



productive cooperatives HAITI

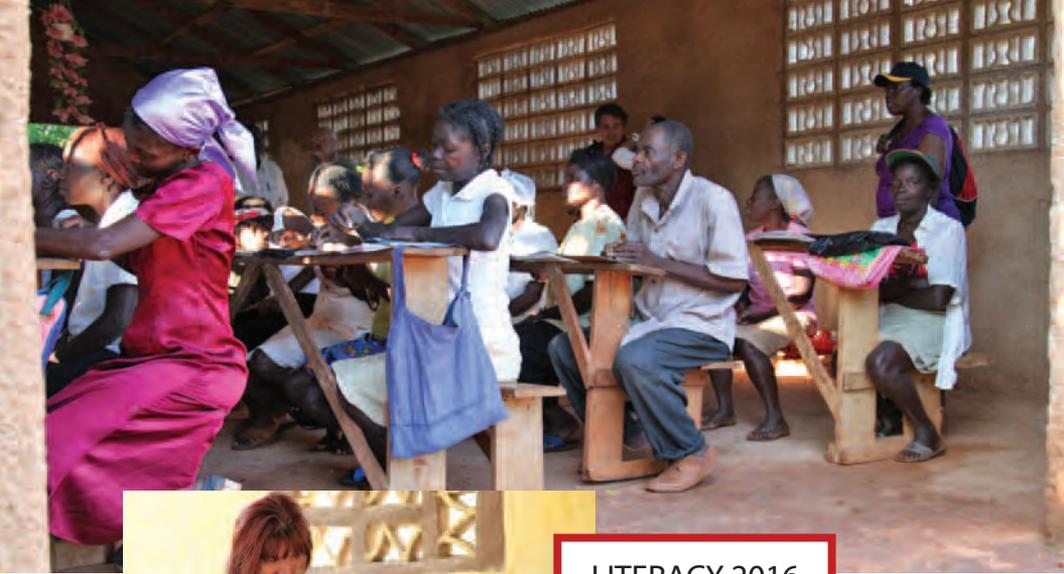
*"Based on **love, humility and confidence**, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship, the logical consequence is the mutual trust between those involved... Collaboration can be accomplished only through communication. The dialogue, the essential communication, must be the basis of any cooperation".*

Paulo Freire

Pedagogy of the Oppressed



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



LITERACY 2016

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Many years ago I was a young mother with two children struggling desperately to survive. My parents were in Haiti. Who could I turn to? My education was in theology. Who would ever hire me? I essentially had been a mother for the latter part of my life. What possible skills did I have? It was a time to take stock: I had an education, I knew how to budget, I knew how to cook and maintain an orderly home, I knew how to think critically, I believed I could make it happen. I had skills, I had determination, and I had people who believed in me. It is these things that motivate me to be a part of FIDA/pCH for as long as I am able.

The majority of parents in Haiti struggle daily to survive, to be able to provide for their children, to feed them, to send them to school, to hope for a better future. When they become most destitute, they turn their children over to an orphanage or a family member in the city where they are commonly neglected, beaten, physically and sexually abused. (In Haiti, children who reside with family members are known as *restaveks*). Children who manage to be adopted out to a foreign family often suffer from serious emotional disassociation which has long term psychological affects and from which they rarely recover.

These Haitian parents are loving parents. Given the opportunity for knowledge, for training, for resources, for understanding how they can help themselves and direct their future, is an immeasurable gift. It is one that you can give.

**I invite you to invest in their potential by supporting the
FIDA/pCH literacy program: Skills. Determination.
People who believe in them...**



FIDA/pcH provides literacy training to adult members of agricultural cooperatives and farmers' groups. These men and women, between 18 and 55 years, are typically simple farmers living in rural communities in Haiti. Women represent about 56 percent of membership. While women hold a special place in Haitian society, they are otherwise marginalized because of illiteracy and are most eager to enroll in classes. It is essential for all training sessions to take into account the culture and experiences of those that are participating. Hence, all training and communication is undertaken in the native language of Kreyòl. By doing so, we demonstrate respect for each other and for each member within the development process. When we offer respect, we have an opportunity to be influential and more capable of alleviating frustration in favour of self confidence and confidence in others.

WHY IS

LITERACY

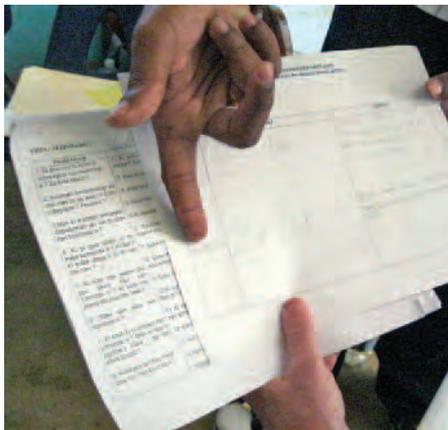
IMPORTANT?



FIDA/pcH is motivated to do what it does because of a belief that we are called to correct a social injustice. Like the rest of the world, Haitians deserve the opportunity to become literate. Although this opportunity is emerging later in life, courses in adult education stimulate self-awareness and self-confidence in farmers which allows them to improve their social and economic situation. The most efficient means to mitigate child poverty is to invest in their parents' ability to provide for them.

It therefore behoves us to provide the opportunity for the marginalized to realize their inherent resources and to invest in their motivation/desire to be equipped with the tools to be the central actors in their own development process.

The Engine of Sustainable Economic Development



Illiteracy is one of the greatest obstacles of the poor. When one has access to this precious right, one is able to gain the necessary knowledge and competence to better function in society. Without this essential tool, a person remains marginalized, frustrated and traumatized. Illiteracy constitutes a true obstacle to social and economic development. This is no more obvious, than in Haiti. Where people do not have confidence in themselves, one cannot then expect that they will have trust and confidence in others or that they will have the capacity to cooperate in order to build enterprise and generate income.*

Beyond economic and environmental barriers, Haitian farmers face widespread social barriers of fear and mistrust, which are aggravated in rural areas where the illiteracy rate is significant**. Peasant men and women frequently compare their illiteracy to blindness or like being an animal with a rope around their neck. These illiterate men and women struggle to protect themselves, constantly living in the fear of being duped, misled, and taken advantage of due to their lack of formal education. They are susceptible to superstition and are often humiliated, suffering financial loss at the market or taken advantage of by a voodoo priest (when they become enlightened through literacy they no longer go to the priest). This humiliation extends to community meetings where illiterate people are reluctant to share their thoughts because of their lack of education. As the elites of the communities often have a higher level of literacy, they assume a disproportionate level of power and control on the illiterate population.

*It is to be noted that ten out of eleven cooperatives that can be viewed as having failed (out of thirty-five), did not benefit from an adult literacy program.

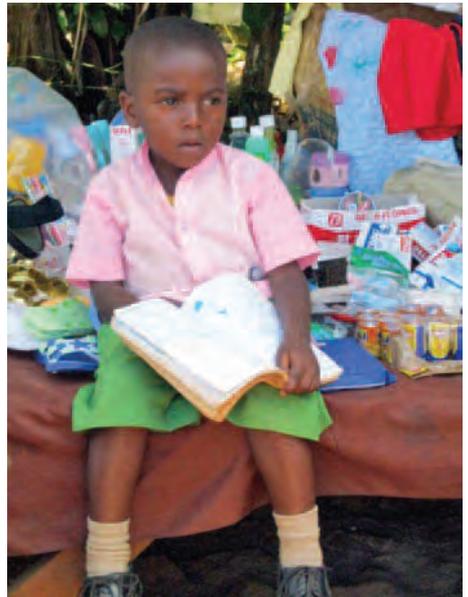
**In Haiti, while the national illiteracy rate is estimated to be approximately 56 percent, FIDA/pCH-initiated assessments reveal that this rate is upwards of 75 percent in rural areas.



It is impossible to realize any sustainable economic development without placing priority on the problem of illiteracy.

When men and women learn to read, to write, and to use basic mathematics, they discover their own capacity for learning. This becomes a first step towards achieving self-confidence. Confidence in self leads to confidence in others. This reciprocal and collective confidence is essential when undertaking sustainable development activities.

Illiteracy is a condition that impedes all human development. *It is impossible to realize any sustainable economic development without placing priority on the problem of illiteracy.* Literacy /adult training that includes dialogue and participation has become the center of all FIDA/pCH programming as it is understood to be the most appropriate strategy for building a foundation for sustainable economic development.





The community leaders and facilitators that convene Open Space acknowledge they do not have the answer to whatever complex, urgent, and important issues must be addressed. They put out the invitation to anyone in the community who is interested enough to attend the meeting and try to seek a solution.

As Open Space begins, everyone sits in a circle. The central theme is presented and everyone is briefed on the principles and laws of the Open Space:

- Whoever is present is meant to be present: the important leaders are not necessary to get something done; it is people who care.
- Open Space starts when it starts: spirit and creativity do not run on the clock.
- Open Space finishes when it finishes: we cannot determine how long it will take to resolve an issue. However, when the discussion is finished, we agree to move on.

THE ROLE OF "OPEN SPACE"



Open Space works best when:

- The issue is real and of concern to all.
- It is so complex that no single person or small group can fully comprehend or solve the issue.
- There is diversity of skills and people required for a successful resolution.
- The potential for conflict is real or imminent implying a high level of interest
- The issue is urgent such that the time is ripe for decisions and action.

Open Space methodology encourages women and men to share, to foster confidence, and to increase trust amongst each other. It also harnesses and acknowledges the power of self-organization. As it is conducted in an open forum, in a church or under a tree, it is an opportunity for participants to ask questions, discuss issues and topics of importance to them, exchange information, and propose ideas and solutions to their day-to-day challenges. These discussions occur in an atmosphere of immense freedom of expression, respect, listening, humility, and selflessness.

Open Space is an important tool for sustainable economic development to be achieved.



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We slowly climb the steep and rocky mountain road outside of St. Marc. About half an hour after we begin climbing the mountain we arrive at our destination; a school and medical clinic tucked neatly into the tree-covered mountainside. Our group eagerly hops out of the ambulance, stretches and waits quietly for participants to arrive for the adult literacy class that is to take place in the afternoon.

It isn't long before people start making their way to the school. Most of the participants are women wearing flip-flops and are dressed in skirts with bandanas or straw hats covering their heads. We greet them with a "bon swa" and they return the greeting with wide smiles. Our group joins them in the sweltering classroom comprised of concrete blocks and a metal roof. The class is ready to begin.

The students sit shoulder to shoulder on wooden benches and stare up at the teacher who greets the class and quickly dives into the material. She invites students to come up to the board and gives them words to write out in front of dozens of staring eyes. Without fail, the students write out the words given to them and the rest of the class show their approval with loud applause. Most of the 40 or so students in the class get the opportunity to write on the board. They are proud and self-assured as they march to the board. Even more so after they successfully write in Kreyòl. It is a joyous and inspiring scene as adults who were never given the opportunity to learn how to read and write as children are now doing so in front of their peers.

Near the end of the hour long class the students burst into song. They sing loudly and with a degree of self-confidence rarely found among Haitian peasants. There is a line in the song that the students sing over and over again, "*Now we can write our names and will no longer have to sign our names with an X.*" You see in Haiti when you are illiterate you simply sign documents with an X. While merely a letter, the X functions as an indicator of poverty, a lack of education and social status. It can be a humiliating and self-deprecating act often causing fear and divisiveness in communities. On this day, however, in a hot crowded classroom a group of Haitians celebrate their newly found ability to read and write. They celebrate the opportunity to be a part of a community without being looked down upon. Perhaps most importantly, they celebrate having found their voices as living testaments to the greatness that lies within us all.



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