



Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Spring 2022

Gang Violence, Electoral Uncertainty, and Increasing Hunger Fuel Continued Protests



Daily life in Haiti has been marked by growing insecurity and civil unrest for the past three years. Large areas of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and access to much of the country are under the control of brutal gangs that outnumber police forces in members and armaments. Fear of kidnapping is constant. What remains of an ineffective and allegedly corrupt, elected government, appears powerless to challenge the gangs or to organize much overdue elections.

Inflation, in the past decade, has risen from a painful 8% to an alarming 24%. Food costs consume upwards of 35% of the average Haitian family's daily cost of living. More than 40% of the population are experiencing increased hunger and many vulnerable families faced acute food emergencies last fall.

Mass demonstrations and frequent general strikes express the desperation of people struggling to survive as the economy spirals out of control and the international community remains preoccupied with international crises.



Post-Earthquake Repair and Reconstruction Efforts Advance Steadily in Ducis Village



In 2016 hurricane Matthew ravaged Haiti's southern peninsula. **Rich in Mercy** contributed to emergency reconstruction efforts by rebuilding house for a small, targeted population of vulnerable widows and single mothers in the village of Ducis. Last August the same region was devastated by a cascading series of earthquakes starting with one of magnitude 7.2 in St Louis de Sud, followed by another of magnitude 6.6 twenty minutes later, and half a dozen smaller quakes over a period of several weeks. All of the Ducis houses rebuilt by **Rich in Mercy** after the earthquake of 2016 remained fully intact, but hundreds of other properties were destroyed including houses, churches, and community buildings, such as the home of **Mme. Lavwa** (shown left and rebuilt at right).

Mme. Lavwa and her one, young daughter are among the vulnerable families targeted by **Rich in Mercy** collaborator, **Fr. Patrick Eugene, CSSp**, for the repair or reconstruction of houses damaged or destroyed in the recent earthquakes. Despite a nearly 50% increase in the cost of building materials since 2016, at least a dozen similarly houses will be repaired or rebuilt through a creative collaboration designed to maximize the impact of available resources. The work is being overseen by local engineer **Bos Richelet** and executed by a team of experienced, local construction workers. As of April 2022 the reconstruction effort is about 60% complete.

Funding for the earthquake reconstruction efforts comes from multiple sources, including generous individual and family benefactors, the **Sisters of Charity** (Convent Station, NJ), the **Spiritan Office of Mission Advancement (SOMA)**, (Houston, TX) and **Rich in Mercy** undesignated contributions.



RICH IN MERCY is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit corporation with tax ID #.47-1591567

All donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

The official registration and financial information of Partners in Progress may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, toll-free within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

“Planting Pits” Increase Drought Resistance, Add Soil Fertility, and Decrease Flooding



In Haiti land available for farming is very limited, often highly degraded, and lacking essential plant nutrients. The **Operation Hummingbird Environmental Center** is developing integrated, low-input strategies to reclaim unproductive and barren lands. “Planting pits” or “micro-catchment basins” are an innovation that addresses land degradation, soil fertility, and soil moisture. Seeds are sown in shallow pits after filling them with a few handfuls of organic matter, manure or compost. This eliminates the need to spread compost or manure on an entire field and greatly improves efficiency. Intercropping with nitrogen fixing “cover crops”, such as velvet beans or jack beans, (also known as “green manure”) reduces soil erosion and increases soil fertility and overall “soil health”. Mixing mutually beneficial “companion plants”, such as plantains and papayas augments fruit production and increases food security.

The planting pits also play an important and strategic role in harvesting rain water. Instead of being lost to runoff, rainfall water is trapped in the planting pits close to crop roots. In addition to water-harvesting, the pits also 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. During unusually heavy rainfall around the **Operation Hummingbird Center** last fall, several hundred such planting pits also served to prevent flooding of nearby fields where encrusted, impermeable soils were unable to absorb or retain the excess water.



Parish Well to Help Address Critical Water Shortage in Sen Michèl Latalay Community



Haitians deal with material poverty and water scarcity on a daily basis. Nearly 80% subsist on less than \$2 a day and 70% do not have direct access to potable water. The members of **St. Michael Parish** normally walk several kilometers to find water. The pastor, **Fr. Antoine Charles**, of the diocese of Gonaïves reports that there is no central access to clean water and diminishing rainfall in Haiti’s central plateau has worsened the already critical water shortage.

With a grant from **Rich in Mercy**, the parish has undertaken to drill a new, deep well that will address that shortage by providing potable water to children and staff at the parish school and to all the families located near the parish center.

Solidarity Empowers Odds-Defying “Mirembe” Women to Break the Cycle of Poverty

Gender roles of women in **Uganda** (East Africa) are subordinate to those of men. Domestic violence against women is common. To survive many young women become victims of sex-trafficking. **Mirembe** is about women finding hope through solidarity to break the cycle of poverty.

The 37 “odds defying” women of **Mirembe** dream of living with dignity and in peace. (“Mirembe” means “peace” in Swahili.) A micro-finance loan program empowers them to launch micro-businesses that generate income to pay for food, medical care, and school fees. They are motivated by the vision of achieving food security, through their individual labor and mutual support, and of seeing all of their children complete elementary school.



A small network of dedicated funders enables **Rich in Mercy** to provide modest, quarterly capital and emergency support for the women struggling to break the cycle of poverty. Additional help is needed. Consider becoming a “dollar-a-day”, sustaining donor with a monthly gift of \$30 to **Rich in Mercy** via the website: www.RIMIN.org