

At a glance: Haiti

A young Haitian earthquake survivor uses art to cope with disaster



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Artist and painter Bruno Rene, 18, has been sleeping outside since the 12 January earthquake destroyed his family's home in the southern port city of Jacmel, Haiti.

NEW YORK, USA, 22 January 2010 – Until their home was destroyed in last week's earthquake, Bruno Rene, 18, lived with his mother in the southern Haitian port city of Jacmel. Since then, Bruno, an aspiring artist, has been working on art projects to cope with the impact of the disaster.

Bruno spoke with UNICEF Radio by phone from Jacmel, describing his experience during the earthquake and in its aftermath.

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When the quake struck on 12 January, Bruno was in the street. He heard a loud noise but didn't understand what was going on, and then he fell. A man passed by and told him it was an earthquake. When he looked up, he saw that all the houses around him were destroyed – including his own.

"Everyone was crying," he recalls.

'A very bad state'

With his home uninhabitable, Bruno has been sleeping outside. He and his family members are hungry and don't have access to food or drinking water. He is also concerned about malaria.

"There are many mosquitoes, and we don't have mosquito nets or tents," he says. "We are really in a very bad state."

Bruno's school, too, was destroyed in the earthquake. Several teachers died when the building collapsed; others were badly injured.

Art programme provides support

As one of the star pupils in an art programme for young people in Jacmel, Bruno is a talented artist, working with paint on canvas and with papier-mâché. For the past 10 days, he has been painting whatever he sees going on around him.

Other local young artists – including two of Bruno's classmates, Withnie Charles and Marie-Michelle Val – are also homeless as a result of the earthquake. Now they spend their days painting and creating papier-mâché constructions together at the Art Creation Foundation for Children in Jacmel. By night, they return to their displaced families.

Organizers of the programme hope the art activities will help students process some of the trauma they have experienced. UNICEF has found that such activities can provide a critically important support structure for children and young people in the

wake of a disaster, when much of the world they knew before has been shattered.



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A recent painting by Bruno Rene, who has been using painting to help process his experiences since the earthquake in Haiti left his family homeless.

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Audio

22 January 2010: Bruno Rene, 18, talks to UNICEF Radio about his experiences during the earthquake in Haiti and its aftermath.