

Hands Across the Sea

2016/2017 Annual Report



Hands Across the Sea Haiti

A country of natural beauty and resilient, hard-working people, Haiti has endured many years of political unrest and many natural disasters. Since the deadly 2010 earthquake, Haiti is rebuilding its infrastructure and working towards sustainable development and growth. The poverty rate in rural Haiti is 75% with almost 60% of Haiti's population living on less than \$2 per day. The literacy rate in Haiti is 61%, compared to 90% in other Caribbean nations. Of those attending school, close to 60% drop out of school before completing grade 6.

In developing countries, education is directly linked to positive health and social outcomes. Studies have proven that education reduces malnutrition, improves standards of health, reduces the spread of communicable diseases and improves gender equity. By supporting educational initiatives and strengthening families, Hands Across the Sea is uniquely positioned to help break the cycle of poverty.

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 Deschapelles, Haiti. We operate a children's home, a school from preschool to grade 13 with over 460 children and young adults, 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.



2016 / 2017 Highlights



School

Hands Across the Sea provided exceptional education to children from preschool to grade 12 at our well-constructed and equipped 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.

- 466 children in preschool to grade 12 completed the school year.
- A new grade 12 class with 18 students was added in September 2016.
- 86% of the students in our school successfully completed the school year & advanced academically.
- 22 of our 27 grade 6 students passed & moved onto secondary school.
- 100% of our grade 9 students passed the very difficult grade 9 government exams.
- At the end of the school year, 94% 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 children are growing and developing well. The adolescents in our crew are developing their leadership skills in the school and in the community. We are proud of their achievements and the care that the children show towards one another. 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. Radio Creole was instrumental in providing information and encouraging hurricane safety instructions prior to Hurricane Irma.
- We supported a local soccer team, providing soccer shorts, jerseys and balls so that young men and women could engage in healthy sport and team building activities.
- During the past academic year, we provided two professional develop seminars for teachers in the Artibonite valley. In each of the 3-day seminars, we were able to equip local teachers to provide excellence in education.
- We distributed over 5000 kg of rice, 3000 kg of beans, 2500 kg of cornmeal, and 3500 L of oil to families in the community facing severe financial need. This is an increase of almost 50 % over last year.

2016 / 2017 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:

- 15 full-time teachers and 3 supervising teachers who also teach
- 31 part-time teachers
- 11 mission staff members, including house mothers, housekeeping, and maintenance staff
- 4 kitchen staff, 1 yard worker and 2 janitors at the school
- 4 security staff
- 42 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 47 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 2016 /2017 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, Alberta
Bob Comeau, Director, Nova Scotia

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

2016 / 2017 Highlights



Capital Projects

- Construction of the grade 12 classroom was completed, funded by an Alberta Community Initiatives International Development Grant. The classroom is well equipped with desks, blackboards and supplies. The classroom is much appreciated by the teaching staff and young adults who used it during the past year.
- Great progress has been made on the construction of the staff apartment on the main campus. The plumbing, flooring, windows and doors are all completed. The painting of the apartment is currently underway. This will be used to house additional short & long-term missions staff.
- A watchtower was built at the rear of the campus to better equip the security personnel to keep the children, staff and our school grounds safe.



Success Story

This year every student in grade 9 at IMKH passed the very difficult standardized government exams! This is an incredible accomplishment and a testament to the excellent leadership of Assistant Director Luckner Estimable at the school as well as the hard work of both our teachers and students.

Our school is gaining a reputation in the surrounding communities for excellence in education, which we will continue to build on in the coming years.

2016 / 2017 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. Sponsors receive an annual photo and a letter from their sponsor child. Students appreciate the financial support they receive and are always thrilled when they receive letters or photos from their sponsors. We do still need sponsors for the next academic year as our school continues to grow to meet demand in the area.

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 thrilled to announce that our U.S. board has recently received approval for 501C status, which means tax receipts will be able to be issued to our U.S. donors.

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. The staff apartment is almost completed. This new housing will be used to house additional missionary staff. After 21 years full-time in Haiti, Karen needs more time in Canada with family and friends and her son 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 13 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 2017 / 2018

- 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 2016, HATS saw an 20% increase in student sponsorships and a 45% jump in donations compared to 2015. From 2013 to 2015, HATS overall funding was below 2012 levels. The slowing of the Canadian economy is viewed as a root cause. A number of regular donors were negatively impacted by the downturn which, in turn, affected their financial support.

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 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 4 years. On a positive note, \$CAD has been trending up in value in 2017.

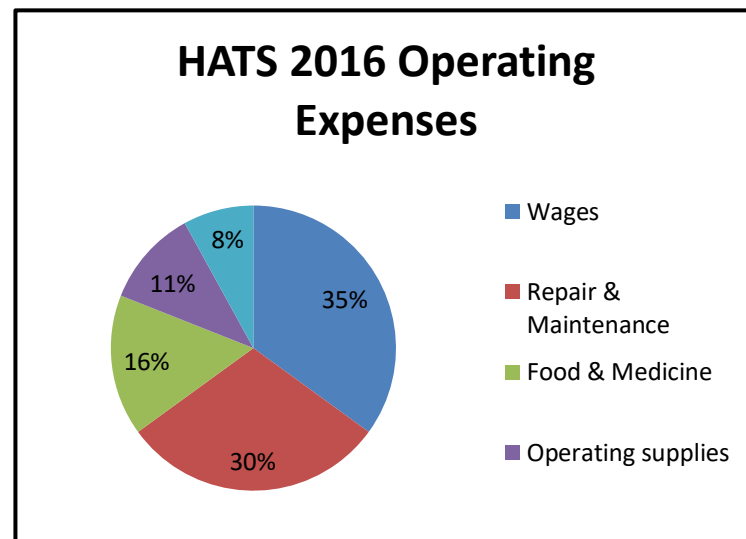
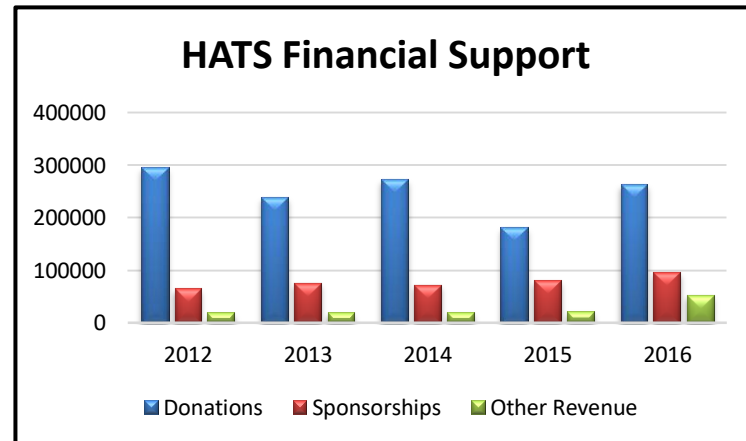
HATS turned a financial corner in 2016, when overall funding finally returned to 2012 levels. This was primarily due to large one-time donations from several individuals, corporations, government agencies and churches.

More attention will continue to be placed on fundraising in 2017, and beyond, to bring in new donors and stabilize funding streams. This is important in light of new high school grade levels, wildly fluctuating prices for key supplies, and continued currency exchange uncertainty.

We are thrilled that HATS has recently received IRS-approved charitable status and are able to offer tax receipts to our US donors. We are currently working on updating our website to accept American donations.

The largest category of expense is Wages, at \$114,705 for 2016. 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



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