



grace!

SPRING 2004

AT WORK IN HAITI & THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Surviving Haiti: Building on Solid Rock

"Anyone who listens to my teaching and obeys me is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse, because it is built on rock."

(Matthew 7:24-25 NLT)

In light of the current turmoil and upheaval in Haiti many are asking a very good question... how is International Child Care surviving Haiti? In the nearly 40 years that International Child Care has been working in Haiti, the organization has experienced countless demonstrations and tire burnings, numerous coups, uprisings, revolts and dictators. The most recent violence in Haiti has left three staff members injured, disrupted daily routines and destroyed a faithful van that had been in use for nearly ten years to transport staff, medical supplies and visiting Mission Education Encounter Teams.

Unquestionably, Haiti is not an easy place to do business. But, that is the precisely the reason that we are there. There are several significant factors that have contributed to ICC's longevity and permitted the organization to deliver quality health care services to children and families in one of the most difficult environments on earth.

One factor is ICC's **Christ-centered focus**. When Jim and Virginia Snavley first ventured to the island of Hispaniola in 1964, they were moved by compassion for the children and people of Haiti. So, Jim, a farm manager, and Virginia, a teacher, sold all of their belongings, loaded their three young children onto a school bus and moved to a small home in what is now Cité Soleil, Haiti. They didn't even know what they were going to do once they got there! They simply chose to let God's hand lead them. They considered doing something in agriculture, but as people kept bringing sick and dying children to their doorstep, God's plan for them unfolded right before their very eyes. Grace Children's Hospital and ICC's work with tuberculosis grew ▶

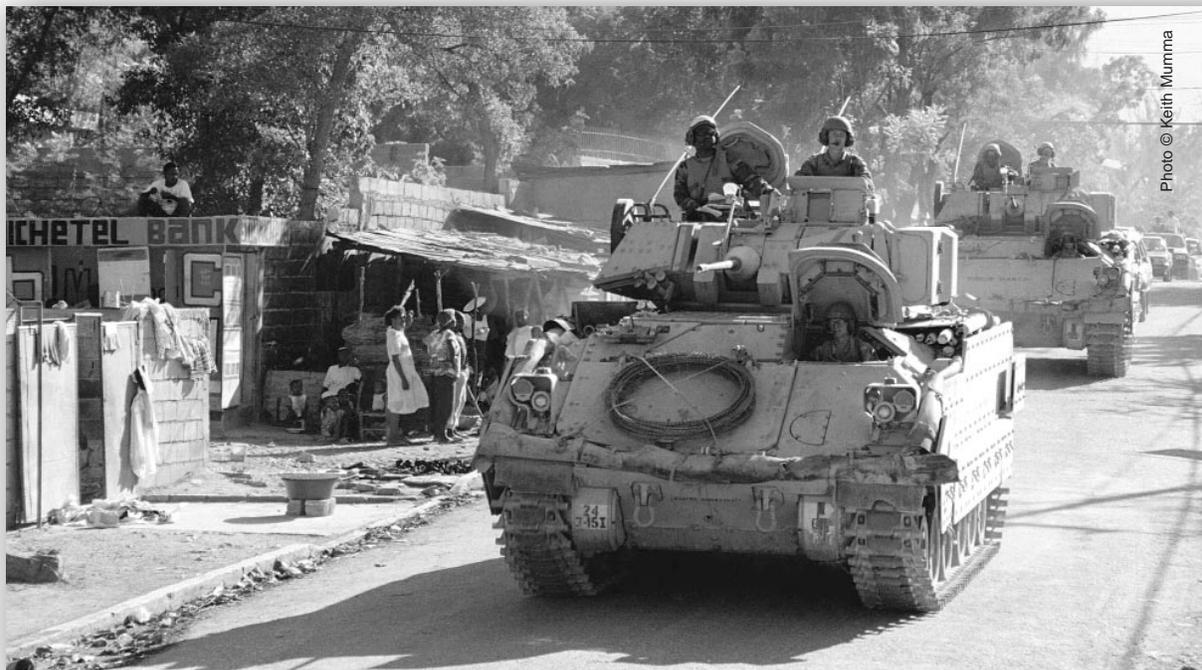


Photo © Keith Mumma

Armored vehicles on Delmas #31 near Grace Children's Hospital.



International Child Care has been delivering health and hope in Haiti for nearly 40 years and during that time has survived:

- 2 dictators
- 5 military coups
- 3 international coalition “junta” governments
- 1 international invasion
- 1 embargo
- 3 “democratically elected” governments
- countless uprisings and revolts

Through it all, because of the help of our many donors and partners, ICC has maintained their presence in Haiti giving aid and support to those most affected and vulnerable. Even today, amidst mobs, barricades and violence, ICC’s staff continues to work to bring healing and light to those dark places.

from this inauspicious beginning. This reliance on faith as a guide is still a hallmark of our ministry in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Another factor that has contributed to ICC’s perseverance is **humility**. It is not often that you hear an organization described as “humble,” but this description aptly defines International Child Care’s work. Since our humble beginnings in the Snavley’s small home, ICC has never sought to build our own kingdom, but instead to build a ministry that glorifies God. You will rarely see signs declaring ICC’s presence because as an organization we prefer to place the pride of ownership and accomplishment with those in the communities we serve. In fact, the average person walking into the Hospital at Grand Riviere du Nord may not even realize the important role ICC plays in that facility. Instead, they will know that the hospital belongs to the community and that the best possible care is being provided.

One of the many positive outcomes of ICC’s humility is that we don’t need to receive credit or be recognized for our successes. This has opened doors and allowed us to enter into real partnerships. One of ICC’s most important collaborations, which has further enabled us to provide quality health care services, is our work with the Ministry of Health in Haiti (MSPP). While this partnership, or any involving the government of Haiti, is not without its struggles or concerns, this commitment to work together has helped both ICC and Haiti build and grow an infrastructure of health, especially in the area of tuberculosis treatment and control. **Partnership and collaboration** take time, commitment, resources and humility. It isn’t always easy and it isn’t fast, but in an uncertain and often hostile environment like Haiti, partnerships and collaborations are crucial to longevity.

For the past 25 years, ICC has intentionally grown the capacity of local systems and people to provide the services and resources to sustain our work in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The value of this approach has never been more evident than in today’s difficult political climate. If we, as an organization, still relied on North American doctors, nurses, staff or supplies, our ministry would fold. It became clear, many years ago, that to survive Haiti, ICC had to become **locally owned and operated**. That is not to say that our partnership as North Americans is any less valuable. We must still share our resources, understanding and our governance, but dependence on us to deliver health, provide services and perform the mission is no longer relevant. When the local community takes ownership for their health work; when they are committed to vaccinations; when they work hard to dig a latrine or pay for a well; when their own family members are part of the community health efforts; then the work is real, sustainable and durable. The support and relationship of North Americans is no less important ... just focused in a new and different way.

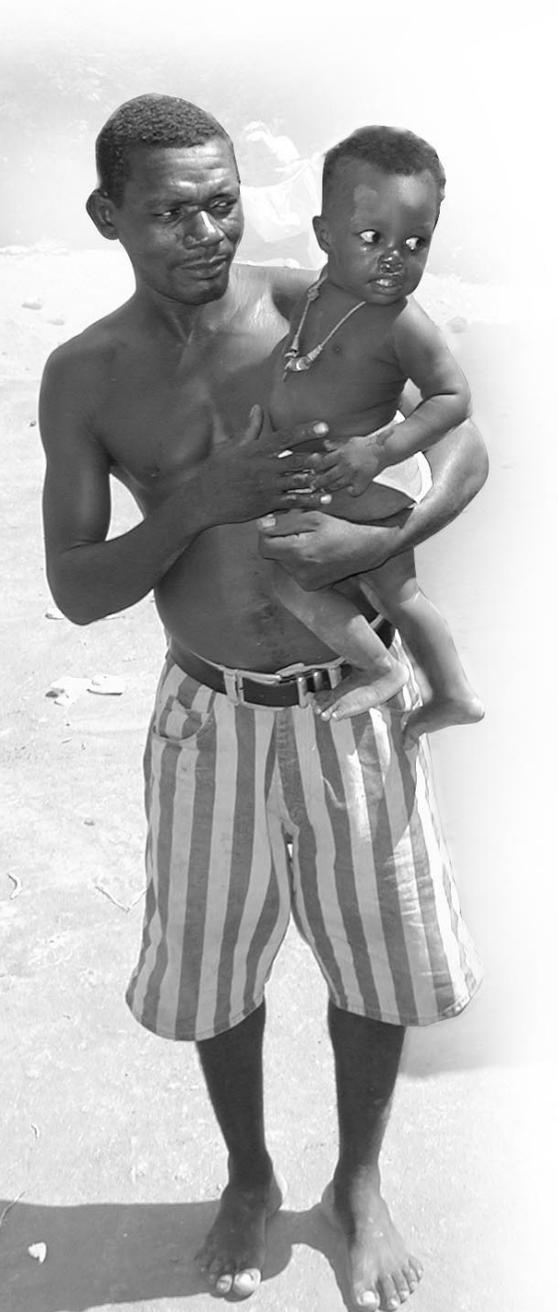
Another factor that has considerably impacted ICC’s longevity in Haiti is **active political impartiality**. While this may, on the surface, sound both logical and elementary, in practice it requires much effort and diligence. Aligning oneself too closely with the political “party du jour” is a slippery slope that must be vigilantly avoided. There is significant pressure to line up on one side or another and there have been numerous occasions when International Child Care has made difficult decisions, choosing to forego lucrative opportunities. The path in Haiti is littered with organizations that aligned themselves too closely with one or another political side and the short-term advantages were far too often followed by long-term demise.

There is a Haitian proverb that says, “*Kay koule twonpe soley, min li pa twonpe lapli,*” which translates, “The house that leaks can hide from the sun, but it cannot hide from the rain.” When the political, social and economic climate in Haiti is “sunny” it is easier to survive. But, when the clouds come and thunder rolls, as it will inevitably do on this tiny island, the leaks and the weaknesses will soon become apparent.

International Child Care has survived Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, for nearly 40 years by building a house on solid rock that can weather the many storms that come our way. The weak and disabled, the children and families who depend on us everyday for health, deserve nothing less. ICC’s North American and European donors deserve nothing less and International Child Care’s commitment to serving Christ and His kingdom demands nothing less. ●

HAITI: *The Other Story*

By Renee Dietrich, Wings of Hope, Haiti



Images flash across the screen.
30 second sound bites don't accurately describe the situation.

All the outside world sees is:
Violence;
Bloodshed;
Angry mobs shouting anti-American sentiments;
Self-destruction in the name of national sovereignty.

Those who don't bother to look any further into the story will never know or see more than that.
They will only see what they want to see.

What is easy to see.
What countless other stories before these have taught them to see.
Foolish savages ruining their own lives;
Looking for handouts;
Lazy, backward, dirty, ignorant.

What they won't see is the love and courage a mother shows for her children;
Rising before dawn to walk barefoot across the rocks to gather water;
Cooking for hours over hot charcoal;
Spending the day under a burning sun to eke out an existence for her family;
Carrying a child on her hip and a bundle on her head as she returns to the stream to beat her clothes
on a rock;
Then returning to her preparation of a simple evening meal of rice and beans;
Allowing herself to eat only after her children have had their fill;
Stooped over candlelight, hand-stitching magnificent creations out of scraps while her children sleep;
Finally laying down on a straw mat to rest her eyes and her mind for a few hours before rising to begin again.

What they won't see is the father;
Shedding his own dignity to become a human donkey;
Pushing and pulling his cargo up and down the hills for a few gourdes to feed his family;
Bare feet and a bare back showing the strain;
Sweat, burden and pain aging him beyond his years.

What they won't see are the children;
Crowded into a classroom, sharing one book, one piece of paper, one pencil, if they are lucky;
Soaking in all of the knowledge they can to help them improve their lives before they are
forced onto the streets to help the family survive.
Taking time to play;
Like children everywhere;
Not with Air Jordans or big league athletic equipment;
But with bare feet and rocks;
A piece of plastic and some string;
A rusted out bicycle tire rim and a stick;
Taking immense pleasure in the simplicity of still being able to be a child.

These are the other stories.
The stories of simple dignity and profound love.
But, these are the ones often left untold because they aren't as sexy or exciting.
They don't ring with gun shots and angry shouts at the camera.
They aren't colored with blood and burning buildings.
They don't rock with political upheaval.
But, they are how the country continues to survive.
Angels on earth, simply striving for a quiet, dignified existence.
Life goes on, even when the government doesn't.

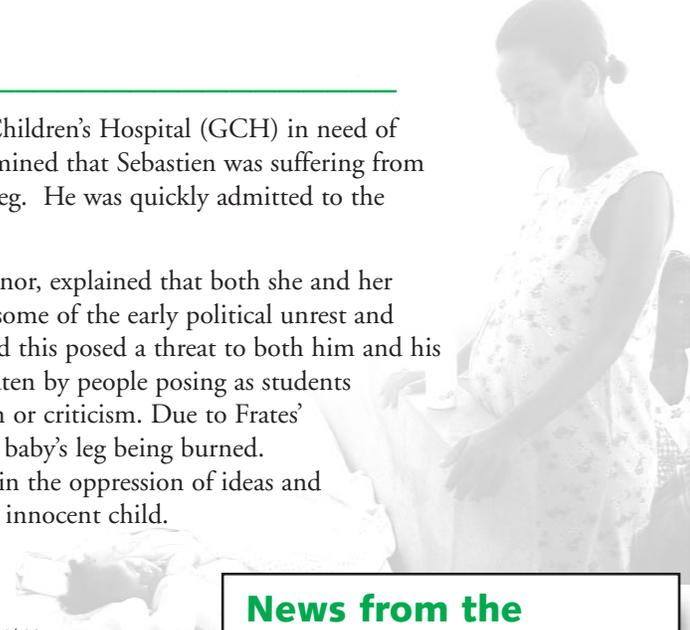
Amazing Grace

Sebastien Leonard Sylvain, a six-month old baby boy, was brought to Grace Children's Hospital (GCH) in need of medical care this past January. After being examined by a doctor, it was determined that Sebastien was suffering from a severe case of malaria, respiratory problems and a serious burn on his right leg. He was quickly admitted to the inpatient ward for treatment.

When questioned about the burn, Sebastien's mother, 19 year old Betty Antenor, explained that both she and her husband were students at the University in Port-au-Prince, the focal point of some of the early political unrest and violence. In addition, Betty's husband, Frates Sylvain, was politically active and this posed a threat to both him and his family. A few weeks prior, the Provost of the University had been severely beaten by people posing as students and the violence was interpreted as a threat against anyone offering opposition or criticism. Due to Frates' outspoken political position, their home was set on fire, which resulted in the baby's leg being burned. Violence and threats of violence are a frightening and very effective tool used in the oppression of ideas and freedom of expression, especially in Haiti. In this case, the victim was a small, innocent child.

Over the past few months, Sebastien has had very few visits from his family. Although Betty tries to visit weekly, it is difficult. Sebastian's father is still in danger and he lives in constant fear for his life and the safety of his family. Frates knows that Sebastien is in a safe, neutral place where he will be well cared for and feels it is far too dangerous to risk endangering Sebastien by visiting him at Grace Children's Hospital.

Even though Sebastien is now well enough to be released from the hospital, his parents are currently living undercover. Therefore, they have decided to leave Sebastien at the hospital for the time being. Both Betty and Frates are very grateful that Sebastien is safe and is continuing to receive care from the dedicated staff at Grace Children's Hospital. ●



News from the International Office

International Child Care would like to thank Jim Hofstetter for his six years of selfless service. Jim began serving as US National Director in the spring of 1998 and was promoted to International Director in July of 2003. Jim is currently pursuing new career opportunities, but plans to continue his involvement in the ministry of ICC both formally and informally. Please join us in thanking Jim for his dedication to the children and families in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Rising Inflation affects ICC programs in the Dominican Republic

When Dr. Marisol Martínez and Fernando, a supervisor, recently made a health visit to a family on Goats Hill, a rural neighborhood to the north of Santiago, they did not expect to be invited for dinner. After discovering that a pot of potatoes and cassava roots was all there was to feed the entire family, including six adults and fifteen children, Dr. Martinez and Fernando gently declined the invitation. It was then that they realized that the health education that they had planned on sharing with the grandmother and mothers of these malnourished children could not be implemented. Unfortunately, this visit and situation represents only one of the many families ICC/DR serves in the marginal neighborhoods of Santiago and the surrounding area.



Dr. Marisol Martínez

The current inflation, caused by a fall of the pesos against the dollar from 17 pesos to 50 pesos, has caused prices to skyrocket. Because everything seems to be calculated on the basis of a dollar value, it is increasingly more difficult for Dominican families to make ends meet. Many costs have more than doubled and some even tripled!

In an effort to try and alleviate the current situation, without the need for additional funding, the ICC/DR staff recently met and brainstormed about some new strategies. Some of the new ideas that were discussed included teaching families how to purchase and use less expensive, healthier foods; how to better manage their money; and how to grow some food in bags or on small plots of land. As a result of their strategizing, the staff are beginning to share these ideas with the families living in ICC's project areas. In addition, they have scheduled a government official, with knowledge and expertise specific to vegetable gardens, to speak to the mothers of the disabled children enrolled in ICC's Community Based Rehabilitation program. During this upcoming presentation the mothers will learn where they can obtain free seed and how to grow their own vegetable gardens to better provide for their families. ●



Grace! is published quarterly for friends of International Child Care. ICC is a Christian health agency working in Haiti and the Dominican Republic to change conditions which make people sick, hungry, unemployed and afraid.

ICC depends on individuals, churches, and donor agencies for the financial means to serve. A response card and envelope are enclosed for your contributions. Your gift will be receipted for income tax purposes.

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UMCOR Advance Projects:
Grace Children's Hospital: 418520-7
Integrated Community Health (Haiti): 418847-3
Community Health Development Program (D.R.): 410215-6
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