

Waiting on Water

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Under the blistering heat of the Caribbean sun, water is essential. Though the island is surrounded by water, access to drinking water is a constant struggle. In rural areas, most people rely on rainwater collection and hand-dug wells. Animals, humans and crops compete for the scarce resource. During the dry season, every stored drop will be sacred.



Temporary cistern next to the kitchen & bath



This groups tests a second tank installed on top of an old cistern in Lotoré

Concrete cisterns are constructed to store water, whether it is obtained from a well or a roof. These plastic cisterns were just installed in Lotore because the concrete cisterns there failed; this created a crisis for the community, their mobile clinics and school. The staff of St. Francis drove the tanks up to connect them to the roofs. Now the school and church will be able to store more water for dry days.

An underground water source called Tet Sous is located in the hills above the capital town of Anse-à-Galets; it is one of the few public water sources on the island. Tet Sous has a dam-like wall constructed to create a small reservoir. PVC pipes bring the fresh water near town. The containers pictured here are being filled with water from that pipe and will be transported by truck, motorcycle, donkey, or on foot.



This young student in Gros Mangles has access to safe, treated drinking water at St. Esprit school.

Water used for drinking should be treated to ensure that it is safe, but not every one can treat their water. *Gadyen Dlo* buckets are located on all St. Francis campuses and in many homes. The blue lidded bucket indicates to all that it contains "safe water." *Gadyen Dlo* is produced in Haiti as a liquid chlorine product sold in a bottle to disinfect drinking water. The efficacy of the solution to treat bacterial, viral, and some parasitic contamination has been proven in studies by Emory University, MIT and the US CDC.

The search for a large-scale, long-term solution to water on the island continues. In the meantime, the parish's large cisterns are vital to the health of its communities, schools, food programs and healthcare network.