



WINDOWS ON OUR WORLDS

News from **PARTNERS IN PROGRESS (PIP)** – Summer 2012

Climate Changes Threaten and Challenge Resilience of Deslandes Farmers

The Deslandes “soil health” or “**Konbit Vanyan Kapab**” (“*Together We Can*”) initiative aims at improving soil fertility and increasing the resilience of small farms in the face of climate changes and other threats through various adaptive and innovative strategies based on both traditional knowledge and modern “agroecological” science. Rainfall patterns in Haiti, once dependable, have changed in unpredictable ways making it difficult for farmers to

know when seasonal planting can safely begin. This year early rains followed by an extended drought and the resulting loss of the region’s corn crop are challenging the farmers’ capacity to adapt and are testing the strategies “*konbit*” farmers have used to increase the resilience of their “trial plots”.



Loss of the annual corn crop presents a serious hardship, but some “*konbit*” farmers included peanuts in their adaptive strategies and these could still be productive in the shortened growing season. PIP support – provided through our Deslandes partners in the **Centre d’Inspiration Jeunesse** (CIJ) – will enable other farmers to purchase drought-resistant peanut seeds. Retention of a portion of the peanut harvest in a community “seed bank” would help repay the cost of the seeds and increase the community’s resilience in the face of future climate change

threats. Other heat-tolerant crops with high economic value including “*masket*” (castor bean, used to produce oil for cosmetics), and protein and vitamin rich “*moringa*” (used to produce a potent nutritional supplement) that were integrated in “*konbit*” members’ trial plots will likewise help to offset partially their loss of corn.

Permanent St. Antoine School Reconstruction Advancing Steadily in Fondwa

A massive groundbreaking for the reconstruction of the **St. Antoine School** in Fondwa was completed in February 2012, representing nearly two years of steady and sustained progress towards the re-establishment of a permanent school to replace the former classroom complex destroyed by the devastating earthquake of January 2010. It also demonstrates the resiliency of the “social infrastructure” of the Fondwa community resulting from the organizational strength of PIP’s community-based partners in the **Association of Peasants of Fondwa** (APF).

Since March 2012 steady progress has continued. Building materials including rock, gravel, sand and cement have been assembled on the building site and a storage depot to house tools and a security guard was constructed at the entrance to the campus. Construction of a new, sanitary latrine system was completed in June. The new elementary and secondary classroom complex will consist of two, identical, main classroom buildings of 6 rooms each and connected by a central stairway. The “below ground” level of each will be comprised of concrete masonry and will be anchored into the



bedrock below the campus to reinforce the school’s earthquake resistant design. A concrete masonry “first floor” and wooden “second story” will top the anchored levels. A separate two-story building will add four additional classrooms to the complex. It is expected that the new **St. Antoine School** will be completed by September 2013!

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“Skip a Lunch” Supports St. Louis de Montfort Pre-School Nutrition Program

Children in Haiti are born into some of the harshest conditions on the planet, and are seriously disadvantaged in terms of growth, development, and potential to thrive. Malnutrition rates are among the worst in Latin America and the Caribbean. Nearly one-third of all children under five suffer from stunted growth and three-quarters of children aged 6-24 months are anemic [World Bank, Demographic and Health Survey, 2005].



Created by **Marlene Shaw** of Republic, PA following a “reverse mission pilgrimage” to Haiti coordinated by PIP’s “*Rich in Mercy*” division, the “**Skip a Lunch, Save a Child**” program provides partial financial support for a nutrition and early education “head start” program directed by **Sr. Eileen Davey**, a Holy Union Sister from Fall River, MA working in the St. Louis de Montfort church in Port au Prince’s Delmas section. Supporters of the “**Skip a Lunch**” program

contribute \$5 a month to provide a daily, nutritious meal and various educational activities for “at risk” children. Beginning with 30 children in 2002 the program now serves more than one hundred “at risk” preschoolers!

Second “Earth Block” Classroom Building Nearing Completion in Deslandes!

Construction of the second, “earth block” classroom building in Deslandes continues to progress steadily at the elementary school operated by PIP’s collaborating partners, the **Centre d’Inspiration Jeunesse** (CIJ). The foundation and columns of a “gallery” have been added along with an innovative “heat escape” addition to the walls that will intensify the natural properties of the “earth blocks” to moderate interior temperatures. “Earth blocks” provide an environmentally-friendly, “green” building environment that reduces the need for expensive, imported materials while providing a more earthquake and hurricane resistant structure than conventional cement block masonry.



Work on the construction was temporarily halted due to unusually bad weather in March and to allow the CIJ management team to prepare a careful inventory of materials and summary accounting of funds expended. Construction will resume with the addition of an insulated, metal roof as soon as the independent roofing contractor can schedule the job. Finishing work, including flooring and the application of a stabilized, earthen plaster to both the interior and exterior walls, will be completed by the local work crew. Construction of a third building - set to begin in November - will complete the classroom complex and provide additional training opportunities to equip both men and women with the skills needed to build affordable houses.

“Haiti ‘Block’ Party” Raises Awareness and Funds for “Earth Block” Project



The Map Room Grill and Bar in Pittsburgh’s Regent Square neighborhood hosted a very successful “**Haiti Block Party**” to raise funds for the construction of the CIJ school in PIP’s partner community of Deslandes. Several hundred supporters turned out for the event that combined Irish music, Haitian food, and both live and silent auctions of original art by Pittsburgh glass artist **Daviea Davis** and gift baskets donated by **The Map Room** and businesses from Pittsburgh’s “**Strip District**”!

Partners in Progress sends a “*gwo mes!*” (“**big THANK YOU!**”) to **Marji Landale**, **Map Room** proprietor, and to organizer **Ray Werner**, to all the “**Anne Mullaney Friends for Haiti**”, and to all the musicians, volunteers, friends, and benefactors who contributed to this **FUN**draising event!

Partners in Progress

329 N. Fairfield Street • Ligonier, PA 15658
Tel.: 724-238-9204 • Cell.: 724-875-2899
info@PIPHaiti.org www.PIPHaiti.org