



*Dear Friends and Supporters of Haitian Connection,*

*October 4, 2016 a devastating hurricane of enormous force, winds and torrential rains hit Jérémie and the greater Grand'Anse region. Nothing like this has ever occurred here before, the last hurricane was seen in 1954. Close to 90% of the smaller houses with tin roofs have been completely destroyed. The photo above is my neighbor's house to the left of my home. Another view of that destruction is below:*



*On the other side of my house a similar picture:*



*Nobody escaped the devastation. Most people have lost everything, clothes, photographs, and what is more important birth certificates and other important documents. In other words, almost everybody starts at zero.*

*Of course all lines of communication are inoperable, no electricity, no phone contact, no internet. So there is no way to find out if people are ok, or to let loved ones know nobody is hurt. Elections were to take place October 9, this coming Sunday, but the government already declared that elections will not take place. Another delay in a series of delays. Can Haiti ever move forward?*

As far as the work of Haitian Connection, it remains to be seen what can be salvaged. We are fairly sure that the houses we built so far could not withstand this hurricane. But there is no way to find out until the roads are passable. So far neither motorcycles nor cars are able to pass, since the roads are blocked by fallen trees. **Newsflash just in: 3 houses we just finished building in a new community have withstood the hurricane and they provided shelter during the storm for a number of people. Thank God for small -- or rather -- large miracles.** We have not been able to get out to the university campus, but have heard reports that the whole campus is under water from the swollen river nearby. The tin roofs of the classrooms are gone, swept up by the winds. For those of you who have come as volunteer professors to UNOGA, you need to know that the guest house is no longer. The old structure could not withstand the gale force winds. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor simply collapsed onto the first floor, 15 minutes after Reginald got the two remaining professors out. We will need to close the university until January.



*(Above: Photos of the destroyed guest house were provided by Dr. Kevin Meehan and Amenold Pierre)*

I have not been able to check out the damage to the tutoring center which has just been refurbished to also double as a counseling center and a small gift shop. It is quite possible that all that is gone to. **Newsflash: Just checked out the tutoring center. The top floor is totally gone, but the bottom floor only sustained water damage. So we might be able to continue to use it.** Depending on when the internet is available you might get news about all that in one scoop, if not there will be a first email with follow up a little later.

One thing is already clear, there will be no school for the children until January, and maybe even that is uncertain. All schools in Jérémie have been destroyed. In addition, parents will have a super hard time coming up with the necessary school fees, on top of replacing uniforms and books. The most difficult are shoes to replace, because once they have soaked in water there is no way they can be worn again.

Jérémie and Grand'Anse already are preparing for a season of hungers, since all the fields are destroyed and it will be some time before trucks will come from Port-au-Prince to bring merchandise. Cholera will be on the increase, because clean drinking water is not available.

Personally I am doing ok. All during this period, I have been very ill and unable to get out of bed for the past several days. Lately I have been feeling a bit better. So all of this has not really entered my mind completely. I am including a few pics from my own disaster which is nothing compared to that of my neighbors and friends. My biggest concern has been the lack of electricity since I am on insulin, which requires refrigeration, but a nurse here told me today not to worry too much about that. So I am not.

I also got to talk to my kids today (October 8) who have been extremely worried about me. Since there has been no communication whatsoever, we are not totally aware of the scope of the disaster. Lots of helicopters in the air all day long I assume assessing the damage. But from my kids I heard that this disaster was well reported on in the US.

But again, even given the scale of this disaster, Haitians are just incredible people. This morning a friend of mine came to check on me, machete in hand, to see what he could do. He called another young man and a young friend of mine also came to check on me, so between the 3 of them they took all the trees that had fallen and removed them from my yard. SO tomorrow I just have to "sweep" which is a bit of an

*understatement, but things already feel better. The woman who helps me around the house, came today because it was her day to work, despite the fact that both houses that she and her husband own have lost their roofs, so everything is completely under water. All around me people are just starting to pick things up and putting things back together. Nobody from any state agency is around to direct any of this. This is why I have such a respect for Haitians, because they are just able to function in a collaborative way without the help of the state. Two young men brought my electric cables which had fallen to the ground because of the storm, so that thieves would not profit and steal the cables, a precious item, and profit from the misery of others. So much to be thankful for.*

*If you feel so moved, and I know you are doing so much already, you can send a donation to Haitian Connection either by **Paypal on our website** or by **writing a check to Haitian Connection and sending it to: 5300 S South Shore Drive #27 Chicago, IL 60615***

*Blessings to All  
Renate*