



Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Summer 2021

Confusion, Insecurity, and Uncertainty Follow the Assassination of Haiti's President



Months of popular dissent, political chaos, and escalating gang violence have led to the assassination of Haiti's unpopular president, Jovenal ("JoMo") Moïse, resulting in further confusion, deepening insecurity, and greater uncertainty about who has a legitimate claim to power and when long-overdue elections can occur.

The assassination occurred in a void of government institutions. The parliament, the municipal government network, the judicial system, and the police have been destroyed by decades of misdirected aid, outside intervention by foreign governments, and the corrupt and increasingly authoritarian actions of Moïse and his predecessor. Gang violence has brought death and displaced thousands from their homes in the poor neighborhoods of Port au Prince. The death of Moïse adds one more unacceptable death to literally thousands of unnamed and equally unacceptable deaths.

Popular social organizations demand justice: an end to impunity, adequate housing, schools, electricity, water, hospitals, and access to land on which to grow local foods. Activists are clear they do not want a foreign invasion or an occupying force. **RiM** collaborators insist that Haiti needs a Haitian solution to the current crisis, one that is supported and accompanied by international friends like **Rich in Mercy** working to build a "culture of solidarity".

New Educational Initiative Aims at Reaching Youth in Underserved Neighborhood



Education is the necessary foundation for positive change, but in Haiti access to education is severely restricted by too-few quality schools and lack of financial resources. The neighborhood of "Route Eddy One" is a rapidly growing section of the Tabarre suburb of Port au Prince housing many commercial enterprises, but lacking a quality elementary school. Children have to attend schools outside their neighborhood.

With support from **Rich in Mercy** and an anonymous donor, **Fr. Jean Patrick Eugene, CSSp**, began construction of a new educational institution the **Institute Pere Pollard des Places (IPPP)**, named after the founder of his Spiritan religious congregation.

Set to open in September 2021, the school will enroll 60 students in grades one and two the first year and expects to add more classes in each successive year. After 5 years the school will accommodate up to 400 students.



The Spiritan religious congregation, founded in France, has been in Haiti for more than 150 years. It operates a distinguished school in downtown Port au Prince and staffs four parishes. **Rich in Mercy** has been a long-time collaborator with the Spiritans on educational and various infrastructure initiatives. Physical infrastructure projects include construction of two churches, two rectories, another school, and several solar powered electrical systems – in diverse areas including Furcy, Bokozelle, Kotplaj, and Pon Sonde. Social infrastructure projects include a motorcycle transport business, cyber lab, minibus transport business, two tree nurseries, and a poultry business.

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Sisters of St. Antoine Ministry Outreach to the Rural Poor Equipped With New Vehicle



Rich in Mercy partnered with Louisiana-based **Black Unity and Spiritual Togetherness (B.U.S.T.)** and the **Sisters of Charity** of Leavenworth (KS) to fund the purchase of a new heavy-duty, four wheel drive Toyota that will help meet the transportation needs of their numerous ministries.

Founded in 1996 and numbering only 20 members, the **Sisters of St. Antoine** of Fondwa are a Haitian women's religious community who serve the poor in several rural communities in Haiti.



They operate a K-13 school, a preschool, a professional school, an orphanage and a clinic in Fondwa. They staff a preschool and clinic, manage a food bank in Kafelompre (Trouin) and a farm in Hinche, and staff a preschool in Tom Gato. The new vehicle replaces one that was 14 years old and no longer able to be repaired. In October the sisters will celebrate 25 years of service to the rural poor of Haiti!

"Odds Defying" Scholarship Recipient Earns Business Management Degree in Fondwa



Jeff Josephs is one of 10 children born into a peasant family in the rural community of Fondwa. His father and disabled mother worked hard to provide basic education to all their children, but he is the first to complete secondary school and the first ever in the family's history to attend university. He recently received his degree in Business Management from the **University of Fondwa (UNIF)**, which **Rich in Mercy** helped establish in 2004.

Jeff is the second "odds defying" RIM scholarship recipient to complete university studies in Fondwa. **Rich in Mercy** currently provides two other UNIF scholarships and additional university scholarships for students of medicine, law, and education at **Quisqueya University** and the Catholic **University Notre Dame d'Haiti (UNDH)**.

"Mirembe" Women Rebuild Lives and Livelihoods Following Pandemic Lockdown



Kamya (left) and **Naigaga** (below on right) are two members of the "**Mirembe**" **Women's Solidarity Group** in Kampala, Uganda (Africa) who, like other women in their group, are slowly rebuilding their small businesses with support from **Rich in Mercy** quarterly grants and assistance from the **Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd** sisters. The local economy collapsed under the weight of a pandemic "lockdown". Domestic violence, robbery, and gang attacks rose sharply. Many single mothers faced the threat of eviction as landlords, struggling themselves, showed little compassion for vulnerable women. Most of the Mirembe women used their small savings to survive during the lockdown.

The women of **MIREMBE** (a Swahili word meaning "peace") supported each other in solidarity, sharing what little food they had with one another and with their neighbors – especially hungry children. One member, **Mbabu**, initiated this outreach declaring to the others *"Let us share this little food we have because someone far away has given to us generously."*

Mirembe is comprised of 37 women living in Katanga, a slum marked by hunger, disease, violence, and despair. The women have organized themselves into "solidarity groups" and each of them is committed to realizing the hope of a dignified life for all the members of the group and their children. **Rich in Mercy** provides fiscal sponsorship for a "micro business" program in which women engage in small commerce in the informal economy. Modest profits from the businesses pay for food, rent, medical care and school fees.

