

With no medical resources to save Maritza's crushed arms, amputation was certain, until a chance meeting brought her hope



More than 1,500 life-saving water purification kits have been sent to Haiti after Derby Telegraph readers helped raise £200,000 to pay for them. Reporter **Claire Duffin** has flown to the country's capital to see first-hand how the Aquaboxes are making a difference to survivors of the devastating earthquake.

SHE had been trapped for two hours beneath the wreckage of her home and now Maritza Geanty was told both of her arms would have to be amputated.

Savage cuts to both limbs exposed bone and tendon. Surgeons said there was no hope of saving them.

But Maritza was adamant. There was no way she was going to agree to the operation.

It was by pure chance that aid workers from international charity Humanity First saw Maritza, swathed in bandages in a side ward of a makeshift hospital in Port-au-Prince. They called a myriad of contacts in an attempt to help her before finding a plastic surgeon in Miami. They sent him pictures of her wounds and

within days he flew out to save her arms.

The story of 25-year-old Maritza is just one of the dramas which are faced by medics in Haiti every day.

Now what she and others need is clean drinking water to help them in their recovery.

That is where Aquaboxes, paid for by readers of the Derby Telegraph, come in.

In fact, all of Maritza's family, who live in a tiny tent, will now have water thanks to the remarkable blue box.

Dr Aslam Daud, chairman of Humanity First, said: "Maritza suffered heavy crush injury to the forearms, resulting in deep wounds and loss of muscles."

"She had minimal abilities on both hands and no sensation on the right hand and minimal

EARTHQUAKE HORROR: Maritza Geanty, who was trapped under the rubble of her house when the earthquake struck Haiti, had both her arms saved after the Humanity First charity came to her aid.

All pictures: Claire Duffin



VICTIM: This little girl will have a safe supply of water to drink thanks to Aquaboxes which contain chlorine tablets and carbon filters.



on the left. The US Naval Hospital doctors who originally saw her wanted to do an amputation as it was difficult to save both arms. She resisted and refused amputation."

Dr Daud said hundreds of amputations had been needlessly carried out on Haitians injured in the earthquake, which killed more than 200,000 and left a million more homeless.

He said doctors in Haiti simply did not have the resources to try to save limbs in many cases.

He said: "Humanity First managed Maritza and changed dressings and provided required treatment."

"Her dressing was changed on a daily basis as there was high risk of life-threatening infection."

"We also consulted plastic surgeons in Haiti and the USA. After some consultations, it was decided to take her to the Miami Medical facility in Haiti and a plastic surgeon would attempt to restore her arms. The surgery was successfully done."



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"Humanity First continued to monitor her on a daily basis and provided all the support she needed. We are now doing post-operative follow-up."

Almost two months after the earthquake, the operation has been deemed a success and Maritza has got 75% of the movement in her arms back.

We went to see her in the hospital called Miami Medical in Haiti, which is run by aid organisations with volunteer doctors.

"I want you to set up five Aquaboxes in the school ... the priority must be water for the children at the school first, then women with babies."

Claire Duffin continues her reports from Haiti with the moving story of how aid arrives in an earthquake-torn village

It is inside a large tent, in which scores of people injured in the earthquake lie cheek by jowl on row after row of camp beds covered in blankets.

There are drips hanging from a bar on the ceiling providing most patients with fluids and, although it looks very basic, there is even an operating theatre - an area in the tent fenced off by screens.

Maritza is in one of the beds towards the end of the tent with her mother sat close by. When

the doctors arrive she smiles and tells the interpreter she is feeling much better.

Last week, Maritza's family, who now live in a makeshift shelter in Port-au-Prince, were given an Aquabox.

The box contains chlorine tablets and carbon filters which clean dirty water. The Aquabox will provide the family with a safe supply of water to drink.

The box also contains essential welfare items, including cooking pots, tools, washing powder and clothes, which were met with exclamations of delight by Maritza's family.

Volunteers from Humanity First, which is distributing the Aquaboxes in Haiti on behalf of the Rotary Club of Wirksworth, took the box to Maritza's family on Wednesday.

We pulled up outside a door on a busy main road in Haiti's capital and went down a long passageway. At the back, several families are living in tents and under sheets at the side of a pile of rubble which used to be their homes.

Humanity First volunteer Mark, who handed over the

Aquabox and showed the family how to use it, said he was delighted to be able to continue to help Maritza's family.

He said: "This has been an important case for Humanity First. Everyone was very moved by Maritza's plight and it has been nice to be able to see it through to the end."

"And it is great to be able to give her family an Aquabox - it will provide them with clean

Everyone was very moved by Maritza's plight.

Humanity First volunteer Mark

water and much-needed aid."

To donate to Aquabox, call us on Derby 253053 or alternatively e-mail cduffin@derbytelegraph.co.uk. You can send money to NatWest, account number 53575113, sort code 60-14-15, call 01629 825 178, or post a donation to Aquabox, PO Box 5398, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 4ZP; cheques payable to Aquabox.



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