NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Conference on Haiti highlights role of partnerships

Alice Popovici | Jun. 13, 2012 NCR Today

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Earlier this month, Catholic Relief Services and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops held a ?national solidarity conference? to look at partnerships between the Catholic church in the United States and Haiti: what?s working, what can be improved and how groups can collaborate to make better use of resources.

The event, *Haiti: One Table, Many Partners* [1], was held June 1-3 on the Catholic University of America campus and brought together about 400 representatives of parishes, dioceses and nonprofit organizations from the two countries for workshops on topics such as managing clean water supplies, preventing child trafficking and microfinance.

In one session, Christine Newman, director of a program called Hens for Haiti, described how her organization?s project in Gros Morne, Haiti, has created jobs and income in this community.

?Egg production provides economic stimulation for the area, increased local food security, and an available source of protein which is affordable,? Newman said, describing the idea behind the project.

In the same workshop, Kim Lamberty described how her organization, Just Haiti, helps growers in Baraderes, Haiti, export their coffee to North America. She said the organization is helping Haitians earn enough money to become self-sufficient.

?People want to pay their own school fees for their kids,? said Lamberty, who serves as senior program adviser at Catholic Relief Services. ?You want to take care of your own families, you want to take care of your own houses, you want to pay for your kids, you want to pay for their medical care -- that is who we are as human beings and it?s part of our dignity.?

One recurring theme in workshops and conversations with participants was the concept of ?twinning,? or establishing partnerships between members of the Catholic church in the U.S. and Haiti.

The idea is said to have originated with a Tennessee businessman who was moved by the poverty and suffering he saw on a trip to Haiti in the late 1950s and started various projects to help improve living conditions for the country?s poor. Eventually, the work evolved into the Parish Twinning Program of the Americas, which has helped forge more than 340 connections between parishes in the U.S. and Canada and those in Caribbean and

Latin American countries, according to its website.

But partnerships with parishes in Haiti have their challenges, according to U.S. participants who attended a workshop on community-led projects. They wanted to know how they could start an exit strategy and said they don?t want to stop helping the Haitian community, but at the same time, do not see an end to its need for support.

?The wish list gets longer, and we have to say no to a lot of the wish list,? said Dianne Durand, of Knoxville, Tenn., whose parish is working with a Virginia parish on education projects in Boucan Carré, Haiti. ?It?s huge, what we?re doing.?

Judy Townsend, whose Hampton Roads, Va., parish works with Durand?s, said: ?I want to be justice, I don?t want to be charity,? but added, ?someday the money has to stop.?

***Editor's Note**: An earlier version of the story misidentified the organization Kim Lamberty talks about (see comment below).*

Source URL (retrieved on *07/10/2014 - 11:42*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/conference-haiti-highlights-role-partnerships

Links:
[1] http://onetable.crs.org/