



Grand Anse Health & Development Association

Questions posed by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) January 2024:

1. What impact has your partnership with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance had in the communities in which you work?

These comments reflect collaboration in 2022, 2023 and the beginning of a new initiative in 2024. A total of \$45,000 has been entrusted to GAHDA Haiti dispense medicines, water, food, education, and health care to meet the pressing needs of thousands in this region of 500,000.

We here at GAHDA in Jeremie, Haiti, appreciate the partnership that developed in response to a magnitude 7.2 earthquake on August 14, 2021, that destroyed houses and roads, caused landslides, injuring many, and cutting off access to clinics in rural areas. The hospital was overwhelmed. Some critically injured were evacuated by helicopter to Port-a-Prince for trauma care.

Aftershocks continued. In all of Haiti, 45% of 1451 tremors in 2022 occurred in the Grand'Anse Department. Most slept outside in fear of another quake, others lived outside, unable to return to their damaged homes. We stayed in our car for 2 weeks. The region's clinics and dispensaries needed supplies for wound care, medicines, tarps, food, medical providers, and funds. Many people lost their medicines when their houses collapsed or were damaged. The photo below shows families who were selected for building materials.



A fortunate talk with Rev. Gonzalas at PDA proved to be the beginning of a partnership that has had a tangible impact on the survival of families living in damaged areas. A \$20,000 grant that GAHDA received in 2022 made an enormous difference in this ongoing recovery. This support was used for mobile medical clinics in nine counties in the Grand'Anse Department. 11,914 people received medical consultation, treatment, and referral at \$1.68 per patient. (report sent earlier)

Another earthquake magnitude 5.0 struck on June 6, 2022, shortly after a period of torrential rains.

PDA Responded again after this quake, and on **July 6, 2023, GAHDA received \$10,000** to support house repair (\$7500) and mobile medical clinics (\$2500). A total of 1625 people received medical consultation, on site treatment when possible, and medication free of charge in these remote sites – some in the open, some in a school and others in a tent. Because the workers were volunteers, the cost of patient care was nominal. Donations of solar lanterns from other donors for rural night clinical work helped a great deal for multi-day events clinic services. **The photo below shows the people waiting to be consulted by three physicians, nurses, and support staff.**



The bulk of these funds, (\$7500) are being used for house repairs for an estimated twenty-four families. This part of the program is moving slowly. Families received home visits. GAHDA staff and community members determined the first fifteen family recipients who would be a part of round one. Follow-up visits were made as family and friends collected building items (wood, sand, and rocks) to make needed repairs. Community organizers, who distributed materials after hurricane Matthew in 2016, decided that the gift for each household would include twenty pieces of tin and 15 lbs. of nails (\$135) OR 35 bags of cement (\$180) to repair dangerously cracked walls. **\$4,000 has been used to purchase materials and ship them to a building supply business in town. The remaining funds will be used to complete the project when it is safe to do so and transportation up and running again.** Here is one completed house that sports a new tin roof.



PDA invitation for Dr. Jean Robert Douge to participate in a disaster preparedness seminar in Guyana in June 2023 offered the opportunity to share his experiences with the other participants and to learn about the PDA disaster operations. It was immensely helpful to meet and learn from other disaster managers and Rev. Edwin.

2024 Food Distribution Plan

A new initiative was funded targeting families and individuals needing help. PDA sent \$15,000 and it was received for distribution once the banks opened and movement around the region was safe. Recipients have been identified. Some are organizations of religious Sisters, the prison population, EPER for children with disabilities. Five hundred individual families in rural areas are identified for rations of rice, oil, and other dried foods. A local group works with families when the mother has died, often in childbirth, and the babies receive formula or wet nurse feedings, clothing, and medical care. Haitian Homes 4 Haitian Children (HH4HC) will distribute food parcels to families in their urban program. Another beneficiary is in Apricots County to a population of three thousand children in school. This is an outstanding gift of hope to families otherwise without resources to feed their children in the face of such difficulties.

What are some challenges you are facing in your work and how can the church accompany you?

Current challenges we are experiencing include:

- **Lack of an elected and functional government** since July 2021 when President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated.
- **Widespread food insecurity** due to gang control of roads, theft of trucks and cargo, inability to send and receive food.
- **Instability of available gasoline and diesel** and unreasonable prices.
- **Uncertainty due to gang control** of large sections of Port-au-Prince causing many more people to escape to the Grand'Anse where it is calmer. The pressure on clinic staff, village health workers and hospitals are immense.
- **Increased need for mental health counseling** for people escaping gang-controlled areas including support for victims of rape and violence.
- **Shifting priorities:** Families rebuilding after earthquake damage are focused on finding food, this need prioritized over all others. This has delayed completion of the PDA sponsored house project.
- **Transportation has halted** due to roadblocks throughout the country, not just on major trucking routes. The photo below is one roadblock in our rural area.



The Presbyterian Church and all religious institutions and Sisters, play a significant role in response to the on-going trauma in Haiti. PDA and the rest of the faith community are a presence providing the continuation of religious services and distribution of goods. In the absence of a government, the faith community is one of the only stable social structures holding us all together.

Detailed planning with organizations on the ground, such as GAHDA, provides a lifeline of information about the current situation and unforeseen difficulties. For example, while GAHDA is in Jérémie, it is known to many communities. GAHDA can receive external funds, convert to Haitian gourdes, and distribute many things ranging from family food packets, medical care, cooked meals to the incarcerated, housing supplies, and fuel for operations.

Financial support by churches of all faiths, through prayer and coordination of activities will keep our efforts moving forward.

2. What do you wish our constituents knew more about the communities with whom you are working?

We are working with vulnerable people. Many cannot read. Women are often considered the “post in the middle” or *poto mitan*, that keep the family going.

Haitians are working hard for a sense of normalcy in a chaotic time of natural and human-caused disasters. Church is an important part of their lives.

People in this region appreciate all our actions to support them: helping with housing, sharing food, and celebrating their lives.

Rural men and women farmers often work in groups called “konbit” or “sori” for their mutual advantage. Women vendors, *Madan Sara*, are an important part of daily life – they buy from farmers, add items in demand such as brooms made from the fronds of a tree, and other items for the home, and travel a regional circuit from countryside to Port au Prince and back in open trucks.

They have been robbed of their goods and money and now, they cannot venture out of town due to instability, roadblocks, and potential kidnapping. Six religious Sisters were kidnapped in Port-au-Prince this week.

When we say that the families here suffer from food insecurity, it is a matter of starvation. One grandmother told us, when delivering a \$50 family packet of locally sourced food, that all they had to eat was sweet potato and salt.

3. How have you seen climate change/environmental racism/militarism/disaster capitalism informing your work?

Climate change most certainly affects us, especially the coastal areas. Hurricanes will continue in the region and the impact of tropical storms, droughts and population shifts because of these realities will test our resilience. Haiti is the “land of mountains” in Haiti’s original language. Population pressure is causing stripping of trees to plant beans and other food crops and to make charcoal from downed wood.

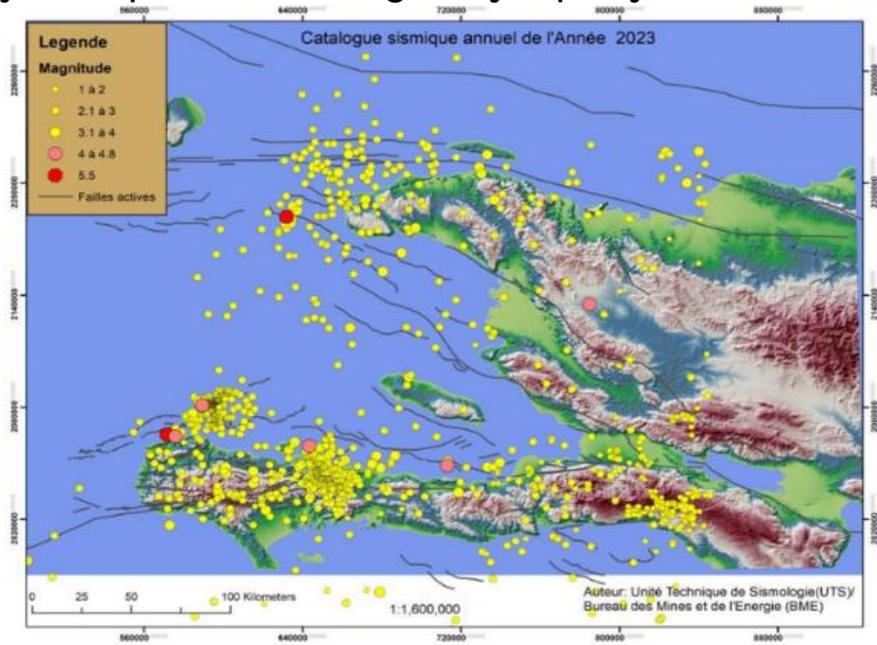
Disaster capitalism, in an article by Klein, he describes the misappropriation of donated funds in Haiti, still struggling from dictatorship and a stunning difference between those with money and the majority living on a dollar a day, heightened by the 2010 Magnitude 7.0 earthquake that killed thousands. ([klein disaster capitalism.pdf](#)). Many of us lived through these times and witnessed the outcomes. 120,000 affected people came to the Grand’Anse. Several books and articles were written about how aid never reached the people in need. There was no structure to document donations and expenses.

Haiti has been a victim of disasters caused by others, without recourse, most of the time. Cholera swept through Haiti after tropical storm Tomas carried it from the north, where UN troops were stationed and spread the disease that they had brought with them. The Grand’Anse suffered deaths in large numbers, despite valiant efforts. There is still cholera in the Grand’Anse, primarily in rural villages.

Environmental equity demonstrates a society where no distinct group or region faces disadvantages such as exposure to disasters, lack of water and sanitation, lack of adequate schooling, lack of access to health care.

The statement that is part of this idea, “Ideally, no one should need extreme wealth or political connections to protect the well-being of their families and communities,” is the opposite of what most Haitians experience.

4. Systemic problems that negatively impact your work and what effect?



These are the seismic events in 2023. We live in the Grand Anse, the western handle of the country. Natural disasters are out of our control. We pray that earthquakes and hurricanes pass us by. Man-made disasters must be overcome. We pray for both.



Photo December 2023 of some of the GAHDA staff and volunteers at the Center in Jeremie