



Solidarity News Notes...

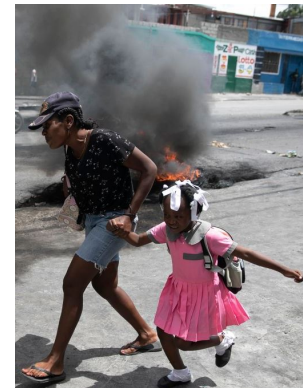
News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Spring 2023

Intensified Gang Violence Disrupts Daily Life and Deepens Humanitarian Crisis in Haiti



Clashes between gangs are becoming more frequent and more violent as rival gangs battle to expand their control of Port au Prince, Haiti's capital. The **UN High Commission for Human Rights** reports that there have been more than 500 killings and nearly 300 kidnappings since the beginning of this year alone.

Arson attacks and indiscriminate shootings of people in their houses or in the street have forced nearly 200,000 people to be displaced from their homes. Political and economic instability, resulting from continuing gang warfare, have caused shortages and skyrocketing increases in the price of food and fuel, leading to alarming levels of hunger in some areas.



Rich in Mercy has provided emergency relief to vulnerable families in some highly stressed neighborhoods in the capital and in several rural communities where **Rich in Mercy** has had a long-term presence. The UN has repeatedly called upon the international community to "urgently consider" sending a "time-bound specialized support force" to Haiti. Activists and popular leaders are divided over the issue of support for foreign intervention, but all are in agreement that the chronic insecurity is untenable as the country continues its freefall into anarchy.

Drought Resisting Strategies Prove Dramatically Effective During Seven Month Dry Spell



Farmers in the north of Haiti are experiencing unprecedented challenges including low productivity resulting from exhausted soils. A prolonged drought, lasting more than seven months, has rendered most farms unproductive. Lacking water for irrigation, farmers watch their crops wither and their mostly clay soils harden and become impermeable in the tropical heat.

The **Rich in Mercy** supported **Operation Hummingbird** agro-ecological education center, is developing water retention and drought resisting strategies that allow it to continue food production while other farms in the area are experiencing record failures. The use of innovative, low-input "planting pits" and "micro-catchment basins" simultaneously addresses land degradation, soil fertility, and soil moisture.

The planting pits play an important and strategic role in retaining water. Scarce moisture, trapped in the planting pits by layers of rich organic matter, is available to crop roots. In addition to water-retention, the pits concentrate fertility near the crop root zone. Wind or runoff-driven debris, including plant litter from nearby vegetation, is also trapped in the holes leading to improved soil fertility and enhanced soil biology.



Last year, during unusually **heavy** rainfall around the **Operation Hummingbird** center, several hundred such planting pits also served to prevent flooding of neighboring fields where encrusted, impermeable soils were unable to absorb or retain the excess water.

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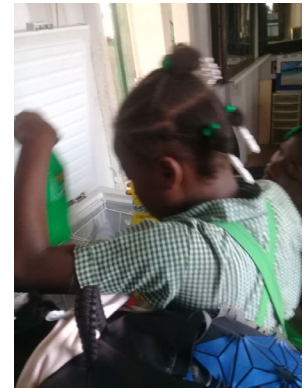
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“Odds Defying”, Young Entrepreneur Launches Retail “Micro-Business” in Rural Haiti



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.

A **Rich in Mercy** scholarship enabled Josephs to be the first ever in his family’s history to attend university. He recently received his degree in Business Management from the **University of Fondwa** (UNIF), a unique rural university, which **Rich in Mercy** helped establish in 2004.



Employment opportunities for youth in rural Haiti are extremely limited even for – or especially for – university graduates. Not discouraged by the lack of jobs, Josephs submitted a business plan to **Rich in Mercy** with a request for start-up funding for a retail enterprise. Solar panels and an inverter, a solar-powered refrigerator, and a small television and antenna provide goods and services that are valuable to the Fondwa community. Customers charge their cell phones, buy cold drinks and ice, and purchase tickets to watch sporting events. Over time other services, such as photo-copying, will be added.

Emergency Funding Assures Restored Water Access to Fonfred Outreach Center



The House of Mercy was established by the **Diocese of Les Cayes** in the community of Fonfred as an intentional community of (lay) men and women committed to contemplative prayer and social action. It is a center for spiritual growth and outreach to people in need locally and in the surrounding area. The community operates an all-organic farm which produces food to supply the resident community and its guests. It also serves as a training site for all-natural, low-input food production.

The **House of Mercy** community depends on a deep well for its water supply, but recently experienced the failure of its existing water pump, causing a critical emergency to the community.



Access to potable water was restored when a grant from **Rich in Mercy** provided the funding needed to replace the existing pump. Four solar panels, also funded by the grant, generate electricity to power the new pump.

Post-Earthquake Housing Initiative Targeting Vulnerable Women Reaches Completion



Following a series of earthquakes in 2021 that devastated communities in Haiti’s southern peninsula, **Rich in Mercy** launched an initiative to fund the repair or reconstruction of houses for a small, targeted population of widows and single mothers in communities where **Rich in Mercy** has a long-term presence.

Some houses could be repaired, but others had to be totally rebuilt and were designed by a local architect to be earthquake and hurricane resistant. All the work was done by local construction workers and overseen

by **M. Richelet**, a local master-builder.

Fuel and material shortages, resulting from the civil unrest and gang violence that plagues Haiti’s capital of Port au Prince, caused slow-downs and unavoidable delays in the construction that was begun last year. The new house (shown above) built for **Mme. Gaspard** (shown at right) in her home village of Ducis marks the completion of this initiative!

