



## Trauma-recovery Group Continues Work in Haiti

Thursday, March 25, 2010



Laurie Leitch from Trauma Resource Institute leads COZPAM staff through an exercise designed to illustrate how bodies respond to trauma. In turn, COZPAM staff will use the exercise to address trauma issues they confront as first responders to crises.

As the *New York Times* detailed in a recent article — "[In Haiti, Mental Health System Is in Collapse](#)" — Haiti is in desperate need of mental-health resources and treatment in the wake of January's earthquake. After [several days in Haiti's Central Plateau](#), a team from the Trauma Resource Institute (TRI) — brought to Haiti by UUSC to meet and

train their partners and other Haitian organizations responding to the emergency — worked in Port-au-Prince, assessing the situation and offering somatic trauma-healing techniques.

TRI met with representatives from clinics and several nongovernmental organizations, including UUSC partners the Papaye Peasant Movement ([MPP](#)), the Platform of Community Organizations of the Port-au-Prince Metropolitan Zone ([COZPAM](#)), and [ActionAid](#), as well as the Association pour la Promotion de la Santé Intégrale de la Famille (APROSIFA), and provided [Community Resiliency Model](#) (CRM) workshops in camps for internally displaced persons. According to their latest report, they also conducted more than 55 survivor interviews, which will offer a nuanced profile of survivors' concerns, symptoms, strengths, and hopes. They designed the interview so that it will not re-traumatize interviewees and can act as a form of trauma treatment itself.

People are eager for effective ways to deal with the trauma they're experiencing. Drawing on experience from other disasters, TRI is working with the knowledge that the original earthquake is just the first in a series of traumatic events for survivors; as TRI reports, "the disruption trauma of living in the wake of the earthquake for the days, weeks, months, and even years that follow can cause additional traumatic experiences." The workers from [APROSIFA](#), a Haitian grassroots health organization working in Port-au-Prince, were very enthusiastic about the training, saying that just participating in the sessions helped them work better.

As TRI navigates the challenges of working in a disaster zone — changing itineraries, unexpected numbers of participants — they are adapting their programs for various populations to best enable the innovative techniques they teach, including stabilization skills like tracking and grounding, to be disseminated and used effectively.

Concluding their initial trip to Haiti, they reflected, "The Haitian people have shared deeply with us their concerns about the present and the future. We have seen their strength and we have witnessed their suffering. We have again seen, as in China, the U.S., Rwanda, and Kenya, the healing potential of body-based models like CRM."