

# ERITAJ CHRONICLE

A newsletter for the friends and supporters of Haiti

May/June 2004

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**The Catholic Institute for International Relations article is part of an Eritaj effort to work with faith-based institutions to improve human services in Haiti.**

## **Paysans de Vallue**



## **Our churches, our strength**

**T**he Catholic Institute for International Relations works with l'Association des Paysans de Vallue to reforest this community:

Perched on a hillside overlooking the most beautiful mountains in the West Central region of Haiti the Association des Paysans de Vallue has worked with remote farming communities for 17 years, helping them to develop sustainable agricultural techniques. The birds sing and there is a plethora of amazing flora and fauna. The Association has developed an eco-tourist focus with a beautiful and well equipped hotel where visitors can relax and renew their spirits as well as be treated to delicious cuisine from locally sourced products free from chemicals.

Yet a closer look at one's first impressions will reveal a slightly different reality. Here the people are desperately poor, eeking out a living from hillside farming on steeply inclining mountainsides. Many have to walk long distances to their plots of land and few have adequate storage facilities to prevent their harvested grain from being destroyed by rats and insects. Another thing strikes the visitor: how few trees are left in the area.

In conjunction with the community APV faced this problem: How to dynamize the peasant economy within a perspective of wealth creation to improve the sustainability and quality of life within an environment which is protected and nurtured. The analysis of this problem produced a program which the

community have called Vallue Economically Green, coordinated by a team of local community activists which aims to protect the environment and reestablish the

ecosystem. The program aims to do this through the following means: promotion of composting for soil fertility, training in natural pest control methods and the production of organic pesticides, promotion of vegetable gardens and tree nurseries, provision of a tool bank and an agricultural credit scheme, and training of women agricultural agents.

Many aspects of this program have worked well, as farmers have enthusiastically participated in improving their sustainable agricultural techniques. 23% of the agricultural agents are women and 44 % of the members of konbits the communal work groups are women. Over 40% of the users of the credits schemes are women. But the ecological challenges are huge. In Haiti the primary fuel used for cooking is charcoal and there is a huge market for timber as this requires a large amount of wood. For many rural people the difference between survival and destitution lies in selling wood for charcoal. Their primary concern is not environmental protection for tomorrow but the economic necessity of today. Under APV's environmental protection pro-



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# PAHO/WHO looks at the health sector in Haiti

**P**AHO/WHO representation initiated a dialogue between the main partners in health in the country, in coordination with the United Nations system, the country's health authorities, the bi- and multi-lateral cooperation agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations. They established a Health Sector Emergency Cell to ensure the best possible cohesion in the definition, planning, management and execution of the actions to face this crisis.

## Critical elements for the health sector

### 1. Disregard for the health institutions' neutrality and immunity

Several hospitals were the target of violence. The Port-au-Prince University Hospital, one of the main hospitals in the country, has been almost at a standstill for weeks, due to lack of personnel.

### 2. Supply difficulties in health institutions

It is increasingly difficult to supply hospitals with drugs, medical surgical consumables, water, propane gas, and diesel. As a result, emergency care and other essential services are not guaranteed.

### 3. Precariousness of the access to care

Certain hospitals strongly decreased their activities due to the lack of equipment and human resources. Problems for routing the injured and sick patients to hospitals are becoming more acute, due to the lack of ambulances.

### 4. Risk of a destabilization of the already weak health care system

Difficulties of access to certain zones complicate or impede vaccination activities.

Certain blood transfusion centers set up in different areas of the country had to stop their activities, in particular in the zones of highest tensions where they are most needed.

### 5. Increase of emergencies linked to violence

The care of the injured saturates the existing capacity of emergency services. There have been reports of cases of unattended obstetrical emergencies. Some institutions suspect an increase in the incidence of rape.

### 6. Focalization of the media on the crisis

The mass media report almost exclusively on the political information and assign very little space to other categories of information. Health messages in support of disease prevention and control programs have become much less apparent.

### 7. Deterioration of the potable water installations

Most hospitals are old, badly maintained buildings with decrepit water installations. Hydraulic pumps are often out of order for lack of electricity.

### 8. Lack of precise information

The health effects of the crisis are not documented properly due to a failing routine health information system and difficulties of access to zones most exposed to the violence.

### 9. Necessity of a coordination of interventions

The sudden rise of a multiplicity of speakers to face the emergency situation requires a coordination and follow-up mechanism in the health sector.

*Excerpted: For more information on the situation in Haiti, see: [www.paho.org/English/DD/PED/haitisituation2004htm](http://www.paho.org/English/DD/PED/haitisituation2004htm). Contact at PAHO: [haiti@paho.org](mailto:haiti@paho.org)*

## Mini Grants to six Haiti-based projects

Eritaj Foundation in collaboration with the Pan African Children Fund have provided mini grants to six non profit organizations serving children in Haiti. Selected organizations receive an amount of \$1,500 to support the basic needs of the children they serve. The mini grants will be used to cover costs for food, medicine and other urgent needs. The recipient organizations include CHEB; Horizon de L'Espoir, Foyer Bon Samaritain, Centre d'Accueil et de Support Communautaire, Association Gonaïvienne pour le Développement and Love in Action. The organizations keep monthly progress reports on the development. These reports will help to evaluate how effectively the needs of the children served through these mini grants are met. It informs on the strength and hindrance of operations when local leaders use their discretion in service provision.

## Churches

*Continued from page one*

gram, if anyone in the community wants to cut down a tree the community has to investigate the proposal to see if it is agreed upon. If they are permitted to go ahead they must then plant 10 new saplings in its place.

As one of the coordinators of the programme recently commented: "We're working as hard as we can to make people understand their commitment to the environment. But we also have to understand that people have economic problems, and difficulties in sending their children to school. If they have 10 trees on their land and by cutting down two they could send their children to school for the year what choice do they have?"

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# Medicine and Health in Haiti:

**A matrix for determining the structure and function of a medical and health system in Haiti.**

by *Stuart Leiderman*

What will happen to Haiti if the elements of American medicine and health practice are simply transplanted from here to there? It is my opinion that, overall, Americans are not satisfied with, cannot afford and do not significantly benefit from the American way of medicine and health practice. Even though it may be tempting to replicate all of our familiar premises and procedures, bringing most of them to Haiti, I believe, would be a tragic mistake from which the country could never recover. It is unethical to introduce into Haiti a medical and health system that is primarily a business venture rather than a public service.

The whole country of Haiti must be considered to be in a state of medical emergency with little, if any, money available for treatment. Thus, there is no room for profit-taking. I believe this will be the prevailing condition for at least the next one or two generations. Reliance on cash incentive will further polarize Haiti's already skewed social structure. Instead the incentive of steady salary could play a significant role in alleviating poverty.

It is part of the social contract in world civilization that citizens require their government to provide for the common welfare. Haiti is now undergoing a nation-building process, including re-organization of government. The government cannot negotiate away or privatize its basic responsibilities, including leadership in and standards for public health. Therefore, no one should circumvent the national government in creating a new health system. The fact that doctors, dentists and others simply want to practice their medical arts

and leave the job of government to someone else, is naive. Haiti requires strong governmental policy and operational components, including enforcement of standards, relating to the practice of medicine and health.

While I agree that one way to divide medical and health activities in Haiti is public, private and non-profit, this is primarily an economic perspective. There are other ways to divide activities, for example:

a) according to age and vulnerability to disease: mothers and babies,

- b) according to treatment: health maintenance, disease prevention, critical intervention
- c) according to communities: slums, cities and towns, countryside
- d) according to environ: house calls, street-front office, clinic, hospital
- e) according to threat: accidents, abuse, contagion.

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## Women's Struggles at CHAPO, A Success Story

Comprehensive Haitian American Program Outreach (CHAPO) has been in operation since 1994. The word *chapo* is a Haitian Creole metaphor for condom. CHAPO's focus is boldly stated in its name, but most importantly in the program's daily operation to reach hundreds of

young people and adults. A significant tool used for HIV/AIDS education and prevention is to meet clients in need where they are. Whether it is providing a much needed meal or paying a modest coffin for a relative's funeral, CHAPO's success is built on the use of a unique parameter to reach and serve its clients. Following is an excerpt of a report we received from the CHAPO office in Haiti about their Women's Struggle:

(Editor's note: The Women's Struggles is a micro lending project of the Eritaj Foundation. Nine groups received funding to run the project)

Femmes En Lutte at Merger: "We have 12 women in the FEL program. Three quarters of them have between 3 to 9 children. Two women use the loan to pay for school tuition fees because they don't want to keep their



### Women's Program at CHAPO

children at home. Some use the loan to raise livestock including chicken, goats, turkeys and to resell them at the public market, others sell food at a nearby marketplace. They come to a support meeting every Sunday and bring with them a portion of the money. They share their stories and counsel each other. As they discuss health and social issues they face, it provides CHAPO's staff with an exceptional opportunity to educate about HIV/AIDS transmission and how to prevent it. Every Sunday the group enrolls another participant with whatever loan it recoups from the participants. We have a long waiting list and plan to cover all, one week at a time. Our women are empowered to fight poverty and never miss a meeting.

## Seeds of Hope

Seeds of Hope is presented by the Eritaj Foundation in collaboration with the New York cultural group Heritage Konpa. Guests include Boulo Valcourt, Jean Claude Martineau, Frederic Surpris from Haiti and many more. A memorable evening of dancing, poetry and acting will be offered at the John Hancock Hall/ Dorothy Quincy Suite, (corner of Berkeley and St James Streets) on May 29th, 2004 between 6:00PM- 10:00PM. Our guests have to reserve their seat with a contribution of \$25. We will hold parking permits for those who want to with an additional \$5. This option is available until May 21. We accept Visa and Master Card. Pick up your card at Haitian businesses in Cambridge, Somerville, Waltham, Dorchester and others. Call (508) 620-1424 for more information. email contact: jomarou@msn.com or eritajfoundation@msn.com

## Freedom and Creativity:

From the Mountains to the Sea will mark the 200th anniversary of the Haitian Revolution, a major event which gave birth to the first nation to free itself from both colonialism and slavery at the same time. The 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall will celebrate and highlight the cultural creativity of the Haitian people that continues to sustain them. Carnival performers from the town of Jacmel, stone carvers at work on the restoration of the Haitian Citadel, and bead workers from Souvenance will join over one hundred Haitian musicians, cooks, storytellers, other traditional artists and community experts in this ten day independence salute.

Huge spiritual concert with Margaret Bonhome from Haiti., the Deoronette brothers and other exquisite artists from Boston on June 19 at 7 pm at the House of Prayer located at 206 Seaver Street, Boston. Call (617) 922-2806 for more information.

## Haitian Unity Parade

Urgent Appeal for Humanitarian Crisis During the week of May 9 through the 16, Haitians and friends all around New-England are gathering for a week long drive to collect clothes, shoes, hygienic items, medical supplies for Haiti's remote areas, hospitals, schools that have been affected by a humanitarian crisis, after the events of January through March 2004. The drive will end on Sunday, May 16 during our annual Haitian Unity Parade. To join: participate@bostonforhaiti.org; unity@hauinc.org; patlucien@yahoo.com 10 Fairway Street, Suite 108, Mattapan MA 02126

## Thank you

We thank Eastern Bank of Massachusetts for supporting the Eritaj's Seeds of Hope event. Based in Boston, Eastern Bank is the largest independent, mutually-owned commercial bank in New England. With 4.7 billion in assets and 52 branches in Greater Boston, Eastern offers a full range of financial products for consumers, businesses, investors, government agencies and nonprofit organizations. It's wholly-owned subsidiaries are Eastern Insurance, one of New England's largest insurers, and Fantini & Gorga/iCap Realty Advisors, a real estate advisory firm.

### Support Eritaj Programs

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