

TRANSFORMATIONS

Christian Businesspeople Transforming Lives



Partners Worldwide member business, Maxima S.A., is meeting the current needs for shelter throughout Port-au-Prince. The business has expanded from 60 to 90 employees in order to locally produce dependable housing.

Haitian business leans on its global network

by Jacqueline Klamer

Special Focus:

Haiti Business Recovery

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Imagine this: You are a business owner in Port-au-Prince, nearing the end of the work day on Tuesday, January 12. Suddenly a major earthquake strikes, rocking the entire city. You walk away unharmed, but in the days ahead you learn the extent of the destruction: 200,000 killed, one million homeless, and the national economy devastated. What do you do?

In the first few days, Evelien de Gier of Maxima S.A., a cabinetry and casket manufacturer, looked after her family and friends and did what she could to relieve suffering and meet needs. Regarding her business, she learned within a week that all 60 of her employees were alive and that the business still stood.

Evelien then turned her attention to needs that Maxima S.A. could meet in the recovery. With her husband, Kees, she investigated buildings around Port-au-Prince that survived the quake. Among those still standing were some of the oldest—gingerbread houses built of wood in the 19th century post-colonial era. With hundreds of thousands of Haitians homeless and living in tents, she knew Maxima as a wood manufacturing company could meet housing needs. *Please continue reading on page 3*

Salt and Light in Haiti

by Dave Genzink, Partners Worldwide Director of Operations

Exactly a year ago, I traveled to Haiti for a vacation with my son Jon, his wife and their two boys. Jon was born there 34 years ago when my wife Deb and I lived in Port-au-Prince, studying the language and preparing to work in community development in the Haitian countryside. Jon wanted to show his own kids where he had spent the first four years of his life. In Port-au-Prince, we stopped at the Caribe grocery store to pick up water and food for the journey. It was a marvelous adventure in an amazing country.

Last week I returned to Haiti, this time to visit colleagues in our business network. I drove down the main road past the same grocery store, now a pile of rubble. The hospital where Jon was born was in ruins, and the Hotel Montana, one of our favorite places to stay, had crumbled. More than the news could capture, I saw destruction too awful to contemplate.

Each person in Port-au-Prince has a story about where they were and what they were doing at 4:53 p.m. on January 12th. A good friend and colleague was supposed to substitute-teach a business course at 4:00 that afternoon. He accidentally forgot about the class. The business university was destroyed. Had he remembered, he and all his students would have perished.

One of the untold stories is the hope that businesspeople have firmly grasped—and the steps they've quietly taken to make that hope a reality. As I listened to members of our partner businesses, they shared how they are meeting immediate and long-term needs, right now, through their businesses. They're offering employment as their businesses respond to new opportunities. They are maintaining a stable presence in the community. They are helping colleagues recover what's been lost. They are welcoming new members into the group and pulling each other through the hardship. They are responding with business expertise and experience, a passion for their communities, and a resounding faith in Christ. They are salt and light.

It was humbling to realize that most people in the Haiti business network received their education and early work experience somewhere else in the world. They could have remained in Montreal, Geneva, New York, Paris, or Chicago. Yet each one chose to return to Haiti and operate a business there, meeting local needs and employing 60, 80, even 200 people each. They are also servant leaders. And the quake has only served to make them redouble their efforts, holding each other to high ethical standards and supporting each other with mutual respect and strong accountability. Their commitment to operate ethical, viable businesses in Haiti is both contagious and inspiring.

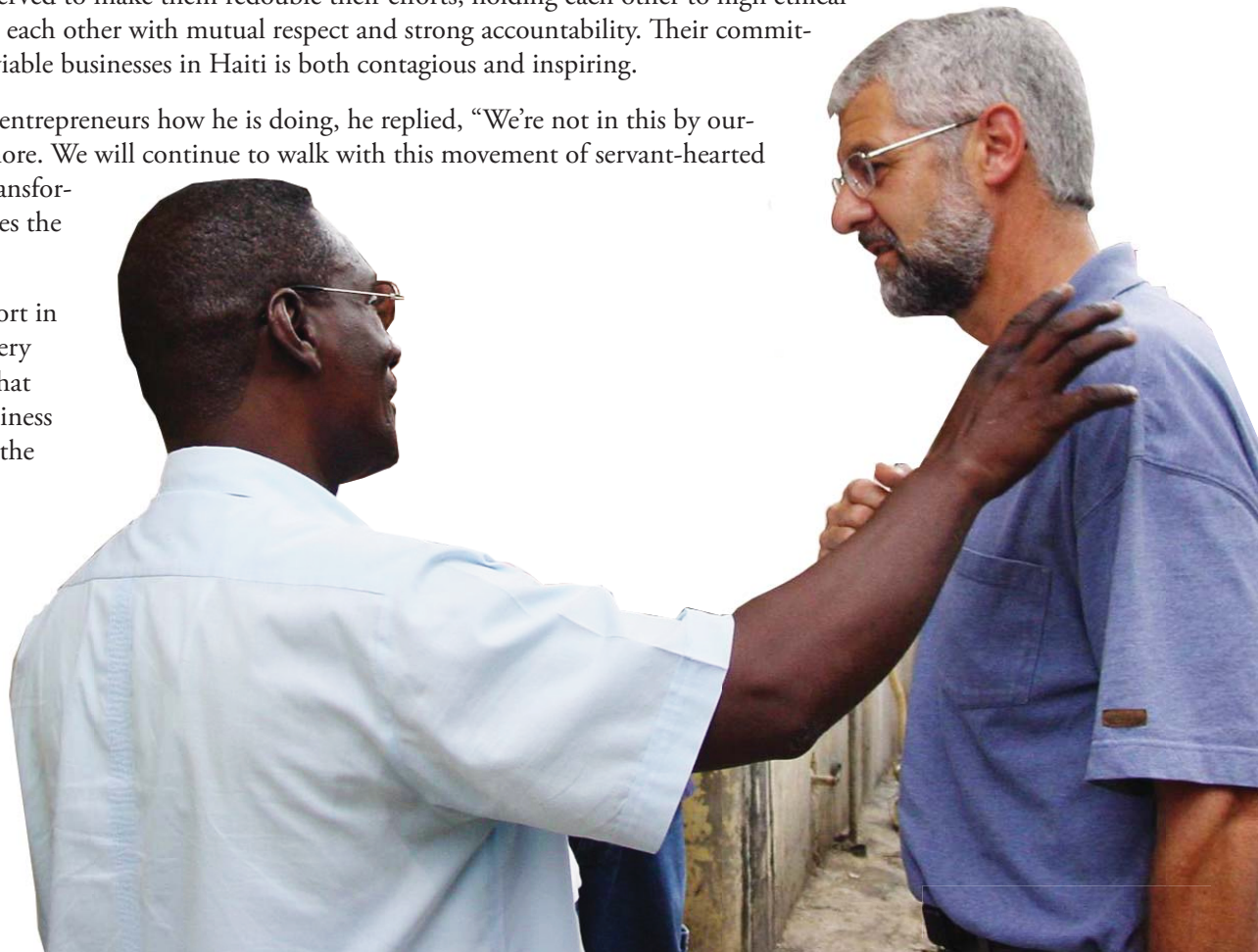
When I asked one of the entrepreneurs how he is doing, he replied, "We're not in this by ourselves." I couldn't agree more. We will continue to walk with this movement of servant-hearted businesspeople as their transformative influence permeates the fabric of this country.

Thank you for your support in our Haiti Business Recovery Initiative. Pray with me that the influence of these business people is multiplied over the months and years ahead.

Dave Genzink
visiting business
leaders within the
Partners Worldwide
network in Haiti.



The board of Haitian Partners for Christian Development, Partners Worldwide's affiliate in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.





Clockwise from left: Through Partners Worldwide, structural engineer Cal Van Ooyen volunteered to assess damages to businesses. • Maxima S.A. transformed their cabinetry and casket business to meet orders from NGOs and individuals for transitional housing. • Ralph Edmond is the owner of Farmatrix, a pharmaceuticals company returning to full production. After replacing key machinery through a Partners Worldwide connection, 77 of his 82 employees are back to work.

Haitian business leans on its global network

Continued from page 1

Evelien turned to the Partners Worldwide global business network, which she has been involved in since 2003, for help in creating a plan. Through the network she connected with PorterCorp product manager Chris Kreple in Holland, MI. Over long phone calls into night, Kreple advised Maxima S.A. employees on housing models and design.

“I wanted to help in a tangible way,” Kreple said. During the calls, Kreple came to “a better understanding that the response to the needs has to come from relatively local sources.” For Evelien, the calls were more than helpful business advice: “It was good to bounce ideas off of people who were more logical than we were in our emotional state,” Evelien said.

The calls and additional planning were critical. Evelien turned down initial housing contracts because they would have exceeded the production capacity of Maxima S.A.’s facilities. But by April, Evelien was in a position to sign a contract to build 1,600 housing units for an NGO providing housing in Leogane, a town west of Port-au-Prince that was 90% destroyed. At the start of May, Maxima S.A. had 3,000 housing units in its production pipeline, with a potential contract for 8,000 units on the horizon.



A transitional housing prototype was developed by Maxima S.A with input from Michigan based PorterCorp.

6139 Tahoe Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
www.partnersworldwide.org

NON-PROFIT
U.S POSTAGE
PAID
Grand Rapids, MI
PERMIT No. 552



SPECIAL FOCUS:
Haiti
Business
Recovery