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PROFAMIL: CHARGING AHEAD

A NEWSLETTER FROM FRIENDS OF PROFAMIL HAITI

June 2024



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At the end of June, most of Port-au-Prince and its surrounding areas were under the control of gangs. Countrywide, the number of displaced persons had surged to more than 578,000 in the past three months, with more than 90,000 people living in temporary, mainly makeshift, camps.

In May and June, indiscriminate violence and looting shut down 40 percent of the country's clinics and hospitals, including the main university hospital. Hunger has reached its highest level on record.

The situation is as grave as can be imagined, but there is some movement by Haitian and international actors to turn things around. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) facilitated Haitian negotiations that created a Transitional Presidential Council, which represents most of the country's political currents (see "Women must be included in Haiti's Transition" below). In late May, the council appointed an interim prime minister, Garry Conille, a former UN official who served briefly as prime minister some years ago, and he has named a government.

Several hundred Kenyan police officials have been deployed through the United Nations Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS) to assist the Haitian National Police in tackling the gang crisis. They are expected to be joined by police from the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Chad and Jamaica for a total of 2,500 personnel.

It would be hard to find a Haitian expressing even cautious optimism but a little bit of hope has returned to the country.

"Every conversation I have with my Haitian colleagues, neighbors, and networks tells me Haitians long for security. They want to see their sons and daughters safe in school. To go to work. To have enough food. To drink clean water. To be free from danger and disease. This is why we are committed. This is why I stay."

We strongly encourage you to read "[Why I Stay: Haiti's Fight for Health Care](#)." In the article, author Marie-Marcelle Deschamps not only provides critical historical context, but also explains why she is unwavering in her decision to stay in Haiti and dedicate herself to Haiti's healthcare system.

Haiti: The State of Affairs



Haïti Prime Minister Garry Conille greeted the Kenyan troops in Port-au-Prince, on Wednesday, June 26, 2024. Photo by Arnold Junior Pierre for *The Haitian Times*

How You Can Help

PROFAMIL delivers roughly 230,000 clinical services each year, demonstrating its commitment to addressing the reproductive health needs of the country. The organization operates three centers in metropolitan Port-au-Prince, ensuring permanent access to crucial services for youth, women, and men. Additionally, its mobile clinics extend healthcare services to vulnerable populations in rural areas. And they continue this work despite profound safety and security challenges.

By making an essential financial contribution to PROFAMIL's work [here](#), you will be providing displaced Haitian women with a lifeline to essential health services. Your contribution is 100% tax deductible. For more information on PROFAMIL and its critical work, please visit their website [here](#). We thank you for your support for PROFAMIL and Haitian women at this immensely challenging moment in their lives. Your intervention could save a life.



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PROFAMIL'S CURRENT PRIORITIES

This spring, PROFAMIL focused on youth programs and outreach. In order to serve Haiti's youth population, PROFAMIL is committed not just to providing access to healthcare services, but also to information. PROFAMIL acknowledges that by serving those experiencing early pregnancy – without judgment or blame – the organization creates a line of communication with the most vulnerable members of Haiti's youth community.

Not only has PROFAMIL created and disseminated a comprehensive sexual education document, but it also organizes regular youth workshops to discuss sexual and reproductive health topics, including consent, sexuality, desire, and human rights. Excitingly, PROFAMIL is now offering their comprehensive sexual health education course online – even if youth live in isolated and rural Haitian communities, they have access via their phones.



PROFAMIL PRIORITIES, CONT.

Additionally, PROFAMIL has broken ground on the maternity clinic discussed in previous newsletters. As of 2020, Haiti's maternal mortality rate was estimated to be 350 deaths per 100,000 live births. The maternal mortality ratio is the number of women who die from pregnancy-related causes while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy ending. Haiti's maternal mortality rate is the highest in the Western Hemisphere, similar to rates in Afghanistan and some African countries. With your continued support, PROFAMIL endeavors to decrease the maternal mortality rate by providing essential services to Haitian women and those experiencing pregnancy.

Advocacy for Abortion Rights in the Caribbean

In April, two women and two health care providers made history – they filed the first ever constitutional challenges to colonial-era abortion laws in the Caribbean. You can learn more in the press release [here](#), which details the importance of these challenges in both Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda.

Women Must Be Included in Haiti's Transition

A group of women's rights and feminist organizations in Haiti and the United States have demanded that women be included in the transition process, especially as Haiti works to reestablish peace and democratic processes. The country's Transitional Presidential Council has no women among its seven voting members, and only men were interviewed for the position of Prime Minister (to which Garry Conille was appointed on May 29th). The organizations called for at least half of Ministry posts in the forthcoming government to be filled by women, especially as women make up more than half of Haiti's population. You can read more about the demands in the press release [here](#).

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“I’m a Big Dreamer”: Three Questions for PROFAMIL’s Program Director, Patricia Jean

As PROFAMIL’s Program Director, Patricia Jean researches, plans, and develops the programs and approaches that best fulfill PROFAMIL’s commitment to sexual and reproductive health and freedom. She manages PROFAMIL’s fundraising strategies and communications outreach, including its stream of compelling outreach on Instagram and other social media. Patricia was born in Haiti, but spent most of her childhood in Montreal. In 2015, she was “dreaming of living under the sun and picking mangoes from trees,” when the opportunity came to move back to the island.

What is motivating you to continue your work, especially in the current environment?

I’m a big dreamer. I like to stay on a positive note, even though hospitals and healthcare facilities are closed down, women are in pain, and there is suffering and death. But I still have a lot of optimism because I see PROFAMIL’s impact. If we see 85 patients, that could be 85 women who would otherwise stay home and not know that they have cervical cancer. There is no place to go in Haiti if you have advanced cancer – so early screening is critical. And this is just one example of the essential services that PROFAMIL provides!

What are you most proud of accomplishing with PROFAMIL?

So many things! I’m so thrilled about revamping the mobile clinic experience to ensure that every patient leaves the clinic both healthier and more empowered to take control of their sexual and reproductive health.

I’m also really proud of successfully applying for and implementing a project with UN Women. Our work with international organizations is key, especially from a visibility and fundraising standpoint. We established a partnership with the United Nations Population Fund, too!

If you could share one message about PROFAMIL to its supporters – or those considering supporting PROFAMIL – what would you share?

It’s very sad to realize how many funders do not trust Haitian organizations. Sometimes when we receive funding, there’s this very clear sentiment: “We’re going to trust you, but please don’t rob us.” Of course, this is based on a negative experience they had in the past. But this is not what Profamil is about, and we don’t want our clients to lose out on critical support because of others’ actions.

We hope that donors will be willing to give Haiti a chance and invest in the PROFAMIL team. We really have a beautiful organization. We have people who have worked for Profamil for more than 30 years, for their entire working lives. And they are impressive. You can trust in them and their belief in the mission. Our team comes into work and they give 100%, even when they just witnessed death and gangs are burning hospitals.

When it comes down to it, we all know that we just have to keep going.