

Eagles deliver water to thirsty Haitians

Feature article written by Michelle L. Oetman, Communications Coordinator for ADRA International, currently on the ground in Haiti.



At first glance they look like just four bikers flying by, then pulling to the roadside.

As their two motorbikes come to a stop, the pair on each bike quickly sets down a large yellow box and erects a table between the two bikes. A small crowd hurriedly gathers around them. As you get closer, you see why.

Truth is, these bikers are integral to providing vital clean water to communities and displaced person camps throughout earthquake ravaged Port-au-Prince.

The yellow box they carry quickly unpacks into an ingenious water purification system, called a Trekker, especially powered, amazingly, by a motorbike. The Trekkers, portable yellow briefcases filled with a pump and tubes, can serve water to 330 people in an eight-hour day.

Beginning Friday, 22 January, ADRA hired and dispersed 20 motorbike drivers around the city to areas where water is available but undrinkable. Once they're set up, they begin dispersing purified water into containers brought by those living nearby. The motorbike drivers, who've named their team "*Les Aigles*" (The Eagles) – because they're light and can fly by jammed traffic or crumbled roads -- also hand out water purification tablets during their day-long shift. In return, drivers are given food, a small salary and reimbursement for their petrol. Because of the low cost and ease of wide distribution throughout the earthquake-affected areas with poor roads, ADRA expects to grow the project to 30 trekkers.

Walix, father of four young girls, was anxious for food and eager to be part of the ADRA Eagles team. The top of his house caved in during the recent earthquake forcing him and his family to sleep on the streets. They have other scars, too. A wall of their home fell on his sister, who lives with him, one child in their home sustained injuries to her leg, and another received injuries to her head. But all have survived, which Walix thanks God for.

Ironically, Walix doesn't even have water at home for his family, yet he's committed to driving around and providing water for his fellow Haitians.

He'd never heard of ADRA before this earthquake but when asked what ADRA means to him now he said, "Do you see where ADRA is?" pointing to the bib he and his team wear. "ADRA is on my heart."

His partner at the water site, Joseph, has much of the same story. He, his wife and three small children are now living on the ground close to their completely flattened home. His family has all survived, but his brother suffered a broken arm when a wall of his home fell. He decided to be an ADRA Eagle because he had heard that "ADRA always helps the poor people. I saw people here in a difficult situation," he continued. "They have no water. They needed help!" And he enjoys being that help. "The people are so happy to get water. They say 'thank you' and 'the water tastes very good!'"



The technology for the Trekker's unique water purification systems is provided by GlobalMedic, ADRA's partner

organisation in providing water supplies throughout Port-au-Prince in response to the recent earthquake. GlobalMedic team members also trained the Eagles and scout the locations for Trekker placement each day.

Now, more than a week after the initial earthquake, Haitians are still desperate for many basic needs. Your support for Haiti does things like hiring Eagles like Joseph and Walix, who, in turn, are flying around their city providing clean drinking water to the thirsty people of Port-au-Prince. You can help make this difference. To donate to ADRA Australia's Haiti Earthquake Appeal, call 1800 242 372 or visit www.adra.org.au.



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