



# COASTAL CONNECTION

NEWSLETTER | Summer 2024

## WELCOME

Thank you for your support and prayers. Please enjoy this read about our international activities over the last few months.

## HAITI UPDATE

In the last 60 years, the world has spent over 20 BILLION dollars on infrastructure, economic development, and humanitarian aid to Haiti. The U.S. alone has spent over 6 BILLION. What has been the result? The cons are worse than in *any* living Haitian's memory and some are even bold enough to suggest it is worse than when the country won its independence in 1804.



Since the assassination of President Moïse in 2021, gangs have filled in the political void by gaining 90% control of Port-Au-Prince and increasing control of the countryside. They have ruled with impunity by using sexual violence as a tool of war and “sweeping” neighborhoods by burning houses to the ground. Gangs have institutionalized kidnapping, making it the most prosperous industry in the country. It is projected that given the current rate of statistical trends, 7,000 people will die through gang violence in 2024 with more than 2,500 killed or injured in the first three months – compared to 4,500 in 2023.

Over 5,000 people will also be displaced. Gangs have wielded their power to close roads, banks, markets, schools, coastal seaports, and airports. Gangs also control the exchange of goods and services and the costs of each. Gasoline and food are in short supply. Even when available, they are out of reach of most Haitians who can't pay the 300% inflation on a gallon of gas or a bag of rice. Nearly half of Haiti's population is living with food insecurities and thousands are at risk of starvation.

Vitel'homme Innocent's picture on the FBI's “Ten Most Wanted” list of fugitives suggests a crazed man - eyes wide and wild, teeth-bared. It's the photo you might expect for a gang leader accused of destabilizing a nation, who claims to be under divine protection and has a \$2 million bounty on his head for alleged kidnappings. In person, he projects a different image, at least to guests. Powerful, and surrounded by armed acolytes who jump at his glance-but also carefully solicitous, with a cooler full of sandwiches for his visitors, and a tendency to wax philosophical in conversation. Innocent is under sanction by the United Nations for extensive human rights abuses committed by Kramer Barye under his leadership and is wanted by the Haitian National Police for kidnapping Foreign ransom, murder, rape, armed rape, vehicle theft, theft and destruction of property. His group is known to target the Haitian National Police directly and has sought to seize some of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Port-Au-Prince.

There are a half-million unauthorized guns in Haiti. Haiti has no firearms or ammunition manufacturing capabilities. Guns are smuggled into Haiti with Florida being the primary source. This is a lucrative business for gun manufacturers and gun dealers who can charge up to \$8000 for a semiautomatic rifle that costs a few hundred dollars in the U.S. Weapons sold at gun shows for \$400-\$500 can draw as much as 20 times that in Haiti. How are the gangs able to assume more control of a country than its government, police, and military? GUNS! They have stronger and bigger weapons than any official in Haiti. Where do they get these weapons? Most come from the U.S. This must stop!

**What is next for Haiti?** In October 2023, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorized a multinational security support mission (MSS) to Haiti. The resolution was co-drafted by the United States and Ecuador in response to Haiti's request for international support to address insecurity and gang violence. The mission will be led by Kenya and is authorized to deploy for one year, with a review after nine months. The resolution also gives the mission the authority to “take all necessary measures,” which could include the use of force. The mission will be funded by voluntary contributions, with the U.S. pledging up to \$200 million. The first and second group of an expected 2,500 foreign police officers and soldiers from Kenya arrived in Haiti in June and July. The development came more than a year and a half after Haiti's Prime Minister issued a plea for help.



## HEALTH INEQUITY IN HAITI

As of April 2024, access to health services in Haiti is dire with over 4.7 million people requiring humanitarian aid related to healthcare. The country's health system has failed, with most of the state facilities closed due to security issues, lack of infrastructure and mass displacement of medical professionals and their patients.

To help address this void, Coastal Connection is working with a vendor called Mediverse, based in Nigeria. The goal is to bring a cloud-based telemedicine solution to the country. Initially, we believe we will target up to eight locations which will have service access with the Christian Community Clinic as the primary home base. It will also afford us the opportunity to have online medical records that can be accessed in Haiti and the United States in the future.

Our goal is to have the system fully functional in the fall of this year. We believe this could be a game changer for the country and its population. More information will be coming soon.



*Patients waiting to be seen by a physician at Christian Community Clinic.*



*Dr. Garry Thomas sees Christian Community Clinic patient.*

## FOOD INSECURITY

As you previously read, food insecurity has become the number one issue behind safety for Haitians. Our partner, Vision 4 Word, has successfully built a relationship with Feed the Starving Children and Food for the Poor. Through their food donations in 2024, we have been able to distribute 526 boxes of food totaling over 460,000 meals. Additionally, we have 291 boxes at the clinic with 600 more on the way.

Praise the Lord!



## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CLINIC

In September 2015, the Christian Community Clinic started providing primary healthcare to patients in the Onaville area in Haiti. We had a huge facility with a clinic, guest house and storage facility all on the campus. After several years of great success, things began to go from bad in July of 2021 to horrible by May of 2023. In 2022, our original clinic was attacked by two gangs, the Canaan and the 400 Marozo, who were fighting for control of the area. We immediately shut down our services to ensure the safety of our staff. After a couple of months, we reopened our clinic under a new name and in a new location (Lizon) about 5 miles from our old location. Unfortunately, we lost all of our equipment and some of our supplies. In early 2023, gang violence got worse and ensured the shutdown of our second location. We were able to see some patients using the What's App and renew prescriptions, etc. Our last patients were seen in May of 2023.

At the beginning of this year, we decided to start working on the idea of leaving the capital completely and moving



*Christian Community Clinic grand opening*

to a safer permanent location. We chose Paillant in the mountainous region of the southern peninsula of Haiti. This area is much safer, beautiful, and in much need of medical services.

In June of this year, we began to see patients in Salagnac Paillant. This soft opening will move into full operations by the end of July. Fully operational, our clinic will have three consultation rooms, lab, pharmacy, a triage area, waiting areas, offices, stockroom and a dental clinic. We will also be able to house visiting staff when the opportunity presents itself. This location has solar energy and STAR LINK satellite services for internet access. The blessing of the clinic is scheduled for Sunday, July 28th and the community Grand Opening is July 29th. Special thanks to Dr. Garry Thomas for his dedicated service to our patients, our staff, and this new community. None of this would be possible without him.



*Blessing and dedication ceremony*

## SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. ELIZABETH

For nearly 15 years, the Sisters of Charity operated their ministry in Cuvier, Haiti. They built a new grammar school for 300 children and had seven other programs in five different locations that included micro loan programs, emergency food distribution, agronomy and farming, water purification project, housing and road reconstruction, medical clinic, and summer recreational and peace camps. After their medical clinic was overrun by gangs, three members of the school staff kidnapped, a child murdered, and a teacher wounded, they had no alternative but to close all their programs in June of 2023.





A month later, they had the opportunity to re-open a school in Santo that had been closed seven years prior due to lack of funding. By August, because of the generosity of their supporters, they were able to start accepting students. By September, 90 students were enrolled. Despite incredible odds, it has been a very successful year. Here are some of the comments shared by Raul, the school's administrator.

### From parents:

**“My daughter has never enjoyed going to school as much as she has this year.”**

**“The school not only cares about my child, but about our family and our community.”**

### From teachers:

**“I have never been treated so well and respected so much as I am at the School of the Good Shepherd.”**

**“I enjoy going to school every day because the children are thriving.”**

### From administrators:

**“I never imagined that we could have been as successful as we have been this past school year.”**

**“This summer the children are having the time of their lives. Though the staff is tired from a very busy school year and running four summer camps (agronomy, peace, music, and reading), they are happy and excited to come to work every day.”**



For the 2024-2025 school year, the Sisters of Charity have received a grant to expand the school to 120 students and start a cooking program. Recently, they received a donation that will allow them to expand either the grammar school or the trade school. They feel blessed by all the new opportunities that await them. They give thanks to God and all their founders, including Coastal Connection, for giving their ministry a fresh new beginning.

Coastal Connection's primary focus was the funding for reopening of a medical clinic with full-time nurse and part-time doctor. This is the fourth year of this partnership. Additionally, MARS funded a home-based agronomy program.

# UGANDA

## Kitovu Hospital VVF Program

The recent annual report for Kitovu Hospital showed great success for the program in 2023. Five surgical camps were held. A total of 625 women were registered in the program with 367 women having surgery and 258 receiving medical services. A number of the women participated in the Reintegration Program where these women develop skills to help financially support them as they re-enter their communities. The funding for this program was made possible through a partnership Coastal Connection has with MARS.



# NIGERIA

## St. Dominic Catholic Hospital

We are pleased to share with you that the 40-foot shipping container arrived in Nigeria while Stephen Wright and Billy McRae were on site at the hospital campus teaching a leadership development class. Thanks to our partner, Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach, it was truly Christmas in July. It was our pleasure to help unload all the equipment and supplies and see first-hand the excitement of the staff.





