commission tasked to coordinate and assure transparency of donations has been nearly silent. There is no central NGO leadership to create a coordinated effort that will assure that there is at least clean water, decent sanitation and proper housing. We all have hope for Haiti's future. And yet, Haiti's present is still at risk.

Lee is the President of TransAfrica Forum and a human rights attorney who lived and worked in Haiti.

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