

# Elderly Haitians Getting by on 1 Meal a Day

## Elderly Haitians getting by on 1 meal a day, worry about next meal

By MICHELLE FAUL Associated Press Writer  
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FILE - In this Jan. 17, 2010 file photo, (AP)

Elderly Haitians camping in tents outside their collapsed nursing home are getting by on one meal a day of rice and dried beans, trying to make a supply bought by U.S. Marines last and wondering what they will do when that runs out.

They are like hundreds of thousands of other victims of Haiti's Jan. 12 earthquake, waiting desperately for aid to reach them four weeks after the world responded with unprecedented amounts of food and money — too much for aid workers and Haitians to deal with.

None of the food aid being distributed has gotten to the Asile Commune home, on the edge of Port-au-Prince's Bel Air slum.

In its last report, the United Nations said that by Tuesday it had distributed enough rice to feed 1.1 million homeless Haitians for two weeks. But 3 million need food aid.

"The Marines saved us. They came here, saw we had nothing to eat, and went out and bought the necessities — rice and soybeans — as well as charcoal to cook it," caregiver Eline Darisma Wednesday.

That was a week ago. He said the old people had only enough food left for two more days, going on one meal a day.

Still, life has got better for the 80 men and women since The Associated Press first reported on their plight Jan. 17.

Then, they were sleeping in the dirt among running rats. Now, they're on beds in tents provided by the Brazilian aid group Viva Rio.

Shortly after the quake, every one of the home's residents was begging for water and none had gotten medical care.

Some still asked for water Wednesday, but Darisma quickly got his daughter to bring small bags of potable water. He said they now get water to bathe and cook from cisterns. Venezuelan doctors have treated them so council nurses can visit daily now, Darisma said.

Still, despite visits by aid groups, long-term help has not materialized.

"I'm hungry all the time, but I can't eat this," 71-year-old Jacqueline Thermitus complained, giving a reporter a half-eaten bowl of rice and beans to taste. The rice was so undercooked it was crisp, the beans were hard. She had only two teeth in her mouth.

- "I ate some because I'm so hungry, but I have a hernia and it makes me feel very ill," she said.
- Six pensioners died in the Jan. 12 earthquake and three more perished within nine days of the quake, apparently of hunger and exhaustion. They are buried in the garden within 10 feet of some survivors.
- Two more — a man and a woman — were hospitalized this week, Darisma said. Two weeks ago, they probably would have been left to die.
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