



Catholic News Service

Reprinted with permission from Catholic News Service

Primitive but effective, soup pots continue to feed quake victims

Pat Zapor

SAN CLEMENTE, Peru (CNS) -- A system of feeding thousands of people along Peru's central coast through a network of open soup pots in the streets would have seemed primitive two months ago. But after an Aug. 15 earthquake flattened more than 70,000 homes in the region 130 or so miles south of Lima, the "ollas" that feed people in their neighborhoods are a welcome indication that there is at least some kind of system at work. For the first 10 days after the quake, the people of San Clemente might as well have been 130 miles to the west, on an island in the Pacific Ocean. "We had no help at all for the first 10 days," explained Saravia Atuncar, a member of St. Martin de Porres Parish in San Clemente. He and other parishioners met with two U.S. reporters and representatives of Catholic Relief Services-Peru in a church hall Sept. 26 to explain how the community has coped with the disaster. The town of 25,000 people had about 1,500 houses destroyed in the magnitude 8 earthquake that killed 519 people in the region and left 18 dead in San Clemente. Like neighboring communities, San Clemente lost electricity, water and sewer services. Many roads were blocked by debris and downed power poles, Atuncar explained. At the time of the earthquake, he was at a meeting in that same church hall, which was undamaged. Half of his home collapsed, and the other half is so damaged it's uninhabitable, Atuncar said. But he, his wife, children and grandchildren were uninjured.