Haiti Medical Project after Hurricane Matthew

Life in Haiti is hard. It was hard before the 2010 earthquake that killed 300,000, destroyed a huge number of inadequately built structures, and left nearly 1,500,000 persons homeless, some for a couple of years. It was hard before the recent heavy impact of Hurricane Matthew.

In rural villages basic health care is seldom available. Few have any municipal sanitation facilities. The birth rate is high but so is the level of infant mortality and childhood malnutrition. Water is often both a burden to carry for daily household use and a primary source of disease. Income levels are by far the lowest in the in the Western Hemisphere. Unemployment is pervasive, running at over 40%. The roads are deplorable almost everywhere outside of a few metropolitan areas.

But somehow, in the aftermath of the earthquake and already in the early response to Hurricane Matthew, hope is blossoming.

--The Church of the Brethren in Haiti (Eglise des Freres de Ayiti) is thriving and growing in 22 communities in spite of the disasters and brings a strong concern for meeting immediate needs in their communities.

--The Brethren organized a major response to the 2010 earthquake and in 2011, in its wake, launched Haiti Medical Project as an on-going partnership between the U. S. Brethren and the Haitian denominational board, congregations and related communities. It is a force to meet human need, to build self-help capacity, and to give guidance to development initiatives. These resources are all critically needed as we develop an appropriate forward-looking response to Hurricane Matthew.

--We are finding local leaders stepping up, sharing their ideas, and lending their support to positive initiatives. The spirit we encounter is positive and hopeful. They want to see conditions improve!

As of this date we are still gaining local information about the hurricane’s full impact. And Brethren Disaster Response staff continue their assessment as well as taking early steps in response. It appears that we can make a couple of broad generalizations about where the devastation was the greatest and its impact on our related communities. I call your attention to the Haiti Medical Project Site Map attached to this report.

As you look at the map you see a long peninsula at the southern end of the country (at the bottom of the map.) The hurricane cut from south to north with greatest damage at the western portion of the southern peninsula. That is the area that suffered most of the more than 1,000 deaths along with massive destruction of housing and agricultural and infrastructure
Haiti Medical Project Site Map
Kat Jeyografik Pwojè Medikal Ayiti

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Haitian</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Clinic</td>
<td>Klinik Mobil</td>
<td>Mobile Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pure Water</td>
<td>Pwojè Dlo Potab</td>
<td>Pure Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Health</td>
<td>Sante Kominotè</td>
<td>Community Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Agrikilti</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry Center</td>
<td>Sant Ministeryèl</td>
<td>Ministry Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
resources. It is clear that our Brethren Disaster Response will be large in this area. An early grant to support the Church World Service immediate relief there has been made by the Church of the Brethren and we anticipate a longer term response in the south including a significant housing rebuilding component.

The “good news” if we can call it that is that most of our related congregations and communities, while experiencing some very serious damage, are not in the most severely impacted area. While reports continue to come in, we hear of the impact of hurricane force winds and driving rains totaling up to 25 – 40 inches in our service area, causing:

--wide spread crop and small animal losses (particularly goats) greatly intensifying the risk of a decreased food supply until next season’s harvest. It is too late to reseed now since the dry season is right ahead.

--pollution of water supplies, bringing increased vulnerability to a renewed outbreak of cholera.

--some housing destroyed.

--and of course those awful roads got a lot worse—with many wash-outs and mud slides.

We conclude that while our Haitian Brethren members will find ways to be part of some disaster response projects in the south, the places where we can be of the greatest assistance is in our present service area. In these communities we relate to about 3,000 participants through the church families of local Brethren congregations and a considerable additional number of other community members. Perhaps all told we may have a current service reach with about 6,000 persons. We have many excellent relationships with community leaders and a number of development responses underway that are critically needed in the new post-hurricane reality.

The responses underway include:

--Basic health care from our team of seven Haitian doctors and nurses plus supporting personnel (by the end of 2016 projected to provide over 8,000 patient visits this year.)

--Agricultural support building on existing relationships of leader groups in almost all of our communities, with special focus on food production in the next planting season beginning about March or April. The Global Food Initiative helps us in this area.
--Small dispensaries under the charge of trained volunteers, to make the most common medicines available to many persons in their home village at reasonable cost.

--Expanding work on community income generation through newly formed women’s groups.

--Training to improve the skills of local birth attendants (who deliver probably three fourths of the babies born in our communities).

--Educational work with young women in “mothers’ clubs”, focusing on the nutrition and care of small children. These last two Initiatives work at lowering infant mortality.

--Work with pure water projects. All told we have three projects completed and six others in some stage of planning or awaiting funding.

--Insofar as Brethren Disaster Ministries is able to allocate some new funds to needs in our service area, we are in a good position to see that these resources are applied creatively and well.

Thanks to many of you receiving this communication for your own support of Haiti Medical Project. The response that began on a shoe string in late 2011 when we tried to raise an initial $30,000 has grown to an annual response of over $240,000. Thank you for your generous support for the people of Haiti. Please continue to support as you can.

Dale E. Minnich
Paul Ullom-Minnich
Haiti Medical Project Volunteers

Send gifts to Haiti Medical Project, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Indicate your desire to support immediate needs or the project’s endowment.

p.s. The endowment fund launched in 2012 has now reached $370,000 toward its $600,000 goal! We recently received a challenge gift opportunity from one of our good donors offering an additional $23,000 for the endowment if matched on a $2 per $1 basis. For example every $1,000 gift will generate an additional $500 until the challenge is matched. If matched this effort will add $69,000 to the endowment. What an offer!