



**PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN
HAITI**





OUR MISSION

Inspired by the Jewish commitment to justice, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world. AJWS promotes civil and political rights; advances sexual health and rights; defends land, water and climate justice; and aids communities in the aftermath of disasters. We pursue lasting change by supporting grassroots and global human rights organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and by advocating for U.S. and international policies for justice and equality worldwide.

ABOVE Marie Yolene Dossous, of Tise, Haiti, is helping Haiti's rural poor get back on their feet after Hurricane Matthew. Marie's own home was severely damaged in the storm. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik

FRONT COVER Youth in a meeting organized by GADES, an AJWS grantee that is raising awareness about violence against women. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik

An aerial photograph of a coastal town in Haiti, showing dense residential buildings, a church with a red roof, and a coastline with a blue sea. In the top right corner, there is a large, stylized, light blue decorative graphic resembling a flower or a leaf pattern.

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN HAITI

AJWS has supported human rights in Haiti since 1999, with a particular focus on strengthening grassroots movements so they can defend the rights of Haiti's poorest and most socially disadvantaged people, foster a government that is truly responsive to the needs of the populace, and create lasting and meaningful change. After a powerful earthquake in 2010 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016 devastated the country, we expanded our work to help survivors recover and rebuild, and to reinvigorate the movements that faced setbacks in the wake of these disasters.

Today, we fund 25 social change organizations throughout Haiti that are striving to promote greater political participation, empower vulnerable communities, and protect people from the threats to their land and environment.



TURKS AND CAICOS

Atlantic Ocean

CUBA

*Gulf of
Gonâve*

HAITI

DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC

★ Port-au-Prince

● Port-de-Paix

● Jean-Rebel

● Cap-Haitien

Les Trois

Artibonite

● Jérémie

▲ *Macaya Peak*

Lake Saumâtre

● Les Cayes

● Jacmel

▲ *Mount La Selle*

Caribbean Sea



Members of AJWS grantee SOFA participate in a women's support group in the weeks following Hurricane Matthew. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik

OUR GRANTEEES IN HAITI

Asosyasyon Tet Kole ti Peyizan Ayisyen (TK)

Association Nationale de Protection des Femmes et Enfants Haitiens (ANAPFEH)

Batay Ouvriye

Beyond Borders, Inc. (BB)

Bureau des Droits Humains en Haiti (BDHH)

Centre de Formation pour l'Entraide et le Développement Communautaire (CFEDEC)

Enstiti Kiltirel Kal Levek (ICKL)

Equitas — International Centre for Human Rights Education

Groupe d'Appui aux Rapatriés et aux Réfugiés (GARR)

Groupe de Recherche et d'Appui au Milieu Rural (GRAMIR)

Gwoup Apui pou Devlopman Depatman Sid (GADES)

Jenn Pwogresis Okay (JPO)

Kolektif Jistis Min (KJM)

Komisyon Episkopal Nasyonal Jistis ak Lapè (JILAP)

Kouraj pou Defann Dwa Moun an Ayiti (KOURAJ)

Other Worlds (OW)

Plateforme Haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif (PAPDA)

Plateforme Haïtienne pour l'Égalité de Traitements Entre les Personnes (PHETP)

Platfòm Oganizasyon Ayisyen Dwa Moun yo (POHDH)

Reseau National de Defense des Droits Humains (RNDDH)

Solidarite Fanm Aysisyènn (SOFA)

Sosyete Animasyon Kominikasyon Sosyal (SAKS)

Union des Personnes Contre la Discrimination et la Stigmatization (UPLCDS)

Radyo Vwa Klodi Mizo (VKM)

Some grantees are not listed due to security considerations.



BACKGROUND: HISTORY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN HAITI

Seven years after a 7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated Port-au-Prince, tens of thousands of earthquake survivors still live in tent camps. With AJWS's support, activists like Jackson Doliscar (center) worked tirelessly after the earthquake to secure new housing and prevent forced evictions from the camps. Photo by Ed Kashi

THE ROOTS OF INJUSTICE

Haiti is a small country located on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean, distinguished by its rugged mountains and coastal plains, turquoise blue waters and tumbling waterfalls. It is also the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and has one of the highest rates of income inequality (the gap between rich and poor) in the world¹—and it's home to hundreds of thousands of people who have endured decades of dictatorship, political instability, violence and natural disasters.

Haiti's history of political chaos has deep roots dating back more than five centuries. Ever since Christopher Columbus landed on Hispaniola in 1492, various European and American leaders have tried to control Haiti's fate and exploit its people and natural resources. The Spanish and the French colonized the country in succession and after decimating the native Taino population, brought African slaves to support their sugarcane plantations.

FROM INDEPENDENCE TO INVASION

In the early 19th century, Haiti made history as the world's first black-led republic, when the nation's black slaves revolted against French colonial control and gained independence after defeating Napoleon Bonaparte's troops in 1804. But Haiti's independence was fleeting. Just a century later, the U.S. military invaded. American troops controlled Haiti from 1915 to 1934, in part to prevent Germany—an enemy during World War I—from setting up strategic naval bases in the Caribbean, and in part to advance American corporate interests, especially in sugarcane production.

COUPS AND CORRUPTION

Haiti's people have faced brutality from their own leaders as well. When François Duvalier, or "Papa Doc," became president in 1957, he quickly stifled all dissent with the help of the Tonton Macoutes, a militia that killed roughly 30,000 people and raped and tortured civilians

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>

with impunity.² The U.S. tolerated Duvalier's reign of terror, in part because he was viewed as a bulwark against communism during the Cold War. Successive U.S. administrations from the mid-1960s onward funneled aid to the ruthless dictator to counter communist Cuba. Duvalier's son, Jean-Claude (Baby Doc), maintained this dictatorship until popular discontent led to his ouster in 1986.

Political upheaval continued for another quarter century. As author Mark Danner described it, the country saw "coups and revolutions, a handful of elections (aborted, rigged and, occasionally, fair), a second American occupation ... and, all told, a dozen Haitian rulers."³

After Baby Doc was overthrown, Haitians voted in their first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former priest who had been a leader of the pro-democracy movement. But Haiti's military unseated Aristide within the first year. The Clinton administration then imposed an economic blockade from 1991 to 1994, which intensified Haiti's economic decline and only ended when the U.S. military entered Haiti and put Aristide back in power. Although more Haitians had access to shelter, health and education under Aristide's rule, his term was also marked by a flagging economy and allegations of corruption against his government.⁴

When President Aristide was ousted from power in 2004 following an armed revolt,⁵ U.S. Marines entered Haiti and remained there until they were replaced by the United Nations Military Peacekeeping Force in Haiti (MINUSTAH), a force of about 7,000 military personnel from more than 10 countries. MINUSTAH remained in Haiti until late 2017, and today there remains just a small international military presence.⁶ Many Haitians considered MINUSTAH to be an occupying force since Haiti was not at war. Its presence was marked by scandals involving peacekeepers from several countries, including allegations of sex crimes and corruption.⁷

LAND LAID BARE AND VULNERABLE TO DISASTERS

Haiti's sovereignty, economy and political stability were not the only things undermined by the succession of corrupt rulers and outside

forces. The environment has suffered, too. Centuries ago French colonial leaders logged the country's forests to make way for coffee plantations. Then, after Haiti's independence from colonial rule, the country exported timber to France as part of an agreement to compensate the French for their loss of slaves and property. The deforestation accelerated during the American occupation and as part of the Roman Catholic Church's "anti-superstition" drive to cut down the country's sacred mapou trees because of their cultural association with Vodou beliefs.

Today, vast portions of Haiti lay bare. In some parts of the country, the exposed dry earth is no longer suitable for farming. Without large trees to hold the soil on Haiti's steep slopes, the earth is easily swept away by severe storms and rainfall that are made more intense and frequent by climate change. In 2008, tropical storms slammed Haiti again and again. Floodwaters surged down the country's stripped hillsides, wiping out 70 percent of crops and killing or injuring more than a thousand people.⁸

THE CATASTROPHIC EARTHQUAKE OF 2010

In January 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake shook Haiti. It killed more than 200,000 people, injured hundreds of thousands and devastated the capital city of Port-au-Prince. The world watched as the country collapsed, and Haiti's



*In La Montagne, a boy looks out at deforested land.
Photo by Ed Kashi*

² <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francois-Duvalier>

³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/22/opinion/22danner.html>

⁴ <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Jean-Bertrand-Aristide-Haitis-Enduring-Political-Enigma-20160930-0004.html>

⁵ <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article157345769.html>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12794.doc.htm>

⁷ <http://www.newsweek.com/minustah-mission-haiti-un-peacekeepers-scandal-583490>

⁸ <https://www.wunderground.com/hurricane/haiti.asp>

troubles suddenly drew unprecedented international attention. Individuals and governments around the world contributed billions of dollars in aid, but help has not always reached those who need it most, and the country is still recovering from its losses.

Powerful global corporations entered Haiti with promises to “rebuild” or to create jobs through agribusiness or tourism. But the projects have not benefited the poor struggling to get back on their feet after losing their homes or livelihoods to the earthquake. As of late 2016, official estimates reported that more than 55,000 Haitians remained in camps following the quake,⁹ yet civil society groups and journalists have estimated that hundreds of thousands more remain homeless with little or no access to electricity, drinking water or basic health services.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the government has built industrial parks over tracts of fertile farmland, instead of housing for survivors.

Hundreds of thousands of people have also experienced a devastating public health crisis. U.N. peacekeeping forces introduced a cholera epidemic that has killed over 9,600 people and sickened 812,000 more since 2010. Although the U.N. has apologized for the outbreak, it has not accepted legal responsibility, refusing to compensate victims or fulfill its promise to repair Haiti’s water and sanitation infrastructure.¹¹

DISASTER STRIKES AGAIN: HURRICANE MATTHEW

In the fall of 2016, Hurricane Matthew—the strongest storm to hit Hispaniola in over half a century—battered Haiti, killing more than 500 people. The country’s southern peninsula bore the brunt of the hurricane’s fury, with widescale destruction of coastal towns and villages. The heavy winds stripped hundreds of thousands of homes of their tin roofs, displacing more than 175,000 people. The hurricane also wiped out livestock and an estimated 80 percent of agriculture—devastating countless communities that depend on farming for their livelihoods. After the

⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/americas/haiti/report-haiti/>

¹⁰ <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/haiti-they-call-it-canaan>

¹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/01/world/americas/united-nations-apology-haiti-cholera.html>

¹² <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&country=HTI&series&period=>

storm passed, the floodwaters destroyed sanitation systems, leading to contamination of rivers and other drinking supplies that fueled a deadly surge of cholera.

The catastrophic destruction and profound trauma of both of these disasters have made their indelible mark on the people of Haiti, and the inadequate government and global response have only served to deepen the existing poverty, inequality and political turbulence that have plagued the nation.

Haiti is one of the most unequal countries in the world, and this extraordinary inequality is reinforced by the government.

CONTEMPORARY THEMES INEQUALITY, POVERTY AND EXCLUSION

Haiti is one of the most unequal countries in the world, and this extraordinary inequality is reinforced by the government. This inequality can be seen in everyday Haiti, where elites live lavish lifestyles while the masses live in abject poverty. The privately guarded and gated homes in the hillside suburb of Pétion-Ville

in greater Port-au-Prince—a wealthy area with upscale shops, nightlife and salons—contrasts sharply with much of the rest of the capital and the country at large, where two out of three Haitians live on less than \$2 a day.¹² One in three children under the age of 5 has stunted growth;¹³ 75 percent of the population lacks access to a toilet;¹⁴ and nearly three-quarters of all adult women have not attended secondary school.¹⁵

As a result of the government’s failure to meet the needs of the majority of its citizens, the average Haitian has little confidence in the country’s leadership. Few want to engage in the political process, yielding record-low voter turnout in recent elections.

The people also lack access to reliable news that would enable them to monitor government activity and hold their leaders to account. Haiti’s government is hostile to a free press and has allowed attacks on media outlets to occur with impunity. There are also few resources available for journalists who want to build on their investigative skills. Furthermore, given that few Haitians have received a formal education, a vast majority of citizens turn to

¹³ <http://www.ghspjournal.org/content/1/3/389.full>

¹⁴ <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Organization-Improves-Sanitation-in-Haiti-With-Toilets-20170701-0013.html>

¹⁵ https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/haiti_statistics.html#117



radio for news; yet the few radio stations—including small community-based stations—that are informing citizens and exposing corruption and wrongdoing are largely underfunded, underequipped and often face threats by those wishing to silence them.

People on the margins of society—especially women, LGBT people and the rural poor—have perhaps suffered the most. Violence against women was a problem in Haiti long before the earthquake, and it escalated in the displacement camps. Rape was only recognized as a crime beginning in 2005, and even since then, many survivors still don't report attacks for fear that their community or the police will blame them, rather than the perpetrators; or that their attackers will seek revenge.¹⁶

Meanwhile, LGBT people face discrimination, harassment and isolation in their communities, larger society and from the state. Haiti's LGBT community has long remained

in the shadows due to social stigma. Although more and more LGBT Haitians are coming out, violence and discrimination remain a major concern. In September 2016, individuals and civil society groups planning an LGBT film festival received several threats and complaints, including from officials. That same month, a local government official ordered the festival's cancellation on moral grounds.¹⁷ In the days that followed, there was a marked uptick in reports of anti-LGBT attacks. In 2017, the Haitian senate passed a bill that, if enacted, would criminalize same-sex marriage and prohibit any public support or advocacy for LGBTQ rights.¹⁸

THREATS TO LAND RIGHTS IN THE NAME OF DEVELOPMENT

The Haitian government has used its scarce resources to invest furiously in tourism, largescale industrial and construction projects, and the mining of natural resources, such as gold. Often, people's land is taken from them to

ABOVE *In the impoverished shantytown Jalousie, the Haitian government spent \$1.4 million to paint facades visible from Port-au-Prince's wealthiest neighborhood, Petionville, located on the opposite hill. Critics said the move was a cosmetic change that provided the rich a colorful view without improving life in the slum. Photo by Ed Kashi*

¹⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/09/opinion/sunday/haitis-silenced-victims.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-haiti-lgbt-idUSKCN11Y2H8>

¹⁸ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/haiti-may-ban-gay-marriage-public-support-for-lgbtq-rights/2017/08/07/a64c4a22-7bb4-11e7-b2b1-aea62854dfa_story.html?utm_term=.91b49acdo077

make room for projects conducted without their consent and without their interests in mind.

For example, in 2013, the government declared the tiny island of Île-à-Vache off the country's southern coast a public utility, and launched plans to build an international airport, hotels, night clubs and a golf course.¹⁹ The government hailed the project as a shining example of how the land, community and development can exist in harmony, with equitable distribution of benefits for all. But villagers who have lived on Île-à-Vache sustainably for generations tell a very different story.

The island is one of the few places in Haiti that, until now, had been spared the deforestation and erosion that has stripped the rest of the nation. And yet, the government forged ahead in its plan to develop Île-à-Vache without assessing how the project will affect this precious area and its people. Contractors have brazenly razed a rare forest, dredged the untouched Madame Bernard Bay and cut down fruit trees that families depended on for their livelihoods.

When members of the community learned that they would be displaced, without compensation, from their homes and their land in order to make way for the projects, they protested peacefully, requested information about the plans and asked to be included in decision-making about the project. In response, the government sent heavily armed law enforcement units to the island to suppress dissent and arrested community leaders for organizing peaceful protests.

Elsewhere in Haiti, citizens are concerned that government officials will not be able to properly regulate the burgeoning mining industry, which has the potential to displace farmers from their land, poison the water supply and sicken the population. Already, mining contracts have been awarded to foreign companies without public or parliamentary scrutiny.

¹⁹<http://www.mpce.gouv.ht/sites/default/files/ileavache.pdf>

²⁰<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/18/haiti-protest-against-president-michel-martelly>²¹<http://cepr.net/blogs/haiti-relief-and-reconstruction-watch/breakdown-of-preliminary-election-results-in-haiti>

LEADERSHIP IN LIMBO

In 2011, still reeling from the earthquake, Haitians elected a new president, Michel Martelly, marking the first time in history a Haitian incumbent ceded power to the opposition peacefully. Despite its promising start, Martelly's term was marked with upheaval. In 2012 and 2013, thousands of Haitians took to the streets calling for his resignation following corruption scandals and his failure to alleviate poverty in the face of soaring food prices and high cost of living.²⁰ In July 2013, a judge investigating Martelly's wife and son—who allegedly stole hundreds of thousands of dollars from government social programs—died suddenly, leading some watchdog groups to suspect murder. The brutal combination of natural disasters, political upheaval and corruption have undermined human rights throughout the country.

During his five-year-term, Martelly failed to organize any of the parliamentary elections that should have taken place, resulting in a defunct parliament. The presidential election that his government eventually oversaw to elect his replacement was so fraught with fraud and irregularities that the results were eventually completely thrown out. Without an elected successor to take his place, Martelly handed over leadership

to an interim government in February 2016. When elections finally took place under the interim government in November 2016, four in five Haitians declined to vote, marking the lowest record turnout in Haiti's history.²¹

Martelly's hand-picked successor, Jovenel Moïse—a banana exporter—won the presidency with about 595,000 votes²² in a country of more than 11 million people. Moïse's critics claimed he did not have a mandate or represent the interests of the people.²³ Political analysts predicted that Moïse will push for even greater investment in industrial mega-projects, including industrial agriculture and mining—leaving Haiti's poor who depend on the land with an uncertain future.

²²<http://canadahaitiaction.ca/content/record-low-voter-participation-haiti%E2%80%99s-2016-election>

²³<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/jovenel-moise-sworn-haiti-president-170207161155899.html>

Often, people's land is taken from them to make room for projects conducted without their consent and without their interests in mind.

SNAPSHOT OF HAITI'S CHALLENGES

POOREST COUNTRY IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.²⁴ It has the highest income inequality (the gap between rich and poor) of any country in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one of the highest in the world.²⁵

AMONG TOP 20 MOST CORRUPT COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE



Haiti is also ranked by Transparency International, an anti-corruption watchdog, as one of the **most corrupt countries worldwide**—159th out of 176 countries and territories surveyed.²⁶

HURRICANE AFFECTED 2.1 MILLION

In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew **caused Haiti's largest humanitarian emergency since the 2010 earthquake**. The hurricane claimed more than 500 lives, rendered 175,000 people homeless and affected 2.1 million people.

80 PERCENT OF THE HARVEST DESTROYED



Hurricane Matthew dealt a heavy blow to rural communities across Haiti's southern peninsula, where it **destroyed an estimated 80 percent of the harvest** and severely affected at least 428,000 farmers.²⁷ Experts believe it could take over a decade for this region to economically recover from the hurricane.²⁸

APPROXIMATELY TWO-THIRDS OF LAND STRIPPED OF TREES



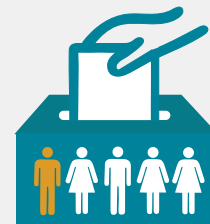
Once covered in lush, verdant forests, decades of deforestation have left Haiti's land **bare, vulnerable to storms and inhospitable to agriculture**. Some experts estimate that approximately two-thirds of Haiti's land has been stripped of trees.²⁹

60% LITERACY RATE



With a literacy rate of 60 percent, **critical information remains out of reach** for many Haitians. Although millions turn to radio as their main source of information, most non-profit local radio outlets function on a shoestring budget and lack equipment and training.³⁰

ONLY 1 IN 5 HAITIANS VOTED IN 2016



The 2016 election marked **the lowest recorded voter turnout in Haiti's history**. Only an estimated one in five Haitians turned out to cast their vote.³¹

²⁴ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>

²⁵ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?view=chart>

²⁶ <https://www.transparency.org/country/HTI>

²⁷ <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#country/93>

²⁸ <https://apnews.com/9a248dd59f83451aa6f932dc2635c71f/decade-crop-loss-hurricane-matthew-haiti>

²⁹ <http://www.envirosociety.org/2016/05/haiti-is-covered-with-trees/>

³⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/haiti>

³¹ <http://cepr.net/blogs/haiti-relief-and-reconstruction-watch/breakdown-of-preliminary-election-results-in-haiti>



AJWS GRANTEES TAKE A STAND

Lack of respect for human rights has been a key factor holding Haitians back from the prosperity they can achieve and deserve. Among the barriers Haitians face are a government that is unwilling to take measures to reduce the gulf between the few wealthy elites and the poor majority; rampant government corruption that further undermines citizens' trust in their leaders; and tragic disasters that have destroyed lives and deepened inequality.

Fortunately, Haiti is home to a growing number of brave civil society organizations and activists striving to overcome human rights challenges and build a more just and equitable society. AJWS is investing heavily in 25 of these groups, with a focus on strengthening Haiti's popular movements to rebuild equitably after Haiti's disasters; support rural communities struggling mightily against injustice and hunger; and empower women, LGBT people and the poor to overcome discrimination and violence.

ABOVE Youth participate in a workshop organized by AJWS grantee GADES to learn about violence against women so they can speak out when they witness abuse. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik

DISASTER RELIEF

After the earthquake of 2010, AJWS distributed \$6.5 million to 66 groups leading local response efforts. The funds have supported vulnerable people on the margins of society, such as women, LGBT people and the rural poor, many of whom who were not reached by traditional international aid efforts.

For example:

- In the days right after the earthquake, AJWS made emergency grants to several organizations based in the Dominican Republic, whose proximity and knowledge of the Haitian community enabled them to immediately respond to unique needs on the ground. Grantees **Movimiento de Mujeres Dominicano Haitiana** and **Movimiento Social-Cultural de los Trabajadores Haitianos** came to Haiti in a caravan of mobile ambulances and provided medicine, food, water purification systems and temporary shelter. They remained to help Haitian communities recover and address issues like violence against women in the displacement camps.

- Once they had recovered from their own losses, AJWS's Haiti-based grantees—such as **Défenseurs des Opprimées** and **Fos Refleksyon ak Aksyon sou Koze Kay**—also worked in the camps, fighting forced evictions, documenting human rights violations and helping residents advocate for their needs. A year after the earthquake, **Fanm Deside** built a safe house for abused women and children in Jacmel, which was the first shelter of its kind in southeast Haiti.
- Given the extensive destruction in Port-au-Prince, more than 600,000 people fled to the countryside after the earthquake, burdening already impoverished villages well beyond their limits. AJWS grantee **Partnership for Local Development** set up a cash-for-work program in rural communities that were struggling to house and feed displaced people. The program paid displaced families to learn and implement new, environmentally friendly farming techniques to help curb the growing food crisis.
- **Fondation SEROvie**, which was the only LGBT organization in Haiti in 2010, lost 14 members and staff during the earthquake. AJWS helped SEROvie rebuild its office and provide critical support to LGBT people who lost their homes.

Since Hurricane Matthew struck in 2016, AJWS has supported 15 organizations helping vulnerable communities

rebuild damaged homes and infrastructure, manage the spread of cholera, revitalize damaged farms and recover from their profound trauma.

For example:

- In the hard-hit coastal south, **Gwoup Apui pou Devlopman Depatman Sid (GADES)** helped families replace their tin roofs and provided food to the hungry. In addition, they have facilitated dynamic workshops with youth to raise awareness about violence against women, which can often skyrocket in times of crisis.
- **Bureau des Droits Humains en Haiti (BDHH)** and **Groupe d'Appui aux Rapatriés et aux Réfugiés (GARR)** have distributed water-cleaning kits to prevent the spread of illness in communities while helping to rebuild homes and distribute food.
- On the outskirts of Jérémie, **Groupe de Recherche et d'Appui au Milieu Rural (GRAMIR)**—which works with local farmers' cooperatives to encourage sustainable agriculture practices—was submerged under almost six feet of floodwater. But despite the damage to their office and their personal hardships, GRAMIR staffers sprang into action to help devastated communities replant lost crops.



*In Port Salut, Haiti, a family uses funds from AJWS to repair a home that was damaged during Hurricane Matthew.
Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik*

Alicemene Milice and her daughter are recovering from the damage Hurricane Matthew did to their home, thanks to support from AJWS grantee GARR. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik



DEFENDING CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

AJWS's grantees are working to boost political participation and empower local communities to counter the corruption, electoral fraud and instability that has characterized Haiti's political system for decades.

For example:

- AJWS partners **Equitas** and **Groupe d'Appui aux Rapatriés et aux Réfugiés (GARR)** have worked together to organize over 100 activists from different organizations who have in turn helped mobilize thousands to speak out about the problems they witness in their communities, including the lack of women's participation in government, mistreatment of children in schools, and discrimination against LGBT people and people with disabilities.
- In 2015 and 2016, AJWS grantee **Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH)**, in collaboration with other grantees and civil society organizations, led the most comprehensive, effective and robust efforts in Haiti to date to observe, monitor and report on its elections. These grassroots groups worked together to contest corrupt practices and fraud, advocate for vote verification, engage local community leaders to serve on electoral commissions to ensure fairness, and engage international allies in supporting their demands for a recount and later a re-run of the elections.

PROMOTING LAND RIGHTS AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

AJWS is supporting organizations that are defending Haiti's fragile ecosystem and striving to ensure that development will benefit—not harm—both the land and the people.

For example:

- On several occasions, authorities have kept rural communities in the dark about plans to mine and develop their land for tourism or massive infrastructure projects that would displace the people or irrevocably harm the environment. In response, an AJWS grantee (not named to protect its security) has helped the local people organize to protest. For example, when the Martelly administration issued a decree giving foreign investors ownership over the island of La Gonâve—home to 87,000 people—to create a tax haven, the grantee conducted outreach in the community that allowed people to come together and successfully push for the decree to be withdrawn.
- AJWS grantee **Kolektif Jistis Min (the Mining Justice Collective)** held "Ten Days of Mining Action," bringing international activists from all over the world to Haiti in order to protest mining that threatens local communities. As part of the program, hundreds of Haitians took part in teach-ins with visiting activists to better understand their rights and to learn new strategies for organizing against mining, and many more mobilized to take action in various parts of Haiti where gold mining is being planned.

AJWS ADVOCATING FOR HAITI

In addition to our support of Haitian civil society organizations, AJWS also advocates for the United States government to use its diplomacy and international aid funding to advance human rights in Haiti. To do so, AJWS led for many years and now participates in a coalition of organizations that is the principal group of Haiti advocates in Washington today. With these allies, AJWS has helped secure \$2.8 billion of additional relief funding from the U.S. and cancellation of more than \$700 million of Haiti's debt. AJWS staff helped write the U.S. House of Representatives' Assessing Progress in Haiti Act of 2013, legislation that directed the U.S. government's response to the earthquake in a way that reflects the priorities of AJWS's partners.

OUR COMMITMENT IN HAITI

AJWS supports 25 local Haitian organizations that are:



Aiding communities recovering from Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and the earthquake of 2010.



Protesting development projects that encroach on or harm local people's land and water without their consent.



Engaging, educating and empowering Haiti's poorest and most vulnerable communities to learn about their human rights, increase their participation in politics and government, assume leadership roles in their communities, and stand up and speak out when their rights are violated.



Ensuring that Haiti's poor and vulnerable have sufficient access to news and information through free and open media outlets, so they can be aware of and respond to affronts to their rights.



Supporting and strengthening social change organizations led by and for women, LGBT people, rural people and the urban poor.



Conducting political and legal advocacy to ensure fair elections and stop other violations of civil rights—including discrimination, corruption and violence.



Building coalitions and alliances with other grassroots groups in Haiti and across the Caribbean and Latin America to forge stronger and more powerful movements for human rights.

AJWS FUNDING IN HAITI

\$10.7 MILLION

GRANTED SINCE 2005

\$6.5 MILLION

RAISED FOR 2010
EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

\$666,000

RAISED FOR HURRICANE
MATTHEW RESPONSE



*After Hurricane Matthew devastated their community in Jérémie, these women—members of AJWS grantee SOFA—are helping their neighbors rebuild.
Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik*

BEYOND GRANTMAKING: HOW DOES AJWS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

AJWS provides financial support and more to strengthen social change organizations and larger movements. To accomplish this, we:

- Support grantees for multiple years, because sustainable change takes time
- Invest in nascent organizations and help them grow bigger and stronger
- Address the root causes of human rights abuses
- Bring clusters of similar and complementary groups together, enabling them to learn from each other and build strong, united movements
- Promote our grantees in the media and foster their leadership on the international stage
- Ensure that women, indigenous people, LGBT people, religious and ethnic minorities, and other groups remain at the center of our social change efforts
- Conduct research and share our findings with grantees and fellow funders, advancing the field of human rights and development

AJWS GRANTEES IN HAITI: A CLOSER LOOK

SOFA representative Neslie François facilitates a meeting about women's empowerment with community members in Jérémie. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik



The social change organizations we support in Haiti are making progress against tremendous odds. Their stories show how grassroots activists are empowering local people to bring about change in the country.

SOLIDARITE FANMAYSISYÈN (SOFA) HAITIAN WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY

Haitians recover through the heroism and advocacy of local women.

Rubble and run

When you walk into what remains of Françoise Innocent's ravaged cement home—remnants of a stairway at the front, steel rods and slabs of walls still standing, and mounds of rubble, all exposed to the open skies—you can understand what it means to lose everything. In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew wrecked thousands of homes like this, robbing countless Haitians of their shelter and everything they owned.

In what was once her kitchen, two chickens huddled in the corner of a small, makeshift cage made with mesh wire and wood. After the hurricane, Françoise built this temporary shelter for the animals. "Even the chickens have a roof over their heads," she said with sadness in her voice as she looked down at the cage. "But we are still living without a roof over ours."

"Take care of yourselves"

The day before the hurricane made landfall, 48-year-old Françoise listened to radio broadcasts warning of rainfall but no heavy winds. But as she and her six children went to bed that night, the wind howled with intensity and beat against their home in the coastal city of Jérémie on Haiti's southern peninsula.

Concerned for her family's safety, Françoise sought help from local authorities. She called the civil protection agency, but they couldn't help. They told her, "Take care of yourselves."

During the storm, the heavy rain soaked Françoise's belongings, and the winds blew away her roof along with the barrels full of cosmetics and cloth material she sold to earn a living. When a palm tree fell on what was left of her home, Françoise and her children braved the forceful winds in search of shelter elsewhere.

Françoise described an apocalyptic scene in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane. She recalled seeing some people wounded and others dead, homes flattened and countless trees fallen on the ground.

A natural leader

Françoise spent the next several months living in a temporary shelter with her children. But despite her own dire situation, she immediately began to help others. For more than 30 years, she has been a member of **Solidarite Fanm Aysisyèn (SOFA)**, a women's empowerment group in southern Haiti that receives support for its work from AJWS. As the SOFA delegate overseeing the department of Grand'Anse, she has helped empower hundreds of women by educating them about their rights and by raising awareness in communities about healthcare, family planning and ending violence against women.

For Françoise, rolling up her sleeves to assist with the hurricane relief efforts came as second nature. In the days that followed, Françoise convinced a local hospital to provide free medical services and medications to the sick and wounded through a mobile clinic. She also distributed 120 hygiene kits to women in the community so they could avoid illnesses like cholera. She and SOFA's other members purchased construction materials to rebuild ravaged homes and helped women restart businesses damaged by the storm.

SOFA is also advocating for authorities to designate Grand'Anse—a region frequently impacted by hurricanes—as a "protected zone," which would help ensure the communities here receive economic investment to adapt in the face of challenges posed by climate change.

Community members speak highly of SOFA and their work. "They don't let go of you. They stay with you. ... If they say they will do something for you, they deliver," said Gertie Mathurin, whose coastal home was reduced to rubble by the hurricane. SOFA has provided women like Gertie with advice on family planning, child-rearing and healthcare.

Although it will take years for communities in Haiti to fully recover, thanks to local heroes like Françoise of SOFA, they are slowly rising above the rubble.

LOCATION: Port-au-Prince **2017 ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET:** \$40,150
AJWS FUNDING HISTORY: \$95,000 since 2015.

*Radyo VKM's Max-Imbert Marcelin is using the airwaves to support recovery efforts in southern Haiti following Hurricane Matthew.
Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik*



LOCATION: Ville Des Cayes **WEBSITE:** www.radyovkm.org
ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET: \$33,333 **AJWS FUNDING HISTORY:** \$55,000 since April 2016



RADYO VWA KLODI MIZO (VKM)

A local radio station saves lives and defends the vulnerable over the airwaves.

In October 2016, as Hurricane Matthew swirled towards Haiti and was about to make landfall, government leaders told people to pray. Meanwhile, **Radyo Vwa Klodi Mizo (VKM)**, a small radio station on the country's southern coast, urged residents to evacuate and prepare. Although hundreds of Haitians perished in the storm and many more were injured, warnings by tiny stations like Radyo VKM helped the country avert greater death and devastation.

In a country where more than 70 percent of the population tunes in to radio each day, community radio stations and other local outlets play an indispensable role in providing life-saving updates in times of crisis, giving citizens a platform to voice their grievances and arrive at solutions, and holding officials to account when they abuse citizens' rights or engage in corruption.

Sounding the alarm bells during Hurricane Matthew

Radyo VKM reaches thousands of residents in Haiti's Southern Department out of a small two-story office in the port city of Les Cayes. During a recent visit, AJWS spoke to Max-Imbert Marcelin, one of the station's hosts, and Claude Charles, its executive director.

The pair explained that before Matthew made landfall, many people were not aware of just how powerful the storm would be or were reluctant to move to shelters, fearing their homes would be robbed. They believe the government did an inadequate job of preparing residents for the impending dangers—and its directive to pray for the country to be spared was “irresponsible.”

As the hurricane approached, Radyo VKM did what it could to sound the alarm bells. It urged residents to evacuate risky areas and to prepare for the powerful storm. Max and Claude believe that had it not been for warnings from Radyo VKM, the death toll in the area would be higher.

When the hurricane hit, Radyo VKM continued to beam announcements over the airwaves late into the night. Powerful winds eventually knocked down the station's antenna and damaged their transmitter and computers.

A watchdog for human rights

Even before the Hurricane, Radyo VKM gave voice to the needs of Haiti's poor and under-served communities. “We embrace all these [groups] and want to provide them the public space to discuss their problems and what solutions work best for them.” It also helps local people expose corruption and human rights abuse.

“We're like a tribunal,” said Max. “If they suffer an injustice, they come to the radio. They talk to us, we investigated, and people are able to then go to the authorities.”

After Hurricane Matthew, callers told the station that many people in desperate need of aid had yet to receive help. They claimed that politicians were diverting aid to their supporters instead of giving it to those people who are most in need. The station's staff investigated these claims and helped redress them. Some have received threats as a result.

As Haiti tries to rebound from this latest disaster, community broadcasters like Radyo VKM will be essential in fostering a dialogue that includes those most in need and in ensuring that recovery efforts are timely and fair.



KOURAJ (“COURAGE”)

Activists with grit stand up to Haiti’s anti-LGBT extremists.

A climate of threats and fear

In September 2016, Haiti’s first-ever LGBT film festival had to be called off because someone threatened to burn down the building and kill the organizers. The police decided to ban the festival, and one Haitian senator even expressed that the event posed “great danger” to Haitian families.

Unfortunately, such threats are not new for **Kouraj**—the organization leading the event. When their founding members formed their non-profit group in 2011, they knew they would be facing serious risks. It takes grit to come out as LGBT in Haiti, let alone to publicly challenge the rampant homophobia present in society. In 2013, anti-gay extremists armed with guns and machetes broke into the Kouraj office and assaulted and robbed two of its members while hurling anti-LGBT slurs. But this didn’t stop them. The group has since persevered and grown in its efforts to empower gay and transgender Haitians to insist on acceptance in their society and stand up for their rights.

Isolation and discrimination

Kouraj’s members are up against formidable opponents. Haitians are predominantly Christian—and, despite LGBT-friendly comments from Pope Francis, local church leaders, especially those leading neo-Evangelical congregations, have vociferously denounced LGBT people as immoral. In the wake of the 2010 earthquake, some evangelical church leaders even accused LGBT Haitians of causing the disaster—bringing divine punishment to the country as a result of their “sins.” Fearing isolation and discrimination, LGBT people in Haiti are rarely open about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Discrimination plays out in less obvious ways, as well. After the earthquake, some of the international aid agencies operating displacement camps distributed food exclusively to women, assuming that they would distribute the food to their male partners and children. While this plan admirably intended to empower women, its architects never considered that it would exclude gay men and others who did not have wives or girlfriends to share food with them. For reasons like this, LGBT people often faced challenges accessing resources in the camps.

Speaking out, gaining momentum

Kouraj is trying to shift Haitian cultural attitudes on LGBT issues. It brings LGBT people together to discuss their concerns, raises awareness about LGBT rights in the wider community and sparks public debate about the stigma surrounding same-sex relationships. The organization is even working to neutralize the impact of derogatory terms lobbed against LGBT people. For example, Kouraj members have reclaimed *masisi*, a Haitian Creole slur for LGBT people, to “transform this insult into pride.”

Their movement is slowly but surely gaining momentum. Just a few years ago, the organization received only limited support from international funders—but today, they have broad support. In November of 2013, they brought together six major NGO allies to publicly respond to Haiti’s LGBT rights crisis.

And Kouraj remains determined to hold the LGBT film festival again in the future—not to be intimidated into silence by the threats of the past. They believe tolerance is growing in Haiti. “More LGBT people are coming out and accepting themselves more these days,” said Charlot Jeudy, president of Kouraj. “They walk on the streets very proud.”

Charlot Jeudy, president of Kouraj, works despite great personal risk to stop homophobia and stand up for the rights of LGBT Haitians. Photo by Ed Kashi



LOCATION: Impasse Yves **WEBSITE:** www.kouraj.org
AJWS FUNDING HISTORY: \$156,600 since 2012

Members of Tèt Kole in the small community of La Vine Blanche, Haiti, stand up for the rights of peasant farmers. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik



LOCATION: Port-au-Prince **2017 ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET:** \$70,000
AJWS FUNDING HISTORY: Since 2012, AJWS has awarded \$316,521 to Tèt Kole

TÈT KOLE TI PEYIZAN AYISYEN (HEADS TOGETHER SMALL FARMERS)

One of Haiti's oldest organizations of peasant farmers defends land and food

When Monsanto—a multinational chemical and agricultural biotechnology corporation—tried to donate genetically modified (GMO) seeds to Haiti after the earthquake, AJWS grantee **Tèt Kole Ti Peyizan Ayisyen** was watching. Monsanto's move willfully ignored the preferences of Haitian farmers, who have consistently and publicly rejected GMO seeds. The farmers, most of them poor, say that the seeds mix with local crops and, in time, force all farmers in the area to pay Monsanto for their expensive, patented seeds.

To resist GMO seeds, Tèt Kole worked with other Haitian peasant groups to organize local farmers and protest Monsanto's self-interested "donation." They gathered more than 10,000 people, who spoke out and pledged to burn the GMO seeds. Soon after, Haiti's minister of agriculture rejected Monsanto's offer.³²

Growing a movement for sustainable farming

Tèt Kole is a grassroots organization run by and for Haiti's peyizan, or peasant farmers. The group's 80,000 members work together to collectively advocate for their rights. Since its founding in 1970, Tèt Kole has enabled Haiti's peasants to wield power in a system in which farmers had long been powerless. Only a few, very wealthy families own land in the country, and the majority of people support themselves as sharecroppers, giving a sizable share of everything they produce back to the owners.

Although Haiti once produced plenty of food for its people, the last two decades of free trade agreements and foreign food donations have upset the local market. This alarming trend has created a food crisis in Haiti and threatened the economic prospects of long-time farming communities.

Today, Tèt Kole farmers work to ensure that Haiti can produce enough food for its people in the future, and protect the delicate natural resources that the people depend on. Tèt Kole even runs an agro-ecology research center, complete with a system to catch rainwater for irrigating crops. Its staff train members in traditional and modern techniques for cultivating crops and raising animals, enabling them to increase their yields. In areas

vulnerable to dangerous mud slides and soil erosion, Tèt Kole has started reversing decades of destruction by launching reforestation projects—protecting both the land and the people who depend on it.

Advocating for the rights of farmers

The organization also advocates against development projects that threaten to evict farmers from the land they depend on for survival. Recently, Tèt Kole has joined the Mining Justice Collective, a newly-formed NGO network that also receives funding from AJWS. The group's goal is to fight corporate mining interests that threaten to displace communities and ruin Haiti's environment.

Tèt Kole continues to evolve with Haiti and the needs of its members. When members expressed concern that the voices of women farmers weren't being heard, the group instituted new rules for including women in Tèt Kole's leadership. Of Tèt Kole's three elected leaders, at least one will always be a woman.

A helping hand after Hurricane Matthew

In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew dealt a heavy blow to rural communities across Haiti's southern peninsula, where much of the population depends on farming for sustenance and livelihood. River water and heavy rain swamped much of the south, destroying an estimated 80 percent of the harvest. Officials believe it could take over a decade for this region to economically recover from the hurricane.

Amid these hardships, Tèt Kole is ensuring the rural poor are not forgotten. With AJWS's support, Tèt Kole is providing small loans and seeds to farmers so they can replant crops.

In a small village in Marfranc commune on the outskirts of Jérémie, Tèt Kole member Marie Yolene Dossous pooled together funds after the hurricane to provide small loans to survivors in dire need. "Even though we have very little now, we will restart and rebuild little by little," she explained. Some recipients used these small loans to produce peanut butter or grow rice that they can then sell in markets. "Tèt Kole has been our helping hand," Marie Yolene said.

³² Michelle Greenhalgh. "Haitian Farmers Reject Monsanto Donation." Food Safety News. 7 Jun 2010.



TRAVEL AND ACTIVISM

AJWS organizes trips to the developing world for individuals and groups of community leaders, activists and philanthropists who are interested in meeting our grantees and learning about the challenges people face in the developing world. After these visits, participants join AJWS through *tzedakah* (giving financial support), education, advocacy and activism to build a more just and equitable world.

For more information about opportunities to travel with us, visit www.ajws.org/travel.



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This publication was written by Sumit Galhotra (Communications Officer); edited by Leah Kaplan Robins (Director of Publications and Messaging); and designed by Kristen Kendrick (Senior Designer); with support from Elizabeth Leih (Creative Director).

ABOVE *The view over a rooftop in Montrouis, Haiti, where AJWS grantee Mining Justice Collective protests mining projects that threaten to displace local people and poison the local water supply. Photo by Ed Kashi*

BACK COVER *Jalousie, a shantytown in Port-au-Prince. Photo by Ed Kashi*

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