



FALL 2023

productive cooperatives HAITI



*“They will beat their swords
into plowshares and their
spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword
against nation, nor will
they train for war anymore.
Everyone will sit under their
own vine and under their own
fig tree, and no one will make
them afraid.”*

Micah 4:3-4



The Foundation for International Development Assistance
Fondation pour le soutien du développement international



CAN THERE BE PEACE?

I prepared for my present role now some 25 years ago by reading all I could about Haiti including project proposals and reports from various international organizations. Concluding remarks always listed Haiti's myriad of challenges and what Haiti "must do". Of course, it is up to Haiti what it "must do". But, of course, we press on and spend more billions without Haiti having do much of anything except be poor and needy. In every report and presentation there is always a reference to "lessons learned". You still hear it today. However, to discover what those lessons are and what was changed remains a mystery that no one seems to want to talk about.

The most I currently gather what the big players in Haiti have learned is they don't want to (or can't) do it anymore (so get the Kenyans to do it). The only time I actually heard a "lesson learned" was at a Canada/ Brazil forum post 2010 earthquake. The response to my question from the then Canadian Ambassador to Haiti was, "We failed to lower our expectations." Sad but true. Brazil did not respond.

I confess that I have little need or appreciation to give or receive accolades or reference pride in achievement. Perhaps it is the Russian Mennonite in me? It was the inextricable link of peace and productivity that was modelled in my not-so-innocent childhood and shaped who I became. "The hope of Haiti is with those who have their hands in the soil," paraded my father... when "they will beat their swords into plowshares

"If we all want to do something, we know now we can do it. Alfa (literacy) makes us good citizens. It is the school of life. This is how we will build our country."

"Our eyes have been opened. This is no longer a dream. We can do this for real."

"We now know how to read and write. We must put our heads together for those who still don't know how. This is now our work, our responsibility. It is in our hands."

"If we want our country to go forward, we cannot have people who are blind and cannot read or write."

ADULT LITERACY PARTICIPANTS LEVEL 1

Thank you for being a light for literacy!

FIDA **pch**
 Foundation for International Development Assistance
 productive cooperatives Haiti (pchl)



and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid.” (Micah 4:3-4)

We are in an unprecedented time of war. If you want to know something about its absurdity and the historic stupidity of man and his glee for revenge, read Elmira-raised, Malcom Gladwell’s, “The Bomber Mafia”. In referencing the Biblical passage of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, he concludes that one can have everything if you walk away from your faith. *“Should we do evil so that good may come? Can we wage war in a way that satisfies our consciences?”*

Haiti knows plenty about stupidity, greed and revenge. War has been more insidious here, but it did what war does. It leaves an ash heap of destruction of which little good has come.

Perhaps, until now?

Let there be peace on earth. And may it begin with us.

Betsy Wall, Executive Director

Local agricultural technicians developed a tree nursery consisting of 4,082 fruit trees and 1,387 trees for reforestation.

In total, 5,469 seedlings reached their maturity and were transplanted.

Students participated in the demonstration garden and nutrition sessions to develop awareness in caring for the environment, to encourage farm plot activities, and to increase their means to produce nutritional food.

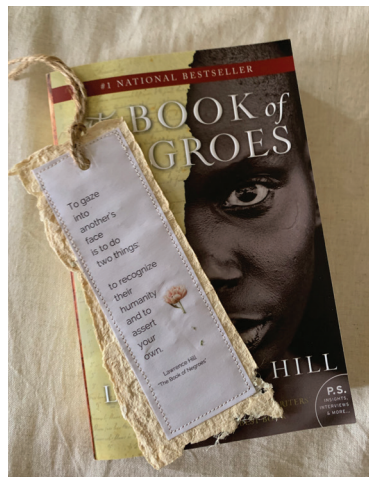


WHAT GOOD CAN COME FROM THIS?

The rampant violence in Haiti today can be considered worse than the devastation of the 2010 earthquake... because it comes from within. Because it is of (our) own making. And, so say many, that the solution must also come from within. My conversations with our Canadian Ambassador to the UN, Bob Rae reinforces our country's position that the solution must be Haitian-led. But who is to lead? Canada spent no small millions on attempts to train and strengthen the Haitian police force, all to no avail. We cannot expect that a Kenyan-led force will do much better. At present, it seems unlikely that their own government will agree to proceed.

My Haitian colleagues agree that change must come from within. Some believe there is finally a level of acknowledgement from the wealthy who have created it. Others believe it must come from the population who suffers. Indeed, we are seeing this; in the determination of the border canal which has drawn Haitian support from within and without Haiti. We see it in the weekly requests from Haitian and American organizations who have come to realize they must do things differently; that investment must be made for Haiti to feed itself. It has. And it can. Moreover, we see it in the motivation of Haitian men and women to want to know better, to be better. This is not possible for those who remain completely illiterate.

This past month our annual fundraising event in Niagara-on-the-Lake aimed to raise \$100,000 for adult literacy. We exceeded it thanks to the many who sponsored, who attended, who bought raffle tickets, and who bid on live auction items. Lawrence Hill, author of "The Book of Negroes" was our guest. His book centres on the story of Aminata, and her transatlantic journey on a slave ship as a young girl. It is the shared history of Haiti, a population who, to this day, suffers from





the generational scars of slavery and, most notably, “the twin demons of fear and mistrust”. This is accelerated by the high rate of illiteracy which continues to be one of the greatest obstacles that prevents Haiti from being “free”. Literacy is the theme in the life of Aminata that contributed to her eventual freedom.

The presentation was a Q & A format. At one point, I recalled that I first contacted the author after reading his book when it was initially published. The second paragraph of Chapter Two literally gob-smacked me: “To stare into another’s face is to do two things: to recognize their humanity and to assert your own”. It spoke directly to what motivates our approach in Haiti. I asked, and was granted, permission to use it on our website. I also vowed, at the time, that after reading his book, were I not working in Haiti, I would be compelled to do so, if only to redeem the sins of my Dutch ancestors.

Each of the 240 guests present received a copy of Lawrence Hill’s book along with a bookmark made by 2nd Story Goods with the above quote. We raised \$132,000. It is not enough. We presently have 2,500 men and women registered for the next term... 2,500 men and women determined to be the change within.

Surely, some good will come from this.

Betsy Wall





THE CHANGE WITHIN

As an organization we tend to focus more on actual “change” over numbers. However, the last quarter report on our innovative “Cooperative-based Health Services” pilot says something about both. This pilot was a response to a number of cooperatives requesting health care for their members and their community. As all FIDA/pCH programs and activities are designed to strengthen and/or reinforce the member-owned cooperative business model, it took thought and planning to determine what this might look like. It took a little longer to find a donor who believed in us. The concept was based on the health service functioning as a cooperative business along the lines of an insurance company. Members would pay an annual fee, based on agreed-upon terms, that would benefit them as a client and as an investor. We thought this would take off like gang busters and imagined an ambitious level of membership by year one. It did not do that exactly. We should have known. Even in the best of times, Haitians remain not only skeptical of new concepts but are challenged to understand and then accept new ideas. We had to patiently and consistently repeat and reinforce.

And so here we are having just wrapped our fourth year. While our reporting has become more sophisticated, we can say that in the same year-end quarter four years ago, there were 507 patients compared to 966 this year. The medical team reports now include patient numbers (m/f) by age groups, number of home visits, lab tests, emergencies attended to, telehealth services employed, and special clinics undertaken. The reports also record how many patients are members of cooperatives, have participated in adult literacy, as well as how they were referred. Further, what actions were taken in terms of addressing the environment, preventive health care and to encourage registration.



Eight cooperatives received loans from 100,000 - 500,000 HTG (\$1,040 - \$5,202 CAD) depending on their capacity to purchase the black bean harvest from members. The two cooperatives who received the largest loans have already repaid their loan in full. Interest is 1% per month over a 9-month lending term.

The big numbers are telling...665 are registered paying members representing 4,655 family members. They have collectively banked over \$31,000 USD through their various fees. They are trusting their own health services as more and more people in the community now come to the clinic instead of going to a charlatan or a vodou priest where they spend time and money only to see their state of health worsen. Visits to the clinic have increased as patients have come to understand the importance of taking their medications and to follow the doctor's instructions.

Moreover, the money that has been banked can now provide loans with favourable interest rates from which members can also benefit as well as receive dividends. Their money. Their choice. Their change.

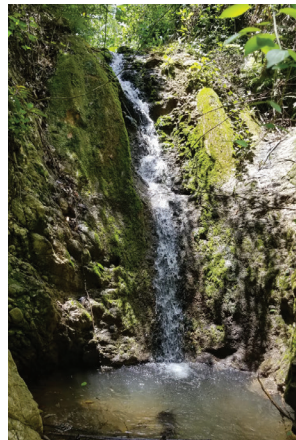




“Making a difference,” was a value our parents instilled in us children. This message is ever before me as I go about this business of life and all those things that require attention and that I so deeply care about. Sometimes it just takes slowing down before speeding up: taking time to breathe in the sight and sound of water. It is here I am offered comfort and solace. And I wonder if this was true for my father. Wherever we lived, Dad made sure there was water flowing or spouting, with a design to attract the birds he so loved. Such life ebbed and flowed around us. It is no small wonder that I feel the greatest connection to my father on my early morning walks on the beach or see birds dip and soar outside my office window. Perhaps this did the same for him...a man that never seemed to slow down. He needed such spaces: Whether a pond, a fountain, a stream, water quieted his soul. And it does so for me.

My sister shared with me a photo of his last trip to Haiti. His enthusiasm for the expansive reservoirs built under the seed storage silos had him nearly falling over. This month, the third of five reservoirs will be complete bringing this gift of life to hundreds of families in Fon Batis. I do believe this would have filled his soul with an unparalleled joy.

Ruth Wall-Olbrych, Country Director
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