



## **AVSI in Haiti: Rebirth of the Human**

**September, 2010**

### **Background and Approach**

In today's Haiti, massive attempts at quantifying the needs of the population have been made and are still ongoing. The Haiti Recovery and Development Plan produced by the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission outlines the main avenues of reconstruction that urgently need to be funded and carried out. Yet for AVSI's staff, both expatriate and local, what is more evident is the fragile human situation being lived by so many who face a future filled with uncertainty. These needs can hardly be quantified, and the response defies labeling with any price tag. More important, possibly, than what is done, is how it is done.

Starting from a context that was already scarred by deep seated poverty linked with enduring political and social instability and the highly volatile natural environment, the strength of the Haitian people has been tested time and time again. AVSI's staff has been committed to accompanying the Haitian people in their daily struggle for dignity and happiness, and for recovery of the desire for these good things when that has been lost. This requires closeness to the people and a commitment to stay with them, despite all odds. Currently, this implies great attention to the decisions of individuals and family groups to leave the camp settings and seek out more permanent shelter, and to the extent possible to ensure continuity in the relationships that have been established. It also implies attention to the most basic services (water/food, education, health), and a way of interacting with every person that affirms his/her value. Through this attention and insistence we can communicate a hope for the future and our certainty that by betting on the inherent dignity of each person something beautiful can emerge. AVSI's history and identity has shaped our attention in a particular way to women and children, and this focus continues to hold in the current context of Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

### **Method**

AVSI's method of emergency response and development always holds the person at the center of all activities and programs. Within the specific context, AVSI has highlighted the following points as important reminders of how to carry out our method:

- Close partnership with local organizations (religious orders, local associations, schools, institutions)
- Direct operation and manage of some interventions which can serve as means to know communities and realities directly and model different approaches to service delivery particularly in the area of socio-educational services (protection, nutrition, education, psychosocial support, community development)

- Explore partnership opportunities, for example with Brazilian contacts (Cit  Soleil is close to a Brazilian army barracks, there is great interest in this neighborhood. AVSI has cordial relations with some Brazilian companies)
- Implement activities not as separate projects but with an integrated vision, always keeping in mind the perspectives and roles of the community and local institutions
- Attention to beauty and order
- Attention to the range of reconstruction needs, including at the household level, needs for repair and upgrading of homes
- Coordination with government plans and initiatives, as well as other international actors.

### **Capital/ Port au Prince**

*In the capital, AVSI is focused on consolidation of activities in the two areas of Cit  Soleil and Martissant and moving into the first phase of reconstruction for the medium to long term, with a Community Development approach.*

#### Community Development

Community reintegration has emerged as a medium-long term need now that the emergency phase has concluded. As people leave the temporary camps in search of more stable living conditions, there is a need to continually reassess the geography of needs and services to be able to reach people where they are. More than ever, people need help restarting some form of livelihood and economic activity.

- AVSI has identified five service sites, based on the origins and destination of people AVSI was serving in the temporary camps:
  - 1) Soleil 21 (focal point: Ecole OBJED, AVSI implementing partner for some time)
  - 2) Ti Haiti (point of concentration: Ecole St. Alphonse, school of excellence, fully collapsed)
  - 3) Projet Drouillard (focal point: land on one side of the square of the neighborhood, "donated" by the City for AVSI)
  - 4) Site called "Cite Scolaire 2" (Fierte) site "donated" by the City for AVSI, area of 5,000 square meters, destination and multi-purpose educational center, opposite the field Fierte Place, for the people of the camp who are not ready to leave the field. Great visibility on Route Nationale, alongside MINUSTAH base.
  - 5) Croix Bleue site: land of about 600 square meters, purchased by AVSI (July 2010) for the construction of new center of psychosocial support (to replace the old building).
- The specific method is to create multi-functional service points in each neighborhood that will support people as they return to their neighborhoods and begin rebuilding through continued provision of essential services, including the following:
  - Functioning school in semi-permanent structure (at least 200 Sqm, at least 200 children) to house existing school communities. Bonus given to teachers for the first year from AVSI private funds.
  - School meals.

- Nutritional and health center in semi-permanent structure with range of services including nutritional counseling and attention to infants and mothers.
- Adequate space or tent for psychosocial support activities.
- Water distribution point.
- Waste disposal point, made with safe materials.
- Gardening site for educational activities to stimulate urban gardening.
- Eventually, site for income generating activities and related production to occur. Depending on the location this could entail a brick factory, tailoring workshop for school uniforms, farming or processing sites.

### Urban Upgrading

AVSI invited an architectural and engineering team to assess the areas where we are working, including AVSI's existing buildings and those of local partners, including area schools. The team is compiling its recommendations for how to proceed and engage the local communities in the task of rebuilding.

### **South (Torbeck Municipality, Les Cayes area)**

AVSI has been present and active in Torbeck for many years, and has been well positioned to help the communities respond to the influx of new residents following the earthquake. A largely rural district, AVSI's priority in Torbeck has traditionally been in agricultural development and food security. Since the emergency, AVSI has been received support from the World Food Program and the UN Mission in Haiti to coordinate the emergency food and nutrition response in Torbeck.

### **Financing and Long-Term Needs**

AVSI has received important support from the Italian government, Italian businesses, the World Food Program, the UN Mission in Haiti, OCHA, and many private donors from around the world. This financial support has been essential to enable AVSI to respond to immediate needs including shelter, protection, health, and nutrition. In addition, AVSI has been able to make firm a foundation for a medium to long-term response through the purchase or negotiation of land, the imminent construction of an improved educational and psychosocial support center, and school rehabilitation.

A significant remaining need is for funding to ensure that support continues for the education and psychosocial care of children in particular. AVSI has made a considerable effort to ensure that these children didn't face long gaps in their education in the aftermath of the earthquake, but the long-term education needs for children are great and the value of a supportive school community cannot be underestimated.

AVSI is committed to working with any potential partners to address the long-term needs in Haiti. For example, in September 2010, AVSI-USA facilitated a grant from a private U.S. foundation to support the entire budget of over \$12,000 for one academic year of a primary school in Cite Soliel, ensuring a quality education for 129 students and employment for a staff of 10 individuals.