**Where did all the Haiti relief money go?**

**It has been over 2 years since the devastating earthquake hit Haiti, but experts say it could be at least another 10 years before the country sees any noticeable recovery.**

**Donors pledged an estimated $4.6 billion in the aftermath of the earthquake, according to the UN yet, only 43% of those relief funds have been disbursed and more than 500,000 Haitians still remain homeless.**

According to numerous politicians and representatives working in Haiti, charities spent a considerable amount of money on soaring rents, board members' needs, overpriced supplies and imported personnel.

Furthermore, only 63.6 % of the money pledged for 2010 has been disbursed, according to the U.N special envoy for Haiti. The Haiti money train tends to take two different tracks. There is the money that was raised and donated shortly after the earthquake. That money has been spent on emergency relief efforts. And then there are billions pledged by foreign nations, most of which may not now be disbursed after all, according to many officials with knowledge of the process.

"A lot of good work was done; the money clearly didn't all get squandered. A lot just wasn't responding to needs on the ground. Millions were spent on ad campaigns telling people to wash their hands. Telling them to wash their hands when there's no water or soap is a slap in the face."

- Jake Johnston, the Centre for Economic Policy Research.

Some of that good work includes removing half of the debris caused by the toppling of hundreds of buildings, creating 300,000 temporary jobs and helping more than 1,000 families return home. But as more than half a million people remain living in packed dismal tents, that are often overwhelmed with violence and disease, charities are trying to devise long-term solutions to get Haitians off the streets and into shelters.

"Although progress is not as fast as we would like, recovery is well underway. The pace of home construction has increased rapidly, with the American Red Cross and the rest of the global Red Cross network providing housing to more than 100,000 people at the two-year mark."

- Gail McGovern, president and CEO of the American Red Cross.

Oxfam is another organization looking to solve the country's infrastructure problems, not just create temporary solutions. It is working on rebuilding in inner-city neighbourhoods and rural areas outside Port-au-Prince, the organization announced on its website. While Oxfam is doing its part, the non-profit is also calling on the new administration to step up to improve the lives of suffering Haitians. "The second anniversary of the devastating earthquake must be a call to action," Oxfam's country director in Haiti, Cecilia Milan, said in a statement,

"Despite the apparent slowness of reconstruction, this remains an opportunity for Haiti's political and economic elite to address the chronic poverty and inequality that has plagued the country since [declaring its] independence."

The relief organization is also urging donors to "honour their promises to Haiti" and not let the slow progress in rebuilding turn them away. However, experts are sceptical as to how much the ravaged country can rely on philanthropists at this point.

"Quite honestly, donor funding is never going to be enough. In some areas, we are really just starting, because we wanted it to be a Haitian-led effort, not a donor-led effort. We’re criticized for not having spending the money faster, but in some ways, that is a virtue. To spend intelligently, it has to be done in partnership with the government and other donors."

- Tom Adams, the U.S. State Department's Haiti special coordinator

The amount of money raised for Haiti earthquake relief has reached a staggeringly high $1.4 billion in less than one year from the United States alone. Everyone from celebrities to regular people held telethons; bake sales and dinner parties whose proceeds went to help Haiti earthquake victims. A year later, people who opened their purse strings and wallets so generously are asking where the money went and how well was it spent. According to a survey by the Chronicle of Philanthropy of 60 major relief organizations, only 38% of that money was spent to provide recovery and rebuilding aid. By comparison, in New Orleans, about 80% of the money raised for Hurricane Katrina victims was spent.

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Carlene Dei, director of the United States Agency for International Development told reporters in a January 7 conference call that there was a “lack of understanding” about the pace at which pledges from March’s donors conference could be met, referring to the UN conference where nations pledged more than $10 billion to help Haiti rebuild itself.

“A pledge is not a check,” she said. “A pledge has to be turned into legislation. Legislation has to be turned into plans. Plans have to be vetted and approved. And money has to be made available.”

- Carleene Dei, director of the United States Agency for International Development

“Nobody can pretend that this has been a hugely successful humanitarian response. If anything, it demonstrates the limitations of humanitarian action.”

- Paul Connelly, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Organizations like the Red Cross have said that because of an ineffectual Haitian government they have had to play roles that they were ill equipped to fill. For instance, the Red Cross said that it has to provide water and sanitation to the Metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince. However, the Red Cross received more than $1 billion in donations after the earthquake, the largest response in its history.

According to Gruloons-Ackermans, four million children in Haiti still face inequitable access to water, sanitation, health care and protection from disease, including the cholera outbreak in Haiti.

On the 12 of July 2012, Stephen Lendman of Op Ed News stated the following in a news report;

* Following Haiti’s catastrophic January 12, 2010 earthquake, billions of dollars in relief aid was raised. Suffering Haitians got virtually none of it.
* Hundreds of thousands remain homeless. A cholera emergency still exists. On June 19, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent said:
* “There is a significant probability of a major cholera emergency in Haiti in the coming months but resources have been severely diminished.”
* Increased numbers of cases were reported in the Artibonite, Nord-Ouest, Nord-Est, Ouest, Gonave Island, and homeless camps in Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas. The Pan American Health Organization estimates another 170,000 new cases by end of 2012.
* Little relief came to the impoverished country. It was stolen for commercial development.
* What nature wrought, corporate developers and corrupt politicians compounded by stealing their land for profit.
* Haitians are no strangers to adversity and anguish. For over 500 years, they suffered severe oppression, slavery, despotism, colonization, reparations, embargoes, sanctions, deep poverty, starvation, unrepeatable debt, and natural calamities.
* Rarely does this news get covered. Over half a million people then remained homeless. They still do. Most debris lay where it fell. Cholera was killing thousands. It’s still out of control because too little is done to stop, control, and treat it.

**Most Haitians are *still* waiting for reconstruction to begin.**

The thousands of Haitians who took to the streets in December, waving banners and chanting the unequivocal message ‘UN, go home!’ could be accused of biting the hand that feeds them. After all, Haiti currently relies on the UN and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide 80 % of its basic services. However, the outpouring of anger, though partly in response to the cholera epidemic that brought into Haiti by UN troops from Nepal, was also a result of wider frustrations with the painfully slow relief effort and the general state of the country. For despite billions that has been pledged in aid since the 2010 earthquake, the lives of the majority of Haitians remain woefully threadbare.

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And while billions of dollars have undoubtedly managed to filter through, a lack of interaction between NGOs and locals means very little of it ends up in Haitian hands. Studies have shown that only 2.3 % of reconstruction aid went to Haitian firms. Haitians been excluded from the rebuilding of their own country.

**American Government Stealing?**

Shortly after the earthquake in Haiti, the American Government sent their army into the broken country to help with whatever they could. However, soon after it was discovered that the American Government was taking 44 cents out of every dollar donated to Haiti by American citizens to pay for the army being there in Haiti. Of the 1.14 billion dollars raised and almost sent to Haiti, $501,600,000 was located back in the pocket of the American government

When some of the native Haitians found out about this scandal and after the cholera outbreak brought into the country by an American soldier, they started rioting against the American soldiers and the UN.

In the end, most of the pledged money that was to be sent to Haiti was quite simply never given to the charities or the Haitian Government.

As of 2012, only $2.38billion of the $4.5billion pledged actually reached Haiti.