

Hands Across the Sea

2015/2016 Annual Report



Hands Across the Sea Haiti

A beautiful country ravaged by political upheaval and natural disasters, Haiti is rebuilding its infrastructure and working for sustainable development and growth. The poorest nation in the Americas, half of its population lives on less than \$1 US per day. Nearly half of Haiti's children do not attend primary school, resulting in a literacy rate of 53%. And only one in five attend secondary school.

Haiti's future depends on its children. Through education, children will become Haiti's future leaders. By supporting educational initiatives and strengthening families, Hands Across the Sea is uniquely positioned to contribute to a brighter future for the Caribbean nation.

Through our educational sponsorship program, our orphanage and our community partnerships, Hands Across the Sea is bringing about lasting change and raising future leaders for sustainable development in rural Haiti.

Our children's home provides full time care for children aged 0-18 years who come to us through a variety of tragic circumstances. The love, support and guidance they receive at Hands Across the Sea are key to their healthy development.

Our work in the community through partnerships and our mercy ministry help us bring hope and healing to families in the Artibonite Valley of Haiti.



Children are Haiti's Future

Education
Character Development
Sustainability
Compassion

It's All About the Children



Who We Are



Vision

Hands Across the Sea believes that children are the key to Haiti's future. Through education, children will become leaders in their families, in their communities and in their country.

Mission

Our goal as an organization is to educate children to be the future leaders of the country. Children thrive within healthy families and supportive communities.

We are a Registered Charity with the Government of Canada working with needy children and families in Deschappelles, Haiti. We operate a children's home, a school from preschool to grade 11 with over 460 children, and an outreach ministry to families in the surrounding communities.

As an interdenominational Christian ministry, we employ local staff, thus encouraging economic development in the community.



2015 / 2016 Highlights



School

Hands Across the Sea provided high quality education to children from preschool to grade 11 at our safe, well-constructed school campus. We are excited that we are getting closer to offering all grades at our campus.

Registered with the Haitian Ministry of Education, our school follows the prescribed federal school curriculum, while working to incorporate modern approaches to teaching and learning. Ongoing teacher training and professional development help our teachers provide the highest quality education possible.

- 460 children in preschool to grade 11 completed the school year.
- New grade 11 class with 19 students added in September 2015
- 80% of the students in our school successfully completed the school year & advanced academically.
- All 14 students passed grade 6 exams & moved onto secondary school. 30 of the 35 students who wrote the very difficult grade 9 government exams passed.
- The majority of the Secondary students successfully completed their academic year.
- At the end of the school year, 90% of our sponsor students had sponsors contributing towards the costs of their schooling.



Children's Home

Our children's home provides full-time care for children aged 0-18 years. We currently have 18 children in our home. The newest additions to the HATS family, brothers named Markenson and Dickieson joined us in August 2015. They are well settled into the family & are thriving & developing very well.

We are open to having additional children in our full time care as the need arises, taking utmost care to verify that the children have no other family support options before we bring them into full time care. We are also working helping our 20-year old young man who has some mental health issues develop life skills in preparation for his eventual independence. He is currently working part-time with us and we are working closely with mental health professionals in Port-au-Prince.

Community Partnerships & Projects

- We continued to partner with Radio Creole, a local radio station broadcasting commentary advocating responsible citizenry, strong community values, Christian messages and music as well as community service updates. Many visitors in the past year had the opportunity to share music and insights live on the radio.
- We supported local community groups like soccer teams and sports clubs, providing soccer jerseys and balls so that young men and women could engage in healthy sport and team building activities.
- During the past academic year, we invited teachers from other community schools to participate in professional development opportunities at our school.
- We distributed 3200 kg of rice, 1600 kg of beans, 1600 kg of cornmeal, and 2200 L of oil to families in the community facing severe financial need. This is an increase of 15% over last year.



2015 / 2016 Highlights



Staff and Volunteers

Our Directors, Karen Huxter, an administrator and teacher who has been living and working in Haiti since 1995 and Luckner Estimable, a lawyer, educator and respected member of the local community, continue to provide great leadership in Haiti. Their hard work and dedication to children and families in Haiti is bringing lasting change to the Artibonite Valley.

Local staff is integral to the functioning of our mission in Haiti as they work with our children, facilities and visitors. In the past year, we have employed:

- 13 full-time teachers and 1 supervising teacher
- 23 part-time teachers
- 11 mission staff members, including house mothers, housekeeping, and maintenance staff
- 4 security staff
- 30 day labourers who have worked on various construction projects

Our visiting mission teams are key to sharing the vision of Hands Across the Sea as they engage with the local community, participate in a variety of projects, then return home to share the work and vision of our organization. We hosted 5 teams this year with 27 visitors staying and volunteering at our mission in Haiti.



Our Board

The Hands Across the Sea Association, a non-profit board of volunteer directors from across Canada, oversees the work in Haiti. The role of the board is to raise awareness of the work in Haiti, fundraise on behalf of Hands Across the Sea, be responsible for budget and to provide direction and administrative support to the organization.

Our board members for 2015 /2016 fiscal year were:

Beate Rufft, Secretary, Ontario
Lynn Clark, Director, British Columbia
Karen Huxter, Director, Haiti
Dickie Macdonald, Treasurer, Nova Scotia

Liette Wilson, Director, Alberta
Don Huxter, Director, Newfoundland
Mara Hawkins, Director, British Columbia
Bob Comeau, Director, Nova Scotia

Tim Newell, Chairperson, Nova Scotia
Emma O'Rourke, Director, Newfoundland
Todd Young, Director, Newfoundland
Robert Lewis, Director, Alberta

2015 / 2016 Highlights



Capital Projects

- Final touches put on the new 400 square meter church building that is used for school devotions each morning as well as Sunday services. Doors, metal work, painting, benches & latrines have all been completed & the building is used for school, community & church gatherings.
- Improvements were made to the plumbing and water lines on the school campus.
- Construction of an additional classroom for our new grade 11 class, thanks to several Canadian fundraising efforts.
- Construction of a grade 12 class has begun, funded by an Alberta Community Initiatives International Development Grant. The classroom will be functional by the beginning of the school year as we complete the construction of desks and blackboards, the purchase of teaching materials, and teacher training & other Canadian fundraising efforts..
- Construction of a staff apartment on the main campus is well underway. This will be used to house additional short & long-term missions staff. The outside construction is completed, with the plumbing, flooring and furnishings still needed.



Success Story

Karen met Claudy Garçon in 1995 through another small missions organization in Borel, Haiti. Claudy was working part-time as a teacher, but was looking for full-time work. When Karen first began sponsoring students in the Aritbonite Valley in 1997, Claudy joined the HATS team part-time, working as a liaison for children sponsored in outside schools. When HATS took in the first orphaned children into full-time care, Claudy came to work full-time with Hands Across the Sea.

Claudys was an invaluable asset in the early days, helping HATS with the land purchase of our current campus & assisting with visiting teams from Canada. When HATS moved onto the current site, she took on the role of manager of the children's homes which she did very well for several years. Later, she moved back to teaching in order to have summers off & have more time in the evenings & weekends with her two children.

Claudys has become a great teacher under the guidance of Luckner, actively seeking chances to learn & grow in her profession. She has been teaching grade 3 for the past seven years, where she is a much appreciated member of the team for her kindness with the students, enthusiasm in leading worship & willingness to learn.

2015 / 2016 Challenges



Challenges

Sponsorship – Our sponsorship program is a successful one, allowing individuals in Canada and the U.S. to sponsor children in our school and orphanage so that we have the financial means to care for the children, providing a high quality education and nutritional support. However, the precipitous drop in the Canadian dollar means that sponsorship funds are no longer sufficient to cover the cost of educating our students. This year, we had to increase the sponsorship amounts for both elementary and secondary sponsorship to \$300 and \$420 per year respectively.

Finances – Overall, both our donations and our expenditures are up 15% compared to the same period last year. The ongoing downturn in the Canadian economy and the low Canadian dollar have added an additional level of challenge due to the exchange rate. Our board continues to explore new avenues of funding, including grants and corporate donations. We are in the process of applying for our 501C status in the U.S. so that our American donors can receive tax deductions for their donations.

Long-term Missionaries – We continue to look for long-term missionaries to come on board with our organization to support the work we are doing in Haiti. An apartment is in the process of being built to house additional missionary staff. After 20 years full-time in Haiti, Karen needs more time in Canada with family and friends and Ti Luc needs to spend 6 months in Canada every year to access medical care.

Our Future



Strategy

HATS' core strategy of caring for Haitian youth, and educating them in preparation for leadership of their generation remains as important and relevant a mission as when HATS was founded. Indeed, the need is probably greater now than at any time in the past. The testimonies of the children impacted by the orphanage and school bear witness to the success of our organization in changing young lives.

Ongoing Work

- Provide full time care for children aged 0-18 years at our children's home, accepting new children as the need arises
- Provide excellence in education from preschool to grade 12 at our school, Institution Mixte Karen Huxter (IMKH)
- Support the work of Radio Creole
- Support local community initiatives such as soccer teams with donations of jerseys and balls
- Provide emergency nutritional support to families whose children are at risk of malnutrition

New plans / projects for 2016 / 2017

- Complete the staff apartment for short and long-term missionary staff.
- Build an additional classroom for grade 13 so that our students can complete their schooling at our school in compliance with Education Haiti.
- Complete the leveling of the school yard so that the space can be used for soccer and other activities & complete the perimeter fencing.

Long term plans / projects

- Install a new well at the school to meet our growing demand for water for the school children.
- Support trusted, local community groups in meeting the immediate and long-term needs of their communities.



Finances



In 2015, HATS saw an 11% increase in student sponsorships, but a 34% drop in donations compared to 2014. Since 2012, sponsorships climbed 24%, while donations decreased 38%, for a combined drop in overall funding of 25%. The slowing of the Canadian economy is viewed as a root cause, with a number of regular donors being negatively impacted by the downturn.

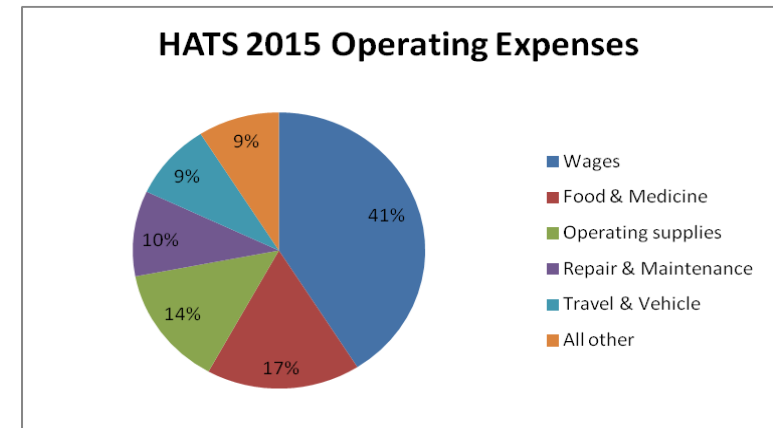
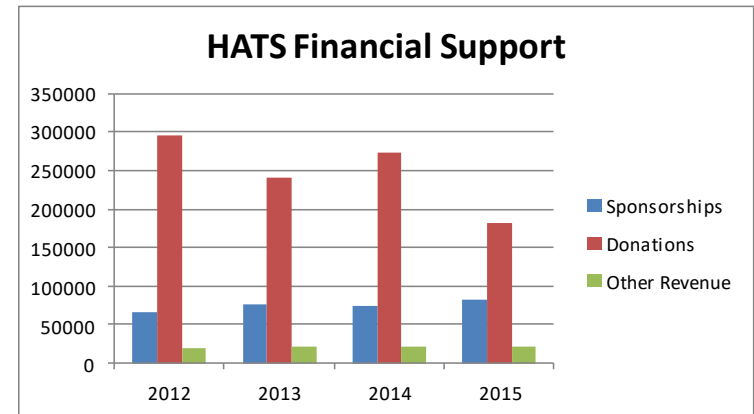
The funding challenge for HATS since 2013 has also been greatly impacted by currency exchange rates. Most funds are raised in Canadian currency, converted to US currency for transfer to Haiti, then converted again into Haitian currency for payment of local goods and services. The recent slide in value of the \$CAD versus the \$USD has resulted in an average 35% drop in the value of exchanged funds actually reaching Haiti over the past 3 years.

More attention will be placed on fundraising in 2016 and beyond, to bring in new donors and stabilize funding streams. This is especially important in light of expanded school grade levels, fluctuating prices for key supplies, and continued currency exchange weakness.

A current initiative by the HATS board is to establish a US entity, with IRS-approved charitable status, to enable tax receipts for donations by US citizens. It is hoped to have the new entity and US board in place by the first half of 2017.

The largest category of expense is Wages, at \$119,983 for 2015. This entire amount is spent on people providing on-the-ground services in Haiti. It includes 13 full-time teachers, 15 part-time teachers, 11 mission staff members (house mothers, housekeeping, and maintenance staff), 4 security staff, several day labourers who worked on repair projects, and the 2 managing co-directors. In short, HATS receives tremendous value for the money spent on human resources.

The North American board directors are in strictly voluntary roles and receive no remuneration for their donated time.



Hands Across the Sea



Box 101
Yarmouth, NS B5A 4B1
Email: inquiries@hatshaiti.org
www.hatshaiti.org