

Tragedy in Gonaïves



An Assessment of the Destruction & a Plan for Reconstruction and Development

Prepared by Eben-Ezer Evangelical Mission of Gonaïves

September 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Churches	4
Housing	5
Schools	6
Health	7
Agriculture & Environment	8
Micro Enterprises & Credit Unions	10
Closing	12

INTRODUCTION

In the early hours of September 1, 2008, the first rains from Hurricane Hanna began to fall on Gonaïves, Haiti. For more than 48 hours, the rain continued to fall not only on Gonaïves but also on the surrounding mountains, sending torrents of water rushing down the deforested slopes. The water had nowhere to go once it hit Gonaïves; the high seawaters prevented the water from draining off the land. Gonaïves, the third largest city in Haiti, became a lake filled with rushing currents as water sped through former streets. The people of Gonaïves waded and swam through the waters, mounting their roofs or seeking higher ground if they could. Most survived with little more than the clothes on their backs. Less than one week later, while the floodwaters from Hanna still sat in the city, Hurricane Ike came through, adding further misery to the devastated city.

The needs of Gonaïves, the hub of northern Haiti and the mother of the independence of this nation, are great indeed. From its foundation, the city has been a political holocaust. It has been used to ignite and foster upheavals and national genocide. In September 2004, Hurricane Jeanne destroyed Gonaïves. Many of our human resources fled the city, never to return. The city was not quite rebuilt when Hanna and Ike came to finish the work started by Jeanne. As a result, Gonaïves has no other future than what the merciful God has in mind for her.

The question is: shall Gonaïves receive fair attention? It is only through the combined efforts of the local community, the national government, and international humanitarian organizations that we can hope to rebuild the city and revive the spirits of the people here.

In the report that follows, we present an assessment of the destruction in Gonaïves and a comprehensive development plan as a foundation for the future of the city. We have identified five priorities for the initial reconstruction efforts: churches, housing, health, agriculture & environment, and micro enterprises & credit unions. Our report is designed to bring together the church-based organizations on a platform that will lift up the work of the church of Jesus Christ and enable her to draw all men and women to Jesus, who is the only one able to cope with such a desperate situation.

CHURCHES

There are more than 500 churches in Gonaïves, divided into the following congregations:

- 10 churches ----- 1500 members (90% of churches affected, 10% destroyed)
- 50 churches ----- 800 members (100% of churches affected, 50% destroyed)
- 150 churches ----- 500 members (100% of churches affected, 70% destroyed)
- 200 churches ----- 300 members (100% of churches affected, 70% destroyed)
- 50 churches ----- 200 members (100% of churches affected, 80% destroyed)
- 30 churches ----- 100 members (100% of churches affected, 100% destroyed)
- 10 churches ----- 50 members (100% of churches affected, 100% destroyed)

Of the 10 churches with 1500 members, 10% of the churches were only partly complete before the flooding. Of the 50 churches with 800 members, 10% were only partly complete before the flooding. Of the 150 churches with 500 members, 60% were only partly complete before the flooding. Of the 200 churches with 300 members, 40% were rented buildings. Of the 50 churches with 200 members, 30% were rented buildings. Of the 30 churches with 100 members, all were thatched roof buildings. Of the 10 churches with 50 members, all were thatched roof buildings. Nearly all of the furniture in these churches has been destroyed. At this time, we cannot fully evaluate the financial cost of reconstructing and refurnishing these churches.



HOUSING

Eben-Ezer Mission has signed a partnership agreement with Habitat for Humanity to build and repair homes in Gonaïves. We estimate that 1,500 homes have been destroyed and another 3,500 damaged. At Eben-Ezer's compound alone, we have lost 35 houses. A minimum of \$5,000 U.S. is needed to build a house.



SCHOOLS

The Federation of Protestant Schools of Haiti has approximately 165 schools in the commune of Gonaives. Of those schools, 30% are in the city and 70% are in the country. Of the 165 schools, 80% were affected by the flooding, and 35% of those were completely destroyed. We need to rebuild, repair, and refurnish these schools for the 18,500 students who attend them. The peasants depend on agriculture and animal husbandry to finance the schooling of their children. Now the region's agricultural sector has been devastated, and 90% of the pigs, goats, chickens, cows, and other livestock are gone. We recommend the establishment of distribution centers in each of the five sections communales and at least one banque agricole in each of those sections communales.



HEALTH

When Hurricane Jeanne hit Haiti in September 2004, the Eben-Ezer Hospital was the only hospital in operation because the Eben-Ezer compound was the only dry spot left in Gonaïves. Four years later, a hospital in Raboteau and the Eben-Ezer Hospital are the only two in operation after Hanna and Ike. Gonaïves desperately needs mobile clinics to reach those who cannot travel during and after such emergencies. There is also an urgent need to upgrade the capacity of the Eben-Ezer Hospital. We need to equip our surgery room, and we desperately need a sonogram machine. We also need a wide variety of general medical supplies.

One of the simplest ways to prevent disease is to ensure access to clean drinking water. Finding drinking water is a great challenge now and will be even more difficult after the international aid organizations leave Gonaïves. Now is the time to drill as many wells as possible. We envision digging five deep wells with a 6" output. Each well with steel casing would cost \$5,000 U.S. plus the cost of a pump.



AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Agriculture and the environment must go hand in hand or the problems of one will affect the other. The deforestation of Haiti's mountains has led to massive erosion of fertile topsoil, dangerous floods and mudslides, and other environmental disasters.

Before hurricanes Hanna and Ike hit Gonaïves, Eben-Ezer Mission was working with a Miami-based corporation, Haitian American Agro Industries (HAAI), to start a pilot jatropha biofuels project. *Jatropha curcas* is a small tree native to the Caribbean that produces oil-filled seeds, which can be converted into fuel. Jatropha offers one of the highest yields of oil per hectare, far surpassing traditional biofuel substrates such as corn and soy. Jatropha has been used for biodiesel production in India and parts of Africa and is valued for its ability to grow in a variety of environments, including marginal lands that are not suitable for food production. The goals of HAAI and Eben-Ezer's joint project are threefold:

- generate jobs through the production and sale of biodiesel and biodiesel stoves
- eliminate deforestation in Haiti by providing an alternative to charcoal fuels
- ensure food security in Haiti by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and introducing new methods of food conservation



HAAI and Eben-Ezer lost their initial jatropha nurseries to the floodwaters from Hanna and Ike. We now plan to work with communities untouched by the flooding to restart the nurseries. In addition, we plan to work with peasant farmers throughout the country to plant jatropha as field breaks and living fences to help prevent further erosion. To make this project a success, we need funds to purchase seeds, farm equipment, and irrigation and drainage materials.

Almost 1,000 acres of traditional agricultural crops were also lost to the flooding. Plantains, hot peppers, papayas, and eggplant are all covered with water. The local peasants have lost their entire harvest, as well as goats, cows, pigs, and other livestock. We are seeking funds to help these local farmers make a new start. Eben-Ezer can allot 100 acres for an animal distribution program, involving the breeding, raising, and distribution of animals and feed to replace the estimated 15,000 chickens, 5,000 goats, 1,500 pigs, 300 cows, and 36 bee hives that have been lost in the flood. We are also seeking a 10" water pump to drain the fields as quickly as possible.

The Desolate Savannah outside of Gonaïves is known as a large plain of fertile land. However, a deep drainage system built to improve the agricultural productivity of the savannah has been clogged for many years. After Hurricane Jeanne, the Haitian government received funds from the Canadian government to repair the drainage system. For four years, the Haitian politicians could not agree on a plan. The peasants of the Desolate Savannah will now take charge of that project to ensure it is completed. The estimated cost is \$55,000 U.S.



MICRO ENTERPRISES & CREDIT UNIONS

Eben-Ezer's micro-finance program operates primarily through school co-operatives. We are training a whole new generation in savings and loans. We bring economic empowerment to the schools through entrepreneurship, partnership, and mentoring. Unless we introduce the students to some kind of income-generating program, the financial burden of education will be too heavy for the parents to carry alone and the entire educational system will collapse. The school co-ops facilitate:

- Hands-on training with artisans, farmers, and other skilled workers.
- Self-sufficiency, allowing the children to generate income that is partially spent on their tuition and other school obligations.
- Involvement with business incubators while still in school.
- Possibility of ensuring a secure future through entrepreneurship and partnership.



For example, the Center of Training, Production, and Distribution brought over 300 children from different schools together to receive training in handicrafts. The products made by the children were distributed in the United States, France, and Switzerland. In addition, the Livestock Co-op had 400 members, who received piglets through the co-op. The children became self-sufficient and no longer needed help from the sponsorship program. At present,

there are 100 co-ops in the program. We are seeking between \$500 and \$1000 U.S. for each co-op and are hoping to expand the program to a minimum of 250 co-ops as a contribution to the rehabilitation of the victims of the flood.

The churches of Gonaïves have also founded two credit unions in Gonaïves: La Caisse d'Epargne et de Crédit de l'Union des Co-ops Chrésiennes d'Haiti (CECUCCH) and La Caisse Populaire Fraternité des Gonaïves (CAPOFRAGO). CAPOFRAGO lends mainly to small businesses while CECUCCH lends its support to economic development enterprises, which provide integrated income-generating activities. For example, CECUCCH financed a young builder, Jean Nadieul, loaning him money for a few months' rent, start-up funds for his inventory, and salaries for a manager and an assistant manager. Jean not only paid back his debt and took care of his family but also started a non-profit organization that donated 30 houses to the victims of Hurricane Jeanne in 2004. CECUCCH's housing program in the Desolate Savannah just outside of Gonaïves has also made provisions for 17 families to live on three acres of land each. These families own a variety of businesses, such as a cement block factory, farms, and retail businesses.

CECUCCH also partners with La Banque Nationale de Crédit (BNC) in money transfer activities and all other services available at BNC. We are seeking funds to finance additional income-generating projects through these credit unions.

CLOSING

The vision displayed in this document reflects the aspirations of the Gonaives churches. The institutions and activities mentioned above are the outcome of countless workshops, seminars, and conferences held with the Gonaives leaders and church members. The schools and churches of Gonaives belong to many different denominations and non-denominational groups but have joined together to create a better future for all in their community. We remain at your disposal for any guidance you may desire.

Sincerely yours,

Michel Morisset

Eben-Ezer Evangelical Mission of Gonaives

