



# BEYOND THE MOUNTAIN

nyc haitian community  
hope & healing fund  
report of the first year

February 2011

Deye mon, gen mon.

Beyond the mountains, more mountains.

— Traditional Haiti Proverb



Dear Friends,

One year ago, the roar of the earthquake that shook Haiti was heard around the world, but nowhere more loudly than in Brooklyn, New York.

Brooklyn is home to one of the largest Haitian communities in the world, contributing invaluable to the economic, cultural and social life of our borough and city. The Brooklyn Community Foundation was just three months old in January 2010, and neither our charter nor our resources permitted us to make a tangible difference in Port-Au-Prince. Helping buttress and sustain the Haitian community in our own hometown, on the other hand, was very much within our mission and capabilities. We decided that we had to act.

Our colleagues at the United Way of New York City felt as we did, and so together, we convened a group of nonprofit leaders who worked in the Haitian communities of New York City. This meeting led to the creation, less than two weeks after the earthquake, of the NYC Haitian Community Hope and Healing Fund.

We announced the Fund exactly one month after the earthquake and distributed the first \$250,000 in grants on the 100th day. My colleagues in the philanthropic world will appreciate the amount of work this entailed, and I am proud of the Brooklyn Community Foundation's staff, board leaders, volunteers and especially our Fund partners and donors for their dedication and sacrifices. These pale only in comparison to the caring, commitment and courage we have continually witnessed in the Haitian community.

This report is an attempt to tell two stories: the story of the Fund and its establishment, and the story of a community still in early stages of mounting an effective response. We hope each will inspire you to support the critical, ongoing work being accomplished through the Fund in the Haitian communities of New York City.

The Haitian proverb *Deye mon, gen mon* ("Beyond the mountain, more mountains") recognizes that with the resolution of one problem, others appear. One year after the earthquake, the Haitian community, both here and in Haiti, looks up at many mountains. But the unity, tenacity and courage we have seen through the Hope and Healing Fund gives us confidence that we can journey beyond them.

Please join us in the climb!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marilyn Gelber". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Marilyn Gelber, President



# January 12,

# 2010

The earthquake struck late on a sunny Tuesday afternoon. It lasted just 35 seconds. But it leveled Port-Au-Prince and a 50-mile area surrounding it, burying hundreds of thousands in rubble.

One week later, more than 300,000 people had died, and at least that number was seriously injured. One year later, more than a million Haitians — one in every 10 — are still homeless. Most of the nation's infrastructure still lies in ruins, and long-term recovery has only begun.

These are the still-evolving manifestations of catastrophe. In the age of the Internet, it is not difficult to view them for oneself. But it is not so easy to apprehend the less visible effects, especially for millions of Haitians living in other parts of the world.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Brooklyn and Queens alone are home to nearly 130,000 members of the Haitian diaspora, one of the world's largest Haitian communities outside Haiti itself. Here, in neighborhoods like East Flatbush and Springfield Gardens, the earthquake's initial trauma was wrenchingly visible.

Hundreds of Haitian New Yorkers, sobbing, lined up to pray in churches. Many others desperately called every phone number they knew, trying to find anyone who could attest to the survival of loved ones. So many people called Radio Soleil d'Haiti, Brooklyn's Haitian radio station, hoping it would know how to get messages into and out of the country, that the announcers begged listeners to stop.<sup>1</sup>

It was clear from the outset that this catastrophe was unlike so many others — natural, economic, political, military and civil — that have punctuated Haiti's 207-year history as the Caribbean's first independent nation. "It's very much different from anything we've ever lived through. We

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*Geographically, New York City is more than 1,500 miles away from Port-au-Prince and the earthquake's continuing impacts in Haiti. But on a different kind of map — of kinship, community, identity and culture — the city is one of the world's largest epicenters for the earthquake's post-traumatic effects.*

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had floods, we had this here, that there. But this is the largest, all different areas hit," said Elsie St. Louis-Accilien, Executive Director of Haitian-Americans United for Progress, the day after the earthquake.<sup>2</sup>

New York's Haitian community contributes invaluablely to the economic, cultural and social vitality of New York City. In recent years, it has sustained a growing middle class, fueled by higher than average employment and lower than average poverty levels, at least within Brooklyn and Queens.<sup>3</sup> It has also developed considerable political and business strength and alliances.

But as in other immigrant communities, a large number of Haitians living in New York City were vulnerable before January 12 to a broad assortment of economic, legal, health, educational and other social welfare challenges.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006-2008

<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, 1/13/2010.

## Haitians in Brooklyn Educational Attainment and Household Income by Community District

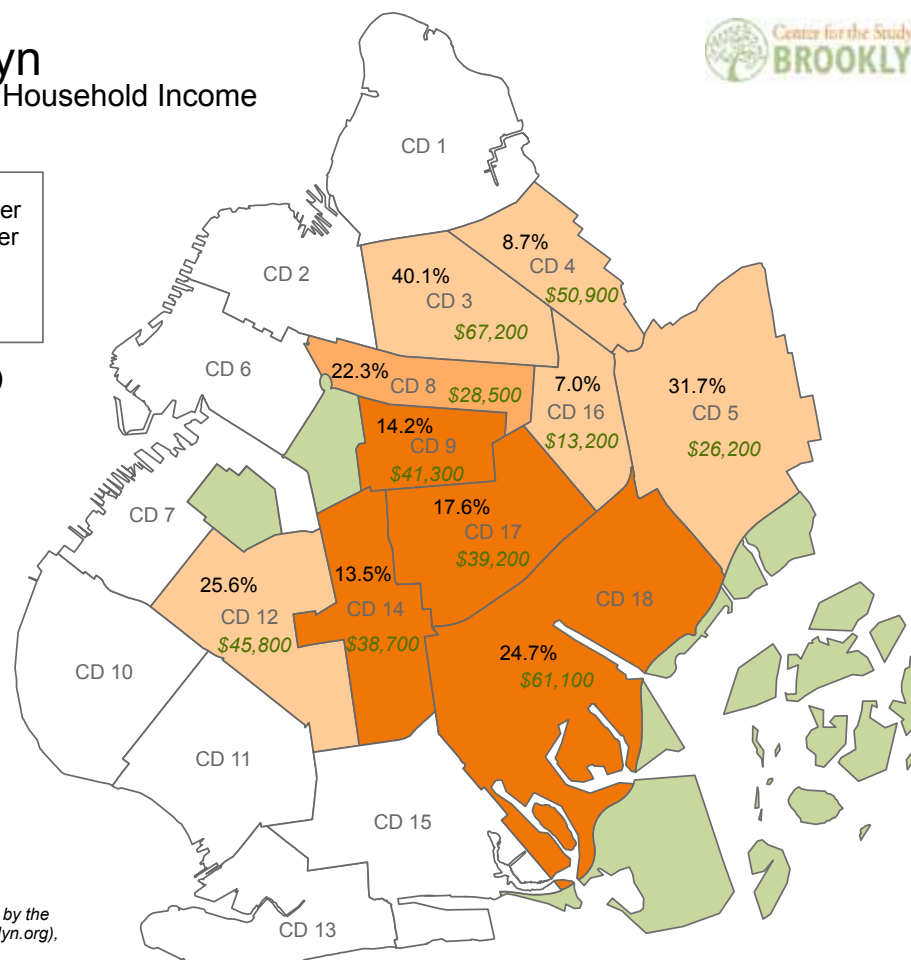


% - Percent of Haitians 25 and older with Bachelors Degree or higher  
\$ - Median Household Income (rounded to the nearest hundredth)

Haitian Pop. (Bklyn Total: 86,687)

- Under 1,000
- 1,000 - 2,499
- 2,500 - 4,999
- 5,000 - 9,999
- 10,000 or more
- Parks/ Open Space

Population for each Community District includes both those who claimed Haitian ancestry as well as those born in Haiti



Produced for the Brooklyn Community Foundation by the Center for the Study of Brooklyn (www.studybrooklyn.org), January 2010

Data Source: American Community Survey 2006-2008 3-Year Estimate, Public Use Microdata Area. While data are collected and distributed by Public Use Microdata Area, the Center has presented it by Community District for clearer interpretation; both districts in Brooklyn are nearly contiguous. To ensure statistical validity, data are provided for Community Districts where sample size is greater than 25 people or households

The map above reveals dramatic variations in income and education within Brooklyn's Haitian community, showing that a disproportionate number of members live in lower income neighborhoods. For a substantial percentage — many of them first or second generation immigrants — linguistic isolation, inadequate education and job skills, problems obtaining legal U.S. residency, and poor community health status reflect some of Brooklyn's most difficult and entrenched health and social welfare problems.

New York City's Haitian community is home to many innovative human services organizations and programs. But most of these efforts are under-resourced, and few have collaborated for sustained periods of time. While they responded immediately and heroically on January 12 and in the days and weeks that followed, the danger quickly mounted that their efforts would

be overwhelmed by the sheer amount of new need.

As many of these organizations' leaders were directly affected by the earthquake, it was unrealistic at best — and heartless at worst — to expect them to function unassisted.

Yet in the terrible days following January 12, while the world mobilized to help victims overseas, coordinated plans to help the Haitian community in New York had not yet entered the conversation.

# Mobilization

For the Brooklyn Community Foundation, the Haiti earthquake provided a clarion call to enact our fundamental mission: **Do Good Right Here**, in New York City's largest, most diverse and most populous borough.

We had launched three months earlier as Brooklyn's only community foundation, after many years of operating as a private one. Although our new programs were just beginning, it was clear that the needs resulting from the earthquake were exactly the kind to which a community foundation should respond.

Three days later, the United Way of New York City agreed to join with us in promoting the local Haitian community's recovery. The following week, on January 22, we co-convened a meeting of Haitian community leaders to ask how we could help.

This meeting led directly to the creation of the NYC Haitian Community Hope and Healing Fund:

*Hope*, because it was clear from listening to those assembled that the community's greatest enemy now was despair; and *Healing*, because that would be its greatest need, not just for several months, but for many years to come.

We later invited several prominent leaders within the Haitian community to join the Fund's Advisory Committee, working on an accelerated timetable to target its resources. Chaired by Carine Jocelyn, the Executive Director of Diaspora Community Services, and Dr. William L. Pollard, the newly named president of Medgar Evers College, the Committee quickly identified four key focus areas (below) in which the Fund could make an immediate and effective difference.

### Hope and Healing Fund Focus Areas:

#### 1. CASE MANAGEMENT

To address the desperate need for new, culturally competent services to connect individuals and families with reliable sources of immigration, family reunification and adoption, housing, financial assistance, public benefits, grief and trauma counseling, and job training services and resources.

#### 2. LEGAL SERVICES

To assist the overwhelming number of non-citizens who needed help applying for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or other permission to stay in the U.S. Many others, especially Haitians with parents or children in the U.S., were expected to arrive later, and require even more intensive legal assistance.

#### 3. HEALING

To provide access to counseling and other mental health resources to promote recovery, as well as to mount community-based events that encourage the expression of grief while reaffirming the endurance of Haitian national identity, community and culture.

#### 4. EDUCATION

To meet significant needs for English language instruction, workforce training and other educational programs to help immigrants from Haiti make effective transitions to new lives.

The NYC Haitian Community Hope and Healing Fund officially launched on February 12, 2010, precisely one month after the earthquake, and announced the availability of \$250,000 for an initial round of six-month targeted grants. Begun with a pledge of \$100,000 from the Brooklyn Community Foundation and \$100,000 from the United Way of New York City, the Fund would ultimately raise more than \$500,000 through the generosity of other institutional donors including the Altman Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the NYS Health Foundation, UJA-Federation, Capital One Bank, the IBM Foundation, the Seth Sprague Educational and Charitable Trust and Target.

The Fund accepted proposals in amounts up to \$50,000 between February 12 and March 15, 2010. Applicants, many of them directly invited, were asked to focus their requests in one of the four emergency focus areas — case management, legal services, healing or education.

All proposals were reviewed in accordance with the Brooklyn Community Foundation’s established grantmaking policies and procedures — but in a highly expedited fashion. On April 22, 2010, five weeks after the proposal deadline — and just one hundred days after the earthquake itself — the Fund announced its first twelve grant recipients. Most of these initial, six-month grants were renewed later in the year.

*Below: Carine Jocelyn, Advisory Committee Co-Chair, speaks at a press conference held at Brooklyn Borough Hall on February 12, 2010, to announce the Fund.*



# Outcomes

It was important to ensure that the Hope and Healing Fund’s resources were fostering direct, measurable benefits in New York City’s Haitian community.

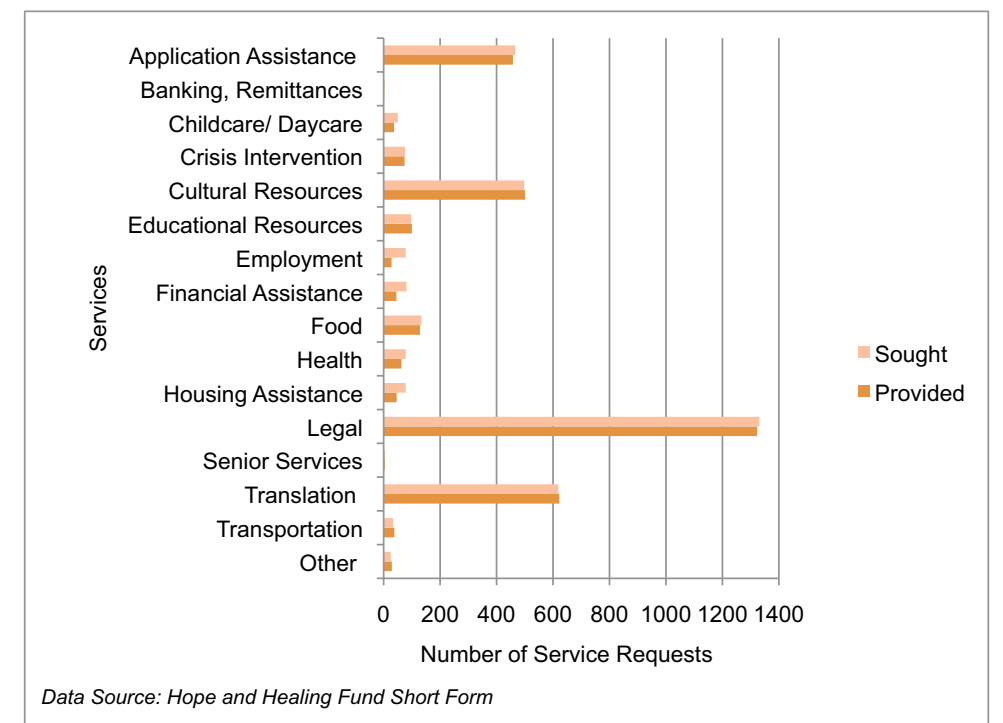
The Brooklyn Community Foundation retained the Center for the Study of Brooklyn at Brooklyn College to develop and implement a manageable framework for better understanding the demographics and needs of the local Haitian population, especially new immigrants, after the earthquake.

The Center worked with the Brooklyn Community Foundation, the United Way of New York City and the grantee partners to develop three online surveys. A short form was designed to capture the most essential demographic characteristics of Haitian clients, the services they sought and those with which they were provided. A long form allowed organizations to collect more detailed quantitative and qualitative data about clients and their needs. A third online survey captured information about cultural programming events.

Between August 2010 and January 2011, grantee partners collected information for 1,512 clients on the short form and 134 clients on the long form. The cultural survey captured data on cultural events attended by approximately 900 adults and young people.

The chart below documents the types of services sought by clients and provided by the grantees. The data reveal a high need for legal (immigration) services and language and application assistance, reflecting the dislocation of many Haitians living in or visiting New York City on January 12. Today, while these needs remain paramount, others, such as housing and job training are coming to the fore.

Chart 1. Summary of Service Requests



*Right: Earthquake-related service requests, based on 1,512 survey reports. Note that most grantees reported only a fraction of their total clients. Chart source: Center for the Study of Brooklyn*

# Case Management

Particularly in a time of crisis, navigating a sea of benefits and services is daunting — if not impossible for many individuals and families. The Fund’s Advisory Committee recognized a need for case management early on.

Case managers connect people with the resources, benefits and services available to them, identifying a service plan for each client and doing everything they can to ensure that its objectives are met. They provide crisis intervention, education, counseling, referrals and advocacy in this context.

Four organizations received grants to provide community-based case management services to individuals and families affected by the earthquake. In addition, one grantee was designated to distribute modest financial assistance, including MetroCards and small value gift cards, in response to the dire situation of many clients left with little or no cash in the earthquake’s aftermath.

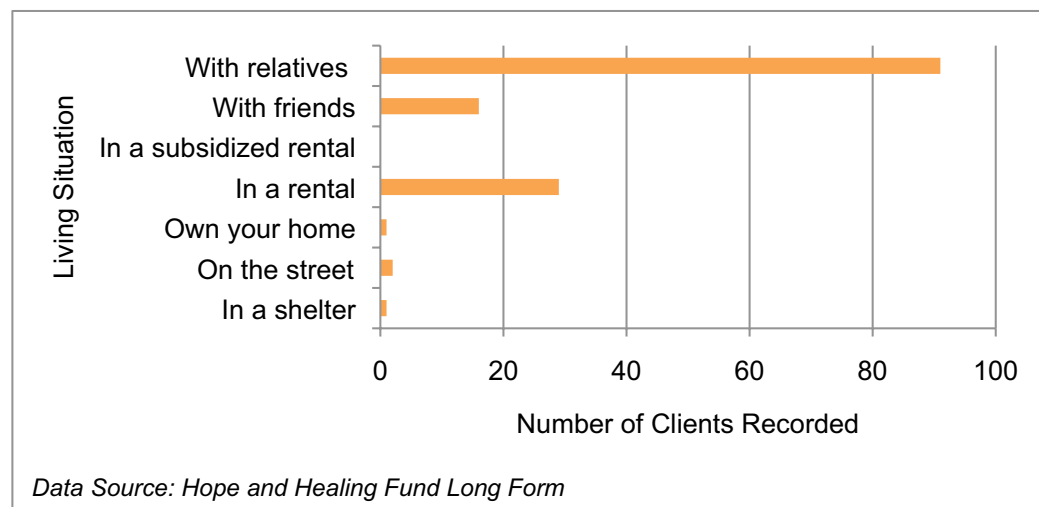
For the reporting period, the great majority of case management clients sought help accessing legal services. The other most frequently encountered needs were for translation services, food, housing assistance and employment/job training.

Today, all these needs continue. But in addition, newer, more fundamental problems are emerging, especially in relation to housing. The chart below shows that a large majority — more than 80% — were living with relatives or friends at the time they sought assistance. Many clients reported that their living situations were not sustainable for much longer.

*“Most clients now are coming in asking us about places to stay, and we just don’t have that kind of a resource. Many don’t have papers, so you can’t send them to a shelter.”*

—Johanne Jacques, Haitian-Americans United for Progress

Chart 2. Most Clients Live With Relatives or Friends



Right: The living situations of clients, based on long form survey reports. Chart source: Center for the Study of Brooklyn

## How We Helped: Case Management

\$190,000 in grants made it possible for four organizations to provide comprehensive case management services to 752 individuals and families.

### Diaspora Community Services — \$50,000

Service organization in Brooklyn that provided culturally competent services to individuals and families, with a focus on fostering access to health services.

### CAMBA — \$25,000

Large, multi-faceted human service agency has assisted smaller, community-based organizations with technical assistance, case referrals, collaboration brokering and advocacy.

### Haitian First Church of the Brethren— \$40,000

Emerging, grass-roots, Haitian-led family resource center located in the heart of Brooklyn’s Haitian community.

### Haitian-Americans United for Progress — \$50,000

Community-based organization in Queens that provided culturally competent services to a wide range of individuals and families.

### Financial Assistance Program

The Hope and Healing Fund allocated \$25,000 for direct cash assistance to case management clients who lacked money to pay for food, transportation, clothing or other necessities. This response was made possible by generous grants from the Seth Sprague Educational and Charitable Foundation and from Target. More than 650 gift cards and transportation MetroCards ranging in value from \$4.50 to \$25 were distributed in 2010. CAMBA administered the program on the Fund’s behalf.

“I sleep on the floor all the time and I’m not being taken care of properly.”

— Case management client

# Legal Services

New York’s Haitian community on January 12 included native-born and naturalized U.S. Citizens as well as permanent residents. It also included an unknown number of temporary residents and undocumented individuals, many liable to deportation.

Immediately after the earthquake, many Haitians in New York City feared that they would be forced to leave. But on January 21, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that it would permit Haitians who were in the U.S. on January 12 to apply for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). This special designation would enable thousands of effectively stranded individuals to live (and potentially work) in the U.S. until it was safe for them to return home.

Unfortunately, obtaining TPS is a complex process. Applicants must complete long forms, assemble significant documentation and in many cases pay a fee. For those with limited English or inadequate personal and/or family documentation, it can be impossible to obtain.

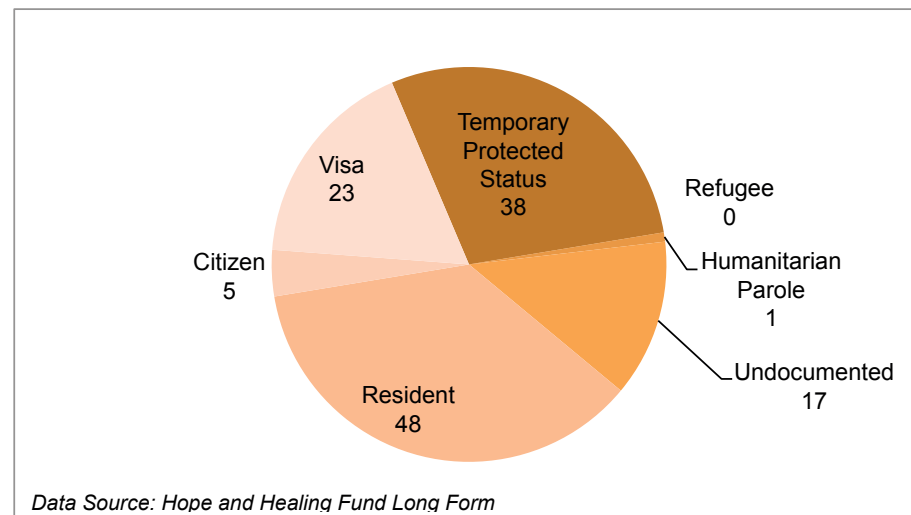
What’s more, extending TPS eligibility to Haitians living in the U.S. on January 12 did nothing to help hundreds who arrived in our area afterwards, many trying to reunite with spouses, children and other family members. For them, the only legal immigration option was to request

Deferred Action: a discretionary enforcement status, granted only rarely in the past.

The funded organizations overcame enormous challenges to provide help applying for TPS for hundreds of Haitian community members. But they also found themselves leveraging another signal accomplishment: advocating successfully for the broader application of Deferred Action status to immigrants arriving in the U.S. after January 12.

In all, their work stabilized and improved the lives of many hundreds of individuals, contributing immensely to the Fund’s early achievements. Even so, it is important to remember that neither TPS nor Deferred Action is a permanent solution to the needs of Haitians living in our area — most of whom will not soon find it safe to return to their country. In coming months, the Fund, its Advisory Committee and grantee partners will continue to assess the community’s needs, and respond to new laws and regulations as they emerge.

Chart 3. Immigration Status of Clients



Right: Immigration status of clients reported on long forms. Chart source: Center for the Study of Brooklyn

## How We Helped: Legal Services

\$80,000 in grants made it possible for three organizations to provide legal services to 736 individuals and families.

### Brooklyn Defender Services — \$20,000.00

Brooklyn-based legal services provider that partnered with volunteer bar to provide services at a location in the Brooklyn Haitian community.

### Lutheran Social Services of Metropolitan New York — \$40,000

Legal services provider partnered on-site with Haitian First Church of the Brethren, a Focus Area 1 grantee.

### CUNY Citizenship Now! — \$20,000

Legal services provider located in the heart of Brooklyn’s Haitian community at Medgar Evers College. CUNY has worked on individual cases, conducted follow-up, lent general immigration law expertise and took on more difficult cases.

“I lived in Port-Au-Prince with my husband and my two young daughters. When the earthquake struck, the land heaved up and down, and our house started breaking apart. I am thankful to have been able to get my children out of the house alive. I am requesting Deferred Action because our family has no home to go back to in Haiti.”

— Legal services client

“I am sixty-five years old and I was afraid that if I didn’t get TPS I would not know what to do in Haiti or how I would support myself if I were forced to return to those conditions. I suffer from high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and pre-diabetes. Here in the U.S., I can see a doctor every month and get the medication that I need. I was afraid I would not be able to get this medical attention in Haiti.”

— Legal services client

# Healing

Only time can heal the pain and sorrow of all those affected by the earthquake in Haiti. But we thought the Fund should strive immediately to restore a sense of personal and communal integrity — feelings of connectedness, relative soundness and security — to everyone in New York’s Haitian community.

To that end, the Fund provided a grant to SUNY Downstate Medical Center to develop and provide ongoing individual health and mental health services to individual Haitian community clients. This program is ongoing today. It also supported cultural organizations that mounted events to help community members grieve their losses while reaffirming and connecting with their culture.

Haiti Cultural Exchange piloted arts education workshops for Haitian children attending New York City public schools. The sessions featured Haitian teaching artists and engaged participants in healthy self-expression about the earthquake, themselves, their feelings about Haiti and its culture. KONGO used traditional Haitian music to connect audience members to one another and to their culture. It also partnered with Haiti Cultural Exchange to help it mount its school-based programming and organize several events in the Haitian community.

Between April and June 2010, nearly 1,000 people attended cultural events throughout

Brooklyn, some of which spanned for weeks and all of which were hosted in English and Creole. Grantees plan to continue using artistic and cultural expression as tools to help Haitian New Yorkers reclaim both a personal and communal sense of hope and well-being. But this goal may grow harder before it becomes easier.

As noted by Haiti Cultural Exchange’s Regine Roumain, “We could have had a bit more counseling. It’s not really part of our culture to go to therapy. Utilizing art, we can help young people explore their feelings, bring them in. [But] you could sense that a lot of other things were going on.”

The Fund has already expanded its Healing support once in the second half of 2010, with a new grant to Counseling In Schools National Network. We hope that these and other new efforts will deepen its impact further in 2011 and beyond.

*“Your support throughout the year has truly made a difference in our ability to respond to the crisis that we are experiencing in the Haitian community... We will continue to use music as a healing tool to bring hope to our community as we recover.”*

—Oneza Lafontant, Founder and Artistic Director, KONGO

“I can contribute. I can do something. I can promote healing among these kids.”

— Volunteer Teaching Artist, Haiti Cultural Exchange

## How We Helped: Healing

\$105,000 in grants made it possible for three organizations to provide individual and community healing services to approximately 900 people.

**Haiti Cultural Exchange — \$20,000**

Emerging, Haitian-led cultural organization that implements community-based programming for children, youth and adults.

**KONGO — \$10,000**

Haitian-led cultural organization that uses traditional Haitian music as a means to engage adults, children and youth in the healing process.

**SUNY Downstate Medical Center — \$50,000**

Leading medical center is providing wellness and clinical mental health services for the Haitian community  
*Note: This project is ongoing and reporting is not yet complete.*

**Counseling In Schools National Network — \$25,000**

School-based provider of individual, group and family counseling services.  
*Note: This project is ongoing and reporting is not yet complete.*



Above: KONGO leads a traditional drum family workshop with children and youth.

# Education

Most people living in Haiti speak Haitian Creole, and a smaller number speak French. In Brooklyn, U.S. Census data show that nearly one in four Haitian community residents do not speak English well.

Among newer arrivals, the proportion is much higher: 86% of clients whose language abilities were reported could not speak English. Educational attainment was also very low: A large majority never completed high school.

To help meet these challenges, two organizations received grants specifically to help community members develop basic English language skills. Their work was further targeted to ensure that Haitian children became enrolled in New York City public schools, and that adult Haitians acquired enough English to work effectively with service providers, public agencies and others from whom they were likely to need assistance.

“When I started, I could not converse with someone who spoke English,” said Marie-C., one adult student. “Now, anything I need, I can

ask.” Her teacher at Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, Ruth-Marie Charles, admires Marie-C.’s determination. “She has perfect attendance, and she asks a lot of questions. She pushes, and works hard to enrich herself.”

Increasingly, though, people like Marie-C. are facing more challenging educational needs. Like many other community members, she is looking for a job that will help her obtain housing. She would also like to help her three grown children in Haiti, all of whom narrowly survived the disaster.

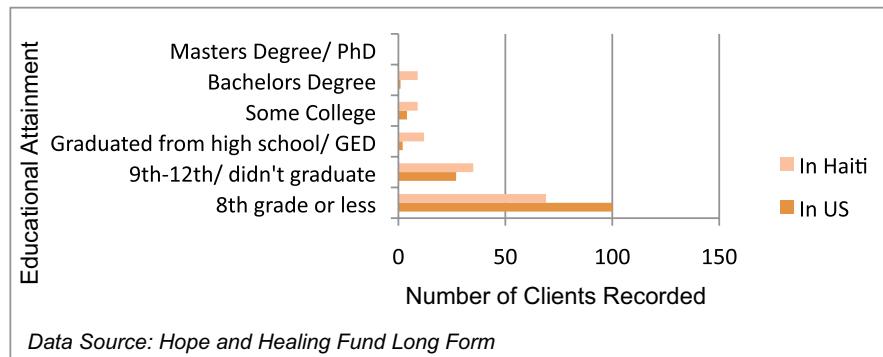
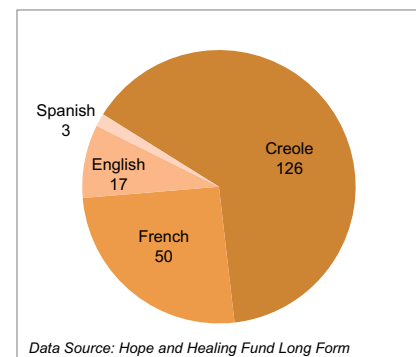
In the latter part of 2010, in addition to renewing support for the original education grantees, the Fund awarded a new grant to Brooklyn Workforce Innovations to target training, placement and other workforce development services to Haitian community residents affected by the earthquake.

ment and other workforce development services to Haitian community residents affected by the earthquake.

*“The creation of the NYC Haitian Community Hope and Healing Fund provided prompt support, at a most crucial time, to Haitian community-based organizations in Brooklyn that were already chronically under-funded.”*

—Ninaj Raoul, Executive Director of Haitian Women for Haitian Children

Chart 4. Languages Spoken and Educational Attainment of Clients



Charts source: Center for the Study of Brooklyn

## How We Helped: Education

\$105,000 in grants made it possible for three organizations to provide educational services to 59 individuals and families (see note below).

### Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project — \$40,000

Haitian-led advocacy and service organization working with children and youth on the acquisition of English language skills and access to needed school-based English language services.

### Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees —\$40,000

Haitian-led service organization working with adults on basic English language acquisition so that individuals can more effectively interact with government, community-based service providers and employers.

### Brooklyn Workforce Innovations — \$25,000

Training, placement and other workforce development services provider will target services to Haitian community residents affected by the earthquake. The program was starting as this report was written.

Note: The total number of clients helped represents only a small sample of students, as reported by the grantee partners.



Above: “Survival English” classes help recent Haitian immigrants adjust to living in New York City.

# More Mountains

Just one year after the earthquake, the Haitian community in New York City has made considerable progress toward recovery. But much more remains to be done.

Support from the Hope and Healing Fund has already been instrumental in improving the lives of hundreds of individuals and families in our area. But many more need help. Today, the Fund's grantee partners are registering new clients whose cases involve not just one or two, but a panoply of challenging health and human service needs.

In 2011 and beyond, the NYC Haitian Community Hope and Healing Fund will continue to play a vital role organizing and providing local private philanthropic support to organizations helping the Haitian community recover. We have been especially gratified to see our efforts spur several additional public and private responses to the needs of Haitian residents in New York City.

But as we continue to engage the Haitian community's leaders to develop new, more targeted responses to the next set of earthquake-related needs, we call on others, including all the Fund's current donors and partners, to help us redouble our efforts.

We especially call on our **city and state leaders** to implement policies and funding that will expand the Haitian community's access to longer-term housing, workforce development, health care and other safety net programs. We hope to reduce the barriers imposed by language, transportation, immigration status and culture.

We also call on New York's **philanthropic and business sectors** to heighten their own responses to the Haitian community's needs: not just in Port-Au-Prince, but right here at home. In every way possible, we stand ready to help them.

The UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies provides an example of how longer-term healing can really occur. In mid-2010, the Hope and

Healing Fund partnered with UJA-Federation to implement New York City's first **NY-Haitian Leadership Fellows Program**. The program is now developing the skills and capacity of a group of human service professionals serving the Haitian community.

Like so much of what the community needs today, the Fellowship is an investment in its longer-term ability to meet widespread service needs.

In the coming year, in these and many other ways, the NYC Haitian Community Hope and Healing Fund will continue working to make comprehensive healing for New York's Haitian community more than just a distant hope. In particular, we will:

- Measure and report on the work of new and continuing grantees.
- Work with our Advisory Committee, existing grantees, donor partners and other key stakeholders to identify and target funding in response to emerging community needs.
- Organize and support public policy advocacy for the earthquake-related needs of New York City's Haitian Community.
- Expand the Fund's partners, contributions, grantees and results.

Admittedly, not all of the mountains that lie ahead will be easy to climb. But climb we must, knowing that even the highest summits are attainable, so long as we can support one another's steps — however small. That, too, is the essence of community, and the reason for all our work. May the coming year bring us all to new peaks.



Established by the United Way of New York City and the Brooklyn Community Foundation

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