

2021. Peter Hesse Foundation year in review

SENEGAL

The Montessori partner schools in Senegal functioned normally for the greater part of the school year. Children wore masks and observed protocols for the prevention of Covid. Fortunately, there were no Covid positive cases of either staff or children at the school. Unfortunately, however, the teacher training which was planned when I visited Senegal in 2020 did not take place. Covid changed my plans to physically travel to Senegal. We adapted our training to work online with the teachers to improve their teaching skills via social media, and were able to involve 15 of our teachers with these activities. The effective of the Montessori preschool section of the school in Senegal is 160 children.



School in Senegal

MALI

The PHF were supposed to start a Montessori preschool and training in Mali since October 2020. Unfortunately, the political coup occurred in August, and I did not go there as planned. In 2021 COVID and security issues, including the kidnapping of foreigners, again prevented my visit.

In the meantime, preparations to open a school in the village of Tidianbougou had been made. The village elders acquired a building and the Montessori teacher from Mali, who trained in our Montessori training in Ivory Coast, started the school in October 2021. She is currently working with two assistants to create the Montessori environment.

She is also using the Montessori language materials to teach the assistants to read and write. The materials are in French, but we are currently working on Montessori reading materials in Bambara.

This year the foundation produced a Montessori teacher training workbook in the Bambara language. This workbook will make the teacher training course more accessible to all, since French is the official language of Mali but, is mastered by less than 10 percent of the general population.



School in the village of Tidianbougou, Mali



The school in the village of Tidianbougou does not have all the materials yet, but we are working on it. Shipping to Mali is a bit complicated. I am planning a trip to Ivory Coast in March 2022, and will investigate the possibility of accommodating teachers from Mali to attend training there if we are unable to do it in Mali itself

IVORY COAST

Ivory Coast functioned for the greater part of the school year with no problems. The three teacher-owned schools are headed by teachers who trained with the PH Foundations training course and started their own schools after graduating. There are three schools with the effective of 150 children in the Montessori program. The schools have also added a primary school so children can continue up to age eleven or twelve.



School in Ivory Coast

HAITI

In Haiti, 2021 was a cumulation of disasters, anti-government demonstrations, gang activity, nationwide fuel shortages, and escalated prices for food and water which affected the opening of schools and daily life in general. From January to March schools opened sporadically depending on if there were demonstrations in the streets or not. Demonstrations usually consists of barricading the streets mostly with burning tyres. Some schools in areas not affected by roadblocks were able to function.

Despite the difficult situation in the country, everyone was hopeful that schools would open for the new academic year in September 2021. The Foundation prepared for the school year by giving books and Montessori materials to its partner schools and, as is the norm, we planned an in-service training for teachers from its partner schools. This year, however, we could only go to schools in Liancourt, Gonaives, and Port-au-Prince since the streets were becoming more and more unsafe due to gang activity and violent demonstrations.

On 14 August 2021, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake hit the southwestern region of



In-service training for teachers in Port-au-Prince



A mother trying to get her child to safety

Haiti. Thousands of homes, schools and churches were damaged or destroyed, including our partner school in the town of Jonc d'Aquin. The school had just undergone renovations and preparations to start in September 2021. The estimated toll from the 7.2 magnitude earthquake is around 1,941, with more than 9,900 injured and 30,000 people left homeless. Two days after the earthquake, even as the search for survivors continued, the same area was hit by Tropical storm Grace. An unbelievable blow to the already difficult effort of rescuing earthquake victims from beneath the rubble. The floods made the rescue of people who were still buried under the fallen down buildings a major challenge with unfortunate consequences.

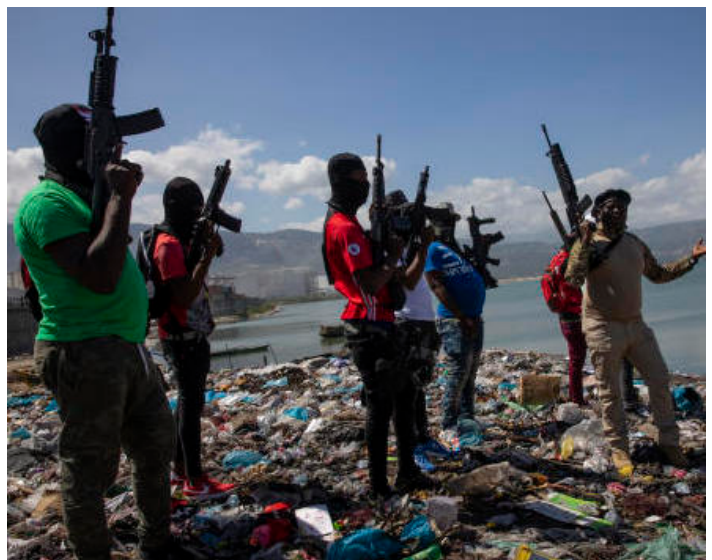
Aid to some of the affected areas was/is extremely difficult because of landslides caused by the earthquake and the ambushing of aid convoys by criminal gangs. In areas not affected by the earthquake, gang activities, in particular kidnapping for ransom, are common. In the first half of October alone, a reported 119 kidnappings and countless robberies took place. Police are largely outnumbered and the gangs have the most modern weapons, which they openly parade in the streets.

In October a new crisis in the form of a nationwide fuel shortage began. The G9 gang syndicate launched a blockade preventing fuel from being distributed. This greatly affected all aspects of daily life, including supply chains for most commodities and electricity. Only about 40 percent of the population have consistent access to electricity in normal times, so this has made life much more difficult for millions of Haitians. Most middle income and wealthier people rely on generators and are slightly more in control of their situation. In effect, businesses are either closed, or open for only a few hours on specific days. Some banks, for example, open for two days a week for a few hours.

Schools closed in most areas since there is no transport, and parents are afraid of kidnapping, both for their children and themselves.



Just **two days** after it was hit by the devastating 7.2 magnitude earthquake, Tropical storm Grace with 35mph winds bore down on the troubled region.



Gangs walk around freely with modern arms

Prices are exploding. Most people are not earning any money to support themselves and their families. Many people have no water since there is no pipe-borne water, and water trucks are at risk of hijack by gangs. Most trucks cannot afford the black-market fuel. The ones that do have gas and are not stopped by gangs charge more for the water. There is also a food shortage for the same reason - goods cannot be moved without fuel for transport.



Gasoline being sold on the black market

Although the situation sounds dire, this will not last forever. Schools will reopen. The Peter-Hesse-Foundation will continue to support schools in Haiti when they reopen. In the meantime, the Foundation is giving food aid to earthquake victims in one of the remote areas where aid has not yet reached people there. About 400,000 people have not yet received aid because they live in remote areas.

The Peter Hesse Foundation has over 4,000 preschool children in our partner schools yearly. We certainly intend to continue to offer hope to those children in the most critical age where experiences shape a child's capacity to learn, to get along with others, and to respond to daily stresses and challenges.

Education can help these children learn skills to secure a more promising future. In the last 35 years, the Foundation has provided better education and hope for a better life to over 600,000 of Haïti's poorest children. We have assured the quality of education for those children by training teachers to an international standard. Over 2,000 teachers have attended our teacher training courses. This not only helps children, but also provides teachers with sustainable and meaningful jobs.

The school in Jonc constructed a temporary plywood room to hold classes until they get a real building to replace the one which destroyed by the earthquake. The Teacher organized a Christmas party for the children. This shows how people just want to get back to normal life in the face of all the problems.

