



Dear Friends and Supporters of Haitian Connection,

This holiday season, we are truly thankful for all of you who have contributed financially and with prayers to keep the work of Haitian Connection going. We launch this Annual Appeal because the needs are many, and they continue to grow. Haitian resilience is an expression to capture the enduring spirit and strength of the Haitian people amidst the ongoing challenges they face daily. They show resilience in forms that many of us have never experienced – hauling water to their homes, finding a safe space outside the home to use the bathroom, traveling to work on foot, because there is no gas and the roads are impassable anyways.



Reginal (left) is one of the young Haitians who truly show resilience. During the hurricane of October 2016, he literally saved the life of one of our guest teachers at the University of the Grand'Anse. In gratitude she supported his medical studies financially, and Haitian Connection accompanied him and encouraged him to persist. He had to deal with daily shootings around his university and the dorm, periods without electricity, and at times professors could not make it to class because of the insecurity surrounding travel. Reginal, after passing all his classes, is now doing his internship. He just finished a stint in dermatology and is now working and learning in internal medicine. Resilient indeed.

Enrollment at universities in Port au Prince has dropped between 50 and 70 percent. Most of these young people have left for the US under the Biden program. Haitian Connection is supporting students at all levels with scholarships, because we need to build education as one of the pillars of development in the by Michael Deibert kept replaying itself like a consistent mantra during my recent visit to Jérémie region.



Melchie is a 4<sup>th</sup> year student at the University of the Grand'Anse in agronomy. She gets excellent grades and is self-motivated. Her tuition for this year is \$600.00. Melchie has demonstrated enormous resilience, showing up each day for classes, dealing with poor roads, no internet on campus and many other obstacles.

Stacy graduated this year with a certificate in business and computer skills. She was the valedictorian of her class. Her resilience really made a difference. This is her second certificate from ECAM, the first was in culinary arts. These are one year vocational programs that cost about \$300 for the program. We would like to support another student for the coming year.



Starmeline is now in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and one of the smartest students I have met. We have supported Starmeline for 5 years now and would like to continue our support. Starmeline has seen much violence in her young life, but she is resilient. She lives with her mother who gets some income from tailoring, but not enough to pay the tuition. Starmeline's tuition for this year is \$250.



The teachers of the elementary school in Deschamps did not receive a salary the first month of this school year and were owed the month of December for last year. Yet they showed up. Their resilience showed in their dedication to the children.



The summer programs in Deschamps and Caracolie have been very successful. It is a great time for the kids, especially since they also received a full meal along with the camp activities like games, some education and prayer. The adult guides for the programs are truly amazing for what they are able to do with little means. They are truly the backbone of Haitian Connection. Their resilience keeps the program alive. Each summer camp for 25 children for a week costs about \$500..



Our after school program is off to a good start for this school year. The kids as well as their parents are grateful for this opportunity to do some extra work for school. They see that without a decent education there is no future. Their resilience shows in the regular attendance of the children. We have 3 adults to help with homework. The program costs \$200 per month while school is in session.

Haitian Connection is concentrating on education for children and young adults, because education is portable. But all of our other programs also continue to function. Our Cash Without Condition supports 10 women monthly. Each of them receives \$30 per month, so the total cost is \$300 per month.



Our mental health program continues to help and educate the population on issues relating to mental health. The community mental health agents have formed a WhatsApp group to facilitate communication during these difficult times. Their resilience is astounding, they do not give up, despite the difficulties of just even keeping their cell phone charged.



These are some of the inspiring Haitians who make it worthwhile to keep going. Resilience writ large.

I hope what has been said here will move you to open your hearts and wallets as well as your spirit to share whatever is possible. We thank you for your continued support!!!



With best wishes for Christmas and the new year, blessings in abundance!!!!

Renate



*I am attaching this article to the appeal letter, just to give you more of an idea of what is happening in Haiti now. We hear so little on the news. But the country is suffering in ways not seen.*

Often far removed from the headlines is a humanitarian crisis worsening by the day: the situation in Haiti. In recent months, a resurgence of armed violence has plagued daily life in Haiti with brutality and insecurity, particularly in the capital of Port-au-Prince and neighboring areas. It is estimated that over 200 gangs currently operate throughout the country, and the largest groups control up to 80 percent of Port-au-Prince. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) found that between January 1 and September 30, 2023, 5,599 cases of armed-group-related violence were recorded, including 3,156 killings, 1,159 injuries, and 1,284 kidnappings, noting a sharp increase from the amount reported for the same period in 2022.

In recent years, Haiti has endured two powerful and devastating earthquakes – one striking the capital in 2010, killing an estimated 300,000 people, and another in August 2021 in Petit-Trou-de-Nippes, killing over 2,000 people. The earthquakes not only decimated communities but deepened preexisting security and economic crises. Before the second earthquake, the situation had already severely worsened in the country with the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse on July 7, 2021. The assassination of President Moïse exacerbated political and economic fragility that facilitated the ability of gangs to grow their power and control.

Following the President's assassination, Prime Minister Ariel Henry served (and continues to serve) as Acting President. Prime Minister Henry's leadership, however, is without a constitutional mandate, as he never officially received parliamentary approval. Due to continued cancellations of elections, today Haiti is without any democratically elected officials, as its remaining Senate seats were vacated in January 2023 following term expirations.

Such political turmoil has facilitated an astonishing level of impunity to thrive in Haiti with ruinous impacts on the civilian population. In a 2023 report, Human Rights Watch detailed the nightmare many Haitians are living, noting, "Killings in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area and Artibonite are often accompanied by sexual violence, looting, burning of corpses in the streets, and burning or illegal occupation of houses, all of which have led to the displacement of thousands of people." In August 2023, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that nearly 200,000 people were internally displaced in Haiti, often in inhumane conditions, with violence as the main driver for displacement. As impunity reigns, sexual violence, including gang rape, is used by gangs and criminal groups as a weapon to insert control and terrorize populations in areas controlled by rival groups. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported that in the first five months of 2023, it assisted 1,005 survivors of sexual violence in Port-au-Prince – representing double the number registered during the same period in 2022.

Haitian authorities are outnumbered by gangs and lack adequate capacity to implement security measures. Additionally, allegations of police inaction and complicity in attacks have also been reported. Human Rights Watch wrote, "The Haitian government has failed to protect people from the violence of criminal groups. To those living in affected areas, the police and other authorities scarcely exist." Following a plea from Prime Minister Henry a year prior, in October 2023 the UN Security Council convened a historic meeting where it authorized the deployment of an international security force, led by

Kenya, to assist the Haitian national police in addressing the surging gang violence and restore security and accountability.

Unfortunately, a court in Kenya blocked the deployment of Kenyan police to lead the mission in Haiti and Kenya's High Court must now rule on the case, said to take place on November 9.

Due to the security situation in Haiti as well as insufficient humanitarian funding, access to essential services and delivery of humanitarian aid have been critically impacted. An estimated 5.2 million people need humanitarian assistance, and 4.3 million people are in a food crisis. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) elevated Haiti to the highest concern level, where acute food insecurity is likely to deteriorate from June to November 2023. The agencies recorded that "All the hotspots at the highest level have populations projected to face starvation...or are at risk of deterioration towards catastrophic conditions, given they have already critical food insecurity...and are facing severe aggravating factors." Haiti is also facing an ongoing and dangerous cholera outbreak. As of September 2023, the country had 64,496 suspected cholera cases and 3,934 confirmed cases. Almost half of the cases are children under the age of 14.

As Haiti and the international community grapple with a worsening nightmare, no one's survival and safety are more in jeopardy than that of Haiti's children.

