Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world. Political instability, violent riots and natural disasters such as the earthquake of 12th January 2010 have led to unimaginable human suffering and destroyed a significant part of the infrastructure. For decades, the urgently needed public health care can offer only minimal services and is, like almost everything else in the country, dependent on international aid. The Albert Schweitzer Hospital (HAS) is one of the few institutions which can still offer basic health services. Within the framework of a reorganization of HAS, since 2004 six medical outstations (dispensaries) have been expanded and in some cases newly constructed in order to improve the health care of the region of Artibonite. The initiator of the building project was the Grant Foundation, the managing organ of HAS. The project was financed mainly by the Swiss Agency for Development SDC with the support of third parties. The Bern University of Applied Sciences BUAS was mandated as consultant to analyse the infrastructure needs and then design and supervise the construction of the six dispensaries.
**Project description**

BUAS architects collaborated with HAS doctors in the analysis of the infrastructure needs. They quickly came to the conclusion that the construction of six dispensaries would have the dual benefit of reducing pressure on the overstretched hospital and also improve health services directly in the rural areas. During the design of the dispensaries the following were the main criteria:

- Geographical location of the dispensaries (service area, accessibility etc.)
- Medical services offered by the dispensaries (prevention, operations etc.)
- Structural requirements (safety, comfort, logistics etc.)
- Financial framework (budget compliance)

The planning and realization phases had to overcome construction challenges such as climate compatibility, respect of local building traditions and medical functioning. A lot of experience and an intercultural understanding were necessary for the organization and logistics of the building materials as well as the inclusion of the local artisans. BUAS employed a Swiss builder with local experience for the realization phase, a decision which proved to be very helpful.

**Aims**

The project had the following main aims:

- Improve the health care of 300'000 people in the region of Artibonite
- Redirect the patient movements: reduce the flow to the central hospital and send more people to the dispensaries, which need to be improved with construction measures and better staffed.
- Improve the economic efficiency of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital HAS
- Integrate the local authorities (acceptance) and the local community (income possibilities) in the construction work.

**Results**

The last of the six dispensaries – Bastien, Deslandes, Liancourt, Deschapelle, Plassac, Tienne – was handed over in June 2009 to HAS, which started operations immediately. All dispensaries have been provided with an atrium and a gallery in accordance with local building traditions. They dispose of 13 – 15 rooms and have been provided with water supply and sewage water disposal. All six dispensaries withstood the earthquake of January 2010 and they have become an important health service for the long-suffering rural populace.

**Competences**

The planning and construction of a medical infrastructure in a country like Haiti requires professionals with additional organisational, social and intercultural competences. The project team was able to maintain all obligations despite permanently changing framework conditions as well as the need to integrate all interest groups in a reasonable manner.

**Project partners**

- Hôpital Albert Schweitzer in Haiti (Project initiator and owner)
- Swiss Agency for Development SDC (Main financing source)
- The association Partnerschaft Kinderspitäler Biel–Haiti and the Bündner Partnerschaft Hôpital Albert Schweitzer (Medical support)
- Various local project partners

**Centre for Development and Cooperation**

Within the framework of development cooperation, we provide services in research and development, knowledge and technology transfer, professional further training programmes as well as the promotion of companies. We thus contribute to the positive development of emerging and developing countries. We also offer project management, consulting services, training programmes and make evaluations. In order to attain the project aims, we seek partnerships with development agencies, research and educational institutions, relief organizations, foundations and private companies.

www.ahb.bfh.ch/cdc