

**Intervention of Dr. Michel A. Pean at the WBU North American and Caribbean branch meeting held in St. Kitts and Nevis on April 9 and 10 2010.**

Dear friends,

In lieu of introduction, I would like to thank all of you who have supported us morally after the catastrophe of January 12. I have received some letters and telephone calls that really comforted me. For instance, the letters of Mr. Larry Campbell, Mrs. Françoise Madre Lesigne (President of UFA, Blind Franco-phone Union), Dr. Penny Hartin, Mr. Carl Augusto, Mrs. Lola Marson (President of CCB) etc. The telephone calls from Mr. Arvel Grant, Frank Bowen and many others.

In particular, I thank Mr. Carl Augusto, President of WBU North American and Caribbean branch, and Mr. Arvel Grant from CCB who have given me the opportunity to be with you in order to expose the situation of Haiti after the earthquake.

January 12th was horrible for the people of Haiti specifically for people with disabilities. There were 300,000 deaths, 250,000 wounded; 1.5 million people are sleeping in the streets. The financial loss has been estimated at 7.7 billion U.S. dollars. It is more than the total revenue of the country (GNP) for 2009 which was 6.9 billion U.S. dollars.

Concerning the handicap people and their institutions or associations, I have to point out the following: all the buildings of these institutions have been destroyed at 98% for example the school of St. Vincent, the Monfort Institute, the Center for special education, the Haitian society of and for the blind, etc.

- Many lives were lost at these places.
- The handicap population has increased. For instance, we have about 5 thousand new amputees.
- The survivors are facing a lot of difficulties. They almost do not have access to the humanitarian aid because of the way it is distributed.

### **Concerning SHAA what is the real situation?**

1-The building is not functional at all

2-Some of the adapted material and archives were saved

3-About a dozen members died

4-Our rehabilitation, educational and blindness prevention programs are still alive

5-With the support of CBM and SSI, we are in the process of relocating the central office of SHAA

6-With the help of OXFAM-Quebec, Food for the Poor, CMMB and PAM, we have been able to come to the aid of 1,665 blind persons.

### **Three months after the earthquake, what are our dreams?**

#### **What is our vision?**

1-We have to find funds to execute a transitional project of 3 years.

2-We have to build our own office with Para seismic, Para cyclonic and handicap accessibility norms. According to the architect, we need for that 2 thousand square feet of land and a minimum of 5 hundred thousand U.S. dollars

3-Education of blind children is for us a great priority. During those past 10 years the percentage of schooling for blind children in Haiti has been increased from 1.7 to 4%. That is not enough. We have an ambitious project for the next 10 years to increase it from 10 to 40%. I would like to invite ICEVI, WBU and CCB/SSI to help us achieve these goals in establishing in Haiti a center of excellency and elaborating a 5 year plan for mass education of blind persons and visually impaired.

4-The international community is really involved in the reconstruction of Haiti. We are advocating in favor of an inclusive and accessible rebuilding. As I said before, at SHAA we have a great dream and I hope with this dream we will be able to transform January 12 which is a bad thing into a good thing.