

Haiti Connection Update

Recently, a number of us from the Diocese of Massachusetts attended the Haiti Connection gathering in Miami, Florida, to learn about the Diocesan Master Plan for Haiti, meet the new Episcopal Church representatives working Haiti, and network with US and Haitian mission colleagues. What follows are some highlights from the program.

- In opening remarks, Bishop Duracin stated that the earthquake last January has had a dramatic impact on Haitians, changing the way they perceive, think, and behave. He reminded us that rebuilding is complicated by the fact that the earthquake altered all infrastructures in the country. The Bishop told us that looking out at all of us ... approximately 260 people ... was a sign of continued hope and a sign that “we are not alone.”
- Dr. Lucien Bernard spoke to us about education in Haiti. In his remarks, he noted that the schools lack adequate resources and qualified teachers. He noted for us that there is a lack of political will toward the population, so there is little to no support for public education. He illustrated this point by indicating that 65-70% of the population is illiterate, and 81% of schools in Haiti are controlled by the private sector. Even though UNESCO pushes the need for education, ~50% of children stay away from schools. He also noted that lack of education impacts other sectors of the country. For example, unemployment, often due to lack of education, is a major cause for migration throughout the republic. Dr. Bernard was clear that many schools opened this Fall through support from Bishop Duracin and the Diocese of Haiti.
- Hilda Alcindor, the director of the school of nursing in Leogane, noted that the Episcopal Church has the 1st 4-year Baccalaureate degree in Nursing in Haiti. She noted that there can be no public education without health; health and education are intricately connected. In her comments, she noted that many lives were saved through the Episcopal Church. For example, 20 minutes after the earthquake, the school and its students were providing care ... bleeding patients, CPR, suturing, and delivering babies. She noted that Haiti is a young population ... 54% of the population is 15-24; 80% of the population lives on less than \$1/day; infant mortality is the highest in the Western Hemisphere at 73%; 47% of the population has no access to healthcare. One of the upcoming projects through the Diocese is to have immunization clinics at all Episcopal schools.
- Abigail Nelson from ERD noted the difficulty with not being able to communicate details of their Haiti fundraising and usage of funds out of safety concerns for staff on the ground in Haiti. That said, Abigail provided a great deal of information regarding their work in Haiti. In collaboration with the Diocese of Haiti, she noted that they have served 17,600 outpatients, 42,124 in clinics, 30,260 individuals, provided 16,834 individuals with non-food items, provided 1,879 jobs, and are working on 37 projects based in 22 communities. The \$3 million that has been spent breaks down as follows:

34% housing & shelter
8% healthcare
9% economic recovery & development
4% special needs
11% food
5% diocese institutional support
13% equipment & vehicles
8% sanitation & water

8% administration & salaries

Abigail noted that ERD is focused on empowerment and sustainability in its next phase and that the work will likely entail economic development, agro-forestry, housing, education, and communication

- It was also noted in the gathering that The Episcopal Church's Executive Council in October committed to a plan for living out its earlier challenge to the church to raise \$10 million to help rebuild the diocese. At Bishop Duracin's request, that money will be dedicated to reconstruction of the diocesan cathedral.