



**From the Desk of Michael Herce,
PIH volunteer and medical resident**

Dear Friends,

For over 25 years, Zamni Lasante (ZL, PIH's partner organization in Haiti), has served as an example to the world of pragmatic solidarity—responding to the call of the rural Haitian poor for health care, clean water, food, education and housing with concrete action. But in a disparate world where the gulf between the haves and have-nots continues to grow and the basic social and economic rights of the poor go ignored, many “experts” in development, policy and public health have referred to the work of ZL and PIH as “unsustainable,” citing a perceived lack of long-term funding and human resources. The dismissive questions raised by critics in the rich world are, unfortunately, all too familiar to our colleagues working for change in resource-poor Haiti: “Isn't a program that provides health care without charging patients doomed to fail?” and “Won't a project supported by an American NGO create dependency on foreign doctors and other providers to care for patients?”



On August 17th in Cange, in front of a community assembly filling the Chapel Bon Saveur, seven Haitian medical students lent their resolute voices to those of the hundreds of Haitian *accompagnateurs*, nurses and doctors who work everyday with ZL and the Ministry of Health throughout Haiti's Central Plateau by answering, “No!” to the nihilists. On that clear Sunday morning, parishioners and community members joined six newly named Howard & Doris Hiatt Residents in Internal Medicine and Global Health Equity and faculty members from the Division of Global Health Equity at Brigham & Women's Hospital to cheer on these bright students for their academic achievements and their expressed commitment to return to the Central Plateau to serve the destitute sick after their training.

Ferle Jean-Sauvener, Guerrier Odilest, Adam Thélor, Dony Théoromé, Alexandre Wilda, Elounedie Nourissant and Jean Robert are each exceptional Haitian physicians-in-training pursuing their doctor of medicine degrees either in the Dominican Republic (DR) or Cuba—at the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra in Santiago de los Caballeros or the Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina in Havana. Traveling far from home and family to study, a near pre-requisite for Haitian medical students since the U.S.-backed coup in 2004 destroyed one of the country's only surviving medical schools, each shares a gripping personal story and commitment to their community. Take, for example, the story of Alexandre Wilda, who lost both of her parents to tuberculosis, faced life-threatening pulmonary tuberculosis herself, but overcame the odds to persevere in her studies and gain admission to medical school last year.



Haitian med students (front row)
at the celebration in Cange.

As a sign of solidarity with their Haitian counterparts and with the backing of the Cange community, these Brigham residents and faculty presented each student with a new laptop to assist them in the pursuit of their medical studies. The sense of community pride and camaraderie between GHE residents and their Haitian colleagues was palpable—evidenced by the resounding applause from the crowd and the many warm embraces exchanged.

These Haitian medical students are living proof that comprehensive community-based approaches to the delivery of health and education services are not only sustainable, but yield untold benefits for future generations, from creating economic opportunities for patients to building the next cadre of healthcare professionals. But don't just take my word for it, ask Alexandre.

–Michael Herce
Medical resident and PIH volunteer