



HAITIAN EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

From Poverty To Prosperity Through Education

HELP Update Spring 2008

Dear Friends,

Students Succeed in Difficult Times: As many of you have heard, the latest news from Haiti is not good. After almost two years of stability and economic growth, the rising price of basic foodstuffs has provoked another crisis and exposed how fragile Haiti's recovery is.

The excerpt below is from an April 9th TIME magazine article which gives a good overview of the current situation. (<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1729150,00.html>)

The cost of staple foods has risen some 50% in Haiti since last year, a crushing trend in a country where three-quarters of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. Only Somalia and Afghanistan have a higher per capita daily deficit in calorie intake than Haiti does. (The figure in Haiti is 460 calories below the United Nations' daily minimum of 2,100.) The U.N.'s World Food Program says it has received only 13% of the \$96 million it needs to help Haiti's 10 million people in 2008 — barely enough to support its operations there through the end of this month. Due to an estimated 55% rise in global food and fuel prices since last summer, the WFP last month made an extraordinary appeal to donors for an extra \$500 million this year. At least eight other poor nations in Africa and Asia have recently experienced food-related unrest.

Despite the mounting difficulties HELP students continue to work hard and succeed. Not all grades are in from the first semester but so far seven students have made the Dean's List including two who are at the top of their class. Angelie Orelie is number one in her 4th year medical school class at Notre Dame University of Haiti followed closely by another HELP student, Yves Thimothee. Jerry Fevrin is at the top of his Quisqueya University class with an 89 average, the highest we have ever seen at Quisqueya! Jerry is from the coastal city of Gonaives which was devastated by Tropical Storm Jeanne in 2004. When the storm hit Jerry and his family spent several days stranded on the second floor of their house as they waited for the water to subside.

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Also on the Dean's List is Marie- Michele Montout (2nd year, education), HELP's first student from the rural Nippes region. Marie Michele has persevered through unfortunate circumstances. After finishing at the top of her high school class in 2005 she stayed at home and taught primary school as she couldn't afford to continue her education on her mother's earnings as a street merchant. A year later, local education officials connected her with HELP but two weeks into her freshman year she admitted to HELP Director Garry Delice that she was completely lost in class and didn't know how she would ever pass. Further investigation revealed that Marie Michele had actually been attending upper level classes! At the end of that difficult first semester Marie-Michele came down with pneumonia and missed the whole semester. Now it appears that she is finally settling in and working to her potential.

Working Women: Most Haitian universities require undergraduates to complete a final thesis,



Luce Locan at the HELP center

which can last a full year after four years of coursework. Many students never graduate because their financial situation forces them into the labor market after their classes and they never finish their thesis. In order to make sure that our students graduate, HELP supports them for six to eight months after their coursework, discouraging them from working full time during this period and meeting with them monthly to track their progress. With their theses delivered to their advisors, three young women recently found work. Perennial Dean's List student

Ermine Civil (accounting) is now a junior accountant at Sogefac, the consumer finance division of Haiti's second largest bank, Sogebank. Smyrne Saintil was hired as staff attorney at Cabinet Celestin, where she had been a part-time intern. Finally, Luce Locan (accounting) found a job with GRAMIR, an NGO working with farmers. After a three-month internship, Luce will earn \$11,700 a year. Just five years ago, when Luce first came to Port-au-Prince from her home in Haiti's central plateau, she could not afford a bed and slept on a mat on her sister's floor. Thanks to your support and her hard work Luce and her family will surely sleep better from now on.

While HELP assisted these young women with CVs, cover letters, job search strategies and the like, it is to their credit that they found the jobs on their own, an important step in HELP's mission of giving students the skills they need to move from poverty to professionals. Their experience reinforces our belief that the job market for professionals in Haiti remains strong and that well educated people with marketable skills do not necessarily need connections to find good jobs. This is why the employment rate among HELP graduates remains at 100 percent even while Haiti is undergoing difficult economic times.

Building Relationships: This winter we were pleased to welcome many visitors to the HELP Center



Visitors from the Haitian Timoun Foundation in the computer lab

in Port-au-Prince: Our supporters at the Colorado-based Haitian Timoun Foundation brought a large group of Lutherans from around the United States who returned home eager to get more involved. A representative of Suas Educational Development, a small Irish NGO working with Digicel, Haiti's largest cellular network, came and saw our program firsthand. HELP was invited to make a presentation at a February forum sponsored by the Haitian Parliament's bicameral committee on education. Senator Edmonde Suplice Beauzile, one of Haiti's few female senators, was so

impressed with HELP's work that she visited the HELP Center the following week and asked if our ESL teacher would be willing to conduct classes for parliamentarians. Also in February Garry attended a regional conference in the Dominican Republic on administrative reform of universities.

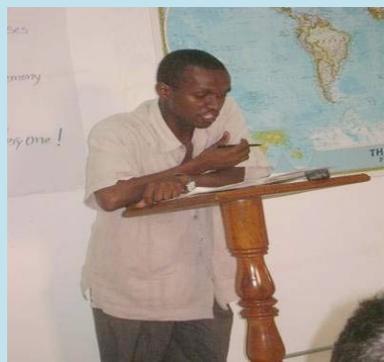


Young Fundraiser in Michigan Shows Generous Spirit:

According to Kym Juntti, her 8 year old daughter Riley was "a humanitarian from birth". After learning from her neighbor and longtime HELP supporter Jennifer MacCormack about the grave obstacles facing Haitian children, Riley was inspired to raise money to help them attend school. First she raised \$18 at a garage sale but decided that just wasn't enough so she enlisted her friends to recycle cans and bottles at home and at school, saving up all the 10-cent deposits. Riley also convinced her school principal to put a collection box in the teachers' lounge. For months Riley and her mom loaded the car with the cans and bottles they collected and inserted them one by one into the recycling machine at a local grocery store. Riley recently gave HELP \$102 and says knowing that her gift will be put to good use makes all her work worthwhile. A big thank you to Riley for her inspiring work.

New Student Advisor: We are pleased to announce that our ESL instructor Samson Charles, has accepted a job with us as part-time student advisor. With 80 students this year and plans for 100 in the fall, we have to take on extra staff to provide all students with the services they need to succeed. Samson, a graduate of Haiti's state teacher training college, won a scholarship to pursue an MA at the School for International Training in Vermont and returned to Haiti to teach English at

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Samson Charles teaching English

several local universities. He was a natural choice for the student advisor position as he is much by his students, for his engaging classes and his emphasis on critical thinking. Stanley Clermont (3rd year, engineering) says that the students in Samson's class "learn how to make good decisions and the steps we should take to achieve our goals. Most importantly we learn how to think actively and critically." Samson in turn says that he enjoys working at HELP because the students are so motivated and eager to learn.

HELP, Today & Tomorrow:



Syndie at a university conference

I will close with two contrasting stories: Syndie Pierre-Canel came to HELP in 2001 from an all-girls public high school. Personable and ambitious for a better life she found direction and guidance at HELP. She is now in her last semester of a chemistry degree and recently wrote to thank HELP. "At HELP I discovered enormous potential in myself and really developed my ability to successfully adapt to different situations. The feeling of belonging to HELP, which we sometimes talk about in theory, is rooted in me. Thank you all again for your understanding and support."



Haitian school children carrying more than books to school.

On a recent recruiting visit to Haiti's isolated central plateau, Garry ran into several schoolchildren carrying a bench down the road. When he stopped to enquire where they were going they explained that the school they attended didn't have enough chairs and desks for the students so their local pastor let them carry the church benches the four miles back and forth to school every day.

We depend entirely on your continued generosity to give students like Syndie, Luce, Ermine and Smyrne the opportunity they deserve. One example of this

continuing generosity came in the mail recently when Fiona Druckenmiller renewed her annual gift

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of \$125,000. This impressive gift puts HELP strong financial footing as the school year comes to a close. Our heartfelt thanks to Ms. Druckenmiller for providing so much opportunity for our students. As our students move from adolescence to adulthood, from uncertainty to confidence and from poverty to prosperity, the dividends of your support speak for themselves. The students in this photograph, willing to make impressive sacrifices to attain what we often take for granted, represent the next generation of HELP. These students need our support today and tomorrow.

Please visit our website (www.haitianeducation.org) or mail your gift to:

136 Madison Ave.

N.Y., NY 10016

Thank You,

Conor