

# Potholes in Port Au Prince

by Vikki McLachlan, Micah Challenge

Brightly coloured 'Merci Jesus'-adorned tap-taps (taxis), huge MACK trucks and countless motorcycles hurtle directly towards us on the road out of Port Au Prince.



A Haitian child sitting on the doorstep of her tent in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti

They're not trying to hit us, or necessarily vying for space. They're trying to avoid the plentiful potholes. And they do so with great panache. No-one is affronted by the beeping horns, or frustrated at entrepreneurial drivers who undertake or overtake as they see fit. Each respects the path the other carves out. The rules of the road are hard for a Brit to understand, but they work.

We're on our way to a meeting of an ambitious project: Mobilisation of the Prophetic Role of the Church in Haiti. Already this morning thousands of Christians across Port Au Prince heard sermons on Proverbs 14:34 – "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin disgraces the people." It was an important moment for the congregations. Many are aware of the project catalysed nearly 18 months ago by the earthquake and resulting crisis and by all accounts have been waiting for this sense of unity and focus from its leaders.

Micah Challenge Haiti is a central player in the coalition, along with many denominations, international development organisations, and para-church groups including the Haitian Evangelical Alliance. Put bluntly, their task is together to contribute to the rebuilding of a nation. They know it's not a purely physical rebuild required, but a spiritual and attitudinal one: a shift in the values and identity of Haiti. They know they will need to tackle corruption, broken

policing and judicial systems, and unjust practices that willfully ignore the plight of the vulnerable. They know they need to change within the Church as well as beyond. It will be no mean feat.

These are not talk shops. It may be a slow process, but local and national actions to change systems and structures are taking place, with similar stories in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Micah Challenge exists to encourage and support the Church in taking these bold steps towards new futures. And Joel Edwards and I are privileged to have been invited to participate in these critical conversations for Haiti. Our local coordinator here, Jean-Valery, has reason for hope, saying: "We realise the importance of new foundations required for reconstructing Haiti, and that partnership is imperative in tackling the huge issues impeding its well-being. Unity is being expressed here in a way we have not experienced as churches and NGOs lay down their agendas for bigger issues. We are committed not just to talking, but for immediate and sustained action. We are hopeful."

I hope an historic event is happening right in front of me. It's entirely possible that as these leaders carve out a new identity for their country, they are able to fill the economic, spiritual and political potholes in the road ahead. Or at least navigate them skilfully as the tap-taps do.

## Transforming lives, transforming communities

by Roshini Wickremesinhe  
Director Advocacy & Law National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL)

Beautifully dressed brides and grooms took to the ramp in an array of fashion styles. It was a gala night - photographers, TV crews from various local stations, pounding music and colourful lights all competed for attention, as models dressed in traditional Sinhalese, western and Tamil bridal attire sashayed down the ramp.



The Al-shabaab operatives have categorically denied that there is famine in Somalia.



Transformation of Colours bridal fashion show was the culmination of a three-month beauty culture course conducted by the Alliance Development Trust (ADT), the relief and development arm of the NCEASL.

This was no ordinary bridal fashion show. This was the graduation ceremony of 36 former LTTE cadres (combatants of the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam.) A few months earlier, ADT launched a comprehensive three-month course in giving facials, manicures, pedicures, applying make-up, re-bonding and perming hair and salon management. The students learned how to dress brides in the traditional attire of different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, western and Indian attire.

Just months after the conclusion of the bitter war which left thousands dead and much of the northern countryside in utter devastation, the ADT helped the government with vocational training for ex-combatants living in rehabilitation camps. Female ex-combatants between the ages of 20 and 45 with no skills or higher education were selected to study beauty culture. The training programme took place at the Women's Rehabilitation Centre in Pempemadu, Vavuniya, Sri Lanka.

The girls took to their new vocation with enthusiasm and passion. Evident from the start was their determination to complete the course and finish well. "When I go back home, I would like to start my own salon," one student said.

ADT continues to restore the lives of families devastated by war in Sri Lanka. Male ex-combatants are trained in food processing and preservation of jam and chutney to be sold. Others are trained in making candles.

To join us in making a positive difference, please contact us at [efa@slt.net.lk](mailto:efa@slt.net.lk)

## Relief, rehabilitation and reconciliation in the Horn of Africa

by Rev Aiah Foday-Khabenje, general secretary, Association of Evangelicals in Africa

**Humans have learnt to span the seas, scale the firmaments, build gargantuan bridges and excel in technology but still have not learnt the humble art of love and care for their neighbour and their environment.**

One does not have to understand rocket science to know that the current famine in the Horn of Africa is due to drought. Victims of the famine are aware that previously forested farmlands are now bare and covered by desert. How did the trees disappear? There has been indiscriminate slashing and burning of trees and selfish exploitation of the natural resources that are intended to sustain the population. We have not learnt to take care of our environment and use the land today. We do not care about the next generation.

Listening to the media and famine victims both within and outside Somalia, one is left with the awareness that we are also victims of our beliefs - both animistic and secularist.

The Al-shabaab operatives have categorically denied that there is famine in Somalia. They have actually chased out humanitarian workers and abducted some. Some of the victims themselves express worldviews about their plight are steeped in animism. The world leaders are yet to agree on a binding treaty to mitigate climate change. Ironically, the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) was held in Durban, South Africa. Are the drought in Eastern Africa and floods in Thailand being heard by our policy makers?

A reconnaissance visit to Mogadishu and the refugee camps reveal the extent of human suffering, the dire need for humanitarian aid. I also saw the complexity and intrigue of human activity revealing our lack of love and apathy for a better future. The Kenyan Army is now at war with the Al-shabaab in Somalia supposedly to help the transitional government in that country deal with the rebels. However, the denial of the transitional president of his support for the Kenyan action and subsequent demonstration of the Somali people against their president is another eye-opener to the Somali question.

A number of aid agencies are currently helping to provide relief to internally displaced persons in camps, mostly women and children. The Evangelical Alliance of Kenya and many church denominations are also engaged in providing relief items to the IDPs.

The Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) urges and appeals for a more holistic approach to the crisis to complement the ongoing relief effort. The AEA Relief and Development Commission has launched an appeal for setting up an initiative dubbed "Triple R" (Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation) aimed at funding emergency/disaster responses in the short term, rehabilitation and recovery/reconciliation in the medium and long term. This initiative also aims to mitigate the climate change and bring about a paradigm shift in the affected population. We also commit to mobilise prayer as a priority and to ask the help of God.

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