

Mexicali quake victims need our assistance, too

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You can't escape the irony. A magnitude-7 earthquake hits Haiti, halfway around the world. Fundraising concerts are broadcast worldwide, famous tennis players put on exhibition matches and \$1 billion is raised — including \$2 million from Riverside County.

Then a 7.2-magnitude quake shakes the Coachella Valley out of its Easter reverie, causing major damage to Mexicali and surrounding communities. The epicenter is less than a two-hour drive from the valley, but relief from the valley was just more than \$100,000 — most coming from Martha's Village & Kitchen in Indio.

After a Desert Sun report on the disparity, another \$12,000 trickled in from the Coachella Valley.

Of course, the impact on Haiti in January was enormous compared to the nearby temblor — 230,000 dead and 1 million people homeless.

In Mexicali, two people died and 2,500 were left homeless. But the problems our neighbors are facing are serious, especially now that serious heat has arrived. The quake also collapsed a hospital, made roads impassable and knocked out the Delta Canal, used to irrigate farmland.

“It's really disappointing as a community that we can help Haiti and Chile and China, but we've forgotten about the people in our own backyard,” said José Gonzalez, who is leading the fundraising efforts at Martha's Village.

Gonzalez said two local foundations are considering major contributions.

We admire Father Joe Carroll, leader of Martha's Village and St. Vincent de Paul Village in San Diego. Despite the fact that his organization is in a \$1.5 million fiscal hole this year, he's still leading the effort to help in Mexicali. He is not accepting a salary this year.

The Mexicali quake destroyed nearly 1,000 homes and damaged another 1,300. Many families went for three weeks without potable water. Farmers could lose a third of their crop this year because of flooding.

On the U.S. side of the border, many buildings in downtown Calexico were damaged in the April 4 earthquake.

The Desert Sun applauds the efforts to help in Haiti, but help is also critically needed close to home.