

EXCEPTIONAL WORK

When the earthquake struck, cooperation officer Jean-Claude Jean had been working late at the Embassy, preparing for a ministerial visit planned for the following week. Jean fled from his office, located in a part of the chancery that has been destroyed and must be rebuilt, and slept outside that night on the Embassy's grounds. He went home in the morning to find his two-storey house destroyed. "There's a complete floor missing," he says. "I lost everything."

He immediately returned to the Embassy and helped to set up tables and chairs to make a waiting area for consular cases. "I could spend the time helping others," he says, "rather than thinking of what happened to me."

The LES found support among their colleagues, both LES and Canada-based staff (CBS), who were going through the same experiences, says Ambassador Rivard. "They were all dedicated to helping Canada and helping each other through this difficult time," he observes. "They provided exceptional work in spite of personal trials."

Says consular officer Régine Bernard: "The earthquake brought people closer." Bernard and her colleague Sofrady Joseph helped Canadians who were coming to the Embassy. "They were injured, they were stressed, some were in shock," says Bernard, who, like Joseph, lost her home in the disaster. They collaborated with colleagues in the immigration section to help with a mix of urgent requests, for example issuing emergency passports and citizenship papers for newborns.

Christine Boudreau, supervisor of the mission's immigration archives, acted as a liaison between the two sections. She says she was especially touched to see all of the people, from Canadian Forces soldiers to senior diplomats, helping out in the nursery that had been set up in the Embassy's reception area, caring for the adoptees as Jocelyne Pierre was finalizing their records before they left for Canada.

TRANSFORMATION SUCCESS

Pierre, one of the Embassy's three transformation champions, says that the transformation effort's main goal at the mission—to improve communications—was largely accomplished through the earthquake, especially with staff from all of the different sections working side-by-side.

"The real transformation happened on January 12," Pierre says. "The disaster brought unification of all employees—LES and CBS, from all government departments—to help Canada and Canadians."

Boudreau says that the LES were proud of and encouraged by Ambassador Rivard's assurances to staff in a speech that Canadians will stick by Haiti as it goes about the long and painful process of rebuilding from the earthquake. "There is hope for my country with the help of countries like Canada," she says.



James Louis (standing) loaned his office in the mission's garage to Ambassador Gilles Rivard.



Régine Bernard serves a Canadian.



(left to right) Sofrady Joseph, Christine Boudreau and Régine Bernard work at a table set up outside of the Embassy.