

**Testimony to Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**  
**Ms. Loune Viaud**  
**Executive Director**  
**Zanmi Lasante**

On behalf of Zanmi Lasante and Partners In Health, I would like to thank the distinguished members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for arranging this hearing.

I am honored to be here to address the current aid delivery situation and the status of the healthcare system in Haiti.

Next month, on January 12, 2015, we will be reflecting on the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the catastrophic earthquake which changed everything in Haiti. Over 300,000 people died. The earthquake left many people with disabilities and unaddressed mental health needs. It left thousands of children orphaned or displaced and women and girls vulnerable to violence. Five years later, over 100,000 people remain in temporary camps.

While the road to recovery remains long, I can testify today that in the five years since the earthquake, progress has been made. I would like to share with the Commission insight into these accomplishments made in the health sector through Zanmi Lasante/Partners In Health, with the support of donors such as USAID, PEPFAR and United States Government. I will then identify some of the challenges I see in the delivery of aid to the health sector. I will conclude with recommendations I have for a more rights-based assistance to Haiti.

**Zanmi Lasante/Partners In Health Contributions to the Long-Term Development of the Health Sector after the Earthquake**

Zanmi Lasante has operated as the sister organization of Partners In Health in Haiti for close to three decades. Our objective has always been: partner with the public sector to strengthen the public health system in Haiti. This objective did not change after the destruction brought on by the earthquake; rather, it became more necessary and urgent.

In partnership with the Haitian Ministry of Health, Zanmi Lasante invests in building and maintaining health care infrastructure and improving the quality and availability of medical care and medical training in Haiti. After the earthquake, at the request of Haitian authorities, Zanmi Lasante built l'Hôpital Universitaire de Mirebalais (the University Hospital of Mirebalais) as a public sector hospital. The hospital officially opened its doors in March 2013. Funding for this first class institution came from a number of donors including \$8 million USD from the Government of Haiti for the first year of operations. Zanmi Lasante signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Haiti confirming its continued financial support to the hospital. The hospital's financing strategy which includes innovative revenue models has been reviewed by the Ministry of Finance. Upon request from the Ministry of Health, USAID, through its Health Financing and Governance Program, has provided technical assistance to our leadership team to study the costs of care and develop a full business plan. We look forward to a continued collaboration with USAID as we implement this financing strategy.

This state-of-the-art teaching hospital has facilities to serve the people of the Central Plateau, one of the poorest areas in Haiti, and to train Haiti's future health care professionals in accordance with the highest standards. Haiti has well below the number of health professionals per person recommended by the World Health Organization with one nurse and 3 doctors per every 10,000 persons as opposed to a recommended 23 nurses, doctors and midwives per 10,000. Providing high-quality medical training for more Haitian medical residents is essential to building a high-quality, integrated health system in Haiti. I am proud to announce that just a few weeks ago; Zanmi Lasante held a white coat ceremony where 44 Haitian medical professionals celebrated the beginning of their training in emergency medicine, general surgery, pediatric, anesthesiology and women's health.

We will also soon begin training for over a dozen nurses in anesthesiology who will work throughout health facilities in Haiti.

Since Mirebalais hospital's opening in March 2013, Haitians from across the country have come to the facility for basic and complex care, demonstrating the extreme need for advanced, high-quality health care in Haiti. On average, there are 400 emergency room visits per week and 700 outpatient visits per day. The hospital has over 900 full time staff comprising of 70 doctors, 162 nurses, and 50 technicians—the vast majority of whom are Haitian. It is also the only public hospital in Haiti offering CAT scan services.

In addition to the hospital in Mirebalais, we partner with the Haitian Ministry of Health in the provision of health care in 12 public medical facilities across the Central Plateau and lower Artibonite regions. Zanmi Lasante has staff numbering just over 5,000 providing health care to over three million Haitians.

In addition, with partners such as USAID Haiti, we currently work as an implementer under the health service delivery project, Services de Santé de Qualité pour Haiti (Services for High Quality Healthcare in Haiti). Through this initiative and the support of USAID and the Ministry of Health, we are expanding our technical capacity in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene, gender based violence, child protection and nutrition

Furthermore, as an organization grounded in human rights, we understand that realizing the right to health requires investments in all aspects of society—to improve the underlying determinants of health. Therefore, Zanmi Lasante supports 42 schools, four farms, housing, water, sanitation and cholera prevention projects, as well as runs a public facility on behalf of the Ministry of Health that produces ready-to-use therapeutic food called Nourimanba for the treatment of malnutrition in children. Throughout the years we have treated 3,000 children for malnutrition. We also promote decentralization and economic growth through the training of 200 students each year in our agricultural vocational program, which trains local farmers in ways to improve their crops. We then purchase their crops for meals provided to patients and staff at Mirebalais hospital. We also provide support to government partners in education, the local water authority, and Ministry of Social Affairs.

As this esteemed Committee is aware, a cholera outbreak began in October 2010 and has infected close to 1 million Haitians and taken the lives of over 8,000. Zanmi Lasante is working with our partners at the Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and UNICEF to reduce the prevalence of cholera in the Central Plateau by increasing access to water,

sanitation, hygiene, and education in primary schools, villages and health facilities. This work constitutes part of the ten-year National Plan for the Elimination of Cholera in Haiti.

In partnership with the government of Haiti and the communities we serve, we continue to improve the health and quality of life for millions of people, and to challenge the notion of what's possible in global health care delivery in a developing country.

We appreciate the support of USAID and are exploring other ways to work together, including collaborations for greater access to education.

### **Challenges for Development Aid in Haiti**

Zanmi Lasante/Partners In Health has, through a close collaboration with our Haitian counterparts in the various ministries, and a long-term commitment to the communities we serve, been successful in securing positive outcomes in Haiti. We, nevertheless, encounter and witness many challenges for aid delivery in Haiti, some of which I would like to enumerate here:

- Haitian organizations struggle to secure international funding, which can create duplication and tension among non-governmental organizations. According to the United Nations Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti's data, of the \$6.4 billion disbursed between 2010-2012, six tenths of one percent was disbursed to local NGOs. Further, it does not serve the general purpose of assisting the country in the long-term because it does not contribute to improving local capacity.
- Our colleagues at the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Welfare often remind us of how difficult it is for them to effectively coordinate the various donors as many do not align their plans with the Government of Haiti's priorities.
- While we are seeing some encouraging decreases in the number of cholera cases since the onset of the outbreak, long-term investments are needed. The National Plan for the Elimination of Cholera remains under-funded with only approximately 10 percent of the 2.2 billion currently funded. This is of concern as controlling the number of cholera cases requires investments in both treatment and prevention. Cholera is now endemic and living in our water sources. Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western hemisphere with the lowest coverage of water and sanitation. Since most of the population does not have the means to disinfect their water, stopping the funding for treatment or slowing down investments in water and sanitation infrastructure will reverse gains made in controlling the outbreak and would bring us back to the predicament we were in at the onset of cholera. Without significant long-term investments to expand water and sanitation coverage throughout the country, Haiti and its donors will be faced with a chronic and expensive public health crisis.

### **Recommendations**

The challenges faced by Haiti are not insurmountable and there are solid models of success. . We are counting on you, esteemed members of Congress, to keep pushing for a human rights-based

approach to reconstruction and development in Haiti. In doing so, below are a few recommendations for your consideration:

- Continue to support programs that strengthen local groups and increase their capacity; in the past 30 years, we have seen young Haitians who want to advocate, serve and lead. We have also seen local associations gain experience in responding to local needs. Funding these organizations to expand their reach while providing them with key technical assistance to improve their management skills, can truly make a difference. Codeveloping these programs with the Government of Haiti and civil society can help ensure their effectiveness.
- Continue to fund programs that take a holistic approach to social and economic development. We are grateful for the long-term commitment of the US Government to our health and education systems building.
- Continue to support long-term investments that focus on an increased collaboration between the public and private sectors.

At Zanmi Lasante/Partners In Health we understand that we are doing only a small part of what is needed for the country in terms of human rights, and there is so much more that is needed. We are grateful to all the members of congress who continue to call for support to Haiti. With your help, the momentum will continue so that Haiti becomes a country where all citizens benefit from not only civil and political rights but social and economic rights as well.

Thank you.