

## Earthquake, COVID-19, and Violence Batter Haiti



*Jolande Baptist, and her children, Etienne and Jenia, were displaced by gang violence in La Saline, Port-au-Prince. Photo: Chandan Khannan.*

### Haiti in Chaos.

Haiti is experiencing a multi-dimensional crisis including an upsurge in violence, the August earthquake that killed around 2,200 people and left hundreds of thousands in need, and a deadly rise in COVID-19 infections.

Since the assassination of President Moïse in July, political instability and the takeover of the streets of Port-au-Prince (PAP) by criminal gangs presents the biggest threat to most Haitians. Gang wars, assassinations, and kidnapping leave Haitians in constant fear. The violence in PAP has also displaced 19,000 people and put one million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

The crisis has spread far beyond PAP. Roadblocks and attacks on truck drivers by

armed gangs have led to fuel shortages across the country. Lack of fuel is affecting the functioning of hospitals and ambulances, transportation, and the distribution of food, drinking water, and humanitarian aid.

The violence and shortages of fuel and supplies have not stopped MFP staff and volunteers from providing healthcare to women in rural Haiti. Averting roadblocks and travelling by small plane, we continue to detect and cure breast and cervical cancer, stop the spread of sexual transmitted infections, including AIDS, and guide thousands of women on how to maintain their health.

We are confident that if we improve the health of Haitians, they will find the path out of this crisis.

## MFP Celebrates its 30-Year Anniversary

### Iraq: 1991-1994, 2004-2005



*Dr. Chris Hansen examines a sick Iraqi child as Dr. Michael Viola, and an Iraqi mother and doctor look on. (Baghdad 1992)*

In 1991, following the Gulf War, MFP sent its first medical teams to Iraq to establish a clinic for sick children and deliver pediatric drugs throughout Iraq. Many of the children we saw were brought to the U.S. for life-saving surgery. MFP was expelled from Iraq in 1994 for exposing human rights abuses. We returned to Iraq in 2004 and issued a landmark report on the condition of Baghdad Public Hospitals.

### Bosnia: 1995-2000

*Cheryl Kennedy, left, and Judy English, right, and colleagues from the Prijedor Women Association. (Lusci Palanka, Bosnia, 1997)*



MFP sent its first medical team to Bosnia in 1995 during the Civil War. We cared for traumatized Bosnian women and, with our Bosnian partners, established the much-acclaimed Bosnian Children's Project, a school-based mental health program for Bosnian Muslim children who were victims of ethnic cleansing.



## Haiti: 2000-Present

*Erlose Cerfrere, RN leads a women's health discussion. (Pendou, Haiti, 2018)*



MFP has conducted a range of successful health and social programs over the past two decades in Haiti. These include water purification projects, post-earthquake house construction, and establishment of rural dispensaries. Our Women's Health Program, which continues to expand, has cared for nearly ten thousand women.

When MFP first arrived in Haiti, our main concern was the treatment of acute disease: children with malnutrition, and adults with pneumonia and diarrhea. As we got to know the community better, we focused on other causes of death and suffering, specifically breast and cervical cancer. We initiated early detection and treatment programs, and also assumed the responsibility for patients who were incurable. Madame Telimond's story demonstrates the MFP staff's commitment to compassionate care, keeping patients free of pain and able to spend their remaining days with dignity.

***Madame Telimond's story.*** One fall morning, two nurse practitioners, Erlose Cerfrere and Astrud Fortune, and their assistant Barach Pettit Homme, headed west in the MFP van from Gros Morne into the mountains. It was rainy season, and the roads were muddy and slow going. Two hours later, the mobile clinic reached the remote dispensary at David and was greeted by forty patients and Mr. Constave, the MFP community health worker.

*One of the patients, Madame Telimond, was a*

*67-year-old woman who worked in the market and lived in a one-room house with her daughter. She was emaciated and weak. On examination, she was found to have a cervical mass, which was biopsied and determined to be cervical cancer. The MFP medical team of U.S. and Haitian physicians decided that she was inoperable and Madame Telimond agreed to allow us to care for her at home.*

*"...our patients should be comfortable, free of pain, and able to spend their remaining days with dignity."*

*Mr. Constave visited her weekly, and the medical team made house visits every two weeks. They talked to her about the problems she and her daughter were facing, provided her with pain medication, and brought her staples of rice, beans, bouillon, canned fish, and clean water. When Madame Telimond was no longer able to be cared for at home, we brought her to Alma Mater Hospital where her daughter comforted her, and we continued to provide her medical and supportive care.*

## Advocating for Traumatized Women



*MFP is a member of a network that advocates to “End Female Genital Mutilation Now!” Two hundred million women world-wide are victims of mutilation. Photo: Equality Now.*

In 2009, we opened the doors of the MFP Clinic for Torture Victims, which now resides at the Grace Medical Center in Baltimore. Under the direction of Michael Viola, MD and Pat Clausen, RN, we provide expert medical and psychological documentation for torture victims seeking asylum in the United States. With our partners, TASSC International and Intercultural Connections, we also offer social, psychological, and medical support to help our patients find a path to recovery.

Over the past 12 years, we have cared for nearly a hundred women in our clinic who were victims of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Africa. We assist these women with their medical care, arrange psychological counselling and, as part of our advocacy mission, campaign to stop this widespread human rights abuse.

## Foni Bo School Remains Open During Crisis

The earthquake, a COVID-19 flare, violence in the streets, and gas scarcity have closed many schools in Haiti. Having taken necessary precautions, the Foni Bo School in Gros Morne opened in September and has remained in operation throughout the fall. MFP has partnered with the Children’s Scholarship Fund for Girls to help support students (with tuition, uniforms, and books) from grades 1-7 return to school.

The opening of Foni Bo School also means access to a hot lunch, the highlight of each school day. The meal consists of local produce prepared by town residents. This lunch, funded by the World Food Organization, is the only full meal of the day for many students.



We are proud of the teachers and volunteers committed to educating Haitian children at the Foni Bo School throughout the pandemic, which will markedly improve the quality of these children’s futures.

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MFP Medicine For Peace 2732 Unicorn Lane Washington, DC 20015  
email:mviola@medforpeace.org Tel: 202 441 4545