



Communications for life

Télécoms Sans Frontières

GONAIVES
24th September - 9th October 2004



20, avenue Garcia Lorca - 64000 Pau, France
tél : +33 (0)5 59 84 43 60 - fax : +33 (0)5 59 84 43 58
contact@tsfi.org - www.tsfi.org

Mission to Gonaives

- **Initial Situation**

Cyclone Jeanne hit Haiti on Saturday September 18th. Two days of heavy rains - together with the after-effects of the cyclone - led to serious flooding in North West Haiti, principally affecting the town of Gonaives, the third largest town in Haiti (250,000 inhabitants). According to estimates, 80% of dwellings were affected by the aftermath of Cyclone Jeanne. Deforestation has aggravated the catastrophe : heavy rains led to huge mud slides which swept through the town, devastating houses.

The first dispatches were sent on Monday September 20th. The number of dead were at this time underestimated and initial information made it difficult to evaluate the extent of the catastrophe - the emphasis was moreover put on the eventual disappearance of Turtle Island. The number of dead in Haiti due to Cyclone Jeanne has risen to more than 3000 (2826 in Gonaives).



The day after the catastrophe, the situation in Gonaives was critical; tensions were high amongst the population and aid from NGO's and rescue teams was set up in a climate of insecurity. Also, access to Gonaives was complicated by the flooding of the main road into the village.

Initial information received pertaining to the state of telecommunications indicated that the telephone network at Gonaives had been totally destroyed by the flooding. One week after the catastrophe, only one cell operator was working (Haitel), and was very often saturated by calls. However, the first movements made by the population between Port au Prince and Gonaives allowed the exchange of information amongst Haitian families.

At the time of the disaster, TSF had already been mobilised on the island of Grenada since September 13th 2004. A TSF team - based in France and Thailand - arrived on Haiti on Friday September 24th and will be augmented one week later.

The TSF team arrived in Gonaives on Sunday September 25th. The team was from this date operational to bring help and support to the victims as well as the NGO's, local and international.

- **Locality of the mission**

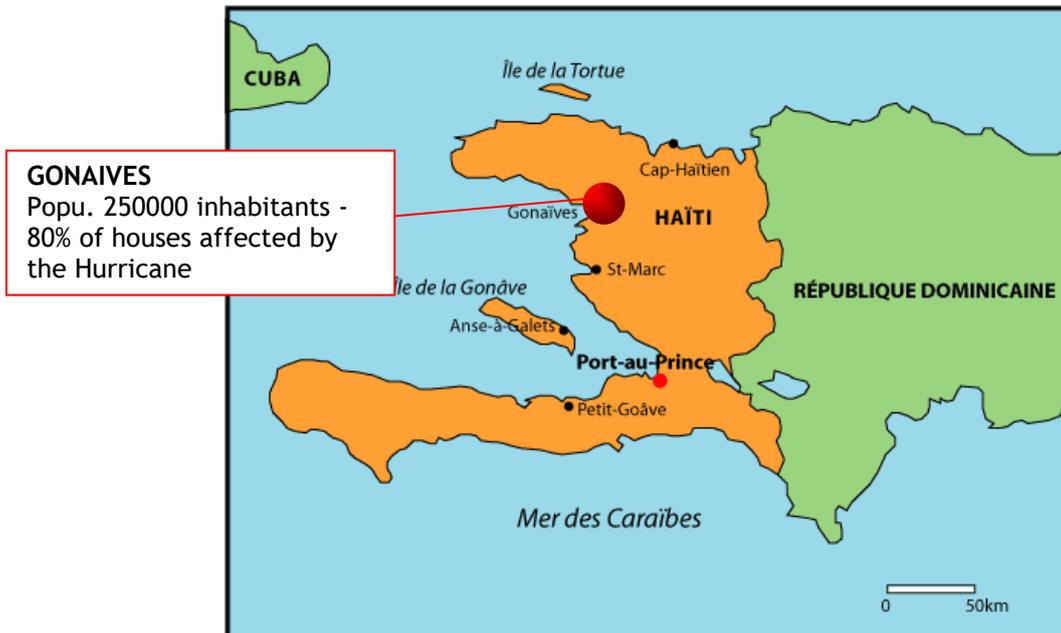


Fig 1 : Location of the mission

- **Telecommunications Centre**

From the arrival of TSF in Gonaïves, 36 NGOs, other organisations, institutions and local workers were present in the town (*cf. UNDAC list in Annexe 1*). For most of the programmes operating in Haiti, the majority of Internet exchanges operated from permanent centres in Port au Prince. Mobile telephones enabled the rescue teams working in Gonaïves to contact the base in Port au Prince.

The United Nations coordination centre (UNDAC-OSSOC) was installed in the Law Faculty in Gonaïves (where the MINUSTAH was also installed) and it is the focal point for all the NGOs and rescue teams working in the town.

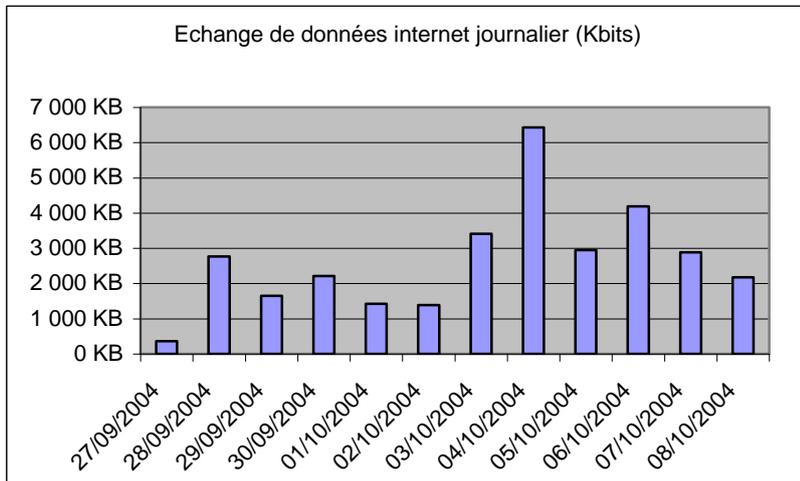


During its evaluation, TSF carried out an enquiry with NGO representatives at a coordination meeting at the OSSOC centre in order to determine telecommunications needs. The principal need expressed by the NGOs present was to be able to benefit from technical assistance to configure and use their own satellite communication equipment.

In order to be able to respond to these requests and to make the NGOs autonomous as quickly as possible, TSF decided to install a « Data Centre » in the Faculty of Law. This choice was to make access easy for the majority of NGOs working in the town. More than technical assistance, TSF's telecommunications centre offered NGOs the facility to make telephone calls and have

Internet access.

TSF's Télécoms centre was operational from Tuesday September 27th and two daily sessions were established : from 7 to 10 o'clock and 4 to 7 pm. TSF made two satellite lines (**voice and email**) available to local authorities, local and international rescue organisations, and TSF's technicians provided technical assistance to NGOs who wanted to configure and use their satellite equipment.



Graph 1 : Daily report on Internet connections.

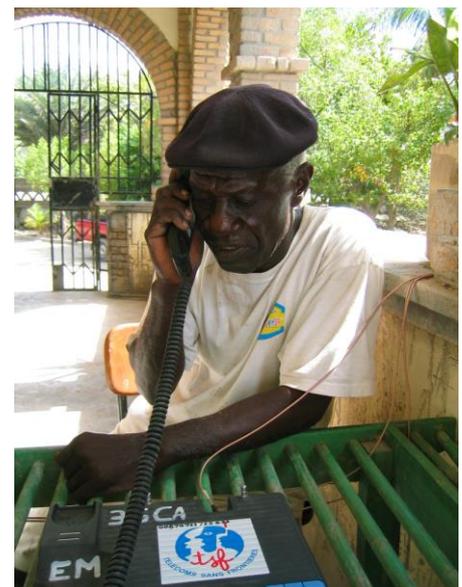
► NGO beneficiaries : ACF (MiniM programming, email, telephone), Caritas (email), CRF (Minim use, email, telephone), CRH (telephone), Cuban Medical Brigade (telephone), Red Cross (MiniM programming), Living Water (email), Haitian Civil Protection (email, telephone), MdM (MiniM programming), MSF (email, programming MiniM).

- **Humanitarian phoning activities**

The needs of the population were evaluated during the course of visits made by CRF in the accommodation centres in the town. TSF evaluated the telephone needs amongst 13 accommodation centres (within a total of 62 centres identified) - more than 20% of accommodation centres, the numbers of which changed daily with openings and closures - *cf. list established by CRF in Annexe 2.*

These evaluations demonstrated that telephones were urgently needed. The majority of families immediately expressed the need to telephone members of their family living abroad, they were able to provide telephone numbers - an ability not always possible due to the flooding.

In order to be able to bring the maximum help possible to the victims, it was always necessary to take into account recurrent problems of insecurity. The strategy put in place by TSF was to concentrate on mobile logistics and to focus on the main accommodation centres in Gonaives.



The programme of humanitarian telephone calls (opening satellite telephone lines for emergency calls) had also been organised in 9 accommodation centres selected in order to cover the majority of Gonaives town (cf. Fig 2) and to contact the maximum number of centres.

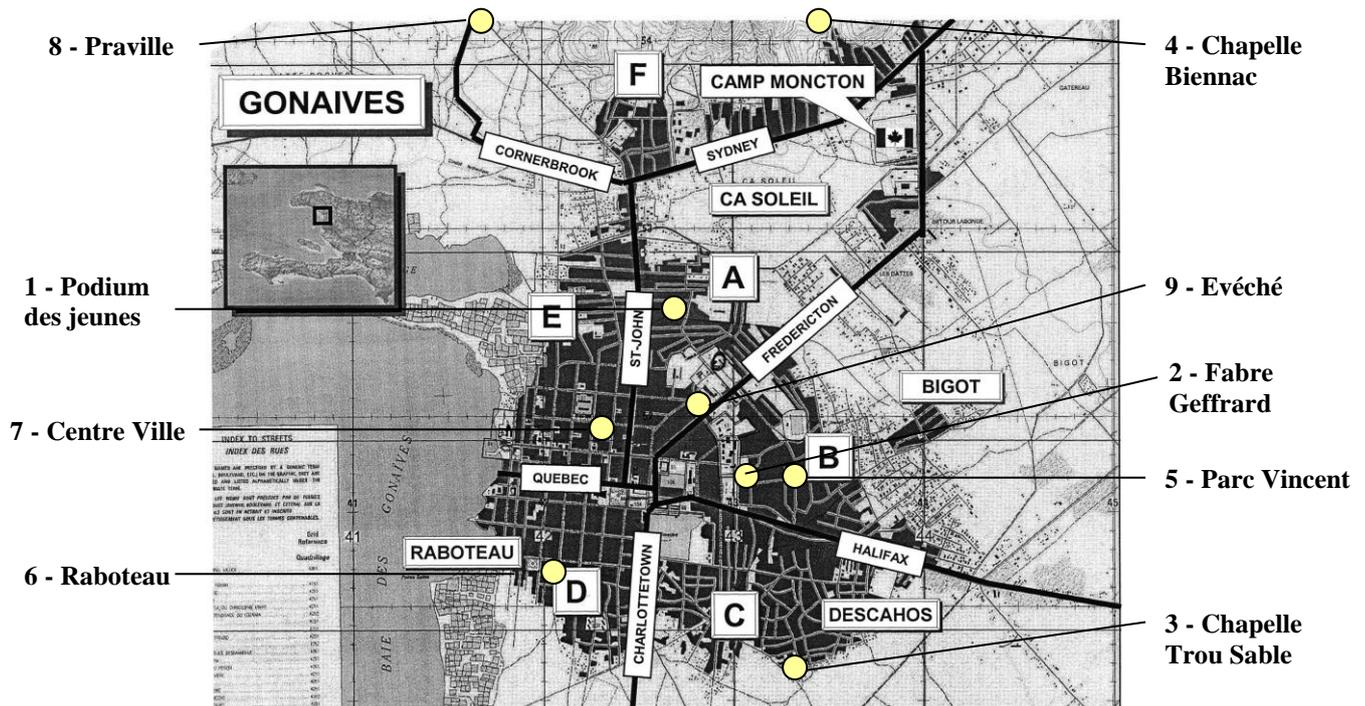


Fig 2 : Map of TSF Priority Phoning Centres

Initially, we chose the centres according to the maximum number of families who could be contacted, based on the estimates on the number of families in the centres. However, the number of families was never constant (many families left during the day to clean their houses, go to food distribution centres, certain centres were closed...) also, we very quickly targeted the zones of the town where we could visit the maximum number of centres.

	Lieu	Nbre familles est.
Jeudi 30/09	Podium des Jeunes	115
Vendredi 01/10	Lycée Fabre Geffrard	143
Samedi 02/10	Chapelle Trou Sable	254
Dimanche 03/10	Chapelle Bienac	230
Lundi 04/10	Eglise évangéliste – Parc Vincent	140
Mardi 05/10	La Chandelle – Raboteau	58
Mercredi 06/10	Eglise Bethel – Centre ville	/
Jeudi 07/10	Orphelinat de Praille	/
Vendredi 08/10	Evêché des Gonaïves	200

Tab 2 : Data for TSF Priority phoning centres

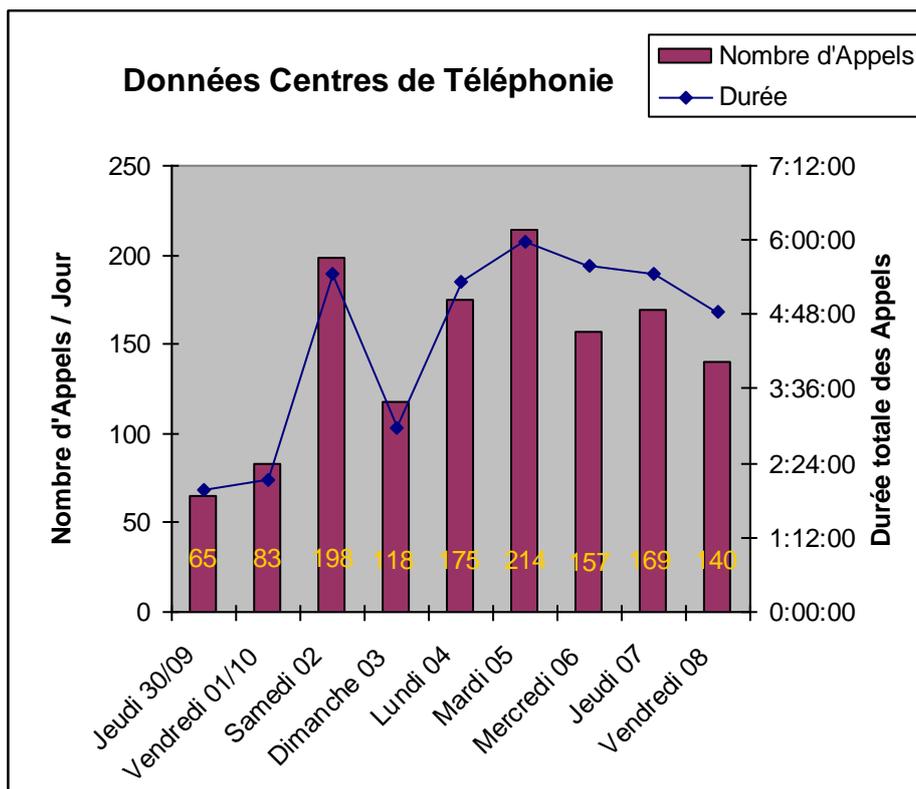
This list of centres also fulfilled the criteria established to be able to respond to most needs : geographic distribution, the number of families accommodated, and the presence of smaller centres nearby.

In order to be able to help the maximum of families near to our post, we spent the day before in the selected centres in order to introduce ourselves to the heads of the centres, to ask them to announce our presence there and to distribute the telephone call tickets (cf

Annexe 3). We were going as well to alert the smaller centres around the large centres where the telephone posts were set up, in order that those families could also benefit.

As well as the telephone activities, TSF counted as a priority the needs of families unable to call family members living abroad and in more urgent cases, their family in Port au Prince. Statistics indicated that in Gonaives, 1 family in 8 had a family member living abroad.

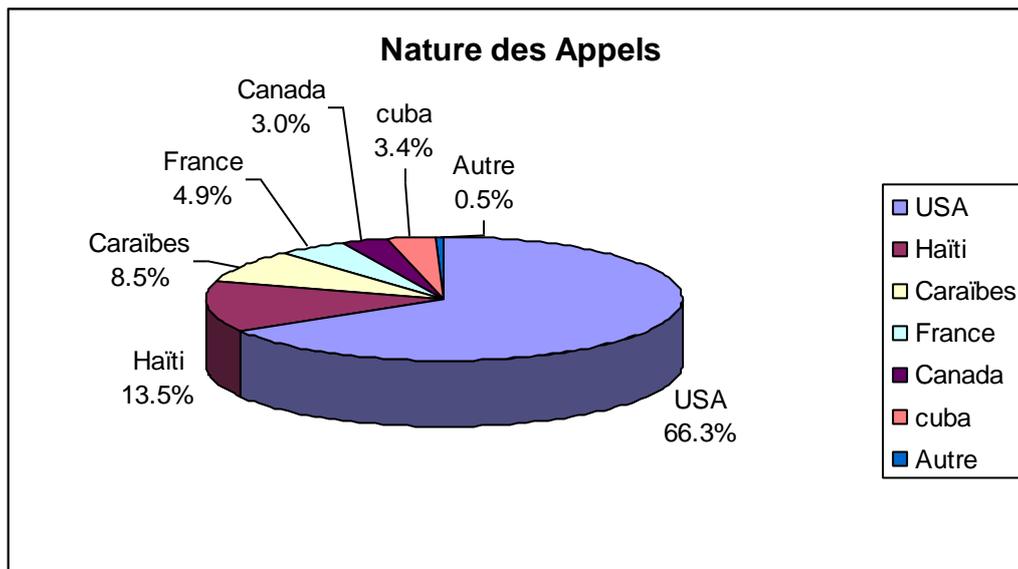
TSF opened **4 satellite telephone lines** daily in each telephone centre. These telephone posts meant that **more than 1300 affected families** could contact a family member living abroad and more urgent cases in Haiti.



Graph 2 : Number and duration of calls

	Jeudi 30/09	Vendredi 01/10	Samedi 02	Dimanche 03	Lundi 04	Mardi 05	Mercredi 06	Jeudi 07	Vendredi 08	Total
Nbre Appels	65	83	198	118	175	214	157	169	140	1319
Aboutis	45	67	165	83	138	164	115	123	103	1003
%réussite	69.23%	80.72%	83.33%	70.34%	78.86%	76.64%	73.25%	72.78%	73.57%	75.41%
Durée totale	1:58:37	2:07:28	5:27:41	2:58:45	5:19:52	5:57:54	5:34:27	5:28:04	4:50:34	39:43:22
Moyenne	0:01:49	0:01:32	0:01:39	0:01:31	0:01:50	0:01:40	0:02:08	0:01:56	0:02:05	0:01:48

Tab 3 : Data for Priority Phoning centres



Graph 3 : Destination of calls

It appears that more than 65% of calls were to the United States (principally the East Coast - Miami, Orlando, Boston, New York, Providence) and for the most part of initial calls -it also appears that most people were calling a distant parent for the first time in more than two years, and more often simply for the first time.

These telephone calls allowed victims to reassure their families far away and above all, to be able to ask for financial help. Following the catastrophe, many families lost everything in the floods.

« The unofficial transfer of money proving that the diaspora constitutes a substantial source of revenue and plays an important stabilising role. It was more than 256 million US\$ in 1997 to more than 931 million US\$ in 2002 » (*CIDAWEB - Canadian International Development Agency*)

<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/webcountry.nsf/VLUDocFr/Ha%C3%AFTi-Approchestrat%C3%A9gique>

- **Final Situation**

At the end of TSF's mission, the fixed telephone lines started to be operational again in the town of Gonaïves and many families could transmit a telephone number to be able to call them back. The second cell operator (ComCell) was again functional.

All the NGOs who needed it benefited from technical assistance to be able to use their own satellite material and were therefore able to become totally autonomous.

TSF ended their mission on Friday October 8th. In the course of their intervention, TSF enabled 1300 affected families to call abroad and in urgent cases to other towns in Haiti, in order to reassure their family members and ask for financial assistance. A dozen NGOs and local institutions also benefited from the services of its telecommunications centre installed in the building housing United Nations Coordination Centre.

Mission figures for Gonaïves

- 3 TSF technicians, 4 local staff
- 6 satellite phones available for daily use for NGOs and population
- 14-day intervention
- 1319 families beneficiaries
- 32 Mbytes transferred - 10 NGOs beneficiaries.

