

## **Cholera – The latest setback for Haiti**

In response to the magnitude 7.0 earthquake that rocked Haiti in January, 2010, Hope on the Move quickly sent a team to that country for the purpose of providing medical aid to those in need. That effort took us to St. Nicholas Hospital in St. Marc (see the media tab for photos from that trip) where we partnered with health care professionals from Harvard Medical School (Boston). On our fourth day serving there, one of us (Mark) had a profound conversation with a surgeon who had previous experience in regions of Africa devastated by infectious disease. That physician warned (sic), “If the water supply becomes contaminated, it will become the next phase of devastation...with people dropping dead in the streets.” At the time, concerns certainly existed regarding the availability of clear water, but...as the months went by, that stated caution appeared largely just that, one of caution. However, when news reports broke out in October that Haitians in the region around St. Marc and arriving at St. Nicholas Hospital were infected with cholera, it rendered that once profound conversation into one that was prophetic. In a nation where a large part of the population lives without access to reliable sanitation and clean water, a disaster that further disrupted infrastructure seemed likely to lead to widespread infections, such as cholera, which spreads through feces-contaminated water. As of March 2011, over 5,000 people are thought to have died from this infection, per news from the Haitian Minister of Health.

The cholera outbreak has, in many ways, changed the way Hope on the Move ministers to the people in Haiti. First, it led to changes in the way our teams utilize water. Also, it led to the development of a series of training programs; first utilized in November 2011 by Rhonda Thomas and HOM President Carol Atkinson. More recently, HOM Board member, Dr. Kirk Young, through intensive interactions with his local Rotary Club, oversaw the fundraising and purchase of a series of individualized water purification devices known as “life straws”. Over 5000 of these life saving units were delivered to Haiti and were received with excitement by the children of Haiti (see picture).

