



SPRING 2022

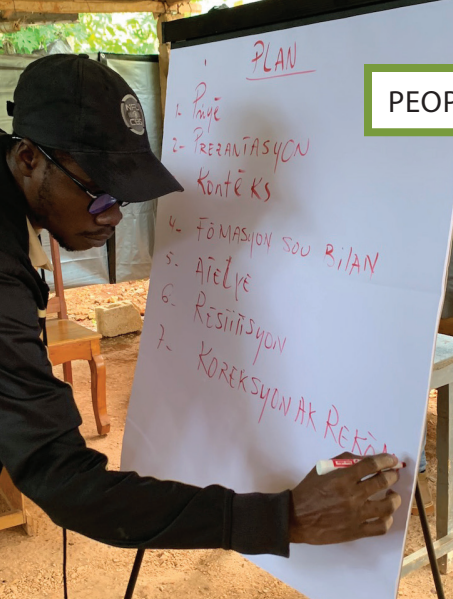
productive cooperatives HAITI

"It remains for us and the generations that follow, to honor the legacy of faith we have inherited, to be the people of compassion and understanding when we wish to walk hand in hand with the people of fear who, too, are created in the image of God. For this we must."

~ Betsy Wall



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



PEOPLE OF FAITH. PEOPLE OF FEAR.

On a recent flight to Haiti, I sat beside a Haitian woman, who was returning for a one-day visit after some years of being away. She asked me, “Are you ever afraid?” I am not sure it is what is to be expected in a relatively casual conversation, but my answer was unequivocal, “No, I never have been afraid.” I cite a number of reasons about being a Haitian organization, that we are not perceived as “military, mercenary, or missionary” and how we navigate ourselves in a country such as Haiti with caution and our God-given wisdom. But as I watch the events of the Russo-Ukraine war unfold, I am wondering if it comes from something deeper.

My father was born in The Ukraine. Both my families suffered immeasurably throughout the Bolshevik Revolution, particularly under the brutality of the Makhnovists. This was the consequence of affluent Mennonite colonies who put their backs into unproductive land granted to them by Catherine the Great. Many of these stories I heard while sitting at the feet of my two “Omas”. I was often mesmerized by these both romantic and harrowing tales of their escape; the love, the faith, the intensity of survival. Notwithstanding imprisonment, fight or flight decisions, and leaving behind all they had, both my grandparents, and the children they had at the time, managed passage to Canada. They carried with them their unshakeable faith rooted in the values of peace and productivity. They worked hard and they worked together, establishing extremely prosperous Mennonite communities throughout Western Canada as well as Ontario, where both my families eventually settled, and where my parents eventually met.

You can be sure, as their first born, currently working in a country such as Haiti, that these current events have me reflecting on what it might have been like for my grandparents to have to choose what they leave and what they take. The passport I once had in my possession was of my Oma holding my father in her lap. Neither reflecting the face of fear. Only resolve. They do what they must.

And so, as I sit here in Haiti, watching the 24-hour breaking news, I think of these things. I think of my father in whom I never saw fear. And, I think,



that maybe there is within me something I have inherited, that a people of faith are not a people of fear.

However, the people of fear are here, in this country that I have come to for well over 50 years. These are the people who, at the same time my Swiss-German-Dutch ancestors were arriving in the New World to freely live out their faith, were being sold and shipped as slaves to this same New World. They were tortured and brutalized far beyond what my grandparents experienced. Their history of impoverishment in this country is the legacy of fear. (Many may not know that Columbus first disembarked on the northern coast of Haiti. The anchor of the Santa Maria is cemented in the MUPANAH museum in Port-au-Prince.) So too, the generational scars of slavery are cemented here: fear, mistrust, low self-esteem, and inability to believe beyond today. In their own words, they are the biblical “Cains” rejected by God, condemned to languish in labour for the sin of their skin. It is these generations of a “people of fear” that I have chosen to spend the rest of my life with. It remains for me and the generations that follow, to honour the legacy of faith we have inherited, to be the people of compassion and understanding when we wish to walk hand in hand with the people of fear who, too, are created in the image of God. For this we must.





WHAT HAITI NEEDS: BETSY WALL

My Dad was a consummate believer in integrating all members of a community and he was never short of ideas on how to make this happen. When my parents started Parkhill Girls' Home, the property needed clearing. My Dad rounded up kids from the community to pick up rocks, heaving them into a makeshift flatbed vehicle that motored along beside us. At the end of each day, he would have us line-up and dole out a role of quarters into our grubby hands in payment for the day's work. This memory came to me during a three-day mobile clinic we undertook in Duchity following the August 14, 2021 earthquake. At the end of one clinic, I gazed at the detritus left from the crowds we had served that day. Now, Haiti is known for its garbage filled streets and streams. Its failure to recognize the impact of this on their environment or capacity to address the issue, is often decried by visitors and foreigners living in the country. I am among those who have a low-level tolerance for uncollected garbage. I have often thought about how this could possibly change.

My time had come. Staring up at me surveying the site were seven young boys, the only ones still hanging around as we were closing up. Shaking my head at the site, I summoned the president of the cooperative (as he was responsible for the organization of the mobile clinic) to ask what he was going to do about the mess left behind. He declared that since the site was on the grounds of the school that it was not his responsibility. I countered that as the president of a cooperative, he is to reflect leadership and model practices in his community such as care and protection of the environment. We discussed what to do. I agreed, on behalf of pCH, that we would pay each boy who would help to clean up the entire area. However, the condition was that there must be no visible garbage left anywhere. I emphasize this because Haitians commonly filter what they see as garbage. Hence, I gave them a little tutorial. They wasted no time in finding boxes and bags, running around like they were hunting for Easter eggs. While I was watching over this site, two of them approached me to ask if they made some more mess, would I pay them more? Of course, we all laughed, but it is an indicator of the thinking processes of this country. I advised them that no one would be paid until an inspection was undertaken. Once complete, they would have to come to the place where we were staying and we would settle accounts.



Despite that we passed by them twice that evening, they never begged or cried out for their payment as they sat on top of the cement wall. Four of them arrived early the next morning. My colleague asked where were the other three to which they responded that they did not know. It was made clear that no one would be paid until every one of the seven were present. They found the other three. My colleague stood them in a line and began giving each one 250 HTG (about \$3 USD at the time), an astonishing amount for a child as it is more than the daily wage for many adults who work in the city. I asked each one what they would do with their earnings: "I will give it to my mother so she can buy food for the family. I will be able to pay for lunch at school. I will pay for my school fees for this month." And there it was. I wondered what would it take for any organization or mission family present in a community such as this to hire ten little groups of seven and pay them 250 HTG to clean up their community? There would be no need for child sponsorships or feeding programs. There would be dignity and pride and ownership.

This is what Haiti needs.





FIDA USA FOR LITERACY: RUTH WALL-OLBRYCH, COUNTRY DIRECTOR

I do not take lightly the mantle that has been passed to me as the Country Director for FIDA USA. In all honesty it has taken some time for me to determine the path which I will blaze to further promote the work of FIDA/pcH to our USA constituency. My role is to inspire people to invest in the potential of Haitian women and men. This can best be done by telling the story of the impact of our giving to a country where it seems like it doesn't matter... *just give something/anything, because the need is so dire*. However, it really does matter. Without serious reflection, our "good will" can be ineffectual, even harm inducing.

Following an exciting three- year term as a cultural liaison for International Child Care in Haiti in 1983, I was primed to build on the connections made to bring the story home... to churches and schools and service clubs. However, God had other plans for that particular time in my life which included a number of years in Asia, with my husband and children. Now, I am here, positioned to take on a role I so aspired to almost four decades ago.

I am excited to share my story and the work of FIDA/pcH, developing community cooperatives in Haiti; In particular, the phenomenal adult literacy program... the "pillar" of our mission that my predecessor, Patrick Bentrott, so enthusiastically promoted, contributing to the transformation of 300 women and men the community of Zoranger to realize a dignity that eluded them for most of their adult lives.



This month approximately 800 adults will be completing their first year in Delis and Fon Batis where it has been nearly 20 years since their last graduation in 2003. For three cooperatives in Duchity, it has been nearly ten years since their last graduation that saw over 1,400 adults transformed through literacy. They are now asking us to prepare the next generation to realize the same opportunity. This is the commitment of FIDA USA... to play a role in making this a reality.

I may have physically left Haiti in 1986, but my heart remains. I invite you to be so moved.

At various stages throughout the literacy year, participants are given little tests to determine their progress. They have to demonstrate their ability to write as well as the capacity to comprehend content and discern words and sentences. On a recent test they were asked to write their name, the date and read the following:

"We are having a little chat about children who go to school. We are their parents who are raising our children. Jan and Meli are from Fon Batis. We are all parents and as a family, we talk about health."

Then to copy the following phrases:

- We like health
- We do not leave the house without sweeping
- We like to ask for forgiveness
- Good food is necessary for health

In the final section they are asked to choose the right word to complete the phrase and underline which words are animals. Bravo to all for their good work!

1) kopi 2) degl 3) manman
janjan se moun fonbatis

5. Fè yon tras anba non bèt yo
Lapen kale defi kana bato
Ze chape kochon bale pijon

Chapit #3

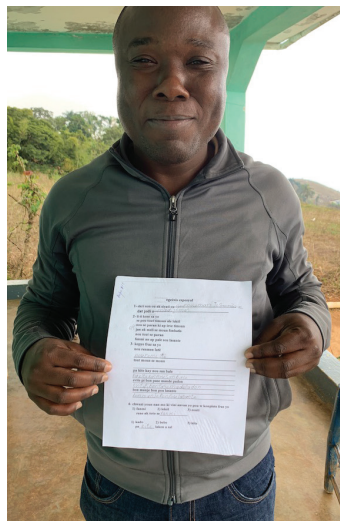
egzèsis espesyal

1- ekri non ou ak siyati ou Cledone Altine
dat jodi a ma di 7 Pr mas

2- li ti koze sa yo
se pou tout timoun ale lekòl
nou se paran ki ap leve timoun
OK jan ak meli se moun fonbatis
nou tout se paran
fanmi an ap pale sou lasante
3- kopye fraz sa yo
nou renmen latè
nou renmen latè
tout moun se moun
tout moun se moun
pa kite kay nou san bale
pa kite kay nou san bale
evite pi bon pase mande padon
evite pi bon pase man padon
bon manje bon pou lasante
bon manje bon pou lasante

4- chwazi youn nan mo ki vini anvan yo pou w konplete fraz yo
1) fanmi 2) lekòl 3) zouti
rene ak toto se fanmi

1) kado 2) bebe 3) kite
pa kite lakou a sal





WHERE THERE IS VISION... PEOPLE THRIVE

I am sure everyone is familiar with the scripture, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” It is one of 26 potential consequences cited in Proverbs 29. I thought of this on my recent trip to Fon Batis with pcH staff, Veniel Jean. It is not an easy travel in the best of times. The recent rains had eroded the already precarious mountain road. To distract me, even as we veered right and left to avoid the rocks, Veniel talked about vision, about how we need to take care of FIDA, of pcH and how we hold to the vision of my grandparents and my mother. Despite the treacherous parts of the drive that had me thinking that I could die at any moment, our conversation filled me with confidence. Veniel drove on with a belief in his ability that he knew what he was doing and that God was with us. I began to see how faith influences decision-making that I, as third generation, am often charged with. When I was in school, I was told that I must learn to write essays, a discipline my over-active mind could not manage. While I knew this was not my strength, I believed there were things I could do. I thought of this as Veniel reminded me of the vision that I was born with. When we reached the pcH base at the top of the mountain, overlooking more mountains and the valley that is the site of the water source that Hope International Development Agency (HIDA) is partnering with us to bring



water to thousands of families, Veniel spreads his hands and explains to me the vision. And I think of my grandfather... and of my mother, who always reminded of the above scripture, and she would say to me, “My daughter, what this verse is really telling us is, “Where there *is* vision, people will *thrive*”. Here, in Fon Batis, there is vision. There is faith. There is commitment. And people will thrive.

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