




FALL 2018

productive cooperatives HAITI



"We believe in the inherent right for every person to know dignity and self respect. We believe this can best be achieved through a cultivated ability to provide for one's self, one's family and one's community. We endeavour to encourage self sufficiency in Haiti; to work at the grassroots to introduce appropriate technology and training to help communities work out solutions to their adversities."



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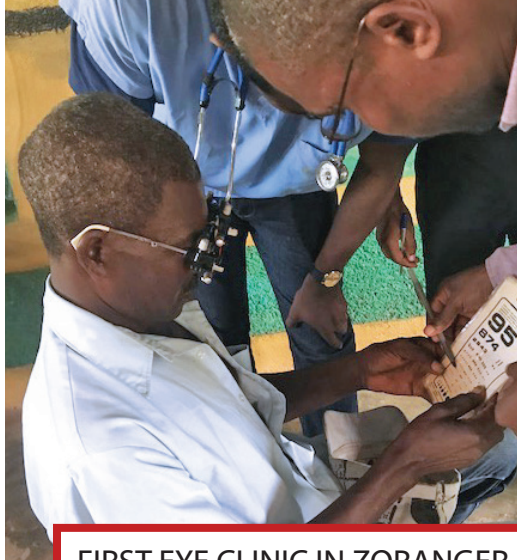


EDITORIAL...

When my father first began describing to me the cooperative model and what it could do for Haiti, I admit that I quite simply couldn't get my head around the concept. It is important for me to remind myself of how long it took for me to grasp the merits of the cooperative business model when people inquire about what FIDA/pcH does and why we are so passionately committed to this vision for Haiti. I have observed that one of the challenges encountered is that most foreigners in Haiti cannot imagine the possibility of "poor" Haitians motivated enough to participate in a business they have envisioned, let alone have the financial resources to invest in it and the capacity to manage it! This "poor" image of Haiti is a most limiting factor for Haitians who desire to be seen as motivated and capable people desiring to provide for themselves and their families.

The second challenge I have observed is that many people (organizations) coming to Haiti with a view to "help" is rooted in being able to say "look what we are doing for the poor". This approach is at odds with the cooperative model which is intended to be autonomous and independent, controlled and managed by its members. The mission and vision of FIDA/pcH has not been an easy one to understand but it has been wholly embraced by the women and men of Haiti. This newsletter is dedicated to reinforcing why we exist, to encouraging an appreciation of the methodology we employ to our readership and the many of you who believe in this through your generous support. On this eve of our 35th year, I give thanks to each of you, and to God who gave me the gift of my parents. For without them this vision for Haiti would not exist; without the women and men whose lives, and the lives of their children and grandchildren, have been forever changed, it would not carry on.

~ Betsy Wall, Executive Director



FIRST EYE CLINIC IN ZORANGER



With the cooperative literacy program in its second year in Zoranger, it was observed that a number of the participants who were learning to read and write had challenges with their eyesight. The Chairman of the pcH Board, Dr. Joey Prosper, offered to host an eye clinic with his team to assess the issues and provide appropriate eyeglasses. The clinic was held on November 8th. The optometrist and his team saw 72 patients of which 56 were prescribed glasses. The team also did tests for vital signs and found that 32 had high blood pressure. A small number showed systems of other eye diseases. The first group of patients were seen at a local church but because it was market day, the team chose to see the rest of the patients in the marketplace.

The excitement ran high at the possibility of their eyesight being enhanced. Illiterate women and men often describe their illiteracy as “being blind.” This metaphor from “darkness to light” is not lost on the doctors who are now bringing to them a new level of “light”.





WHAT MAKES FIDA DIFFERENT?

By all accounts, Haiti has more Non-Government Organizations per capita than any other country, lending to the epitaph, “The Republic of NGO’s”. With a population topping 11 million, there is a reported 10,000 international organizations present in Haiti ranging from small missions to large multi-national aid organizations. Each attempt to develop activities that will move Haiti and its people beyond poverty. Despite the myriad of efforts, the majority of the population remains poor and illiterate with a sustained dependence on foreign intervention to provide health care, education for their children, food and relief for the disasters so often encountered.

FOCUS: FIDA began its work in Haiti in 1984 and remains the single country of focus. productive cooperatives Haiti (pcH) is the evolution of the Canadian charity, renamed in 2001 to reflect its precise mandate and commitment to a sustainable development model that is *envisioned by the people, owned by the people, and managed by the people*. pcH received its certification as a registered Haitian not-for-profit in 2003 and maintains an all-Haitian staff.

RESPONSIVE: The mission of FIDA/pcH is to be responsive over interventionist. We engage with a community by *invitation only*. This ensures there is a level of motivation at the community level to take action to change their impoverished situation.

NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS: FIDA/pcH believes all people deserve the right to know dignity and self-respect through a cultivated ability to provide for one’s self and one’s family. It does not favour one gender over the other, or one faith over the other. However, at least 50% of members are female which creates equal opportunities for all members with the majority of members of the Christian faith community.

BUSINESS MODEL: No investment in Haiti can be sustained unless it begins with a business model with principles, structure, transparency, accountability and participation. Our view is that it must be owner envisioned, owner invested, and owner managed. The FIDA/pcH adherence to the Seven Principles of International Cooperative sets them apart in Haiti in promoting the merits of a true cooperative business model.



AGRICULTURE: *A country that cannot feed itself will forever be poor.* Haiti, once the most productive island in the Caribbean now has a 70% dependence on subsidized

imports that a Haitian farmer is paralyzed to compete against. While widely acknowledged that agriculture is the primary sector to advance Haiti economically, its productivity has been systematically undermined for decades. FIDA/pcH invests exclusively in rural communities that depend on some form of agriculture to make a living.

HUMAN CAPACITY: FIDA recognizes that a business model is not sustainable when the majority of the participants are illiterate. We developed a comprehensive four level adult literacy program incorporating images and scenarios of rural life in Haiti that the average peasant can relate to. Each level is nine months and is taught by men and women from the community who have been instructed by FIDA/pcH staff and undertaken a test to qualify them. Cooperatives are required to provide the locations of the teaching centres. Hours of instruction are scheduled to accommodate the work day so are held pre dawn or late afternoon. As adult literacy is not viewed as priority in Haiti, the FIDA/pcH program is unprecedented.

PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGY: It is not what you do in Haiti that is critical but how you do it. FIDA/pcH is a strict adherent and practitioner of *Participatory Methodology* in all its undertakings. Participatory Methodology is an approach founded on the belief that a population has the capacity to assess their situation and the ability to make decisions that ultimately affect their lives. In this way, we act not as leaders but as followers. If they go fast, we go fast. If they go slow, we go slow. If they stop, we stop.

COMMITMENT: Our pcH staff live in the community throughout the term of engagement to support training and activities to ensure the best outcome for the beneficiaries. This requires considerable sacrifice and commitment but is essential in establishing trust and confidence. It also allows staff to observe community life and be able to be knowledgeably responsive when challenges arise.



THE COOPERATIVE MODEL AT WORK

The vision of FIDA/pCH is to be a leader in the development and establishment of productive agricultural cooperatives as the vehicle for sustainable economic advancement for the country of Haiti. Given that 70% of Haitians depend on some form of agriculture to make a living, that Haiti *does* have the potential to feed its population, a cooperative model that is locally invested, owner driven and owner managed, is coming to be viewed as the most appropriate and viable response for a vision of independence.

The cooperative model is particularly well suited for rural communities in Haiti. Often referred to as The Third Way, it emerges as the response to addressing adversity when there exists no national infrastructure or no individual capacity to overcome extreme challenges. It is the experience of FIDA/pCH that change in Haiti is not sustainable without a structure to incubate it.

The true cooperative model then:

- provides much needed infrastructure at the rural community level where none exists
- is designed to address economic adversity
- is a democratic model requiring transparency and accountability
- requires individual commitment, investment and cooperation
- adheres to the Seven International Principles of Cooperative

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

The first choice for the economic activity of the KOPEDAG cooperative established in April 2018 in Gonaïves” (translated as “Productive Cooperative for the hope of tomorrow for Asifa) was to invest in egg-laying chickens but after much discussion it was realized that they would have quicker and better returns if they opted to raise broilers.



The members were presented with the option of having one large unit that they would manage “cooperatively” or smaller units for each member. They were also presented with the roles and responsibilities, advantages and disadvantages of each option. The membership agreed to go for individual member units. Three phases were proposed with the first phase beginning with 15 select members. While there was much disappointment that not all members would be included in the first phase, it was accepted.

The objective of a cooperative is not only to respond to the needs of the members but also to grow the cooperative collectively as a business. In this case, the cooperative is provided chicks and feed by pCH at a wholesale price which the cooperative then resells to the members at a competitive, yet profitable rate. The cooperative is also provided credit funds to be re-loaned to members. Each member will be offered approximately \$200 for start-up capital along with terms and conditions (including interest) which is reinvested in the cooperative.

The start-up capital allows for the purchase of 60 chicks, feed, bedding, vaccinations and related supplies. A model two-story “coop” for a maximum of 100 birds is provided with the condition that the member agree to a minimum of three (42 day) cycles per year. If the member does not abide by the terms and conditions of their contract, the cooperative reserves the right to take back the coop and offer it to another member who will agree to the terms and conditions as set out by the management.

It is in the interest of the member to produce as they not only benefit from their individual enterprise but, by supporting their cooperative, they also benefit in terms of dividends paid out according to their invested share value if and when the cooperative is profitable.



FIDA/pcH MEETS MANY HANDS FOR HAITI

FIDA USA Executive Director, Patrick Bentrrott, first met Tim Brand at a business meeting for organizations working in Haiti. Tim, a successful businessman, had a faith story that led him to found, “Many Hands for Haiti” with a mandate of *transformation* for men and women in the area of Pignon in the Central Plateau Department. While Tim and his team have established an impressive “wholistic” model, they knew that a local community structure was a next step. Tim was familiar with the cooperative model and was seeking expertise, appreciating that it may not be necessary to “reinvent the wheel” if the expertise already successfully existed. Patrick connected him to the FIDA/pcH team in Haiti and a visit was arranged.

FIDA Canada Executive Director, Betsy Wall, travelled with pcH Agronomes Legrand Charles and Yves Charles to meet Tim and his team, to learn of the many facets of their program and to sit with select community leaders to hear of their activities, their challenges, their vision and what resources they had to realize their vision. Such discussion is the first step in engaging a community toward an “owner-based” process.

A brief will be presented along with recommendations for next steps. We anticipate this to be a new opportunity of collaboration to move another community toward a sustainable vision for Haiti.



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