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THE HUMANITARIAN MAGAZINE

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LIFE AFTER LEPROSY

**TED PRIZE WINNER
JAMES NACHTWEY**

**10 LOST BOYS
SAVING LIVES**

**5 STEPS TO
FEED THE WORLD**

**GEORGIANS RETURN
HOME AFTER CONFLICT**



WE ARE NOT OUT TO
SAVE THE WORLD
BUT TO TELL THE STORIES
OF THOSE WHO ARE.

WORK | SHOVELING OUT HAITI

Local and foreign volunteers collaborate after devastating storms.

WORK | SHOVELING OUT HAITI

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BRONSON ENRIQUEZ

The location of Gonaives, Haiti is both a blessing and a curse. Situated on a floodplain, it has rich agricultural potential but is under constant threat of flooding, which is aggravated by extreme deforestation. Water rushes over riverbanks down the bare surrounding mountains, and even with light rain, mud often settles in the port city. When hurricane season hits, people's livelihoods are washed away, exacerbating the plight of the Western Hemisphere's poorest country. As the water subsides, mud is left in homes, schools and churches, bringing everyday life to a halt.

Tropical storm Jeanne struck in 2004, causing 3,000 deaths and massive destruction. Gonaives residents were still recovering when four tropical storms and hurricanes pummeled Haiti in 2008. Fay's flash floods swept away a bus full of passengers. Gustav's force caused landslides that damaged roughly 900 homes. Hanna hit a week later and caused 529 deaths. Days afterwards, Ike smashed into the already waterlogged country and killed 74 more people. The collective damage affected more than 825,000 Haitians, leaving approximately 800 dead and 300 missing.





These storms washed several feet of mud into most homes, creating unlivable conditions. Roads from the capital, Port-au-Prince, to Gonaives were completely flooded; aid organizations faced difficulty in reaching survivors. As the water slowly receded, the city remained buried by 3 million cubic meters of mud.

Without the necessary resources to clear their houses, entire neighborhoods were forced to abandon everything. Hands On Disaster Response (HODR) worked to combat this problem. Established in 2005, this organization deploys assistance to address the initial destruction communities face after hurricanes and other natural disasters strike. HODR has worked with communities in locations worldwide including Thailand, Bangladesh, Peru and the United States.



AFTER STORMS HIT THE CITY OF GONAIVES IT WAS COVERED BY 3 MILLION CUBIC METERS OF MUD. MARC YOUNG, HODR INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS DIRECTOR, SAYS THAT "VOLUNTEERS CREATED THEIR OWN 'MUD TAXONOMY' TO ACCURATELY DESCRIBE THE VARIETIES."





Marc Young, HODR international operations director, has worked on seven disasters in the past three years. Upon arriving in Gonaives he was overwhelmed by the devastation. He says, “I was absolutely shocked at the depth of the mud and the area that it covered.”

“We were thinking, If the building collapses, we will be no more.”



Many residents were stranded on rooftops when water flooded their homes. The crisis peaked as 200,000 people were left without food or potable water. “It was very terrible when the hurricane came because we had to go up ... on the roof,” says Mr. Smith. He and his 76-year-old mother spent five days living on top of his home.



Smith’s situation was common across the city. Sister Margaret, who lives and works in a school, also climbed to her roof to escape rising floodwaters. When the storms hit, Sr. Margaret recounts, “We came down and collected things in the chapel. Within ten minutes the water entered the downstairs, and we were upstairs the whole night. The next afternoon around three o’clock the water level raised very high; we had to climb on the roof.” While waiting for the water to abate, Sr. Margaret and other sisters prayed the building would not be washed away. “We were thinking, ‘If the building collapses, we will be no more,’” she says.



LEFT
AFTER VOLUNTEERS CLEAR ONE ROOM, THEY CONTINUE TO THE NEXT.

TOP RIGHT
SEAN KOENIG (RIGHT) SHOVELS MUD INTO A BUCKET. WORKERS OFTEN USE BUCKETS UNTIL THEY CLEAR A PATH WIDE ENOUGH FOR A WHEELBARROW.

CENTER RIGHT
YOUNG EXPLAINS THAT HODR MEETS A COMMUNITY’S NEED BY CHANNELING VOLUNTEER ENERGY.

BOTTOM RIGHT
AARON SANGSTER (LEFT) AND ANDREA FERRADA (RIGHT) PASS BUCKETS OF MUD AS THEY CLEAN A HOUSE.



CHRIS JUNG (TOP) AND CENET ONES PAINT A SCHOOL RUN BY THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF THE APPARITION.



SILEX NOUSLET'S HANDS AFTER A DAY OF PAINTING AT THE SISTERS' SCHOOL.

Several feet of mud remained in the school buildings once the water withdrew. For over a month HODR volunteers shoveled, scrubbed, cleaned and painted. Sr. Margaret says, "If Hands On were not there, I don't know what we would have done."

The HODR project leader for the school, Suzi Lee of northern California, explained the joy of seeing all 600 students back in their classrooms: "One day it was everybody working in mucky and muddy clothes and the next day everyone came in with their school uniforms. They were so excited to get back to school."



A LOCAL VOLUNTEER CARRIES BUILDING SUPPLIES.

Even with children back in class, many of them still have no place to live. Some Gonaives residents have sought refuge in temporary housing while others are on the streets. In an effort to provide shelter, the government opened an abandoned hotel for emergency accommodations but conditions are bleak. “There

are mosquitoes, no food, there is no drinking water,” explains Evon, who has stayed there for several months. The shortage of supplies to rebuild is worrisome; Evon has been waiting in long lines for materials and fears that aid organizations will leave before he gets help.





Families are overjoyed when HODR teams arrive equipped with shovels and wheelbarrows. Lee describes the group's work: "talking to the homeowner and finding out that they have no means of cleaning out their house. Then we go in with an amazing team, take the wheelbarrows, buckets, shovels and clear the mud out of their homes, and then watch their faces, their smiles just broaden."

HODR worked quickly to clean out the home of a woman who was nine months pregnant. The woman slept on an old mattress outside of her house because mud prevented her from entering. Kathryn Hubbart-Cerna of Schertz, Texas, and other volunteers shoveled out her home, providing a space for the expectant mother. "If I can just shovel out one room, that's one room for her to be inside to have this child," says Hubbart-Cerna. With little chance to get to a hospital, the woman would have likely given birth on the street.



Keely Kernan of Pennsylvania, who is on her second deployment with HODR, worked with numerous local volunteers to clear a blind man's home. "We showed up with the crew and started removing mud and all of these people in the community pitched in," Kernan says. Neighbors of all ages helped to clean the house. Even the resident, unimpeded by his blindness, was on his hands and knees picking up mud. Kernan remembers his "putting it into the wheelbarrow and when he couldn't reach the wheelbarrow ... little kids would bring buckets to him."

LEFT
KAREN ROMBOUITS OF BELGIUM (RIGHT) AND KAIPETER KOENIG SHOVEL MUD. PHOTO | BRONSON ENRIQUEZ

TOP RIGHT
DEJY SERVIUS PUSHES A LOAD OF MUD WHILE VOLUNTEER AARON DAVIS WATCHES THE PROGRESS.

BOTTOM RIGHT
AARON DAVIS WHEELS MUD OUT OF A HOUSE. A LOCAL RESIDENT LOOKS ON.



CHRIS JUNG JUMPS ROPE WITH CHILDREN FROM THE EBENEZER RELOCATION CAMP AT A HODR-RUN SAFE SPACE PLAY PROGRAM. VOLUNTEERS MEET WEEKLY AT THE EBENEZER CAMP TO PLAY GAMES WITH THE CHILDREN STAYING THERE.

Nearly one-third of HODR volunteers in Gonaives are Haitian. Young explains that when HODR has “local liaisons who speak [the homeowners’] language and understand their culture,” the community can shape projects to local needs through its involvement.

The organization’s inclusive policies extend further. HODR allows foreign volunteers of all backgrounds to participate. Young says that there is “an incredible blending of people on a work site, these different cultures all come together for one purpose: to help.”



(LEFT TO RIGHT) ANDY APPLETON, NEIL LAWSON AND KEELEY KERNAN CHANGE CLOTHES AFTER A LONG DAY OF 'MUDDING.'

While many organizations require specialized skills from their volunteers, HODR welcomes everyone willing to work. As a result, the organization gains volunteers who are grateful for the opportunity to help, which makes the teams incredibly dedicated to the organization's goals.

As HODR works to get people back into their homes, relationships are formed and social barriers are toppled. Volunteer Paul Hammond describes working alongside local volunteers: "I'm going to think differently about them when I'm done; they're going to think differently about me when we're done. ... They see that we care enough to come down and get dirty. We bust the stereotypes, Hands On does, every day."



TOP LEFT: CHRIS TURNER (LEFT) AND KEELY KERNAN (RIGHT) CLEAN TOOLS AT THE END OF THE DAY.
BOTTOM LEFT: KAIPETER KOENIG GETS COMFORTABLE FOR LUNCH.

HODR takes a unique approach to disaster response. Its committed foreign and local volunteers have one objective: “We are trying to put this person back in

their house,” says Young. “Armed with shovels, buckets and wheelbarrows, passion and desire, we can make that happen.” **NEED**



AARON SANGSTER (LEFT) AND NEIL LAWSON (RIGHT) REST AFTER A HARD DAY OF SHOVELING MUCK.

*“Different cultures all come together
for one purpose: to help.”*

HANDS ON DISASTER RESPONSE
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