

Hurricane Matthew Housing Reconstruction Update

February 8, 2017

Plans were initiated before Hurricane Matthew hit the Grand Anse (October 5, 2016), in anticipation of the destruction that would be caused. Based on local estimates, approximately \$100 worth of materials could provide cement, tin roofing and nails. While this cost was maintained initially, it increased to \$130 due to higher prices and shortages of materials as well as transport.

Nearly 90% of the Grand Anse was destroyed resulting in loss of shelter, income and food. Two months of heavy rain followed the hurricane, making life even more difficult for those without roofs.

After the hurricane, an assessment was made of those families most in need and a materials distribution process was established. Families were responsible for picking up the materials in Jeremie, and completing the reconstruction. As of December 31, 2016, 333 families had been provided these essential materials. These households average 6 people, resulting in housing for 2060 people. These families were located in 6 of the 12 counties of the Grand Anse Department; the highest distribution was in Jeremie County. Within Jeremie County families were in 7 of the 9 boroughs (sections communale). 38% of the recipients were elders, most of these were over 80 years of age.

A complete record of all beneficiary households was established and, where possible, this includes before/after pictures. Most families have completed the roof and home repair. People have been very resourceful, using additional tin and other materials from salvage to add to their original allotment of materials. The families have been very grateful for the reconstruction materials they received.

There are still many families in need and the reconstruction initiative continues with the goal of reaching all of the most vulnerable households.

Two examples are provided to illustrate the impact of the program on families. More stories and analysis of program outcomes will be provided in the next few months.

The first example is the story of an elder. Many elders were alive when Hurricane Hazel hit the Grand Anse in 1954. Matthew followed almost exactly in its path, and both were equally devastating. So these people had experienced catastrophic hurricanes twice in their lives.

Mme. Madeleine Etienne



Mme. Madeleine Etienne's new home (no before pictures because house was leveled)

Mme. Madeleine Etienne is better known as Madu by her family and friends. At 83, she is still managing the house and the family. She outlived the two men in her life and birthed 7 children in the family bed at the hands of different granny midwives. She recalled that "Every child was welcomed."

Madu was born in the remote rural village of Chadonette, an arduous 8 hour walk from the Departmental seat of Jeremie. Madu's mother was young when Madu was born and she lived a long life, dying at age 71 at home in Chadonette.

Madu never attended school. She said, "Long time ago if you put a child in school or built a tin roof house, the devil would eat you (DJAB manje ou!)." "My mother did not put me or my brother in school." Her mother was named Eliemenne Charles and she lived with Madu's father, Delouis Etienne. They were farmers. They grew and sold plantains (bannan), yam, sweet potatoes (patat), and cassava (manyok). They had a little land. "When I was growing up there, I cooked and cleaned. Water was far. I and my brother put water in kalbas (hollowed out round gourd) on our heads."

Hurricane Hazel came with no warning in October 1954. Madu remembers, "after hurricane Hazel, there was hunger and famine. I was in the mountains and had twins. I was living with my parents then. We had to wash clothes with the leaves and fruit of the soap tree (bwa savonette)."

She remembers, "Big wind and everything was gone only sour tomatoes grew. No animals were left. Ships came to the coast and everyone went to get rice and pinto beans and oil. Support came from the Haitian government and foreigners, too. I did not go to get the food because it was 1 day to get there and one to come back, but some of our neighbors went."

"I left the village because there was no food and the children were very very thin. I was 22 years old. I came to Jeremie with my children. I was hungry. I went to the hospital St. Antoine. They took the kids and admitted them. I stayed with them. They gave me food at the hospital 3 times a day. They were strangers. I knew no one, and they took good care of me."

On October 5, 2016, Madu experienced another devastating hurricane. Her house was leveled and she was carried by neighbors to the house of a friend. People came together to give her food. She was very grateful for the support of her neighbors who also helped her rebuild her house.

A second example is of a family that experienced many losses from the hurricane.

The Bien-Aime (*Good Friend*) Family

Family before the hurricane

Larethese Charles (women in Haiti keep their own name) (49) was a mother of seven children in the Bein-Aime family: Stephanie (23), Fara (20), Fedia (18), Ernese (16), Ludina (6), Jhony (14) and Jaclin (12). Five were enrolled in school. Stephanie had a 3 month old infant and Fara was 7 months pregnant. Larethese was the breadwinner for the family. She worked as a market vendor. She would buy avocados, bananas and other seasonal fruits in rural markets of Leon, Marfranc and Moron each week. She would keep them until they were ripe and then sell them in the Jeremie market. Though she worked very hard, she had a difficult life because she was solely responsible for the care and education of her 7 children. Her nephew, Junior Jean, a seminarian in Port-au-Prince, said she loved them very much and was always sensitive to their needs. Her husband, Rene Bien-Aime was seriously disabled by

the earthquake in 2010 and has been unable to work, putting even more pressure on Larethese to provide for them all.



Hurricane Matthew and aftermath

The family survived Hurricane Matthew in their modest home in the Berquier section of town, although they lost their roof and clothing. Unusually heavy rain continued to fall every day. On Saturday night November 6, after 3 days of torrential rain, a large cement house on a steep slope above collapsed onto their house. (see photos). Three of Larethese's children were asleep with her in the house. All were injured: Enese suffered a back injury and was taken to the hospital; Fedia was struck in the chest and Stephanie received a head wound. Larethese died of her wounds. Miraculously, baby Wesley did not receive a scratch. Neighbors rushed to dig them out of the rubble. What little the family had left was lost.



Enese was hospitalized unable to stand or walk. It seemed that the blow to her back and spine caused temporary immobility and the contusion is healing over time.

The children lost their mother, their home and all of their belongings. Sultane Bien-Aime, Larethese's sister-in-law (on the right in the photo below), took the children into her two-room rental space located higher up the mountain off Rochasse Street.

Open this link about the family's loss of their mother:

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!ApmZ9aBpgd7OgQcbJafbNZVMnA5f> (Courtesy of M. Marron)



Sultane's home was also damaged. The entire tin roof was ripped off. Her back wall had collapsed into the yard of her neighbor. Three other families rent rooms in the same one-story structure. Sultane lives in this home with adult children: Guerlin (31) an unemployed nurse, Junior (25) a seminarian in Port-au-Prince (in the striped shirt in the photo above), Johane (27) and Lovita (21). Both have graduated with a post high school degree but are unemployed.

Resources and Recovery

The community members of Berquier provided critical assistance in the survival of the children of Larethese. Though what remained of the house was razed and they no longer live in the neighborhood, people still ask about them and offer emotional support.

Schools in Jeremie Town were either damaged or used for families who had nowhere else to live. It took some time and aid from international organizations to create temporary shelters and rebuild schools, benches, blackboards, doors and windows. Some schools opened in November. Though uniforms, books and shoes were lost, the children returned to school. Ludina (6) is in first grade in Pastor Bestav School. She said she likes school and drawing most of all. Ernese (16) has not returned to classes at College Peniel where she is in sixth grade because of her ongoing recovery from her injuries. Jaclin (12) is in the third grade and is back in classes. Jhony (14) attends Kay Fazie and is in sixth grade. Fara is in high school at College de Jeremie. They worried that they would not be able to continue schooling in January without their supplies. Schooling was the most pressing need on Sultane's mind.

During a visit to the home in early December, I asked for information about each child's school, books and copybooks, uniforms, shoes, backpacks and related needs. This information was collected by one of Sultan's daughters.

Housing was a major concern. Twelve people live in two rooms. There is an outside shower and separate latrine (that needs some work). The back wall of the house needed to be repaired and "found tin"- blown into their yard with the winds of the hurricane- were not enough to cover the whole house. The gift of generous donors to the house relief fund provided the resources to cover most of the house – their two rooms plus the rooms of the other families. They received two house repair kits – 60 pieces of

tin, 20 pounds of nails and 8 bags of cement. They rebuilt the fallen wall with the cement (Photo below)

Enese (16) on the only bed in the house recovering from her injuries under a new tin roof.



Sixty pieces of tin (double ration) covered their two rooms and those of the 3 other families sharing the structure

When asked what was still needed, the first things on the list were three beds and bedding since most were sleeping on the hard cement floor. Hygiene kits and blankets were also requested. Food is a constant worry. World Food Program was still in Jeremie Town and efforts were made to get some dry rations of rice or corn and beans and oil for them.

One month after Lerethese died, more good news arrived. Dr. Richard and Kathy Ellenbecker of South Dakota, who have come to Jeremie as members of the Avera Mission teams for many years, donated \$1000 for the family. With the help of the Avera Foundation, Judy Lewis in Connecticut and Ann Hauge in Port-au-Prince, funds were transferred and converted to 65,000 gourdes – food, clothing, bedding, uniforms, books, shoes and school tuition were taken care of. For the first time, the family smiled. They were astounded to learn of this gift. Sultane and her adult children are very encouraged. UNICEF has provided ongoing psychological support as well as some living supplies. Others continue to help.

December 9th would have been Lerethese's 50th birthday. She is greatly missed by her family and friends. But they are moving forward.



Sultane and her niece Stephanie's baby Winston.
She is the Grandmother now.