



## WINDOWS ON OUR WORLDS

News from *PARTNERS IN PROGRESS (PIP)* – Fall and Winter 2010

### **At Least 9 Dead in Deslandes as Partners Counter Deadly Cholera Epidemic**

An outbreak of deadly cholera swept through Haiti's Artibonite valley at the end of October resulting in at least nine deaths in PIP's partner community of Deslandes. A flood of severely ill patients quickly overwhelmed hospitals in St. Marc and Deschapelles. PIP board member, **Mike Neumann**, advisory council member, **Ospri Descommes**, and the management team of PIP's partner organization the **Centre d'Intervention Jeunesse** (CIJ), were present in Deslandes when the outbreak started and quickly began disseminating life-saving information about prevention and treatment. Following the lead of the CIJ team, families throughout the region immediately prepared supplies of homemade oral rehydration solution to treat victims of the bacterial disease that can result in death from dehydration and loss of electrolytes. Contaminated water in the Artibonite River was tagged as the most likely source of the deadly infection.



### **First "Earth Block" Construction Nears Completion – Training Center Planned**

A hurricane-resistant roof added to the first of four "earth block" school buildings that will comprise the new PIP financed **Centre d'Intervention Jeunesse** (CIJ) elementary school in Deslandes brings the school one step closer to completion. The "stabilized earth block" technology is an environmentally friendly method of building that utilizes locally available materials and provides thermal and seismic advantages over conventional cement block construction. In December the building is scheduled for completion when Jeff Rottler, from the **Tierra y Cal Institute** in Mexico, will train the local construction team in techniques of natural earth plastering and flooring.



Consistent with the broader CIJ vision of sustainable development for Deslandes and the surrounding region, the experience gained in this first phase of "earth block" construction will become the basis for an "earth block construction" (EBC) training center as part of a "**Village to Village Sustainable Development Project**" in which Haitian engineers, skilled builders, apprentice builders and ordinary citizens will learn the techniques of EBC as a way of meeting the long-term needs for post-earthquake housing and other construction needs in rural Haiti while generating alternative economic opportunities .

### **St. Antoine Students Return – "Design Phase" of Reconstruction Underway**

The St. Antoine School in Fondwa reopened in October with children attending classes in improved, temporary structures built by volunteers organized by **Family Health Ministries** (FHM) and financed jointly by FHM and **Partners in Progress** (PIP). Last year, against all odds, following the massive earthquake that destroyed the former St. Antoine School, the elementary students achieved a 100% success rate on their graduation certificate exams while 11 of 12 secondary students passed their graduation exams on the first attempt. "*Bay Chapo yo*" - "*Hats off*" to the students, their teachers, and the administration!



Progress towards a new, permanent St. Antoine School has entered the "Design Phase". Architect **Bob Theis** and "green building" expert **Tim Owen-Kennedy** conducted a "design charrette" with teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders in the school and researched local material sources during a 3 week visit to Fondwa in October and November. A detailed proposal with timeline for completion is expected before the end of the year.

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## **“Together We Can Succeed” - Deslandes Soil Health Initiative Begins Phase II**



The **Konbit Vanyan Kapab** (“Together We Can Succeed”) “soil health” initiative provides more than 40 Artibonite farmers from three communities opportunities and resources to rebuild depleted soils, conserve heirloom crop varieties, increase the availability of locally-produced nutritious foods, and increase income-generating activities based on speciality crops and value-added farm products. During Phase I farmers expanded their knowledge of soil biology and ways of successfully integrating trees and food crops. They also began propagating more than 50 native species of multi-purpose trees and will integrate many of these into trial plots during Phase II.

During Phase II participating farmers will continue farmer-to-farmer exchanges of knowledge with other rural communities in Haiti, hone their composting skills (including the use of “compost teas”), and design sustainable strategies for optimizing production on several experimental trial plots. Students in grades 6-8 of the **Centre d’Intervention Jeunesse** (CIJ) school will learn about traditional values pertaining to land usage and how these have guided the choice of strategies being tested. Students will also assist in testing soil samples and assessing the impact on soil and water resources of innovations introduced.



The **Agroecology Resource and Education Center** begun during Phase I will be further developed as a repository of knowledge gained during Phase II about new ways of producing food and managing natural resources. The Center will include a tool depot, a seed bank for the conservation of rare and heirloom crop varieties, and a community radio station modeled on the successful Canadian-based **Farm Radio International** working in more than 39 African countries to fight poverty and food insecurity.

## **New Initiatives: Charet Elementary School and Rose Mina Diegue Orphanage**



**Fr. Antoine Charles**, pastor of **Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish** in the town of St. Marc, operates schools in St. Marc and Gwayavye. Since the earthquake of January 2010 the enrollment of these schools has increased by more than 50% as more than 200,000 “earthquake refugees” have flooded the Artibonite department. The St. Marc school received 400 new students coming from Port au Prince, boosting the enrollment to 600 in secondary and more than 700 in the elementary section. Enrollment in the Gwayavye school almost doubled. A **new elementary school** in the rural community of Charet, where the parish operates a small chapel, was nearly completed in September, but funding ran out before the chalkboards, desks, and even doors could be purchased! A development grant from PIP’s **Rich**

**in Mercy** (RIM) division will allow construction to be completed so that classes can begin in early November.

The **Rose Mina Diegue Orphanage**, located in the upper Delmas section of Port au Prince and under the direction of **Rolande and Oswaldo Fernandez**, provides care and education for about 75 children – including some with severe handicaps - ranging in age from infancy to about 18 years old. The **Rich in Mercy** (RIM) division of Partners in Progress is providing fiscal sponsorship for capital improvements to the facility through the **Little Flower Project** initiated by **Jerry and Cecilia Oetgen and Therese Oetgen Clemens**. RIM development grants have made possible the renovation of the kitchen and dining areas. Plans are currently being made to upgrade and expand the dormitories and bathrooms and replace beds and other furnishings.



### **Partners in Progress**

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