



Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Summer 2022

Escalating Gang Violence and Fuel Costs Spark Renewed Protests in Haiti's Capital

In the year following the assassination of Haitian president Jovenal Moïse, gang violence has continued to escalate. Many Haitians, including educated professionals, have tried to flee the country. What remains of the government and police force is ineffective as the country slides into social and economic freefall.



From January to the end of June police officials have documented 934 killings, 684 injuries, and 680 kidnappings - more than three kidnappings a day. At least 90 heavily armed gangs with thousands of members control whole neighborhoods in Haiti's capital of Port au Prince as well as access to most other parts of the country..

In one five day period in early July, 234 more people were killed or injured in the area of Cite Soleil where rival gangs are engaged in combat for control of the area and access to the nearby fuel depot where gasoline and diesel fuel reserves are stored. Recurring fuel shortages, continuing high prices for fuel and food, and the interminable violence have sparked mass protests led by moto-taxi drivers in an attempt to lock down the capital and force the government and/or international community to respond.

A broad coalition of Haitian grassroots organizations is calling on the international community to support the formation of a transition government tasked with restoring order through substantive reform of the police and restoration of the rule of law in order to create conditions for – and carry out – a fair election of a new Haitian president and parliament. The US has urged Haiti's politicians to agree among themselves, but continuing support for the current, largely discredited government headed by prime minister Ariel Henry and the expulsion of 24,000 Haitian asylum seekers from the US since September 2021, have undermined the US capacity to exert influence.

Operation Hummingbird Launches YouTube Channel to Reach Expanded Audience

The **Operation Hummingbird Environmental and Educational Center (OHEEC)**, located in Dubre near Haiti's north coast, is committed to developing low-input strategies to help small-scale farmers increase food production sustainably. The vision of founder **Lamothe Lormier** is to inspire a popular movement to transform community food systems in Haiti and beyond by sharing techniques for soil regeneration and enhanced food production gained from his experimentation at the five-acre center.

Lormier offers free trainings and seminars to groups organized by churches, schools, and universities. To enable him to reach an even broader audience, **Rich in Mercy** is funding production of a series of YouTube videos available on the **Operasyon Kolibri** (Kreyol for "Operation Hummingbird") YouTube channel. Recorded in Haitian Kreyol, the videos are also available with English "voiceovers" so that the audience is not limited only to speakers of Haitian Kreyol.



Operation Hummingbird is inspired by the legend of the hummingbird who repeatedly filled her tiny beak with water and dropped it on the fire which engulfed the forest. Although the other animals mocked her, she challenged them by insisting "I'm doing **my** part"! The mission of the center is to inspire a "hummingbird revolution" in which everyone is "doing my part" to regenerate soil, increase bio-diversity, and reverse environmental damage.

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St. Andre Parish Well Provides Access to Safe Water for 4000 Residents in Grand-Hatte

The **St. Andre Parish** in Grand-Hatte in the diocese of Gonaives was established in November 2021 and includes four remote chapels. Its founding pastor, **Fr. Donald Rely**, is a dynamic young priest committed to bringing new life and inspiring new hope among the more than 4000 residents of this previously underserved area.



Haiti has been ranked the most “water poor” country in the world and, like people in many other parts of rural Haiti, the Grand-Hatte community had limited access to water and no access to dependably safe drinking water. A single canal provided water to people and animals alike and was a continual source of water-borne diseases. During frequently occurring periods of drought this lone source often became dry.

Rich in Mercy provided funding for drilling a deep well. Insecurity in the country and the resulting obstacles to transportation caused delays in executing the project, but faith and perseverance resulted in its completion early this summer. The new well is a consistent source of abundant and safe drinking to the more than 4000 residents of the Grand-Hatte region.

Roof and Improved Sanitation Added to “House of Mercy” Retreat and Outreach Center



The House of Mercy retreat and outreach center opened in 2000 in the diocese of Les Cayes as an intentional community of lay women and men committed to contemplation and social action. It became a center of spiritual growth and outreach to people in need.

The August 2021 earthquake damaged – beyond repair – the structure which housed the community and its guests. Construction of a new center – previously begun, but stalled for lack of funding – became the priority for the community to continue its work. **Rich in Mercy** provided funding to complete the new community center. Support from a generous donor provided the funds needed to complete the “sanitary block” (latrines) essential to making the new center fully functional.



In addition to the outreach hub the **House of Mercy** operates an all-organic agricultural center which produces food to supply the community and its guests. It also serves as a demonstration farm for all-natural, low-input food production. The center welcomes visitors seeking spiritual growth in a prayerful setting of community hospitality where visitors are also invited to contribute to the charitable outreach and other works of the community.

Datcha Villagers Celebrate Inauguration of New Kindergarten in Togo, West Africa



In 2017 **Rich in Mercy** extended its mission of promoting global solidarity to the West African country of **Togo**, by providing fiscal sponsorship for construction of a water well in the village of Datcha.

Long-time **RIM** supporter **Dr. Kimberly Baker**, a professor at **St. Meinrad Seminary**, initiated the project after one of her students shared the need for clean water in Datcha – his home village. Baker raised all the needed funds. That collaboration led

to others – school and community latrines and a new elementary school – all responding to priorities set by villagers under the leadership of **Fr. Odilon Kofi, SMA**.

In July 2022 the community completed its most recent collaborative project – the construction and furnishing of a new **Datcha Community Kindergarten**, which can accommodate 50 preschoolers. In the short span of 5 years, the efforts of one determined woman – **Dr. Baker** – and her network of generous friends have transformed village life by bringing clean water, improved sanitation, and renewed elementary education to Datcha village. Such is the power of global solidarity!

