

Proposal for the Asylum of Beudet, Haiti

The asylum of Beudet has been the only site for chronic or long term mental health care in Haiti since the mid 1930's. Beudet started out as an American camp during the American occupation of Haiti (1915-34). It was built by the American troupes on Haitian government land. When the troupes left Haiti in 1934, one of their nurses remained behind in the former barracks, and started "giving injections" on the site. He eventually rescued people who were mentally ill and housed them in the complex. Eventually, the Haitian government took over and supported the Asylum of Beudet and paid for public health personnel to look after the mentally ill there. The land, over 7 acres still belongs to the Haitian government.

The buildings of Beudet were destroyed by the earthquake of January 2010, and the patients are presently housed in provisional shacks, shared by 3 patients. At this time there are 150 patients sharing 50 shacks. They lack in clothing, food, medication etc... The medical director of Beudet, Dr. Roger Malary is a competent psychiatrist and a dedicated man; he has done all he can to help. He has met with Rebatî Sante Mentale in Miami to request help in rebuilding the institution.

The first lady of Haiti, Mr. Sophia Martelly has visited Beudet for Mental Health day last month, and made mental health her cause, she says. She is also requesting Rebatî to help in rebuilding Beudet. She has assured us the land belongs to the Haitian Government.

Rebatî, a group of Haitian-American and Haitian-Canadian mental health professionals, has been meeting with a group of Haitian mental health professionals, including representatives of the Public Health Department, for the past year. We are offering our expertise in planning, education and in a clinical setting. We are also ready to raise funds to help provide mental health for Haitians. We have the support of the American Psychiatric Association, of the World Psychiatric Association and of the Pan American Health Organisation as well as different Universities where our members work. We have a 501-C3 tax exempt, not for profit status in the United States.

Rebatî consulted with the Haitian Architectural firm of Benjamin-Jadotte. They reviewed the buildings of Beudet and of Mars-Kline Center and confirmed the fact that the buildings at both institutions were damaged beyond repair. They estimated that we need 4,000. square meters of building at Beudet to serve 150 inpatients. They quoted the cost of building in Haiti at US \$1500 per meter sq. of construction with an estimate of US\$6,000,000. for building a modern, full service facility in Beudet.

There are many styles of buildings appropriate for the Haitian climate and situation. However, one of the models we looked at is made up of one-storey buildings housing different parts of the mental hospital. We need:

1. Four dormitory units of 30 to 40 beds each, divided into male and female units. Each unit would also have 6 to 8 showers, 8 to 10 toilets and a nursing station. A common room would serve for community meetings, psychoeducational activities and therapies. It could also be used as a small dining room for the occupants of the unit when the weather is bad or if there is a hurricane. A small kitchen with a refrigerator for snacks and a small medicine room would complete the unit. The intent is to have the patients out of these units during the day.
2. One administrative unit with about six offices/consulting rooms, which the medical director and other medical personnel can use for meeting with the patients for therapeutic purposes. The Central Pharmacy or Central medication room would be situated in this unit, and one of the offices would be equipped to provide physical examination and care. A central records room would also be part of this unit.
3. A service building housing a large, central industrial kitchen where patients' meals would be prepared. A cafeteria or dining room would be next to the kitchen for patients to eat their meals. This large dining room could also be used as a meeting room or auditorium. A locked supply room for goods necessary for patient welfare would be in this unit as well as a laundry facility.
4. Utilities: a water treatment plant as well as a waste treatment unit are needed. A generator room and an inverter room are also necessary if solar power is used.
5. There should also be a small building with 6 to 8 rooms with baths to be used by visiting relatives and staff in need of spending the night at the facility.
6. A soccer field and an open air theater would complete the complex.
7. Rain water should be collected into a large cistern even if a well is dug to provide water for the complex.

Needless to say that any of those accommodations could be distributed in a different manner. The buildings distributed on a large piece of land are an effort to encourage the patients to be outdoors. They could even cultivate some of their food as they used to do in the past, according to old inhabitants of the area. I cannot emphasize too strongly the need for infrastructure: solar power and electricity, water and waste treatment plants.