



## WINDOWS ON OUR WORLDS

News from **PARTNERS IN PROGRESS (PIP)** – Fall / Winter 2013

### Deslandes “Soil Health” Initiative Sparks Community-Wide Transformation



For two years some 50 farmers from Deslandes and neighboring villages have participated in the “**Konbit Vanyan Kapab**” (KVK or “*Together We Can*”) initiative to revitalize traditions of caring for the land and to introduce innovations in agricultural practice aimed at improving soil health, increasing yields, and creating new economic opportunities. Their efforts have sparked a community-wide transformation towards more sustainable agriculture and community resilience.

KVK farmers have been able to nearly double the yield of staple crops such as “*pitimi*” (millet). Seeing these results, growing numbers of community members are adopting various “agroecological” innovations such as poly-cropping, companion planting, mulching and contour planting to reduce soil erosion, and rotating or integrating cover crops to improve soil fertility. Fewer farmers are engaging in the common practice of burning their fields before planting, choosing instead to incorporate old plant material back into the soil as a way of building soil organic matter and helping to conserve moisture. More than 6000 multi-purpose trees have been planted. Additionally area schools have begun integrating agroecology and environmental education activities into the elementary school curriculum.

As the winter “dry season” begins, KVK farmers plan to reflect on their past accomplishments as they tour and evaluate their experimental farm plots. Working collaboratively and with technical support from **Partners in Progress**, they will create a plan for increasing farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing opportunities within their local region in 2014. Guided by a “learn, do, improve” model, they will also identify ways of improving upon promising agroecology strategies and begin organizing cooperative ways of processing and marketing economically valuable specialty crops and value-added agricultural products.



### Rising from the Rubble, New Fondwa School is “Open for Business” in October



In January 2010 a massive earthquake struck Haiti and more than 20 years of infrastructure development on the part of **PIP’s** collaborators in the **Association of Peasants of Fondwa** (APF) – including the St. Antoine elementary and secondary school – was completely destroyed in a mere 35 seconds! Within 6 weeks the school resumed classes in transitional structures jointly financed by **Partners in Progress** (PIP) and **Family Health Ministries** (FHM). Planning for a new school complex began almost immediately and financing was provided by a consortium of funders which included PIP and FHM. Construction of new classrooms began in January 2012 and the new complex was ready for use at the opening of the current academic year in October. A formal inauguration of the new school is planned for early 2014.

The new classroom complex consists of two main buildings, each housing six rooms and joined by a central staircase. Each building has two stories on the main campus level and a third story below the main level, facing the Fondwa valley and anchored into the bedrock underlying the campus. Well-lighted, spacious classrooms have been outfitted with new benches for the students and desks for the teachers. Teachers, staff, and students are unanimous in their praise for the enhanced teaching and learning environment that the new classrooms provide for nearly 600 students!

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit corporation with tax ID # 25-2896636.

All donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

The official registration and financial information of Partners in Progress may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, toll-free within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

## Local Craftsmen Add “Finishing Touches” to Deslandes “Earth Block” School

Construction of the second, “earth block” classroom building for the **Ecole Communautaire Gamaliel** or ECG school was completed nearly a year ago with financing made possible largely by the generous support of “**Anne Mullaney’s Friends for Haiti**”, a group of friends and family members of former PIP board member Anne Mullaney who initiated fundraising for the project before her untimely death in 2011. The school is built using “compressed earth blocks” or CEBs, which are high-quality building blocks fashioned on site using a mixture of soil, sand, and a small amount of cement.

Recently the ECG school buildings received a new coat of paint and were fitted with locally-crafted doors and windows. Expert craftsman from the Deslandes region, who were former students of the ECG school, fashioned window frames and doors out of “bwa chen”, locally grown, sustainably harvested wood. The onsite workshop attracted the attention of local youth and inspired an interest in carpentry among children currently attending the ECG school.



Construction of two additional classrooms that will provide space to house a solar-powered computer lab for the school and a resource center for education and formation in agroecology (the science underlying sustainable agriculture) is set to begin in January 2014. This final phase of “earth block” construction is intended to launch an “earth block” business that will continue to provide jobs and livelihoods to local workers and generate income to help support the ECG school.

## School Garden Links Traditional Values to Environmental Awareness and Action

With guidance from local farmers participating in the “**Konbit Vanyan Kapab**” (KVK or “Together We Can”) initiative, the students in grades 4, 5 and 6 of the **Ecole Communautaire Gamaliel** or ECG school, together with their teachers started a “*jaden Ieko*” (“school garden”). The garden serves to reinforce traditional values of land and water management and link them to greater environmental awareness and action. Students learn about the health, economic, and environmental benefits of a diverse and healthy agro-ecosystem. The garden includes five different kinds of fruit trees; the “three sisters” combination of corn, beans and squash; and a nutritionally diverse variety of other locally consumed vegetables. Produce from the garden is used in school lunches and sold in the local market.



## Barraderes Project = Food Support for Elderly + Vocational Training for Youth



Barraderes, located in the Nippes department in the southwest part of Haiti, has a population of about 32,000 and is accessible via a rocky dirt road and passable only to large trucks and high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicles.

PIP’s “*Rich in Mercy*” (RIM) division provides partial financial support for the “Barraderes Project” which provides food support (rations of rice, beans, sugar and oil) to 300 elderly residents who are “at risk” for malnutrition and chronic hunger. Additionally the project provides basic health care for “seniors” and classes in embroidery, cooking, and sewing for local youth. The project is coordinated by **Sr. Denise Desil** (pictured with PIP executive director Rich Gosser) of the Little Sisters of St. Therese whose community has worked in Barraderes since 1972.

### Partners in Progress

329 N. Fairfield Street • Ligonier, PA 15658  
Tel.: 724-238-9204 • Cell.: 724-875-2899  
[info@PIPHaiti.org](mailto:info@PIPHaiti.org) [www.PIPHaiti.org](http://www.PIPHaiti.org)