

Haitian Center for Inclusive Education with Dr. Don DeVito

Serving the Lord in Haiti



For the past several months the situation in Haiti has become critical. Gertrude Bien Aime who leads the inclusion school in Haiti also has rescued and raised children with disabilities over the past 25 years at the Notre Maison Orphanage. All of the children have been attending the Haitian Center for Inclusion and the attendance has risen to over 100 children with and without special needs from Notre Maison and the surrounding community. Gertrude is in need of support and assistance due to the school and port closings that just occurred March 19th due to two new Corona Virus cases in Haiti. Violence and protests taking place in Port-au-Prince continue. Supplies of food and necessities are difficult to find and only available at times when there is a lull in the violence that keeps everyone off the streets. Ports are shut now because of the new Corona Virus which means the children in the orphanage with disabilities will have a difficult time getting food again. They were down to one meal a day previously and with this news we must act quickly. I wanted to share this report from Gertrude and ask if you would consider making a donation to the Haitian Center for Inclusive Education to assist with getting the school back on its feet and helping the children with disabilities that Gertrude raises (currently nearly 40 children). She mentions in the letter below that at the worst of times the children were down to one meal a day because of the political situation and is hoping to be able to go to replenish their supplies of gasoline, food and basic necessities in between riots. The children are now unable to leave the orphanage and food and supplies will again become critical. Prices and inflation have risen due to shortages which makes the situation worse when you are keeping so many children alive let alone healthy due to their special needs.

Here is the situation in the words of Gertrude. The children could soon be down to one meal a day again:

Hello everyone,

Last month:

The situation in Haiti is getting worse and worse, the protests cease a bit, but they are still burning tires and more people are getting killed. Especially the gang leaders that make it more complicated because they are fighting between themselves and they have big guns.

A few schools open as parents take their kids to school wait for them at the school in case something happens and some of them hire security with guns. I feel the situation is not good to expose our Notre Maison kids to this especially in our Laplaine area as they are shooting a lot. A few gang leaders in our area that work for MSC and Sejourne have seen and told our school gatekeeper Gesley to not stay in front of the gate and keep the gate more secure.

Two weeks ago:

The situation is very complicated, sometimes they open the street for one day then we run and do what we have to do. We can find food when they open the street but it is very expensive. I can't describe the situation. Only what I can say is this is the worst situation for people to live in.

We are hanging on and hoping it will change.

Gertrude Bien Aime
Notre Maison Orphanage director.



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We are happy to share that the 1st year of our approach to inclusion at the HCIE has resulted in a chapter coming out this month in the Oxford Handbook of Social Media and Music Learning. The chapter is entitled, “Vini Ansanm” Come Together for Inclusive Community Music Development in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The professional development and STEAM based access to education the children with disabilities are receiving thanks to Gertrude Bien Aime, Jamie Schumacher and Hannah Ehrli (2012 National Council for Exceptional Children Teacher of the Year) is inspiring.

Given the multiple barriers to educational access Haitian children with disabilities face, one wonders if colonialism, catastrophic events, poverty, political instability, cultural biases, and toxic charity could be looked at as insurmountable within the Haitian context. It is, however, through access to education that the need for social justice within the country can be addressed. Haiti has long been a recipient of charitable work and contributions, but it is important to differentiate between charity that perpetuates the status quo and that which enables conscious restructuring for the common good.

This HCIE field report presents a case study of social media engagement learning, with an emphasis on social justice, which has contributed to sustainable efforts, even as Haiti’s electricity grid is underserved. Social media has proven invaluable in several ways. First, social media has helped to provide continued professional development for Haiti by enabling sustainable local structures. More specifically, social networks have established support for the development of a school that employs social justice to address the ways in which children with disabilities are perceived and treated in Haiti, particularly and specifically as supported thorough community music development. Additionally, social media has largely enabled and supported the professional development of the school’s teachers—a population that has been historically underserved (i.e., Haitian teachers of children with disabilities). Such professional development has been integral in supporting the social justice mandate of this school, both in general and as it related to music education.

While a lack of inclusion opportunities are an unfortunate reality in Haiti we are working collaboratively to improve, we are praying for support to continue our work with the added challenges of Covid-19 and a worsening employment situation that makes it nearly impossible for the parents in the community to provide for their children. Unemployment was 90 percent before Covid-19 began to spread. Any donation of support to continue to assist the Haitian Center for Inclusive Education, which provides services for over 100 children in mainstreamed settings, would be greatly appreciated.