

Konbit Sante

CAP-HAITIEN HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

Handbook for Volunteers Traveling to Haiti

*Our mission is to support the development of a sustainable health system
to meet the needs of the Cap-Haïtien community
with maximum local direction and support.*

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Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Konbit Sante traveling volunteer! We greatly appreciate your commitment and the donation of your time and talents to support our partnership with people in Haiti.

This handbook is designed to provide you with information about Konbit Sante and your role and responsibilities as a traveling volunteer. In addition, you are encouraged to learn more about Konbit Sante's work in Haiti as well as our staff and board of directors by visiting our website at www.konbitsante.org.

If you have questions or need additional information, please call (207) 347-6733 or email volunteer@konbitsante.org.

What is Konbit Sante?

Konbit Sante is registered with the Haitian government as a humanitarian organization and with the state of Maine as a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Our mission is *“to support the development of a sustainable health system to meet the needs of the Cap-Haïtien community with maximum local direction and support.”*

The name *Konbit Sante* represents our values and approach to accomplishing our mission. “Konbit” is a Creole word that describes a traditional collaborative Haitian method of a community working together to till one’s neighbors’ fields when they are in need of assistance; the favor is reciprocated when another is in need. “Sante” means health.

Our “*konbit*,” then, is a long-term collaboration between volunteers, U.S. and Haitian staff, and with the Haitian Ministry of Health and other public and private Haitian organizations in the Cap-Haïtien area. Together, we work to strengthen the Haitian health system in order to improve the health status of the people in that community.

We focus on strengthening all of the elements, or “building blocks,” of the health system that need to function well in order to provide quality care: human resources; programs; supplies, medicines and equipment; facilities and infrastructure; management; and research. We do not provide direct patient care, except in extraordinary circumstances, such as a national disaster.

Konbit Sante seeks to identify the specific areas of support that are needed and find feasible ways to provide that support. Sometimes, this entails joint problem solving with existing resources; sometimes, it requires finding additional resources. The goal is always to enhance the capacity of Haitians to provide care to their citizenry.

Ways Konbit Sante Strengthens Health Systems in Haiti

Konbit Sante works to strengthen the health system in Cap-Haïtien by:

- supporting the training and professional development of Haitian clinicians and support staff,
- supporting service delivery to improve outcomes in many aspects of adult and children's health in both facility- and community-based care,
- supporting the development of a functional supply chain procurement and management system,
- selectively providing salary support for staff embedded in the Haitian public health system,
- supporting facility and infrastructure improvements,
- supporting research and quality improvement initiatives in partnership with the public system,
- supporting and strengthening management and finance systems of health institutions, and
- supporting the health system to effectively respond to public health emergencies.

Konbit Sante's Partners in Cap-Haïtien

Public Partners: Our primary public partnerships are with facilities, programs, and personnel of the Ministry of Health (Ministre de la Santé Publique et de la Population, or MSPP) in the Northern Department of Haiti (DSN).

Justinian University Hospital/ l'Hôpital Universitaire Justinien (JUH)

JUH is a 250-bed teaching referral hospital that serves an estimated population of more than one million people in Cap-Haïtien and the surrounding communities of the DSN. It has residency programs in medicine, pediatrics, surgery, anesthesia, OB/GYN, and family practice. There is a nursing school and a laboratory technician training program on site.

There is a fairly large campus that was constructed in 1890, and most services are housed in individual buildings. In addition to the programs with residency programs, there is an ER and critical care unit, a pharmacy, an archive, a laboratory, x-ray, and a cholera treatment center. There is also onsite housing for many of the residents.

There have been some upgrades to the original infrastructure, most notably a new electrical distribution system (2014) and a new facility for the pediatric service (2018). There remain challenges with intermittent electricity and adequate running water. Public facilities such as JUH tend to see the poorest patients, who are often quite ill and malnourished. There is no food service, so family members and friends must provide food for patients.

The Konbit Sante office is located in a small building at the rear of the campus that includes an office, a conference room for teaching and training, a restroom, and internet access.

Hopital Fort Saint-Michel (FSM)

FSM is a community health center with a birthing center. It serves an impoverished neighborhood of approximately 110,000 people in the Petite Anse area of Cap-Haïtien, located near the airport. When we began our partnership with FSM, it was a small community dispensary operated by the Ministry of Health that provided basic primary care, TB testing and treatment, immunizations, and family planning services. In recent years, it has undergone a major expansion to include the birthing center with an operating room for C-sections, an emergency room, and dental and HIV/AIDS services. Konbit Sante supports 28 staff members at FSM, and much of our work is focused on the community and public health aspects of the center.

Private Partners: Our private partnerships include two Haitian health facilities that serve surrounding areas of Cap-Haïtien:

ULS (Unité de Lutte pour la Sante)

In 2012, we began working with ULS, a non-profit founded and operated by a group of young Haitian nurses and physicians to provide primary care in Bande de Nord, an underserved area in the mountainous part of the Cap-Haïtien Communal Section that lays outside the urban center. Konbit Sante provides program support, and recently designed and constructed a new permanent health center facility for the community. Dr. Maudelin Mesadieu serves as director.

Haitian Convention Baptist Hospital (HCBH)

HCBH was the vision of a one-time KS employee, pediatrician Dr. Paul Toussaint, who is its founder and medical director. With major support from close partner Haiti Hospital Appeal (now named “Hope Health Action,” or HHA), an English non-governmental organization (NGO), the hospital opened in 2007 in the city in Quartier-Morin, a municipality on the outskirts of Cap-Haïtien. The hospital offers pediatric and maternity care as well as emergency and ambulance services. It also houses the only spinal cord rehabilitation center in northern Haiti, which was built in collaboration with KS, and a respite center for severely disabled children with the goal of helping their mothers keep them rather than put them up for adoption.

We are also privileged to have many other partners, some found in the response to natural disasters, who share our values and commitment to strengthening the Haitian health system.

What does it mean to be a Konbit Sante volunteer?

There are several ways to become a Konbit Sante volunteer, involving different levels of commitment, costs, and types of activities. Traveling volunteers are chosen based on matching their skill sets to the needs identified by the staff in conjunction with our Haitian partners. It is helpful to have prior international health/development experience as well as French or Creole language skills.

Serving as a traveling volunteer entails significant personal investment in time and expense. In turn, coordinating and supporting our traveling volunteers entails significant investment in time and resources for our staff, particularly those in Haiti. On top of their regular work, our staff must often accompany volunteers as well as arrange for translation services and transportation. All parties to this konbit—volunteers, U.S. staff and Haitian staff—must work together to plan and execute the volunteer’s work so that it can be productive and satisfying for all parties and that it contributes to the mission of Konbit Sante. It is for this reason that we emphasize the need for volunteers to be oriented, participate in pre-trip meetings, communicate beforehand with their Haitian partners, and participate in follow-up activities.

Konbit Sante has developed a volunteer model over the years that seeks to reflect our mission and values:

- We maintain a strong focus on strengthening local capacity and impact, rather than providing direct services, so it is important that our activity supports the priorities and agreed-upon plans of our partners and partner facilities.
- Trainings should be integrated into, augment, and support longer-term strategic quality improvement efforts. We emphasize train-the-trainer approaches so that capacity becomes institutionalized and sustainable, and less reliant on external assistance.
- We have found that simply providing training and equipment is not usually sufficient to realize real change in practice and care, so we strive to accompany our partners through the sometimes challenging process of change. This means we are particularly interested in volunteers who are willing and able to maintain supportive and collegial relationships over time; for example, meeting regularly between trips via teleconferencing.
- Some volunteer partnerships entail working in the context of a mentoring relationship with the aim of strengthening the skill set of a particular person or group of health workers. For example, a volunteer with expertise in research methods may support residents in their research, or an engineer may provide ongoing technical assistance to biotechnicians or facilities managers.
- We value seasoned professionals who are willing to share their expertise and engage in joint problem solving with colleagues in Haiti without imposing answers; i.e., with cultural humility. We facilitate finding “Haitian solutions” that are appropriate to Haitian challenges, not simply advocating replication of how things are done in the U.S.

- Health professionals in training are welcome to apply for volunteer positions; however, the prime focus of engaging U.S. health trainees in our work will be unambiguously linked to addressing local health system needs.
- We encourage volunteers to personally invest in attaining a depth and breadth of understanding local realities and thinking, including making an effort to learn local language and culture over time.
- We are very serious about our work, and are committed to monitoring and evaluating all of our initiatives to assure that we know if they are having the desired impact.

Given this general approach, there are several ways that people can volunteer with us in Haiti:

Program-focused Partnership Volunteers: These volunteers are primarily skilled professionals who have been recruited to bring a particular skill set or expertise to the success of a program initiative. Clinicians, engineers, and public health or management experts fall into this category. Volunteers work with Konbit Sante staff to establish a scope of work. Most travel on a regular basis and form long-term partnerships with Haitian counterparts. Their work is focused on program assessments and development of incremental plans for quality improvement, teaching, and capacity strengthening of both individuals and systems within our partner facilities.

Training Volunteers: These volunteers are primarily clinicians, but also include administrators or people with other skills, and may have a short- or long-term relationship with Konbit Sante. Their focus is on providing formal and bedside training in Haiti in the context of broader curriculum goals established by our Haitian partners and the related program.

Project Volunteers: On some occasions, there is a discrete project activity that is essential to advancing larger project goals and for which there is inadequate local capacity or expertise to complete the task in the needed timeframe. These volunteers can be either technical or clinical, and specific projects or trainings are planned ahead of time with our partners in Cap-Haïtien. In regards to infrastructure, for example, there may be water, electrical, and/or equipment-related projects or training. In clinical areas, the activity might include a specific study or assessment. Project volunteers work collaboratively alongside Haitian staff, but their main goal is to complete a specific project.

Research Mentors: Medical residents are required to complete a research project to complete their residencies. As part of our research initiative, Konbit Sante recruits volunteer mentors with content expertise in the clinical topic of their studies to accompany residents through the research process. These volunteers have knowledge of current best practices, are familiar with the most salient literature concerning all of the topics being studied, and are needed to give guidance about the interpretation and significance of the data collected. Although a face-to-face introduction to mentees is desirable, much of the follow-up communication occurs through telecommunications.

Emergency Circumstances: Our mission is to strengthen the capacity of our partner Haitian healthcare facilities and of our colleagues who work in them, so our volunteer model is not built on providing direct care. However, in extraordinary circumstances, such as the 2010 earthquake, we try to assist our partners in their response in any way possible, and our volunteers provide direct care. When needed, we will put out a call for such assistance, including specific skill sets that are required.

We also have many U.S.-based volunteers, and we encourage our traveling volunteers to help out with domestic projects. U.S.-based volunteers may serve on the board of directors or on advisory committees (e.g., supporting/advising on events, fundraising, communications, etc.), and/or on an ad hoc basis (e.g., helping to load containers, sort donated materials, or provide an extra pair of hands in the office).

Staff

Konbit Sante supports the salaries of more than 40 staff members in Haiti and the U.S., but a smaller number who will be directly involved in supporting your volunteer success and travel experience:

Maine: Konbit Sante has one part-time and three full-time staff members in its office in Falmouth, Maine. They are:

- Nathan Nickerson, executive director: Nate will be very involved in the volunteer application process and planning the trip program itinerary.
- Susan Viets, assistant executive director: Susan is responsible for the overall management of the volunteer process. You will be coordinating your paperwork related to volunteering and travel with her.
- Richard Williams, office manager and financial associate: Richard is responsible for receiving travel-related expenses, such as Konbit Sante apartment contributions.
- Rod Harmon, communications coordinator: Rod will be talking to you about any stories or photos that you might share about your travel and work.

Cap-Haïtien: Konbit Sante employs a small administrative/office staff, housed at JUH, that oversees programs and provides leadership. They are:

- Dr. Adrien Demes, program director: Dr. Demes is involved with the planning and oversight of program activities in Haiti.
- Dominique Joseph, administrator: Dominique helps arrange logistics, such as transportation, housing, scheduling training rooms, etc.
- Clotilde St Jean, RN, community health program manager: Clotilde is involved in the planning and implementation of community-based activity and work.
- Dr. Rony Saint Fleur, pediatrics program manager: Dr. Saint Fleur is involved in the planning and implementation of pediatrics-oriented activity and work.
- Ruddy Adeca, bookkeeper: Adeca is a helpful resource for assisting with many logistics.

Planning for Your Trip

Volunteers, U.S. staff and Haitian staff and partners must all work together to plan and execute volunteers' work so that it can be productive and satisfying for all parties and contributes to the mission of Konbit Sante. It is for this reason that we emphasize the need for volunteers to be oriented, participate in pre-trip meetings, communicate beforehand with their Haitian partners, and participate in follow-up activities. Adequate planning involves the following steps:

Step 1: Complete volunteer application and interview

All interested traveling volunteers complete an application, which is available on our website and provided by the Maine staff by request. This gives us basic information about the background, areas of expertise, and interests of the prospective volunteer. All volunteer applicants will be interviewed by program staff to determine if there is a good fit with the volunteer's skills and interests to the program needs and volunteer opportunities.

Step 2: Make plans to travel

Volunteer travel is initiated by a joint decision between the volunteer, Maine staff, and the in-country partner. It is important that the in-country partner be part of the initial discussion to plan a trip. This includes keeping the administrator in the loop. At the request of our in-country staff, all first-time volunteer visits must be synchronized with a visit by Maine staff. This initial planning should take place at least four weeks before travel is planned.

You must request permission to bring minors on Konbit Sante trips. If a minor goes on a trip, the legal guardian must assume full responsibility for and oversight of the minor's activities and well-being.

Please remember that you are responsible for the expenses related to your trip, including, but not limited to, airfare, room and board. Such expenses are considered contributions and are therefore tax deductions. We are happy to provide a letter of acknowledgement for IRS purposes.

Step 3: Orientation

Maine staff members will arrange a one- to two-hour orientation for new traveling volunteers. Regular traveling volunteers will be asked to attend an orientation every two years so that staff can cover issues and information that has changed. The inclusion of seasoned volunteers in these sessions can contribute to the orientation of new members. Ideally, orientation sessions will be scheduled about four weeks before travel.

Step 4: Plan for the assignment

Both U.S. and Haitian staff will participate in planning the volunteer's activities while on assignment. This assures that the volunteer's time and effort is spent in activities that meet the needs of our partners, and also helps us plan translation services,

transportation, and other logistics necessary for a productive trip. It is important that staff and partners in Haiti have the opportunity to comment, suggest additional work, modify plans, and prepare the staff for the work you and/or your team will do.

Please let us know if you plan to pursue other activities in Haiti before or after your work for Konbit Sante.

Step 5: Complete required paperwork

At least two weeks before you travel, you should:

- Purchase airline tickets. (Make sure that the executive director and assistant executive director have signed off on the trip before you purchase your tickets.)
- Purchase MedjetAssist evacuation insurance and send proof of purchase to staff.
- Submit the Volunteer Agreement and Release of Liability forms to staff.
- Submit a copy of your current passport to staff.
- Submit a photo to be used to create a Konbit Sante volunteer ID card.
- Register with the U.S. State Department's *Smart Traveler Enrollment Program* (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step/>. You are responsible for registering your travel directly with the State Department.
- If you will be involved in clinical training or direct care, you must submit a copy of your medical credentials to the Maine office.
- You will need to have a criminal background check on file with the Maine office before your trip. Konbit Sante staff will file for this check before your trip.

Personal Preparation

Language

It is extremely helpful to learn some basic Creole phrases before departure so that you can greet people and be polite in your exchanges. One excellent free online resource for beginning Creole learners is "Survival Creole," which has both written and audible learning tools: <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/10932>

Google Translate is a useful tool that has English, French, and Haitian Kreyol translations, and can be used on smartphones.

Suggested Reading

Haiti is a complex place, and developing a deeper understanding of its culture and history is extremely helpful to building long-term relationships. There is fascinating literature on the Haitian revolution, agricultural and land development, syncretic religious traditions, vibrant arts communities, shortcomings and unintended consequences of foreign aid, and models of accompaniment. A few of our favorite books are:

- *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* by Laurent Dubois. This is an incredible historical account encompassing Haiti's revolution up to the present day, and how this history and other external forces influence outcomes in Haiti in the present.

- *Fault Lines: Views across Haiti's Divide* by Beverly Bell, foreword by Edwidge Danticat. This book provides an invaluable perspective on Haitian community groups and the local responses in Haiti to the 2010 earthquake. It makes you appreciate the challenges that people in Haiti face on a daily basis, and how perceptions in the U.S. media undervalued the local response and the courage and generosity of so many people.
- *Haiti in the Balance: Why Foreign Aid Has Failed and What We Can Do About It* by Terry F. Buss. This is an exploration on approaches to aid and the (often negative) impact that aid has had on Haitian society.
- *The Uses of Haiti* by Paul Farmer, with Noam Chomsky and Jonathan Kozol. This classic book looks at what has happened recently to the health of the poor and at the structures of powers responsible.

For more perspectives, see fiction by acclaimed author Edwidge Danticat (a Konbit Sante supporter) and other writings by Paul Farmer, Bev Bell, Noam Chomsky, Timothy Schwarz, Philippe Girard, Amy Wilenz, and Peter Hallward.

Contact our Maine office for more information, as we have many of these books at the office and others in the Konbit Sante apartment in Cap-Haïtien.

Expected Standards of Behavior

Our work depends on maintaining strong positive professional and personal relationships with our colleagues and partners in Haiti. Although common sense and common courtesy should be your regular guide, be aware that cultural differences and not sharing a common first language may add complexity to a situation. Please ask if you are unsure how to proceed.

Some reminders:

- Carry your Konbit Sante identification badge at all times while in Haiti. Please wear it on your person when you are in your professional capacity.
- Be respectful to the society and culture. Seek to understand, learn, and listen. If you find yourself in a situation in which you feel your professional or medical knowledge or experience needs to supersede, please speak with a Konbit Sante staff person immediately.
- Maintain patient or client confidentiality.
- Taking pictures of patients should be approached with great care. Please ask the staff when it is and is not appropriate to take pictures. Always ask permission.
- Only represent Konbit Sante in public events or meetings with the express permission of the executive director.
- Don't possess or use illegal drugs or other illegal substances while volunteering for Konbit Sante.
- Don't discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.
- Don't engage in harassment of any sort (verbal, physical, visual). Harassment

may be, but is not limited to, words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, unwelcome sexual advances, physical contact, or violence.

Communications

Some volunteers choose to purchase an international plan for their private phones through their carrier. There are relatively inexpensive options for this.

Konbit Sante has several local phones that work on the local Haitian network, and they will be available for volunteers to use for local communication.

Many U.S. phones have a SIM card, but if you choose to purchase a local SIM card (for less than \$1 U.S.) to use in your personal phone, it will need to be “unlocked” through your carrier for use in Haiti. Be aware that there are two types of phone networks—CDMA and GSM—and that only GSM (like AT&T) work in Haiti.

You can purchase phone cards on many street corners from local vendors throughout Cap-Haïtien. There are special long-distance cards available that allow you to call the U.S. for 5 Haitian Gourde (HTG) per minute, or less than \$8/hr.

Health and Medical Advice

You can find detailed information on travelers’ health, specific diseases of concern, and the most current preventive recommendations at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website: www.cdc.gov/travel.

Recommended Immunizations

In order to provide full protection, you should get vaccinations, particularly for typhoid, four to six weeks before travel. One local resource for immunizations is the City of Portland Public Health Immunization Clinic, 103 India St., (207) 874-8446. Another resource is the Traveler’s Clinic at Intermed, 84 Marginal Way, Portland, (207) 347-2908.

Vaccinations can protect you from:

- **Typhoid:** A bacterial illness that may be transmitted by food or water contaminated by human waste and directly between people. An oral and an intramuscular vaccine are currently licensed and available. Most people choose the intramuscular vaccine. You need to get a booster dose of the intramuscular typhoid vaccine every two years.

Hepatitis A: A viral infection of the liver that may be transmitted by water or food contaminated by human waste or directly between people. You need two doses of the intramuscular vaccine; the second dose is given six months after the first.

Once you complete the two-dose series, you don't need boosters. You need to get the first dose of vaccine at least one month before travel to ensure protection.

- **Hepatitis B:** A viral illness transmitted by exposure to blood and blood products, contaminated needles/medical equipment, and sexual contact. The vaccine is recommended for volunteers who will be working in a clinical setting and traveling repeatedly to Haiti. The vaccine is usually administered as a three-dose series (at 0, 1, and 6 months). The second dose should be given one month after the first dose; the third dose should be given at least two months after the second dose and at least four months after the first dose.
- **Other:** You should ensure that you are up to date with other immunizations, such as tetanus (booster within the past 10 years), MMR, and poliovirus. Under certain circumstances that don't apply to most of our traveling volunteers, the CDC recommends a cholera or rabies vaccine.

Medications and Preventive Behavior

- **Chloroquine:** Malaria is a parasite that is transmitted to humans by mosquitoes. It is endemic throughout Haiti, including Cap-Haïtien. We encourage you to take prophylactic medication. Fortunately, most malaria in Haiti is still sensitive to chloroquine, an inexpensive oral medication with infrequent side effects. The chloroquine dosage is one tablet per week, beginning one week before travel and continuing during your stay in Haiti and for four weeks after your return. By convention (to make it easy to remember), most people take their chloroquine dose on Sundays. For a stay of one week or less, you will need a prescription for six doses of chloroquine. Some people have difficulties taking chloroquine, and there are other alternatives that your doctor can discuss with you.

While in Haiti, you should take precautions to avoid mosquito bites—day and night. See dengue fever below.

- **Anti-diarrheal Medications:** Even if you take routine precautions regarding food and water consumption while in Haiti, you may still contract traveler's diarrhea. There are many possible causes, including viruses, bacteria, and parasites. The most frequent exposure is probably failure to adequately wash one's hands before handling food. If you have diarrhea that is not accompanied by fever or bloody stools, you probably won't need antibiotics. Instead, use an over-the-counter anti-diarrheal agent, such as Imodium. *Note: If you have a fever or bloody stool, do not take anti-diarrheal medication.*
- **Cipro:** Bloody diarrhea and fever are likely symptoms of a bacterial infection, and you may need early treatment with an antibiotic such as Cipro (500 mg twice daily for 3 to 5 days). After discussion with their primary care physician, most volunteers take a three-day supply with them for possible use.

- **Prescription and Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications:** Take a full supply of any regularly prescribed medications. Be sure they are in the original labeled containers in which they were dispensed from the pharmacy or that you keep a photocopy of the prescription. You should also consider taking other OTC medicines, including Tylenol and/or ibuprofen, Pepto-Bismol (for nausea or diarrhea), and decongestants or antihistamines. Consider taking any other OTC or prescribed medicines that you might occasionally need (prescription pain medication, Dramamine, etc.).
- **Dengue Fever, Chikungunya Virus and Zika Virus:** These are all potentially serious and very uncomfortable viral infections transmitted by mosquitoes. There are currently no vaccines or prophylactic medications for any of them. Your best protection is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes by using an insect repellent containing DEET at all times, wearing long sleeves and pants (preferably sprayed with permethrin), and, if you sleep in a room with the windows open, using mosquito netting. There is no curative treatment, so the goal of treatment is pain management and comfort. *Note: Zika virus is believed to present significant risk to the fetuses of pregnant women for serious birth defects. Any volunteer who is pregnant or part of a couple that is planning to become pregnant should speak to his or her doctor before deciding to travel. Zika can stay in men's semen for months after infection (even without symptoms), and can be spread to sexual partners during that time, so there needs to be a plan for protection of women who are pregnant or could potentially become pregnant after exposure.*
- **Cholera:** This is a bacterial illness that may be transmitted by food or water contaminated by human waste. While many people experience subclinical cases without symptoms, infection can cause copious watery diarrhea that can result in severe dehydration, shock, and death within hours if not treated. The vaccine is not widely used at this time, so the best prevention is to be vigilant about drinking clean water and well-cooked foods. In the unlikely event of contracting the disease, immediate and aggressive rehydration, including with IVs in the most severe cases, will be needed.
- **Medical Evacuation Insurance:** To ensure you would receive the best level of care needed in a medical emergency, Konbit Sante requires that all traveling staff and volunteers purchase medical evacuation insurance. Most volunteers subscribe to MedjetAssist, as there is a group discount when you identify yourself as a Konbit Sante volunteer. This insurance must be purchased while you are in the U.S. It will cover you wherever you travel, including in the U.S., and bring you to the hospital of your choice. You can set up or renew your own account by contacting MedjetAssist. The Konbit Sante MedjetAssist agent is Larry McGuinness at (917) 640-4099, (800) 5-ASSIST, or Lmcguinness@medjet.com. For further information, see medjetassist.com or contact the Konbit Sante staff.

If you become sick or have an accident while in Haiti, depending on the situation, you will be transported to Justinian Hospital in Cap-Haïtien or Sacre-Coeur

Hospital in Milot. If evacuation is necessary, Konbit Sante staff will make the arrangements for travel, including contacting the medical evacuation team, ground transportation, and airlines.

Security and Safety

During our time working in Haiti, there have been occasional periods of political instability with associated security risks that have impacted our trip planning. The U.S. government maintains an advisory regarding travel to Haiti. Konbit Sante takes this and other information into account when assessing safety and security issues before a trip. Konbit Sante cannot be responsible for any travel costs incurred as a result of a cancelled or postponed trip due to security or disaster situations.

For information about safety and travel warnings, please see the U.S. Department of State website:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/haiti-travel-advisory.html>.

Prior to your trip, Konbit Sante staff will brief you on any current security issues.

Once you arrive in Haiti, Konbit Sante staff will:

- Instruct you on the use of communications equipment
- Give you a list of emergency telephone numbers

At all times, you should carry:

- Haiti contacts list and emergency telephone numbers
- A cell phone
- Your Konbit Sante identification card

While in Haiti, please understand that you:

- Do not enjoy diplomatic protection, and are not exempt from civil/penal law
- Must defer to staff regarding limitations of movement related to security issues or filing of reports concerning security issues with authorities
- Must report the loss or theft of your U.S. passport to the local police and to the U.S. embassy or consulate in Port-au-Prince

Additional safety tips

Just as in the U.S., crime is an ongoing concern in Haiti. Violent crimes, such as car hijacking, assault, kidnapping, and armed robbery, have at times been frequent in some areas. Women travelers may be more at risk.

- Try not to travel alone; travel around the city with someone who knows his or her way around and can communicate effectively
- Carry a flashlight to see in power outages
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Avoid areas of known violence

- Be discreet; do not act in ways that encourage greater notice or curiosity
- Do not take flashy or expensive jewelry on the trip
- Don't carry large amounts of cash
- Keep valuables hidden at all times
- If you are going to consume alcohol, please be certain to drink only in moderation
- Be cautious and respectful of talking about Haitian politics, religion, and other potentially charged issues in public. Konbit Sante is politically neutral, and must maintain neutrality for the well-being of our staff and for the longevity of our programs.

Unsolicited photographs of individuals in public can and have resulted in very negative interactions for everyone involved. Always respect the general goodwill of the Haitian people by not visibly taking pictures of people without their permission, particularly if they are in a context or situation that they would not find flattering.

Lost or stolen birth certificates and/or driver's licenses used as entry documents generally cannot be replaced outside the United States, so always carry copies of all documents and keep them separate from each other.

Expenses and Logistics

Flights

Konbit Sante volunteers come from all over the U.S., and sometimes from other countries. Unless specifically covered by a grant, volunteers are self-supporting and are responsible for purchasing their own airline tickets. We have a lot of experience flying in and out of Cap-Haïtien, so if you need assistance, Konbit Sante's Maine staff will be happy to help identify the itinerary that works best for you. In most circumstances, you will be flying directly into Cap-Haïtien on the daily American Airlines flight from Miami. The airport is also serviced by Spirit Air out of Fort Lauderdale three days a week. Staff will meet you at the airport, and it is only a four-mile drive from there to the hospital, apartment, or hotel (although it can take up to 45 minutes, depending on the traffic).

Lodging

Volunteers who stay at the Konbit Sante apartment are asked to make a donation of \$30 per night to help defray the costs of maintaining that option. Volunteers staying at a local hotel will pay directly for their lodging.

Credit Cards and Cash

We recommend that you carry credit cards and enough cash with you for your entire trip, and also to cover any potential emergencies or changes in travel. There is a safe for secure storage both at the Christophe Hotel and the Konbit Sante apartment. Although there are ATMs in Cap-Haïtien, we do not recommend using them. In an emergency, staff in Haiti can access funds, and Maine staff can wire funds from the U.S.

Currency

The currency in Haiti is the gourde (HTG). Although most places will happily accept U.S. dollars, it is usually better for you to have some local currency available. In recent years, the exchange rate has changed rapidly. As of this writing, it is roughly 78 HTG/US \$1. For current exchange rates, you can check <https://fx-rate.net/USD/HTG/> (International currency converter). Konbit Sante staff will be happy to show you how to safely and accurately exchange some U.S. dollars to HTG.

You will hear people refer to a “Haitian dollar,” which is equal to 5 HTG. The Haitian dollar is not an actual currency; it is just a way that people talk about money, because the gourde used to be linked to the U.S. dollar. Sometimes, prices in restaurants are listed in Haitian dollars. Fifteen Haitian dollars are approximately equal to one U.S. dollar. Many formal places of business can accept credit cards, but some still cannot, so it is important to have a reasonable amount of cash with you.

Tax Deductions

When you travel as a volunteer with Konbit Sante, most of your out-of-pocket travel expenses (travel, meals, lodging) are tax-deductible. It is your personal responsibility to keep receipts and use them to determine the total value of tax-deductible expenses from the trip. For tax documentation purposes, Konbit Sante will, upon request, write you a letter acknowledging that you made a trip to Cap-Haïtien for charitable purposes between x and y dates, but we cannot provide a dollar value.

Once I arrive in Cap-Haïtien, what do I need to know?

At the Airport: You must fill out the immigration card provided to you on the plane. It requires you to report your local address in Cap-Haïtien. For most of our volunteers, the local address will either be the Hotel Roi Christophe at Rue 24B or our apartment at 98 Rue 24. Upon landing, give the form to authorities at the airport. There is a **\$10 U.S. entrance tax fee (cash only)** that you must pay at the airport upon entry. At immigration, they will review the immigration card and tear off the bottom piece. Save this in a safe place, because you will need it when you depart. Just after clearing customs and before exiting the airport, you will be asked to show your luggage tags, so be sure to keep them handy and have them ready. At the airport, many porters offer to help with your luggage. When someone carries your bag, they will expect and deserve a tip. One or two U.S. dollars per bag is a reasonable tip.

In the City: Most of our U.S.-based staff and volunteers stand out when walking the streets of Cap-Haïtien, and it can take a while to get used to being noticeably different. Don't be surprised or offended if people refer to you as “blan,” which means “foreigner” in Creole. In Haiti, it is considered polite to establish eye contact and acknowledge people with a pleasant “bonjou” (“good morning”), “bonswa” (“good afternoon”) or “sa va?” (“how are you?”).

People may ask you for money in any number of circumstances. It is a personal decision as to how to respond to such requests; however, we strongly advise against giving money within sight of others in public. It is important to remember that handing out money to people on the street can attract a crowd and make them, or you, a target.

Please also be aware of promises that you make for any services, requests for employment, supplies, or provision for care, whether they be explicit or implicit. There can easily be misunderstandings if you are vague in your response, such as saying, “I will see what I can do” upon being asked for something. People may see this as an agreement, and may expect Konbit Sante to deliver on what is seen as a promise after your departure. Please be considerate of the impact this can have on staff.

Accommodations

- **The Konbit Sante Apartment:** The apartment, 98 Rue 24 (24th Street), at the intersection with J Street, is a 10-minute walk from JUH. It is booked on a first-come, first-served basis, and reserved first for staff. We request a contribution of \$30 per night to help defray the cost of maintaining this option for travelers on a budget. There are three bedrooms and two bathrooms. It can accommodate up to seven adults sharing rooms. It is basic, with no services, but secure and clean. There is a refrigerator, a microwave, clean drinking water, and a water heater for tea or coffee. There is basic internet service, and while the public power is somewhat erratic, there is an inverter with back-up batteries for power outages. There is running water for showers, but no hot water. There is a safe for valuables.
- **Hotel Rio Christophe:** Within walking distance of the Konbit Sante office, apartment, and JUH is the Hotel Christophe (Rue 24B), which has rooms that are spacious and comfortable and include private baths and antique armoires. Rooms have window screens, air conditioning, and 24 hour/day power. The hotel also provides wireless internet, although it is only somewhat reliable due to power outages. The nightly room rates change, but are typically over \$100 U.S. per night for single occupancy and more for double occupancy (including tax and service charge), including continental breakfast. Other food and beverage charges at the Christophe average between \$10 to \$20 per day per person, and are added to the hotel bill throughout the week. There is a newer section where room rates are higher. Rates can change without notice. The process of checking out can take a while, so we recommend that volunteers check out the night before they depart. We also recommend that volunteers closely review their bill, because with large groups, it is easy for food and drink orders to get placed on the wrong bill.
- **Volunteer Village:** HHA (Hope Health Action, an NGO partner that works closely with HCBH) operates Volunteer Village in Quartier-Morin, which is about 15 minutes by car beyond the airport away from Cap-Haïtien City Centre. Open to teams of up to 11 people, it has single and double rooms with a shared bath and breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Rooms cost \$40 per night. Transportation may be

available for an additional cost to and from the city. This would be a most appropriate option for a volunteer who has work focusing on support at HCBH. Konbit Sante staff can make a reservation at Volunteer Village.

Once I return home, what do I need to do?

Within two weeks of returning from Haiti, you will be asked to:

- Participate in debriefing sessions, either in person or via conference call
- Submit a trip report noting important meetings or discussions that need follow-up, a narrative for publication, and comments on what could be improved to make for a better and more productive trip experience
- We appreciate when volunteers submit photos to us—particularly action shots, which show volunteers and Haitian colleagues at work together. (Please remember to request permission to take all photos.) You may email your best shots to us or upload to sharing sites such as Flickr. Please include captions describing the activity and the people pictured. These photos are incredibly helpful for our reports, brochures, the website and other communications.

You are an important ambassador for Konbit Sante, and we appreciate your role in informing the community and different audiences about us. At the same time, we ask that you get advance permission of the executive director to represent Konbit Sante in public events or meetings. Please do not publicly use your Konbit Sante affiliation in connection with the promotion of partisan politics, religious matters, or positions on any issue not in conformity with the official position of Konbit Sante.

General Information

Packing List

See Appendix 2 for a list of required and suggested items to bring on your trip. For your convenience, we've set up it up as a checklist to use as you pack. Bring professional as well as casual clothes. Hospital staff members wear uniforms, and medical staff dress professionally. Men often dress in dress shirts and ties. Nice slacks or skirts are fine for women. Shorts and spaghetti straps are not appropriate in a work setting.

Haiti Contacts

Konbit Sante staff will email the local contact names and phone numbers as a spreadsheet. You are encouraged to carry a copy with you while in Haiti.

Getting Around in Cap-Haïtien

Streets in the City Centre, where JUH and the Konbit Sante apartment are located, are laid out in a grid pattern. East–west streets are labeled Rue A to Q. North–south streets are numbered Rue 1 to 24. Maps of Cap-Haïtien are available online at Google Maps, Google Earth and on many GPS devices.

Always negotiate taxi rates before leaving the curb. Most taxi fares are standard, e.g., 50 HTG in town, 100 HTG to the airport area. Taxi rides from the airport into town, on the other hand, are often U.S. \$20.

Weather

Haiti is tropical, with a mean daily high of 90 degrees Fahrenheit and a mean nightly low of 71 degrees. The hottest months are July and August, when daytime temperatures average 93 degrees, and the coolest are December to March, with average daily highs hovering around 87. In the north, where Cap-Haïtien is located, rainfall is spread out through the year. August through October is hurricane season, with storms and flooding likeliest during September, October and November.

Guest Policy

Konbit Sante encourages strengthening relationships with our Haitian partners. We frequently invite guests to share dinner and drinks with us. Before extending an invitation to others to join us as guests of Konbit Sante, speak with staff first. If you want to treat a guest on your own tab, you are welcome to extend the invitation without consulting staff.

Tipping

You should have U.S. \$1 bills in your pocket at all times. (It is helpful to have about \$30 in \$1 bills.) Tipping is expected for most personal assistance, e.g., helping with bags at the airport or hotel. Any monetary transactions in public should be handled discreetly (it is a good idea not to pull more money out of your pocket than you are intending to give).

Common tips paid for by individual volunteers:

- Housekeepers: Please leave approximately U.S. \$10 (per person/per week) in the room at either the apartment or hotel at the end of your visit. If housekeepers do personal laundry, the cost is approximately \$5 for a small bag and \$10 for a large bag.
- Luggage Handling: Please tip individually (\$1 to \$2/bag) when luggage is carried.
- Restaurants: Add 20% gratuity

Shopping

There are relatively few stores in Cap-Haïtien like we might find in the U.S., but there are many vendors and markets.

- Food Markets: The Kokiya Market, located on the boulevard, is fairly expensive, but is convenient and a place to buy groceries. You can also request assistance from Odelin Pierre, who provides custodial services at the apartment and Konbit Sante office, to assist in purchasing items in the local market, such as fresh fruits and bread. Although this would be a way to purchase groceries at a much cheaper price, you should add a tip. Staff in Haiti know of many places for lunch that are 100 to 200 HTG.
- Tourist Art Market: A long row of artisans' stalls is located on the boulevard not far from the Hotel Christophe. Artisans sell woodcarvings, paintings, baskets, needlework, and painted and unpainted metal cutouts. Prices are negotiable.

- Le Marche Cluny/Iron Market: This is a market area within a rusted ornate iron structure where you can find a vast array of home goods, food, clothes, and much more. The area is crowded, and it is a good idea to watch for open manholes. Prices are negotiable. It is advisable to go with someone who knows their way around and can communicate.

Water and Food

- Water: There is always clean drinking water in the Konbit Sante apartment, Konbit Sante office at Justinian Hospital, and most hotels. Commercially sealed bottled water is the safest water for drinking and brushing your teeth. It is often referred to by a proprietary name, "Culligan." Unless someone in the know tells you it is safe, be wary of drinking water or iced drinks at any establishment. Bring a water bottle that you can fill and carry during your excursions. Be sure to take it whenever you go out for a period of time.
- Food: There is basic cooking equipment in the Konbit Sante apartment (electric skillet and water heater), which people staying there often use for preparing breakfast. There are an increasing number of good and affordable restaurant/café options within walking distance of the places where volunteers stay, and we often eat dinner at one of those.

Sharing food and meals with staff and partners is very important, but we encourage you to consider the needs of others when you are ordering and purchasing food. Be aware that some people may not have the resources to pay for a meal.

Be careful what you eat. You can generally consider packaged foods safe. Street foods are suspect. Eat only well-cooked meat and fish, preferably still hot. Dairy products are not pasteurized, and may pose a health risk.

Departure

You will have to go through Haitian immigration again at the airport upon departure.

When reentering the U.S., you must fill out a customs declaration form. You will hand the form to a person as you are exiting the airport with your baggage. It is rare that they will ask to search your luggage unless they have a reason to do so. You are allowed to bring in \$600 worth of products duty-free.

Thank You!

Thank you for your interest in serving as a traveling volunteer for Konbit Sante! We hope that you find your participation to be rewarding. We welcome feedback from you on this document and on any of your experiences with us.

Appendix 1: Checklist for Trip Prep

- Receive authorization to travel from Konbit Sante executive director at least 4 weeks before travel
- Criminal background performed by Maine office staff at least 4 weeks before travel
- Compete online registration with U.S. State Department
- Participate in orientation meeting(s)
- Purchase airline tickets. (Must have received permission to travel.)
- Arrange evacuation insurance (required). Must be done 10 days prior to departure.
- Submit copy of passport, licensing, Volunteer Agreement and Release of Liability to Maine office

Appendix 2: Packing List

Required items to take:

- Passport (keep a separate photocopy of your passport with you)
- Airline tickets
- Casual and professional attire
- Konbit Sante identification badge on lanyard
- Medical evacuation ID and info

Recommended items to take:

- Liquid hand sanitizer
- Personal first aid kit
- Insect repellent to wear day and night (DEET is best)
- Motion sickness pills, if needed
- Water bottle
- Flashlight (most smartphones have an adequate one)
- Notebook and writing implements
- Reading materials (tablets/e-readers)
- Power bars or other snacks
- Small U.S. bills for tips and souvenirs (recommend \$30 one-dollar bills; then some \$5's and \$10's)
- Facial tissues
- Powdered Gatorade and/or oral rehydration salts
- Probiotics/acidophilus
- Plastic and Ziploc bags
- Business cards
- Small umbrella and plastic poncho
- Towel

Appendix 3: Trip Report Form

Dear Konbit Sante Volunteer,

Please submit your report electronically to Susan Viets (stviets@konbitsante.org) within two weeks of returning to the United States. Take as much room as you need to answer the questions. We intend to use these reports to monitor projects and improve the quality of project implementation.

Name of Volunteer:

Dates of Trip:

1. What was the purpose/objectives of your trip?
2. Who were your primary Haitian collaborators on this trip?
3. Please provide a summary of the activities that you and your partners carried out during this trip.
4. Please provide a summary of the achievement or results achieved during this trip.
5. Please share what staff support you found helpful in terms of making this a meaningful or impactful trip.
6. Please share any challenges or obstacles you faced during this trip, and any suggestion on how Konbit Sante staff might have better addressed them.
7. Please add any comments or thoughts you wish to share with Konbit Sante staff about your trip, including logistics, travel, accommodations, etc.
8. Did you take photos of your collaborative work that the staff can use? (If yes, we will give you instructions on how to transfer them to us.)

Mesi Anpil!! Your input is very helpful!