

Haiti is on its knees after the quake but a tragic people keep their faith in God

The survivors need long-term aid after the terrible disaster and not a quick fix

BY CLAIRE DUFFIN

in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

THE young boys bang on the car window, lifting up their shirts to reveal their emaciated frames and rubbing their stomachs to indicate they are hungry.

They are holding out their hands, pleading for cash.

It's a natural instinct to want to give them money but, as one aid worker warned me, it is not a good idea.

He told a story about how he had handed over some coins to a boy of about seven, only to watch in horror as he looked back to see him being set upon by a gang of older boys.

They beat him up and took his money.

Instead of helping him out, the cash had made him a target.

Humanity First volunteer Brian said: "You want to help and you think you are but you can in fact make things worse.

"Just giving them cash is not

This was my house. I don't come here very often – it just makes me too sad.

Noor

the answer. They need long-term help, not a quick fix."

Next to where the boys are is a car, crushed under a pile of rubble when the house next to it collapsed.

Buildings have fallen in every street of the city – not even the president's palace escaped the devastation.

In many buildings bodies still lay inside, nearly two months after the quake struck.

No-one dare go in, some fearing further tremors, others simply don't want to see the horror of what is inside.

Noor, another volunteer, is offering his services to Humanity First because the college where he was studying accountancy also collapsed.

Now he works as a translator and guide for the charity, in return for meals and a tent in which to sleep.

I went with him to his former home, now also a pile of rubble, to retrieve a text book. He used to live just outside Port-au-Prince and you can still see the steps that once led up to his front door.



GIVE WATER. GIVE LIFE. TELEGRAPH CAMPAIGN

IN TOMORROW'S DERBY TELEGRAPH

Now, shoes, papers and household items lie mixed up with piles of bricks and dust.

"This was my house," he said. "I don't come up here very often now – it just makes me too sad."

His family, who survived the disaster, now live in a make-

shift shelter in one of the city's squatter camps that have sprung up in the wake of the earthquake.

We went to visit his mother, an elderly woman. She is living in a tent made of sticks and covered in blue tarpaulin.

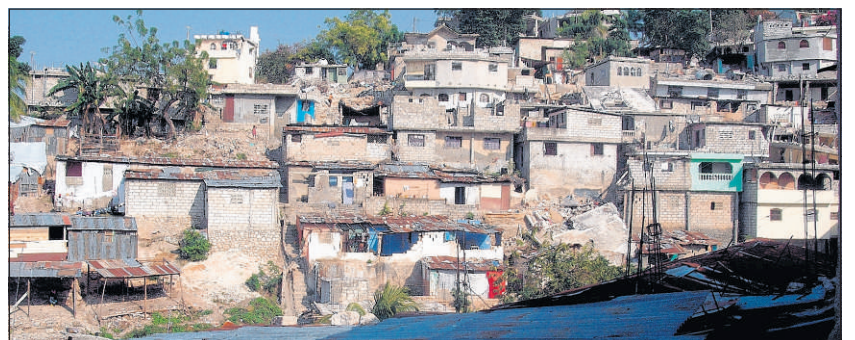
As we enter, the first thing



HUMAN CATASTROPHE:

Above, a homeless family wait for Aquaboxes to be distributed in Grasier camp at Port-au-Prince. All around the capital there are shattered buildings which crumbled in the enormous earthquake which killed 200,000 people almost two months ago. Buildings collapsed in every street and not even the president's palace escaped the devastation (bottom left).

Pictures: Claire Duffin



that hits you is the heat – it is almost unbearably hot inside and the woman complains to her son that she is feverish.

She is friendly and welcoming and invites us to sit down on one of the five beds inside. Also inside is an Aquabox, which she and her family are using to get clean water.

The woman chats to her son and is upbeat and positive, which is amazing considering the devastation the country has been through.

But the positive attitude is typical of the Haitians who despite their sadness are incredibly resilient and still have an unwavering faith in God.

I am told that many have turned their back on the traditional Voodoo that some once followed, blaming it for the devastation.

But outdoor Christian church services are still held every Sunday, with chairs being rounded up and laid out in rows and the local people putting on what they find of their Sunday best.

Messages like, Jesus Loves You and God is Good are also painted all over the brightly coloured tap-taps – the local public taxis, so called because people tap their money on the side when they want to get off. And all this comes despite

the fact that 200,000 people were killed in the earthquake on January 12.

Haitians are not angry with God but are focusing their frustration on the Government – which they claim is withholding money sent as aid and are doing little to repair the devastation.

Almost two months after the earthquake I only saw one piece of heavy machinery hired by the Government to remove the rubble.

As Haitian local Alexander Tudor told me: "Haiti is on its knees. It is going to take many years for it to get back up again."