



As communities around the world face the many burdens brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, Haiti, too, is struggling with unprecedented fear and uncertainty. As our partners and friends are braving yet another storm, we stand alongside them. Please read on for 3 important updates from Haiti:

- **In Cap Haitiën, the Centre for Nutrition & Education for Women & Children has been forced to temporarily close its doors to comply with government orders.** The closure would thrust malnourished children and their families into an even more precarious situation.

Staff are working tirelessly to ensure that these families are not forgotten and have organized emergency food distributions, including the medically formulated Medika Mamba peanut butter so crucial to the treatment of malnutrition.

(Below) Mothers like Benita were thankful to receive packages of Medika Mamba, and breadfruit flour from Trees That Feed Foundation to help them through this time of crisis.



"You gotta fight with double fears."

- **The realities of Covid-19 in Haiti:** As of April 24, 2020, there were a total of 72 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Haiti, and 5 deaths. However, the reality is that next to no testing is being done, and so the actual numbers are likely much higher...and expected to grow.

More than Covid-19, the greater fear for many Haitians is how they will feed their

families. Marketplace commerce is the key source of income for so many women in Haiti.

Rayjon's Haiti Field Director Andre Jean-Pierre shared with us this week some of his own fears, and how he worries for the most vulnerable. He reminded us that many Haitians had just finally gotten "back on their feet" following the horrendous political lockdown that occurred in Haiti during the autumn of 2019. Now they are knocked down again by a situation beyond their control.

With very strict restrictions on hours for market vending, and in some cases total closures and/or bans on non-food items, many families don't know how they will survive. Andre says that Haitians have an additional fear, the "fear of breakfast" (and where it will come from). He says, "You gotta fight with double fears."



- **Rayjon's action in Haiti during Covid-19:** As the health crisis grows, we are working in partnership with multiple NGOs and health organizations in Cap Haitiën, looking for every opportunity to collaborate as preventive training, sanitation stations, and health care services are modified in preparation for Covid-19.

Rayjon is supporting coronavirus prevention training in St. Marc, organized by the Haitian Women's Federation in partnership with a local hospital. A pickup truck rigged with loudspeakers is moving around the villages broadcasting a message professionally recorded message (with music!).

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Thank you for your continued support of Rayjon! Stay well.

More specifics about the Covid-19 situation in Haiti:

Extreme political instability complicates the situation, and many Haitians do not trust the information coming from the government, and are critical of the response. There are demonstrations occurring, mainly in the capital of Port-au-Prince but also in other regions as people protest the restrictions on commerce and transportation. **In a country of 11.1 million, there are an estimated 40 ventilators.**

To make things more complicated, many Haitians do not believe that coronavirus is even a problem in Haiti. With so few proven cases, they are skeptical of the need for drastic social distancing. And those that do realize the seriousness are still faced with decisions about following the restrictions, or putting food on the table.

While social distancing seems to be working for Canada and many other nations, **the case is very different in Haiti.** Most Haitians live in extremely close quarters to begin with, and have poor access to clean water and basic sanitation. People are wearing homemade masks in the streets, but keeping physical distance is next to impossible.

Schools are closed country-wide, but Haiti lacks the infrastructure to implement online or other programs of home study. Some schools have provided written curriculum to parents, but with such a large proportion of the population unable to read and write, we know that for most students, formal learning is on hold.

If you have the time, here are some suggested news reports predicting disastrous outcomes for Haiti:

['We are not prepared at all': Haiti, already impoverished, confronts a pandemic \(BBC\)](#)

[Coronavirus pandemic will cause global famines of 'biblical proportions,' UN warns \(CNN\)](#)

[Haiti - FLASH : The country faces a triple threat, \(HaitiLibre\)](#)

More information about Rayjon's projects during Covid-19:

Very dedicated staff members in **St. Marc** are keeping the office open, albeit with reduced hours and social distancing strategies in place. They know that completely closing would mean no access to microcredit loans and other services that families rely on.

The community of Pinson is excited about all of the work that has taken place to prepare the gardens for planting. Agricultural trainings for large groups can't proceed right now, but a community committee is working with Rayjon staff to modify plans. Check out our [Facebook page](#) to see some of the photos of all the work!

Our team is preparing to be flexible to adapt emergent needs. As some activities are halted temporarily due to social distancing, the call for our support is strong. We are trying to equip local leaders with the resources and tools they need to face this crisis together.

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