

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 03-24-10

INTERNATIONAL
CHILD ART
FOUNDATION



Maria Neuves | T: (202) 530-1000 | F: (202) 530-1080 | E: media@icaf.org

Healing Arts Programs for Haiti and Chile Launched

WASHINGTON – The International Child Art Foundation today launched the Haiti Healing Arts Program and the Chile Healing Arts Program to help the child survivors cope with the traumatic experience.

In January 2010 the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti killed nearly 230,000 people, injured about 300,000, turned nearly one million into homeless and may have affected as many as three million people. In February 2010 the 8.8 magnitude that struck off the coast of the Maule region of Chile, affected 80 percent of the country and moved the entire city of Concepción nearly 10 feet to the west, according to seismologists. Significant international efforts are underway to address the physical health needs of the children of both Haiti and Chile. Yet the mental health needs of child victims often get too little attention in any mass trauma event.

ICAF's previous healing arts program experience with the Asian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina children attests to the effectiveness of art-making and art therapy in facilitating the emotional and psychological recovery of children. For example, artworks the Katrina children produced four years after the Hurricane depict children's wellness and hope for the future and reveal the power of art therapy to help children recover from a tragedy. Current literature also maintains that techniques involving the use of images are among the most effective in decreasing the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). Art offers a channel for children to express their feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and memories in ways that words cannot. Research also shows that traumatic memories are stored in the brain as images. Often, words are simply not accessible as this part of the brain has been affected by trauma. Through art, children can express their pain, first visually and then verbally. With guidance and support, the arts can help traumatized children to make sense of their experiences, regain control, communicate grief and loss, and become active participants in their own process of healing by seeing themselves as "survivors" rather than as "victims" to begin with.

ICAF will send teams of art therapists to Haiti and Chile to work with the children starting in May 2010. Program partners at present include the Center for Rebuilding Sustainable Communities after Disasters at University of Massachusetts Boston, the International Art Therapy Organization, and BelTiFi - young Haitian-American women empowerment network.

Earthquake relief workers in Haiti and Chile can immediately benefit from ICAF's Guidelines on how to deploy the arts to help the children traumatized by the earthquakes. The Guidelines can also help local schoolteachers and have been translated into Creole and Spanish for this purpose. The Guidelines can be downloaded free-of-charge from www.icaf.org/whatwedo/healingarts.html.

About the International Child Art Foundation

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, ICAF has since 1997 employed the power of the arts to heal, inspire and unify children across the globe.