



6th Annual Maine Walks with Haiti Brings Allies & Supporters Together

May 30th was a perfect day for a 4-mile walk and run, and our Program Director from Haiti, Jose Raymour, and Mr. Zephyr, a hospital administrator, joined us in Portland for the event.

“It felt really great to be back in Portland and witness firsthand people’s desire to participate in our *konbit*”, Jose stated. “It was even more rewarding to see the joy of Mr.

Francois Zephyr, JUH administrator, in Portland for a week-long training/workshop being able to appreciate all the effort required to continue to support Konbit Sante’s effort in Cap-Haitien.”

Thanks to incredibly generous supporters, sponsors, performers and friends, the 6th Annual *Maine Walks with Haiti* raised over \$60,000.

How You Can Help

It is the generous donations from individuals and organizations that makes our work to improve the health of our Haitian neighbors possible.

Please consider making a contribution today. For your convenience you can use the enclosed remittance envelope, or donate online at www.konbitsante.org.

Thank you!

May we send you occasional E-news?

It’s a great way to learn more about how Konbit Sante is working to improve health care in northern Haiti. To receive electronic updates, please visit www.konbitsante.org. Also follow us on Facebook by clicking on the Facebook icon located at the bottom of the web page.

We Welcome Your Comments:

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Dr. Maudelin Mesadieu, Director of ULS, with medicines in stock in their pharmacy in Bande du Nord.

Getting medications where they are needed most

In 2015, Konbit Sante has continued to work to expand access to medicines for patients in need.

We recently made a **major purchase of medications and supplies** through an organization based in Amsterdam called IMRES that makes them available to eligible organizations for pennies on the dollar. This order included six months worth of medication for our partners at the Hospital of

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Infant Incubators Installed, and in Use!

Even in a warm climate like Haiti, the body temperature of premature infants can drop dangerously low, leading to harm or even death. They need extra help keeping warm.

Skin-to-skin care- also known as “kangaroo care”- where the baby is placed against the skin of their mother, father, or other caregiver, is a low-tech and very effective way to keep babies warm, and we have been working to integrate that into the routine care. However, in some cases, when the parents or caregiver are not available or the preterm baby needs additional medical care, an incubator can provide a protective and warm environment for a preterm baby.

For many years incubators that were installed in the JUH neonatal unit quickly burned out due to wild

fluctuations in voltage, leaving clinicians without this invaluable option for saving lives. Konbit Sante worked with USAID and others to both upgrade the electrical system and purchase new incubators.

Most recently we purchased and installed additional electrical security for these new incubators so that they won’t meet the same fate as their predecessors. It has taken some time to address the complicated issues that blocked this from being available in the past, but the Pediatric Department at JUH now **has four incubators to care for premature babies in use** once again. Prematurity is the leading cause of death among newborns at the JUH, but with the installation of the incubators like the one pictured here, premature infants now have a better chance of survival.

Since the installation of the incubators, premature infants like the two newborns pictured here, have a higher chance of survival at JUH.



Incubators keeping premature newborns warm at the JUH.

Getting Medications *Continued*

the Baptist Convention (HBCH); expanding their ability to provide care while contributing to their financial sustainability. The order also included a year's supply of materials for the 120 traditional birth attendants and 22 community health workers from HCBH, FSM and ULS.

We are also very happy to be recent recipients of an in-kind grant from a new partner organization called Vitamin Angels, which has supplied all of the **Vitamin A, children's vitamins, and prenatal vitamins** that we requested for 5 partner organizations for the next year. It is wonderful to be able to give pregnant women prenatal vitamins for their entire pregnancy, and Vitamin A to all infants and children that are seen at these sites.

Some level of Vitamin A deficiency affects as many as 1 in 5 children in the world; almost entirely in areas like Haiti where malnutrition is common. It is the leading cause of preventable childhood blindness. Universal distribution of Vitamin A for children is national health policy in Haiti, but stock-outs have often undermined that goal. We hope to be expanding access to essential medicines in the coming year as we complete the legal process to be allowed to bring them in.

From Maine To Haiti: Our 16th Shipping Container!

This spring, a small crew of Konbit Sante volunteers loaded a 40-foot shipping container for Haiti. It arrived in record time, and in less than a month was unloaded with supplies delivered to five health facilities in northern Haiti.

With your help, we sent over **1600 birthing kits** sent from all over the country, an X-Ray machine from South Portland, an ultrasound from Newcastle, and \$460,000 in medicines from our partner Direct Relief International. The shipment also contained hundreds of boxes of medical supplies and equipment already in use!



Bob MacKinnon, Beth McCarthy and Mike Kilmartin join Konbit Sante staff in loading a full container on May 16, 2015.



Needs List

We take special care to ensure everything that we send to Haiti is useful and can be repaired easily. Right now, our partners have requested:

- Rugged vehicles for Haiti! (Please call for info)
- Cameras
- Laptops
- Tablets
- UPS Power Supplies
- Safe Birthing Kits
- Tools
- Smartphones
- EKG machine
- Neonate CPAP machine
- Heavy duty washing machine(s)
- O2 H tanks
- O2 concentrators
- Intercom system suitable to connect between two buildings
- Ultrasound machine and/or probes
- Money for the purchase of medications and anesthesia

Call us at (207) 347-6733 or email us at supplies@konbitsante.org if you have something to donate!

Trainings to Improve Post-Abortion Care for Women

Konbit Sante, in partnership with Emory University and the JUH Maternity Service held a 3-day post abortion care (PAC) workshop as part of a larger collaborative effort to improve the services to women at the hospital.

Induced abortion is illegal in Haiti, but it is frequently practiced, and spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) is a common outcome of early pregnancy. Unsafe abortion and pregnancy-related bleeding remain among the most common causes of maternal deaths. Access to safe, compassionate, comprehensive, and high quality care after an induced or spontaneous abortion can improve women's health and save lives.

Women need and deserve no less.

The Justinian Hospital Maternity Service is a busy unit that routinely sees women urgently requiring PAC. The surgical procedure currently in use for this is called a *dilation and curettage*. This method is less safe and more painful than a newer WHO-recommended technique that uses a plastic device called a manual vacuum aspirator, or MVA, which can quickly resolve bleeding with minimal pain and risk to the woman. The purpose of our workshop was to focus on transitioning to the safe use of the MVA to replace the old method.

Over the course of the next 6 months, we will continue to work closely with

the maternity residents and faculty to monitor the uptake and quality of this best practice.



Trainer Dr. Youseline Telemaque uses papayas to simulate MVA techniques.

Volunteers Join Local Staff to Conduct Water Use Survey at Haiti's 2nd Largest Public Hospital

Konbit Sante has supported JUH's efforts to improve water and sanitation conditions for over 12 years. Initial work successfully focused on increasing the quantity of available water, improving the main water distribution system, and elimination of sources of contamination. As a next step, volunteer water engineers conducted a comprehensive assessment of the internal plumbing systems where water actually is needed for patient care and hygiene, and evaluating the current operation and management of the related systems.

The work included a series of interviews with many hospital staff and documenting all points of water use and wastewater disposal in over 20 buildings on the JUH campus. As was expected, the plumbing systems in most of the buildings were found to be in various states of disrepair, or completely inoperable. The survey really highlighted clinicians' uphill struggle to deliver high quality patient care without a reliable, safe source of water. For example, the maternity service - where over 300 babies are delivered each month-

contains only two operating sinks. This is wholly inadequate.

The next step is to use this professional assessment to inform the development of a strategic plan with our partners at JUH, including specific capital improvements and operational recommendations that can improve the allocation of limited water resources, improve efficiency, and better manage the utility systems to meet patient needs at the hospital.



Team of Konbit Sante engineers, volunteers and hospital staff together at the well house at the Justinien University Hospital.

Warehouse Moves to Westbrook: Second Container This Year on the Way!

We have been fortunate to get donated warehouse space for many years from J. B. Brown & Sons (and donated office space since our beginning from the amazing folks at Northern Data Systems). This summer, we are moving into a warehouse in Westbrook that we will share with Furniture Friends, a local organization that provides furniture and household items for many new Mainers.

We are very excited about this new arrangement, as we often receive offers of items that are not usable at the hospitals and clinics we support in Haiti. So we often try to get those items to families in need locally, and working now with Furniture Friends will allow us to be more effective in aiding families both in Maine and in Haiti.

We will be moving to a smaller space, however, so it is necessary for us to send a second container this fiscal year. We have some incredibly valuable items to send, and **we need your help! We need to raise \$12,000 by September 1** and make this the best container we can. Join us in support by:

- Sending safe birthing kits (instructions online or available by contacting us)
- Making a donation today!
- Reviewing our needs list of essential supplies, medicines and equipment

Send the attached envelope with your gift to help fund the container, or visit us online at www.konbitsante.org/donate.

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends of Konbit Sante,

I have recently had the good fortune to become a grandfather twice over, but neither grandchild arrived without some difficulties. My granddaughter needed to be delivered by emergency C-section, because fetal monitoring indicated that her heart rate was dropping dangerously low during labor. Once the decision was made that surgery was required, the baby was delivered within minutes and her prognosis improved immediately. My grandson was born 7 weeks premature at a US county hospital. The baby needed several weeks of supportive neonatal intensive care until he was strong enough to go home with his happy parents.

As happy as I am about those outcomes, I am sobered by the knowledge that when women and their families in Haiti face those same circumstances today, their children will too often not survive. If one believes that that is just an unfortunate "luck of the draw", it is easy to think of this simply as tragic. But if you believe, as I do, that in today's world this just doesn't need to be the case; it is not only tragic, but unjust and immoral.

That human rights perspective motivates us to work to the limits of our capacity toward the day when the fruits of medical knowledge and practice that we so often take for granted, benefit all people. It is for that reason that, while the overall newborn death rate has dropped remarkably in the JUH pediatric services, we are turning our focus on improving the survival of premature babies; which now account for the majority of preventable death. It is why we are partnering with the maternity service to find ways to decrease the time from obstetrical emergency to delivery by C-section; why we are supporting work in the communities to provide and connect women to prenatal care; why we work with our partners to get the needed supplies to allow Haitian professionals who are able and wanting to provide this care to do it without delay.

I hope that this newsletter gives you a small window into this work. As always, I invite you to continue to walk with our Haitian partners; partners that can make this care a reality for their own communities and families with the right kind of support and collaboration.

Peace,

Nathan Nickerson, DrPH, RN
Executive Director, Konbit Sante