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Rapper enlists celebrities to aid Haiti

By JACQUELINE CHARLES

Haiti's food crisis, which last month sparked days of rioting and deadly demonstrations, has received attention from civil rights leaders to members of the U.S. Congress to Latin American leaders.

Now it's attracting the likes of U.S. celebrities. Grammy-Award winning musician Paul Simon, model Petra Nemcova and influential economist Jeffrey Sachs are all giving their support to hip hop artist Wyclef Jean, who on Tuesday launched Together for Haiti, a \$48 million fundraising effort aimed at providing food, creating jobs and supporting local agriculture in the artist's impoverished Caribbean homeland.

All were on hand in New York to hear Jean speak about why a coordinated emergency response was key to helping Haitians cope with the current crisis created by rising global food and fuel prices.

The effort involves his Yéle Haiti Foundation, the United Nation's World Food Program and the Pan American Development Foundation. Over the next six months, they plan to create labor-intensive jobs, paying workers with cash and food; distribute food to malnourished children under five and pregnant women as part of WFP's existing food assistance program; and provide fertilizer, seeds, training and micro-enterprise grants as well as support local agriculture. "It starts with the ground," Jean told The Miami Herald in a telephone interview, emphasizing the role domestic production can play in cushioning the impact from the food crisis.

``Let's start implementing projects so that we can create jobs. Job creation will slow down the violence."

Jean pointed out that Haiti is only miles away from Miami's sun-drenched shores and what happens there usually has an impact here.

When things get tough in Haiti, he said, ``Haitians get on the boats and try to get to Miami."

``We'll be turned back or some of us will drown at sea. It's a domino effect."

So far the campaign has raised \$1.5 million, with the Haitian cellphone company Voila among the corporate contributors.

A tax deductible donation can be made at www.TogetherforHaiti.org or send a check made out to "Together for Haiti," to Friends of the World Food Program, 1819 L Street NW Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20036.

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