

# Lacombe charity helps Haitians rebuild

➤ Devastation is beyond belief

Lisa Joy  
Globe Editor

Lacombe charity A Better World (ABW) is back in earthquake ravaged Haiti and the devastation is beyond belief, says ABW co-founder Eric Rajah.

“Even though one sees all of the devastation on TV, one never understands until you meet the people, look in their eyes and hear the stories of the challenges they face day-to-day,” he said in an email to the *Globe*. “To say plenty of damage and thousands of bodies are still under the rubble is an understatement.”

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— Eric Rajah  
co-founder  
A Better World

ABW has teamed up with Calgary-based charity Haiti Arise Ministries to bring aid after the 7.0-magnitude earthquake hit the tiny island nation Jan. 12.

Thor (Michael) Burnham—a UBC professor specializing in Haitian studies and a former Lacombe resident—is working with ABW.

“We are fortunate to have Thor on the ground who is leading us to good solid contacts for our relief part of our work,” said Rajah from

Petionville, which is five miles from Port-au-Prince.

Also with ABW is Olds College Instructor Gord Gilchrist and architect Pat Romerman of Group 2 Architecture of Red Deer and Lacombe College Heights Seventh-day Adventist pastor Ron Sydenham.

They were to pitch tents in a backyard but there was no room because the yard was already full with Haitian’s in tents.

“We saw the yard had no room for our tent,” said Rajah. “Ketley said we are more than welcome to sleep inside the house as no one has slept inside since the earthquake.”

But they were concerned about more earthquakes and aftershocks. And one struck Feb. 21 measuring 4.7.

“I was sleeping on the floor and felt the movement so woke up running outside,” said Rajah. “By then people were already out on the street.”

Then days later, Rajah and Gilchrist fled the house to the safety of the open street again.

“Gord and I, and all of Haiti, had a scare this morning at 1:36 a.m. and again at 1:45 a.m.,” said Rajah. “This tremor was scary and we all rushed out and everyone was on the street. I slept in the car and Gord slept on the driveway and others on the street. I can understand why no one wants to sleep in their houses.”

“It was at 4:30 a.m.,” said Rajah. “I was laying on the floor and could feel it and jumped up. By then everyone was out on the street.”

The development team went to a camp occupied by about 4,000 Haitians and another camp with about 700 people to assess any gaps in the immediate needs of the people.

“The first thing is help expand the clinic with medicines and workers,” said Rajah. “The biggest challenge is to get the medicines. We need to bring as much as we can to get the clinic going.”

*Watch upcoming issues of the Globe for updates on Lacombe-based charity A Better World’s work in Haiti.*



A Better World photo

Streets in towns and cities in Haiti are littered with collapsed buildings from the 7.0-magnitude earthquake of Jan. 12.



A Better World photo

The situation in Haiti is desperate. As Eric Rajah was walking through the camp a lady came and begged him for some tarp. She had just arrived at the camp and so far only managed to find four poles to stick in the ground which she had done. Lacombe charity A Better World (ABW) helped her with shelter. ABW wants to create some tin roof shelters for this camp. When the rains come it is going to be one big disaster if some type of shelters aren’t erected.