



WINDOWS ON OUR WORLDS

News from **PARTNERS IN PROGRESS (PIP)** – Summer 2014

PIP Executive Director – Dr. Richard A. Gosser – Announces “Re-Wirement”



After more than 13 years as executive director of **Partners in Progress**, Dr. Richard A. Gosser is stepping aside from that role at the end of 2014 to assume the title of “**Founder and President Emeritus**” of **Partners in Progress**. Not ready to “retire” from an active work life, Gosser sees his change in status as an opportunity for “re-wirement” in response to the new opportunities opened up by his change in status. He plans to continue overseeing the “**Rich in Mercy**” or “faith based” division of **Partners in Progress** which is rooted in the “Haiti work” that he and his wife, Daneen, began in the early ‘90s following their initial visit to Haiti in 1987.

Gosser is emeritus professor of mathematics at **St. Vincent College** where he taught in the Math and Engineering Department between 1975 and 2005. In 2011 St. Vincent College presented him with an honorary “Doctor of Humane Letters” degree for his work in social justice, human rights, and sustainable development. He

continues to teach a “service learning” course called “Haiti: Window on Our Worlds” as an adjunct professor of history at St. Vincent.

Deslandes Farmers Poised for Greater Role as Community “Change Agents”

Nearly 50 farmers – both men and women – in Deslandes have been successfully testing innovative “agroecology” strategies on 2-3 acre experimental plots with the aim of increasing crop yields and improving soil and ecological integrity through the PIP-sponsored “**Kobit Vanyan Kapab**” (KVK or “Together We Can”) project. Each plot produces 14-20 different “row crops” and 6-8 different varieties of multi-purpose trees.

The experimental plots have seen a dramatic increase in the use of “ramp vivan” or hedgerows formed along the contour lines of fields and planted with nitrogen-fixing trees such as *Gliricidia* and *Lisena* or thickly rooted grasses such as vetiver. The “ramp vivan” helps conserve water while providing a continuous supply of nutrient rich organic matter to improve the soil health.



After multiple cycles of innovation, experimentation, and evaluation over the past three years, KVK farmers are eager to have a greater role as community “change agents” – promoting and sharing their knowledge and experience in agroecology in a structured way with the larger Deslandes community. This summer farmers will plan a “**Pot Ouvert**” (“Open Door”) event where they will provide “hands on” demonstrations and dialogue with other farmers in order to facilitate more widespread use of these successful techniques of sustainable agriculture. These “farmer to farmer” exchanges will be videotaped and made available for viewing in schools and other community events through a new “**Agroecology Resource Center**” (ARC).

Partners in Progress provides technical support for the “**Konbit Vanyan Kapab**” (KVK) project as well as financial support derived from generous individual donors and partnership with the **Harvest for Haiti** program of **Mt. St. Peter Church** in New Kensington, PA



“Earth Block” Machine = New Classroom Construction + New Opportunities



PIP recently purchased and shipped to our Deslandes community school partners (“**Ecole Communautaire Gamaliel de Deslandes**” or **EGD**) a new hydraulic press to manufacture “compressed earth blocks” (CEBs) – high quality building blocks made of locally available materials. The machine will be used to manufacture blocks for a third **EGD** classroom building that will house a “**Community Cyber Center**” to be used by students and teachers during school hours and other community members during evenings or weekends. The new building will also house the “**Agroecology Resource Center**” (ARC) that will include a “tool bank” and storage for food processing and soil analysis equipment. Construction is scheduled to begin later this summer.

The new block machine will provide livelihoods to local “earth block” builders, facilitate increased access to affordable housing, and advance a safe and environmentally friendly alternative to conventional building while generating revenue to support the **EGD** school. In conjunction with the construction of “Building #3”, PIP and **EGD** will explore opportunities to create a local “earth building” cooperative business enterprise to manufacture earth blocks and take on other “earth block” projects across Haiti. Potential projects – already under consideration – range from single family houses to a radio station and permanent housing for elderly and disabled persons.

Fondwa Sisters Receive “Gift of Water” from Pittsburgh Area Congregation

With the generous support of **St. James Parish** in Sewickley, PA, Partners in Progress facilitated construction of a “rain water capture” system that is providing the “gift of water” at the formation house of the “**Little Sisters of St. Antoine**”, a community of women religious who work “*men nan men*” (“hand in hand”) with the **Association of Peasants of Fondwa** (APF), for the sustainable development of PIP’s partner community of Fondwa.



Children and youth in the St. James religious education program and vacation bible school, under the direction of St. James parishioner **Karen Conroy**, raised more than \$8,000 through a “penny power” campaign, bake sales, a walk/run/jump-a-thon, and through additional donations from St. James parishioners.

The “**Little Sisters of St. Antoine**” are a Roman Catholic community who follow a way of life based on the spirituality of St. Francis that includes service to the poor and respect for the integrity of creation. In PIP’s partner community of Fondwa they are responsible for managing the PIP-supported, primary-care **medical clinic**, the **Fatima House Orphanage**, and the **St. Antoine elementary and secondary schools**.

“ESPOIR Haitian American Orgnization” Legacy Continues Through PIP



After nearly 25 years of bringing HOPE to people in Haiti, the “**ESPOIR Haitian American Organization**” of Detroit, Michigan is closing its doors. PIP executive director Dr. Rich Gosser met with **ESPOIR** founder, **Jean Alcé**, MD, and **ESPOIR** acting president, **Carole Keller**, to receive a legacy gift of \$4,000 on behalf of the “*Education for Change*” fund of PIP’s “faith-based” **Rich in Mercy** division.

Through this gift to PIP, **ESPOIR** (“HOPE”) will continue giving HOPE by providing educational scholarships based on need and merit to children and youth primarily in Solino, a neighborhood of Port au Prince that is dominated by poverty, violence, disease, and despair.

Partners in Progress

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