



About Project Medishare

In 2003, Project Medishare conducted a needs assessment prior to the implementation of the Green Family Foundation Initiative Community Health Program.

The scarce number of health facilities and of qualified personnel was obvious. One small health clinic with eight beds, located in the town of Thomonde, provided services to the entire population (34,623 people) living in the Commune.

This represented approximately 2.5 beds per 10,000 people. The clinic operated with only three physicians, three nurses and four LPN's, representing 9/10 of a doctor, 9/10 of a nurse and 1 and 1/5 of LPN's for every 10,000 inhabitants.

This extraordinarily lacking health infrastructure was also centralized in the more densely populated downtown section of Thomonde, which translates into no permanent health care system existing at all in the more rural and isolated areas (Tierra Muscady and Baille Touribe) of Thomonde.

At the community level, health interventions were very limited and reduced to periodic activities of vaccinations, nutritional surveillance of children from 0-5 years of age and home visits by health agents to administer TB and HIV medications. There was no community integration or participation or mobilization for the promotion of health.

According to the most recent survey available on morbidity and mortality and access to health care services (EMMUS III-Haiti 2000), the Central Department (Plateau Central) where Thomonde is located has:

1. The highest prevalence of chronic malnutrition in children of 0-5yrs (33% versus the national average of 23%)
2. The highest mortality rate of children before the age of five (187 per 1,000 vs. 119 per 1,000 nationally);
3. The highest fertility rate, 7.6 children per woman compared to the national rate of 4.8.

In May 2003, Project Medishare, after being approached by community leaders in Thomonde, started a process to implement a community health program in the Commune of Thomonde. This program was financed through a generous grant from the Green Family Foundation. In order to provide an integrated and coordinated approach Project Medishare held strategy meetings with the Haitian Ministry of Health, Zanmi Lasante (an NGO that works in the area and specializes in HIV and TB treatment), and community leaders. Together the groups participated in the planning of the program. The fully integrated project was launched in September 2003 with the following primary objectives:

- To provide economically disadvantaged families in the Commune of Thomonde with access to quality preventive and curative health services.
- To provide access to the "minimum package of services" as defined by the Haitian Ministry of Health. These services include health care for children, adolescents and women; emergency medical and surgical care; communicable disease control; public health education; environmental health; water supply; and the supply of essential drugs.

In addition, curative ambulatory services are offered at the community level and include the following interventions:

- Health agents conduct rally posts, home visits, meetings with community groups and mothers clubs
- Mobile clinic teams (Physician, Health Educators, LPNs, phlebotomist, pharmacy technician) provide care in remote areas
- Medical trips including physicians and students from the University of Miami, George Washington University, Emory University and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute contributed greatly to reinforce the efficacy and coverage of Project Medishare's mobile clinics treating a large number of patients with specialized services unavailable in rural areas.



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Cholera Response

Project Medishare has been directly involved in helping stop the spread of cholera by networking with the Haitian Ministry of Health, Partners in Health—through their sister organization Zanmi Lasanté, the American Red Cross and many other partnering NGOs. .

The Ministry of Health has asked Project Medishare for assistance particularly with providing tents and important medical supplies such as IVs, IV starting kits and cots. They are transforming the large tents that were used at the field hospital available to be used as cholera treatment centers. One of those tents will go to Mirebalais, which is halfway between Port-au-Prince and the Medishare community health program in Thomonde.

Cholera cases have been confirmed in Port-au-Prince, however it is believed that these cases were contracted in communities outside the capital. Currently, Hospital Bernard Mevs Project Medishare has made room available for patients suffering from cholera.

Due to the rapid progression of the illness along with concerns that many patients may be remaining at home when symptoms become present, Project Medishare is working actively within the communities in the Central Plateau. There, they are utilizing community health agents who are actively participating in education and prevention campaign. These health agents have not only spread out through the communities, but have also penetrated areas in nearby Hinche.

These health agents are using motorcycles to reach the most rural areas that Project Medishare serves and are equipped with megaphones to gather attention of the people. At these community meetings they are distributing chlorine tables, liquid bleach and oral rehydration kits. Project Medishare is also distributing chlorine and disinfectant throughout the community and specifically to schools in the area.

While the primary outbreak is downstream from the project's community in Lahoye, Project Medishare is making an extra effort to concentrate their education campaign since it is along the Artibonite River, which has been linked as the possible origin of the outbreak.

Dr. Malou Phanord and Ronel Marcellus, Project Medishare's bookkeeper, in Thomonde created a skit, which aired on three radio stations that have far reach in the upper region of the Central Plateau. The radio skit discusses the importance of hand washing, boiling drinking water, cooking food thoroughly and using regular and pit latrines appropriately as to limit exposure of disease.

While this education campaign will prevent the spread of cholera in the community, should the outbreak reach the area, there is also a treatment plan to activate immediately.

In Miami, Project Medishare is actively coordinating several activities in collaboration with the Center for Haitian Studies (CHS) in order to provide the Haitian community with updates on the situation in Haiti. Recently, Dr. George Metellus, an expert in Public Health and a Project Medishare Board Member gave an interview on the local Haitian radio station about the epidemic. Project Medishare, in partnership with CHS, is planning on creating pamphlets in Creole and English and plans to establish an information bank for community agencies and Haitian media.