



Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Winter 2023

International Community Backs Armed Intervention in Haiti Despite a History of Failures

Violent gangs in Haiti, control more than half the capital of Port au Prince and are beginning to appear in other parts of the country including the Artibonite valley, Haiti's main growing region. Compared to the gangs the police are poorly armed and, in some cases, act in collusion with gang leaders, allowing the gangs to commit arson, kidnappings, rapes, and killings with impunity.



The **United Nations** has authorized a military mission to be led by **Kenya** (West Africa), but activists and civil society leaders express grave doubts about yet another outside intervention to address the deepening humanitarian and political crisis. Haiti has a long history of failed interventions. Another armed intervention may reduce temporarily the level of violence, but cannot by itself address the underlying social, economic, and political causes which have repeatedly led to similar crises in the past.

The proposed military intervention is short-term – authorized for one year only – and will have fewer resources than previous such efforts despite a commitment of \$100 million from the US. Without halting the influx of heavy weapons, coming mainly from the US, and a plan for a transitional government not tainted by the corruption and abuses of the current *de facto* regime, the proposed intervention is unlikely to lead to a better outcome than longer and better-funded military interventions in the past.

Environmental Education Center Overcomes Simultaneous Water and Electricity Crises

In 2019 the **Operation Hummingbird Center**, with support from **Rich in Mercy** and numerous friends arranged for installation of a solar water pump to bring clean water from deep underground, supplying both the center and many of the neighboring villagers. Last summer, in the midst of a drought, the pump stopped working causing a water serious crisis for the center and the villagers of Dubre. The company that manufactured the pump, **RPS Solar Pumps**, (Woodland, CA), acted immediately to get a replacement pump delivered to Haiti, going well above and beyond its usual excellent customer service! Insecurity in Haiti made getting the pump to Dubre particularly challenging, but with the help of several friends of Operation Hummingbird, **RPS Solar** undertook the challenge successfully even assuming the entire cost!



Concurrent with the water crisis, the **Operation Hummingbird Center** faced a shortage of electricity when the battery array installed several years ago with support from **Rich in Mercy** reached its natural "end of life". Electricity enables the center to produce ice – a highly valued product in rural Haiti – and the center derives much of its income from the sale of ice. A **Rich in Mercy** grant made possible the replacement of the original batteries with efficient, long-life "gel" batteries, allowing the center to resume its normal operations.

The **Operation Hummingbird Center** focuses on environmental education and the development of low-input strategies to regenerate soil health, strengthen drought resistance, and increase food production. With apprenticeship programs with three universities it is helping to form a new generation of young agronomists trained in innovative strategies that restore degraded soils and empower small-holder farmers!

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“Odds Defying” Haitian Youth Earn University Degrees in Nursing and Accounting

Given the lack of access to education generally and the cost of attending university anywhere, fewer than 1% of Haiti's young people will go on to receive a university degree in Haiti. Those few who do generally require scholarships or other financial support. Because education is the necessary foundation for positive and systemic change, **Rich in Mercy** provides support for education at all levels from pre-school through university.

In September **Richardine Eugene** [right], 24, received a degree in nursing from the **Universite Notre Dame d’Ayiti** (Les Cayes). The oldest of four children, she was raised by her single mother after her father abandoned the family. Poverty marked her childhood and youth, but her mother created an atmosphere in which education was valued and higher education was a goal. Not only did she “defy the odds” by completing her degree, she did so with honors and ranked third in a class of more than 40 students!



Whestly Jean-Louis [left], 26, studied journalism at a community college before receiving a degree in accounting from the **Université Polyvalente D’Haïti** (Port au Prince) The oldest of four children he grew up in the extreme poverty of Cite Soley, a vast slum built on what used to be the garbage dump of Haiti’s capital (Port au Prince). His family has repeatedly suffered gang shootings, robberies, evictions, and arson attacks.

Against such tremendous odds, the entire family, headed by his parents **Wisly and Myriame Jean-Louis**, has remained together and all the children continue in school. **Whestly** is the first to attend university. Believing that change for Haiti is possible, **Whestly** is an active member of his church and a leader among Haitian youth in **Jeunes Acteurs pour le Changement – Young Actors for Change (JEACHA)**, a non-profit organization of Haitian youth who champion education and leadership for change in Haiti.

Committed to Advancing: Youth Combines Day Job, Night School, and Small Business

Raymond Jean Wilkins, 25, from Fonfred, is another example of “odds defying” Haitian youth. Orphaned as a child and raised by his grandmother, he finished high school and then, with support from **Rich in Mercy (RIM)**, completed vocational studies in electricity. He teaches school in Fonfred by day and attends university night classes at some distance in Les Cayes. Capital from **RIM** enabled him to purchase a motorcycle, which provides his transportation to Les Cayes and enables him to integrate operating a motorcycle transport business into his busy schedule of activities. “*Bay chapo*” (“hats off”) to this enterprising young man committed to personal advancement and contributing to his family and community!



Training Center to Create Self-Employment for Disadvantaged Youth in Datcha Village

In Togo (W. Africa) youth unemployment poses a serious threat to social cohesion. Earlier this year, in the rural community of **Amoussoukopé**, the **Society of African Missionaries (SMA)** launched a **Farming Resource Center** aimed at creating self-employment opportunities in agriculture and agribusiness for disadvantaged youth – particularly young women – and allow them to benefit from a government strategic plan to strengthen the agricultural sector.



Progress to date on the center includes construction of a sheep pen, a pig pen, and a chicken coop which houses 1000 laying hens! Additionally a truck, and needed equipment have been purchased and space for student housing and classrooms is under construction,. Solar panels, breeding materials, and irrigation materials and other equipment will be added and training for the first 25-50 students is expected to begin as early as January 2024.

Rich in Mercy provides fiscal sponsorship for the project. **Kimberly Baker, PhD** raised the necessary funds, and **Fr. Odilon Kofi, SMA** is providing visionary leadership, ongoing project management, and financial accountability.