

CARE Haiti
Scout's Honor Story
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Rick Perera, CARE Haiti Communications Coordinator

You might expect to see Wilner Ulysse helping a little, old lady cross the street. That's the classic image of a dutiful Scout. But Wilner, age 23, has a much more important good deed for today.

He is one of the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Girl Guides of Léogane, a hard-hit town near the epicenter of last week's deadly earthquake. Their town was all but destroyed -- most people here have lost homes or family members, and funerals have become a tragically frequent occurrence. But despite their own trauma and loss, the young people of Léogane are rallying to the aid of their fellow citizens.

On Wednesday, Wilner and his fellow Scouts joined the CARE team delivering urgent help near the center of Léogane. The telecommunications office, idle since phone service was knocked out by the quake, is serving as a temporary town hall and humanitarian aid center. Here, the CARE staff set up operations to deliver vital aid to the traumatized survivors, above all women.

The job of the Scouts is to provide security and comfort. The boys, tall and brave, stand guard at the entrance of the compound. The girls walk side-by-side with the women, softly touching the occasional arm or shoulder, as they walk to the distribution point. The women look exhausted, but a few smiles break out as they receive a precious gift -- hygiene kits including soap, toothpaste, towels, and sanitary napkins, all packed in a five-gallon bucket that can be used to collect and purify water. Still, the faces at the CARE truck are tired, lined, and sweaty.

The bright young Scouts look serious -- most have suffered grievous losses of their own -- but their faces are full of compassion for the mothers and grandmothers they gently guide.

"We can only imagine how traumatized and heartbroken these women feel," said Sophie Perez, CARE Haiti Country Director. "As much as material aid, they need to know that the world cares about them, and that they are not alone. To have these lovely young people literally standing by their side is a great comfort at this terrible time."

Many of the women at Wednesday's distribution have lost their homes and are living in the open, in tents and makeshift shelters. Even those whose houses were left standing are often afraid to go inside, because of a series of terrifying aftershocks.

"To lose one's home, loved ones, and then still to feel constantly afraid -- it's more than anyone should have to bear," says Sophie. "We are committed to work very hard so that they do not continue to suffer needlessly."

And so is Wilner. In seven years as a Scout, it's certainly the most important thing he's accomplished.