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NEWS RELEASE

SCIAF AID REACHING HAITI QUAKE SURVIVORS AS CARDINAL O'BRIEN CALLS FOR PUBLIC SUPPORT

SCIAF Haiti Earthquake Appeal: 0141 354 5555 / www.sciaf.org.uk

Cardinal O'Brien has spoken of his deep sadness following the earthquake in Haiti and urged Scots to support the SCIAF appeal to get aid to those in need.

SCIAF is working with Catholic aid coalition Caritas which is providing first aid, tents and blankets to survivors. The emergency response team of Caritas Haiti is working around the clock to provide support to people in urgent need.

Caritas staff visited badly affected areas of the capital Port-au-Prince yesterday to assess immediate requirements. At least 60 tents were distributed to families in desperate need. First aid was provided to some of the survivors in clinics and hospitals.

SCIAF, which has been working in the country since 1987, is calling for donations to help Caritas its local partners provide urgent aid on the ground. Caritas Haiti and Caritas members working in the country have available warehouses, 200 medical centres, and a strong community network of volunteers that are being used to deliver aid. Caritas Internationalis is sending a team of international staff to support the national operations in areas including food, shelter, sanitation, communications and logistics.

Cardinal O'Brien said: "The suffering taking place in Haiti is truly horrifying. I am deeply saddened by the reports of the many casualties following the devastating earthquake which has struck this already impoverished nation. The disaster has left no one untouched. The death of Archbishop Serge Miot of Port-au-Prince and reports from SCIAF that many seminarians are still trapped in collapsed buildings highlight a snapshot of the human suffering. My heart-felt sympathy and prayers go out to all the grieving families and the many millions who have had their lives torn apart.

"I would urge everyone across Scotland to support SCIAF so they can provide the urgent aid on the ground to help deliver food, clean water, shelter and other essential supplies."

On the ground in Port-au-Prince, Caritas Haiti Head of Emergencies Joseph Jonidès Villarson said: "This is the worst disaster Haiti has experienced. Many people have been killed in Port-au-Prince. Their bodies are everywhere on the streets of the capital. People are still under the debris. The hospitals are overwhelmed with the dead and injured. The risk of disease is great.

"The streets and public places are filled with people who do not know where to go. We fear violence if the situation continues. Looting has already broken out. There is very little visible presence of the police. Caritas Haiti President Bishop Pierre André Dumas has appealed on the radio for calm and solidarity. "The immediate needs are for tents for provisional shelters, covers, clothing, clean water, food, psychological support, first aid materials, drugs, flashlights and batteries. Caritas has no supplies left."

Members of the public can donate to SCIAF's Haiti Earthquake Appeal by calling 0141 354 5555, or 0800 0279 005 or online at www.sciaf.org.uk.