

LIGHT OF LEARNING, INSPIRATION, EXCELLENCE SHINE THROUGH A COUNTRY'S CRISIS

Despite the spiraling crisis affecting much of Haiti, St Antoine School has remained in session. Its students, their parents, and teachers are the hope for Haiti. They are determined to make life better for their community and country.

This is a snapshot of long, sometimes perilous days, determination, and hope.

COURAGE AND COMMITMENT. A DARK FOUR-HOUR WALK TO AND FROM SCHOOL

Flashlights through the darkness while walking to and from school is a metaphor for the light and hope shining through the chaos and despair in Haiti.

There is nothing more inspirational in the work supported by PIP, its partners, and donors, than sacrifices made by students and their parents to make a better future.

Their names include Simplice, Succes Rose, Baptiste, and FleurJuste. They're young, courageous, inspirational, and driven to succeed.

Of the 610 students attending St. Antoine School in Fondwa, many walk two to four hours to and from school each day, while 75 walk an estimated four hours each way. A sixteen-hour day, six days a week for the privilege of receiving an education and a better future. From 15 villages they travel. In the dark. Through mountains. Across a river. Sometimes studying together along the way.

The school day at St. Antoine starts at 8 am, Monday to Saturday, for secondary students. These students leave home about 4 am with flashlights, books, and a change of clothes. Because it's early, dark, and dangerous, their parents walk with them until sunrise, before returning to their villages. "And, to be on time when it's raining," Sr. Claudette adds, "they leave home even earlier because the road is slippery and unsafe. These students must wear other clothes and shoes and carry their uniforms in a bag. When they get close to the school they stop and put on their uniforms."

The students' and parents' commitment continues when the school day ends after school is done at 4 pm. Students again walk as many as four hours, their parents again meet them on the road when it becomes dark, some not returning home until at 8 pm. A sixteen-hour day, six days a week.

RESILIENCE, INSPIRATION, AND SUCCESS

St. Antoine School provides children, families,



School of St. Antoine 9th grade students after taking the national exam

and communities a sense of stability, hope, and demonstrated success for the future during this period of crisis. Results are astonishing by our standards, but are now the norm in the rural villages served by St. Antoine School.

This year, St. Antoine students achieved a 96 percent passing rate on the national Baccalaureate exam which marks the end of their secondary level education. "This is nearly double," reports Sr. Simone, "the 49 percent average passing rate for students throughout the rest of Haiti's Ouest Department."

STAFF MAKE PERILOUS JOURNEYS

Many of the teachers also make tremendous personal sacrifices in order to educate students in the villages surrounding Fondwa. Some teachers reside in dangerous sections of Port Au Prince. They must first avert gang activity, then travel by sea from Port Au Prince to get safely down the coast where they can then take ground transportation to Fondwa. Teachers stay in Fondwa for a month at a time before going back home.

These teachers are heroes -- as inspirational in their commitment as students and parents.

SUPPORTING THE INSPIRATIONAL LIGHT OF LEARNING

Schools like St. Antoine are part of the foundation for building resilience, overcoming generational trauma brought about by the crisis, and shaping a better future for Haiti. You can support these efforts by going online at www.piphaiti.org and donating to "St. Antoine School Teachers' Salaries" or "Farm-to-School Child Nutrition" if you choose to give at this important time.

LOCALLY GROWN LUNCHES HEALTHY TRADITIONAL FOODS, HEALTHY CHILDREN

According to the latest report from the UN World Food Programme, 5.4 million Haitians—about half the population—are currently facing acute hunger. Additionally, one in four children in Haiti is suffering from chronic malnutrition.

Farm-to-School Child Nutrition farms in the communities of Fondwa, Layaye, Leogane, Savanette Cabral, and Papaye are growing healthy, traditional foods used in school lunches and other meal programs for children. This past year, the Farm-to-School farms provided daily meals for 1,049 school children and 65 children from the Fatima House Orphanage. Farm-to-School farms use agroecology practices that increase yield and crop diversity and protect against extreme weather. Farmers of the Farmer-to-Farmer Agroecology for Food Sovereignty Initiative (FAFSI), provide technical support throughout the growing season.

These farms are also helping to rebuild food sovereignty by serving as a place for testing and sharing agroecology innovations with youth and farmers. Sr. Claudette of the Sisters of St. Antoine, who manages two of the farms, including one at the orphanage, states: "When we can grow our own food, we won't be as dependent on outside help, and the health and economy of our communities will thrive."



Paroisse St. Yves student with lunch

PIP IN UGANDA

ALUR FARMERS EVALUATE AGROECOLOGY'S CLIMATE BENEFITS

Evaluation data is being gathered by Alur farmers of the Farmer-to-Farmer Agroecology for Food Sovereignty Initiative ("FAFSI"). This is part of an effort to expand and share knowledge about the potential for agroecology to help smallholder farmers adapt to climate change while improving environment, livelihoods and nutrition.

In October, FAFSI farmers teamed with Oyera Rural Inclusion and Well-being (ORIW) and PIP to assess the potential of agroecology to increase biodiversity of beneficial insects. ORIW agronomist Beatrice Anicingmungu, and PIP consultant David Honsberger PhD, an entomologist from University of Hawaii, worked with single mom farmers to begin surveys comparing the number of beneficial insects on agroecology with those of control plots.

FAFSI farmers use control plots, conventional, local methods of growing to compare with the increase in production and diversity of crops grown in agroecology trial plots. ORIW staff and FAFSI farmers already regularly analyze diversity of life in the soil by comparing the amount of bacteria and fungi in agroecology versus control plots.

A very preliminary and positive study completed by farmers in October showed greater biodiversity in agroecology plots as compared to that in the control plots. "This is mind-blowing to see multitudes of visible and invisible lives supported by agroecology," said ORIW Executive Director, John Baptist Oyera. "There are predatory wasps that feed on destructive pests...and parastoids are good for crops."

Next summer, farmers will expand the number of farms where these biodiversity surveys are conducted. They will compare soil organic matter in agroecology and conventional systems to assess overall soil health and ability of soil to sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gases. Despite increasing frequency of drought and other severe weather, plans are also underway to assess the potential of agroecology in helping farmers improve diversity and nutrition value of crops produced.



ORIW Agronomist Beatrice Anicingmungu explains the process for collecting and identifying beneficial insects.



Farmers from Oloi performing field surveys

FARMER-TO-FARMER EXPANDING

IN HAITI

The Konbit Vanyan Kapab Farmer-to-Farmer Agroecology for Food Sovereignty Initiative (FAFSI) is set to expand in Haiti and Uganda in 2025. PIP has partnered with Chokopam (www.chokopam.com), a Haitian-based company that manufactures chocolate products sold in Haiti and the U.S., to provide opportunities for Chokopam's cacao growers to transition to agroecology. FAFSI farmers will share knowledge and resources for fifteen growers from Milot, Haiti in the Nord Department to test agroecology techniques for cacao production.

PIP and partners will also introduce virtual farmer-to-farmer sharing with two other communities—Gwayavye in the L'Artibonite Department and Bassin Caiman in the Sud Department. We'd planned to expand FAFSI to these communities in early 2023, but violence and dangerous travel conditions made in-person activities impossible.

Gwayavye was one of the communities that farmers from Deslandes visited back in 2012 to see model forest gap and coffee production agroforestry systems, before

they began designing and launching three cooperative agroecology innovation farms as part of the initial Konbit Vanyan Kapab Agroecology Project.

In Bassin Caiman, PIP has partnered with Pittsburgh based Haiti H2O (www.Haitih2o.org), which invests in Haiti-led development solutions in rural communities. The technology for virtual activities has been successfully tested, including evaluation training for Agroecology Educators as part of FAFSI, and Literacy Project planning and implementation with community-based partners.

IN UGANDA

ORIW, PIP's community-based partner in Uganda, has identified two communities for expanding FAFSI based on farmer demand and level of need. This past summer, ORIW was approached by farmers and leaders from Kalowang and Kucwiny, located near the Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), about expanding FAFSI to include their communities. Kucwiny is unique because it is a potential site for refugees coming from the DRC.

AFOYO! MÈSI! THANK YOU!

Your support and solidarity with the people of Haiti and Uganda in 2024 has enabled farmers and our community partners to continue to ensure basic needs, while expanding key development initiatives.

We've shared just a few examples of the way you as supporters and donors have helped these partner communities remake healthy and thriving rural communities for future generations.

We hope you will consider an end-of-year gift and join our partners in their work to rebuild food sovereignty; improve rural economies and the environment; and increase access to housing, education, and children's services.

Thank you for all that you do! We wish you all the best in the new year.