

# 2024 **move** for mobility



**This May, get moving for a great cause—anytime, anywhere—with the Move for Mobility!**

Run, walk, hike, roll, swim, jump, bike, or do any activity you choose, anywhere, for any distance, while raising funds to provide wheelchairs for people with disabilities in developing countries.

The Move for Mobility is fully customizable. You can run on a treadmill or at an official 5K, half-marathon, or full marathon. You can hike a trail or walk around your neighborhood. You can cycle outdoors or do your miles on a stationary bike. It's all up to you! Complete your distance all at once or over a period of a few weeks.

Invite your friends, family, coworkers, church, sports teams, training partners, or other groups to form a team and Move for Mobility together!

Visit [MoveforMobility.org](https://MoveforMobility.org) for more information or to register for free!



## FREE WHEELCHAIR MISSION

## SPRING 2024 UPDATE



### A COUNTRY IN CRISIS

On February 7, 2024, I was in Haiti to distribute wheelchairs with our local partners when our plans were derailed by security concerns over street protests and growing unrest.

The country had been sliding deeper into turmoil for years. The assassination of Haiti's president in July 2021 left the country in a power void that remains unfilled as of this writing. Then, just weeks later, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake devastated the island nation, which still had not recovered from an even larger earthquake that struck in 2010.

Conditions rapidly deteriorated in the absence of leadership, with Haiti's already-frail infrastructure crumbling. Violence escalated in February 2024 as armed gangs broke prisoners free to join their forces, seizing control of the ports and the international airport in an effort to oust the prime minister. A national state of emergency was declared on March 4, 2024.

Thankfully, our team was able to leave Haiti before this surge in violence. However, we still have distribution partners and wheelchair recipients in the country, along with those who need wheelchairs and are among the most vulnerable in situations like this.

### DONATE NOW

Give to our Medical and Mobility Emergency Fund to provide essential medical supplies, wheelchairs, and mobility aids to impacted communities that we serve around the world.

[FreeWheelchairMission.org/emergency](https://FreeWheelchairMission.org/emergency)



## Give Today to Transform Lives



[FreeWheelchairMission.org/donate](https://FreeWheelchairMission.org/donate)

Access 24 hours a day for easy one-time or monthly giving.



Please send checks to:

Free Wheelchair Mission  
15279 Alton Parkway, Suite 300  
Irvine, California 92618



800.733.0858

Call Monday to Friday  
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM PT

We want to hear from you! Connect with us online and hear more stories from the field.



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[FreeWheelchairMission.org/stories](https://FreeWheelchairMission.org/stories)



**FreeWheelchairMission.org**

Transforming lives through the gift of mobility®



## DISABILITY IN HAITI

Haiti stands as the most impoverished country in the western hemisphere, with an estimated 59% of its population living below the poverty line.<sup>1</sup> For countless Haitians, each day is a relentless struggle for survival, marked by the quest for necessities such as food, clean water, and stable shelter.

This toil becomes even more daunting for those living with disabilities. Approximately one out of every six households in Haiti has a family member with a disability,<sup>2</sup> with 43% of disabilities being related to mobility.<sup>3</sup> This rate increased in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, when an estimated 20,000 individuals sustained injuries leading to permanent disabilities and/or the loss of a limb.<sup>4</sup> Without mobility, persons with disabilities in Haiti are more likely to face discrimination, unemployment, and as a result, extreme poverty.

Free Wheelchair Mission has distributed 20,826 wheelchairs in Haiti since 2005. Our current distribution partners are Food For The Poor (FFTP), which has been serving in Haiti since 1986, and Walkabout Foundation, through whom we work with a sub-distribution partner called Hope Health Action (HHA) in Haiti as well as in Kenya and Uganda. The focus of Walkabout and HHA is health, disability, and emergency response. "The implementation of these

## IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

A team from HHA assembles a wheelchair amidst growing unrest in Haiti.



wheelchairs has profoundly influenced our organization and the broader community," stated Nina Pigorini of Walkabout Foundation. "By enhancing accessibility, they not only empower individuals with mobility challenges but also serve as powerful tools for reshaping perspectives on disability, promoting a more inclusive and accepting community."

The trip I took in February was to see firsthand our work with Walkabout Foundation and HHA. Our team flew into Cap-Haïtien, the second largest city in Haiti, where HHA has been working since 2007. The objectives were to meet their leadership team, tour the Haitian Baptist Convention Hospital that they helped found and operate out of, distribute wheelchairs, and follow up with individuals who have received a wheelchair from us.

These plans, however, were disrupted due to the growing unrest. As we waited for street protests to subside, we spent ample time touring the hospital, where Free Wheelchair Mission wheelchairs were being used as transport wheelchairs for patients. The hospital also distributes new wheelchairs to individuals through both its rehab center and its respite care center for children with disabilities.

Yet, despite the change of plans, we still had multiple opportunities to visit the homes of individuals who have received one of our wheelchairs, such as 58-year-old Wilbert.

## "COMMITTED TO THE END"

Wilbert (photo on opposite page) lives with his wife in Dubout, an inland town southeast of Cap-Haïtien, where Wilbert was born and has never left. They have been married for 22 years and have two daughters, one son, and two grandchildren who live with them. Wilbert used to earn a living through multiple jobs as a chauffeur, taxi-motorcycle driver, construction worker, and gardener, but he had to stop working in 2011 when diabetes led to the amputation of his left leg. "I haven't been able to do any of those things ever since," he lamented.

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action for Children: Haiti* (UNICEF, 2023), [www.unicef.org/media/132191/file/2023-HAC-Haiti.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/132191/file/2023-HAC-Haiti.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, "Furthering Economic and Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities in Haiti," [worldbank.org](http://worldbank.org), April 26, 2021, [www.worldbank.org/en/results/2021/04/26/furthering-economic-and-social-inclusion-for-people-with-disabilities-in-haiti](http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2021/04/26/furthering-economic-and-social-inclusion-for-people-with-disabilities-in-haiti)

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, "Greater Inclusion Necessary for Haitians Living with a Disability," [worldbank.org](http://worldbank.org), December 17, 2021, [www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/12/17/greater-inclusion-necessary-for-haitians-living-with-a-disability](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/12/17/greater-inclusion-necessary-for-haitians-living-with-a-disability)

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, "Furthering Economic and Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities in Haiti," [worldbank.org](http://worldbank.org), April 26, 2021, [www.worldbank.org/en/results/2021/04/26/furthering-economic-and-social-inclusion-for-people-with-disabilities-in-haiti](http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2021/04/26/furthering-economic-and-social-inclusion-for-people-with-disabilities-in-haiti)



## "BLESSED"

Wilbert (above, with his wife) received his first wheelchair after waiting 13 years.

His wife then became the family's sole provider, running a small business selling charcoal. It can be tough, but she is determined to do whatever needs to be done for her family. "We have a strong marriage with a lot of love in our home," she declared, "and we are committed to the end." Wilbert would spend most of his time watching the grandchildren while his wife was away at work. Without a wheelchair, he could take a few steps with a walker, but it was too painful and difficult for him to leave the house.

Wilbert received his very first wheelchair this past January after going nearly 13 years without mobility. "I feel blessed by God to have this wheelchair," he said. Now, he can go outside with his grandchildren, attend church with his wife, and in light of the uncertainty rocking Haiti, he can more easily flee should danger arise.

As developing news continues to stream out of Haiti, I think about people like Wilbert and other wheelchair recipients I had a chance to meet, about those who are still waiting for a wheelchair, and about our distribution partners who remain in the country.

## JOIN US IN PRAYER

We will continue to closely monitor the situation in Haiti. Please join us in praying for the safety of our distribution partners, wheelchair recipients, and all who are affected by recent developments.

We have been keeping in close contact with our local distribution partners, whose staff are safe as of this writing. Food For The Poor has closed its offices due to security concerns but remains ready to respond to the need for medical supplies and mobility aids as circumstances allow.

Thanks to supporters like you, our local partners still have an inventory of wheelchairs we have shipped to Haiti and are poised to distribute them whenever possible. If you would like to support our work of providing medical supplies and wheelchairs in the countries that we serve, please visit [FreeWheelchairMission.org/emergency](http://FreeWheelchairMission.org/emergency).

Thank you for your continued support, which ensures a steady supply of wheelchairs to our partners across the world, who can remain prepared to address emergencies that arise.

With gratitude,



Nuka Solomon  
Chief Executive Officer  
Free Wheelchair Mission