

THE *PROGRESS* REPORT

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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FARM-TO-SCHOOL: IMPROVING CHILD NUTRITION, SCHOOL SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSIBLE FARMING

Following successful farm trials on the Sisters of St. Antoine Farm (SSA Farm) in Papaye, plans are underway to expand the use agroecology for producing crops used for the St. Antoine School lunch program. This “farm-to-school” initiative is a collaborative effort of farmers from Deslandes and Papaye, Partners in Progress, the Sisters of St. Antoine in Fondwa, and the École Communautaire Gamaliel de Deslandes.

“We have learned a lot about the soil and what will grow,” says agronomy specialist Claubert Versey, “and we know which agroecology techniques will make the farm successful.” This year, the SSA Farm will provide pwa congo (congo beans), pwa ekoni (cowpea), cassava, corn, okra, and sugar cane. Fruit trees, including banana, plantain, orange, cachiman (soursop), mango, and tamarind, have been planted as well.

Farm-to-school initiatives provide a self-sustaining strategy for improving child nutrition and the viability of schools in rural communities. The School of St. Antoine gets little outside support for the school lunch program. With many St. Antoine School students walking two to three hours over mountain footpaths to get to school, having a healthy, hot meal is critical for learning. The lunch program also provides an important incentive for parents who can only afford to pay a modest tuition. There are also plans for food from the farm to be sold in local Papaye markets to help offset program costs.

The SSA Farm has become a site for learning and sharing knowledge about sustainable farming. Agroecology workshops are now facilitated on the farm, and continuous monitoring and evaluation of agroecology techniques is driving innovation. The primary agroecology techniques tested on the farm thus far include cover cropping, ramp vivan (contour hedgerow), mulching with leaves from nitrogen fixing trees, and the integration of livestock with cover crops.

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We are especially interested in measuring the impact of the livestock and cover crop system on soil health. Farm animals are allowed to graze on one section of the farm where Sunn Hemp and Velvet Bean cover crops have been rotated with food crops. Cover crops provide nutrition-dense food for farm animals, and manure from the animals improves soil biology. “The farm has a lot of potential because we can produce more vegetables for the school and all our institutions,” says Sr. Claudette, “We have many dreams for the farm.”



Farmers prepare the nursery at the Sisters of St. Antoine Farm in Papaye



Fruit and nitrogen-fixing trees will play an important role in the SSA Farm agroecology system.



Students from the St. Antoine School in Fondwa

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS NOW HAS TWO OFFICE LOCATIONS!

Having two offices improves efficiency and enables us to broaden collaboration with partners, volunteers and donors.

Pennsylvania Office*

Partners in Progress
222 3rd St.
Aspinwall, PA 15215

Minnesota Office*

Partners in Progress
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COLLABORATIVE GREEN SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

We are happy to announce that construction of the new St. Yves School in Savanette Cabral is underway. The project is a cross-community collaborative initiative of St. Yves parish in Savanette Cabral, École Communautaire Gamaliel De Deslandes, St. John's Catholic Church in Grafton, ND, and Partners in Progress. The school is being constructed with stabilized, compressed, earth block (CEB), a green building material with proven economic, health, and environmental benefits over conventional construction methods.

The project brings together experienced CEB block makers and builders from Deslandes and builders and community members from Savanette Cabral. The school will provide a safe and healthy learning environment for 250 rural children, including children with special needs. Father Wilfranc, pastor of St. Yves, says, "In the new school, children will be taught to read, write, and do math. They will also be prepared to think critically about protecting the environment and respecting the rights of all people." The construction will also provide training and important jobs in green building to local community members.

The site has been prepared, cleared of old buildings, and a drinking water system has been relocated. In April, compressed earth block training will begin, followed by manufacturing of over 18,000 blocks needed for construction of the school. Completion of the project is scheduled for this fall.



Community members prepare the site for new St. Yves School in Savanette Cabral.

THE WORK ON THE GROUND CONTINUES DESPITE WIDESPREAD UNREST



Protestors took to the streets in early February demanding their leaders be held accountable.

Our work on the ground in Haiti continues despite civil unrest that erupted across the country last summer. In early February, the entire country was on lockdown as hundreds of thousands of people poured into the streets calling for President Moïse's resignation. The tipping point for this crisis is a combination of soaring inflation, devaluation of the gourde, and rampant government corruption. These core issues are centuries in the making and rooted in a history of political, economic, and environmental injustices.

In recent months, food and gas prices have nearly doubled. Most Haitians already live in extreme poverty and find it increasingly difficult to obtain basic goods. Many live in fear of what the future may bring, and they are demanding that their leaders be held accountable. Protests have subsided, but until the government addresses vital citizen concerns, demonstrations are likely to return.

While the widespread February protests

caused delays in the start-up of farmer-to-farmer trainings and the St. Yves School construction, we're happy to report that these projects are now moving forward. Blockades and road closures made it difficult to get materials to communities and unsafe for our program associates and partner staff to travel during demonstrations.

Our highest priority is to ensure the safety of our team and partners and to minimize disruptions in project activities. We monitor news from Haiti daily. By staying abreast of planned demonstrations, we are able to modify activity schedules as needed. We've increased security measures for our team and partners when traveling.

While there are no easy solutions to the current political crisis, we passionately believe the best way to lift people out of poverty is by empowering communities to create real, lasting change for themselves. By building the capabilities and resilience of the communities we work with, they become less vulnerable to economic and political shocks.

GIVE WITH CONFIDENCE

When you donate to Partners in Progress, you can be sure that your gift is going to the communities that need it most. We have proven systems in place to ensure accountability of all project funds, including regular project updates from team members on the ground, project coordination meetings with partners, and formal grant reports that document precisely how all funds are spent.

Grant reports and annual program evaluations with partners and community members enable us to learn from both successes and challenges so that continual improvements in program delivery are made. When you give to PIP, you can give with confidence.

If you have questions regarding giving or funding, please contact Executive Director, Michael Neumann, at 651-260-9787.



Revitalizing Sustainable Community Development in Rural Haiti
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