



Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Winter 2022

Worsening Humanitarian Crisis Pushes Haiti Deeper into Low-Intensity Civil War



Violent gangs in Haiti, already in control of nearly half the capital of Port au Prince and access to much of the country, continue to gain ground. The national government has done little to halt the descent into civil war and violence is spreading beyond Port au Prince. The purchasing power of people has steadily decreased because of rising inflation. Unemployment and misery are rampant while confidence in the government and police force has completely eroded.

A coalition of armed gangs controlling the capital's fuel depot recently pushed the black market price above US \$30 a gallon for gasoline and diesel fuel. Lack of transport resulted in shortages of food and water, leading to a new outbreak of cholera and slow starvation for people already experiencing food insecurity. Banks are operating only three days a week. Schools and businesses are closed. 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.

"Odds-Defying" Haitian Youth Maintain Hope for Long-Term Positive Change in Haiti

Peterson Alcious says he "became a man" on January 10, 2010, the day his mother died because she could not access emergency medical care following the devastating 7.2 magnitude earthquake. He also promised to dedicate himself to saving lives as a medical doctor, even though the death of his mother forced him to drop out of school. With a **Rich in Mercy** scholarship he resumed his studies and graduated with the highest academic record among his peers. Peterson was awarded a full scholarship to study medicine at the **University of Medical Sciences** in Santiago, Cuba. Before beginning med school he had to learn Spanish – his third language. After eight long and difficult years, Peterson was awarded his medical degree with distinction!



Dr. Peterson Alcious will return to Haiti to give two years of service at the state hospital where he will complete a clinical residency before continuing his professional education with specialized studies in Haiti. His return to Haiti has been delayed because of the ongoing humanitarian crisis which has halted flights from Cuba, but he remains committed to "making a difference" to the future of his country.



Staline Musseau, 22, [shown far left with her mother, brother, and sister], comes from a one-parent family in the rural village of Ducis. After finishing secondary school, she received a half scholarship from **Rich in Mercy** and a half scholarship from the Catholic **University of Notre Dame of Haiti** (UNDH) to study law – completing three years of law school in Port au Prince. An outstanding student, **Ms. Musseau** plans a career in law with an emphasis on defending human rights and essential freedoms.

For her final year of law school **Ms. Musseau** has been accepted into a prestigious and accelerated program at the **University of Grenoble**, France where she will complete her study of the French legal system, which underlies that of Haiti. She will simultaneously earn a Master's Degree in Human Rights before returning to Haiti to sit for the bar exams and begin a career of service to the nation. She strongly believes people of her generation can make a long-term, positive difference in the future of Haiti.

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St. Andre Parish Community “Raises the Roof” on School Renovation Project



The rural parish of **St. Andre**, in Grand Hatte, (Diocese of Gonaives) has a small school offering kindergarten through seventh grade to approximately 350 students. The school, built in the '60 when the newly established parish was a chapel to a larger parish, stood in a state of disrepair when the new pastor, **Fr. Relly Donaldy**, arrived in November 2021. The rusted, corrugated metal roof was twisted from recurring, heavy winds and leaked badly during the spring rainy season.

Support from within the parish combined with a generous gift from a **RIM** benefactor, and a matching **RIM** grant provided the financial resources to “raise the roof” on the aging building! But the parish is committed to much more than raising a new roof. **Fr. Donaldy** believes firmly that education is the foundation for positive and systemic change in poor, rural communities like Grand Hatte and is committed to offering an integral and quality education to the area children by raising both the level of preparation for teachers and – over time – the general level of education of everyone in the Grand Hatte region.



Strategies for Agricultural Resilience Attract UNDH Interest During Prolonged Drought

The **Operation Hummingbird Center** founder and director, **Lamothe Lormier** [center], recently hosted **Fr. Jean Maxène Tristant, SPSJ** [left], academic affairs director at the **University of Notre Dame of Haiti (UNDH)** in Cap Haitian and a UNDH graduate agronomy student. The center is committed to the exploration and implementation of low-input strategies designed to help small-scale farmers in rural Haiti increase food production under increasingly challenging conditions with minimal impact on the environment.



Farmers in the north of Haiti are experiencing unprecedented challenges including exhausted soils and an extended drought lasting more than 6 months. The **Rich in Mercy** supported Operation Hummingbird center has developed water retention and drought resisting strategies that have allowed it to continue food production while other farms in the area are experiencing record failures. The Center's success had caught the attention of university officials and inspired a program for advanced **UNDH** students to learn, through internships, the innovative strategies and techniques developed at the Center. Additionally the university is setting aside more than 6 acres of land on which **UNDH** students will duplicate the low-input, regenerative strategies developed at the Center to provide an on-site learning environment.

Mirembe Solidarity Group Grows Peace, Hope, and a Brighter Future in Uganda Slum

Mirembe is a Swahili word that means PEACE. The **Mirembe Project** is about hope, collaboration, and transformation for women from Katanga, a slum in Kampala, Uganda. Mirembe women organize into “solidarity groups” committed to realizing the hope of a dignified life for all the members and their children, in order to break the cycle of extreme poverty and to free themselves from being victims of sex-trafficking, so that they might live in PEACE!

Funded by small donations disbursed in quarterly grants by **Rich in Mercy**, the **Mirembe Project** supports an expanding micro-finance loan program. Women receive an initial loan which enables them to launch a micro-business of their choice such as buying and selling in the informal economy or selling fresh vegetables that they grow in container gardens. **Sr. Bibian Thuguci, RGS** meets with the women weekly to provide support and encouragement and operates a small bank, providing security for the financial resources of the groups. The modest profits earned by the women pay primarily for food, school fees, and medical care. Due to the slum's growing population of single mothers with young children to feed and educate, many more women come to Sr. Bibian each week asking to join the program.

