



Coastal Connection of Louisiana; 530 Slattery Blvd., Shreveport, LA 71104

## Haiti Country Update



Just about a year ago, Haiti like the whole world started facing this new challenging pandemic, the covid 19, on March 19, 2020, the president shutdown all non-necessary businesses, places of worship, airports and borders. But after a year, we can say that this pandemic didn't really hit the country comparing to other countries knowing our inability to respond effectively to such a health challenge. Until today, only 12 732 cases of covid-19 were reported for only 251 deaths. Recently, Haitian's authorities rejected the covid vaccine AstraZeneca that World Health Organization had proposed for them. Currently, throughout the country, there is no longer any curfew and no real barrier gestures or other measures to limit the spread of the covid. The only thing that is always effective is the wearing of a mask.

Haiti is increasingly unstable as political tensions continue to rise, food insecurity worsens, and the country undergoes a currency crisis. The UN estimates that 4.4 million Haitians will be in need of humanitarian assistance this year (nearly 40% of the estimated population). Haiti's currency, the gourde, had a sudden and manipulated drastic appreciation. Because many Haitians rely on funds sent from friends and family in the US, this has

put many people in a tough position as their buying power with US dollars has depreciated by 60%.

The opposition claims that the president's term has ended. Based on the constitution, would expire on February 7, 2021. Considering that the former president Michel Martelly didn't have time to make any presidential elections, he was replaced by a temporary president, Mr. J. Privert, who was a senator. He made the elections, and Mr. J. Moise took the power on February 7, 2017. But the constitution does not take into consideration temporary presidents. So, the opposition thinks that the current president must leave power this year, however, the constitution calls for 5 years after the end of the mandate of the former president, which technically is after Mr. J. Privert's interim term. Without taking into account this gap February 7<sup>th</sup> 2016 - February 7<sup>th</sup> 2017. Mr. J. Moise says he will leave power on February 7, 2022 since he took power on February 7, 2017, 5 years like the constitution requires so there is one year left under current leadership.

Haitian Prime Minister Joseph Jouthe announced his resignation on April 14<sup>th</sup> as the country faces a spike in killings and kidnappings and prepares for an upcoming constitutional referendum and a general election later this year. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, 7 members of the Catholic

clergy were abducted near Port-au-Prince and are being held for \$1 million ransom. Haiti's Catholic Church has spoken out against the government's failure to act over the unrest claiming the country is facing a "descent into hell".

For the moment, the government is trying to organize a referendum to change the constitution just before holding elections at the very end of the year. Therefore, the end of this year will be crucial and the country will probably have to face social and political insurgencies. Many cases of kidnapping were reported since the beginning of the 2021 year, some of which have been very popular, for example the attempted kidnapping of Dr. Ernst Pady, this famous pediatrician, who was killed because he resisted. Another kidnapping involved 4 people, including a pastor, a pianist and two other choir members while they were live on social media last week. Finally, we must share some information about the ever-increasing gang violence and their continuous activity to seize control of the country. Recently there was a famous gang orchestrated prison jailbreak which led to the death of the prison's director and 24 others, while a total of 400 escaped. The strongest gang leader successfully escaped, but was later killed.

Please keep Haiti and those affected by the violence and kidnappings in your prayers.

## Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth

Construction of the Cuvier school has been completed. Currently about 250 students are attending the new school. Our school-based clinic has opened for business with support of a full-time nurse and the physician oversite pediatrician Fessianne Moise, M.D..

The nurse will also make home visits to follow up on these sick children and provide an in-school health program. Phase 2 will include a free health clinic for the families of the students. Phase 3 will provide free health care to the community surrounding the school. We are working on beginning to fill a wish list of supplies and equipment for the school and the clinic.

Additionally, we are working with the sisters to identify how we can help also address clean water through a program they call Water Women project. The expansion of this program would allow a new group of women from the village of TiMache to provide thousands of gallons of water for their neighbors every month. More to come.



### Kobonal Mission in Haiti Update

On a brighter note, the Kobonal Haiti Mission is far enough away from the capital to be able to continue their good work virtually unaffected. Thanks to your generous support last year, children are attending nearby high schools (school started in the fall). The Kobonal staff recently met with all 500 high school and university scholarship students to encourage them in their faith and to guide them toward becoming good citizens.

The scholarship students volunteer at the mission by helping work in the community gardens, which are used for the mission's primary school lunches. The scholarship students are also encouraged to participate in the mission's many formation activities including attending mass, bible study, catechism, and more. In fact, a total of 128 children celebrated their first communion Easter weekend. The mission's primary school expansion construction is now complete and an additional 340 students were accepted bringing the total student body to 1,600 children!

The mission is putting a greater emphasis on home repairs for poor families and are moving towards their goal of 60 home repairs and 25 new home construction for this fiscal year. The water projects are also moving along well and we hope to have all 3 systems completed soon which will help 1,419 people. This year there are 43 people participating in the microloan program which helps families start small business ventures to increase their income. A special thank you to each and every one of you who are playing such a crucial role in bringing hope to suffering children and families in Haiti!

Despite the many challenges the pandemic has brought, you continue to share Christ's love with those most in need, giving them hope for a brighter future! May God bless each one of you abundantly.

We remain hopeful that soon we will be able to return to Kobonal and continue our work there using the medical equipment, supplies, shelving, clothing, and other equipment that we successfully shipped to Haiti. Our team from Louisiana, primarily led by Alice Bryant, is attempting to coordinate a charting system so that any team whether dental or medical has a paper trail/history of patients seen in the clinic. We have built a storage room for dental supplies and communicate with other teams to better understand the needs of particular items to efficiently run the clinics. As an adjunct to our ministry in Kobonal, we are trying to address needs at Missionaries of Charity for their post-acute care facilities and their community outreach program, with medicine, diapers, and clothing specific to the different age groups.





The Onaville Community Health Center, located in Onaville 18, for almost 6 years is providing primary care to the population of not only Onaville but the whole Croix des Bouquets County. When the clinic opened in 2015, we started with only basic rapid laboratory tests like Urine (Urine stick test), CBC (Only the hemoglobin rate), Malaria and pregnancy test. But since 2017, we started adding slowly new laboratory tests and increase our staff.

We have now 2 part time nurses working in our Hypertension's clinic but they are working and get paid by one of our partners, Laman Outrich. One new full time nurse in our triage and one new part time doctor. In terms of new tests available currently in our facilities, we now have: CBC, Malaria, Widal, Urine, STD's check, sickling test, cross matching test, blood glucose test and other special tests that we operate from a partnership with 2 others doctors, a sonographer for all type of ultrasound and a cardiologist for EKG and follow up for those who need to be referred.

We have different programs: Hypertension, diabetes and prenatal program. In these programs, the main emphasis is prevention, education and treatment / follow up. At the clinic, we provide free medications to our patients.



During this pandemic Covid we received personal protective equipment like masks, gloves, gowns, etc. mostly from Coastal Connection. CAM sends us some medications sometimes, in addition to those sent by Coastal Connection and those we purchase.

Coastal Connection has partnered with James Curdiff, the clinic's founder, to pay operating expenses and payroll for the clinic and adjacent guest housing. The continued biggest financial challenge is finding additional dollars to purchase the needed medications. This is a very poor population with no money and no other access to medications.



## United States Mission Work: Shipping Warehouse



This year has slowed us down some in having scheduled pick-ups and shipments, but not completely. For example, this past week we successfully collected a complete dental practice including supplies, multiple dental chairs, X-Ray machines, sterilizers, etc., etc.. We also just sent 30 hospital beds and about 2,000 surgical instruments and 5 stainless steel surgical cabinets to Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach in Springfield, IL. They continue to successfully ship medical supplies and equipment to 94 countries in need around the world.

At the end of the fall/early winter, we had another 18-wheeler leave our warehouse and make it to Springfield, IL to the Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach. We also had a load of medical equipment and supplies, boxes of clothing, and other supplies that were shipped successfully to Kobonal in Haiti.

We have also recently shipped multiple boxes of medical supplies to our clinic partners in Haiti.



## School Food Pantry Programs

In 2020-2021, the COVID-19 pandemic threatened the lives and livelihoods of people throughout the world. Decisions are being made that weigh economic cost against the lives of people in the USA, and no matter the outcome, the most vulnerable members of society continue to fare the worst. Specifically, in Louisiana, our children are at the highest risk for food insecurity in the USA at a rate of 32.3% or 354,000 children, Louisiana also ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in food insecurity for its entire state at a rate of 20.1% or stated another way, 938,280 affected households (Feeding America, October 2020 Report

[https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief\\_Local%20Impact\\_10.2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief_Local%20Impact_10.2020_0.pdf)).

Recognizing the growing need has challenged us to expand our school-based food pantry program. Recently, we have added two college food pantry programs to the 8 elementary schools we support in the city of Shreveport. This year we should be approaching 30,000 snacks/meals that we will have provided. Special thanks goes out to our partner the Food Bank of Northwest Louisiana.

As we begin to turn our attention to the 2021-2022 school year, we are trying to figure out what other schools we could add to our project.

# Empowering Women Through Investment (EWI) Program <sup>5</sup>

## New Program:

The mission statement of Coastal Connection of Louisiana states that we believe in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in today's world. One key initiative that we are developing is the opportunity to educate, assist, and financially support younger, especially diverse, women as they learn financial planning and portfolio management.

As a 2019 report from the TIAA Institute and Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center (GFLEC) shows, African Americans constitute 13% and Latinos constitute about 15% of the American population and thus both groups play a critical role in the function, success, and sustainability of the economy in the U.S. today. Yet, compared to whites, African Americans and Latinos score significantly lower on the Personal Finance Index on eight indicators (earning, consuming, borrowing, saving, investing, insuring, understanding risk, and gathering information) by a measure of 38% (AAs/Latinos) to 55% (whites).

Critically, the intersectional link for diverse women of color is even more pronounced as it relates to financial literacy and personal financial success. Women of color score significantly lower on these metrics by a measure of 17% to 26% compared to white women (and even worse compared to men). These gaps show that not only is there a real opportunity for women of color to benefit from financial investment programs and financial literacy initiatives, but that these impacts can be extended greatly to have a larger impact on the American economy generally.

## Objectives:

1. Establish a female stock club that focuses on group learning, expansion of financial literacy, and group initiative on making investment decisions
2. Meet every other month for 18 months
3. At the end of the 18-month period, the initial \$1000 of donated cash per participant and earned investment

proceeds will be distributed equally amongst the program's graduates to invest on their own

4. Learn to make financial investments, monitor market changes, and learn the language of the profession
5. Know how to manage a household budget weekly, monthly, and annually
6. Develop financial goals for oneself and family
7. Long-term planning—retirement & investment—planning today leads to greater success tomorrow
  - a. Not only does month to month and day to day budgeting prove crucial for financial well-being, but so too does being able to plan for the long-term.
8. Understand the keys to financial literacy by learning the “lingo”
  - a. In order to be empowered and succeed in the areas of financial investment and planning, one of the keys to succeeding in any field and any professional arena is understanding the language, the lingo, and the keys to success including how to avoid the pitfalls/easy mistakes.
  - b. By starting with an introduction to all of these skills, knowledge, terminology, etc., this is a simple way to help elevate women into being more empowered and confident in their own financial literacy by knowing what to talk about, what to ask for, what they need, etc.

We are currently identifying women to participate in our program. Our intent is to begin in August 2021. We are also working to finalize our curriculum for the 18 months. Please pray for our team and the participants as things kick off soon.

**COASTAL CONNECTION OF LA**

530 SLATTERY BLVD.  
Shreveport, LA 71104

*Mission statement:*

*Coastal Connection was created as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization focused on addressing both domestic and international development goals of extreme poverty and hunger, primary and secondary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, ensuring environmental sustainability, and striving for universal access to health services. These development goals will be achieved through global partnerships with like-minded organizations sharing similar philosophies and values.*

**We're on the Web!**

See us at:  
[www.coastalconnection.net](http://www.coastalconnection.net)  
OR on our Facebook page at  
<https://m.facebook.com/pages/category/Nonprofit-Organization/Coastal-Connection-2396932317009986/>

## Prison Re-Entry Program

During the winter, we had the opportunity to partner with the Louisiana Department of Corrections. We learned that just in Northern Louisiana alone over 5,000 men are actively in the program. After my retirement, I had over 30 suits and sports coats, along with shirts, ties, and slacks that I wanted to donate to a place of real need. These men need appropriate dress that they can wear to job interviews etc. So, on a semi-annual basis, we will be working to collect professional dress for these men. Please begin to check your own closets for clothing to help these men begin to rebuild their lives.

### Save the Date!

Plans are underway for our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual "Droids and Dragons" virtual trivia contest. Date is October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 6:30pm. Remember the funds raised with our partners at the Food Bank of Northwest Louisiana go to support our food pantry program and the school backpack program. More to come!!!



### Thank You!

We want to say thank you to all of our donors who continue to support our ministry during these crazy times. Your financial support and prayers are needed now more than ever. As you can see, our ministry is alive and working to carry out its mission.

We will continue to pray for you and your families.

Yours in Christ,  
Stephen and Mona Wright