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Costa Ricans Lend a Hand to Haiti Earthquake Draws Solidarity in Region

Despite the 1000 miles of ocean between them, Costa Rica and Haiti both sit on the edge of an unsettled landmass known as the Caribbean plate that moves about 0.79 inches each year. A sudden release of pressure built up between the plate and North American plate along a fault line that saw little movement in 40 years caused the 7 magnitude earthquake that rocked Port au Prince on Jan. 12, 2010.

With the 6.2 earthquake in Cinchona fresh in the national memory, Costa Rica was one of the first countries to dispatch a team of 57 rescue workers to help in the search and recovery efforts in Haiti. When they returned home a week later, their stories of devastation ignited a chain of response from the Costa Rican people. Local media and aid groups created the call to action, while individuals and businesses pulled together organizing benefits and concerts to generate money for the victims.

On final tally, the Costa Rican Red Cross raised over \$1.1 million and 100 tons of food and supplies from donations plus \$360,000 from a text message campaign organized by the national phone company. The local chapter of UNICEF was entrusted with around \$22,000 to organize aid for Haiti's children. More than \$3,200 was donated by the Florblanca Hotel after hosting a benefit dinner to celebrate the food and culture of the region with live dance. The whole town of Santa Teresa gathered in attendance and with donations of food items and publicity, with every cent raised directed to UNICEF. The International Professionals of Costa Rica showed that change adds up when a happy hour and masquerade dinner they organized brought in \$3,000 for UNICEF and Partners in Health.

In the wake of this natural disaster, an unprecedented show of solidarity rang out worldwide. As Costa Ricans, we are very proud to have done our part and pulled forces to help pave the path to a better future through temporary housing and medical assistance. For information on how to further support disaster victims, contact UNICEF (2296-2034).

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