

# Konbit Sante

CAP-HAITIEN HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

## 2023 Annual Report



# Agility and Focus

Letter from the Country Director and Interim Executive Director

*In difficult times, Konbit Sante is always responsive to HUI's requests. Last week, following the breakdown of the oxygen generator, Konbit Sante purchased five oxygen cylinders for pediatrics and the operating room. Yesterday you agreed, following a request from the Justinien's management team to support certain one-off needs such as the protection of cylinders, copies for pediatrics and other services, and the repair of the alternator of the SDMO 350 (generator) which suddenly broke down. For everything, the management of the HUI appreciates your attention and is grateful to Konbit Sante and its staff.*

— Jean G to Dub , MD, MSc  
Executive Director, H pital  
Universitaire Justinien

On the cover: Mother and newborn at Unite de Lutte Pour la Sante health center in Band du Nord, Haiti. Thanks to Konbit Sante staff, volunteers, and partners for this and the other photos in the 2023 annual report.

Dear Friends,

Political and economic conditions continue to deteriorate in Haiti. While we, in northern Haiti, have been spared the violence that has upended the lives of thousands of people in Port-au-Prince, we have not been immune to the aftershocks. The cost of essential goods has skyrocketed, and activities stall every few months due to periodic fuel shortages. In the face of uncertainty and daily struggles, and with many Haitians, including health professionals, opting to emigrate, we think about what difference a small non-profit organization like Konbit Sante can make in a time of such overwhelming need.

I believe the answer lies in the size and mission of our organization. Because we are small, we are nimble and able to respond to most circumstances quickly. Our agility is an asset, particularly in times of crisis. As you will read in this report, we helped partner facilities source materials needed to remain open and functional during the past year. It is hard to overemphasize the value of our contribution in this regard.

Health care is a basic need regardless of political conditions. This is especially true in Haiti, where the maternal and newborn mortality rate is high, road traffic injuries are rampant, and chronic diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure are on the rise. Community members desperately need health institutions they can count on. As the following statement from the executive director of H pital Universitaire Justinien (HUI) attests, Konbit Sante's responsiveness to urgent needs makes that possible.

Beyond addressing immediate needs, Konbit Sante is working with its partners to build strong and resilient health institutions that can withstand crises in the long term. That is our mission. It is not straightforward or easily attainable. Yet, we believe the measure of our success must be the delivery of quality health services with minimal outside support, regardless of the circumstances. The story contained in this report about our research initiative illustrates the steady progress we have made over the years toward institutional capacity strengthening.

Having a steady, responsive, and strategic presence is ultimately the difference that an organization like Konbit Sante can make in Haiti. We thank you for standing by Konbit Sante, our partner facilities, and the people of northern Haiti as we continue this momentous journey.

With gratitude,



Tezita Negussie, MSW, MPH

Country Director, Interim Executive Director



Tezita Negussie with Dr. Dube of  
H pital Universitaire Justinien



# Standing Together

*Letter from the President and Vice President of the Board*

Dear Friends,

A year ago, when we wrote a similar letter for the 2022 annual report, we shared our determination to continue the konbit despite very challenging circumstances and periods of great uncertainty. We were and still are determined to harness our resilience to continue supporting our partners who provide quality health care to individuals and families in their communities.

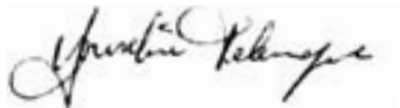
We have continued to address these challenges head on. It has been a year of unprecedented growth and learning. We supported our partners and communities during the tumultuous times of insecurity in Haiti while expanding our network of partnerships. Konbit Sante’s staff, management, and board of directors stood together to strengthen the organization to ensure we can continue this work.

As we look toward 2024, we will continue to improve the quality of and access to health care for people who live in the poorest regions in the north of Haiti. In this report, we invite you to read about our achievements during 2023 and the new challenges we are addressing in 2024.

With great respect and gratitude to staff, to partners, and to the friends old and new who have stood with us during these times,



Eva Lathrop, MD, MPH  
President, Konbit Sante Board



Youseline Telemaque, MD  
Vice President, Konbit Sante Board



Eva Lathrop



Youseline Telemaque

*Konbit Sante does not come with a program already prepared to implement. But, this organization sits down with local actors, and then we identify together the problems and decide together how we will address them. We each make a contribution.*

—Youseline Telemaque, MD  
Vice President, Konbit Sante Board

# Konbit Sante’s Mission and Values

Our mission statement, developed in 2001, and our values continue to guide our work.

**Mission:** To support the development of a sustainable health system to meet the needs of the Cap-Haitien community with maximum local direction and support.

We believe in the dignity of all people and that all people have the right to health care regardless of personal means.

In Haitian Kreyol, a *konbit* is a group of people working together for a common goal. Sante means health. So Konbit Sante is a group of people working together, shoulder to shoulder, to improve health.

We focus on building local capacity. We believe in strengthening Haiti’s health system, from the grassroots community level to tertiary hospital care, rather than developing a secondary, parallel system.

We use the World Health Organization’s framework of health system building blocks to remind us of the importance of financial viability, a sufficient and well-prepared workforce, health information systems to inform our work, access to essential supplies and medicines, and the

importance of leadership in health system strengthening.

We seek maximum local direction from our Haitian colleagues and partners to help create a health system that supports their vision and their communities.

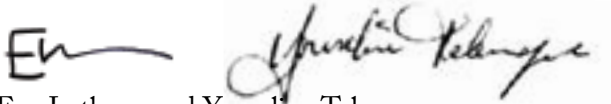
Konbit Sante values the contributions of its volunteers, donors, and suppliers of important materials and strives to be a good steward of the human and material assets entrusted to us, seeking the most benefit for the people of Cap-Haitien.

# Perry Newman Joins Konbit Sante as Executive Director



In early November, just as this annual report was going to press, Perry Newman of South Portland, Maine agreed to become Konbit Sante’s executive director. Perry is an experienced leader of mission-driven nonprofit organizations with an extensive background in international business, diplomacy, law, and community development. He brings substantial experience leading organizations at various stages of their development. His background is in international business, diplomacy, law, and community development. And he speaks fluent French. We are thrilled to have Perry join Konbit Sante.

And we are deeply grateful to Tezita Negussie, interim executive director, for her generosity and willingness to step in as interim executive director while continuing her responsibilities as country director during this important transitional year.



Eva Lathrop and Youseline Telemaque

My Haitien colleagues and I spent a week with Perry in Cap-Haitien. We were impressed by his curiosity, empathy, and communication skills – soft skills that are often undervalued but critical to building trust and relationships. The opportunity to return to being the country director and to work with Perry going forward is the best possible outcome from my tenure as interim executive director that I can imagine.



Tezita Negussie



Perry Newman (top left) with Konbit Sante staff in Haiti.



# Supporting the Unsung Heroes of the Health System: Community Health Workers

Konbit Sante’s support of community health workers, known as agents de sante in Haitian Kreyol, has helped improve the health and nutrition of mothers and children in some of the poorer neighborhoods of Cap-Haitien. These community health workers do not wear formal uniforms or use sophisticated medical equipment. They do not possess degrees of higher education. Yet, they are the cornerstone of healthy communities.

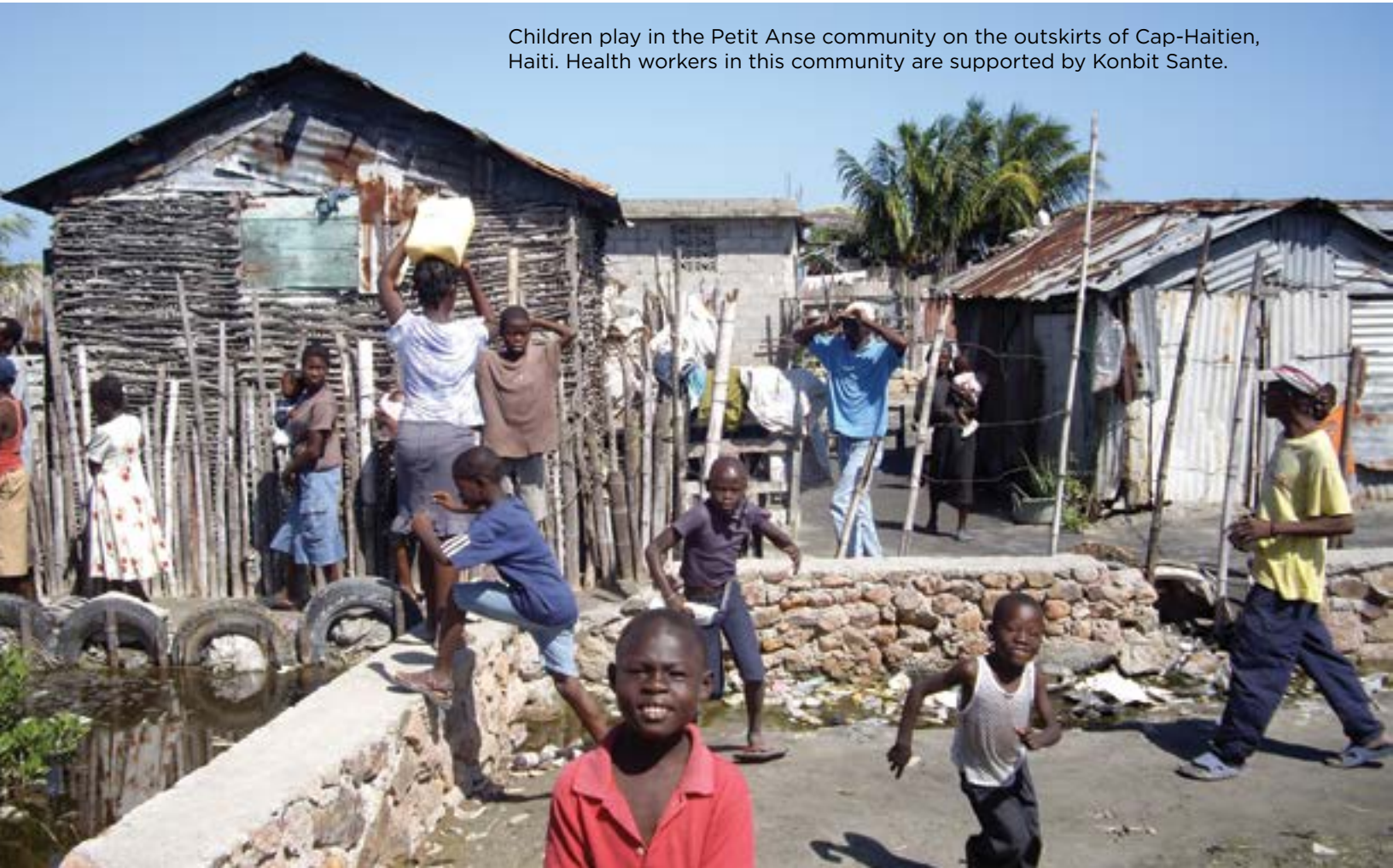
Traveling by foot, bike, or public transportation, they visit mothers and their children in their neighborhoods to offer health education, make

referrals to health centers, and provide essential services such as childhood vaccinations and family planning. In many parts of the world, community health workers are the only source of health care. Most of them are women who are uncompensated for their labor.

For more than 15 years, Konbit Sante and our partner Hôpital de Fort Saint Michel (FSM) have worked to fund and train these essential caregivers. We have secured grants from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to fund community health workers and have

collaborated with the Haitian Ministry of Health to create formal training and accreditation opportunities.

In 2023, a team of nine community health workers from FSM lived and served in Petit Anse, a low-income area on the outskirts of Cap-Haitien. They visited 577 new mothers within six hours of giving birth at home, ensured that 6,019 children received their first doses of Vitamin A, and provided nutritional consultations to mothers of 8,176 children under five years of age.



Children play in the Petit Anse community on the outskirts of Cap-Haitien, Haiti. Health workers in this community are supported by Konbit Sante.



Community health worker, Maguy Centaus, speaks at a parent education neighborhood rally

In many parts of the world, community health workers are the only source of health care. Most of them are women who are uncompensated for their labor. Recognizing the invaluable role played by community health workers in preventive and curative care, and in alignment with our commitment to fairness and equity, Konbit Sante has ensured that those working at FSM receive a livable wage through a successive series of cooperative agreements financed by USAID dating back more than 15 years. We have also collaborated with the Haitian Ministry of Health to create formal training and accreditation opportunities for the FSM’s community health workers.

Over the years, our other partner facilities – Unite de Lutte pour la Sante, Serving Sante, and Haitian Baptist Convention Hospital – have added community health workers to their staff rosters with technical or material support from Konbit Sante. Combined, our partners now employ nearly 30 community health workers. Our vision is to see their numbers grow in the Cap-Haitien area because community health workers’ presence means better health outcomes.

We are grateful to our donors and partners who make possible the work of these dedicated care providers.





## Essential Medicines, Supplies, and Equipment

During fiscal year 2023, Konbit Sante again used its legal status as a recognized humanitarian organization in Haiti (a status afforded to just 5% of organizations working in Haiti) to import ten containers of essential medicines, supplies, and equipment specifically requested by our partners. Teams source materials and make inventories of the container contents in the U.S. Upon arrival in Haiti, contents are stored in secure warehouses and then distributed to our partners. Here are some examples:

- Rise Against Hunger and MAP International supplied medicines and food packets that were especially appreciated during this time of insecurity and shortages of food and medicines.
- Direct Relief provided enough birthing kits to support 7700 deliveries at 35+ facilities. The Dalton Foundation provided critical medical equipment, including incubators, ultrasound machines, radiology equipment, and patient monitors.
- As part of our response to the increased incidence of cholera this year, Konbit Sante purchased 1.2

million Aquatabs water disinfection tablets from the manufacturer in Ireland and arranged with a USAID-funded program to have the tablets transported to Haiti.

- Konbit Sante continued its collaboration with the Walkabout Foundation and Hope Health Action to import nearly 1,000 new wheelchairs and wheelchair accessories for distribution throughout the country.
- To address the patient transport needs of our partner ULS Health Center, whose patients currently arrive at the clinic via bicycle, taxi, or motorcycle if they can afford to pay, Konbit Sante accessed a Toyota program that sells new 4-wheel drive ambulances at very favorable prices. The purchase of a Toyota ambulance was made possible by a grant received by ULS from the Inter-American Foundation and other generous donors.

- In addition to the shipments described above, Konbit Sante sent its 24th 40-foot container of equipment and supplies from Maine to Cap-Haitien in September. The container included indispensable basic hospital supplies such as syringes and bandages, endoscopes, a colposcope, lab refrigerators, EKG machines, and a CR machine - a piece of computer radiography equipment that will allow our partner, Hôpital de la Convention Baptiste d'Haiti (HCBH), to digitalize x-rays.

Looking forward, and with funding from the SG Foundation, Konbit Sante is working with friends at Hope Health Action to purchase medications and supplies from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) program in a way that will benefit all Konbit Sante's health facility partners.



## Building Research Skills at Justinien University Hospital

Konbit Sante has been at the forefront of the drive for a more equitable approach to global health research that meets local needs. In 2015, we implemented a research policy that promoted meaningful collaborations between Haitian and foreign researchers. This year, Konbit Sante collaborated with Dr. Erica Felker-Kantor, an epidemiologist from Atlanta, to develop a research course focused on faculty physicians at Justinien University Hospital (JUH).

The practice of global health research in Haiti is dominated by foreign researchers. A recent study found that 75% of health research conducted in Haiti between 1979 and 2020 was led by investigators based in the United States (Guillaume D, Thermy R, Sternberg C, et al. Decolonization of global health in Haiti: a call for equity, partnerships, scholarship, and informed action. Glob Health Sci Pract.). A growing movement driven by public health practitioners from the global south is demanding a change from a system that “serves interests that are far removed from and uncommitted to the local context.”

Our research policy creates a framework centered on local expertise and needs. We ask foreign researchers who contact us about conducting studies in Haiti to identify a Haitian professional who will collaborate as a co-investigator on the study's design, implementation, analysis, and reporting. The Ministry of Health must review and approve the research topics and questions. Our policy maintains

that research papers be made available in French or Haitian Creole and that results be shared with Ministry of Health officials, health facility leadership, and/or community members. In this way, findings will inform and benefit health practice and policy in Haiti.

Over the years, we have learned that this framework is only useful if it is supplemented with training opportunities for young Haitian researchers. Haiti has a limited number of research education programs. As a result, many residents at JUH who want to conduct research feel ill-equipped to lead or participate in such projects. In 2021, we collaborated with Haiti Medical Education to develop a structured six-month research course for residents. Two teams of residents completed the course, focusing their research on

quality-of-care issues affecting their respective departments.

The new research course developed by Dr. Felker-Kantor expands on this training by equipping a cadre of facility physicians at JUH with the skills to mentor and teach future generations of residents about research methods as well as conduct research themselves. Dr. Felker-Kantor, who speaks fluent Creole and French, is leading the year-long course that combines lectures, discussions, and hands-on support on data analysis.

Overall, our objective is to transform how global health is conducted and shared in Haiti so that research serves the interests of the local community.

Dr. Erica Felker-Kantor (upper right on monitor) leads a research skills class with faculty physicians at Justinien University Hospital.





Improving Health Facility Infrastructure

Deteriorating health facilities are often a barrier to high-quality care, yet improving infrastructure requires expertise, time, and planning. This year, we made real progress toward the goal of installing an operational oxygen generation plant at the Haiti Convention Baptist Hospital (HCBH) in collaboration with Hope Health Action. The bottled oxygen produced by the new oxygen generator will substantially improve patient care in this 60-bed hospital and will help make the hospital financially stable since oxygen is one of its largest expenses.



Hôpital de la Convention Baptiste D'Haiti (HCBH)

To make this happen, a team of engineers and other volunteers from Konbit Sante and other organizations consulted with experts in the field to clearly define the technical requirements needed to generate medical-grade oxygen and then sourced what would be most appropriate in Haiti. We ordered a unit and spare parts like those the Haitian Ministry of Health has purchased for other installations, with the goal of

growing in-country expertise in the operation and maintenance of the unit.

The generator was shipped from China in August and arrived in Cap-Haitien in October. Konbit Sante volunteers were there to help plan the installation, which should be completed later this year.

The oxygen generator and other essential medical equipment depend on reliable and safe electrical power. As Konbit Sante did for the Justinian Hospital several years ago, we assessed HCBH's entire electrical system this fall. The hospital has grown since it opened in 2005, and the electrical system has become more complex with solar panels, battery banks, increased demands, and outdated power distribution.

This assessment and its recommendations have become even more urgent as the hospital plans to construct a new neonatal care unit with the support and collaboration of Hope Health Action and Konbit Sante. This new unit will dramatically



increase the quality and size of the space that serves vulnerable newborns.

An expansion of the solar power capacity at the Fort Saint Michel (FSM) birthing center is also in the planning stages. Deterioration of the security situation in the country has led to a complete lack of public power and nationwide shortages of fuel to run generators, leaving centers like FSM in the dark at night and without basic comforts like fans in the intense heat. As a result, women are reluctant to come to the center for deliveries, and staff feel insecure at night. To address that, we have developed a plan with JustEnergy, with whom we have worked on several other solar projects, to provide solar-powered electricity 24/7.

Patients waiting to be seen in the TB and nutrition clinics at Hôpital Fort Saint Michel

Management & Leadership: Business Planning at Unite de Lutte pour la Sante (ULS)

In September, we were fortunate to host Dr. Maudelin Mesadieu in Maine, where he shared the history of the development of ULS, the health center he founded, its current scope of clinical and community programs, and the challenges they face going forward. Dr. Mesadieu described how the partnership with Konbit Sante has enabled tremendous growth and expansion of services for his communities - growing from six volunteers in a rented two-room space to 39 staff in a health center they now own.

He spoke about the critical technical assistance that he has received from Konbit Sante through the years,

whether it was related to the construction of his health center, strategic planning, website design and outreach, grant applications, or other support. During the past year, Konbit Sante's business planning assistance has focused on developing a budget and a longer-term business plan for sustainability. This requires setting goals, estimating expenses to meet these goals, and identifying possible sources of revenue to support those goals in a poor community where services are provided regardless of the patient's ability to pay.

As with much of Konbit Sante's work, this is not a matter of simply teaching the technical skills but



Dr. Maudelin Mesadieu (fifth from left) with staff in Bande du Nord.

rather working together through the process, discussing options, and problem solving about the best way to realize the partner's goals.

Patients waiting to be seen at ULS health center.





# Our Partners

Our partners, all in northern Haiti, include large and small public and private hospitals and clinics.

Konbit Sante only provides hands-on care in the context of teaching or in special circumstances. Rather, we are a resource for Haitian doctors, nurses, administrators, and community health workers who are part of their communities and who

understand their community’s needs better than we do. We support them with medicines, medical supplies, equipment, technical assistance, and training according to their individual needs. While some medicines and supplies we acquire are distributed to

a wider variety of health facilities in the north, most of our efforts focus on five hospitals and clinics that we know well and call our “partners.”



## Hôpital Universitaire Justinien

In 2001, Konbit Sante began its relationship with Justinien University Hospital (JUH), the 300-bed teaching hospital in downtown Cap-Haitien. As part of the public healthcare system, this tertiary care hospital serves people of all incomes and helps instruct future doctors for Haiti. We have worked in many departments, with a particular focus on strengthening the pediatric service.



## Hôpital de Fort Saint Michel

Hôpital de Fort Saint Michel (FSM) provides care to an underserved urban neighborhood of Cap-Haitien. This public health center, established in 2002, includes a birthing center, a clinical laboratory, and community outreach services. Konbit Sante has been a partner since 2004, with a focus on public health, maternal health, and infrastructure improvements.



## Hôpital de la Convention Baptiste D’Haiti

Hôpital de la Convention Baptiste D’Haiti (HCBH) is a 60-bed private hospital in Quartier Morin, about six miles southeast of Cap-Haitien. Konbit Sante and HCBH began their partnership shortly after the earthquake of 2010 and have worked together since. HCBH has grown to include maternity and pediatric units, a respite center for children with physical, mental, and special needs, a community health center, an emergency ambulance response service, and a spinal cord rehabilitation center for northern Haiti. Most recently, Konbit Sante is supporting oxygen and electrical infrastructure improvements.



## Unite de Lutte pour la Sante

Unite de Lutte pour la Sante (ULS) is a private health center providing clinical services and public health outreach to the rural Bande du Nord neighborhood on the outskirts of Cap-Haitien. Konbit Sante helped design and fund its construction in 2012 and continues to support its operations with financing, materials, and technical assistance.

## Serving Sante: Meet Our Newest Partner

Serving Sante is a private facility in Limbe, about 15 km from Cap-Haitien. It is run by Dr. Nelly Osias, an OB/GYN who Konbit Sante first met in 2012 when she was a resident at the Justinien University Hospital in Cap-Haitien.

The population in the Limbe area is about 90,000, including subsistence farmers, vendors, manual laborers, moto drivers, teachers, and housekeepers. Most people in this part of Haiti face challenges related to skyrocketing inflation, food shortages and malnutrition, fuel shortages, and other ripple effects from the upheaval in Port-au-Prince. In addition, Serving Sante’s community is challenged by a lack of clean water and poor sanitation. Serving Sante faces shortages of most medicines and basic, essential equipment and supplies.

Dr. Osias, who grew up in Cap-Haitien, is one of the most inspiring, dedicated, and capable physicians we have met in Haiti. She trained in general and family medicine in Cuba, OB/GYN in Haiti, and cervical cancer in Haiti and the USA (ASCCP). She became motivated to become a physician in elementary school while reading a book about a missionary doctor. Later, while practicing general medicine, she was inspired to become an OB/GYN because of the weakness of the Haitian health system in addressing materno-fetal and other women’s health care.

At Serving Sante, Dr. Osias and her staff of 60 employees offer OB/GYN care, pediatric care, urology, orthopedics, general surgery, internal medicine, general medicine, sonography, radiology, mental health services, and medical laboratory services. In the community, they provide cervical cancer screenings and follow up, health education, and seeds for farmers.

One of Dr. Osias’ most significant accomplishments, in her own words, is “saving a lot of moms and babies by offering emergency Cesareans 24/7 with a functioning operating room and a very good anesthesia machine.”

Konbit Sante has helped Dr. Osias with her research into Emergency Cesarean Decision and Delivery Intervals, installation of a solar power system, and Dr. Osias’ work on cervical cancer.

Dr. Osias refers to Konbit Sante as her engine and a source of inspiration. “Konbit Sante helps me understand better the Haitian people, my community, and our reality. With Konbit Sante, I learned to put words into actions to achieve goals. They help with friendship, collaboration, and respect.”



Dr. Nelly Osias, OB/GYN



Dr. Stanley Loriston, anesthesiologist, finalizes installation of the universal anesthesia machine at Serving Sante



Dr. Nelly Osias (middle) with Dr. Stanley Loriston (left) and nurse anesthetist Marc Donald (right).



# Thank You

Our thanks to the many people who make this work possible.

## Volunteers

Christina Alva, MPH  
Michael Canarie, MD  
Sarah Sorenson Coppi  
Joseph Adrien Emmanuel Demes, MD, MPH, PhD  
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Dr. Adam Silverman (right) working with pediatric residents at Justinien University Hospital.

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## Founders

J. Michael Taylor, MD, MPH  
Wendy Taylor

Konbit Sante is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation organized in the State of Maine.

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Ford Haitian Foundation	Mark Griswold	Blanca Santiago & Jon Bradley	David Verrill
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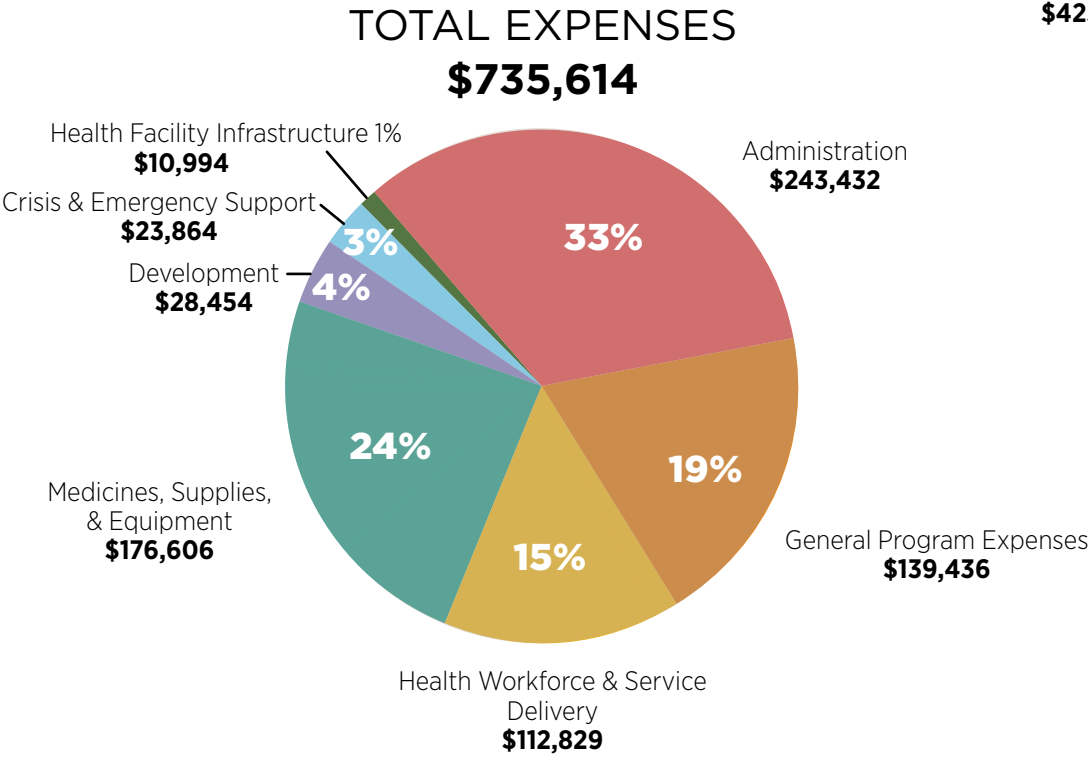
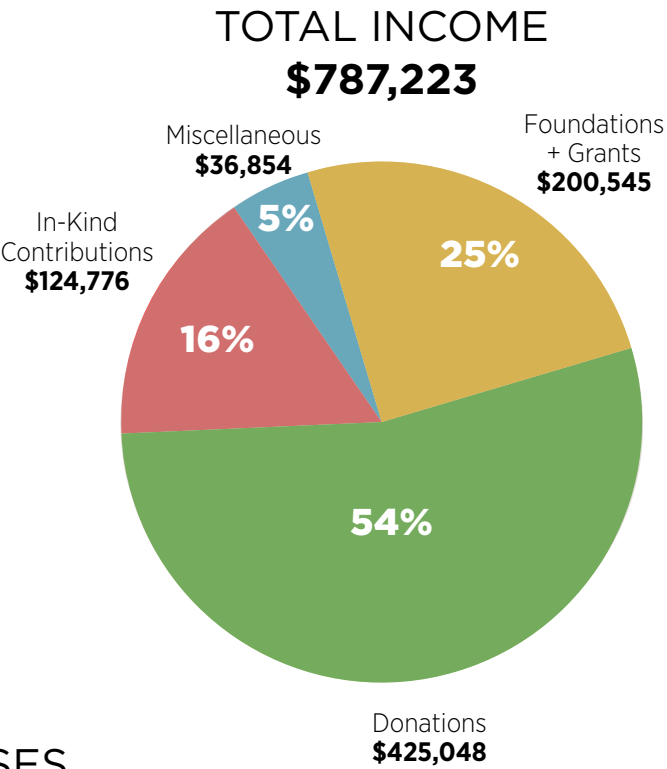
# Financial Information

For the 2023 Fiscal Year (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023)

## Comparing Fiscal 2022 to Fiscal 2023

Total revenue rose 52% driven mainly by the significant increase in donations. A \$231k increase in FY23 more than doubled the total donations received in the prior year, with an additional \$200k pledged. A decrease in grants (~28%) partially offset some of the gains realized by the significant increase in donations.

Total expenses decreased 14% during the year, resulting from lower Health Workforce, Facility Infrastructure, and Development costs, which were collectively down \$146k or 49%.



On the back cover: People at the entrance to Hôpital Universitaire Justinien.



# Konbit Sante

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