



# COASTAL CONNECTION

NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2022

## WELCOME

Happy belated Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year 2023! It has been over a year since our last newsletter. Even in the midst of all the worldwide craziness, our ministry has grown and continues to serve the poor and forgotten, both at home and in other parts of the world. Over the last plus year, so much has happened that we thought we should break up our news into two separate letters. This edition of our newsletter will cover our international ministries. Our next newsletter will cover U.S. and domestic activities, to be released in early 2023. Please enjoy and know we remain so humbled by your prayers and financial support.

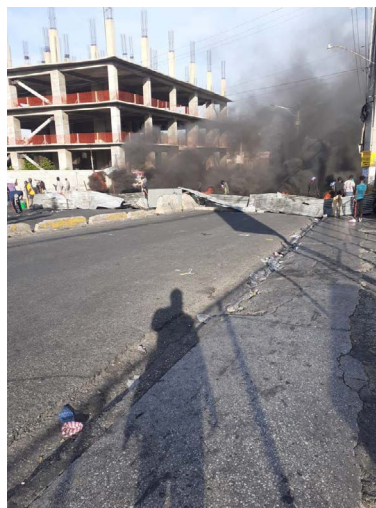
## HAITI COUNTRY UPDATE

Haiti is in the middle of a humanitarian disaster. Gang warfare has deepened since the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in the summer of 2021.

To understand the current situation in Haiti, you can look at two major events this summer. In July, rival gangs fought for control of Cite Soleil, the largest slum in Haiti where about 300,000 people live. The war lasted about a week and resulted in hundreds of deaths. Gang members burned down entire neighborhoods and women were raped as a tool of war. It is horrific. Recent numbers show there have been over 650 people kidnapped for ransom and over 700 killed in 2022.

The next significant challenge for people living in Haiti came a few months later when Prime Minister Ariel Henry doubled the price of fuel. This sparked riots and protests

by gang members and citizens alike, nearly plunging the country into anarchy. In protest, the gangs closed most major roadways, blocked the port exits, and essentially closed down the country. Black market gas prices reached as high as \$30 USD per gallon.



*Left: Reflection of  
gang and street  
violence across  
Haiti*

This latest disaster has caused a terrible food shortage throughout the country, especially in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. These famine-like conditions are driving many to survive on rainwater and by boiling leaves for food.

The lack of fuel has also exacerbated the sanitary conditions, taking things from very bad to almost unbearable. Trash continues to pile up in the cities and when hard rains come, the roads run with streams of floating trash. Kids are (of course) barefoot and running through the muck.

This country's most recent challenge has arrived in the form of a cholera outbreak. Not yet as bad as it was in 2010 after the earthquake, but it is still beginning to grow. To date, 11,648 suspected cases have been reported and 949 cases have been officially confirmed. Hospitals have reported over 140 deaths and over 60 deaths reported at home – all from cholera. Facing a growing cholera outbreak alone is difficult, but doing so with fuel shortages is even more challenging. The Haitian national electric grid system

is unreliable. Hospitals and clinics closed since they had no fuel to run their generators.

There is a little bit of recent good news. The gangs have begun to once again allow the gas trucks to run, delivering gas to local stations. However, gas is still at an all-time high and the government has no current plans to supplement gas prices as they have done in the past.



*Thanks to Board member Gene Cicardo; he and Stephen Wright attended the Haiti Unity Summit held on the Southern Law campus.*

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## SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. ELIZABETH

Conditions in Haiti continue to deteriorate. They have no functioning government, military or police – violence and chaos have filled the void. These harsh conditions have made it impossible for Dawn, Sr. Dianne, and other sisters to remain in the country. The group has returned to New Jersey and they are running their ministries remotely, relying on the committed staff and partners they have in Haiti.

At different times this past year, gang members kidnapped two staff members and later released them unharmed. One staff member was shot in a gang crossfire. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time, but has recovered after surgery.

The school was open and closed throughout the year, so



*Above: Children eating lunch at the school supported and run by Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth*

the team was creative and developed camps where gates remained open to campus and students did not wear uniforms. Students attended class 3 days a week. This allowed for some continued studies but did not violate the directives of the gangs or the government.

The medical clinic for children and families provided healthcare services with the addition of a new nurse and the remote services of our physician.

We were able to donate 600 lbs. of school supplies and 3 new sewing machines with the help of our partners,

Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach in Springfield, IL. Additionally, food was provided to the school when possible throughout the year.

Many other major accomplishments were made by these ministries under very difficult circumstances, and a few are mentioned here:

- Construction of two safe houses on campus for staff
- Installed solar energy system
- Expanded school with 8th and 9th grades
- Continuation of agriculture and goat program funded by our friends at MARS



*Both: food being delivered from Ona Ville Community Health Center to Pastor Jordany for the school children*

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## MARIE LOUISE BAYLE CENTER

We helped fund another program in partnership with Cross Catholic – the Marie Louise Bayle Center, located in Ouanaminthe, Haiti. This program provides life-changing services to local children and families.

Our assistance this past year helped provide:

- Preschool classes for 171 children
- Primary school education for 146 children
- Nutritious meals and medical support for 317 children
- Breastfeeding training & pregnancy support for 150 women
- Childcare development training for 400 parents
- Medical follow-ups for 175 newborns and children
- Developmental therapy & nutrition support for 85 babies



*Preschool children in a classroom at the Marie Louise Bayle Center*

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## KOBONAL HAITI MISSION

Even though the Kobonal mission is located in Hinche, far outside the city of Port-au-Prince, it too has been greatly affected by the gang violence and civil unrest. Cross Catholic Outreach has remained committed to Father Glenn Meaux and his team in Haiti. But unfortunately, all this violence has made travel to and from the country very difficult and has forced Fr. Meaux to remain in the U.S. for longer than he would prefer. With very few exceptions, there has been no travel of medical



professionals or other missionaries to Kobonal. This means a number of medical and dental issues remain unaddressed.

Recently, a cargo shipment of 10 stoves for the schools, solar supplies, and other much needed supplies made it safely from Louisiana to Kobonal. This project was made possible by the hard work of members of the Serving Because of Christ ministry from Central Louisiana.

While we did play a small role in arranging and funding the shipping of the cargo, our primary focus for the Kobonal mission last year was the Kobonal Water Project. This past year, a water station was built in Kobonal Cross Road and five new wells constructed for the communities of Colladere, Morique, Rhode I, and Rhode II. The mission was also able to repair 13 existing wells. The new wells benefited 1928 children and 617 adults, while the repaired wells benefited 2500 in the surrounding villages.

When a decision is made to drill a new well, a water committee and leader are selected by the villagers. They are responsible for ongoing hygiene, training, and repairs of the well, and hold the community accountable for the use of the well. At each well, a hand pump is installed, and a protective wall is constructed.

Other programs we have supported at the Kobonal Haiti Mission in the past continue to move forward despite the numerous challenges facing the country. Programs like the microloans to women and feeding outreach are even more important with food costs nearly triple historical levels. Over 1600 children at two school locations continue to receive education and a daily meal. However, school schedules were interrupted this past year. Safe housing is receiving a renewed focus. The goal is to ensure that as many as possible have safe housing and are not living on the streets or in crowded shelters.



Top: A newly drilled well with protective wall; Bottom: Kobonal Water Project

## ONA VILLE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

These past 18 months have brought incredible challenges to the operation of the Ona Ville Community Clinic and its ministry. The founder and previous partner of ours, Mr. James Curdiff, passed away. After a quick trip to visit Jim before his passing, he asked if we, Coastal Connection, would be willing to work with Vision4Word (with founder Kendra Luna) on the continuation of the clinic. We agreed and now have a new partnership. James signed all his Haitian assets over to Kendra's ministry. This change now makes Coastal Connection the primary financial supporter of the Ona Ville clinic. Soon after this change, the clinic and guest house landlord began negotiations for a new lease, which

took over 4 months and lots of Haitian legal services to resolve.

All this was occurring as we found ourselves in the middle of gang violence and civil unrest. When word got out about James's death, several of the gang members showed up at our clinic's doorsteps demanding to speak to someone in charge. As it turned out, they needed reassurance that the clinic would remain open. Our clinic treats many of the gang members, their families, and of course, the community. This reassurance by Dr. Garry Thomas, our local leader, bought the clinic and its staff

a safe pass to travel from home and back to the clinic through local gang roadblocks. While not completely safe, it has helped. Yet, there have been several days over the past year when we had to keep the clinic closed for fear of staff safety. Also, the high gas prices have presented new challenges in getting staff to work, supplies to the clinic, and gas for our generators.

With the leadership of Dr. Thomas, we have managed to keep business stable for the clinic. We have made every payroll and have managed to pre-pay our rent for the next 4 years.

When the roads were completely unsafe to travel, we saw a noticeable decrease in patients coming to the clinic, even though most arrive on foot. The clinic usually sees 70 patients per day with two physicians. Unfortunately, we have also seen an increase in gunshot victims, including children, due to the gang violence. We have discovered new and creative ways to ship much needed medical supplies to the clinic. Our intent is to continue stocking supplies from the U.S. as much as possible.

Finally, we are pleased to report that we have not seen any cholera cases at the clinic. Our staff has taken the necessary, precautionary measures as patients arrive at the clinic.



Left: Food supplies shared with pregnant women and elderly patients of the clinic  
Above: Ona Ville Community Clinic waiting room



## EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

We have been working with Vision4Word on an earthquake response strategy for the southern area of Haiti most affected by the magnitude 7.2 earthquake that hit in 2021. In partnership with Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth, we have helped to secure a 40-foot cargo container that can now be used to store all the supplies being held in one of the tent cities. A little more homework on our part is needed to see what our next steps to rebuild those communities will be.



Above: example of tents we donated in earthquake relief effort  
Right: supplies being distributed at earthquake site





## AFRICA

### Medical Services

New opportunities have presented themselves for Coastal Connection to provide medical planning and operations advice to Catholic sponsored ministries in several African countries. Through a recent relationship with Missio Invest, we have been able to work with Catholic health ministries in Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, and Ghana.

One specific example was a trip Billy McRae and Stephen Wright took to Nigeria to offer assistance to St. Dominic Catholic Hospital in Ibadan, Nigeria. A second trip is being scheduled in early March of 2023 to visit facilities in Kenya and Uganda.



Above: Board members Billy McRae and Stephen Wright meet with two leaders from St. Dominic Catholic Hospital in Ibadan, Nigeria alongside healthcare consultant Ezinne

### Agriculture

Through a relationship with Missionary Agricultural Resource Services (MARS), we have been able to facilitate the funding of four agricultural grants to various Catholic ministries in Africa. The first grant was to the Katigonda Seminary Farm in Uganda for the purchase and installation of a solar water pump system to be used on the coffee plantation. A second grant went to St. Mary's Rubya Seminary Farm in Bukoba, Tanzania to expand their piggery project. The third grant went to the Little Brothers and Little Servants of Mary Pineapple Farm in Rwanda. The fourth and final grant went to African Benedictine Sisters, Naruny Sisters Cashew Farm, Tanzania to expand their cashew farm, and for tree pruning in particular.



Left: Solar-powered water pump  
Right: Tanzanian Piggery Project

## 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*