

Press release, Amsterdam 27 January 2010

## **The Prince Claus Fund researches damaged cultural heritage in Haiti** *Restoration of cultural heritage is of importance for human dignity*

**The Prince Claus Fund is shocked by the disaster that struck Haiti. Directly after the heavy earthquake on 12 January the Fund contacted its partners in Haiti. The Fund is currently collaborating with one of these local partners, Fondation AfricAmerica, and with the international Blue Shield network, to identify the damages to cultural heritage and conservation needs and priorities as soon as the situation will allow it. Restoration of the places that give meaning to the lives of Haitians can provide hope and consolation and contribute to restoring human dignity. The Prince Claus Fund believes that culture and therefore cultural heritage, apart from food, shelter and medical care is a basic need.**

In 2009, through its Cultural Emergency Response (CER) programme, the Prince Claus Fund restored four vodou sanctuaries in Noailles/Croix-des-Bouquets and their valuable wall-paintings in collaboration with the Fondation AfricAmerica. These sanctuaries had been severely damaged in the series of four hurricanes that swept through Haiti in Summer 2008, and are located close to the epicentre of the earthquake of 12 January. It is not presently known whether the restored wall-paintings have resisted the earthquake. The Cultural Emergency Response programme awaits further information from Fondation AfricAmerica which has not yet been able to reach the area.

### **Haitian Prince Claus Laureates unharmed**

The two Haitian Prince Claus Laureates, choreographer Jeanguy Saintus and theatre maker Frankétienne are despite the circumstances doing and have fortunately not been harmed.

Choreographer Jeanguy Saintus (1964) is almost daily keeping the Prince Claus Fund informed on the situation in his country: *"I have not been hurt physically, but the heart of Haiti bleeds. We are all mourning, for our sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters and friends. I have no more tears"*. At this point it is clear that none of the dancers of the Compagnie Ayikodans was hurt. Saintus founded Ayikodans more than 20 years ago. With his work he has put important subjects on the map like AIDS, the long road to freedom and the tension between modern society and vodou rituals. Jeanguy Saintus received a Prince Claus Award in 2008. The building that houses Compagnie Ayikodans was also damaged by the earthquake.

Frankétienne, at the time of the earthquake, was busy with the rehearsals of his new theatre play, that strangely enough focuses on an earthquake on Haiti. Frankétienne (1936) is writer and theatre maker and plays an important role in the cultural history of Haiti as an author of the first novel written in Haitian Creole. For his work he was granted a 2006 Prince Claus Award.

### **Cultural Emergency Response**

CER provides "first aid" for cultural heritage that has been damaged or destroyed by man-made or natural disasters. CER is extremely busy with mobilising colleagues, in Haiti as well as internationally, in order to assemble as much information as possible about the damages to cultural heritage and conservation needs and priorities. The Cultural Emergency Response programme was launched by the Prince Claus Fund in 2003 in reaction to the looting of the National Museum of Baghdad that shocked the world. Since then it has provided aid to cultural heritage in emergency situations in over thirty countries throughout the world.

---

The **Prince Claus Fund** actively seeks international cultural collaborations with partners of excellence in spaces of need. The Prince Claus Fund provides immediate cultural rescue as well as support to sustainable cultural processes. It takes initiatives to raise awareness on the importance of culture in everyday life and for development. The Fund works in the spirit of Prince Claus' belief that one cannot develop people, but people develop themselves. The Prince Claus Fund is based in Amsterdam and is supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Postcode Lottery. [www.princeclausfund.org](http://www.princeclausfund.org)

### **Contact:**

Prince Claus Fund

Sebas van der Sangen [s.vandersangen@princeclausfund.nl](mailto:s.vandersangen@princeclausfund.nl)

+31(0)20.3449160 / +31(0)6.19638346 (mobile)