



Konbit Sante

CAP-HAITIEN HEALTH PARTNERSHIP



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Providing Sustainable Primary Health Care in Bande de Nord

With your help, the 25,000 people in the economically poor community of Bande de Nord (BdN), one of the three major sections of Cap-Haitien, will soon have a new center serving their primary health care needs.

Unlike the other two sections, BdN is very mountainous, much more rural, and more isolated, as many people do not live on an access road. Regular health services had not been provided there until seven years ago, when Dr. Maudelin Mesadieu and his colleagues formed ULS—"Unite de Lutte pour la Sante" (which might best be translated into English to mean "Fighting Unit for Health")—and began taking care of people in a small rented space. Konbit Sante has been working with

this very capable and dedicated group since its inception with the goal of establishing high-quality and sustainable health services.

Recognizing the precariousness of utilizing a rented space that could be lost at any time, and being impressed with the quality of its work, we told ULS that if it could secure ownership of a suitable piece of land, we would help build a permanent health center. When ULS was recently informed that it was being evicted from the leased space, the situation became more urgent.

Thanks to two generous offers of matching challenge grants of \$50,000 apiece, we see a path forward for making a new health center a reality. The first challenge has been met, so we now have half the funds needed and have broken ground. Our hope is that we can raise the remaining \$50,000 in matching funds to complete the center by late summer or early fall. Please contact our office if you would like to learn more about this initiative.

New Pediatric Facility at JUH—Open at Long Last!

The long-awaited USAID-funded pediatric facility at Justinian Hospital is open, and newborns and children are now receiving care in a much more spacious and modern building. The new facility presents a real opportunity to offer care in a much more dignified and less congested space, which by itself helps reduce transmission of infection. There is also much more adequate storage space to manage the essential medicines and supplies that we provide.

The new building has utilities and systems that are new to the staff so we are working on a long-term plan to support them. Konbit Sante staff and volunteers also continue to support ongoing efforts to improve care and decrease neonatal mortality. We will have some specific data to share in the annual report, but for now, we are happy they are able to provide care in a facility that can facilitate the provision of high-quality care, rather than impede it.

Summer 2018 *Developments in Cap-Haitien*

Research

Taking the “Blood Pressure” of Care

In the spring, Konbit Sante collaborated with colleagues from the Haiti Medical Education (HME) in strengthening the capacity of clinicians at Justinian University Hospital to use research tools to ask and answer important questions about their services and policies. We consider these skills foundational to improving the quality of care that the hospital provides. Just as it is not possible to effectively treat a patient who is suspected to have high blood pressure without measuring it, we emphasized the power of collecting critical data on how services are provided to identify and treat problems with the delivery of care.

Over 60 residents, attending physicians, and nurses enthusiastically participated in three two-day seminars that introduced the basics of formulating a meaningful research question, doing a literature review, and conducting simple studies that can have a great impact on the practice or policy in their services. Understanding the nature and severity of a problem is the first step in addressing it.



Education & Health

Clearing the little “Game Stoppers”

For people to receive health care in any system, a whole chain of events need to occur that is quite often hidden to us in the U.S. In a more fragile or under-resourced system, a relatively minor failure can prevent something very important from happening for the patient or community member.

Accompanying our partners in their day-to-day challenges and triumphs helps us identify and address some of the many and varied “game-stoppers” that can prevent people from receiving the care they need and deserve. For example, Haiti has made real progress on meeting its ambitious goal of decreasing vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs), particularly since the 2010 earthquake.¹

Aside from the protection from disease that the vaccines confer, children are required to present a vaccination card, documenting their vaccine status in order to attend school. No card, no school. At the Fort St. Michel Health Center, there are sporadic shortages of official Ministry of Health vaccine cards, which disrupts the entire

Meet Dominique Joseph

Konbit Sante Administrator



Konbit Sante has been going through some transitions this year, including the addition of a full-time administrator in our Haiti office. After an extensive recruitment process, we were thrilled to find Dominique Joseph for this position. It would be an understatement to say that he has had a tremendous impact already! In addition to the administrative burden of doing health work in Haiti by the book—working with various ministries to maintain our legal good standing, working with customs to import humanitarian supplies, overseeing our finances and taxes—Dominique also works closely with our partner facilities to help strengthen their administrative capacities.

Dominique comes to us with years of very relevant experience administering other NGOs in Haiti, a “can-do” attitude, and a tenacity about getting tasks accomplished. His warm smile and diplomatic approach make people want to work with him. We feel fortunate to have him on our team!

program. Even if the vaccine is available, the lack of a card is a “game-stopper” and even has implications for access to education for children who are already disadvantaged in this regard.

Knowing this, we produced an emergency back-up supply of 4,000 reproductions of the vaccination card that can be drawn upon when there are shortages so that weak link does not stop the chain of events that might protect a child from a VPD or make it harder than it already is to go to school.

¹Tohme RA, et al., 2017. Expansion of Vaccination Services and Strengthening Vaccine-Preventable Diseases Surveillance in Haiti, 2010–2016. Am J Trop Med Hyg. Oct 18; 97(4 Suppl): 28–36.

Container #19 Shipped

In early August, a container was distributed to Konbit Sante partners in Cap-Haitien with over \$150,000 in goods, from the basics of latex gloves to donated x-ray machines and discounted infant incubators. We are particularly pleased that it carried lots of new equipment for newborns at the Haitian Baptist Convention Hospital in support of its efforts to improve the survival and health of these youngest and most vulnerable members of the community.

Transitions

Konbit Sante had many staff changes in early 2018. Tezita Negussie, MPH, MSW, who lived in Cap-Haitien for 15 months as our country director and for six years previous supported programs out of the U.S. office, headed home to Ethiopia after a six-month detour at Buddhist Retreat in California.

Danny Muller, who provided almost eight years of service in the U.S. office as Konbit Sante’s supply chain manager, volunteer coordinator and development associate, has left to put his abundant energy into working with other NGOs on foster care issues and on Middle-East peacemaking and reconciliation.

We thank both Tezita and Danny for their tremendous energy and dedication to the Haitian people, and wish them well on their new ventures.



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**"Every time you spend money, you're casting
a vote for the kind of world you want."**

Anna Lappe, author and advocate for food justice and sustainability

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Dear Friends of Konbit Sante,

Greetings from Haiti. I am writing to thank you for all that you have made possible with your generous support of Konbit Sante's work. Whenever you expend your talent, time, or treasure on something, you are, as Anna Lappe says, "casting a vote for the kind of world you want". If you are receiving this newsletter, it is most likely because you have "cast that vote" in some way by your support for our work, and we are truly grateful.

I am often asked if Konbit Sante has aspirations to "scale up" or grow bigger, and I always respond that our "growth goal" is only to grow in positive impact. That does not necessarily entail growing bigger, but it does entail growing deeper in relationships and understanding so that the resources we are entrusted with can be applied wisely, flexibly, and directly.

The popular media frequently presents Haiti as a place that is such an abyss of need and dysfunction of both the Haitian government and international players, that no amount of money can really have a meaningful impact. Although there is definitely a need to examine how to provide effective support, the great paradox is that relatively small amounts of resources, that are invested in an informed and targeted way based on local goals, realities, and aspirations, can have a real and positive impact on many people.

Though a small organization, our impact has been substantial over the past 17 years because we have accompanied local people and health systems in the Cap-Haitien area and gained a deeper understanding of the leverage points for positive change. We hope that you find this newsletter helpful in describing just a few those points where your investment in the "kind of world you want" has been applied. Thank you again for your support, and being part of this community of caring we call a konbit.

As always, we are happy to share more details with you, and answer any questions you may have about our work. Please feel free to give us a call!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nate Nickerson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Nate